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Gideon, Mighty Man of Valor

Judges 6

Prayer: *Father, again I just thank you for your grace, I thank you for your goodness. And Lord, again we're talking this morning about folks who have lost heart, and I pray that you would continue to give us the grace and the wisdom and the insight to not lose heart by looking at Gideon's life. And so I pray as we begin this new series this morning that you would again accompany us, give us the privilege and the presence of your Holy Spirit, enable us to make this of permanent value I pray this Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well there's one thing about human beings that you can bank on or at least that God can bank on is that we in general are faithless and rebellious creatures. Israel was no exception and her history is one of constant spiritual entropy, from being lined up with God's plans and purposes and experiencing great peace and prosperity and then rebelling and experiencing rebellion's consequences. Blessings for Israel historically devolved into curses as she forgot where those blessings came from. And almost every time we run into good news in the Old Testament, it's only a

matter of time before we find rebellion setting in and the good news turns bad and the determination to follow after God and his ways begins to dissipate and disappear. This is exactly what God warned his people of in *Deuteronomy 8*. He said this: *"Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, and he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God."*

Well we're going to be spending some time the next few weeks looking at the life of Gideon whose life story perfectly mirrors this up and down nature of Israel's relationship with her God. The

story of Gideon occurs in the book of Judges and we pick up the story. Where we pick up the story is some 40 years after Israel's last great victory over the Canaanites under Deborah. God had blessed Israel abundantly by giving them this impossible victory, and true to form during the next 40 years of peace and prosperity rebellion begins to grow and fester and once again God has to discipline Israel. Now the last verses, the last verse of Judges 5 sets the stage. Israel is singing a song and they're celebrating this tremendous victory that they had through Deborah. The song goes and it ends this way in *Judges 5:31: So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might.*" And the land had rest for 40 years. So ends chapter 5 of the book of Judges. Well the very next chapter opens with this ominous statement. It says: *The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years.*

Now the Midianites stemmed from Midian who was a son of Abraham and Keturah, one of his wives, and they had a long and varied history with Israel, much of it bad. It was the Midianites who sold Joseph into slavery and it was the Midianites who actually used sexual idolatry as a means to drag Israel into the worship of this false God, it was a Baal known as Baal of Peor. *Numbers 25* says this, it says: *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Harass the Midianites*

and strike them down, for they have harassed you with their wives, with which they beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the chief of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague on account of Peor." What that's describing is what had actually taken place was Cozbi was the daughter of the chief of Midian and Zimri was the son of a leader of one of the Israelites and together, together they celebrated their rebellion against God by publicly flaunting their infidelity, possibly by having ritualized sex right in front of the tabernacle daring Israel's leaders to do something about it. Well, God's response was a plague that killed 24,000 before Phinehas executed them both, having caught them literally in the act. The Midianites were a tribe that God saw being powerfully used by the enemy to lead Israel down a pathway that ended up with them worshiping this false God called Baal Peor. And so at this time in Gideon's story God is beginning to allow the Midianites not only to become bitter enemies of Israel but to become incredibly strong as Israel becomes incredibly weak. Well, the Midianites wound up kicking them out of house and home and then they started to use Israel as a source of readily and easily obtainable resources. This is what happened according to *Judges 6*. It says: *The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of*

Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come up like locusts in number -- both they and their camels and could not be counted -- so that they laid waste to the land as they came in.

So understand where Israel is right now. This is this once mighty nation now finds themselves after 40 years of peace and prosperity at the hands of Deborah, they've now been reduced to the status of unwilling tenant farmers who have been kicked out of their homes. I mean they're scrambling to live in dens and caves in the mountains and every attempt to scratch out a living by planting crops ends in a raid in which the Midianites steal even their hope of ever being free. This is the way they lived for seven years as pawns of the Midianites. It says: *And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.* So it took seven years but eventually Israel cries out to God for help and that itself was a huge change.

You see, it's popular today to state that change only happens when

the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of changing. And I understand that and I think it makes sense, but from God's perspective, what does Israel's idolatry say about them and subsequently about us? Well, it says that we have no natural inclination toward God. And God says so as well in *Romans 3:10*, he says: *As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God."* See, if things have to get to a state where we are living in caves and dens helplessly watching as overwhelmingly powerful thugs rob us of everything before we actually decide, hey, we're going to turn to God, well then God would not be unreasonable in concluding that we had really no natural inclination toward him. I mean all it requires for us to seek after God is a state of pain that is so great that the pain of seeking God becomes a reasonable alternative to ignoring him. You see, the Israelites cried out to God for one reason and one reason only, the Midianites had made their life so miserable that appealing to God was for them the only available option. For 40 years their houses had been built, their crops had come in, their herds and their flocks along with their silver and gold had all multiplied and slowly but surely pagan gods were invited in and the real God was shown the door. That is until the Midianites came by and that changed the calculus. Absent the Midianites, Israel had no interest at all in returning to God. But they're not alone. You see, Israel is us. And what is truly stunning is that God is

willing to accept us on terms that should be an affront and an embarrassment to him. This does not go unnoticed by God. I mean he's the king, we are his subjects, and so often we treat him as if the opposite was true. Listen to what he says in *Isaiah 65*. He says: *"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.' All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations -- a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices and gardens and burning incense on altars of brick."*

Have you ever had a relationship with someone when you realized perhaps after a long, long time that this person really, really has no interest whatsoever in you unless there's basically something you could do for them? Have you ever been in that kind of a situation? I mean you look back over your relationship over the course of months and years and you realize that every single time they seem to have any interest in you, it was only because it was something that they were after and once having gotten it, they sort of disappeared? Well, God knew that's precisely where he stood with Israel. And he responds initially to their cries for mercy from the Midianites by sending them a prophet who states clearly God's case. This is what he says in *Judges 6:7*. It says: *When*

the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you and drove them out before you and gave you their land. And I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.' But you have not obeyed my voice."

Now God doesn't tell us who this prophet was, but he was not the only response that Israel received because God himself decides to pay a visit to his beleaguered, beloved people. Verse 11 says: *The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.* First let me explain the difference between an angel and the angel of the LORD. Number one, an angel is a creature, we've spoken about them recently, it's a creature, different category of creature who lives in a different plane and who serves God. The other, the angel is God himself assuming the form of an angel or a person and we call that a theophany. It's an appearance in human form of the pre-incarnate Christ. And it's important to distinguish between the pre-incarnate Christ and the post-incarnate

Christ because ever since Jesus took on flesh, his status as one of us is now permanent. 2,000 years ago in a barn in Bethlehem God became a man and he will remain forever in that state, having flesh just like you and me. Prior to his incarnation, however, Jesus assumed a number of different forms and visited his people at particularly crucial times and that's what we call this theophany. And usually the distinction that the scripture makes is instead of referring to an angel of the LORD it refers instead to the angel of the LORD or gives to this particular angel qualities that would only apply to God. For instance Mary was told by an angel, clearly named Gabriel that she would bear the Lord Jesus. In *Luke 1* it says: *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendent of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."* Here's the angel Gabriel doing what normal angels do. They're considered messengers of God. Well our text this morning describes a very different type of angel, one who we will soon see or eventually see, one who does something no angel would ever do, he accepts worship from Gideon, thus he is the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus. And our text introduces us to this angel by saying: *The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing*

wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. All right. So picture this, we have this angel just calmly sitting down under a tree opposite Gideon who was threshing wheat and everything about this picture of Gideon threshing wheat is wrong. I mean you don't thresh wheat in a winepress. And second of all, threshing was usually done out in the open, either on top of a hill or someplace where there would be a decent breeze so the chaff would blow away. Obviously Gideon is attempting to harvest wheat and not draw the attention of the Midianites. And so we have this one proud warrior, now he's hiding out and he's squeezing out what meager harvest he could without getting it stolen. So Gideon's threshing alone and suddenly he's joined by this unique visitor. Verse 12 says: *When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."* Well, this is not the first time where God seems to have employed sarcasm, maybe even a little bit of humor in communicating with his people, I mean, I don't know how else you could interpret the phrase "mighty warrior" spoken to someone who's in a pit threshing what he fears is going to be stolen. Now I'm not certain if it's humor or sarcasm but we can tell one thing, they're both completely lost on Gideon who replies: *"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?'"* But now the LORD has abandoned us and given

us into the hand of Midian."

Well we're going to see that God indeed had mighty plans for Gideon but I want to focus on the first part of his response to his Lord because it is universal in its application. God is extremely unhappy -- Gideon is extremely unhappy and he knows he's in the presence of a great spiritual being and yet he doesn't hesitate to more or less unload on him. I mean his response to the angel's statement "*the LORD is with you*" cuts right to the chase. But like so much of our responses to God, it misses the most obvious point. I mean Gideon does not realize that he is complaining about God's absence while speaking directly to the Lord of the universe who is clearly and unmistakably right at that very moment as present as he could ever be. The Lord's statement gets lost in Gideon's bitterness. And Gideon asked the question I think every single Christian at one time has asked. He says: "*but if the LORD is with us then why has all of this happened to us?*" You see in Gideon's case we're invited, so to speak, behind the scenes to see this from God's perspective. We see a people whose heart has grown cold, who have abandoned God and are now only because of the Midianites seeking him out. You see we get to see what God is up to here. And Gideon's plight is ours as well. There are many, many Christians today who desperately long to have the same kind of encounter with a Christ they can see as well particularly when life

turns hard and God appears to be distant. I mean it may be that Christian couple who can't conceive who see all of these people around them ignoring or abusing their children or perhaps a young wife and mother who watches and weeps as cancer steals her kids' father and her husband or maybe simply the frustration of trying to live out your life for Christ and finding that any and all of your plans wind up going south no matter how hard you try. I mean you cry out to God and all you hear back is crickets. And you realize that Gideon isn't the only one who feels the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian. You see, I think this goes to the deepest need that we as human beings have; it is the need to know why.

Joni Eareckson Tada put it extremely well in her book *When God Weeps*. She describes two different scenarios both involving a hundred pound weight that you are required to carry on your back. In one case you've been given the weight and a complicated series of directions to get you from one point to another. You're not told what the weight is or even why you're carrying it, just that it's absolutely necessary that you get it to a certain destination. Now in the other scenario you are told that that hundred pound weight is actually your son who has been severely wounded and the directions are to the closest emergency room. Now the labor in both cases is exactly the same. You have to carry a hundred pounds

of weight to a set distance. In one scenario you grit your teeth and you work until you get to your goal or exhaustion stops you in your tracks; but in the other one, in the other one you become a person possessed, you're almost unaware of the weight that you are carrying and your determination to get there as fast as you can, there's no thought of exhaustion or failure, there's just determination. The only difference between the two scenarios is that one of them answers the question why and the other one doesn't. I mean in one exercise the point is uncertain. In the other it is the driving force. I can't tell you how many times I myself have thought, God, if you just made yourself clear. I mean, if you just came and sat down next to me while I'm trying to thresh out this wheat in a winepress. If you just revealed yourself to us in a way that would give us absolute certainty, if you assured us that this action is right and that action is wrong, it would make all of the difference in the world. And we can do just about anything if that question of why wasn't lingering in our heads constantly. But then I remember that the answers to all the whys in the world come from a place where faith is no longer necessary. See, God's definition of what faith is is *Hebrews 11:1*. It says: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* God seems to be telling us that true faith is having an attitude of certitude about something that can't yet be certain. It's being absolutely convinced about things that are not

empirically provable, things that are not seen. I mean so desperately we want to see the reason why because we understand how much easier it makes things. But what if God is saying that we don't really understand what matters to him, what he values in us. And what he values in us is being certain about things we can only hope for and being convicted about things we cannot see. That's what's precious to God. God also says in *Hebrews 11:6*: *Without faith it is impossible to please him.* Understand, faith is the one thing that we have that's absolutely precious to God. I mean you know in all of our interactions with God we're on one side of the ledger and he's on the other, I mean we're on the side that has absolutely nothing to offer. I mean we are here because of God. We live and breathe and have our being because of God and everything we've ever received is from God's hand. And so in terms of offering God something of value, we're like a six-year-old trying to figure out what to give dad for his birthday. I mean there's not a single physical resource a six-year-old has that his dad doesn't have already, but there's a whole host of precious things that a six-year-old can give to his dad. He can give his heart, he can give his trust, he can give his faith in his dad. And as dads know, that's precious. And so when we come before God we're in the exact same position and God is quite clear in telling us that there's no physical resource that we can ever give him that he doesn't already have in spades. I mean, he's the creator of all

things. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. But he does tell us that there is one thing that is precious to him. That's faith. It's the ability to be certain about things we can only hope for and being convinced about things we can't see. Faith is the only meaningful currency we will ever have with God, and it's precious to him.

I once had a conversation with a young man who was upset about God's apparent silence. He said he had listened and he had heard all of the different arguments for Christianity and they made sense and he said that he wanted to believe and he cried out to God and he prayed and he said he repeatedly cried out and the response, as he said, was a big fat zero. I told him that God's timing is uniquely his and that he needed to trust that God meant what he said when he says that all who seek him shall find him. But I wonder now if my advice missed the point. You see, God put such a priority on faith and since he does put such a priority on faith, wouldn't it then follow that he expects to be accepted and followed by faith? I mean I'm concerned when people expect that if God doesn't give them a profound almost physical experience, if he doesn't sit down next to them while they're threshing the wheat then somehow or other God has failed to keep his end of the bargain. But God never promised us the physical experience of his presence. In fact what God is interested in coming from us, what

God views as the keystone of our relationship with him is the very same thing that God told Abraham was the key to being right with him. And it wasn't some great right, it wasn't some great sacrifice or good work, it was simply the act of trusting God for things hoped for, for things not seen. In fact God said in *Romans 4:3*: *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."*

Gideon is a recipient of a direct visitation from God himself. God starts out by announcing precisely the gift that Gideon is receiving. God says to him, *"The LORD is with you."* Gideon in his pain and his blindness doesn't see it at all. And he starts right in complaining about the absence of a God who is sitting right opposite him. The irony can't escape us. And his question is real. He says: *"but if the LORD is with us, why has all of this happened to us?"* You see what Gideon is doing here? What Gideon is doing is what we all do. He is conflating the presence of God with good fortune. I mean bad things are happening so God couldn't possibly be with us. But God tells us over and over again that that calculus itself is wrong. In *1 Peter 4:12* he says: *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* You see being a

Christian does not give you a ticket to health, wealth and prosperity like the prosperity preachers claim. God does not walk any of his children around difficulty. He walks them through it. *Psalm 23* says it well, it says: *Yea, though I walk through -- not above, not below, not around, but through -- the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.* Why? Not because God's gotten you around it or over it -- because *You are with me; your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.* But still we have the question of why. God, why don't you sit down next to each of us as we're there by the winepress and explain why, why God could still be with us and things could still be such a struggle.

Well, if I were to look at the question of why from God's perspective and we'll certainly see as we look at Gideon's interactions with God that that's the case, I think we'd see an entirely different scenario. I think we would be hearing God say just like he is saying to Gideon, I am here. I am here with you. I am right by your side but you are choosing not to see it. You know, we're coming right out of the Christmas season which celebrates the most unlikely miracle that ever could have taken place, God has come down, not just temporarily as he did with Gideon but now permanently he has become one of us. And so our faith is not in a concept, it's not in a quality, it is in a person. From God's perspective, his love is demonstrable and

empirically provable. There is an historical Jesus. There's an historical Jesus attested to by non biblical sources who are no fans of this Jesus. So we know Jesus actually existed. But that's not enough. As Paul says in *1 Corinthians*: *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.* Paul says if Jesus didn't actually exist and rise from the dead, then all of Christian faith simply disappears. It just goes away. Because it is all based on the fact that God became a man, died for our sins and then rose again. See, from God's standpoint, faith is simply a matter of getting on his wavelength. God knows what he's already done. He knows what he's already accomplished to purchase perfection for us. God knows what it cost himself, that he led a perfect life and that he offered that life on the cross as payment in full for our lives of imperfection and sin. God already knows what he's accomplished. What he wants from us is a willingness to believe it. Gideon's unhappiness with God started after 40 years of plenty and culminated after seven years of trial. God's unhappiness with us goes right back to the very beginning. God's perspective starts in the Garden of Eden with an active flat out act of treason committed by a couple that God had only done good for and blessed. I mean all of Adam's existence consisted of gifts and blessings beyond measure. Here you go, Adam, perfect life, perfect animals, perfect creation, perfect everything including a perfect companion created from a rib taken from your side. I mean

there were both surrounded by wonders human eyes have never seen since including every possible wonderful thing to eat. And God places but one restriction on them. He says do not eat of this tree. And we all know what happens. Adam and Eve choose to side with the serpent. They decide they're going to believe his lies that his restriction on Adam and Eve was designed to keep them from becoming like God. Think about this. What an incredible response to the gifts that they have had lavished upon them. What an incredible insult. But understand, God was never, never taken by surprise by Adam and Eve's treachery. I mean he knew before they were even created that they would rebel and reject him and that he would have to at some point enter into our existence to pay the price of our rebellion. You see, those were the facts that God knows with absolute certitude because he's at the center of all of them. The faith part is the challenge to us as to whether or not we will believe God when he tells us three things: Number one, what our real situation is like; number two, what he's done to address it; and number three, what we have to do to appropriate it. And the real situation is that we are fallen sinners, every one of us, and that no matter how hard we try, we will never, never live up to the standard of goodness that God requires for heaven because that standard is one hundred percent absolute perfection. Jesus made that demand crystal clear in a statement that he made in the Sermon on the Mount. He said in *Matthew 5:48*: *You therefore must*

be -- what? -- *perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*. I mean that's a standard only the Lord Jesus Christ could measure and make. Secondly is what Jesus has done to address the fact that's since Adam's fall we can no longer meet the requirement of God's perfection, it's God himself coming down to live among us perfectly to offer up his perfect life in the place of ours. And thirdly, what we have to do is appropriate what Jesus has done and that is to simply believe it, to place our faith in Christ's provision for sin. I mean Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And the very same thing applies if your name is Bill, Mary, Sue or Abraham. What matters is faith.

Now it was faith that was in critically short supply when God met with Gideon at that winepress. Gideon has long since abandoned the notion that God is loving and caring for him in his nation because the Midianites had had such success in attacking them. So Gideon says again, he says, "*If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders when our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.*" Well Gideon's going to learn the wisdom of *Proverbs 17* which says: *Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent*. See Gideon only knows at this point that he's speaking to a very

powerful spiritual being and he's complaining mightily about how unfairly and poorly he's been treated. Little does he know that the God he is speaking to has every right to give Gideon's complaint right back to him, that Israel has treated God poorly and unfairly. But this angel's got bigger fish to fry, and so he calls Gideon's bluff. He says: *Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?"* And he said to him, *"Please, LORD, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."* And the LORD said to him, *"But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."* Gideon, consider your bluff called.

Now we're going to have to stop the narrative at this point unless of course you want a four-hour sermon. I could arrange for that. But in the next few weeks we're going to see that God met Gideon's complaint with a great and mighty task for Gideon to do. God met Gideon when circumstance had driven his faith to its lowest ebb and he simply told him, *"The LORD is with you."* Gideon couldn't believe it because he had conflated God's presence with worldly success and it so blinded him that he wound up bitterly complaining about God's absence to God. And by the time we finish with Gideon, we'll see that his faith has grown in leaps and bounds and his success, as it were, was directly related to the promise that God

has made to each of us whether we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death or enjoying life at the peak of the mountaintop, God is always with us as he was with Gideon. *And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."* See, Gideon learns that the key to his success is the key to ours as well. It's the presence of Christ in our lives. It's something we have to appropriate by faith because we walk by faith and not by sight. And what I want us to take away from this introduction to Gideon is that God also has great and mighty things for you and I to do, because Gideon is every man. God is using Gideon's anger and bitterness and his circumstances to paint a vivid picture of how he interacts with every one of us. Understand, God did get -- Gideon did get a privilege that very, very few of us have. I mean his why received a very specific and direct answer, something every one of us would love to receive. But the task that God has for him, that's the defeat of the entire Midian Army of 135,000 with a force numbering only 300, that's not something I would necessarily volunteer for.

That young man that I met who had cried out to God and said that he had heard nothing back reminds me now of Gideon complaining mightily about God's absence to God. I mean God has spoken and he has spoken mightily. This is what I think God would say to my friend, he would say this, he would say, I left heaven itself to be

born in a cave to peasant parents and then I lived out my life on this earth perfectly and then I went not to a palace to live but to a cross to die for your sins and then I rose again conquering death itself. I've made my statement with my life. It is crystally clear and historically verifiable. And if you're waiting for me to sit down beside you as you thresh out your life, understand that Gideon didn't have what you have. He didn't have the record that I left in my word. He didn't even know what a cross was. Yet he was saved in the very same way, by faith in my provision for him. I met him and I grew his faith because I had a great and mighty task for him to do, by faith he was to conquer armies. There is a great mighty task that awaits every single son of Adam and that task requires faith as well. It is to believe God when he makes his claim on our lives and then to live our lives pursuing the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. That is the only currency that we have with God, and it is precious to him and life giving to us. *"For Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness."* Next week we'll look at Gideon's challenge. Let's pray.

Father God, I just thank you for Gideon because Gideon is us and how often we conflate your presence or absence with how things are going in our life. If things are going well, surely you are there with us. If things are going poorly, obviously you've abandoned

us. That was Gideon's error, Lord, and it's our error also. Father, you have stated to Gideon that you are there with him regardless and you are there with us regardless. Give us the ability, Lord, to trust in you, give us the ability to have that faith when circumstance demands that we say no, give us the ability to say "yes" to you. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.