

# The Call of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Judges and Judges chapter 6. Judges chapter 6. Let us hear the word of God.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. And because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them dens which are in the mountains, and caves and strongholds.

And so it was when Israel had sown that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites and the children of the east, even they came up against them.

And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till they came unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

[ 1 : 21 ] For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude. For both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to destroy it.

And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said to them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage.

And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land. And I said to you, I am the Lord your God.

Fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice. And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak, which was an Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abizarite.

And his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

[ 2 : 50 ] And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?

But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, that thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have I not sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

Depart not, hence I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, it's a young goat, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour.

[ 4 : 19 ] The flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and put it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.

And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and unleavened cakes.

Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God, for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.

And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah Shalom.

[ 5 : 32 ] Unto this day it is yet an oprah of the Abizirites. And it came to pass the same night that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even a second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it.

And build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock in the ordered place. And take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove, which thou shalt cut down.

Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him. And so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he should not do it by day, that he did it by night.

And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it. And the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built.

And they said one to another, Who has done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon, the son of Joash, has done this thing.

[ 6 : 50 ] Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die, because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.

And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning.

If he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbabel, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abiezar was gathered after him.

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him. And he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

[ 8 : 04 ] And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the floor.

And if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then I shall know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

And it was so, for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once.

Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece. Let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground. Let there be dew.

And God did so that night, for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground. Amen.

[ 9 : 09 ] We pray God's blessing on that reading of his word. Let's now sing once again to God's praise in Psalm 93. Psalm 93.

Psalm 93. The Lord doth reign and clothed as he with majesty most bright.

His works to show him clothed to be, and girt about with might. The world is also established that it cannot depart. Thy throne is fixed of old, and thou from everlasting art.

We'll sing the whole psalm to God's praise, standing to sing. The Lord doth reign and clothed as he with majesty most bright. The Lord doth reign and clothed as he with majesty most bright.

His works to show him clothed as he with majesty most bright. The world is also established that it cannot be made.

[ 10 : 25 ] The world is also established that it cannot be made.

The world is also established that it cannot depart. Thy throne is fixed of old, and thou from everlasting art.

The floods, O Lord, have lifted up.

They lifted up their voice. The floods have lifted up.

The floods have lifted up. There with sun and made a mighty noise.

[ 11 : 45 ] And yet the Lord that is on high is more of might by fire.

The flood, O Lord, have lifted up. The flood, O Lord, have lifted up.

The flood, O Lord, have lifted up. Thy testimonies, everyone in faithfulness excel.

And holiness forever, O Lord, have lifted up. The flood, O Lord, have lifted up.

The flood, O Lord, have lifted up. Well, friends, if we could turn back to Judges chapter six for a short time this evening.

[ 13 : 13 ] And I'd like us to consider the words we have in verses one to 24. But if we were to take a text this evening, perhaps we could take the words of verse 16.

First half of verse 16. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee.

Surely I will be with thee. One of the wonderful things about the God that we worship is that we can expect the unexpected.

God does not conform to the way that perhaps we at times would like him to conform.

He doesn't conform to cultural or social norms. He doesn't work in the way that we work, in the way that we operate in this world.

[ 14 : 30 ] We find that difficult to deal with at times. We by nature like to restrict God. We like to take God down to our level and almost make him as one who has a finite mind.

One who thinks the same way that we think. And because he thinks the same way that we think in our own mind's eye, we then expect that he in turn will act in the same way that we would perhaps act.

And so because of this, we find ourselves containing God in a box. We restrict him. We hem him in. Our expectations of him are so narrow and so small that often times we miss numerous blessings because of this.

Tonight's narrative is a perfect example of this. Because what we see here tonight in the first part of this chapter is we see that God chooses to use an ordinary person to do extraordinary things.

We're not going to think so much about the extraordinary things. You can find out about that if you want by reading through verses, sorry, chapters 7 and 8 of Judges.

[ 16 : 04 ] But tonight we're going to see how God defies human expectations by selecting the most unlikely of candidates to do his work.

Of course, that's not how we work. That's not how we operate. When we're selecting a candidate to do a particular job, whatever that might be, we want the best.

We want the cream of the crop. We want to go straight to the top. We're always looking almost for perfection.

That's just how we are by nature. But not God. God. God. God. God. And this is what's so refreshing about our God. God equips those whom he calls.

Always remember this. He doesn't call the equipped. Why does he do this? Why does he operate out with this box, if you like, of our own expectations?

[ 17 : 15 ] Well, it's quite simple. He does this so that he himself will receive all the glory. And that's what we see here tonight, friends.

An example that really ought to be an encouragement to all of us. As we seek to serve this great God, a God who in many ways we simply cannot comprehend, we find it challenging.

We find it daunting. We don't know how to do so. We don't know what this should look like in our lives.

But tonight what we see here is we see a reminder of the reality of the power of the God that we here serve.

We don't come here tonight worshipping an idledom. We come worshipping the creator of the heavens and the earth and all that in them is.

[ 18 : 23 ] He has created all things including you and in me. And it's in his hands that our times are in. And because of this, because of this, if we find ourselves leaning fully upon him, we find that we can serve him in a way that we never thought possible.

Because that's what he does. He uses ordinary, everyday people just like you to do extraordinary things in this world.

Before we think about this unlikeliest, if you like, of candidates, it's helpful for us just to set a little bit of context in the chapter that we have before us.

Here we, of course, are faced with the Israelites. They are in Canaan. They are in that promised land. You know the story. They had been sojourning through the wilderness for 40 years.

They crossed the Jordan eventually. They had, of course, been going round in circles in the wilderness. They crossed the Jordan. And then they find themselves under the leadership of Joshua. And eventually they inherit the land.

[ 19 : 45 ] And here we see that they are in the land of Canaan. At this point, there are many years, maybe a couple of hundred years, since they came into the land of Canaan, since they became benefactors of the promises of God.

But what we see in the book of Judges is that such an inheritance had been mingled with disobedience. You see, yes, God's people had been given this land that they would be told would be flowing with milk and honey, this glorious land that was to be theirs.

And they inherited it. But there were certain conditions upon inheriting this land that they were to fulfill. One of these conditions was that they were to drive out certain groups of Canaanites that were still there.

They didn't do that. And so because of that, even at this point, there was a remnant of Canaanites living alongside God's people in this promised land.

Unlawfully living in this land that had been reserved only for God's people. What happened?

[ 21 : 04 ] Well, this led to problems. They began to intermarry with the Canaanites. They began to intermarry with the pagans with whom they dwelt.

And of course, unsurprisingly, this wasn't without its own problems. Problems that we see scattered throughout the book of Judges.

This is just a very brief summary of setting the scene here. But these were problems that we see scattered right through the book of Judges. Because as the Lord's people find themselves in Canaan with the Canaanites, beginning to intermarry with these pagans, what we see is a recurring sequence of events.

We see that the Israelites would turn their back on God. Then after turning their back on God, God would chastise them. And after God would chastise them, usually through a military defeat, what would happen was that the Israelites would then, not surprisingly, turn to God for deliverance, for help.

So they would turn their back on God, they'd be chastised, and then they would turn to God for help. And he would, in his mercy, deliver them. But so like us, they were slow to learn.

[ 22 : 28 ] And this would be a process that would be repeated over and over and over again for about 400 years. And that's why we have the book of Judges.

Because Judges really refers to those that God have called into his service to deliver the Israelites at a particular time from the bondage of the enemy.

The word Judges in Hebrew literally means deliverers or saviors. Now we see that there are 13 judges recorded in the book of Judges.

12 men and 1 woman. Deborah. The first judge was Othniel. And we have various other judges all the way through to Gideon and more after him.

And it's when we come to Gideon that we pause. Because it's Gideon that we're going to meet tonight as we come to chapter 6.

[ 23 : 40 ] Let's turn to verse 1. The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.

So this sequence of events had been going on and on and on. And here they are back again. No doubt after having just been delivered from the judge.

I think it was actually Deborah that was the judge before them being delivered from the Canaanites. And here they are once again doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

What was this evil we might ask? What was it that they had done that led them to turn their back on God? Well, it would appear that they hadn't completely turned their back on God because they would still pay lip service to the God of Israel.

But at the same time, they had begun to worship the God Baal. This was, of course, an inanimate God.

[ 24 : 49 ] A God who couldn't talk. A God who couldn't have any power to do anything for them. Yet a God that they worshipped. A God that they built altars for.

In response to all that the Lord had done for them, the one who had delivered their forefathers from the tyranny of Egypt and established them in the land of promise, we see that they had become saturated in the idolatry of the day.

Isn't that solemn, friends? And you know, it's easy for us to, in many ways, act in the same way. Not because we're building altars to Baal in our garden.

But we're building altars to other gods in our hearts. Yes, we might even profess to be God's people. I include myself in this. This is the nature of every heart.

God. We are so prone to build up gods for ourselves. Gods that need to be dismantled and destroyed. Gods that in and of themselves, friends.

[ 26 : 03 ] They can be legitimate things. But yet things that we are worshipping alongside or even above our heavenly Father.

It can be the God of our family. Of course, we're to serve and to love our family to the glory of God. Absolutely. But when our family become an idol to us, something's not quite right.

We're not serving God in the way that we should. It can be the God of our occupation. It can be the God of our reputation. It can be the God of our bank balance.

It can even be the God of our church. Things that we can put above the God of Israel. We have to be so careful.

I think it was Calvin that said that our hearts are idol factories. Continually seeking to make idols that will distract us from who it is we should be worshipping and serving.

[ 27 : 16 ] That's what happened with the Israelites. And as we reflect upon the pattern of their behaviour and as perhaps we're aghast and we're thinking, well, how on earth did they not learn?

Just look at your own life and me with you. Reflect upon even the last year of our Christian walk. How many times have we gone back to pet sins?

How many times have we found ourselves flirting with that sin that we had at one point said we would never go back to? That's the way we are. That's why we're continually needing the mercy of God.

And how does God respond, we might ask? The Lord who has seen it all before, how does he respond? Well, he responds in mercy and in love and in grace.

Look at verse 1. And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. What does this mean? Well, as one commentator puts it, Israel had bowed to the gods of the heathen.

[ 28 : 27 ] Therefore, they must bow to the tyranny of the heathen. Israel had bowed to the gods of the heathen. Therefore, they must bow to the tyranny of the heathen.

You might be a little bit confused. You might be wondering, well, how on earth this is an act of mercy and grace and love? He's given them over to the enemy.

Well, Lord, Scripture is quite clear about what the Lord does. The Lord chastises those whom he loves.

It's not punishment. It's chastisement. Punishment is different. Chastisement is born out of love.

Punishment is wanting to get our own back. Wanting to teach someone a lesson. It's done in a harsh spirit of arrogance and pride and anger and even hatred.

[ 29 : 30 ] I'm going to punish you. It's not an attractive thing. Then, chastisement is different. Chastisement is there to draw us back.

It's not comfortable. It's not always easy. But we're thankful for it. We're thankful for it because it's a sign that we are indeed covenant children.

If the Lord would just leave us to ourselves, that is the most frightful place to be. Where we're not aware of the Lord chastising us. When we carry on in sin time and time again, year after year.

It's not bothering us. Our conscience is seared, as it were, like a hot iron. So that we don't feel any chastisement. We're not aware of any chastisement. That is a fearful place to be.

Why? Because we've been left to ourselves. Because we're illegitimate. Because we are not children of God.

[ 30 : 35 ] That's why those without grace tonight are merrily making their way through this world. As I did. As you did. Without worry.

Without conviction. Without any fear. And we look upon them at times and we think they've got such an easy life. They're so loyal.

They're so happy. Of course they are. Because the spirit of the Lord hasn't worked in their hearts. They are not children as of yet of the covenant.

And so they are not drawn to that place whereby. They are chastised by the hand of the one who loves them. And so the Lord chastises them at the hands of the Midianites.

Midianites. They would come from the east of the Jordan River. From the deserts to the east of Palestine. And what they would do is they would oppress the Israelites.

[ 31 : 39 ] How would they do this? Well would they come with military might? We might expect that. That's what's happened in the past with the Israelites. They would be defeated perhaps in terms of being overcome by armies.

But that's not what we see here. Instead what they simply do is they come into the country in large numbers.

In huge numbers. And in doing so they overwhelm the people. How do they overwhelm the people? Well they take from the people what the people need to live.

They take their crops. That's what they do. Verse 3. And so it was when Israel had sown. That the Midianites came up. And the Amalekites.

And the children of the east. Even they came up against them. And they encamped against them. And destroyed the increase of the earth.

[ 32 : 39 ] Destroyed their crops. Till they come unto Gaza. And left no sustenance for Israel. Neither sheep. Nor ox. Nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents.

And they came as grasshoppers for multitude. And both they and their camels were without number. And they entered into the land to destroy it.

In a nutshell. In a nutshell. Economically. They ruined the Israelites. They took their crops. They took the fruit of their labors. Leaving little or no food for them.

Or their animals. They ruthlessly bled the Israelites. They ruthlessly bled the Israelites of all their resources. And remember this wasn't a one-off. This wasn't a one-off siege.

That they could somehow just get over. After one season of their crops being taken. No. This happened year after year after year. For seven whole years.

[ 33 : 38 ] For what was absent in that seven-year period. What's clearly absent.

Is any interaction between the Israelites. And the God of Israel. Because they turned their back on the God of Israel.

They'd lost communion. With the God of Israel. It wasn't the natural place for them to come. In time of difficulty. And we know what that's like.

Maybe if we're backslidden in our hearts. We find it difficult to come to that place of prayer. We're almost ashamed to come before God. And to plead our case.

When in fact that is the very place that we should be coming to. Even in our backslidden state. But that can be hard. That can be difficult. And so we don't go. We try and carry on regardless ourselves.

[ 34 : 37 ] We try and plot. Or rather find solutions. To our situations. In our own strength. That's what happened here for seven whole years.

They're fleeing to the caves. They're hiding. They're weak. They're weak. Because they turned their back. On the Lord.

That is until we come to verse six. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites.

And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. This was a very last resort. How like us.

How like us. And we come to the Lord last. Our faith can be so small that somehow we believe our problems are too big for him.

[ 35 : 35 ] Or somehow he is too big for our small problems. That's the voice of the devil. That's the voice of the evil one who wants us to do anything but come to the Lord.

But they come. They come. Even as a last resort. They come. And what does God do? He mercifully listens to their cry.

He doesn't turn his back on them in the way that they do. On whom he hears their cry. He firstly sends a prophet to teach them. There was the problem of their heart that needed to be dealt with first of all.

Before they had the physical problem of the lack of food being dealt with. And so they needed to be taught by this prophet. This unnamed prophet. To bring them back to that place.

Whereby they are reminded of who the God of Israel is. And why this has happened in the first place. And after having done this.

[ 36 : 41 ] We see that God would then send help. In terms of delivering them. From the oppressive hand of the Midianites.

And that's where we find ourselves tonight. We find ourselves in the interview room. We find ourselves observing God's recruitment process.

For the man that indeed would lead Israel in this way. The man that effectively God headhunts. The man that God chooses.

The unlikeliest of candidates. Who is this man? Gideon. And as we're introduced to Gideon friends.

We very quickly see that this man is indeed very ordinary. We come alongside an ordinary man. In an ordinary perhaps even obscure town.

[ 37 : 43 ] Ophrah. What is he doing? Well he's doing a very ordinary thing. He's doing no doubt what everyone else at this time was doing. He's threshing wheat.

Why is he threshing wheat? Well he's threshing wheat in order to hide some of the wheat from the Midianites. How else would they survive? Even for these seven years.

They had to have as it were their own secret stash of wheat that they could live off. And so that's what he's doing. He's threshing this wheat to put aside.

So that they could continue to survive. An ordinary man in an ordinary field. In an ordinary town carrying out an ordinary task.

But his day is interrupted by something that is pretty extraordinary. Verse 11.



[ 38 : 41 ] There came an angel of the Lord. That should be translated the angel of the Lord. There came the angel of the Lord and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah.

This man is there minding his own business. And who decides to come and sit under a tree nearby? Well none other than the angel of the Lord himself.

This of course was a Christophany. A pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. The second person of the Godhead. That is the angel of the Lord.

We have many angels of the Lord. But the angel of the Lord is the second person of the Godhead. The pre-incarnate Christ. And as this ordinary man carries out his task of trying to set spare food for survival.

The angel of the Lord speaks to him in verse 12. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him. The Lord is with you.

[ 39 : 43 ] You mighty man of valor. We've all heard the saying that tells us about rubbing salt on a wound.

And that's exactly what this voice appears to be doing. The Lord is with you. The Lord is with you.

Look at what I'm doing. And you can almost hear the tone of anger and frustration from the voice of Gideon.

As Gideon replies in verse 3. Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our father told us of saying, did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?

Look at what I'm doing. We're fighting for our lives. Scraping food together to survive. And you say the Lord is with us? Really? We've heard about that God leading our fathers out of Egypt.

[ 40 : 51 ] Well, where is he now? Where is his deliverance? And you know, we might be forgiven, friends, for putting our amen to this passionate speech of Gideon.

Where is God? Where is God in all of this? And we ourselves, from time to time, might be tempted to say the same. Where are you, Lord? What are you doing? Where are you?

Where are you? But we must remember one detail here. Before we ourselves, or before we sympathise too much with Gideon blaming God, we cannot abdicate our own responsibility for the situation that we find ourselves in.

That's what happened here. That God's people had turned their back upon God. And that's why they find themselves in this situation. You know, I've heard people sing, Oh, well, the Lord has left us.

The Lord has left us. And you understand the sentiment of what's being said. But it's not true. It can't be true.

[ 42 : 08 ] If it is true, God is a liar. He tells us he will never leave us. He will never forsake us.

The reality is that we leave him. That is true. Undoubtedly, that is true. We forsake him.

We see that with the Israelites here. We see that Gideon's father had even built an altar to Baal in his house. We do it.

And even as I said this morning, as we find ourselves perhaps as a church in a time of leanness, and as we perhaps find ourselves blaming this, that, and the next thing, maybe we've left him quite simply by turning our back on the cross.

The finished work. Neglecting to realise that our identity is in him and none other. Nothing else.

[ 43 : 20 ] No one else. And because of this, we leave him. And we find ourselves far from him. In our hearts. What does he tell us in his word?

Malachi, I think it says, Return to me and I'll return to you. That's what he says. You've come back to me.

And so as Gideon accuses God himself, how does he respond? Again, in love, in mercy, in kindness, in kindness, he offers a solution to all of Israel's problems at this point.

Verse 14, And the angel of the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee?

In other words, God is saying, Okay, yes, there is a problem. That is true. The problem is clear. But you are going to be involved with the solution to this problem.

[ 44 : 33 ] That's what it is to be servants of God. It's so easy, friends, to be focused on the problem, to be problem-driven.

We see people like that in life all the time. They'll come to you with a problem. It's almost as if they enjoy coming with the problem and sharing the problem.

We need to be solution-driven. When a problem arises, what's the solution to this problem?

And especially applying this to God's people, to the church. When there are problems, what do we do? Do we wallow in the problems? No.

We find ourselves as people who are full of solutions that come, as we thought about this morning, from the wisdom of God himself.

[ 45 : 34 ] He wants us to be part of the solution. God uses means. That's how he chooses to operate. And that's humbling in itself that he would use you and me. But he does.

And so God is saying to this ordinary man, you are going to undertake an extraordinary task. But you know, friends, and this is one thing for sure, as we reflect on Gideon's response, we see that it's a response that is also so, so ordinary.

And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

I am the youngest of a family in the weakest tribe of Israel, he's saying. My credentials hardly lend themselves to such an undertaking that you are calling me to.

And you know, friends, as I was studying this, I could see so clearly that we all have the spirit of Gideon, do we not? When God calls us to serve him, and he does, we are called to activity.

[ 46 : 54 ] We are called to be those who indeed serve the Lord actively. We are not called to be armchair theologians. And when God calls us, maybe he's calling you tonight.

I don't know you all terribly well, but maybe he's calling you. And what do you say? How can I do this? How can I do this?

It's beyond me. It's impossible for me. And God's not asking us to deliver a whole nation, as he was Gideon.

Perhaps it's a small thing, and we say, no, I can't do that. When I myself was called, before I was called to the ministry, the very first time I was asked to preach, if you'll forgive the personal story, but just to illustrate that I'm no different from you.

When I was first asked to preach, my minister came and caught me unaware. I was not expecting it. And he said, Yang, I would like you to preach.

[ 48 : 09 ] And what did I say? No, I can't. And he continued. And what did I say? No, I can't.

And I continued, and I persisted. And I told him, I can't do that. And he, in his wisdom, said, well, maybe you should pray about it.

And so I did. I went and I prayed, and just, I think it was this morning, I was saying how we can pray, and we know the answer that we want God to give.

But he didn't give the answer that I was looking for, because as I prayed, and as I came to the word, I was confronted by these words. Now, therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth, and I will teach you what you shall say.

I will be with your mouth. I will teach you what you shall say. That's what the Lord said to me. And I had to phone the minister and say, okay, I'll do it.

[ 49 : 16 ] The Lord has said, I have to do it. But the problem there, friends, was that I was saying, and of course I couldn't do it. And I still can't do it without the strength of the Lord.

But my responsibility, and your responsibility too, is to go. It's to be obedient. That's what the angel of the covenant is saying to Gideon.

Go. Go in strength of the Lord. Yes, he calls him a mighty man of valor. But the only thing that would make Gideon a mighty man of valor was the strength of the Lord that he would draw from.

The only thing that makes this man worthy or able is the fact that God himself has called him. There's nothing here to suggest that Gideon in and of himself was anything special.

That he was a gifted leader. That he was a strong-minded man. There's nothing to suggest any of that. But what we see here is that he could be.

[ 50 : 27 ] And he would be. And that's the central point of all of this. And we see this in verse 16. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

Surely I will be with you. This is Gideon's strength. This is Gideon's valor. This is Gideon's might.

That the Lord promises to be with him. That he's not expected to go it alone. But he is expected to go.

Friends, it's so easy for us to grumble about the day that we live in. To moan and groan and bemoan it.

And yet not be willing to be part of the solution. Friends, tonight God expects you and me to believe the same promises that he gave to Gideon.

[ 51 : 40 ] That whatever God is calling us to do, and this is exciting. This is life-changing if we grab hold of it by faith.

This will transform your whole Christian walk. And my walk too. That whatever God is calling you to, whether it's pastoral ministry like he's called me to, whether it's witnessing to your neighbor, which is such a difficult thing to do, I know, or to your family members in a God-glorifying and helpful way, or to your colleagues, or even if it's to profess the name of the Lord for the first time, or even just to come out to the prayer meeting.

Whatever the Lord is asking you to do, calling you to do, or even if it's something more than that, I don't know, but you do. Whatever it is, the Lord is saying, surely I will be with you.

Surely I will be with you. Time is gone.

I'm going to have to cut out some of what I'd hoped to say. But, as we move on to perhaps verse 22, we see that Gideon perceives that he was an angel of the Lord.

[ 53 : 16 ] Gideon says, Alas, O Lord God, for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. He's come to this place of submission and he realises this is God.

That's what happens. And that in itself is liberating and freeing. But how can this be God? Because we read elsewhere in Scripture that no man can see God and live.

Well, what we read is that no man can see God the Father and live, but they can see God the Son, which shows us that this is a Christophany.

They can see God the Son and many did see God the Son face to face for 33 years in this world. But nonetheless, Gideon is scared.

This is the old dispensation still. He would have known that no man can see God and live and yet he would be yet to realise that yes, we can see God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[ 54 : 24 ] That's why the Lord says to him in verse 23, Peace be unto thee. Fear not. Thou shalt not die. So the Lord calls him and eventually he responds.

He builds an altar there to the Lord that is called Jehovah Shalom, which means the Lord is peace. He builds an altar. He shows that he is ready and willing to serve the Lord.

He builds that altar amongst all of the altars to Baal. What a witness. What a witness. Not an easy thing to do, but surely blessing will follow his obedience.

A lot more could have been said about the offering that he offered up. We've run out of time, but as we close, it's true to say that tonight God, God is calling you.

He's calling you to trust in him. We all have our own calling in this life as I've just touched upon that and it will vary from person to person, but every single person gathered in here has a calling of God.

[ 55 : 49 ] All of you, individual, tailored to you, where you are. as a congregation, he's calling you.

No doubt you have uncertainties about the future as you seek a minister, as you worry perhaps about the future of your congregation.

Is the Lord going to provide? How are we going to build this congregation up in the day that we live in? These are challenges. These are difficulties.

Who will be our minister? So on and so forth. We have all these questions and we can find ourselves paralyzed by negativity. Please don't, friends. Lay hold of these words.

Surely I will be with you. Surely I will be with you. What an encouragement to you.

[ 56 : 50 ] Isn't that exciting? Does that not just stir you up to want to serve him and to see where he'll lead you and to see how he'll build up this precious community for his glory because he can.

It's not that he's not willing. It's not that he's turned his back on us. But we need to be willing to serve him with all the might that is to be found in trusting in his promises.

Unconverted friend, you're in this as well because he's calling you to believe. He's perhaps even calling you tonight to stop sitting on the fence you may be scared.

You might be worried. I know what it's like. There's a fear of the unknown looking forward to being a Christian. Perhaps in your heart you want to be a Christian.

But you're scared. You're scared of letting go. You don't know what it's going to be like. You don't know if you'll be able to keep it up.

[ 58 : 07 ] You don't know if perhaps next week you'll not be a Christian and so you don't bother taking that step of faith. What does he say to you? He says to you tonight never mind all of that.

He says to you tonight remember these six simple words. This is the whole essence of faith. Stepping out beyond ourselves.

Remember these six simple words of faith. Surely I will be with you. Is it not time friend that you just submitted?

Submitted to God's will for your life. Trusting not in your own weaknesses or inadequacies. They will be with you until you take your last breath in this world.

There's nothing sure than that. So that's why you need to trust in another. To trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 59 : 13 ] the angel of the covenant. The one who tells us that in him we will be more than conquerors.

May it be so for us all gathered here as we go forward into a new week on life's journey that we will be more than conquerors in the strength of the Lord knowing in our heart of hearts that he will be with us.

Let us pray. We bless and we thank you O Lord for the instruction that you give to us through the lives of others.

As we reflect upon the calling of Gideon we see so much of ourselves. We see that a people as a people we are so hesitant to serve you fully.

We draw back and we keep from you that which is rightfully yours not realizing the freedom and the liberty that is to be found in offering our lives to you as living sacrifices which is a reasonable service a reasonable act of worship.

[ 60 : 34 ] We pray O Lord God that your Holy Spirit would speak to us tonight individually as a congregation converted and unconverted that you would incline our ear to your voice and that we would truly seek to lay hold of these words by faith as we go forward in the strength of the Lord.

Part us now with your blessing and forgive us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.