

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 8- "When tested"

Key text: Judges 6:33-7

Suppl. texts: Deut. 6:16, Heb. 11:6

Introduction: Last time, we saw how God uses sanctifying trials to forge our faith. God didn't immediately send a judge; instead, God sent an unnamed prophet to deliver His chastisement to His people. What they were experiencing was because of their disobedience. We also met Gideon, a man hiding from Israel's enemies, trying to process food in secret. The preincarnate Christ Himself comes & calls Gideon 'mighty warrior'. God sees the finished product, not what we are in the moment. Gideon is only mighty because God is mighty. Still, not knowing who he is talking to, Gideon argues with & accuses God. Then, stunned & shocked that he has encountered God, he fears that he will die. Gideon then asks the first 'fleece' of this story, as he asks God to wait while he prepares a sacrificial meal. Finally, God accepts his sacrifice & tests his obedience by destroying the altars of false gods belonging to his pagan family. Tonight, we continue in this amazing story & see how God deals with man through testing.

Outline: [read Judges 6:33-40](#).

1. To fleece, or not to fleece?

- When we teach this section of scripture, it is usual to address the act of fleecing God.
- Fleecing is foreign to faith. "A faith that cannot be tested, cannot be trusted."
- **Deut. 6:16;** *"Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah."*
- **Why shouldn't we test God?** God is the one who tests! He never breaks His Word. We should have no doubt when He says He will do something, that He will do it.
- **6:34;** *"Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites (Manasseh) to follow him."* A promise of enablement.
- This should have been enough for Gideon, but it was not.
- **6:36-40;** *"Gideon said to God, 'If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.' And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew, a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, 'Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew.' That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew."* Gideon asks God for two signs. Again, not signs of a mighty warrior.
- He's already received an angelic visitation. He's already seen his sacrifice consumed by fire. He's already received a promise of peace & success from the Lord.

2. Are we being tested?

- **Why does God test our faith?**
- #1: to reveal to us whether our faith is genuine or counterfeit.
- #2: to strengthen our faith for what He has called us to do.
- Unknown quote: *"Faith is like a toothbrush: everybody should have one and use it regularly, but it isn't safe to use someone else's."*
- *"Fear and faith can't coexist in the same human heart very long."*
- Gideon should be assured in his faith; he has met with God. Now, God gives orders.
- **7:2-3**; *"The LORD said to Gideon, 'You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.' So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained."* God initially removes over **60%** of Gideon's fighting forces.
- If 32,000 Israelites can pull off an underdog victory, then they would get the glory.
- **First test**: Anyone who lacks faith can go home. *'If you're scared, say you're scared!'*
- **7:4-7**; *"But the LORD said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The LORD said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place." Gideon now has less than **1%** of his original forces (32,000), which were already outnumbered (135,000) over **4** to **1**.*
- **Three** promises of victory; 6:14, 6:16, & 7:7.
- **Three** special signs. The fire which flared up from the rock, the wet fleece, & the dry fleece. We might figure that Gideon has rock-solid faith at this point.
- However, Gideon is still fearful, especially now with his low numbers.

3. The battle belongs to God!

- Graciously, God will give Gideon one more sign & promise of victory.
- **7:9-14**; *"During that night the LORD said to Gideon, 'Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.' So he and Purah, his servant, went down to the outposts of the camp. The Midianites, the Amalekites, and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore. Gideon arrived just as a man was*

- telling a friend his dream. 'I had a dream,' he was saying. 'A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.' His friend responded, 'This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon, son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.'" Barley bread is the **food** of the **impoverished**.
- It did take **courage** for Gideon & Purah to go to the enemy camp & get close enough to overhear a conversation. Something is changing in Gideon.
 - Don't forget, God sent Gideon at just the right **time**, to hear just the right **conversation**, among just the right **people**. God is **Sovereign**, God is in **control**.
 - **How will Gideon respond to this final promise & sign?**
 - **7:15a; "When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God."**
 - **Overwhelmed** by the **goodness** of God, Gideon **worships** Yahweh.
 - **The penultimate purpose** of God is to alleviate Gideon's **fear**, empowering him to act on his faith.
 - However, God's **ultimate purpose** was to get Gideon to faithfully trust Him completely, resulting in worship.
 - Before we can be **warriors** for Christ, we must become true **worshippers** of Christ!
 - **Hebrews 11:6; "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."** Gideon is ready to be that mighty warrior whom the preincarnate Christ greeted him as earlier in the story.
 - **7:15b; "He (Gideon) returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands."** Gideon is now calming others' fears.
 - Gideon made what could be considered a **tactical blunder**! He has lost 99+% of his fighting force; he now splits his remaining 300 men into three groups of 100.
 - They don't use bows & arrows, or swords & shields, their weapons are everyday items; trumpets, jars, & torches. God uses unusual weapons in the book of Judges.
 - The trumpet was blown to call soldiers to battle. The jars were simple water & food holders, but when broken simultaneously, they made another loud noise. And the torches made it seem as though their numbers were greater than they appeared.
 - What appeared as tactical blunders was the wisdom of God.
 - **7:19-22a; "Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch (10 pm-2 am), just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, 'A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!' While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. When the three**

- hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused **the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords.***” Gideon’s men didn’t even need swords to win.
- **7:24-25;** *“Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, ‘Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.’ So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they took the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. **They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb.** They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb **at the winepress of Zeeb.** They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.”*
 - **Oreb means raven & Zeeb means wolf.** Both are scavenging animals.
 - One more **detail** you might have missed! The story of the call & deliverance of Gideon began & ended where? In a **winepress**!

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 8

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- Fleecing is _____ to _____.
- A promise of _____.
- Gideon asks God for _____.

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- God initially removes over _____% of Gideon's fighting forces.
- Gideon now has less than _____% of his original forces (32,000), which were already outnumbered (135,000) over _____ to _____.
- _____ promises of _____; 6:14, 6:16, & 7:7.
- _____ special _____.

3. The battle _____ to God!

- Graciously, God will give Gideon _____ more sign & promise of victory.
- Barley bread is the _____ of the _____.
- Don't forget, God sent Gideon at just the right _____, to hear just the right _____, among just the right _____.
- God is _____, God is in _____.
- ***How will Gideon respond to this final promise & sign?***
- _____ by the _____ of God, Gideon _____ Yahweh.
- ***The _____ purpose*** of God is to alleviate Gideon's _____, empowering him to act on his faith.

- However, God's _____ **purpose** was to get Gideon to faithfully trust Him completely, resulting in worship.
- Before we can be _____ for Christ, we must become true _____ of Christ!
- Gideon made what could be considered a _____!
- **Oreb means _____ & Zeeb means _____.**
- One more _____ you might have missed! The story of the call & deliverance of Gideon began & ended where? In a _____!

Small Group Questions:

- 1. Be honest! Have you ever ‘fleeced’ God? Why should fleecing be so foreign to faith?**
- 2. Doubt & fear are common to the human condition. They are also primary tools the enemy uses to keep us silent & on the sidelines. Gideon received many proofs of victory. Discuss why we are so hesitant to obey the Lord & instead are ruled by fear.**
- 3. One of the hardest times to obey God is when His command goes against conventional wisdom, as we noted in tonight’s story. Has there been a time when you obeyed God even though it didn’t make any earthly sense? Share with the group.**
- 4. In the book of Judges, we continue to see that one obedient & courageous heart can change the ‘destiny’ of many. Can you think & share of a time when you were courageous when others stayed on the sidelines? Share with the group.**
- 5. What significance do you place on the ‘bookends’ of Gideon’s story, both parts taking place in a winepress? We know the beginning of our story with God, but are you trusting Him to write the rest of the story?**