

# Faith's Progress

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at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
by S. Michael Durham  
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Hebrews 11:32

*And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:*

Judges 6-7

There may have been a time since you have been a Christian that you entertained the thought that God could probably, perhaps, possibly use you in some way, in something, somewhat above normal. You would read the story of Moses and feel the thrill of possibility of God using you in a significant way. You heard of David's exploits or of the Apostle Paul's experiences and you excitedly thought that something significant could happen with you.

But now, any idea of potentiality has been wiped away by the years, years marked by one disappointment and failure after another. Your future isn't like Moses', David's, Paul's, or even Bartholomew's. You might ask who is Bartholomew? My point exactly, many of you don't even know who he is, that he was one of the original apostles of Jesus. You believe you're as forgotten as Bartholomew.

However, could I suggest that the end of your story has not been written and that you are more akin to a poor, weak, and timid Gideon than Moses? But remember God used Gideon just as He used Moses.

In our text we have God's list of His champions of faith and we come to those who have honorable mention. Not much is said about them but at least they get on the list. But one name stands out among them as someone you would not think as having great faith and that's Gideon. When you think of Gideon you don't think of a person with much faith. You think of a person who was timid and lacked faith. He had to be coached and comforted and coerced by God over and over before he would obey God, so naturally you don't think of Gideon when you think about great champions of faith. Yet God inserts him in this list. I think Gideon is here specifically for people like you and me.

God puts Gideon on the list of men and women of faith to remind us that faith isn't what we claim it to be or think it to be. Faith isn't always sensational. It isn't always bright lights or miracles. Sometimes faith has to be coerced. Sometimes faith has to be dragged and pulled. Sometimes faith isn't parting Red Seas, sometimes it's doing something in the dark because you're too afraid to be seen in the light. That's why Gideon is here. Gideon is here to tell you and me that faith isn't always sensational and that you and I have the possibility of being used by God even though our faith may be weak.

I want to speak to all of us, to the people among us who have great faith, to those of us who have little faith, and to those of us who have no faith. Let Gideon be an example of what God can do for you.

In order to know the story of Gideon and see the progress of his faith we have to turn to Judges 6. We'll spend the rest of our time here, so I invite you to turn there to understand why Gideon is in Hebrews 11:32.

The first thing I want us to see in the progression of God enabling, equipping, and strengthening Gideon's faith is just to see where Gideon is. Let's be honest, Gideon is not where we would hope to be with our faith. As far as I'm concerned, Gideon doesn't have any faith at this point. God comes to a man who has absolutely zero confidence in God. You could say Gideon is more an unbeliever than a believer; at least he's showing more fruits of unbelief than faith.

The reason he is in this state of unbelief is probably why many of us are in a state of unbelief this morning—we just can't believe God can change anything about us or our circumstances, much less use us. Is anybody at that point where you don't believe God can use you or maybe you think you've passed your day of grace and God just can't do anything with you? You think nothing will change; this is the way it's always going to be. You're a Gideon. And if you're a Gideon take heart. God knows what to do with you.

We come to the sixth chapter of Judges and it's a very dire time in Israel's history. For the last seven years, God allowed Midianite raiders and terrorists to wreak havoc in the life of Israel. They're in the Promised Land of course, many years have passed since they occupied the land, and they've disobeyed God. Because of their disobedience, God has allowed the Midianites to raid Israel gathering the crops, leaving the people of Israel starving. This is where we find Gideon.

We find him threshing his wheat in a wine press. Why is he in a wine press trying to get a little wheat for home? Because he's hiding.

In that day you threshed your grain on a large platform in the open air. You would beat it and toss it up and the wind would catch the hull and the stalk and blow it away while the grain would fall to the ground. Here Gideon is doing it in a wine press where they would pour in the grapes and the women would stomp them causing the juice to flow. He's trying to hide from any would-be raiders.

This is where God finds him. Look at your text here in Judges 6:11.

*“Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor! 13 Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about,”*

I want you to see first of all how the story of Gideon's faith begins.

### **I. SOMETIMES WE CHANGE OUR THEOLOGY TO FIT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES INSTEAD OF JUDGING OUR CIRCUMSTANCES BY OUR THEOLOGY.**

This is exactly where Gideon was. “If God is with us, why is this happening? Why are my circumstances the way they are? Why are the Midianites allowed to do this to us, if God is with us?” That's what happens when you look at what's happening and determining what you believe by what you see. What you see will hardly ever correspond to what God has already said.

You cannot determine what you should believe about God by your circumstances. Your theology has been given to you in order to rightly interpret circumstances. If I started from Genesis and went through Revelation showing you every time circumstances said it was hopeless but God came through, it would take all day.

How many times in your life have you experienced such a story? When you thought there was no way, there appeared a way. Your theology must interpret the circumstances not the other way

around. But when you allow your circumstances to dictate what you're going to believe and not believe about God, my dear friend, your faith will plummet. It will drop. It will bottom out, if not become completely non-existent.

Gideon thought God had abandoned them because of their circumstances when it was precisely *because* God was with them they were in the particular circumstances.

I say to you the angel of the Lord was telling the truth. Gideon was the one who was speaking lies. The angel said, "God is with you." Gideon said, "No, He's not, because we're in this predicament." According to the angel they were in the predicament because God was with them. That's what the angel tells them. Sometimes our acts of disobedience put us in difficult places. This was the case for Israel. They had disobeyed God. God had warned them through Moses and Joshua that this would happen if they disobeyed God, but God had not forsaken them even though they had disobeyed Him. What a longsuffering and gracious, patient God we have. Instead of God being absent and having forsaken them, He was there in their midst. That's why they were suffering the discipline of God.

If you don't have faith in God, if you're not a follower of His, God will allow you to be a happy, even a blessed soul. But for His children He has promised that He will never leave them and never forsake them and for that reason He is going to insure that when they are not obedient children He is going to work in their lives and the circumstances will not be pleasant. His working will not always be easy or cheerful but it's God's presence nonetheless. Because God loves us, He manifests Himself in discipline. "Gideon, I am here! What do you think the Midianites are doing? They're My instruments to awaken you and your people to the fact that you have disobeyed Me so you'll repent and return."

I would not dare say that your difficulty is the result of your disobedience but neither would I say your difficulty is not the result of your disobedience. I'm not saying either one. I'm simply saying you must not allow your circumstance to dictate what you believe about God. In fact, in Judges 6:7-10, a nameless prophet tells them God is still with them and that's why this has happened to them.

*"And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, 8 that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD*

*God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; 9 and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 Also I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice.'"* (Judges 6:7-10)

God tells Gideon that He is with him.

*"And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, **"The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"**"* (Judges 6:12)

And so is He with you right now. He's with you. Please, do not let your heartache determine your theology. Do not let the pain tell you what you should or should not believe. Don't let the squeeze of life determine your faith in God. Rather, let the pain, the squeeze of life, and the difficulty prove to you that God's not through with you yet. Be encouraged this morning that the circumstances from which you are now suffering has God's fingerprints all over it. If you're not a Christian and you've got pain and difficulty and suffering in your life, please believe me, you ought to be thankful. You ought to be on your knees right now saying to God, "Thank You that You've not abandoned me to my life. You're still trying to get to me!" That's exactly what He's trying to do. He's trying to awaken you to the fact that you've missed Him. You've lived your life and you've bypassed Him all these years, all these days, but He's still here. There's still hope for you if you would simply open your eyes and believe that He will do what He said He would do: receive you to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Now that we see that Gideon is faithless, let's move to the second point.

## **2. GIDEON ARGUES FROM HISTORY THAT GOD IS NOT WITH THEM BECAUSE WHEN HE WAS WITH ISRAEL MIRACLES HAPPENED.**

Isn't that what he said in verse 13?

*"Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.""*

He determines by history that God is not with them. I said this a few weeks ago and I'm going to repeat it because some of us need to hear it more than once.

You cannot determine what God will or will not do by church history. You determine what God will or will not do by this Book. Church history, I believe, will mostly confirm what's in the Bible, but there are periods of church history that are totally diametrically opposed to this Book because the church was in rebellion, if you even want to call it a church. Church history is not Scripture. Church history is not inspired. Church history is not the authoritative rule of our lives.

There are a lot of good men telling us today that God doesn't do the things that He did in the Bible anymore and that church history proves this. They teach church history shows that once the apostles died and the New Testament was finished that God crawled off into some corner of His universe, shut His mouth, and ceased to do miracles. Beloved, that is not only an inaccurate view of church history it's not the truth. It's the same argument that Gideon pulls here. Gideon pulls out the church history card and says, "God is not with us because there are no miracles."

In response I say first, church history proves that God has not stopped doing the miraculous. I can take you through different periods of church history where you are seeing miracle after miracle after miracle occur. If you weren't here a few Wednesday nights ago, I brought up one of those time periods in church history. There was a time in church history when nameless men—you've never heard of them, they're not famous—would walk into completely pagan villages in Asia where they were completely ignorant of the name of Jesus and begin to preach and lay hands upon sick people and instantly they were healed. In one particular village this happened, I don't even know the man's name, again, I'm telling you, these people are nameless, but it did happen in church history. The Christian man walked in this village and began to preach and people began to be converted, many sick and infirmed were miraculously healed. The witchdoctors, the "priests" of their religion, were highly agitated and angered. They warned the evangelist that if he didn't leave the village they would put a curse on him and his family and they would die. But he remained. A few weeks later, the priests came to him and said, "We need to know something about you and your God because we put a curse on you and the spirits came back and said, 'We can't touch them, there's a wall of fire around them.' Then we prayed to the even stronger spirits and they came back and said, 'We can't touch them, there's angels all around them.' Who is this God you're preaching and in whose name are you doing these mighty works?!" He told them it was Jesus Christ.

Let me tell you when that happened in church history. It happened in most of your lifetimes—just a few years ago. It's happening every single day in many remote places in the world. Men walking into villages and all they have is the Gospel, faith of God, and a fire burning in their bones.

Now I ask you why would you get your dusty church history book off the shelf and tell me that's the guide when this Book is living and it's Author is still alive?!

I'm going to believe the God of this Book not some god of church history. You might ask why He doesn't do those sorts of things here? I don't have the answer. I have opinions and you know where the final opinion has to fall, don't you? Unbelief. We've told ourselves those things don't happen for so long that we now believe that they don't happen. And just like Nazareth of old, Jesus can't do many miracles because of our unbelief. It's not that He doesn't have the power to do them it's that we don't bring Him our needs in faith. We won't believe that God will do something like that for this church or this city. So why do we even ask for it? We don't because we don't believe it's possible.

The absence of the miraculous is not proof of the absence of God. Just because you don't have a financial miracle to point to doesn't mean that God hasn't been taking care of you financially. Just because you don't have a miracle of bodily healing doesn't mean that God hasn't been keeping your body well. I don't need a miracle; my body is being completely kept alive by the grace of God. But that doesn't mean God is absent from me because I don't have a bodily miracle. My health isn't proof of the goodness of God and His grace. Just because there is an absence of miracles doesn't mean there is an absence of God.

### **3. GOD COMMANDED GIDEON TO GO IN THE STRENGTH THAT GIDEON POSSESSED.**

Look at verse 14. This is what God does He's trying to build your faith in Him. He tells you to do what you can do in the strength that you possess.

*“Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” (Judges 6:14)*

“You, Gideon, will save Israel...” This is remarkable to me because this is not the way we have been taught faith. We've been taught faith in the sense that God does it and we're like innocent

bystanders watching God. But God says, “No, I want you, Gideon, to go in the strength you have.” A few weeks ago I shared from the passage of the feeding of the five thousand. Do you remember what Jesus said to the disciples before He multiplied the bread and fish? He said, “You feed them.” He commanded them to feed them and He intended them to feed them. God says to Gideon, “You’re going to deliver through the strength that is yours.”

We’ve been taught that if you’re going to see God work in your life you have to absolutely empty yourself so that self is not involved and it’s all the power of God. There is some truth to that, of course. But if you take one truth and go a little bit too far you end up in error and here’s the truth: God uses people.

Watch this. Could God have delivered Israel from the Midianites all by Himself? Absolutely. Would He have been glorified? Absolutely. But not to the degree He was glorified by using a Gideon. Here’s a man who doesn’t even believe God can do it and God uses him to do it. Remember at the point of victory, preceding the battle, what do they shout? “The sword of the Lord *and* Gideon!” God gets more glory when He takes puny, weak, almost faithless people and causes them to believe Him for what they know is impossible. He’s even more glorified when He does it that way rather than just doing it Himself.

Then we notice that as God begins to cultivate faith—God promises peace and war.

#### **4. GOD’S PEACE IS EXPERIENCED IN TURMOIL AND WAR.**

God tells Gideon that the first thing he is to do is to tear down his family altar. They had an idol of one of the gods of the lands and they offered sacrifices to this false idol. The Lord tells Gideon He wants him to tear it down and build an altar to Him and sacrifice to Him.

*“Then the LORD said to him, “Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.” 24 So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.” (Judges 6:23, 24)*

God said, in the midst of turmoil, He was going to be a God of peace. That sounds odd but it’s no stranger than what Jesus said in John 16. Jesus is with them the night before the crucifixion and He’s trying to prepare them for His death and absence.



*“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)*

Doesn't this all seem strange to you? In one breath Jesus says, “You'll have peace in Me,” and in the next breath, “in the world you'll have tribulation.” You and I hear that and we think there's a discrepancy here. There's dissonance. *This is not right because tribulation is the opposite of peace. How can you have peace when you have tribulation?* The answer is because we wrongly define what peace is.

Some of you came here troubled today. You don't have much peace today if any. You probably have the wrong definition for peace. That's part of the problem. Again, you're letting your circumstances dictate your theology. Peace is not the absence of tribulation or trial or pain. That's the way we define it though isn't it? Why? We think if we don't have any anxiety or a troubled spirit we must then be at peace. Or we sometimes say “I feel peace,” that means everything is going wonderful in my life, there's no hiccups, there's no disturbances, there's no problems in my life, but that's not peace. I've known a lot of people whose circumstances were wonderful but they lacked peace.

Peace is not the absence of problems. Peace is the ability to be balanced and stay centered when trouble and everything else is churning around you. Jesus said His peace He leaves with us and His peace will be full even though we will have problems. Yes, you'll have problems, but you will be able to go through your tribulations and problems centered and balanced, not worried or anxious but at rest in Him.

Now we begin to see faith in its earliest stages when Gideon does exactly what God tells him.

## **5. GIDEON OBEYED EVEN THOUGH HE WAS AFRAID.**

*“Now it came to pass the same night that the LORD said to him, “Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night.” (Judges 6:25-27)*

Do you have the picture? Here's a wooden statue and here's an altar. It's his daddy's. God tells Gideon to cut down the wooden image and use it for the firewood when he burned his daddy's best bull. Gideon was to go to the barn and get the bull, kill it, and put it on the altar to burn on the wood from the family wooden idol. Now you know why Gideon did this at night and not during the daylight. But he obeyed even though he was afraid.

It's better to do it afraid than to not do it because you are afraid. I'd rather you obey God fearfully than to not obey Him at all. And so would God. Why did Gideon do this, even though he was fearful? Because he believed God. Faith has begun to spring up in his soul. How do I know that? Because faith and obedience are one and the same. Again, we over-sensationalize faith. We think if you have faith you never have fear, you're just so full of confidence, you're so bold, you know what's going to happen before it happens and we think that's great faith. But Gideon is in God's list of great men of faith because he was willing to obey God even though he was afraid to do it. God says that's faith. Do not sell yourself short because you tremble when you obey God. Just because your heart feels the tremors of fear doesn't mean you're not acting in faith when you do what God tells you to do.

Gideon feared God more than his father or the men of his city and that's faith. The absence of fear is not what faith is and, by the way, faith can coexist with fear. We see it right here. David said, "Because I feared, I trusted in the Lord." Again, we are so wrong in our understanding of faith. We think faith is the absence of fear and that we should be bold and unafraid all the time, but here we see that faith and fear can coexist. The key is that you don't let your fear overcome your faith. You obey anyway.

What is it God wants you to do that you, because of fear, have refused to do? I pray that as I'm speaking right now that God is dealing with you, showing you that it's okay that you're afraid. It's okay. It's okay that you're afraid right now. Fear God more. He's not going to put out the smoldering candlewick. It was prophesied that Jesus would not put out the smoldering wick. Do you know what that means? When you blow a candle out it's no longer flaming and what do you see? That little red glow on the wick and it's smoking. God doesn't lick His fingers and pinch the ember out. No, He begins to fan it. It's okay that you're afraid, go ahead and obey God even though you're afraid. Don't wait until the fear is removed, go out and do what God wants you to do right now, today and let God take care of the fear and the faith.

In the progression of Gideon's faith we see he asked for further signs.

## **6. GIDEON ASKED FOR SIGNS.**

You know the story. In chapter six verse 36, Gideon has already done what God has told him to do and God protected him from the city and his father's house and no harm came to him. Now he's assembled an army of about 32,000 men. But before he can go to the battle he has to test God again, so he puts out a fleece. A fleece is just a wool cloth.

*“So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— 37 look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.” 38 And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.” 40 And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.” (Judges six thirty six)*

There's a lot of discussion about asking God for signs. We often do it. Haven't you done it? Have you ever said, “God, if this is really You, let this or this happen”? We've all done it to some degree. I would say this very cautiously: it's not recommended. But, on the other hand, I'm not going to say it's wrong. Gideon did it and God didn't rebuke him at all, which tells me something about our God. He wants to encourage your faith and not discourage it. If He has to give you a sign to encourage your faith He's more than willing to do so. But take great caution here.

First, I would say, when asking for a sign, don't stack the deck in your favor. A lot of times we've asked for signs that were not so miraculous at all. “Lord, if you want me to go out with him he'll ask me.” You're all laughing because you know the deck is stacked.

Or what about this one: “Lord, if it's Your will that I go be a missionary let the sun rise in the east tomorrow.” That's stacking the deck in your favor and I would strongly advise against that.

Secondly, in asking for signs, I would say limit it to what God has initiated not what you're initiating. God did not rebuke Gideon for asking for signs because God had initiated this whole affair

not Gideon. He was having trouble believing what God was telling him, that's why his faith needed encouragement. If Gideon had decided, "You know, Lord, it isn't right that the Midianites are doing this to us, I believe I can do something about it if You would just go with me. I want a sign that You'll go with me." I would say that is completely wrong because that would have been Gideon initiating it. But God had instigated this and Gideon's faith needed some fanning, some help, some strength. When you're in that position I'm not recommending you ask God for signs but at the same time I'm not saying it is evil or wrong. God did answer Gideon.

The main sign of confirmation is the church. That's the sign God uses the most. Let me say it again in a different way. When you're looking for a sign about what God may have told you to do the greatest sign is that the church will be in agreement with you. That's the confirmation that's New Testament and biblical. If spiritual men and women don't sense that God is in what you are praying about, you ought to pay a lot of attention to that. According to the Scriptures, God does most of all He does within the local body. That's why He's given fathers and mothers and shepherds and older men and women to shepherd younger men and women to give counsel for "in a multitude of counselors there is safety."

If God is big enough to direct your heart to do something, isn't He big enough to help your brothers and sisters hearts to see it as well in order to protect you and encourage your faith? We're talking about spiritual men and women who know how to pray. If they're not seeing this sign, that ought to be a clear sign to you that God may not be directing you or at least He's telling you to wait.

I must move on. As we see Gideon's faith begin to rise, God does two more things.

## **7. FAITH MUST BE IN GOD AND NOT MAN.**

In chapter seven, Gideon has assembled about 32,000 soldiers. In verse two the Bible says God spoke to Gideon and said,

*"And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' 3 Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained."*

The Midianite army was about a 135,000. So the odds are four to one in favor of the Midianites. One Hebrew to four Midianites. Not good. Also, the armament and weaponry of the Hebrews, was inferior to the weaponry of the Midianites. Yet, in spite of this disparity God said Gideon had too many soldiers.

Why does God do this to Gideon? Because He wants Gideon's faith to be completely in God, not in his army and when God gives the victory He doesn't want the army to take credit. God loves to put you in the direst of circumstances before He will lift a finger to help you. Why? Because He knows that if He intervenes early on you will never truly learn how to put your absolute confidence in Him. But when the circumstances are so dire and you know only God can do it, where's your faith, in you or in God? God loves you too much to answer some of your prayers. He knows some of your prayers would hurt you if He were to answer them now. So He has to let things get far out of hand. I'm not saying every circumstance that looks impossible God is going to rescue. I'm not saying that either. But when do you see God work? When it's almost dire and impossible.

Therefore, God tells Gideon that ten thousand men is still too many and He brings the people to the river and says those who cup the water in their hand and brings it to their mouth are the soldiers he is to keep. After the test was over, Gideon only had 300 that passed. Now the odds are not four to one, they're 450 to one and God says, "Now we can do something." Beloved, isn't this just like God to make it where the eyes and the logic say, "There is no way this is possible"? The only way is if God intervenes. That's the way God still works today.

Look at us. We are at the place where God is at hand to move, where now there is no visible way in which we can do the will of God. And yet God has taken something small and even weaker now than it was even a few short years ago and He's doing much. We have to say it is the Lord, don't we? If this happened four or five years ago we would have said, "Well, God is *helping* us to do this. Look at what we've done with 'God's help.'"

We've seen a church plant just a few weeks ago. Now we're seeing in the city of half a million a church being formed even as I'm speaking to you. We have 60 to 70 pastors who are being trained regularly through the ministries of this church—that's more people than we probably have here this morning! How is that possible? It's not through me or you. He uses us but it's Him and our confidence is in Him.

I'm assured to tell you, I can say this in great confidence in God, that what we are seeing now is only encouragements to our faith not what God really wants to do in the end. These are the fleeces, if you will. These are the little miracles, the little signs that God is with us. If we'll trust Him, He will do things that are completely impossible and beyond our abilities.

## **8. GOD ENCOURAGES GIDEON'S FAITH YET AGAIN.**

One more time, Gideon has to have his faith strengthened. God sends Gideon down the hill to the camp of the Midianites and while he was there God said if he was afraid to go by himself he could take a friend with him. So what does Gideon do? He didn't go by himself, he took his friend. While they're there they hear this dream. A Midianite had a dream and he said there was a loaf of barley bread that came rolling down on the camp and destroyed a tent. The other Midianite said, "You know who that is, don't you? That's Gideon. God is going to hand our army over to the hand of Gideon." When Gideon heard that his faith was at the point where he could really trust God.

## **9. FAITH AT ITS HEIGHT.**

How do I know that Gideon's faith has arrived at its apex? Look at verse 15. This is what God is up to after all. This might surprise you, when God shows you what He considers to be faith at its best.

*"And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." (Judges 7:15)*

He's full of faith, isn't he? How do we know? Because he said, "Arise, for the Lord is at hand"? No. It's because he worshipped. You never are truly at the place of full faith until you're able to worship. Worship says, "God, I know You've got this under control." When you're anxious and worried and unsure, it's hard to worship, isn't it? It's hard to put your confidence in a God you're not sure will pull through for you. If you're not sure His hands really have this thing or that His abilities are going to cover this, it's hard to worship. You know He has the ability but you're not sure He's going to do it for you. But when you know He'll do it for you there's only one response and the heart gives it freely—worship. "God, I'm Yours."

Worship isn't saying, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition." No. Worship is to live a life in obedience to God. "I'm now ready to do this because I trust You. You're the Almighty. There's no army too big for you, God. You don't even need these few men. In fact, You could do it Yourself but You've told me to do it and here I go. I worship You." That is great faith!

Faith at its height is not doing a miracle. Let's just forget about that. God's not asking you to do miracles. If you think that's the criteria of great faith, you'll never have great faith. This is not about healing the sick, seeing the dead raised, or blind eyes coming to sight. No, that is not what God is requiring. That is not the measure of great faith. The measure of great faith is that you can worship God in spite of the overwhelming odds against you. That's great faith, that you can worship Him in spite of the opposition and adversity, trusting that He will do what's right by you.

Can you worship God right now? Can you thank Him today? Can you praise Him that He is sufficiently in control of the events and circumstances of your life that you can say, "God, whether I live or die, whether I stand or I fall, You are the Lord God and I trust You"? That's where He wants to take your faith. And as you get there I wouldn't be surprised if you saw a miracle or two along the way.

May God grant you understanding as He nurtures your faith and progresses it. You may be like Gideon and say you don't trust God and have lived your life in complete rebellion. You may not know that God would save you or if He even loves you. I understand where you are today. When God saved me I was telling Him He couldn't. I suppose He saved me just to prove me wrong. I understand what it means to be completely without faith and unable to believe God for your own soul. I know what that's like. But I'm here today as a testimony that God can save in spite of you having no faith.

How can a man be saved apart from faith? He can't. That's true. But God is the Giver of faith! Just like in Gideon's case, God nurtured that man's faith. This guy was hiding in total unbelief, he didn't believe those things happened anymore and that God had abandoned them, but yet he's the great champion of the army of Israel. How did he turn out to be that way? Because God gave Him faith, nurtured that faith, and brought that faith to full height.

He will do the same for you. Just call upon Him right now. Just tell Him you don't have the faith to believe that Jesus is going to take care of you here and now and in the future. Call upon Him

to take your life and grant you faith that you might believe in Him. I believe God will respond. I know that He will. He says even for you to cry out like that means there is something going on in your soul that is a work of His Spirit. People who are rebels and sinners and not really following God don't ask God for His intervention in their life unless He is doing something.

Call upon Him now. This is a life-changing moment for you. You will never be the same again and God will take you on a journey that will only grow in excitement. There's never a dull moment when you're really walking with God by faith.

For those of us who have been saved, I know you're afraid. I know you're looking at your circumstances, but I'm asking you, in Jesus' name, to listen to the Word of God and cease to look at your circumstances. Start believing God that He can definitely use you. Amen.