

Gideon's Confirmation

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[0 : 00] Take our Bibles and open them to the book of Judges.

And we're going to be looking at chapter 6, starting with verse 25. We're studying, of course, through the book of Judges.

That means we're looking at all of the various judges and what the Bible has to say about them. And not just about the judges, but the condition of Israel and the reason for the judges. And we're now looking at the fifth of the judges or deliverers raised up by God. And so let's read verses 25 to 32.

Chapter 6, verses 25 to 32. Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him. The same night being the same night that God visited with Gideon and called him to be a judge.

[1 : 10] That same night he 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.

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.

So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared the father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal torn down. And the wooden image that was beside it was cut down. And the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built.

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

[2 : 21] Then the men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it.

Joash said to all who stood against him, Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning.

If he is a god, let him plead for himself because his altar has been torn down. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubal, saying, Let Baal plead against him because he has torn down his altar.

All right. Now, I know this isn't the entire story of Gideon. We're kind of taking our time with this judge and really doing it for a number of reasons.

Number one, because the book of Judges devotes so much copy to this judge. Three full chapters. And I would say probably a second reason would be there are so many different movements in the story.

[3 : 28] And here yet again is a... I mean, first we have kind of an introduction to Gideon and the condition of Israel, about ten verses that are devoted to that.

Then we have Gideon's call, which is a very interesting part of the story. And so we have taken our time and looked at that. And now we have this other movement.

We haven't even really reached the place where Gideon actually does some judging, actually becomes a deliverer. We'll get to that by and by. And so the book of Judges devotes a lot of time to him.

There's so many different movements in the story. And I would say a third reason why we want to take our time with Gideon is because there's a lot to learn from Gideon. And I think of all the judges in the book of Judges, Gideon is most like us.

There are a lot of things about Gideon that are true of every one of us in one way or the other. All right, so we've spent one Sunday night on the introduction, as I've said.

[4 : 36] We've spent a Sunday night looking at the call, Gideon's call to be a judge. And tonight we're going to focus on what I would like to call Gideon's confirmation, kind of a confirming of Gideon before he really begins to do the task for which God had called him.

God is going to confirm Gideon's readiness to act as judge for Israel. And in God's confirming of him, God is really at the same time doing a work in him, a work in regard to his faith, a work in regard to his courage.

And Gideon struggles with both of those things. And God's going to confirm these things and make him ready. I mean, you know, think about it. I think you would agree with me that from the very start, and we haven't really, we're barely into this part of the book of Judges, but from the very start, what we've seen already, Gideon appears to be the most unlikely candidate to be a judge or a deliverer of the nation Israel.

Because remember, where did we find him first? I mean, when we first meet him, Gideon is hiding out. He's hiding from the Midianites. And when God comes to Gideon and calls him to be Israel's judge, he doesn't really even believe him.

He doubts him, questions him. In fact, he even puts him to the test, put God to the test to somehow prove that God had not chosen the wrong man. Are you sure this is Gideon?

[6 : 16] Are you sure it's me? And so that's the kind of man Gideon, the kind of man we meet when we first meet Gideon. And we're going to find out about this kind of fearful side of Gideon, this lack of courage in Gideon, this kind of weakness of faith.

We're going to see many, many times that is confirmed in his life. We're going to be seeing some of that here tonight as I read a moment ago. And so God confirmed Gideon's call and now he seeks to confirm Gideon himself.

You know, it's ironic. Gideon put God to the test initially. Now God's going to put Gideon to the test and give him a command to do something that is not going to be easy for him.

But in comparison to what he will eventually ask him to do, command him to do, this is something very simple. Gideon will not be ready to judge Israel.

Here's the point. He will not be ready to judge Israel until God confirms him, confirms him. Before Gideon can accomplish great things for God, Gideon will have to take some baby steps, baby steps in his life.

[7 : 39] So let's look at this. I divide this into three parts and really very easy to see. It begins with the command. It begins with the command, the command from God.

And actually there are two commands here. Or I guess we could call it a two-part command or two-fold command. And both commands or the two-part command pertains to altars.

Altars in some way. One command is negative. The other is positive. All right, so the one is negative in the sense that it is to tear down the altar of Baal.

Tear it down, verse 35. The other command is very positive because it says build up. Build an altar to the Lord. So tear down the altar of Baal.

Build up or build an altar to the Lord, verse 26. All right, so let's look at verse 25. Now it came to pass the same night. And I mentioned already, as I was reading the passage, that same night means the same night that God appeared to Gideon and called him to be his judge.

[8 : 56] So the very same night, God is acting in this way. He's going to confirm Gideon. And so God doesn't waste any time. And so on the same day that God called Gideon, he commanded Gideon.

All right, let's read on. 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.

Now if you have a New American Standard or English Standard version, there's going to be some differences here. We'll get to that here in just a minute. A 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.

All right, so here's the first command or the first part of the command and it is a negative. Tear down. Tear down. That's a very positive negative.

Okay. Very positive negative. Tear down the altar to Baal. But, you know, apparently, and this is rather interesting, there was an altar to Baal worship right there in Gideon's backyard.

[10 : 01] It belonged to his father or his father allowed it to exist on his property, on his land. And so what is Gideon supposed to do here? Well, pretty clear.

He's to take, first of all, first of all, he's to take one of his father's young bulls. That's coming right straight from the New King James Version. And I would say to you that the translation here is difficult.

And there are a lot of different renderings that we could come up with, scholars have come up with, coming just from the Hebrew text. And they're slightly different.

Some take it to mean two bulls. They took two. New American Standard, for example. If you have that one, then you see it. It says, take your father's bull and a second bull, seven years old.

So it seems to suggest two bulls. Some take it to mean just one. One bull. And that's what you have in the New King James Version.

[11:06] And the King James does the same because they're really translating from the same family of manuscripts. And so, which is it? Well, I think this second rendering is the most correct, that there's just one bull.

Just one bull. And it is a very special bull. And really, from the text, and by the way, the New King James really gives the more literal translation.

Number one, we can see that it's Gideon's father's young bull. This is how it's translated. And so that's kind of a misnomer. Young bull, that's how it translates it.

But in the Hebrew, it is literally would read the bull of the bullock. Okay, what? The bull of the bullock. All right. It's parhasor in the Hebrew.

Big deal about that. But it means literally the prime bull. The prime one. The superior one. We could say the prize bull.

[12:14] You know, that's an expression I think we would understand. But then it's almost as if it repeats it because then it says Gideon, he's to take Gideon's father's second bull.

Young bull, second bull. Now, this is a different Hebrew word. It's parhasini. Hhasini or something like that. I'm not sure how it's pronounced. And it means the bull of high rank.

Not high rank in this sense. Though probably that would be the case. But of quality. Of quality. So it's kind of saying it twice in two different ways.

And so it is a is the prize bull. The best bull. And then it adds this description. It is the bull of seven years old.

Seven years old. All right. What does that mean? Well, it refers to its physical strength and maturity of the bull.

[13:15] Physical maturity. And the idea is that it had to be a strong animal for what Gideon was going to use it for.

Or was commanded to use it for. So here Gideon was to take his father's prize bull. The best one. Not only for what it needed to do physically as we shall see but also it would become a sacrifice as well to the Lord.

So it had to be the best. And so so then second all right. So first of all he's to take this his father's prize bull. And then second take this prize bull and he's to use it to tear down the altar of Baal.

Tear down. Literally to pull it down. And it was most likely constructed of stone and as we'll see a little bit later very likely had a stone wall around it.

And Gideon was to take this strong bull bullock and pull it down to the ground. Okay. That's what he was commanded to do. Third then he's not just to pull down the altar but he is to cut down the wooden and this is how it's translated in the New King James cut down the wooden image that is beside it.

[14:39] And that's also somewhat interpretive because this is all this is difficult to to translate because it's difficult to know just what some of these words are referring to.

The Hebrew word is Asherah. In fact I think maybe that word is used in some of our more literal translations New American Standard ESV I think ESV have Asherah.

So that's the Hebrew word. So they've just taken the Hebrew word right into the English text Asherah. But it's difficult to know and understand the exact meaning.

The King James is even stranger yet. It if you have the King James it uses the word grove. the grove that is beside it.

To cut down the grove. That suggests a grove of trees. And it could be because it is thought that the Asherah were poles or trees that were set up beside the altar of Baal.

[15:45] Now others believe and I think this is probably right. You've got to pick one. I've picked this one. That the Asherah was a wooden image.

That's clearly what the New King James version translators think it is. And it was a wooden image of a goddess. The goddess Astarte which was the female consort of Baal.

His female counterpart. His wife so to speak. And this image would have had exaggerated female features.

You know what I'm talking about. Because the Canaanite religion was a religion of fertility. Fertility. And so whichever it is whether there were poles used for who knows what that were erected beside the altar or some image some image of Astarte or goddess whichever it is.

Gideon was to cut them down. They're made out of wood he's to cut them down. The altar is made out of stone the bullock pulls them down and the image is cut down. And really you know the application we might cross this over into our life we're to we're to completely get rid pull down and cut down any altars in our lives.

[17 : 20] But there's a second command here and it's a positive one. First negatively tear down tear down and cut down that means destroy destroy what is wicked.

The second command or second part of the command is positive build up build up or construct tear down destruct destroy construct construct what is good what is godly.

Verse 26 and build 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.

This is interesting even somewhat ironic the word rock and I mentioned this moment ago this idea of walls around the altar the word rock actually is the word for fortress the fortress not just simply you know rock you know rock that you might find on the ground or under the ground or you know like we have around here you have to dig very far to find sandstone you know not just talking about a rock foundation talking about a rock wall and that rock has now been tumbled down because it's been torn down the Canaanite worship sites were very typically fortified with walls and that's why Gideon needed the biggest and best bull to pull all this down and now all this rubble's there and God says build an altar to the

Lord upon this rock this fortress fortress and so this was I think you would agree the ultimate indignity against the pagan worship of Baal when you put all this together first he's to build an altar to the Lord on the very side of the pagan altar very side of the pagan sanctuary and he's to offer as a sacrifice the very animal that had pulled their altar down and the sacrifice the sacrifice the bull using the very wood from the pagan image that used to stand beside the altar the image of Baal's female counterpart and Baal could do nothing about it why he's not God he's false you know and and so it's just really kind of interesting that you know poetic justice

[20 : 13] I guess we might call it God's poetic justice so the command and it was to confirm Gideon's commitment to the Lord so first we have the command and this is how God works sometimes in our lives sometimes most of the time God commands us to do small tasks of service and commitment small things then as we prove ourselves faithful in the small things God assigns us greater things greater tasks and then by grace when we accomplish these things then God gives us even greater tasks to do we didn't start with Gideon at the top to his ultimate task he started very small baby steps and that's why I think we can identify with Gideon more than the other judges that we have seen thus far because it just seems like with the other judges man they're there and they go for it but here we're just kind of taking steps and the more we learn about

Gideon the more we understand why God had to do it this way and did do it this way so the command then we have second the compliance the compliance and we learn two things about Gideon's compliance to God's commands two things about it we learn first of all about his faith about Gideon's faith and yet we also learn second of all about Gideon's fears and they're put right together in the same verse verse 27 so Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had said to him good for him good for Gideon he obeyed and we can surmise from the grammar from the language here that Gideon's compliance was immediate he did it immediate

I mean on the very evening that God called him and Gideon doubted very much about that on that very evening God commanded him his first task it would be just a small little baby step though it certainly caused a lot of angst amongst a lot of people but it was still a small thing compared to leading God's armies against the Midianites and the Amalekites and so forth all right so on that very evening that God commands him Gideon goes out and does it he does it his obedience is swift and his obedience is complete he did exactly everything God told him to do great good for Gideon right and don't you wish that verse 27 just ended right there but then it wouldn't be true to life would it

because verse 27 doesn't end there for us either usually so it doesn't end there so second we learn something about

Gideon's fears his fears look at it but and how I wish that conjunction didn't appear there what a disappointment for the reader 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 maybe at first glance that seems like the smart thing to do you know do it at night why stir up a bunch of trouble if you don't need to God didn't say he had to do it by day he didn't say he had to do it by night I didn't read anything about any particular time specified required by God you know why not just do it at night and then there won't be trouble and I'll face it the next morning but maybe they won't know who did it you know whatever his thought process was and first and foremost this is I think a sad reality concerning Gideon's courage in the Lord he's a fearful man and we're going to see this crop up a number of other times that's the first thing you get from it a kind of a sad reality of

Gideon's lack of courage and the fears that he faced but also you think about this this is a sad commentary on the spiritual condition of Israel think about it even Gideon's own household I mean the altar was the Bible says his father's that is his father either gave permission for it to be built there or father was involved in idol worship and I think he was in the worship of Baal he'd been caught up in that even though we're going to find out something else about Joash here in just a minute but what a sad commentary that Gideon would have to fear his own people and fear even his own family that they the next morning are going to be more prone to be on Baal's side than on their own flesh and blood side and so he had these fears and it was a very real fear and it was founded in something quite real and yet it still is a testimony to

[25 : 58] Gideon's weakness and his fear and lack of courage so Gideon had faith but it was a small faith it was a faith that was growing and this was the whole purpose behind this God's purpose in his life God didn't just call him and throw him out there to take on the Midianites and God does that with us as well there are many things that God has for you to do in life that you're not ready to do and God is gracious to allow us to take baby steps and also God is gracious to allow for our weaknesses he knows that we're just dust and so you don't have any overt condemnation coming from God here Gideon did obey even though he struggled a little bit with fear all right so God is confirming

Gideon in a sense preparing him grooming him for a much larger task that we will eventually get to when we get to that part and that task will be one that will carry much more risks and danger than just tearing down one altar of Baal and cutting down one image to his dear sweet false wife okay the command the compliance and then third the consequence we have to get to the consequence we really don't need to spend a lot of time on this but there are always here's the lesson there are always consequences in this world when we follow Christ we follow him and follow him in an active way inactive obedience there's always a cost there's always a consequence and so when Gideon complied with God's command God was pleased but he was the only one who was pleased none of the people were pleased I think his father came around and that's a wonderful thing to see let's just see kind of how this unfolds and there's some irony in here as well but looking at verse 28 of chapter 6 we can just kind of follow along here not a lot needs to be said and when the men of the city arose early in the morning alright so now things are going to come to light here it's morning and there was the altar of Baal torn down oh sad how sad their precious altar of Baal been torn down what how could this have happened torn down and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built and so they see the altar Baal's been torn down toppled over their whole sanctuary to

Baal's been completely demolished and the image has been cut down nowhere don't know where it went and they see this new altar built and the bull is still smoldering on top of that altar or maybe it's its ashes now I don't know take a long time I think to burn up a bull and they see all of this and what you know what could have happened and that was kind of their response so they said to one another who has done this thing who has done this so they put together a court of inquiry and that's really what they do and when they had inquired and asked that is they question everybody probably questioned the servants they got down to the truth of it it's just basically what that means and they said Gideon Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing alright so Gideon has found out has been found out then the men of the city said to

Joash this is Gideon's father remember bring out your son that he may die I mean this is worthy of capital punishment to tear down this altar to a false god and a goddess made out of wood I mean

you just can't do that I mean if you do that you must die pretty serious isn't it I mean they're just all in for this Baal worship so he must die and because he has turned down the altar of Baal and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it but and here's here's Joash remember the altar belonged to him it was on his property at the very least he certainly was not the only one who worshipped there but Joash said to all who stood against him would you plead! [31 : 10] for Baal now what does that mean? I mean Baal's the one that was was harmed here right?

Theoretically he's a god right? I mean he's not asking those questions but you you get the gist of this he's a god why can't he speak for himself?

Would you speak for him? would you save him? Do you see the how snide the irony of this kind of the you know poking them here you're going to save a god let the one who would plead for him be put to death by mourning that is this is he's saying by your own religion this religion of Baal and maybe Joash is just suddenly his eyes are open this is ridiculous so by their very religion they're saying that he's saying that if you have to speak for Baal what blasphemy is that you should be put to death if you're the one that has to protect Baal then you're saying he's not powerful enough to take care of himself and so you should be put to death if he is a god let him plead for himself because his altar!

therefore on that day he called him Jerubel called who? Gideon he gave him another name and he explains the meaning of the name let Baal plead against him because he has torn down his altar his altar so there is the consequence and again the lesson for us is really quite clear there's always a consequence a consequence coming from the world you're always going to have people upset with you when you walk with Christ when you actively serve him and you stand up for him you're always going to be criticized there will always be a cost someone is not going to be pleased with you even family members not going to be pleased with you

I remember something Adrian Rogers used to say a number of times he said if you please God it doesn't matter who you displease but if you displease God it doesn't matter who you please now think about that that's so true and Gideon is a stands as a good example to us for that can you can you see yourself in the life of Gideon you know you have faith and yet there's always that little bit of weakness of that faith you trust the Lord but there's always a little measure of fear and doubt that we grapple with and deal with and we can just really relate to Gideon and but then also we can relate!

[34 : 31] to! how God moved him along and prepared him for a huge task huge task that he could not have done not from the get go God had to confirm him by preparing him for that day and for that task he to to have to have to