

# **AWAKENED BY PURPOSE; FUELED BY FAITH**

## **THE CALL OF GIDEON**

**Key Verse: Judges 6:11-24**

**Key Thought: God Sees a Bigger Potential for our Lives**

Over the next few weeks, we will be introduced to a remarkable judge named Gideon. Gideon is a study in contrasts. On the one hand he was a man who led a handful of warriors against a far larger army and won a great victory. On the other hand, Gideon was filled with doubts, fears, and questions. He was a man who questioned God's plan, yet he did God's will.

Gideon was called to be a judge during a time of intense trouble in Israel. The nation was suffering under the grip of Midianite oppression. They watched helplessly as their land was stripped, their homes and villages were destroyed, and their lives endangered. Their condition is summed up in verse 6 where the Bible says they were "impoverished". This word literally means that they were at the "end of their rope". The people of Israel felt as though their nation was destroyed and their lives were over.

Israel's main problem was that they counted God out. They cried out to Him, but they probably did not believe that He was listening, or that He was able to do anything to help them. But God always has a message. God sent them a prophet to remind them of the Lord's grace in their lives and to call them to a place of repentance. Not only does God have a message, but He also always has a person in mind as well. In this passage, we will meet the man God chose to save Israel. We will meet a man called Gideon, whose name means, "*He who cuts down*". While Gideon does not look like he has much to offer at the time he was called, in the end, he would be responsible for cutting down the enemies of God's people.

Let's take some time to meet this man God chose to be deliverer of His people. In Gideon, I see a little bit of myself. Perhaps you will see yourself in this passage as well. Let's examine The Call of Gideon.

## **I. GIDEON'S CIRCUMSTANCES**

**1) It Was a Time of Poverty** – We know that Israel did not have a lot during these dark, desperate days. Verses 4-6 make that clear. Evidently, Gideon and his family had been able to hide away a small amount of wheat, and he was threshing that wheat behind a wine press to hide it from the Midianites.

Wheat was usually laid out on a special piece of ground prepared for just that purpose. The ground was very hard and usually circular in shape. The threshing floors were located on top of hills where there would be more wind. The grain would be poured out on the ground and oxen pulling a threshing sled called a “noreg” would walk over the grain. It consisted of three stone rollers embedded with pieces of iron that would break and cut the grain. After this process, which broke the hard shell around the kernel, men would take winnowing fans and toss the grain into the air. The lighter husk would be blown away by the wind, while the heavier grain would fall back to the earth.

The fact that Gideon is threshing grain by hand indicates that he had very little grain to work with. It was a time of poverty.

**2) It Was a Time of Persecution** – Gideon was hiding while he threshed because he knew the Midianites would take the small amount of grain he had if they knew about it. Gideon and his people were suffering under the lash of intense persecution.

**3) It Was a Time of Powerlessness** – This is seen in the fact that Gideon is hiding from the enemy. He is just as defeated and just as frightened as the rest of the nation. It was a difficult time for God’s people.

Let me just encourage you today. Like Israel, we are also living in difficult times. We are living in days when economic uncertainty has many people fearing that they will be forced into poverty. We are living in days when the government, and society in general, are growing increasingly hostile to the things of the Lord. We are living in days when it seems that there is little spiritual power among God’s people. In some ways, we are living through times that strongly resemble those that Gideon and Israel faced in their day.

## **II. GIDEON’S COMMISSION**

While Gideon was hiding from the enemy, the Lord knew exactly where Gideon was. This verse says, “*The angel of the Lord appeared unto him*”. This was no ordinary angel! In **verse 13**, the angel is called “*Lord*”. When the Lord speaks to Gideon, He comes with words of hope and assurance.

**1) God’s Promise** – The “*angel of the Lord*” appears to Gideon and says, “*The Lord is with you*”. What we have here is a “*Theophany*”. It is an appearance of God in a visible form to man. Literally, what you have here is “*Christophany*”. This is one of many occasions in the Old Testament when Jesus appeared to individuals before He was born in Bethlehem.

Here is a brief list of some of those Old Testament appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- To Adam in Eden – **Genesis 3:8**
- To Abraham at his tent door – **Genesis 18**
- To Hagar in the wilderness – **Genesis 16**
- He appeared to Jacob at the River Jabbok – **Genesis 32**
- To Moses in the burning bush – **Exodus 3**
- To Balaam – **Numbers 22**

The Midianites did not know where Gideon was hiding, but the Lord did! He had His eye on Gideon the whole time. Even when Gideon was unaware of it, God was with Him, watching him and planning for his future. That truth should comfort our hearts as well. We have the same promise, Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20. We have an even better promise, John 14:17-18. The Lord is with you, in every situation, through every valley, across every mountain.

When the Lord says, “The Lord is with you”, it literally means, “His power is on you.” Gideon could not see it, nor could he sense it, and it sure didn’t look like it, but he was about to be used by the Lord in a powerful way!

The same is true in our lives. If we ever grasp the truth that we are indwelt by the Spirit of God and that His limitless power is available to use, it would change our walk and it would change our lives!

**2) God’s Perception** – Then the Lord says something that is truly amazing. He looks at Gideon and calls him “a mighty man of valor”. Here is a man who is so afraid of the enemy that he is hiding behind a winepress threshing wheat. He is full of fear, but the Lord saw what Gideon would be when he got through with him.

God intended to take Gideon and use him in a great way. The phrase the Lord used literally refers to “*a man who is charging right into the face of the enemy.*” It doesn’t make sense, but that is who the Lord saw when He looked at Gideon.

Did you know that the Lord knows you? He knows you far better than you even know yourself! If you are like me, you often look at your life and see the mistakes, failures, and problems. You see a person who consistently fails to live up to God’s high calling on your life. You see a person who loses far more than he wins. You see a person who is always coming up short.

What does God see? When Jesse looked at David, he saw his youngest son. He saw a mere boy who was not worthy of being called to a family meeting with Samuel. When God looked at David, He saw a King! When Gideon’s family looked at him, they saw a weakling. When the Lord looked at him, God saw a warrior.

You see, the Lord looks at the heart, *1 Samuel 16:7*. He knows what we will be when He gets through with us. The best thing you can ever do is to take your life, with all its problems, its failures and its shortcomings and place all that in the hand of the Lord. He takes us like we are and transforms us into something powerful and amazing by His power! Ex: Saul of Tarsus; Simon Peter; You and me!

### **III. GIDEON’S CONFUSION**

When Gideon hears the words of the Lord, he is amazed by what he hears. He cannot see how the Lord can possibly be talking to him. So, he reacts to what the Lord says by questioning the Lord’s words.

1) **He Questions God's Presence** – Gideon wants to know where the proof of God's presence can be found. If God was really with His people, shouldn't they be experiencing victory instead of defeat?

2) **He Questions God's Performance** – Gideon wants to know where all the miracles have gone. It had been 250 years since God delivered Israel from Egypt through ten devastating plagues. It had been 200 years since the Jordan River parted and Israel crossed over on dry ground into the Promised Land. Gideon wants to know where the God who performed all those miracles has gone.

3) **He Questions God's Perception** – When the Lord hears Gideon's questions, He responds by telling him that he will indeed save Israel. God has sent him, and he will be successful in his quest to defeat the enemies of Israel.

Gideon's response is to question the Lord's wisdom. He tells the Lord that He can't be right. He tells the Lord that he can't be a deliverer because, 1) His father's house is poor, thus no one will follow him, and 2) No one in his father's house respects him. We will learn in a future message that Gideon's father was an idolater, it may be that Gideon was an outcast within his own family because he refused to worship their false gods with them.

A lot of us are just like Gideon. We know the Lord wants us to serve Him; we might even understand that He wants to use us for His glory, but we are so filled with fear and a sense of our own inability that we refuse to trust Him.

Gideon did exactly what Moses did when the Lord called him from the burning bush. Both these men came up with excuses as to why they could not do what the Lord said they could do! Both men felt like the job was over their heads. Both felt like they were inadequate to the task at hand.

We do the same things don't we? The real problem with both Gideon and Moses, and with us as well, is that we tend to focus on what we are and not on Who He is! Without the Lord, we are weak, frail failures. With Him, we are mighty through God to pull down the strongholds. We need to learn to be God-conscious! I know that I can do nothing by myself, and I must believe that He can use me. If I can come to the place where I understand that He is able, even if I am not, I can be used by the Lord!

Gideon isn't there yet, so he makes excuses for why he can't do what the Lord is calling him to do. Gideon's excuses are two-fold. He tells the Lord that he did not have *Fortune* or *Fame*. He tells him that he cannot afford to do the Lord's work, and he tells him that nobody knows him.

God specializes in using those who can't to accomplish His work in the world. Look at the evidence:

- He used Abraham, a pagan from Ur of the Chaldeans, to be the father of the faithful.
- He used Jacob, a liar, to be the father of the nation of Israel.
- He used Joseph, a slave, to save the world.
- He used Moses, a shepherd, and a murderer, to deliver His people.
- He used Jephthah, the son of a prostitute, to deliver Israel.
- He used an unnamed servant girl to tell Namaan about God.
- He used Esther, a slave, to deliver Israel.

Israel was crying out for a deliverer; God's answer was Gideon!

God used all these people, and countless others down through the years, because they were available to Him for His use.

I challenge you to stop making excuses about why you can't do what the Lord wants you to do, and just do it.

There are some here who should be preaching, get at it! Some should be teaching Sunday School, singing on the worship team, or serving in the church, get at it! All of us should be telling the world about Jesus, get at it!

#### **IV: GIDEON'S CONFIRMATION**

The Lord reaffirms His call of Gideon. He tells Gideon that he will be able to destroy the Midianites as if they were just a single man. In other words, the Lord is going to use Gideon in a powerful, wonderful fashion. All he must do is go with God.

Gideon is still not ready to simply follow the Lord. He wants some proof that it is really God who is talking with him. Gideon asks for a sign. This will not be the last time he does so!

Thank God we serve a patient Lord. Gideon should have just done what the Lord told him to do. Of course, so should we! God graciously gave Gideon the sign he requested. The following verses talk about it!

**1) He Is Confirmed by a Presentation** – Gideon wants to make an offering to the Lord, which is what the word “*present*” means. The Lord promises to wait until Gideon returns. So, he prepares a goat, cakes made from 35 pounds of flour, and a pot of broth. This was a sacrificial offering from a man whose family lived in poverty.

It is amazing to see this transformation in Gideon. When the angel of the Lord found him, he was hiding, trying to protect a small amount of grain, now he willingly gives away a huge meal! Gideon has at least reached a place where he is willing to yield the things he cherishes.

When Gideon presents his offering, he is instructed to place it on a rock. He does so, and when he does, the Lord touches the offering with the end of His staff. When he does, fire rises out of the rock and consumes the sacrifice.



In receiving the sacrifice as He did, the Lord was teaching Gideon that everything was going to be all right. The Lord used a staff to work this miracle. The staff was an instrument used by a shepherd. The staff was used to comfort, control, protect and lead the sheep. The Lord is telling Gideon that He will be with him to comfort, control, protect and lead him as well.

It was a way of teaching Gideon that he need not fear where the Lord would lead him. For where God guides, God provides!

This was also a sign that the Lord had accepted Gideon. God had come to Gideon, called him, commissioned him, and accepted his sacrifice. All of this was the Lord's way of telling Gideon that he was going to use him in a great way!

If you want to be used by the Lord, just present yourself to Him and He will use you. His will is that we make an offering like Gideon did. God is not interested in our goats, our cakes, or our broth. God is interested in us. He wants us to place everything we are on the altar. He wants us to yield ourselves totally to His will. When we do that, He will use us in ways we can only imagine!

In other words, knowing the will of the Lord for our lives is as simple as yielding our lives to the Lord. As we give up all we have and all we are, and as we walk with Him, He guides us into His perfect will day by day, just like a shepherd leads his sheep.

**2) He Is Confirmed by a Promise** – Gideon now recognizes just WHO he is dealing with. When he does, he is filled with fear, and cries out to the Lord. God responds by speaking peace to Gideon's heart. He promises Gideon that he will not die! Gideon then builds an altar and worships the Lord. He calls that altar "*Jehovah-Shalom*", or "*The Lord Our Peace*".

Gideon found peace in submission and worship. When he submitted to the Lord's will for his life and when he fell before the Lord in humble worship, Gideon found a place of comfort. That will still work today! If you want turmoil in your soul, just walk a different path than the one God has planned for your life. If you want sleepless nights and dreary days, just refuse to do what He wants you to do.

But, if you want peace, joy, and true happiness, you will only find it by surrendering your life to the will of God. Until you do what the Lord wants you to do, you will never know true peace and you will never experience genuine worship. You might as well do what He is telling you to do; He isn't going to change His mind.

**In closing,** I want you to realize that just looking from the outside, it didn't look like Gideon would amount to much in the Lord's work. He is fearful. He is timid. He is filled with self-doubt. He has more questions than he has answers. However, Gideon is being brought to a place of service. The Lord is willing to take Gideon just like he is and shape him into what He wants him to be. As we will see over the next few weeks that is just what the Lord will do.

What about you? Are you doing what the Lord wants you to do? Have you found that place of service that He saved you to fill? Are you content to stand back while others do all the work, and you watch? Are you fearful? Has He been calling you to do something, but you hold back, making your excuses as to why you can't do what He wants? Is today the day when you will throw up the white flag of surrender and trust the Lord to do His perfect will in your life?

Are you even saved? Today would be a good day to come to Jesus if you are not! If He is drawing you, on any level, I invite you to be obedient to His voice. Come and let the Lord have his way in your life!

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Place: FCA

Date: April 14, 2024

Time: 10:30am

After Service Song: I Surrender (Hillsong United)