

GOD STRENGTHENS HIS PEOPLE

CORE PASSAGE: JUDGES 6:36-40; 7:1-9

CONTEXT

The story of Gideon is the longest and most complex narrative of deliverance in Judges, stretching from Judges 6–9. Israel had turned to idol worship once again. God gave them into the hand of the marauding Midianites, who oppressed them for seven years. Again, God’s people cried out to Him. In response, the Lord called Gideon to deliver His people. But before Gideon faced off against the pagan Midianites, he had to deal with idolatry closer to home. God told Gideon to destroy his father’s idols, and he obeyed. With that preliminary task behind him, he mustered troops to face the Midianites.

KEY CONCEPT

God Almighty strengthens us in our weakness.

As you examine Judges 6:36-40; 7:1-9:

- Notice that God was patient with Gideon’s fears and gave him reassurances to strengthen his faith.
- Acknowledge that Gideon, like other judges, was used by God, but God is the One who delivered His people.



TIMELINE

Joshua Leads Israel into the Promised Land (Joshua 1–24)

Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar Judge Israel (Judges 3)

SESSION STUDY: Gideon Defeats Midian with 300 Soldiers (Judges 6–8)

The Cycle of Disobedience and Oppression Begins (Judges 1–2)

Deborah Judges Israel; Barak Defeats Sisera's Army (Judges 4–5)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** Judges 6:1–40

☐ **Day 4:** Judges 9:1–57

☐ **Day 2:** Judges 7:1–8:21

☐ **Day 5:** Judges 10:1–12:15

☐ **Day 3:** Judges 8:22–35

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 28



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

JUDGES 6:36-40

GOD IS PATIENT AND STRENGTHENS US DESPITE OUR FEARS AND DOUBTS.

Underline the phrases stating the doubts for which Gideon sought assurance.

36 Then Gideon said to God, “If you will deliver Israel by me, as you said, **37** I will put a wool fleece here on the threshing floor. If dew is only on the fleece, and all the ground is dry, I will know that you will deliver Israel by me, as you said.” **38** And that is what happened. When he got up early in the morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung dew out of it, filling a bowl with water. **39** Gideon then said to God, “Don’t be angry with me; let me speak one more time. Please allow me to make one more test with the fleece. Let it remain dry, and the dew be all over the ground.” **40** That night God did as Gideon requested: only the fleece was dry, and dew was all over the ground.

VOICES FROM THE CHURCH

“God is not ashamed to stoop down and reassure us in our fears. . . . He is patient with our weakness. God doesn’t mind humbling himself in order to bolster our fragile faith, our wavering grip on his word. He is so eager to do just that that he has provided a table instead of a threshing floor, and bread and wine in place of a fleece.”¹

—Dale Ralph Davis

Key Concept: God Almighty strengthens us in our weakness.



Gideon asked God to verify His call for Gideon to defeat Midian by causing a fleece to be wet and then dry on successive nights. Gideon's trouble was not a lack of clarity about what God had said. The Lord told him to "deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian" (Judges 6:14) and promised Gideon success (v. 16). Gideon confirmed twice that he understood God's instruction (vv. 36-37). Neither was the problem a lack of resources for the task. The Holy Spirit empowered Gideon, and he was surrounded by a vast Israelite army (vv. 34-35).

Gideon's problem was a lack of faith that God would use him, the youngest son of a weak family (v. 15), to save his people. Gideon needed assurance. Like Gideon, we should ask God for assurance when we feel our faith faltering. Jesus offered assurance to one of His disciples who needed tangible proof of His resurrection: "Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don't be faithless, but believe" (John 20:27).

How might we seek assurance from God when we feel our faith in His promises is wavering?

God was patient with Gideon and twice answered his doubts with assurance of His presence and power. First, He caused a fleece laid on the threshing floor to

be soaked with water even though the surrounding ground was dry. The second time, God caused the fleece to be dry and the ground soaked with dew. The latter test was even more striking than the former because wool absorbs moisture. Supernatural intervention obviously was needed to keep the wool dry on wet ground.

Gideon's weak faith could have drawn God's rebuke. But the Lord was gracious to support Gideon and to affirm the call upon his life to deliver Israel. Similarly, sterling character was not a precondition of our salvation. The Lord commands believers to grow in their character, but always on the basis that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

How has God strengthened your faith in a time of fear or doubt?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

x ————— x

MAN: Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

JUDGES 7:1-9

GOD CAN DO MUCH WITH LITTLE BECAUSE HE IS THE ONE AT WORK.

Keep a tally of the number of troops in Gideon's army throughout this passage.

1 Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops who were with him, got up early and camped beside the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them, below the hill of Moreh, in the valley. **2** The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, 'I saved myself.' **3** Now announce to the troops, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand of the troops turned back, but ten thousand remained. **4** Then the LORD said to Gideon, "There are still too many troops. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. If I say to you, 'This one can go with you,' he can go. But if I say about anyone, 'This one cannot go with you,' he cannot go." **5** So he brought the troops down to the water, and the LORD said to Gideon, "Separate everyone who laps water with his tongue like a dog. Do the same with everyone who kneels to drink." **6** The number of those who lapped with their hands to their mouths was three hundred men, and all the rest of the troops knelt to drink water. **7** The LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the three hundred men who lapped and hand the Midianites over to you. But everyone else is to go home." **8** So Gideon sent all the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred troops, who took the provisions and their rams' horns. The camp of Midian was below him in the valley. **9** That night the LORD said to him, "Get up and attack the camp, for I have handed it over to you."

Key Concept: God Almighty strengthens us in our weakness.



Surrounded by 32,000 troops mustered from the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, Gideon appeared to be in a position of strength (Judges 6:35). Yet God does not want His people to glory in themselves. Addressing that reality, Judges 7:2 states the opposite of what we might expect. It would seem natural for God to say, “The Midianites have too many troops for you to defeat them.” But instead, the Lord told Gideon there were too many Israelites. A large army might glory in its own strength. So God began a reduction of the army, releasing 22,000 soldiers who were afraid (v. 3).

God wanted it to be obvious who brought the victory. That necessitated a further reduction of the army. Only those specified by the Lord would face the Midianites (v. 4). Though God raised up deliverers, He was the One doing the delivering.

Why does God so often work through our weaknesses? What are some examples of this in your own life?

Gideon brought his army of 22,000 to the water, where God told him to dismiss everyone who knelt to drink. That left just 300 men for a battle with 135,000 (Judges 8:10). Commentators have multiple theories about this water-drinking episode.

Some claim the men who drank from their hands exhibited a virtue that would be valuable in battle—perhaps alertness. Yet such an interpretation seems out of step with the emphasis of the passage, that the Lord would get the glory (7:2). Therefore, the water-drinking test is best viewed as an arbitrary means of further reducing the army’s size.

In spite of Gideon’s small force, the Lord indeed gave them victory over Midian (v. 9). God will always succeed in delivering His people because He is the Almighty God.

How has God delivered you through a seemingly unsolvable dilemma?

GOSPEL CONNECTION



God Almighty redeems a weak and sinful people who could not earn salvation on their own. Through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, we sinners are redeemed.

WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH

For each passage from Judges below, record what Gideon needed and what God revealed.

6:36-38

Gideon needed:

God revealed:

6:39-40

Gideon needed:

God revealed:

7:1-3

Gideon needed:

God revealed:

7:4-9

Gideon needed:

God revealed:

In what ways does Gideon exhibit faith in the Lord?

In what ways can you see his lack of faith?

Key Concept: God Almighty strengthens us in our weakness.



HEAD

What traits of yours have you considered weaknesses but might help you be used by God?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 28. As you meditate on verses 1-2, confess the areas of life in which you feel weak. Express your trust in the Lord, and ask Him to shepherd you through challenges (see vv. 6-9).

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

In what areas in your life have you been complaining when you should be praising God?



HANDS

How might you begin a gospel conversation when you feel inadequate to share Jesus with someone?

