

Flawed Heroes Part 3

Gideon: The Sign Seeker

Judges 6-7

Memory Verses: Judges 6:12

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Ehud was a left handed man from the smallest tribe of Israel; an insignificant odd ball, and yet he obeyed the Lord and won Israel's freedom from the Midianites. Deborah was a woman; a second class citizen who should've known her place, and yet she obeyed the Lord and led Israel against the oppression of the Canaanites. Ordinary people who God used to do extraordinary things for his kingdom; flawed heroes.

This series is all about the flawed heroes that God used in the Book of Judges to show us that he can, and wants to, use us even though we are also flawed. In our flaws he is shown flawless, in our weakness he is shown strong. The question isn't whether or not you have flaws... the question is whether or not you are willing to allow God to use your flaws for his glory!

Which brings us to this morning's flawed hero; Gideon. Of course after Deborah the Israelites once again turn from God, and so God once again sends Midian to oppress the people until after seven long years the Israelites cry out to God for deliverance. This time God raises up Gideon to save them. Let's find out who this man Gideon is and what he's all about. Look with me at **Judges 6:11-18**. There's a couple of things to point out here right at the start. One, Gideon is kind of a coward. He, like the rest of the Israelites, is hiding from the Midianites. He is so scared, that instead of separating the wheat on the threshing floor he is doing it in the winepress, and in the midst of this the angel of the Lord shows up and instead of addressing him as Frail Man of Cowardice, he addresses him as Mighty Man of Valor. I can't help but think that this is said in sarcasm...or as the angel is laughing under his breath.

Then Gideon proceeds to whine a little bit about his situation and asks the angel, "where has the Lord been, he has forsaken us." And again the angel, in what I can only imagine is mockery says to Gideon, "go in THIS might of yours and save Israel." I love this. Gideon, like us this morning, has no real might or power in himself. He can't save Israel... but the God who gives him strength surely can... and he wants to use him to do it. God wants to use this cowardly, frail man to save Israel. Look at **vs16**; I will be with you, says the Lord. Is there anything more encouraging in this life than to know that the Lord is with you?

But then we see Gideon's truest flaw. He is a doubter. He has a weak faith. Even in the midst of the angel of the Lord, who has told him

that God is with him and that God will go before him and that God will give him the victory... still Gideon needs something... he needs a sign. This begins a pattern we will see with Gideon throughout his story. Time and time again... he needs a sign.

A couple weeks ago we went on vacation and we drove around 1500 miles and occasionally while we were driving we would get hungry... and it was at that moment I needed a sign. I needed to see one of those giant blue signs with all the food logos on it, depending on our options would depend on where we would stop and get a bite to eat. But if I didn't know what those logos meant there's no way we'd stop there. You know what I mean? No one stops at strange restaurants while they are traveling... they stop at one they are familiar with.

Let's play a **game**. I will show you a bunch of food logos and I want you to see if you can guess them before the time runs out. I think we have about 10 of them for you.

How many of you got them all correct? The point is... when it comes to signs... you have to be familiar with what they are referring to in order for them to be of use to you. A random sign means nothing without context. And Gideon already had context... it was the angel of the Lord telling him he was going to be okay. Why was that not enough for him?

Look with me at what Jesus says in **Matthew 16:4** about those who desire signs; they are an evil and adulterous people. Or what about in **Luke 16 in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus where in verses 25-31** the rich man begs Abraham to let Lazarus go to his family and tell them how to avoid hell and Abraham tells him that if they have ignored the prophets they will not listen even if someone rises from the dead to tell them. The point is clear... Signs won't help you believe in what you've already determined to disbelieve. **A desire for a sign only reveals a lack of faith in what you should already believe.**

This morning we are going to see three different times that Gideon needs a sign from God and three times that God needs a sign from Gideon and in the end we will see that being faithful to God doesn't need a sign at all.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we learn from Gideon's story is that... **We Don't Need A Sign To Know That Our God Is The Only True God.** We learn this in chapter **6:17-32** where we see Gideon ask for his first sign. Gideon asks, if it is you God who speaks to me, show me a sign. It's incredible that he still doubts that it is God who is telling him all of these things. So, Gideon brings out an offering of cooked goat and bread, and as a sign, the angel of God touches the offering with his staff and a fire consumes it all. Look at **vs21-22**. It was only then that Gideon truly believed that it was the angel of the Lord and worshipped God by building an altar there.

Look, God doesn't mind helping us in our disbelief. Look at **Mark 9:24** where a father pleads for Jesus to help his demon possessed son. He says; I believe, help my unbelief. Listen, it's natural to have doubts and struggle with our faith to a certain extent. And we know that if we ask God he will help us have more faith in him. But, it should never get to the point where we are consistently doubting and are always in need of a sign to show us what we should already believe.

In return for showing Gideon the sign of consuming the offering, God asks Gideon for a sign. In **vs25-27** God asks Gideon to tear down his altars to Baal and Asherah and make altars out of them for the Lord and offer sacrifices on them to God. This is a big ask. It is very possible that such an act could mean that Gideon would be persecuted or even killed by his neighbors, but it is necessary. You see, Gideon is struggling with doubts. Does God still love us, will he deliver us, will he fight for us... is he still the only true God? And what is it that is clouding Gideon's heart and causing him to doubt? Could it be his idols? So God tells him to destroy his idols, and worship him alone!

You may be looking for a sign from God today. Let me ask you. Have you any idols that may be clouding your mind and giving you doubts? God knows that the sign we really need is to simply remove the distractions in our way and begin to worship our God again! Remove your idols and trivial pursuits and chase after God with all your passion and you will see your doubts disappear. **Our Fear and doubt will always grow less intense the closer we get to God. A desire for a sign only reveals a lack of faith in what you should already believe.**

The second thing we learn here in the story of Gideon is that... **We Don't Need A Sign To Know That God Is On Our Side.** We see this in **6:36-7:8**. Here Gideon asks for a second sign. Still after all that Gideon has seen he still doubts. He asks, God, are you going to give us the victory and save us? Gideon wants to now if God is truly on his side so he asks for another sign. He lays down a wool blanket on the floor and says, in the morning let the dew be only on the fleece and not on the floor. When he awakes he finds it just as he asked, the fleece is soaked, the floor dry. But that wasn't enough for Gideon the doubter, he still wasn't convinced and so he asked God to do it again but in reverse, let the dew be only on the ground but not on the blanket.

Notice here that Gideon knows he's pushing it because he even asks God, who should be upset over his lack of faith, to not be mad at him. This reminds me of Jesus' words in **Mark 9:19** where he says you faithless generation, how long am I to bear you? A lack of faith is not high on God's list of things he loves. **Hebrews 11:6** says that it is impossible to please God without faith. And yet, God gives grace to Gideon and shows him the sign he asks for; this time the ground is wet

and the blanket dry. Surely, now Gideon will trust God.

Again, The Lord asks for a sign in return. God wants to show Gideon that he is with him, he wants to show him that what he is about to do will be by God's hand and not man's. Look at **7:2**. So God asks him to trim the army from 32,000 to 10,000. Once again, no easy ask on God's part. They are facing an army of 135,000 men. 32,000 was already bad odds. 10,000 is ridiculous odds. But God isn't satisfied and so he has Gideon trim the army gain from 10,000 to 300. Now these odds are impossible for man...only God can bring the victory.

Gideon wanted to know if God was with him; God says... now you will know. You see, God cannot prove to Gideon that he is truly with him unless Gideon removes the human element from the equation. We may struggle to see where God is working in our lives, we may feel that he has abandoned us at times, but he hasn't. Perhaps we are too focused on our own strength to see where God is moving. Sometimes **God's power can only be displayed when we stop trying to do what only He can accomplish.** When you get out of the way, you'll see God's always been there. **A desire for a sign only reveals a lack of faith in what you should already believe.**

The third thing we learn in the story of Gideon is that... **We Don't Need A Sign To Know That In God We Can Overcome Our Trials.** We see this in **7:9-25**. Again, God gives Gideon a sign, but this one is different, God doesn't even wait for Gideon to ask for a sign because he knows that he's going to anyway. Look at **7:9-11**. In **vs13** God sends him into the camp to hear for himself a dream which confirms that they will be victorious. This sign encourages Gideon and he goes off and worships God and then prepares for battle. Again, we shouldn't ask God for signs, but God in his goodness will often give us signs we haven't asked for to encourage us. Just think about all of the signs that God gives us on a daily basis to encourage our faith in him and reinforce what we already believe.

As in the past two signs, God asks for a sign in return. He asks Gideon to not even fight. Now, we don't see God give Gideon the game plan here but we assume that during Gideon's time of worship after hearing the dream that God told Gideon exactly what to do. He says don't fight physically, they outnumber you 450 to 1, that would be suicide. Instead, hide torches under jars and when I tell you to blow trumpets, break the jars, and yell. This battle strategy is just about as stupid as walking around the walls of a city 7 times and blowing trumpets. This battle strategy is just about as stupid as sending a young boy with a rock to fight an iron clad giant. Look, sometimes God asks us to do things that make no sense to us. Why? To test our faith. **While we shouldn't test God's faithfulness, He has every right to test ours.** Here he wants to know if Gideon is truly ready to trust him with everything by doing something that only God can make work.

Let me ask you this morning, are you obedient to God when he asks you to step out of your comfort zone? Do you trust him enough to do something completely out of the normal for his sake? It just might mean your breakthrough.

After all of this madness, of course God gives the victory and proves himself faithful again. **A desire for a sign only reveals a lack of faith in what you should already believe**

Application

God used Gideon even though he was a very flawed individual. He was a coward and a doubter. He constantly was seeking another sign to encourage his faith when God had already done more than enough to convince him that he was with him. Yet God still used him!

Listen, we may have doubts, we may ask for signs, but God still wants to use us too. He is more than gracious to continue to let us be a part of his plan... even when we doubt.

So the question remains.... why do we ask for signs? Why do we doubt? The answer is simple... because we struggle to believe what we should already know is true. And, what is that exactly? What should we already know is true? Jesus.

Conclusion

God has given us a sign... the definitive sign. Look with me again at **Matthew 12:28-40**. The only sign we need is the sign of Jesus; crucified, and raised again for our salvation. What other sign could we ever need? All of our faith hinges on the cross and the resurrection. Jesus came to this earth to show us what a relationship with him looks like. Though he was perfect, he willingly gave himself over to the most cruel death as a sacrifice for our sins. And just like Jonah, three days later he rose from the grave. That's it... that's the only sign we should ever need. Stop looking for a new sign and simply embrace the greatest sign that any of us could ever want or have – Jesus Christ! The Gospel.

Let us, like Gideon, finally realize the truth, that God is the only true God, and he is with you, and he will help you overcome any trial you will ever face. How do we know this? Because he sent Jesus! **Jesus is the definitive sign of God's love and faithfulness... no other sign is needed.** **A desire for a sign only reveals a lack of faith in what you should already believe**