

Gideon's Call

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[0 : 00] The book of Judges.

I'm going to go ahead and turn there. I'll tell you where here in just a minute. You probably already know. We kind of started looking at this passage or several chapters here last Sunday.

And again, we're, of course, studying through the book of Judges. And we're now to the fifth judge. And the fifth judge is Gideon. And so last Sunday night we dealt with kind of an introduction. Really an introduction that is given to us in Scripture.

You know, with each of the judges we're given a kind of brief introduction. To what has occurred that has, you know, created the need for God to send a deliverer and so forth.

[1 : 04] So with each one we have kind of a short one. But with Gideon we have quite a lengthy one. In fact, it's ten verses. And we looked at those ten verses last Sunday night. And so now we're ready to look at Gideon, the judge, look at Gideon himself.

And tonight we want to spend some time in verses 11 through 24 and look at his call. His call and commission.

The calling and commission of Gideon, the fifth judge in a string of judges. Or again, deliverers that God raised up in behalf of the people.

So I want to go ahead and read the text, all of it this time on the front end. And then we'll read parts of it again as we go along. All right, starting with verse 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.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor. Gideon said to him, O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

[2 : 31] 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.

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?

So he said to him, O my Lord, How can I save Israel? Indeed, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

And the Lord said to him, Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man. Then he said to him, If now I have found favor in your sight, then show me a sign that it is you who talk with me.

Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to you and bring out my offering and set it before you. And he said, I will wait until you come back. So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, an unleavened bread from an ephah of flour.

[3 : 41] However, the meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and he brought them out to him under the terebinth tree, and presented them, sacrificed them.

The angel of God said to him, Take the meat and the unleavened bread, and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread, and fire rose out of the rock, and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread.

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

Then the Lord said to him, Peace be with you. Do not fear. You shall not die. So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it, The Lord is Peace.

To this day it still is, still, is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Okay. And so there's the text.

[4 : 55] And as I said last Sunday, when we looked at the first ten verses of the chapter, Gideon was called to be judge, the judge of Israel, or the deliverer of Israel, during a time that was, well, it could only be described as great trouble, great trouble for Israel.

Of course, that's been the case each time now, and the deliverer has been raised up by God, and delivered them. But they're in dire straits here.

In fact, they were suffering greatly, under the oppression of, remember, the Midianites. And the Midianites, of course, had as their partners in crime, the Amalekites, and these people from the east, these Easterners, and we don't really know who they were.

So kind of an alliance of three groups of people, or nations, even though the Midianites, for sure, and the Amalekites also, and we could assume the Easterners, were this way as well.

They were kind of semi-nomadic. They would roam around, and conquer people, and so forth. But they did have a particular place that they called their home.

[6 : 06] And so these three have come together, and they have conquered, in a sense, or brought Israel into subjection to them during this time.

Now, Israel's dire situation was summed up for us in verse 6. And we looked at that passage last week. So Israel was greatly impoverished.

They were impoverished. And we looked there, and the Bible describes how that happened, and what the Midianites and these others were doing to them, and really brought them to their knees, to the end of their rope.

They were impoverished. And what did Israel do? Well, once again, they cried out to God. Cried out to God, just like they always had done in the past. And we're going to see them do that a number of times as we go on throughout the book.

And then as we saw last week, instead, this time is a little bit different, instead of a work from God, which is what they were wanting, they cried out for. Instead, they got a word from God. Sometimes that happens to us.

[7 : 12] And so God sends a prophet, and He sends the prophet to reveal to Israel their sinfulness, and therefore, a reason for their suffering.

And so that we looked at last week, and then after that, God begins to act in Israel's behalf. And this is where we take up the story of Gideon. And so God not only has a message for Israel, delivered through His prophet, but He also has a man.

He has a man for Israel this time, not a woman. It was Deborah, I remember last time, but now Gideon. And a man for Israel, and His name is Gideon, which, by the way, means hacker.

Not in the sense of computers, you know, hacking computers and so forth. We'll see what that means a little bit later, because it kind of comes into the story a little bit after the passage that we're going to be looking at here tonight.

All right, so let's look then at the call and commissioning of Gideon to the place of deliverer, or judge of Israel.

[8 : 19] And the first thing we want to see is the circumstances surrounding Gideon's call. The circumstances surrounding Gideon's call. Verse 11 opens with the angel of the Lord.

And what does that mean, and who is that? Well, we'll get to that here a little bit later. But verse 11 says, the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree.

Some versions, including the King James, translate that oak. And I think that's probably good enough. We have terebinth, the terebinth tree mentioned a number of times in Scripture.

And very likely, we're talking about an oak tree, a big oak tree, probably a notable oak tree, one of the largest ones, kind of a landmark for the place. And so it kind of gave the reader an idea of where, you know, the place we're talking about here.

So the angel of the Lord came, sat under the terebinth tree. This is kind of, his approach.

Eventually, he's going to approach Gideon himself and talk to him. But, and it's there at Opfra, Opfra, which belonged to Joash.

[9 : 30] Joash was Gideon's father. The Abiezrite. And, and while his son Gideon is doing something very unusual. He's threshing wheat in the wine press.

in the wine press. I think the, the King James says behind or by it, but really the preposition is in. He's inside this wine press and he's threshing wheat.

And why? In order to hide it, it says here, from the Midianites. Now, there are a number of things that we can surmise from, concerning the circumstances surrounding Gideon's call or God's call of

Gideon.

And, we've already discovered some of these in the introduction to this period of time in verses 1 through 10. But, we find Gideon doing what? He's threshing, threshing wheat, which was a very normal thing to be done.

And, you probably can picture how they did it in those days. You may even have heard how that's, how that was done. You've heard that or described. And, wheat was usually, of course, spread after it was harvested.

[10:44] It was spread out over a, kind of, a specially prepared piece of ground, prepared just for the purpose of threshing wheat. And, you can begin to, kind of, picture this.

You may have even seen pictures. In fact, some parts of the country, they still do it this way. Not this country. Parts of the world. I don't know. Maybe they do, still do it. Some parts of this country. I doubt it. But, anyway, so they, the ground, would be very hard, packed down, and usually circular in shape.

And, it was called the threshing floor. And, these threshing floors, as they called them, were typically located on, on high ground, or the top of a mound, or the top of a hill.

And, so that the winds could, could easily blow over these areas of ground without obstructions, and so forth. And, that would be very important in the threshing of the wheat.

[11:41] And, oxen then, or horses, or whatever they might use, would be brought in, and they would walk over the, the grain that had been spread out over the ground. And, they would walk over pulling what they called a threshing sled.

and, and it consisted, usually of a couple, maybe three, stone rollers. They would be embedded, sometimes with metal, iron, and this would, then, break and cut, the grain, the grain of wheat.

And, and that process, would, would break it up, break the hard shell, from the, the kernel, inside the wheat. And, then they would take winnowing fans, and they would use those to toss the grain up into the air, and this is the part, you know, we've seen done before.

And, and, and then the wind would be blowing, and it would blow away the lighter part, which would be the outer husk, of the grain, and it would blow that away, or further away from the threshing floor, and then the, the, the kernel, which was heavier, would then fall, down to the ground, and then they would gather that up, and that would be the threshing of the wheat.

That, that was the way that they did it. It was a pretty simple process. I'm sure it took a lot of hard work. But that, you know, very simple process. All right, now, what do you see different in the way Gideon was threshing his wheat?

[13:12] Well, nearly everything is different. And there's a reason for it. And it, and it reveals to us the circumstances, a set of circumstances around which God would call Gideon to be the deliverer.

Verse 11 says that Gideon threshed wheat, where? In the wine press. In the wine press, which would be quite odd to do that.

And so, this tells us a number of things. First of all, it tells us that this was a time of poverty for Gideon, for his household. We already know it was a time of poverty for all of Israel.

Because you don't thresh wheat inside of a wine press unless you only have a small amount of wheat. I mean, to make it work, for it to work at all.

You could not have a large amount of wheat. It had to be a very small amount of wheat to work with. And so, it was another indication of the time of severe, that it was a time of severe poverty.

[14:16] And why did they have so little wheat? Well, second, because it was a time of persecution. Persecution for Gideon, for his household, for all of Israel.

The Bible says that Gideon threshed wheat in the wine press. Why? In order to hide it. To hide it from the Midianites. Now, remember back there in verse 4, we looked at this last week, verse 4 says that the Midianites, the Amorites, I mean, Malachites rather, these Easterners, they would encamp against Israel, the Israelites, and then they would destroy the produce of the earth.

So, it describes them sowing. Israel would begin to sow, and then when it would start to come up out of the ground, the Midianites, the enemy, would come in and destroy it. So, they would have no crop, they would have no harvest.

And so, it was a terrible time of not only poverty, but it was a time of poverty because it was a time of severe persecution. And also, I think we can glean from this that it was a time of powerlessness. Powerlessness. For Gideon, for his household, for all of Israel, they were powerless to, seemingly powerless to do anything about it. Why was Gideon hiding in the winepress?

[15:34] The fact is, all Israel was hiding. Remember? I refer you back to the verses we looked at last week. Verse 2 says, And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel because the Midianites, the children of Israel, made for themselves dens.

They dug out hiding places and caves, they hid in caves and strongholds which were, which are in the mountains, the Bible says there. So it was a time of utter powerlessness.

And all they could do was to protect themselves in these strongholds. They could hide out in the mountains. And you know, if we might make kind of an application here, we live in difficult times. I don't know how that we could compare what is going on in our country and in our economy in these days. I don't know that we could compare it to Gideon and Israel in their days.

But in a similar way, we're living in economic uncertainty in our land. We're living in a time, and this certainly is comparable, when our government and our society in general is growing, I think, increasingly hostile toward God's people and that is the church.

[16:53] And we're only seeing, I think, the beginning of this. We're living in a generation where this is going to continue to get worse, I believe. I just don't, I just think the day of a Christian America is all but over.

And now, the true church is becoming much more evident in our world because we've kind of, you know, there's been kind of a sifting, a kind of threshing of the wheat in a sense that the cultural kind of Christianity is just kind of going away.

And now we have the true church and so there is a greater amount of persecution. I think we're going to see more of it in our country. And so, who are we looking for? We're looking for a deliverer just like Israel was looking for a deliverer.

We're looking for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus to make all things right. And so, there's kind of an application we could make there. All right, so, first of all then, the circumstances surrounding Gideon's call.

Second, then, we get right to the commission, the commissioning at Gideon's call, the commissioning. And it's interesting that Gideon's hiding, right?

[18:12] And hiding from the Midianites and apparently doing quite well, hiding. They had not caught him yet. But God knew exactly where he was.

So, he's hiding inside this wine press, taking care of this little bit of wheat that he could scrounge to gather for his family and the enemy doesn't know where he is but God does.

And so, God gives Gideon his marching orders. And so, we see in verse 12, we move on to verse 12, we can see a number of things here. Interesting, about his commissioning.

In verse 12, we see, first of all, God's presence is with Gideon. That's how it begins. God comes to Gideon. He reveals his presence though Gideon at the time didn't really believe it, didn't really see it.

But God, God's presence is there with Gideon at his call, at his commissioning. Verse 12 says, And the angel of the Lord appeared to him.

[19:14] And that's just a word about the presence of God being there. You say, well, this is an angel, not God. Oh, well, I beg to differ. This is no mere angel. In fact, this is the second time it's, by the way, that we have this phrase, angel of the Lord, in this passage, verse 11, remember, already, has already introduced, the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree.

Now, there's no mere angel here, though that would be an interesting and wonderful kind of visitation to have as well. But this, this is not just an angel. This is, this is God visiting with him. In fact, this is what we call a Christophany. Some would use the term theophany, but I prefer Christophany because it is a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity.

And I say pre-incarnate because it's the second member of the Trinity who would be incarnate, incarnated. He would come as a child in Bethlehem, but long before that, he made a number of appearances in the Old Testament.

You see, he didn't begin at Bethlehem, did he? No, he's God. He's eternal. He's the second member of the Godhead, of the Trinity, the Holy Trinity.

[20:39] And he, Christ, made a number of appearances in the Old Testament. In fact, let me just list a few of them for you and see if you can remember these.

We can go all the way back to the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve. When it says that the Lord walked with them in the cool of the day there in Genesis 3, that's a Christophany, that's a

pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, though he was not named Jesus then. He's the second member of the Trinity. Also, Abraham at his tent door had a visitation from the angel of the Lord. And it's a pre-incarnate visitation of Christ.

Remember, the angel came to tell him that Sarah would have a child, even though she'd been barren all those years. And now she's 90 years old, give or take a few years.

And so the angel of the Lord came. That's not a mere, it was not a mere angel. That was a pre-incarnate visitation of Christ. That's in Genesis 18.

[21 : 51] And Hagar in the wilderness in Genesis 16. The angel of the Lord appears to her and gives her some promises about the son that she's going to bear, that she's bearing and would give birth to.

And you know a little bit about that story. That's a pre-incarnate visitation of the second member of the Trinity. Have Jacob at the river Jabbok in Genesis 32 when he wrestled with the angel of the Lord.

And he wouldn't let go of him. Remember, I won't let go of you until you bless me. And he blessed him with a new name, Israel. And that was not a mere angel that he wrestled with.

I mean, you know, that was Christ. Christophany, a pre-incarnate visitation of Christ. And Moses, of course, at the burning bush.

That's another example of Christophany in Exodus chapter 3. And how about this one? Balaam. Remember the Balaam who was asked by Barak to do what?

[23 : 02] Balak to curse Israel and he would not. But you remember the time when he was riding on his donkey. And the angel of the Lord stands in his way and bars his way.

And, of course, Balaam didn't see him but the donkey did and the donkey stopped. And so Balaam's knocking him over the head. What's wrong with you, you stupid donkey? And it happened three times.

And then finally, remember, God gave the donkey the ability to speak. He said, Why are you beating me? It's really an interesting story. But that angel of the Lord that was standing there barring the way for Balaam, that's the second member of the Trinity.

That is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. Joshua at Jericho, just before the battle of Jericho. Remember, he was out and there was a soldier standing, sword drawn.

That's the angel of the Lord. Joshua called him Lord in Joshua 5.13. A little bit later in the book of Judges, you have the parents of Samson who are going to have a visitation from the angel of the Lord.

[24 : 13] That's a pre-incarnate visitation. And there are many, many others in the Old Testament. And so the Lord himself was there with Gideon. I mean, this is, at Gideon's call in his commissioning, God comes, literally comes in all of his presence to call Gideon to be Israel's deliverer.

And Gideon could not hide from him. And I tell you, if God comes to visit you, there's no way you're going to hide from him. Though it seems we try to. You know, you think about old Jonah and he not only tried to hide from God and get away from his calling, he thought he could get on ship and sail somewhere where God wasn't.

It just wasn't going to happen. All right, so we have then God's presence with Gideon. It's revealed in verse 12. But also when you look at verse 12, you see a second thing and that is God's promise to Gideon.

God's promise. And this may sound like the same thing, but he said, the Lord is with you. You say, well that's talking about the presence, but it's more than that. You see, when God says that he is with you, he promises more than just simply his presence.

You know, a lot of times a person can be present and yet not manifest himself or herself. But with God, when he's present, you get, present with you, you get a whole lot more than just the fact that he's there.

[25 : 44] When he said, I am with you, it's equal to him saying, my power is with you. And so God's promise to Gideon, he's about to commission him, he's going to say, go in the strength, in the might that you have and defeat the Midianites for my people.

And Gideon eventually, he's going to come around and he's going to realize that he can go and he can trust God because his power is with him.

So God's presence is with him. We see that revealed here in verse 12. His promise, his promise of his power to be upon Gideon and in Gideon's life.

And Gideon didn't know it yet, but God was about to use him in a very powerful way. And then we have God's perception, perception of Gideon.

And this is very interesting. And, you know, we have this mentioned here or revealed here and yet we can't see it. We really can't see it at this point.

[26 : 52] We have to read on in the story to see that God's perception of Gideon is correct because what did God perceive about Gideon according to verse 12? Well, it was something way beyond what Gideon perceived about himself.

The angel of the Lord said what? He said, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor. And we're thinking, you're kidding me at this point, you know.

In fact, there are a number of other interesting instances in this story of Gideon that make us wonder about that as well. You know, a mighty man of valor.

I mean, Gideon is hiding out from the enemies there inside that wine press. And he's not a mighty man of valor, not showing himself that way. He is in fear of the Midianites that they might just, you know, come along and steal his paltry amount of wheat.

You know, wow, that doesn't describe a mighty man of valor. But here's the point. God's perceptions are not like man's perceptions, are they?

[27 : 59] Not at all. God sees things before they happen. But really, it's more than that. God turns things that are not into things that are.

And I fully believe that Gideon certainly was not a mighty man of valor at this point in his life. But God is seeing what Gideon is going to be. And not because Gideon, he's not just seeing in the future to see what Gideon might develop into.

He's seeing what God is going to do through Gideon. And what God is going to, the effect God is going to change upon Gideon's life. And, you know, much later in Israel's history, you know, we'll, you know, you have Samuel being sent to the household of Jesse.

Jesse, and he's there to look for the next king. Saul was a dismal failure as a king. And now God is going to raise up and anoint a new king who would be who?

David, of course. And so Samuel's been sent to the household of Jesse who has a house full of sons, big, tall, strong, strapping sons.

[29 : 10] And you know the story. When Jesse, eventually when Jesse looked at his son David, what did he see? Just a little boy, mere boy. In fact, he was not even worthy to be summoned for this meeting with the prophet Samuel.

And think about that. You know, Samuel goes all throughout the whole list of sons and God keeps saying, this is not it, this is not the one, he's not it, he's not it. And Samuel says, you got any other sons?

And Jesse says, oh yeah, there's David out there tending the sheep. I mean, he didn't even think enough of him and his abilities to call him to be a part of the group. And so when Jesse saw David, he just saw a boy.

And what did God say? Of course. He saw a king. And not because he saw down through David's history, his life, and saw his potential and what he could become.

He saw him as a king because that's what he was going to make him to be. And that's what we understand about Gideon because when Gideon looked at himself, he saw just a common, weak farmer hiding out from his enemies.

[30 : 22] And that's exactly what he was. But when God looked at Gideon, he saw a mighty leader, a warrior. He called him a mighty man of valor, which is a Hebrew idiom by the way.

And the full meaning of that idiom is this, a man who is charging right into the face of the enemy. That's what is meant by this expression, a mighty man of valor.

Not just a courageous man, but a man who will go out against the enemy without any fear. And so God surely saw something no one else could see, but what God sees, God makes into reality. by his grace. And this is far more than just divine perception. This is divine predetermination and the sovereignty of God.

So God says to Gideon in verse 14, go in, here's his commission, go in this might of yours. And Gideon still is not convinced of that. You know, what might?

[31 : 27] But this God speaking, go in this might of yours. You shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you? And even when God says that in verse 14, Gideon's still not convinced.

And we'll talk about that here in just a minute. So the commissioning at Gideon's call. Now third, the confusion about Gideon's call. Whose confusion?

Not God's. Gideon's confusion. And so when Gideon hears this from the angel of the Lord, he's thinking, ain't no way.

He'd be thinking just like I would be thinking. And you too. There's no way. This just can't happen. There's no possible way. Lord, you must have got the wrong tree.

Maybe it's three trees down. You need to check this again. There's probably another fellow on down the way that you meant to stop and call. And surely you're not talking about me. You know.

[32 : 28] And so the very things revealed, and this is interesting, the very things that God revealed when he commissioned Gideon, these same three things Gideon questions. It's the exact parallel here.

In the first place, Gideon questions God's presence. I said God revealed his presence there. It's the angel of the Lord. And Gideon questions that. Verse 13, Gideon said to him, Oh my Lord.

And I don't think it's wrong for the, at least the New King James to use a lower case L on Lord because that's exactly what Gideon meant. He wasn't talking about Lord God.

He was just, you know, just a kind of a term of respect. He said, If the Lord, not you, but the Lord, he's saying, is with us, as you said, then why then has all this happened to us?

I mean, listen, get this, the Lord himself is standing there. And Gideon can't see that. And he questions the presence of God, not only there at that place at that time, but God's presence even in Israel.

[33 : 37] He questions that. And he also, Gideon also questions God's promise. His promise. Look again, there at verse 13, And where are all his miracles?

So he still hadn't recognized that the one who's standing before him and speaking to him and issuing a call to him, that he is indeed the Lord himself. Still not recognizing that.

So he says, And where are all his miracles? Which our fathers told us about, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? And this was rehearsed over and over and over again with the people of Israel.

And rightfully so. They didn't have the printed word. They would pass this on through tradition. And they would have these things memorized. And so he had been told, since he was just a little shaver, about all the things that the Lord had done, that the Lord brought us up out of Egypt.

But now the Lord has forsaken us. This is what Gideon's saying. He's really just repeating what was the general thought and conclusion by the people of Israel.

[34 : 45] The Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. So we've heard all these stories about God delivering Israel out of the hand of Egypt. And now he's delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

So he's doubt he's questioning God's promise. I mean, you have to, I guess you have to give some discount here for Gideon. Because, you know, we read through Judges, and we've read through Joshua, and before that, you know, it just seems just a matter of a few years since Israel was in Egypt and God delivered them, but it's actually been 250 years since God delivered Israel out of Egypt.

That's a long time. You can forget some things by then. It's been 200 years at least since God stopped up the Jordan River and Israel walked over on dry land into the promised land.

200 years. So it's been at least that many years since God caused the walls of Jericho to crumble and all of those great feats of conquering that God did for Israel.

And Gideon then wanted to know where God was. And I'm not giving Gideon a lot of credit here. I'm not trying to do that because actually he's just simply voicing what was the real problem with Israel.

[36 : 13] And the problem was identified by God through the prophet in verses 8 through 10. Do you remember that? Let me read it again. We may have forgotten.

You know, God sends his prophet and there in verse 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 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.

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. So Gideon is just simply voicing, you know, what was the real problem in Israel?

But in his voicing these concerns he is questioning God's promise as was all of Israel and this was their problem. Then third, Gideon questions God's perception.

Now it gets down to, you know, doubting what God said about himself. See, God commissioned Gideon in verse 14 and Gideon questioned God about his wisdom, God's wisdom in choosing him in verse 15.

[37 : 39] He said, Oh my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed, my clan is the weakest or poorest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house.

Now, translation, here's what Gideon's saying, you've got something wrong, Lord. You've got something wrong here. You're seeing something that just isn't there.

Your perception is a little bit cockeyed. My father's house is poor. I mean, why would anyone want to follow my leadership? Not only that, but even in my father's house, I have no respect in my father's house.

So, how could I possibly lead Israel? So, what's he doing? He's questioning God's perception. You know, if anything, this qualifies him for the task.

Think about it. Gideon is not saying anything that Moses hadn't said before him. Remember, Moses came up with all of his excuses and look what God did through the prophet through Moses.

[38 : 47] Moses had that kind of humble response. Now, he was sinful in many degrees and as is Gideon's. But, also the same is true of us. You know, when we, when I have talked with prospective deacons in the churches that I've pastored, you know, the one thing that I want to hear first of all is, from them, is, I can't do it.

I'm not, who am I to do that? And I'm too weak. I'm not good enough. I don't know enough. And I'm thinking you're just the, you're just the right candidate for the job.

And, of course, we look for other things as well. But, you think about it, God used Abraham to be the father of the faithful. It was way beyond just Israel.

Even though Abraham was a pagan from Ur of the Chaldeans. That's how he started out. We could go through quite a list. God used Jacob to be the father of the nation Israel through his sons. even though he was a liar. God used Joseph to save God's holy family from starvation through that famine.

[40 : 05] By the way, if he had not saved them, that would have effectively cut off the messianic line. And God used Joseph to save his holy family even though he was a condemned slave.

God used Moses to deliver the people even though he was, what, a murderer. God used Esther. We just kept picking some throughout the old. He used Esther to deliver Israel from total annihilation.

Again, potential of cutting off the messianic line. God used Esther who was just simply a slave, really, for all practical purposes even though she was a princess.

She was just a slave. God used Matthew in the New Testament to write all about Jesus, the king of the Jews even though he was a tax collector. You know, despised among the people.

God used Saul of Tarsus whom later he changed the name to Paul. to write half of the New Testament and yet Paul was a persecutor and executioner of Christians.

[41 : 19] And we could go on and on with the list and we, each of us, could include our name in that list. Any one of us that in ourselves qualified to be any kind of leaders, any kind of contributors, any kind of servants of the Lord.

I mean, who are we? We're sinners and weak at that. So the circumstances surrounding Gideon's call, the commissioning at Gideon's call, the confusion about Gideon's call, the confusion in his own mind and heart, and finally the confirmation, the confirmation of Gideon's call.

We go all through this and God finally confirms it for Gideon and Gideon finally comes around.

Though he still has some trouble with some faith issues. A little bit later in the story we'll discover those.

But look at verse 16. And the Lord said to him, Surely, and this is an affirmation from the Lord, I will be with you and you shall, that's a promise, you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.

And then we have, I think, the first, or at least an implication of the first instance where Gideon reveals his weak faith. Now he's already been revealing his weak faith, but I mean in the sense of

having to have some visual test, some proof.

[42 : 49] And yet God is gracious to accommodate his weak faith and even in that he uses it to confirm his call, his call of Gideon.

And he does so in two ways. First of all, through the presentation of a sacrifice. There's a presentation. In fact, the word present is the word, the technical word for offering up a sacrifice and offering to the Lord.

And we'll just go back there and look at verse 17 again. We kind of see this. I read it a moment ago, but let me read it again. Verse 17, Then he said to him, If now I have found favor in your sights, he's not really believing it, but if I have, then show me a sign that it is you who talk with me.

That's why I say this is the first of several times that Gideon is going to reveal his lack of faith. You know, we like to talk about the fleece and so forth. And I've even heard people say, I'm putting out a fleece.

But that's nothing more than a lack of faith. And that's what Gideon is doing here. Show me a sign. And he says, He says, Stay right here. Don't go anywhere, angel. Do not depart from here.

[44 : 03] I pray until I come to you and bring out my offering and set it before you. And he said, I will wait until you come back. So the angel, well, God is accommodating Gideon here.

And so Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread with an ephah of flour. By the way, at least he's starting to come around. I mean, he's actually, not wasting, but actually sacrificing from something had very little of, this wheat.

And so he brings that flour and meat to put in the basket and he put the broth in the pot and he brought them out to him under the terebinth tree. And presented them. That's the word, the technical term for offering.

It's an offering. And what does the angel of God say to him? He says, Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened bread and the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

So it's an interesting kind of tension between two things. Here is Gideon and this is the first time but not the last time that he's going to put God to the test and God accommodates him.

[45 : 23] Just like with the fleece. He accommodates his weak faith. And you say, Well, man, if I were Gideon I wouldn't want to do that. I mean, that's just terrible.

Well, we do it all the time. Do it all the time. God, rather, constantly accommodates our weak faith. And he did this with Gideon and in doing this he confirmed his call to Gideon by, in a miraculous way, consuming the offering that he presented.

The second thing, though, also there's there is a confirmation of his call through a promise. There's a promise that God gives him here.

Not only this presentation of an offering, a sacrifice, but also through a promise. And we have that in verse 22. Now Gideon perceived, right, finally, it just takes him a while.

Kind of like us. And he finally sees it. That the angel, now that he's gone from him, the angel of the Lord, he finally sees that he was the angel and that he is God himself there.

[46 : 38] So Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God, for I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. I really, you read between the lines, he thought, I'm a dead man.

I'm a dead man. And I've seen him face to face. Then the Lord said to him, and here's this promise, Peace be with you. Do not fear. You shall not die. You shall not die.

So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it The Lord is Peace. Shalom. To this day, it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

This is a promise. Now, what's the promise? That Gideon would not die because he has looked upon the angel of the Lord. That's not what the promise is attached to. The promise is attached to his calling.

And it is, then, another confirmation of his call and commissioning. When God promised that Gideon would not die, he wasn't talking about physical death, his promise was that Gideon would indeed accomplish what God had called him to.

[47 : 49] It was a promise. What I've called you to do, you will do. And I will enable you to do. And that goes for every single one of us. And so Gideon then could, with confidence, go and obey God's commission and we see him doing exactly that as we go on throughout the story.

And he could do that because he could trust God. God had promised him, you will not die. That is, I'm going to use you and there isn't anything that can stand against that. There is no way you're going to fail.

Now, you know, we bring all this down to a personal application. What about you? Are you doing what the Lord wants you to do? He said, I knew we'd get to that.

Are you? I mean, doing what God has called you to. Or have you made an excuse or you've alibied or you're too busy or, you know, I'm not able, you know, sometimes, you know, even using humility as an excuse.

Are you doing what God wants you to do? And have you found that place of service in this church that God has saved you, by the way, to fulfill?

[49 : 09] He didn't save you so that you could just go to heaven when you die. He saved you so that you could serve Him in a very specific way, a way that God has gifted you, a way that God has developed you into, and in a way that you have yet even to see what God will do.

And, you know, and God's not going to show all that to you on the front end, you know. That's why I say I look for this kind of thinking in a prospective deacon or really anyone.

You know, Pastor, I just don't think I can. I just don't think I've got an enemy to do it. That's not false humility. But God is not going to reveal all of that on the front end.

He didn't reveal it to Gideon. The things that Gideon would do, and he promised that he would, called him to it. Gideon didn't have any option at this point. But Gideon couldn't see it.

God doesn't reveal all of it on the front end. God reveals it by and by as we step forward in faith and then we begin to discover and even then only bit by bit what God has put in us and is doing in us in order to accomplish what he's called us to do, saved us to do.