

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

I would like us to look at verses 36-40 in this chapter and consider how Gideon (a judge in Israel) interacted with the Lord involving some fleece. The story of Gideon and the fleece is very well known. For many, he has become an example for seeking God's will through tests (fleece) in order for one to know direction in life. Growing up many times I was encouraged to pray and put out my fleece to test God and to have Him give me a Bible verse that shows me what to do or to know direction through circumstance (As He opens doors & closes them). Perhaps you have done this as well?

We certainly desire direction from God and, we certainly are to constantly seek God for wisdom, understanding, and help as we make important decisions in life. However, when you examine this text, Gideon's asking for a sign by using the fleece has **little to do with determining God's will**, God already clearly told Gideon what to do.

Gideon's two tests with the fleece show his doubt, fear and lack of trust in the Lord and yet, the Lord is patient and proves Himself to His servant despite his lack of faith. That's why the title of my message is:

**Title: Understanding the Lord's will**

**1. Gideon questions the Lord's will**

**2. The Lord reveals His will**

**3. The Lord fulfills His will**

### **1. Gideon questions the Lord's will**

*Judges 6:36 <sup>36</sup> So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said*

**Gideon places a condition upon God before He will do anything!!** Basically, He is stating - if you, God, prove yourself to me - then I will act, but what is implied is - if you do not prove yourself to me then I will not act. We must understand Gideon believed God, but the nation of Israel was oppressed at this time because the Lord had given them to be subject to the Midianites.

How are we introduced to Gideon in verse 11? Threshing wheat/hiding in fear because when the Midianites would come and consume everything like locusts.

When God appears to Him - what does he do? **He questions (Verses 12-13)**. Yet, despite Gideon's fear and trepidation, the Lord proves Himself to Gideon and gives him a sign by consuming the offering from the stone. **(Verses 20-21)** Gideon has faith! He has received a sign from God! A man filled with the Spirit.

He has a lot going for him! **What has shaken him/ filled him with fear? (36)**

Gideon looks at the numbers of the enemy - they are like locusts in abundance, a huge host with camels without number, described as the sand of the seashore in abundance in **6:5 and 7:12**.

As Gideon sees this massive enemy and compares the army of Israel that he has called; the Abiezrites, Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali and the total number of men that has come is approx. 32,000. We know this from Chapter 7. (Chapter 8 tells us the number was 135,000)

When he makes the comparison, this enemy is much greater than our army and Gideon loses heart! He approaches the Lord with fear and doubt rather than faith and trust. Can we really win? Are you sure we can do this Lord? I think I need some reassurance here!

Gideon says, that little word, **IF** rather than saying **yes I know you will deliver Israel and yes, I know you will be with me**. He approaches the Lord with fear and doubt rather than faith and trust.

**Now, we may never find ourselves in the same situation as Gideon/Israel.**

However, How many times have you questioned the Lord about something He is doing in your life? Something happened you were not prepared for or wanted? If the Lord will to this thing that I want - then I will trust Him. We may not say it openly, but we can also put conditions upon God for service rather than look to Him by faith and say - I trust you Lord - lead on - no matter where the road goes!!

Do you expect the Lord to do your will before you will do His will? How do you think that will go if that is your attitude?

**Next, in his fear and doubt, Gideon also questions the reliability of God (36-37)**

Throughout this entire chapter, the name used for God is Jehovah, the covenant name. This is how Israel knew

Him until we come here to verses 36-40. When Gideon addresses God here, His name is changed and he calls Him **Elohim**.

Elohim refers to the Lord as the God of creation, the One who has power to make all things and to maintain and keep all things. Gideon's approach here - **If you are the GOD / the true GOD / the Living GOD**, then I will need you to prove yourself to me / I will need some supernatural proof so that I will be confident going forward - need show/fleece

I am facing death here if I attack these people and if you are not GOD and what you say is only talk (not real) then I am not doing this and I am not going to face this enemy. Again, he is looking at his situation and things are not going well and he begins to question the reliability of GOD! **He does not trust GOD!**  
***Have you ever questioned the reliability of God? Have you thought, can I truly trust Him? or, Are you really with me Lord? Things are tough and I need some proof here!***

Like Gideon - thoughts of doubt, mistrust and fear can flood our minds especially when things are not going well, we feel overwhelmed or things are not the way we want them to be. It is easy to question the Lord's trustworthiness. We can find ourselves like Israel - defeated, oppressed, and seemingly powerless to do anything about it. For too many Christians the life of faith is a life defeat rather than victory.

Start to bargain with God rather than walk by faith. I will serve you Lord or I will sacrifice my time or my money if you do that for me! Or show a Bible verse that will tell me what to do and I will then be given to action. Not the way to come to God and live for Him! Leads to no service at all. Rather, to think this way is an attempt to get out of serving God, rather than giving yourself fully to Christ and live for Him.

Like Gideon, if you, God, prove yourself to me - then I will act, but what is implied is - if you do not prove yourself to me then I will not act. If you find yourself questioning God, What can you do? What happens to Gideon?

We can rest in this reality...

## **2. The Lord reveals His will**

*Judges 6:36 <sup>36</sup> So Gideon said to God, "If **You will save Israel by my hand as You have said***

Here is where we must understand that Gideon is not trying to discern God's will for his life when he presents the idea of the fleece to God. Rather, Gideon is trying to decide whether he wants to continue to obey it or not. God had already spoken and he knew God's will, he repeated it!! Twice!! (36-37) Gideon heard the Word and obeyed it up until this point in his experience. What was the word that God gave to Gideon?

## **Lord comes to Gideon - He calls Him / gives him direction / fills him with His Spirit!**

### **The Lord's call to Gideon**

*Judges 6:12 "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" and tells him **Judges 6:14 "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"***

What is Gideon's reaction? He replies, *Judges 6:15 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.*** Gideon is not showing great confidence, faith, or self-assurance here. Rather, he says, I'm the weakest, I'm the least, who am I to save Israel! How many times have we said that about ourselves!? Who am I? I am least and the weakest, I don't have what it takes to serve as elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, to be a minister or missionary. Of course, we do not have what it takes, but we are not serving the Lord in our own strength alone, but in the strength, He gives to us. You are not alone.

***1 Corinthians 1:26-29 <sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. <sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, <sup>29</sup> that no flesh should glory in His presence.***

When the Lord calls His servants, He takes the foolish, weak, despised, that which is nothing to accomplish His purposes so that no human can boast of himself, but rather our boast is in the Lord.

Through the first sign, Gideon believes God and accepts His call - begins to obey Him

### **The Lord continues to give Gideon direction**

He tells Gideon to tear down the altar/pole of the false gods (Baal/Asherah) (Verse 25). He obeys and takes away the altar pole of these false gods. Does it at night - fears - others in his town / they want to kill him. He understands the will of God and is doing the will of God! The call of God to salvation in Jesus leads to obedience and holiness! We are not ignorant of the will of God because the Bible declares to us the will of God.

### **Then Lord fills Gideon with His Spirit**

*Judges 6:34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.*

The Spirit of God comes upon Gideon, in fact, the text literally says, the Spirit of the Lord wrapped around Him like a garment. To be filled with Spirit in OT carries with it the idea of empowerment for a given task. Gideon was being strengthened and given the fortitude of heart and mind to stand up, sound the trumpet, call to the tribes that followed Him and he is enabled to go and fight against this great enemy!

We also need that grace and help and to be clothed with Spirit as we have heard the Word of the Lord so that we can respond and say, yes Lord, your will be done in my life!

### **Lord comes to you - He calls you / gives you direction / fills you with His Spirit!**

Ask the Lord to fulfill His promise in your life as Christ declared,

*Luke 11:13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

Do you ask Him for His Spirit to fill you? Do you say with the hymn writer: Spirit of God, dwell thou within my heart... help me to embrace your call, to embrace Jesus and His Word! Not only does the Lord reveal His will to us, but also helps and enables us to accomplish His revealed will!

### **3. The Lord fulfills His will Judges 37-40**

#### **Gideon comes with the fleece tests before the Lord (36-40)**

First, the Lord answers and the fleece is wet and Gideon wrings out a bowlful of water. Second, the Lord again responds and fleece is dry while the ground is wet.

The first is a possible natural phenomenon while the second is completely supernatural! The Lord shows He controls the natural realm - is there anything too difficult for Him! God is more interested in delivering Israel than in arguing with Gideon over his fleece and He is remarkably patient with Gideon; He understands Gideon's insecurity.

The Lord supernaturally answers His request. Shows He is reliable and trustworthy. The Lord patiently brings His servant along to encourage his faith rather than leave him in the place of doubt, fear, and without trust. It's a great comfort to know that God knows us and is patient with us!  
Even as we read in Lamentations...

*Lamentations 3:21-26 ... this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: <sup>22</sup> The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup> they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." <sup>25</sup> The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. <sup>26</sup> It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*

The Lord's steadfast love never ceases, His mercies are constant, and His faithfulness to us is great. A God who gives hope and assurance to His people! That's why it is good for us to seek Him and wait on Him for His salvation.

When you read chapter 7, the Lord saves them!! Israel is no longer slaves, but set free!! God alone gains the victory!

They start with 32,000 and that is too many. Then 22,000 leave because of fear and 12,000 are left. Then the drink test reduces the number to just 300.

**300 hundred against a multitude without number and they are not even to have weapons! They go to battle with Trumpets, torches and empty jars!!**

The Midianites, Amalekites, and men from the East destroy themselves when it is all over! The Lord is a God of salvation despite the weakness and failings of His servants. He has a purpose of saving Israel and preserving a witness to His Person and salvation on the earth. The Lord will never cast off His covenant people. The Bible tells us the true Saviour of Israel and the church today is Jesus! He knew and did the will of God in every way.

He exclaimed, "O my Father ...your will be done".

**He is the true Spirit-empowered Saviour of his people, and it is because of his faithful obedience to the will of God that our disobedience, doubts, anxieties, lack of faith and lack of trust, can be forgiven and overcome. Gideon needed that Saviour, and so do we.**

Jesus is your help and He is the One who tells you to come to Him and will give you rest for your soul. As I said, we certainly desire direction from God and, we certainly are to constantly seek God for wisdom, understanding, and help as we make important decisions in life.

However, when you examine this text, Gideon's asking for a sign by using the fleece has **little to do with determining God's will**. Gideon is showing unbelief, fear and lack of trust in the Lord and yet, the Lord is patient and proves Himself to His servant despite his lack of faith.

If you are struggling to know God's will for your life and if you are asking questions like: **What about those areas that are not addressed in the Bible? Should I marry Sue or Sally? Should I take job A or job B? Should I go to this college or that university? Truly, we face many decisions in life.**

Instead of seeking signs from the Lord, what should we seek?

First, His will for us is to believe in His Son, Jesus and make sure we are following Him. We show love for Jesus by obeying His commandments. We should make sure we are following the Lord's revealed will and living in obedience to His Word. Gideon had to remove the Baal and Asherah before he could move forward by the Lord's direction and serve.

Then, we are to come to Him asking for wisdom, drawing from the counsel of other believers who are older and have experience in life, and praying that the Lord will lead us in the right way and to give us peace when we make a decision.

Occasionally I still hear of someone "putting out a fleece", asking God for some tangible indication of His will, asking for proof. This is not an act of faith. Run away from this idea of needing signs as it leads more to unbelief than trust in the Lord.

We often ask God to show us His plan for our life, but then choose to turn away from that plan when it is difficult or it's not what we want. Remember again, our Lord Jesus gives us faith to overcome our many fears and doubts - come to Him in assurance and trust and ask Him for the wisdom you need to help you navigate the many roads you face in life.

Don't put conditions upon God for service - Rather, look to Him by faith and say - I trust you Lord - lead on - no matter where the road goes!! When things become difficult - not my will by thy will be done!! Do not expect the Lord to do your will before you will do His will. How do you think that will go if that is your attitude? Seek Him to help to determine His will for your life. Amen