

The faith of gideon expository sermon religion essay



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In Hebrews Chapter 11, there you see in verse 32, the author includes Gideon in his classic catalogue of OT great and worthy heroes of faith.

Gideon is the fifth judge of Israel who ruled for 40 years. He is without doubt counted as one of the outstanding heroes of faith in Israel's early history.

Yet as we look at the life of Gideon first mentioned in in Judges Chapter 6, he did not start off with one who is full of faith. Faith did not come naturally to Gideon. In fact, we see much of his unbelief. It was only when he went through some spiritual transformation that he became heroic in his faith in God.

Application: Is it not so for many of us? Do we not show the lack of faith in God when we are first asked to do something for Him? Do we not always shy away from attempting some service for God because we feel inadequate and thought that God cannot use us?

But as God transforms us, like what He did to Gideon, we will then begin to put more trust in Him and to do what He has called us to do.

Do you remember how you reacted to God's call to serve Him in some ministry? Have you been called to teach SS, join the choir, join the Exco, etc.? Did you accept the call readily? Or did you go through much struggle, exhibiting lack of faith in God, and therefore you put so many questions across to God. And not sure if God will use you. And so you keep on debating with God.

Well, this is natural. In fact, it may be good, to recognise your inadequacy before the Lord. Lest God transforms me, otherwise I will not be able to do it on my own. So you struggle with God.

Gideon went through much struggle when God called him. In Judges Chapter 6 verses 11 & 12 we see the angel of the Lord appearing to Gideon and calling him to rise and become the deliverer of his nation from the Midianites.

The children of Israel feared the might of the Midianites who prevailed against them because of their sin of disobedience (v. 1-2). They were so afraid that they had to hide themselves in dens, caves and strong holds in the mountains to protect their own lives (v. 2). And in verses 3-6, we are told that when Israel had sown, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east came up as grasshoppers for multitude, and consumed the increase of the earth, leaving no sustenance for Israel, nor for sheep nor ox nor ass, so that Israel was indeed "greatly impoverished."

In verses 7-10, Israel cried unto the Lord for deliverance. The Lord heard them and sent a prophet to rebuke them of their sin of disobedience and to cause them to repent. After sending the prophet to teach the children of Israel a lesson, the loving and gracious God next sent an angel to call a saviour to deliver Israel.

The call came to Gideon who was to be the saviour of Israel (v. 12). And notice how God called Gideon. When the Lord calls, He assures His presence, His might and His valour (strength and ability) are with Gideon.

Notice also that Gideon is thus far unknown. He was a poor farmer's youngest son, supposedly working with his father in the farm (v. 15) - an ordinary and obscure personality. AND God called him for a special service.

Application: You don't have to be someone who is already great for God to call you to serve Him in some area of service. In fact many times in the Bible, we see that God calls the weak and use the small and little. It is so that His might and His valour might be manifested through the weaknesses of His servants.

Did not the Lord call poor fishermen to be His disciples to teach and proclaim His message of love for mankind?

Did not the Lord use five loaves and two small fishes from a little boy to feed more than 5000 people?

BUT, look at Gideon's immediate response in verse 13! Note his complaint... Oh!...why?...where?...but... Instead of blaming the sin of disobedience and rebelliousness against the Lord on the part of Israel, Gideon was questioning why God allowed Israel to be suffer under the threats of the Midianites.

Application: Have we not asked Gideon's questions, especially during those times when we are broken hearted and bewildered (confused, cannot understand what's going on, cannot decide what to do). " God, you said you are with me always and will deliver me, but look at what is happening to me - distress, sick, poor." Instead of seeing our own faults, are we in the habit of blaming God for all the things that go wrong in our lives?

How did the Lord God respond to Gideon? Verse 14. Strong words, but reassuring. Gideon was to go in his might. And what was his might? It is the assurance that “Jehovah is with him” (v. 12), and also in the understanding that it is Jehovah Himself had sent him: “have not I sent thee?” (v. 14).

Never mind all the accusations Gideon had made against the Lord, but God is still gracious to assure Him His presence with Gideon as He sent him to be the deliverer of Israel from the Midianites.

But this was still not enough assurance for Gideon. In verse 15, he complained again because he realised that he could not run away from God. The Lord was persistent in calling him. He gave more excuses.

Application: Does it sound familiar to us? Moses did the same thing, giving excuses. And we too. All because of lack of faith and trust in the Almighty.

Like Gideon, we look inwards to ourselves, our disabilities, inadequacies, weaknesses; instead of looking up to who God is! – the one who has called, the one who has sent us, and the one who will equip us.

Look at how the Lord reply to Gideon’s complain and excuses in verse 16. Yet, again, this was not enough for Gideon. And he again tried to find a way of escape. “If ...then show me a sign.” (v. 17).

Application: Do we see a character full of unbelief? Gideon’s vocab is so full of unbelief, skeptical surprise, uncertainty, expression of hopelessness, complaints, sarcasm, and sign-seeking attitude showing lack of faith. Is this part of our vocab as well, when the Lord direct us to do something?

Gideon's unbelief arose from and consisted in his looking at circumstances instead of looking to God. Gideon's eyes were earthbound and inward instead of heavenward and unto the Lord.

Yes, looking at circumstances instead of looking to God is the certain cause of unbelief. There are other classic instances of this in the Scriptures.

Think of Peter walking on water to Jesus. As long as he keeps his eye on Jesus he treads the waves; but as soon as he begins to look around at the boisterous billows, his faith collapses, doubts seize him, he begins to sink, and cries out, " Lord, save me!"

Think of those twelve men of Israel who were sent to spy on the land of Canaan. Ten of them declared that Israel is utterly incapable of occupying the land; while the other two urge to immediately go in. The difference - the ten had their eyes on circumstance, whereas the other two had their eyes toward God. The ten put the difficulties between them and God and as a result God looked very small. The other two put God between them and their difficulties, and the difficulties seemed as but the opportunity for God to display His glorious power. Someone said, those ten pessimists saw four " G's." Grapes, great cities, giants, grasshoppers. But they forgot to see the biggest G which Joshua and Caleb could see, God.

Dear friends, Is it always the same with us? We look at circumstances instead of looking to God and this breeds unbelief, and unbelief begets helplessness and hopelessness. Let us focus on Him rather than on our problems, and learn to put full trust in Him.

Thus far we have seen that Gideon was so full of unbelief when he was first called by the Lord to be the saviour of Israel from the Midianites. But look now at his transforming experience.

Gideon in his debate with God challenged the Lord to show him a sign (v. 17). And the Lord God graciously acceded to his request. And after having seen the sign of a miraculous fire breaking out of the rock to consume the unleavened cakes which had been laid there, Gideon was quite convinced (vv. 17-22). And he built an altar unto the living and true God and called it Jehovah-shalom (v. 24).

In the OT, there is vital significance about the altar. It is the place where God and men meet. There at the altar the human soul interacts with God. When Gideon built the altar to Jehovah, it showed that he was in communion with the Lord. It means that he had made a clean break with the past, and became a worshipper of the one true God.

The proof of Gideon's conversion from his unbelief to trusting in the Lord was seen in that he named the altar Jehovah-shalom. The word "shalom" is the Hebrew word for peace. He called the altar "Jehovah is my peace." For the first time in the life of this young Hebrew boy, came a sense of peace. And this is what happens when a sinner is truly converted to the Lord. His heart is filled with wondrous peace.

Application: Do you have this peace? This peace is a peace that know that all our sins are forgiven by the virtue of Christ's atoning death by the shedding of His precious blood on the cross. Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

If you are washed, you have become reconciled to God, and the living
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Saviour daily keeps you, and there is a heavenly home awaiting for you in eternity.

If you do not yet have this peace, you must come to the altar which God had built at Calvary when the Lord Jesus was sacrificed for our sins. He died and rose again to save you and me from our sins. That is the altar where a holy, loving God gives us the pardon, peace, power and promise which we sinners need.

The next step of Gideon's spiritual transformation was his consecration. He offered himself to the will of God on that altar which he built. He did not only meet the Lord at the altar, but he also yielded himself to the Lord.

God tested his consecration as we see in vv. 25-26. It was a test of Gideon's faith and obedience unto the Lord. He was commanded to throw down the altar of Baal - false god which the people had been led away from the living and true God to worship. Therefore for Gideon to throw down the altar of Baal and to erect on to Jehovah in its place, and with a sacrifice made upon it, was to truly stand firm for his faith. It means inviting death for Gideon. Did he obey?

Verse 27 tells us what he did. He passed the test of his faith in God. He was even prepared to die for his new found faith in God by his action to destroy the altar of Baal. And then trouble came for Gideon in verse 28. Things were not good for Gideon. But just then a most remarkable surprise came. Look at verse 31. Gideon's father stood up and addressed the angry crowd. (see verse 31). It was a challenge for the idol worshippers. The marvellous thing was that Gideon's father stood by him in his faith in the true and living God.
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Application: Dear friends, would you stand firm for your faith in God, if you are put to the test? Sometimes we are afraid of what our parents, bosses, friends will say if we stand firm for our faith. But to our surprise they may even commend us for our firmness in our stand. Have you been tested for your faith? Did you stand firm? Or will you stand firm? (Testimony of a sister who went ahead to be baptised and ready to be thrown out of the house, but to her surprise, the father gave her an angpow).

And then we see the most remarkable transformation that took place in Gideon in verse 34. He was controlled by the Spirit of God when the Spirit came upon him. It is like God clothing him with God's armour to be ready to fight the Midianites which God had called Gideon to do.

Application: Note that when God calls, He provides what that we need to do His work for Him. He wants you to fight against the devil, He also provides His armour for you to put on. He sends us to spread the gospel, but He assures that He is with us always.

So we see that Gideon was converted to the true God, consecrated to the will of God, and then controlled by the Spirit of God to become the savior of the people of Israel. The people recognised all these and flocked to him when he blew the trumpet (v. 34). And the story that follows in the next few chapters tells of Gideon's marvelous victory over Midian, and freeing Israel from her enemy. God gave him victory over the enemy as he fought, trusting in God Almighty.

What a transformation has taken place in Gideon's life - from a heart of unbelief to a heart converted to God, consecrated unto God's will and a life

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controlled by the Spirit of God. And he gained a place in the Hall of Great Faith in the book of Hebrews.

Conclusion

Let us learn from the faith of Gideon. Let us not look at the circumstances around us, otherwise our faith in God will waver. But let us put our focus on Lord, fully trusting in Him alone, let us be ready to stand firm in our faith and yield our life to Him, to His will. And He will clothe us with His Holy Spirit to do things, in faith, for Him which He has directed us to do. May God help us.