

## Gideon: Trusting in God's Plan, Provision, and Power

Good morning Anthem. It is nice to see those of you who have awakened from your Thanksgiving food comas. For anybody who might be new my name is Paden Rourk and I am the Deacon of Operations here at Anthem where I work primarily behind the scenes.

Our teaching pastor, Allen Coleman, is on temporary medical leave dealing with an old injury with his arm. We are prayerfully hopeful he is able to return back to us next week. Let us lift up Allen again this morning in prayer.

Heavenly Father, you have been so gracious to your church and you have blessed us with a group of amazing pastors. Thank you for Jim Clark, Lee Oberkamper, John Neville, and Alan Greer. These men do far more for us than we can imagine. Continue to the work you are doing in their lives.

I lift up Allen to you this morning. I know this is not easy for him and I cannot begin to imagine the pain he must be in. I am certain that you are doing a mighty work in the life of Allen and this is a part of it. Grant him the strength to endure and we ask that he come back to us soon. In Jesus name, Amen.

With that being said, I am going to say something that scares me. Allen Coleman was not supposed to be preaching this morning. We serve a Sovereign God who is in control over all things. For reasons not fully known, God has asked that I fill in for Allen this week, just as Daniel filled in for Allen last week.

This morning we will continue looking at the story of Gideon. We are in Judges 7 if you would like to go ahead and turn there.

I do not know about any of you, but I feel like I can relate a lot to Gideon. There are 2 ways I can see myself in Gideon.

### 1. Gideon sees himself as weak and unfit to be used by God

I am originally from a small town in Kansas. How can God use someone like me to be His ambassador to Marin County California? Which is the exact opposite of where I am from.

### 2. Gideon struggles with completely trusting God

I believe Gideon has head knowledge of what God is capable of doing, but he struggles with walking in that faith. God has done some amazing things in my life. Yet how easily I forget what he has done and continue to doubt what God says He is doing in my life and what He says He will be doing in my life.

I am sure that there are at least a few of you, if not this whole room, who can relate to that in one-way or another.

Last week we saw that God has given Gideon the sign of the fleece. He has confirmed with Gideon that He will indeed save Israel and use Gideon as a means to do so. Here in chapter 7 we begin to see Gideon's faith in action. We are going to see God continue to strengthen Gideon's faith by implementing what appears to be an impossible battle strategy to conquer the enemy of Midian.

What do you do when you are faced with what appears to be an impossible circumstance? When life gets really hard, what do you turn to for comfort and strength? Is your first instinct to trust God in whatever he is doing and walk in faith and obedience? Or, are you like me, and look to yourself, or to others, or to something else entirely, to get you through those hard times.

John 16:33 says this, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

There are 3 things I want us to trust in when life gets hard, and when our circumstances seem impossible:

1. Trust God's Plan
2. Trust God's Provision
3. Trust God's Power

## I. Trust God's Plan (Judges 7:1-7)

VS1 - The Gideon and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod. And the camp of Midian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

VS 2 - The Lord said to Gideon, "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

VS3 - Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.' Then 22,000 of the returned, and 10,000 remained.

VS4 - And the Lord said to Gideon, 'the people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say 'This one shall not go with you,' shall not go.

VS 5 - So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.

VS 6. - And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water.

VS 7 - And the Lord said to Gideon, 'With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.

## Trust God's Plan

In verse 3 we see that the army of Israel was 32,000. In Judges 8:10 we see that the army of Midian was 135,000 strong. Midian outnumbered Israel by more than 4-to-1, yet God told Gideon that Israel had too many men.

God asking Gideon to turn away the soldiers who were fearful and trembling is a procedure of war found in Deuteronomy 20:8.

**Deut. 20:8 - Then the officers shall add, "Is anyone afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his fellow soldiers will not become disheartened too."**

God is purposefully shrinking the army of Israel to prove a point. God knows the hearts of His people. If Israel defeated Midian when they were outnumbered 4-to-1 they undoubtedly would have rejoiced in their own strength. These odds, although bleak, are still too good.

God wants his people to fully trust in Him. In sending away those who are fearful and trembling, God has just sent home those people who fear man, more than they fear God.

**Proverbs 29:25 - The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.**

The fear of man is caring more about what others think of you than how God thinks of you.

Although I do not like to admit it, I care way too much about how other people view me. Trying to constantly please everybody can be paralyzing. Trying to make yourself something you are not is both exhausting and vanity. You obey the one you fear. If you fear man you obey the desires of the flesh more than the desires of God.

**Matthew 10:28 - And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**

God sends away these 22,000 soldiers because they fear more what they enemy can do to them than they fear what God is able to do through them.

How can we fight our fear of man? 3 C's...

1. Confess – When you recognize your fear of man confess it to God and repent. The church is also created as a family. Confess your fear of man also with your close brothers and sisters in Christ in order that they might help encourage you. I know from first hand experience that not confessing your fear of man can snowball and turn into a much larger problem. I highly encourage you to confess your fears.

2. Contemplate – Ask yourself why you are afraid. When we talk this out we can often hear how ridiculous this fear can actually be. Romans 8:31 – If God is for us, who can be against us?
3. Confront - Obedience calls for courage. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the resolve to obey despite what we feel. Exercise your trust in God by stepping out in obedience.

The army of Israel has been shrunk from 32,000 to 10,000. The army of Midian now outnumbers Israel by more than 13-to-1. God comes back to Gideon again and lets him know the army is still too big.

The army goes down to the water to drink and God shrinks the army again. He separates those who lap like dogs from those who kneel down to drink. What God asks Gideon to watch out for is confusing. I am not sure I fully understand what God is doing here, but I have an idea.

I understand God to be separating the strong soldiers from the weak soldiers. I also understand the 300 soldiers that remain to be the weak soldiers, not the strong ones.

My understanding is that those soldiers who knelt to drink water were the stronger soldiers. Kneeling to take a drink put them in a better defensive position in case an ambush was to occur. The total of those who knelt were 9,700.

Those who lapped like dogs, that is, those who put their hands to their mouth while also being on their hands and knees, were in a poor defensive position if they were to be ambushed. The total of those who lapped were 300.

If the point of shrinking the army is that God receives the glory. Will God receive more glory from using 300 strong soldiers, or 300 weak soldiers?

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 - For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

I do not know the detailed plan God has for your life. I do not know the detailed plan God has for my life. I do know that whatever his plan is, it is a plan that is full of redemption.

Transition:

The army of Israel is now only 300 and these 300 are the weakest in the army. God gives Israel's leader, who is from the weakest tribe, 300 of the weakest soldiers in Israel's army, to defeat an army of 135,000. The army of Israel is now outnumbered 450-to-1. These are odds God can work with.

When life seems impossible we trust in God's plan. We also Trust in God's provision.

## II. Trust God's Provision (Judges 7:8-18)

**VS8** So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

**VS9** That same night the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand.

**VS10** But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant.

**VS11** And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp.

**VS12** And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the East lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance.

**VS13** When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade. And he said, "Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat."

**VS14** And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp."

**VS15** As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand."

**VS16** And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars.

**VS17** And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.

**VS 18** When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.'"

## Trust God's Provision

God has a plan to save Israel from the hand of Midian. He has also provided Israel with everything that they need to defeat the Midianites. He begins by calling Gideon, a man who believes he is too weak to be used by God for such a great task. God gave them Gideon, a man who in a dream, is compared to a cheap barley loaf cake. Even when Gideon is fearful God is faithful in reassuring Gideon that this is indeed what He has planned.

The time has come for Israel to go to battle against Midian. Israel's army of 32,000 is now 300. Less than 1% of their army remains. If Israel is to put their faith in God alone, they must defeat the Midianites with 300 weak, but God fearing men.

Gideon and his men were also given rations, a trumpet, a jar, and a torch. Something does appear to be missing from this list. Where are the weapons? Where are their swords?

**Philippians 4:19 - And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

God has provided Gideon and his 300 men with everything they NEED, not everything they wanted, to defeat the Midianites.

You will not find God's battle strategy anywhere in The Art of War. God loves to do things differently, especially when it comes to delivering his people.

**Isaiah 55:9 - For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

### **Let us remember the exodus from Egypt**

The Israelites have left Egypt and Pharaoh has begun his pursuit of them. The Israelites have reached what appears to be a dead end. They are fearful of the Egyptians and angry towards God for bringing them all this way just to lead them back into slavery.

Exodus 14:13-14 - And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

The Lord delivered his people from the hand of Egypt without a single sword being lifted.



## Provisions in the wilderness

What about after the exodus? The Israelites spent 40 years walking around in a desert.

Exodus 16:2-3 - And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Did God lead his people out of slavery in Egypt into the wilderness to die? Of course not. God will provide for his people. He will never leave them nor forsake them.

In the evening the Lord provides Israel with meat to eat, and in the morning bread. He did this 6 days a week, in order to have them observe the Sabbath He provides an extra portion on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. God provided food supernaturally for his people 6 days a week for 40 years!

Psalm 37:24 -25 - The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand. I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.

We may not be given everything we want, but we have been given everything we need. We must continually practice contentment.

Philippians 4:11-13 - Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Hebrews 13:5 - Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

1 Timothy 6:6-7 - But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Luke 12:15 - And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Contentment cannot be found simply by giving more, or by purging all of your stuff. Being content is simply put trust in God. Gideon worships as a result of his contentment. He has 300 weak men who are without swords, yet he rejoices. Why? He rejoices because God is enough for him. Gideon is content with what he has been given.

Transition:

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

We give thanks in all circumstances because we trust God's plan, we trust God's provisions, and we trust God's power.

### III. Trust God's Power (Judges 7:19-25)

**VS19** So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands.

**VS20** Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

**VS21** Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled.

**VS22** When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

**VS23** And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh, and they pursued after Midian.

**VS24** Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and capture the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they captured the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.

**VS25** And they captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. Then they pursued Midian, and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon across the Jordan.

I want us to focus on verse 22:

Vs 22 – When they blew the 300 trumpets, **the Lord set** every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled....

Who is defeating the enemy? God is. God has prepared a plan, provided everything for the plan, and is all-powerful to bring the plan to completion. When God says he is going to do something we can trust God that whatever He says He will do. His promises are trustworthy.

Gideon finds his strength in the strength of God. We too should be finding our strength in God, not in ourselves. In God's redemptive plan he has given us everything we need.

Romans 8:11 - If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

We are called to walk by faith and God has provided us with promises to name claim to help us walk by faith. Here are but a few of these promises.

Isaiah 41:10 - fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Philippians 4:19 - And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 9:8 - And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 12:9 - But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Remember these promises. Memorize these promises. Celebrate these promises.

2 Corinthians 1:20 - For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

### Conclusion:

God has a plan for your life.

Proverbs 16:4 - The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Because of Christ, we the church get to claim Jeremiah 29:11 as a promise.

Jeremiah 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

This is a redemptive promise. God's plan for welfare, a future, and a hope may not look the way we think it should. This is more times than not the case. However, God is powerful enough to give us his strength and work through our weaknesses.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

## Advent: Hope

This is the first Sunday of advent where we celebrate the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. We celebrate the hope of Christ fulfilled in his first advent, and we have hopeful anticipation for his second advent.

All of scripture is the story of God's redemptive plan, His redemptive provision, and His redemptive power.

Because of Jesus Christ, we have hope...

[Advent Hope Video]