

6-2-24, COTR

Text: Judges 6-8

The Journey to Significance: The Story of Gideon

- I. Are you happy to be here today?
 - a) I am so glad that you're here.
 - b) My name is Cole, and I serve as the youth pastor here in Power House.
 - c) And I have some bad news!
 - d) If you haven't already caught on, you are stuck with me this weekend.
 - e) Thank you for containing your excitement!
 - f) Pastor John is off this week watching grandkids, so make sure you cover him in prayer.
 - g) Pray for strength, endurance, and maybe some patience too.
 - h) Thank you Pastor John for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to share this weekend. I really am honored to open God's Word with you.
- II. I am also honored to have the opportunity to minister to your teenagers.
 - a) That's something that I am passionate about, because I encountered God in a Power House service when I was getting ready to go into 8th grade and Christ forever changed my life.
 - b) So, we're not about just having hangouts or times of fun, although we do that, we do our best to make opportunities for teenagers in our city to encounter Jesus in the hope that He will change their lives just like He has changed mine.
 - c) We see that happen every single week.
 - d) If you're a student here today, and you haven't gotten plugged in at Power House, come and hangout with us. We would love to have you.
- III. We had a monumental moment in the Yeldell household a couple of weekends ago.
 - a) My 2 year old son, Titus caught his first fish, and by that, I mean that I caught it on a kids reel, and he got to touch it.
 - b) It was a monster. We had to fight it for hours to get it reeled in.

Picture - Titus's Fish

- IV. That's not just a picture of Titus and I, there is a fish, right there.
 - a) Even on that big of a screen it still doesn't look big.
 - b) I might should start saying we caught a minnow... but he was pumped that we got a fish!
 - V. Titus is getting ready to be a big brother in the next 2 or 3 weeks.
 - a) So, if Brittney calls me during my message, I might have to run out of here and Pastor Travis will have to come preach my notes. In fact, I told her to call if my message...
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- I. Before we jump into the Word, I want to pause. I try to remind our youth students of this quite often.

- a) I'm not sure if you recognize this, I hope you do, that what we are getting to be a part within this church and community of believers and what we are getting to see God do isn't normal.
- b) It should be normal in Christ's Church, but it's not.
- c) We try to celebrate together as church the great things that are going on, but honestly, it hasn't gotten to the point that we can't even keep up.
- d) God is just showing up and moving and transforming lives.
- e) Here are a few incredible things that came to the top of my mind that have happened in the last 6 weeks or so, that I'm not sure fully grasped how big they were.
- f) So let me brag on God just a little.

Pictures - TXK Together

II. In youth, a few weeks ago we hosted a city wide youth rally here at the church on a Wednesday night, and had 380 students show up.

- a) Our youth students, with Pastor Zach and Bethany, led all of those kids in worship.
- b) That night, students came to Christ.

Pictures - Texarkana Youth Revival

III. Just a few days later, some of our Power House students felt led to hold an outreach at one of the public schools in town.

- a) Got it approved by the administration.
- b) Promoted to other churches and schools and over 500 students showed up.
- c) Students made decisions to follow Christ.
- d) Think about that for just a moment, in the darkness of our culture, when the stats reveal that multitudes of young people are walking away from God, our young people are being a light in the darkness.
- e) Leading teens in our city in worship, sharing testimonies, ministering and praying for their friends.

Pictures - Power House Service

IV. Each week in youth, students are inviting their friends, our youth room is packed out.

- a) People are getting saved. We have a list ready to get baptized.
- b) Praise God!

Pictures - KZ Baptism

V. Lacey and our KidZone team are seeing our kids understand what Christ did and come to Jesus.

- a) Just a couple of weeks ago, held a special baptism service and baptized over 30 kids.

Pictures - COTR Baptism Weekend

VI. A few weeks before that, we had a baptism weekend and baptized around 50 people that have come to know Christ.

- a) Nearly every weekend our altars are full with people realizing that Jesus Christ is our only hope.
- b) There's so many things going on in The Connection, Celebrate Recovery, with our Seniors, Small Groups, in the School of Ministry getting ready to kick off again this fall.
- c) God is moving!
- d) I just want us to recognize that what God is doing here is special.

- e) Let's not take it for granted, but let's praise Him for what He is doing.
- f) It's not because we are smart or have it all figured out, because we most certainly do not.
- g) I believe it's just because we want to honor Jesus Christ about everything else, and He sees our hearts and keeps showing up and moving like He alone can move.

VII. What we are getting to be a part of and see God do is truly significant.

- a) Let's not just be spectators and watch and observe, but all of us let's play our part and see God move in our city, in our church, in our families and friends, in our personal lives.
- b) Because that, what we do for God, is what holds true significance.
- c) If you have ever heard me preach, you know I can tend to step on toes a little, but today I want to my best to encourage you.
- d) As we talk about a man named Gideon and his journey to significance.
- e) If you have your Bibles, turn with me to Judges chapter 6.

I. As you are turning there, I'll give you a little background about the book of Judges.

- a) This is an interesting time in the nation of Israel's history.
- b) This is after the Exodus story where God uses Moses to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians.
- c) Joshua then leads the nation in the conquest of the promised land.
- d) When Joshua dies, they lack spiritual leadership.
- e) The culture of Israel declines.
- f) People's hearts turn away from God and turn to sin and disobedience.

Judges 17:6 (ESV)

⁶In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

II. While Israel is living in disobedience, God allows for enemies, other nations to come against them and bring oppression.

- a) That is what the book of Judges is about.
- b) These seasons where the Israelites have ran away from God and find themselves in great difficulty, oppressed by godless nations.
- c) When they will cry out to God for help, God would raise up Judges or Godly people to bring deliverance.
- d) A few of the prominent Judges are people like Samson, Deborah, Ehud, and Gideon.

III. In that quick summation alone, you can't help but to see some parallels between the cycles that would occur in Israel and what we are seeing in America today.

- a) That we have come from such seasons of blessing and prosperity, primarily from the years of when our nation has sought after God.
- b) In that blessing, we have drifted away from Him to a culture where everyone desires only to do what was is right in their own eyes.
- c) Our hearts burn and are impassioned for everything else in life, other than proper pursuit of God.

- d) While we haven't seen oppression from war, where other nations have taken control of America, I would say that our people are oppressed.
 - e) We are producing the world's highest rates of anxiety, depression, perversion, loneliness, a general lacking of value and worth.
 - f) How is that we can live in arguably the most blessed and prosperous nation to have ever existed, where our lives are filled with blessing, but we feel like we have nothing?
 - g) I believe it's because we have forsaken what is truly valuable, we have turned our hearts from God.
- IV. The good news in this, is that I think many people are starting to wake up to chaos that this ungodly culture brings.
- a) Just like in the days of Israel, people are starting to cry out to God for freedom and deliverance.
 - b) For us, this is very different, because we aren't waiting for God to raise up a judge of old, but we realize that God has raised up the righteous Judge, Jesus Christ, who came to bring deliverance to all.

Luke 4:18 (ESV)

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

- V. You don't have to look far to recognize the brokenness and issues in our world.
- a) While I don't believe that God is raising up new judges today, because the true judge has come, Jesus desires to work through His people.
 - b) I do believe that God desires to raise up righteous and Godly people that will stand up in a culture of darkness and point people to the true deliverer.
 - c) And proclaim that there is hope, freedom, victory, and forgiveness through the cross of Jesus Christ.

1. It is our duty to proclaim the Good News to the lost and oppressed that there is freedom in Jesus.

- VI. I want our church, not to be one full of spectators.
- a) Where we come and watch others operate in their gifts, but that we would all go out and reach those around us, because that is what we were made to do.
 - b) A life lived for the glory of God and pointing people to Christ, that is a life of true significance.

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- I. I know that if you are here this weekend, you more than likely want to grow, you want to honor God, and do what He has called you to do.
- a) But I also know, that more often than not, we feel too insignificant to do something for God.

- b) How could God use someone like me? A good question...
- c) That is where we pick up in Judges 6 with the story of Gideon.

II. Israel is being oppressed by the Midianites.

- a) They begin to cry out to God, so God is about to raise up a mighty judge named Gideon to bring deliverance to the people.
- b) Except Gideon doesn't feel mighty at all. He feels insignificant.

Judges 6:11-16 (ESV)

¹¹ Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. ¹² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor." ¹³ And Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." ¹⁴ And the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" ¹⁵ And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." ¹⁶ And the Lord said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."

III. An angel of the Lord comes to essentially call Gideon to be a judge of Israel.

- a) There's a good argument to be made as you study this passage, that this isn't just an appearance of an angel, but this is possibly a Christophany, an OT appearance of Christ.
- b) This could be Jesus showing up and He calls Gideon a mighty man of valor, which is quite humorous, because Gideon isn't being mighty at all.
- c) He's not standing against the enemy.
- d) He's hiding, threshing wheat in a wine press.
- e) Trying to process some grain in secret, because he's scared the Midianites might see him and come take all of it and he would be left with nothing.
- f) Jesus calls this man, out of all of Israel, to go and bring deliverance and freedom.

IV. In this interaction, as soon as Gideon was called to something more, his immediate response was to hide behind the excuse that I am too insignificant.

- a) He really does a pretty good job of supporting his claim.
- b) Hey Jesus, I am from the weakest clan in Manasseh, and I am actually the weakest person in the weakest clan.
- c) He's saying I am the least of the least.
- d) I think you have the wrong person.
- e) Gideon felt pretty insignificant, too insignificant to be used by God and do what God had called Him.

V. This is exactly what we do. This is a place where so many Christians get stuck.

- a) We get really good at giving excuses on why we can't do it.
- b) That we aren't good enough, smart enough, eloquent enough, I'm too busy.
- c) I feel unequipped and unable. I get anxiety when I talk to people.

- d) We go through the mental gymnastics of this all of the time, declaring to ourselves that we are too insignificant to ever do anything great for God.
- e) To be honest with you, I deal with it too. We all do. I felt that way in preparing to preach this weekend.

2. **God loves to call the insignificant, which means God can use people like us.**

- I. The pages of the Bible are filled with examples of just that.
 - a) God calling insignificant people to do significant things.
 - b) Abram, a random pagan that was too old to be a dad, but God called him to be the Father of many nations and the father of the faith.
 - c) Moses had a stutter and murdered an Egyptian, but God called him to stand before Pharaoh and communicate to let God's people go.
 - d) God called a little shepherd boy named, David, from the shepherd fields to the palace, to be the king of Israel, and from His lineage would come the Savior of the world.
 - e) The disciples were all uneducated fishermen, more than likely in their teens and twenties, and yet, Christ used them to transform the world.
 - f) Peter, in many ways was the chief mess up, and God called him to be the leader of the NT church.
 - g) There is only one person in all of Scripture that has ever been deserving of His call and position and it is Jesus Christ.
- II. So, if you're here and you have struggled with feeling too insignificant.
 - a) My response to you, is that's great! Because that's exactly who God likes to use.
 - b) What is funny in this encounter with Gideon, as Gideon starts making excuses.
 - c) He is proclaiming that he is too insignificant.
 - d) God doesn't reply, no Gideon, you're great, you're awesome, you can do it.
 - e) You are more than enough. You just need to believe in yourself. Start each morning with some personal declarations of how powerful you are.
 - f) That's not what God says at all. He kind of says "Yeah."

Judges 6:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ And the Lord said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."

- III. I think we often overestimate our importance in what God is calling us to do.
 - a) It's not about our strength, ability, or eloquence.
 - b) It is about the One who is with us.
 - c) **Romans 8:31** declares "... If God is for us, who can be against us?"

3. **Our effectiveness in the Kingdom is not rooted in us, but it is found in the God who is with us.**

- I. We have to hold on to this truth that if God is calling us to do it, He will uphold us through it.
 - a) I'm always hesitant to use myself as an example, but I hope this can be an encouragement to someone.
 - b) I gave my life to Christ at Power House event called Impact Weekend.
 - c) It was a Friday night and Pastor Mike was preaching.
 - d) That night I truly committed my life to Christ.
 - e) The next day was filled with excitement going to sessions and learning more worshipping God for setting me free.
 - f) During Saturday night's service, I remember feeling God calling me to lead a ministry on campus that school year, which started a couple of weeks later.
 - g) Even that night, one of the leaders prophesied over me that I was going to be able to minister on campus and see many of my friends come to know Jesus.
 - II. I remember like it was yesterday feeling too insignificant.
 - a) I had just given my life to Christ 24 hours before, and now, I am supposed to be a minister?
 - b) I knew zero about the Bible.
 - c) I was unequipped in every way, but I also remember coming to the point where I decided to trust God.
 - d) If He was calling me to do it, I knew that He would be with me.
 - e) When school started, we spread the word about the group. I had no idea what would happen.
 - f) Our first meeting, about 25-30 of my classmates showed up.
 - g) I got up in front of everyone, so nervous I was about to throw up.
 - h) I read a little mini sermon that I had written word for word on a sheet of notebook paper.
 - i) It was probably one of the worst sermons in history.
 - j) I gave an opportunity for my friends to make decisions to follow Christ, and I remember hands going up around the room, and we stopped and prayed together as several of my friends made decisions to follow Jesus.
 - k) I remember just sensing the presence of God with me, and it was almost like God whispered in my ear. "Hey, I got you."
 - III. I have done my best from that point forward to just trust God and make room for Him to come and have His way.
 - a) If God can somehow use a little redneck kid from southern Alabama, He can certainly use you.
 - IV. Many of us need to shift our eyes from our own insecurities, insufficiencies, and excuses, and place them on our God, who is able.
 - a) He is more than big enough to use insignificant people like us.
 - b) It is essential to understand this on our journey to a significance.
 - c) I want to stir almost a child like faith in us today, to trust in God and for all of us to go do something for His Kingdom.
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- I. Judges 6 continues as Gideon and this angel, possibly Jesus, interact.

- a) And before Jesus calls Gideon to go and bring deliverance to the people.
- b) He gives him what many would consider a test.
- c) Somethings that he had to deal with.

Judges 6:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ That night the Lord said to [Gideon], “Take your father’s bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it ²⁶ and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down.” ²⁷ So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.

- II. God spoke to Gideon and told him to deal with the idolatry and sin that initially caused Israel to become oppressed by the Midianites.
 - a) We see that Gideon’s dad was one of the guys that built the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole.
 - b) God said, Gideon, go tear them down and built an altar to me.
 - c) The journey of significance always begins with...

4. Each of us dealing with sin and getting our house and family in order.

- III. Everyone of us, including myself, have struggles and things we deal with.
 - a) That’s another big excuse of why we don’t step out to do something great for God.
 - b) Because we know that there are other idols in our lives.
 - c) It’s far too easy to allow compromise to become normal.
 - d) There’s so many struggles we could talk about.
 - e) Christian statistics that reveal so many believers dealing with pornography, lust, being unfaithful to our spouses.
 - f) Lying, cheating, manipulating, greed, gluttony, anger, addiction.
 - g) I’m not here to beat you over the head, but to tell you that if you are wanting to make it through this journey of significance, and do something great for God.
 - h) It begins with toppling every idol and destroying every other altar that nothing stands before our God.
 - i) There is only One that we worship, and His name is Jesus Christ.
- IV. Here’s one part that I felt led to share, that might step on toes just a little.
 - a) Gideon had to go tear down what his father had built.
 - b) We have to be careful of what kind of example we're setting before our kids.
 - c) That we aren’t leading our kids astray.
 - d) When we don’t set the proper values and foundation in place and model it for our kids, we can’t act surprised when they reject it altogether.
 - e) When church isn’t a priority and we don’t really value being a part of Biblical and Christian community, don’t be surprised that your kids never want to go.

- V. I'm all for sports and activities and want to have well-rounded kids, that are talented.
 - a) But the busyness of our culture has gotten out of hand.
 - b) When we let practices, games, and school work constantly take precedence, we are communicating to our kids that all of that is more important than their relationship with God.
 - c) Maybe instead of your teen working on Wednesday nights and making \$40 bucks and not going to church, we use it as opportunity to teach them about making small sacrifices to prioritize God in our lives.
 - d) If they can't team them to balance a part time job and God now, they'll never do it when they are older.
 - VI. I hope none of that is comes off as harsh.
 - a) But one of the most significant things we can do is raising our kids and leading our families to know and cherish Jesus.
 - b) This is just a gracious reminder to think about how you are leading your family, and how we can all do that in a more God-centered way.
 - c) We have to model it for our kids. We have to get our families in order.
 - d) It can't just be a list of values or rules we demand them to abide by, our love for Christ should be infectious, and our lives should be healthy examples for them to follow.
 - e) Does your family see you worship? Study the Bible? Help someone in need? Evangelize and share your faith?
 - f) If not, maybe it's time we start.
 - VII. The journey to true significance always starts by dealing with our sin and getting our home in order.
 - a) We must be willing, not only to tear down the idols and struggles in our lives, but we must be willing to rebuild an altar of worship to the true God, a life lived unto Him.
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- I. Gideon was willing to do what those who came before him were unwilling to do.
 - a) To deal with sin and idols.
 - b) After this, God directed him to go and bring deliverance to the people of Israel.
 - c) Of course, this skipping through a lot of the story and how this unfolds, but we are running out of time.
 - d) This is what happens.
 - e) God calls Gideon to go and face the Midianites, not with a huge and mighty army, but God whittles the group down to 300 men.
 - f) Judges 8:10 reveals that the Midianites had an army of around 135,000 men.
 - g) It makes sense why Gideon is a little scared.
 - h) 300 vs. 135,000, that's 450 to 1.

Judges 7:19-25 (ESV)

¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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!” ²¹ Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled. 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 as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border... ²³ And the men of Israel were called out... and they pursued after Midian. ²⁴ Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and capture the waters against them...” ...and they captured the waters... ²⁵ And they captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb.

- II. Gideon, who was one of the most insignificant men in all of Israel, finally says yes to God.
- a) He tears down the altars of the false Gods, restores true worship back to the God of Israel.
 - b) Then, he leads a small army of 300 men and through the power of God, he defeats the Midianites, bringing victory to the entire nation of Israel.
 - c) Can I tell you that God isn’t looking for the most influential, the most eloquent, and gifted.
 - d) God is looking for people that will simply say yes to what He has called them to do.
 - e) God is looking for people that understand their insignificance, but know that they can do it because God is with them.
 - f) We all want to live significant lives.
 - g) We desire to do something great for God!
 - h) In this journey to significance...

5. Our job is to say yes and walk in obedience.

- III. And God will take care of the rest.
- a) Gideon’s obedience, his yes, led to freedom, it led to restoration, it changed the lives of everyone in the nation.
 - b) I think today is all about us getting beyond our insignificance and to stop making excuses.
 - c) It is time for us to say yes to God. Lord, I am willing to do whatever you call me to do.
 - d) He will empower us to do it.
 - e) Those are just a few important steps that we need to take in our journey towards significance.
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Response

- I. I want to invite you to bow your heads, and have a moment to respond to this today.
 - a) I want you to ask this question, “God what are you saying to me today?”
 - b) What do I need to do? What do I need to change? What do I need to say yes to?
 - c) Maybe it’s time to say yes to God and tear down some idols, altars, or sin.
 - d) Maybe its time to be more intentional with your family and your kids and getting your house in order.
 - e) Maybe it’s time to press past the excuses or feeling of insignificance, and choose to trust that God could even use someone like you.
 - f) Its time to say yes to leading the small group.
 - g) Starting that ministry.
 - h) Sharing your faith with your co-worker or friend.
 - i) It’s time to say yes, to God and choose a life of significance.

- Prayer

Salvation

- I. Let me close with one final idea today.
 - a) While I believe that all Scripture presents spiritual truths that we can glean from and gives practical application for us.
 - b) To always interpret ourselves at the center of the text is nothing short of poor exegetical practice.
 - c) We are not the center, Jesus is.
 - d) Let me end by pointing all of our attention, focus, and adoration where it should be, on Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.
- II. You see, not only is the Old Testament filled with historical accounts, but more significantly it reveals God’s desire and heart to redeem humanity.
 - a) This thread of redemption runs throughout all of Scripture, connecting the OT and NT.
 - b) The stories of God’s deliverance, restoration, redemption through mighty men and women.
 - c) The story of the judges and today the story of Gideon, is a shadow or prophetic picture of the coming of Christ and what He would accomplish.
- III. Gideon’s insignificance and humbled beginnings are a representation of Christ coming in humility.
 - a) Born in a manger. Shared room with animals. As a baby would have to flee and hide from Herod and those that desired to kill Him.
 - b) And would later be from what many would consider an insignificant town called, Nazareth.
 - c) Gideon, the judge and deliverer that the people did not expect, pointing to the fulfillment of God’s promises in Christ in a way that Israel wouldn’t expect.

- d) Gideon, who tore down idols and dethroned the culture of sin, pointing to the One who would come to defeat sin, restore true worship and relationship with God, and that would be high and exalted above all things and all names.
- e) Gideon's unprecedented method's in battle, illustrating Christ's victory that would not come by sword but by taking up the cross.
- f) Gideon's small army of 300 men, in which Judges 6:16 prophetically states that God would use to defeat the Midianities, and strike as one man.
- g) It points to the victory over all enemies, sin, and darkness, that would come through one man, the God-man, Jesus Christ.
- h) In the battle, 135,000 Midianites scattered, afraid for their lives, pointing to the fact that the powers of darkness tremble and flee in the presence of our God.
- i) The trumpet blast that sent their enemies into a frenzy, represent the trumpet sound of Christ that will be heard around the world on the day of His glorious return, signifying an end to all oppression and the fulfillment of all that Christ purchased on the cross.
- j) This entire story, and all of the OT narrative points to the One that will come and bring ULTIMATE REDEMPTION, not only to Israel, but to all who would come to Him and call upon His name, the name of Jesus Christ!

IV. That's why we are here today, because of what Christ has done.

- a) He came to the earth with one mission, to go to the cross taking on our sin and judgment, so that we can go free.
- b) His sacrifice was offered payment for our freedom. Christ's resurrection was proof that God accepted it.
- c) On the third day, when Jesus busted out of the grave it declared to all creation that He is the Son of God and that He accomplished His mission.
- d) Through Him we can receive forgiveness, the promise of eternal life, and not only have that hope for the future, but we can walk in freedom and newness of life here on the earth.

Belief. Repentance. Follow.