Judge 6:1 Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.

THEN - This is always an important expression of time and generally means "soon afterward" which we should prompt us to pause to ponder, asking "What has happened just before?" (and similar questions) which your Teacher the Spirit will help you answer (you will usually be forced to read the preceding context.)

Gary Inrig explains "then" setting the stage for the events in this and the subsequent chapters

"These verses paint a vivid portrait of the condition of Israel in the time of Gideon. Here we have the fourth go-round of the period of the judges, and, once again, it is the distressing cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, and salvation, followed by more sin and more servitude. God had given the people a wonderful deliverance through Deborah, and for forty years afterwards Israel had known freedom and peace. Then the people took their eyes off the Lord and focused their lustful gaze on the idols and evils of Baal worship, and once again God gave them over to the consequence of their sin—bondage and servitude under a foreign nation. Israel’s problems are, once again, the result of God’s judgment. The invaders come because God sends them. Gideon, at this stage of his life, reminds me of that old story of the man who came to his psychiatrist with a problem. “Doctor, you must help me. Everything’s going wrong. I feel worthless. My friends tell me I have a terrible inferiority complex. Can you help me?” So the psychiatrist told him that he would give him some tests and evaluate them. A week later, the man came back, and the psychiatrist said, “Friend, I have some good news for you and some bad news. The good news is that we have proved you do not have a complex. There is no doubt about that. But the bad news is that you are inferior!” If you had been in Ophrah and met Gideon just before the angel did, you would have found a thoroughly discouraged man. He might have said to you, “You know, I feel completely helpless and hopeless. These Midianites are turning us all into slaves, and there is not a thing we can do about it. The same thing keeps happening over and over again. We’re just stuck.” The only honest response you could have made would have been, “I understand
THE SONS OF ISRAEL DID WHAT WAS EVIL OF THE LORD:

- did evil - Jdg 2:13,14,19,20; Lev 26:14-46; Deut 28:15-68; Nehemiah 9:26, 27, 28, 29; Ps 106:34-42

Note the time phrase "then" which marks sequence. When is then? Stated another way, what did we just observe regarding time? (Jdg 5:31-note)

Did evil in the sight of the LORD - They made a willful choice! This is a sad repeated phrase in Judges (Jdg 2:11, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1-see notes Jdg 2:11, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1)

The phrase did evil is common in is also common in 1 and 2 Kings (24 times) (See all 41 uses - Jdg 2:11; 3:12; 4:1; 10:6; 13:1; 1 Kgs 14:22; 15:26, 34; 16:25, 30; 22:52; 2 Kgs 3:2; 8:18, 27; 13:2; 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:2, 11; 21:2, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19; 2 Chr 12:14; 21:6; 22:4; 33:2, 22; 36:5, 9, 12; Neh 9:28; Isa 65:12; 66:4; Jer 52:2), increasing in frequency in second Kings. It is as if the closer they got to judgment, the more evil they became or the more certain the judgment had to be. Just a thought to ponder. Note it is also interesting that this phrase did evil is not found in 1 & 2 Samuel. Could it be that the reason is that the leaders were godly men like Samuel and David? Note also that the evil began with Baalim (plural) but progressed to the point documented in Judges 10:6 (note)!

This same phrase is used to describe King Solomon's evil 1 Kings 11:6

And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.

In Judges 6 we see that 40 years of rest led to dimming of their memories regarding the greatness of God's deliverance over Sisera's 900 iron chariots. And so the next generation fell right back into the syncretism that again threatened to obliterate Israel's distinction as God's treasured possession. What is the principle for believer's of all ages? Remember, remember, remember. Remember the times God has delivered you in the past out of or through a difficult time. Time has a way of eroding our memory and dimming our vision of the greatness of our God. Just another reason to be in the Word daily reading verses like Judges 6:1. If it happened to them, it can happen to us. Periods of "rest" in our spiritual lives can lull us into the delusion that we are self sufficient and don't really need God all that much.

AND THE LORD GAVE THEM INTO THE HANDS OF MIDIAN 7 YEARS

- Ge 37:28; Ex 2:15; Nu 10:29; 24:21; 25:1-3; 25:17; 31:2
- Midian - Genesis 25:2; Numbers 25:17,18; Habakkuk 3:7):
Midian - see notes

TSK - When God judges, he will overcome; and sinners shall be made either to bend or break before him. See the ensuing history.

**Gave them** - (Translated in the Greek *Septuagint* with the verb *paradidomi* = to give one over to the power or authority of another. Used 3x in Romans 1 - Ro 1:24-*note*, Ro 1:26-*note*, Ro 1:28-*note*) The message is that if we play with sin, God may eventually give us over completely to the power or authority of that sin! This is a frightening thought!!! Jehovah repeatedly gave Israel into the hands of their enemies. Jdg 2:14, 11:32, 13:1-See notes Judges 2:14; 11:32; 13:1

Midian was located just south of Edom and at the north extremity of the Gulf of Aqaba. Midianites were semi-nomadic sons of Abraham. Midian was a son of Abraham by his concubine Keturah. (Genesis 25:2). Moses must have learned about surviving in the desert during these years.

**Gideon's** judgeship receives the most extensive narration in the Judges (100 verses comprising 3 chapters).

**Samson** is comparable, with 96 verses in 4 chapter.

This relatively brief period of oppression was sandwiched in between two 40-year periods of peace (Jdg 5:31, 8:28-see notes Judges 5:31; 8:28).

**Gary Inrig** comments on Jdg 6:1-10

These verses paint a vivid portrait of the condition of Israel in the time of Gideon. Here we have the fourth go-round of the period of the judges, and, once again, it is the distressing cycle of **sin, servitude, supplication, and salvation**, followed by **more sin and more servitude**. God had given the people a wonderful deliverance through Deborah, and for forty years afterwards Israel had known freedom and peace. Then the people **took their eyes off the Lord** (Ed: SEE DISCUSSION OF "**Vertical Vision**") and focused their lustful gaze on the idols and evils of Baal worship (Ed: This equates with "horizontal vision!"), and **once again God gave them over to the consequence of their sin—bondage and servitude under a foreign nation**. Israel’s problems are, once again, the result of God’s judgment. The invaders come because God sends them. This time God used an alliance of desert peoples, led by **the Midianites**, a **Bedouin** people from deep in the Arabian Desert. Midian had discovered a devastating new military weapon—**the camel**! In the twenty-first century with our sophisticated instruments of death and destruction, it seems ludicrous to speak of camels as advanced military technology. They are unsightly, temperamental, slow animals. But in the late second millennium BC, camels gave the Midianites enormous military
advantage. Ugly and large enough to strike anyone with fear, their supreme benefit was in giving the Midianites a mobile, long-range, swift attack capability against the Hebrews, who were entirely dependent on foot soldiers. **A camel can travel for three or four days with a heavy load on its back and cover about three hundred miles without food or water.** Even more recent times have seen the military value of the camel. The American army started an interesting experiment to use camels in the fight against the Native Americans, but the project was shelved when the Civil War broke out. In World War I, **Lawrence of Arabia** led his Arab warriors on camel back in a series of devastating attacks on more traditional German forces. With their powerful new weapons, the Midianites developed a unique strategy against Israel. Rather than invading and occupying the land, they simply waited until the Israelites had done all the hard work of preparing the soil, planting the crops, and readying the harvest. Then, as Jdg 6:3-5 reveal, they would move in from the desert, cross the Jordan in huge numbers, and overwhelm the land. Their military and numerical superiority left Israel defenseless; so they would seize every bit of food they could find. Like a plague of locusts (Judges 6:5), they would swoop through the land, stripping it bare of grain, vegetables, fruit, and livestock. Finally, their camels loaded with spoil, they would cross back into the desert and live there until the next harvest time. Perhaps they would leave a small force in the land, but the main host came only during the yearly invasion. This pattern of seasonal invasion was repeated for seven years (Judges 6:1), crushing Israelite morale and ravaging their economy. Israel was left in a desperate situation, reduced to hiding food supplies in mountain dens and caves. But nothing could stop Midian. Israel was defeated and helpless, or, as the writer says, they were brought very low (Jdg 6:6), literally “made small” agriculturally, economically, and socially. (Ibid)

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**Judges 6:2 And the power of Midian prevailed (Literally = the hand of Midian is strong against) against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.**

**AND THE POWER (hand ~ strength) OF MIDIAN PREVAILED AGAINST ISRAEL:**

- Leviticus 26:17; Deuteronomy 28:47,48
- 1 Samuel 13:6; 14:11; Hebrews 11:38; Revelation 6:15

**Charles Spurgeon** declared a principle we would all do well to hear and heed...
“The Lord does not permit His children to sin successfully.”

God is not a “permissive parent” who allows His children to do as they please, for His ultimate purpose is that they might be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Ro 8:29-note). The Father wants to be able to look at each member of His spiritual family and say, “This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5).

Chastening is evidence of God’s hatred for sin and His love for His people. We can’t conceive of a holy God wanting anything less than His very best for His children, and the best He can give us is a holy character like that of Jesus Christ. Obedience to the Lord builds character, but sin destroys character; and God cannot sit idly by and watch His children destroy themselves.

Israel had already experienced forty-three years of suffering under the harsh rule of the neighboring nations, but they hadn’t yet learned their lesson and turned away from the heathen idols. Unless our suffering leads to repentance, it accomplishes no lasting good; and unless our repentance is evidence of a holy desire to turn from sin, not just escape from pain, repentance is only remorse.

BECAUSE OF MIDIAN THE SONS OF ISRAEL MADE FOR THEMSELVES THE DENS WHICH WERE IN THE MOUNTAINS AND THE CAVES AND THE STRONGHOLDS:

Hiding in dens and caves...what a contrast for the chosen people who God said would "ride on the high places of the earth" (Deut 32:13)! Beloved, have you disobeyed God and as a result are hiding in a "den" or "cave" because you are experiencing the attacks of the "Midianites"? Then you need to study the life of Gideon, a most unlikely Biblical hero. God's Spirit transformed Gideon's fearful faith and He do the same for you beloved.

Note the repetition of places of refuge which emphasizes their fearful state. They ran to hide in the rocks instead of hiding in the the Everlasting Rock of ages, the Rock of their salvation.

Harper's Bible dictionary writes that...

"Natural caves are abundant in Syro-Palestine due to the presence of chalk, limestone, and sandstone formations in the hills and mountains. Because of the soft qualities of these materials, man-made tombs and caves are also abundant.

Not only are the caves in this region abundant, but they are frequently massive in size. One cave complex near Damascus in modern Syria was capable of holding four thousand men, according to Strabo, a Greek geographer who wrote in the late first century B.C. . That complex of caves is still visible today. Palestine also had large caves as indicated by the fact that David could conceal four hundred men in the cave of
Wiersbe quips that...

Instead of “riding on the high places” (Deut. 32:13), they were hiding in the dens!

**Judges 6:3** For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them.

**FOR IT WAS WHEN ISRAEL HAD SOWN:**

- when Israel - Leviticus 26:16; Dt 28:30, 31, 32, 33,51; Job 31:8; Isaiah 65:21,22; Micah 6:15

You have a garden, and you work hard all spring and summer to make that garden produce abundantly. But every year, just about the time you’re ready to gather in the harvest, your neighbors swoop down and take your produce away from you by force. This goes on year after year, and there’s nothing you can do about it. If you can imagine that scenario, then you’ll have some idea of the suffering the Jews experienced every harvest when the Midianites made their annual raids. For seven years, God allowed the Midianites and their allies to ravage “the land of milk and honey,” leaving the people in the deepest poverty.

**THAT THE MIDIANITES WOULD COME UP WITH THE AMALEKITES:**

Midianites were descended from MIDIAN & were "half-brothers" with the Hebrews as MIDIAN was one of the several children born to Abraham and Keturah, who had been sent away to the east so that Isaac might be Abraham’s uncontested heir (Ge 25:1-6). Joseph was later sold into Egypt by Midianite merchants (Ge 37:23-28). Moses fled to the land of Midian where he lived for 40 yr & where he married Zipporah, a Kenite princess, daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian (Ex 2:15-22). The Midianites provided opposition 9aided by Balaam who became a tool in their hands to curse Israel) to the Israelites as they journeyed toward the Promised Land, being found in league with the Moabites (Nu 22-25) and the Amorites (Josh 13:21). Known primarily as prosperous traders, the various groups of Midianites tended to merge with the Ishmaelites (cf. Ge 37:25, 26, 27, 28; Jdg 8:24-note). Later, Balaam became a tool in the hands of the Midianites to curse Israel (Nu 22-24). The AMALEKITES occupied the region just S of Judah. So this oppression was not continual occupation (like the preceding one of the Canaanites) but a seasonal invasion at harvest time. (See related discussion - Amalekites = exposition of Exodus 17:8-16)

**AND THE SONS OF THE EAST AND GO AGAINST THEM:** sons of the east a general term for the nomads of the Syrian desert, possibly including some Ammonites and Edomites.
Judges 6:4 So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey.

SO THEY WOULD CAMP AGAINST THEM AND DESTROY THE PRODUCE OF THE EARTH AS FAR AS GAZA:

- Leviticus 26:16; Deuteronomy 28:30,33,51; Micah 6:15
- Genesis 10:19; 13:10
- Proverbs 28:3; Jeremiah 49:9,10; Obadiah 1:5

Since Gaza is on the seacoast in SW Israel this fact shows that these Midianite raiders covered most of Israel from E to W.

- Related Resource: Judges 6:4-22: One War Over and Another Begun - C H Spurgeon

Judges 6:5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it.

FOR THEY WOULD COME UP WITH THEIR LIVESTOCK AND THEIR TENTS THEY WOULD COME IN LIKE LOCUSTS FOR NUMBER:

- tents - Song 1:5; Isaiah 13:20;
- grasshoppers - Jdg 7:12; 8:10; Jeremiah 46:23)

Like locusts = **SIMILE** = figure of speech comparing two unlike things & often introduced by like or as. Contrast with **METAPHOR** = figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object (eg, "food" in Jn 4:34) or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

**Desert locusts** are phenomenal travelers. They are able to fly for 17 hours at a time and have been known to travel 1500 miles. The sound of their wings is compared to the sound of chariots (Joel 2:5; Rev 9:9-[note]). A swarm has been known to cover a hundred square miles and to be so dense as to blot out the sun, A truly large swarm may contain ten billion locusts.

**Easton's Bible** dictionary records that...

"The devastations they make in Eastern lands are often very appalling. The invasions of locusts are the heaviest calamites that can befall a country. “Their numbers exceed computation: the and the Arabs knew them as ‘the darkeners of the sun.’ Unable to guide their own flight,
though capable of crossing large spaces, they are at the mercy of the wind, which bears them as blind instruments of Providence to Easton's Bible dictionary. the doomed region given over to them for the time. Innumerable as the drops of water or the sands of the seashore, their flight obscures the sun and casts a thick shadow on the earth (Ex. 10:15; Jdg. 6:5; Jdg 7:12-note; Jer. 46:23; Joel 2:10). It seems indeed as if a great aerial mountain, many miles in breadth, were advancing with a slow, unresting progress. Woe to the countries beneath them if the wind fall and let them alight! They descend unnumbered as flakes of snow and hide the ground. It may be ‘like the garden of Eden before them, but behind them is a desolate wilderness. At their approach the people are in anguish; all faces lose their colour’ (Joel 2:6). No walls can stop them; no ditches arrest them; fires kindled in their path are forthwith extinguished by the myriads of their dead, and the countless armies march on (Joel 2:8, 9). If a door or a window be open, they enter and destroy everything of wood in the house. Every terrace, court, and inner chamber is filled with them in a moment. Such an awful visitation swept over Egypt (Ex. 10:1-19), consuming before it every green thing, and stripping the trees, till the land was bared of all signs of vegetation. A strong north-west wind from the Mediterranean swept the locusts into the Red Sea.”

**BOTH THEY AND THEIR CAMELS WERE INNUMERABLE**

- camels - Jdg 8:21; 1Sa 30:17; Isaiah 60:6; Jeremiah 49:29,32; to destroy - Psalms 83:4-12)

Camels were a major factor in their success, being able to travel for 3-4 days, at about 100 mi/day w/o food or water, carrying heavy loads which made them a formidable long-range military threat. This is the first reference to an organized raid using camels (cf. Ge 24:10,11). The American army started an interesting experiment to use camels in its fight against the Indians but shelved the project when the Civil War broke out. So here were the Israeli forces, dependent totally on foot soldiers, and in come marauding bands of Midianites on creatures who by their ugly appearance alone would strike terror in the hearts of those who saw them coming.

**AND THEY CAME INTO THE LAND TO DEVASTATE IT:**

Joseph Parker applies this text commenting on God's use of natural means to discipline us...

God gets at men through various means. The Midianites came out and spoiled the fields of the Israelites. The camels of the Midianites were without number; they entered the land to destroy it. Wheresoever they laid their hand they crushed the hope of Israel. Has God a way into our life, then, through corn and grass? Has He a way to chastise us through
Judges 6:6 So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.

**SO ISRAEL WAS BROUGHT VERY LOW**

- **impoverished** - Ps 106:43; Jeremiah 5:17; Malachi 1:4;
- **cried** - Jdg 3:9,15; Ps 50:15; 78:34; 106:44; Isaiah 26:16; Hosea 5:15)

**Brought very low** - they were brought very low (Jdg 6:6), literally “made small” agriculturally, economically, and socially. See same word "hang down" Pr 26:7 for picture of this low state. In the Septuagint the verb ptocheuo means literally to lead the life of a beggar, be destitute, poor and helpless, the picture of of one crouching like a beggar because of their poverty. Interesting that ptocheuo is used only once in the NT of Jesus' poverty for us (figuratively, of Christ's earthly humility and lowly life)! (2 Cor 8:9).

**BECAUSE OF MIDIAN**: literally "the face of" Midian. One gets a picture of the sinful Israel having to stare face to face with the consequences of their sin! Woe!

Israel’s backsliding resulted in poverty and fear or lack of peace exactly what God had predicted in (Lev 26:1-6). God's promises are true, both of blessing & cursing (Heb 4:12-note). Those whom Israel had once conquered (Midian defeated in Nu 31 just before Moses died & Joshua led them into the promised land of milk & honey -- instead of enjoying the riches of the physical & spiritual life that God had intended for His children, Israel was reduced as the Septuagint pictures it to lead the life of a beggar - are you living like a beggar even though you are a child of the King, a son of the living God? (Ro 8:16-note) were now her masters. When believers turn from the Lord to the flesh, old habits enslave and impoverish us as well and we will be fearful.

How sad that Israel was brought so LOW, when God had delivered them from bondage in
Egypt and brought them UP (Jdg 6:8). What a commentary...our efforts and self will usually end up taking us "DOWN" whereas God's will and work takes us "UP". Lord, open our eyes to see this simple truth. Amen.

AND THE SONS OF ISRAEL CRIED (Qal Impf) TO THE LORD

- Jdg 3:9,15, Ps 50:15; Hos 5:15, Ps 78:34,106:44, Isa 26:16

This cry does not seem to have been an indication of repentance (but more of remorse) because they apparently were not aware of the moral cause behind the enemy's oppression until the Lord sent a prophet to point this out (Jdg 6:7, 8, 9, 10).

Gary Inrig notes that "the burden became too great and they “cried out to the Lord,” but once again it was a cry that lacked repentance. As we shall see, Baal worship abounded in the land (Ed: In other words they are crying out for relief, and yet unwilling to repent of their idolatry! How do you think God responds to such hypocrisy? Do we ever do this? We cry "Relieve me God" but refuse to release the idols from our grip?). Until now, every time God’s people had called to Him, He had sent a judge, a deliverer, to change their condition. Not this time. God sent a prophet because His people needed repentance more than they needed relief. His message is one of condemnation, not comfort; of judgment, not encouragement. This unnamed prophet is the only prophet to be directly mentioned in the book of Judges, with the exception of Deborah. (Ibid)

Judges 6:7 Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD on account of Midian

NOW IT CAME ABOUT WHEN THE SONS OF ISRAEL CRIED TO THE LORD ON ACCOUNT OF MIDIAN:

Once again they are not crying out to God "on account of" their sin and seeking the gift of repentance. And yet does God refuse their request? What does this say about God that applies to all of us?

J Vernon McGee - Here goes Israel again, whining and complaining. But God is gracious and good. A prophet came and told them why they were in their present condition. They cried out to God, and God in mercy sent them another judge.

Inrig - There is a great difference between a cry for help from trouble and a cry of repentance for sin. The Israelites called on God, but they had not dealt with their sin. So when God’s prophet came in Jdg 6:7-10, he began by reminding them of God’s unchanging faithfulness and grace. He had delivered them from Egypt, helped them dispossess the occupants of Canaan, and given them the land. He had also entered into a covenant with them, a covenant with the clearest and simplest of terms: “I am Yahweh your God. You shall not serve the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are dwelling.” God had done all
that in His grace for them. Yet, deliberately and defiantly, they had broken their covenant with Him. God does not belabor His point through His prophet. He simply states the obvious: “You have not listened to Me.” (It could equally well be translated, “You have not obeyed Me”). Strangely, there is no pronouncement of judgment or consequences but only a reminder that the Israelites had brought it on themselves. They were what they were and where they were because they had turned away from the living God. We need to hear this. All too often, when Christians experience the consequences of their own sinful or foolish choices, I hear them complain, “How could God let this happen to me? This isn’t fair!” We need to be reminded that the one thing none of us really wants from God is justice. If we were to get what we truly deserve, each one of us would be in terrible trouble! But God did not leave them there, aware of their sin and defeated by it. He was going to deliver them, and His first step was to prepare His deliverer, a very unlikely candidate named Gideon, meaning “hewer” or “hacker” in Hebrew. (Ibid)

**Judges 6:8** that the LORD sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt, and brought you out from the house of slavery."

THAT THE LORD SENT A PROPHET TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, AND HE SAID TO THEM:

- Jdg 2:1, 2, 3; Neh 9:9, 10, 11, 12; Ps 136:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; Isaiah 63:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; Ezek 20:5-32

**GOD REMINDS ISRAEL OF HIS PAST FAITHFULNESS**

The only other prophet mentioned in the book besides the Prophetess Deborah. God used prophets in isolated cases before Samuel, the band of prophets Samuel probably founded (1 Sa 10:5), and later such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, and the writing prophets—major and minor. Here the prophet is sent to bring the divine curse because of their infidelity (v10). So cried to God for a deliverer, and He sent them a prophet to point out the "why" of their predicament (DISOBEDIENCE) (Jdg 6:10 cf Heb 4:12-note, He 4:13-note; Lam 2:14).

We usually call Samuel the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24), but there were unnamed prophets before Samuel’s time.

Ralph Davis comments on God’s response to Israel's cry for help writing that...

Israel cries for relief, “and Yahweh sent a prophet to the sons of Israel” (Jdg 6:8). That would be like a stranded motorist calling a garage for assistance and the garage sending a philosopher instead of a mechanic. Israel needs deliverance and Yahweh sends a prophet; Israel asks for an act of God’s power and he sends them a proclaimer of his
Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery (Josh 24:17):

There is a great difference between a cry for help from trouble, and a cry of repentance for sin. Israel called on God but they had not dealt with their sin. So God’s prophet came in Jdg 6:7-10 and reminded them of God’s faithfulness and grace -- how He had delivered them from Egypt and given them the land of Canaan and set forth the terms of His covenant "I am Yahweh your God. You shall not serve the gods of the Amorites." Yet deliberately and defiantly they had broken their covenant with Him. So the prophet reminded them that they were what they were and where they were because they had turned away from Him. But God did not leave them in this awareness (but they must not have been that aware as they still had Baal altars in the Joash's backyard!) of their sin and their defeat because of it but He raised up an unlikely deliverer.

Judges 6:9 ‘And I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land,

Ps 44:2,3 You with Your own hand drove out the nations; Then You planted them; You afflicted the peoples, Then You spread them abroad. For by their own sword they did not possess the land, And their own arm did not save them, But Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence, For You favored them.
And I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors - God is reminding them of His past mercies. It is so easy to forget His past divine deliverance when we are ensnared by present passing pleasure! It's as if we develop an acute (or chronic as the case may be) case of spiritual amnesia! God warned Israel and He warns us today not to forget (cp Dt 4:9, 23, 31, 6:12, 8:11, 14, 19, 9:7, 26:13) Dt 32:18 says "You neglected the Rock who begot you, And forgot the God who gave you birth." Mark it down beloved, neglecting God soon leads to forgetting God! The best antidote is a daily dose of His Holy Word (Lk 4:4-note) in your Quiet Time. Is your Quiet Time too quiet? Be careful, because you are only a step away from forgetting the great deliverance of God! You are vulnerable to the fiery missiles of the evil one! (Eph 6:16-note)

Judges 6:10 and I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.

AND I SAID TO YOU, I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD YOU SHALL NOT FEAR (could mean "reverence") THE GODS OF THE AMORITES IN WHOSE LAND YOU LIVE:

- I am - Exodus 20:2,3
- Not fear - 2 Ki 17:33,35, 36, 37, 38, 39; Jer 10:2

Do not fear is translated by NIV as "do not worship" which is possible but the Hebrew verb speaks of reverential awe or respect. To be sure, the effect of fears of a deity, is that one will obey, serve, and worship that god. The Lord made it clear to Israel that they were to fear Him alone.

In essence this might be paraphrased as "you shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex20:3-5) The Israelites gave no evidence of real repentance, but their affliction moved God’s loving heart. “In all their affliction He was afflicted” (Isa63:9). “He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities” (Ps 103:10, NIV). God in His mercy doesn’t give us what we do deserve; and in His grace, He gives us what we don’t deserve.

BUT YOU HAVE NOT OBEYED (hearkened to) ME (2Ch 24:19 re not listening to prophets): (Jdg 2:2; Proverbs 5:13; Jeremiah 3:13,25; 9:13; 42:21; 43:4,7; Zephaniah 3:2; Romans 10:16; Hebrews 5:9)

Obeyed actually translates the Hebrew idiom "hear my voice" or "listen to my voice". Thus the Hebrew literally reads "not listened to my voice". The picture is comparable to an irate parent asking a stubborn child, "Do you hear me?" The question is not designed to test the child's literal hearing capacity, but rather could be paraphrased: "Do you intend to take my wishes seriously and obey me?" Israel proved to be a "stubborn" child indeed.
Judges 6:11 Then the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

- Map of period of the Judges
- Map of all the Judges of Israel
- Map of Gideon's Battles

THEN THE ANGEL OF THE LORD CAME AND SAT UNDER THE OAK THAT WAS IN OPHRAH (fawn): see analysis of this title "Angel of the LORD" (Jdg 6:14-16; 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5; 5:23; 13:3, 18, 19, 20; Genesis 48:16; Joshua 18:23; Isaiah 63:9)

Ophrah's location not absolutely certain but it was apparently East of the Esdraelon Plain = Greek for Jezreel (see Jezreel Valley) = low-lying area separating mountains of Galilee from the mountains of Samaria.

WHICH BELONGED TO JOASH THE ABIEZRITE (= my father is help) (Jdg 8:2 Jos 17:2 )

What is unique in this description of Gideon is that text does not say as it did in previous chapters "God raised up a deliverer". Since Gideon’s father Joash was an Abiezrite (a clan of Manasseh, Jos17:2), this Ophrah was not the place located in Benjamin but rather a northern site possibly near the border of Manasseh in the Jezreel Valley. Possible site identifications are el-Affula (six miles east of Megiddo) or et-Taiyiba (Hapharaim, eight miles northwest of Beth Shan).

The story of Gideon is introduced not by an affirmation that “God raised up a deliverer named Gideon,” but rather by a narration of how God raised him up. Gideon’s call or commission resulted from a confrontation with the Angel of the Lord (Who is “the LORD” YAHWEH, "I AM" [v14, 16, 23, 25, 27]

AS HIS SON GIDEON WAS BEATING OUT WHEAT IN THE WINE PRESS (Cp 7:25; rather than on an exposed threshing floor) IN ORDER TO SAVE IT FROM THE MIDIANITES:

Baxter writes that "Gideon, the fifth judge of Israel, is rightly counted as one of the outstanding heroes in Israel's early history. Yet we need to realize at the outset that his heroism was not a product of his natural make-up, but the outcome of a transforming spiritual experience. It is this which gives him a living significance to ourselves today." (J. Sidlow Baxter. Explore the Book)

This is an act of desperation & fear, lest the Midianites discover and seize even the small amount that could be threshed that way. The usual practice for threshing would be in an open & elevated location where the wind would blow away the chaff. This indicated a situation of serious distress; also it indicated a small amount of grain. This is clear because he is doing it rather than having cattle tread it. It is on bare ground or in the winepress rather than on a threshing floor made of wood, and is done remotely under a tree out of
In sum, Gideon's act of threshing wheat in a winepress reflected both his fear of discovery by the Midianites and the smallness of his harvest. Normally wheat was threshed (the grain separated from the wheat stalks) in an open area on a threshing floor (cf. 1 Chr 21:20-23) by oxen pulling threshing sledges over the stalks.

As Inrig says "As the eighth harvest season rolled around and with it the threat of the Midianite invasion, if you had taken a poll to discover the most likely deliverer of Israel, one name would never have appeared on your list. There was never a less likely liberator than Gideon, the son of Joash, a man from the tribe of Manasseh and the clan of Abiezer." (Ibid)

**SIGNIFICANCE OF "WINEPRESS"**

In Gideon's day the winepress was always put at the foot of the hill because they brought the grapes down from the vineyard. Naturally, they would carry the heavy grapes downhill; they carried them to the lowest place. In contrast, the threshing floor was always put up on the top of the hill, the highest hill that was available, in order to catch the wind which would drive the chaff away. Here we find Gideon, down at the bottom of the hill, threshing. Now that would be the place to take the grapes, but that is no place to take your crop in order to do your threshing. Can you see the frustration of this man? Why doesn’t he go to the hilltop? Well, he is afraid of the Midianites. He does not want them to see that he is threshing wheat. And you can imagine his frustration. There is no air getting to him down there, certainly no wind. So he pitches the grain up into the air. And what happens? Does the chaff blow away? No. It comes down around his neck and gets into his clothes making him very uncomfortable. There he is, trying his best to thresh in a place like that, and all the time rebuking himself for being a coward, afraid to go to the hilltop.

Many of the ancient wine presses remain to the present day. Ordinarily they consisted of two rectangular or circular excavations, hewn (Isa 5:2) in the solid rock to a depth of 2 or 3 feet. Where possible one was always higher than the other and they were connected by a pipe or channel. Their size, of course, varied greatly, but the upper vat was always wider and shallower than the lower and was the press proper, into which the grapes were thrown, to be crushed by the feet of the treaders (Isa 63:1-3, etc.). The juice flowed down through the pipe into the lower vat, from which it was removed into jars (Hag 2:16) or where it was allowed to remain during the first fermentation. Many modifications of this form of the press are found. Where there was no rock close to the surface, the vats were dug in the earth and lined with stonework or cement, covered with pitch. 1915 edition (J. Orr, Ed.).

A large vat for crushing grapes, located not on a hilltop like a threshing floor, but in a valley. Gideon was threshing in small quantities in an inconspicuous place, hoping to finish quickly and avoid detection by marauding bands. The Open Bible
Judges 6:12 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."

AND THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO HIM AND SAID TO HIM:

- **the angel** - Jdg 13:3; Luke 1:11,28; The Lord - Jdg 2:18; Ex 3:12; Josh1:5,9; Ruth 2:4-note; Mt 1:23; 28:20; Luke 1:28; Acts 18:9,10

**THE ANGEL OF THE JEHOVAH APPEARS**

Gideon started his career as somewhat of a coward (Jdg. 6), then became a conqueror (Jdg 7:1-8:21), and ended his career as a compromiser (8:22-35). But more space is devoted to Gideon in the Book of Judges (100 verses) than to any other judge; and Gideon is the only judge whose personal struggles with his faith are recorded. Gideon is a great encouragement to people who have a hard time accepting themselves and believing that God can make anything out of them or do anything with them.

Ninety-six verses are devoted to the last judge, Samson. The first four judges were godly people; but from the time of Gideon, the leaders began to decay until you get to Samson, the most unspiritual of them all. Because the nation wanted freedom from the enemy without being dedicated to God, they didn’t deserve godly leaders. Sometimes God gives His people exactly what they deserve.

**THE LORD IS WITH YOU** (singular): affirmed the Lord’s presence with Gideon

Davis comments on God's promise "Jehovah is with you" writing that "Basically, God has nothing else or more to offer you. You can go through a lot with that promise. It does not answer your questions about details. It only provides the essential. Nothing about when or how or where or why. Only the what, or, better, the Who. “But I will be with you.” And that is enough." (Ralph Davis Judges: Such a Great Salvation - Focus on the Bible)

**O VALIANT** (mighty, excellent) **WARRIOR**: "Valiant" (hayil/chayil) conveys the has the basic idea of strength and influence.

**Warrior** (gibbor) is an adjective meaning brave, strong, mighty and is used in a description of God Himself (See Mighty God - El Gibbor Isaiah 10:21; Jer. 32:18).

**Valiant warrior** frequently had a military connotation. In the present context it appears that these name by the Angel of Jehovah anticipated Gideon 's role as a warrior and was intended to inspire confidence. It is possible that the phrase simply identifies Gideon as a prominent citizen in his town which is how it is used of Boaz.

**Valiant warrior** is the same description used of other men in the OT:

Joshua 1:14, 8:3, 10:7, Jephthah in Judges 11:1, Boaz (man of "great
It does appear that God called Gideon what he would become, certainly not what he was at the time of this encounter.

God came to a old childless man named Abram and said I will make you a father of many nations.

God came to Cephas and said you will be Peter (Rock).

Our God is an awesome God...while others look at us and see our flaws and failings, God looks at us and sees our possibilities (in Christ). Don't sell yourself short for what God can or will do in and through your life if you are willing to submit to the Refiner's purifying fire and the Master's touch! Remember that God does not save us and use us for what we are but for what by His great mercy and grace we may become.

In short, God recognizes in Gideon something that Gideon does not see himself. God sees our potential. God sees us for what we can become, as He works in our lives. He is in the business of taking "nobodies" and transforming them by His presence in their lives. He begins with us where we are be it in the winepress or on some mundane job, etc. He knows our weaknesses, our faults, our shortcomings but He does not say "If you get those things out of your life, then I'll be able to use you." He takes our inadequacy and transforms it into His adequacy. God has a way of seeing beyond our fears and frailty. God does not save us and use us for what we are but for what by His grace we may become. Amen.

Gideon's story is truly a wonderful example of the truth of [Romans 15:4] = My paraphrase:

"Judges, et. al. was written for our instruction that thru the perseverance & the encouragement of the God of Judges & the lives of the characters of Judges we too might have HOPE in the midst of our trying circumstances." (Real Life Version)

God sees the potential in you and says to you as He did to Simon, “You are . . . You shall be” (John 1:42). He knows your weaknesses and will accommodate Himself to your needs so that He might develop your faith.

Brensinger applies the truths in this section noting that...

Within this wide spectrum of spiritual participants, the opening events of the Gideon narrative speak at least two special words to the weary and fainthearted:

God’s Presence During Difficult Moments - “Help! I’m going round the bend!” a tattered minister cried out to God. “Don’t worry,” came the reply, “I’m coming round there with you!” (Horsman: 91). In much the same way, God responds to both Israel and Gideon during the Midianite crisis. On the national level, the hideous oppression meted out by the
Midianites might cause the Israelites to hide in caves, but it fails to scare the Lord away. In answer to Israel’s plea for mercy, God draws near. On a more personal level, the Lord similarly demonstrates his continuing presence to Gideon, his chosen but intimidated vessel of deliverance. Rather than leaving him alone, God steps right up beside Gideon during the most difficult and challenging moments of his life. The Lord, in other words, does not abandon his people when circumstances turn sour, even if the turmoil results from their own doing (Ps. 46:1).

God’s Patience During Weaker Moments - In addition to meeting Gideon’s repeated requests, the Lord later offers unsolicited reassurance. In the same way that Job presents sacrifices “just in case” his children have sinned, so too does God provide an encouraging dream “just in case” Gideon’s doubts and fears linger (Job 1:5; Jdg. 7:10, 11, 13, 14). Rather than insisting that Gideon immediately rise to the desired level of commitment, the Lord nurtures him through his moments of weakness. While not condoning evasiveness or prolonged excuse-making, God deals graciously and patiently with all of the Gideons of the world who genuinely need help and reassurance. “God does not require us to have arrived,” writes Sarah Horsman, “only to be moving in the right direction” (41). Apparently, people in need of assistance are more usable in the long run than those who charge out and insistently go to work on their own. (Brensinger, T. L. Judges. Believers Church Bible commentary. Page 87. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press)

Judges 6.12 G Campbell Morgan

The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. Judges 6.12

The story of Gideon is one of the most fascinating in this Book. Forty years' rest followed the work of Deborah. Then the people fell again into evil ways, and for seven years suffered the most cruel oppression at the hands of Midian. They were driven to hide in dens and caves and strongholds. From that terrible situation Gideon was raised up to deliver them. These words were addressed to him by the Angel of Jehovah. They reveal the secrets of the strength which gave him the victory presently over Midian; and those secrets were two. First, there was the one supreme fact that Jehovah was with him; but there was also what he was in himself—"a mighty man of valour." Wherein did that valour consist? Apparently he was a simple man living a very ordinary life. The Angel found him about his daily duty, "beating out wheat in the wine-press." He had given no sign of military disposition or ability. We shall discover the answer to the inquiry as we listen to what he said to the Angel. To the heavenly visitor he confessed his double consciousness. This may be stated in two sentences which he uttered: "Did not Jehovah bring us up?" "Jehovah hath cast us off." He was thus revealed as a man conscious of the true relation of
the people to Jehovah; and of the fact that their sufferings were the result of the Divine judgment. It is ever the man who has this double vision of Divine intention and human failure, who is the man of might and valour. With that man the Lord can work. (Morgan, G. C. Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible)

Judges 6:13 Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

THEN GIDEON SAID TO HIM, "O MY LORD (not Jehovah but Adon) IF THE LORD IS WITH US, WHY THEN HAS ALL THIS HAPPENED TO US?: (Genesis 25:22; Exodus 33:14, 15, 16; Numbers 14:14,15; Romans 8:31) (Deuteronomy 29:24; 30:17,18; Psalms 77:7-9; 89:49; Isaiah 59:1,2; 63:15 )

How like all of us to question the presence of God because of our present circumstances. But to do so is to doubt the Word of God and that is sin for it is not faith (Ro 14:23). Now it is obvious though that at this point Gideon did not recognize the Holy One Who addressed him but he did use a term of respect similar to Abraham (Ge 19:2 cp Ru 2:13, 1Sa 1:15, etc).

Baxter comments that...

When first we see Gideon he cuts a pathetic figure of unbelief (6:11-23). He is a furtive, nervous young man secretly threshing wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the marauding Midianites. What pathetic exclamations of unbelief escape his lips when the Lord suddenly appears... He gasps - "Oh, my Lord, if Jehovah be with us why then is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying: Did not Jehovah bring us up out of Egypt? But now Jehovah hath forsaken us ..." A rather dismal reception this! - "Oh! ... if ... why? ... where?... but ..." Verse 14 continues, "And Jehovah looked upon him and said: in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" These were strong and reassuring words, but Gideon can only moan, "Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I have Israel ...?" The Lord replies still further, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Yet even this only evokes another stammering "if" - "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, then show me a sign." To be sure, in these replies of Gideon we have a fair sample of the vocabulary of unbelief. In his successive exclamations and lamentations we have the skeptical surprise of unbelief, then its uncertainty and its questioning and its complaining and its false humility and its resourcelessness and its persistent dubiety and its seeking for signs. Unconverted Gideon presents a sorry picture of the
Warren Wiersbe comments that...

"When God called him, he was hiding. When God spoke to him, he raised problems instead of trusting promises. One of his favorite words was if (vv. 13, 17, 36; Mark 9:22-23)." (Wiersbe, W. W. Be Available. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books)

The most popular image of the local church today is that of the corporation, with the pastor as the CEO. I wonder how many churches would want a CEO with the credentials of some of the people God used in the Bible? Moses was eighty years old when he began his ministry and he was wanted for murder in Egypt. Jacob was a schemer. Elijah suffered from depression, and so did Jeremiah. Hosea couldn’t keep his marriage together. Amos, a farmer, had no ministerial training. Peter tried to kill a man with his sword. John Mark was a quitter, and Paul couldn’t get along with his associate Barnabas. These traits are not excuses either for leaders to sin or for churches to lower their standards, but they do remind us that God’s ways aren’t always our ways. The man or woman we think least qualified for God’s work may turn out to be a mighty servant of God.

AND WHERE ARE ALL HIS MIRACLES WHICH OUR FATHERS TOLD US ABOUT, SAYING, 'DID NOT THE LORD BRING US UP FROM EGYPT': (Psalms 44:1; 78:3,4 )

Miracles (pala') is a verb meaning to do something wonderful, to do something extraordinary, or difficult. It frequently signifies the wondrous works of God, especially His deliverance and judgments. The verbal root of pala' has the basic meaning be surpassing and conveys the ideas "be extraordinary, beyond one's imagination or expectations" or "be too difficult, beyond one's capability." Gideon most likely was referring to the Exodus and the events connected to it. In the Exodus account pala' refers specifically to the plagues God sent upon Egypt (Ex. 3:20), while Ps. 78:11, 12 associates these wonders with the miracle at the Red Sea.

Gideon's response reflects unbelief as well as ignorance (or forgetfulness) of God and His clear warning in Scripture that if Israel would forsake God...

"Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they shall be consumed, and many evils and troubles shall come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' (Dt 31:17)

Gideon had it backwards! The Lord had not forsaken them as much as they had forsaken the Lord!

BUT NOW THE LORD HAS ABANDONED US AND GIVEN US INTO THE HAND OF MIDIAN: (Deuteronomy 31:17; 2Chronicles 15:2; Psalms 27:9; Isaiah 41:17; Jeremiah 23:33)
Gideon’s initial response ignored the singular pronoun “you” (Jdg 6:12), for he replied, If the Lord is with us (pl. pronoun). Gideon questioned the divine promise in view of his people’s present circumstances. He correctly concluded, however, that the Lord had put them into the hand of Midian. The point however is that it was not God Who had abandoned His people, but God's people who had turned their backs on Him. It is far easier to blame God for our problems than to recognize and deal with our sins and responsibilities.

Abandoned (natash) means to forsake or leave alone and carries the basic sense of leave, reject or abandon. Natash is used of the Lord rejecting his people because of their rebellion. When God does so, He withdraws His protective presence and hands them over to their enemies, subjecting them to defeat and humiliation.

John MacArthur's comment: Gideon’s language here indicates a weak theology. The very chastisements of God were proof of His care for and presence with Israel." Indeed how often in the midst of the Refiner's fire do we feel like the Almighty has deserted us, having abandoned us to the fiery furnace of affliction & suffering!!! (cp Heb12:5, 6-note, He 12:10-note, He 12:11-note). (MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word)

Gary Inrig - The Problem of Discouragement - The first problem is uncovered in verse 13. Notice again the words Gideon used: “If . . . why . . . where . . . but now the Lord has abandoned us.” What we saw pictured in action in verse 11 we now hear spoken in words. Gideon was a discouraged, defeated man.

A little girl was listening to her mother as she told her some Bible stories about great biblical champions such as Moses, David, Elijah, and Daniel. As her mother finished and prepared her for sleep, the little girl spoke with the kind of innocent honesty that only a child can muster: “Mommy, you know, God was much more exciting back then.” I think that Gideon felt like that. I know I sometimes do. It is wonderful to hear what God has done for His people in the past. Gideon believed thoroughly in God’s power back then. But where were those miracles now? Where was God today? How could they possibly deal with the Midianites? God had abandoned them. That’s why things were the way they were. Of all the forms of discouragement, this is the worst. For a believer to feel that God is not interested or to think that God has turned His back is to be reduced to a debilitating despair that crushes all hope from our lives. That is where Gideon was as God began to deal with him. Obviously Gideon had not really come to grips with the situation. It was true that God had abandoned His people and sold them into the hands of the Midianites. But Gideon drew exactly the wrong conclusions from those facts. The problem did not lie with God but with Israel. It was not God who had first abandoned His people but God who had justly responded to His people’s prior abandonment of Him. Gideon is suggesting that God is wrong, because his assumption is that Israel is innocent. It is far easier to blame God for our problems than to face and deal with our sins and responsibilities. At the same time, we need to recognize that Gideon was not suffering from a “defeatist” complex. He and his people really were defeated, but as long as they responded to their defeat with doubt and denial, they would remain enslaved. (Ibid)
Judges 6:14 And the LORD looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"

LXE And the angel of the Lord turned to him, and said, Go in this thy strength, and thou shalt save Israel out of the hand of Madiam: behold, I have sent thee.

AND THE LORD [turned towards and] LOOKED AT HIM AND SAID:

Notice that Angel of the LORD is now identified as one in the same as the LORD. And note that that the Messiah turned and fixed Gideon in His gaze. Although did not fully recognize Who it was that looked at him, he must have seen something different as he later seeks to bring an offering.

What we most need is not self-confidence but God-confidence.

Spurgeon wrote a devotional on this verse entitled "One Look from the Lord" - What a look was that which the Lord gave to Gideon! He looked him out of his discouragements into a holy bravery. If our look to the Lord saves us, what will not His look at us do? Lord, look on me this day, and nerve me for its duties and conflicts. What a word was this which Jehovah spoke to Gideon! “Go.” He must not hesitate. He might have answered, “What, go in all this weakness?” But the Lord put that word out of court by saying, “Go in this thy might.” The Lord had looked might into him, and he had now nothing to do but to use it and save Israel by smiting the Midianites. It may be that the Lord has more to do by me than I ever dreamed of. If He has looked upon me, He has made me strong. Let me by faith exercise the power with which He has entrusted me. He never bids me “idle away my time in this my might.” Far from it. I must “go,” because He strengthens me. What a question is that which the Lord puts to me, even as He put it to Gideon! “Have not I sent thee?” Yes, Lord, thou hast sent me, and I will go in thy strength. At thy command I go; and, going, I am assured that thou wilt conquer by me. (Spurgeon, C. Faith’s Checkbook)

GO IN THIS YOUR STRENGTH AND DELIVER ISRAEL FROM THE HAND OF MIDIAN
(Jdg 4:6; Joshua 1:5, 6, 7, 8, 9; 1Samuel 12:11; 1 Chronicles 14:9,10; Hebrews 11:32,34)

He is not saying "Gideon, gird yourself up like a man...you can do it." Relying on his own strength made Gideon hide in a winepress. "This is your strength" is the strength that God has given by His promise of His presence (Jdg 6:12, 16, cp Php 4:13-note). God's answer to discouragement is NOT positive thinking but rather the promise of His presence. (cp Mt 28:18, 19, 20).

Gary Inrig - The Angel is discarding His anonymity and revealing His true identity. As we have already said, this is one of many places in the Old Testament where the Angel of the Lord is revealed to be God Himself appearing in human form. We can go one step further. Since John 1:18 tells us that “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who
is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him,“ we can reasonably conclude that this is Jesus Christ, taking human form for a brief time. The LORD turned and fixed Gideon in His gaze, then spoke some remarkable words: “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you” (Jdg 6:14)? Gideon’s commission comes directly from the Lord. He is left with no doubt about either his duty or his success. But we need to recognize that when the Lord said, “Go in the strength you have,” He was not saying, “Gideon, you can do it.” Relying on his own strength had reduced Gideon to a clandestine beater of wheat. “The strength you have” is the God-given strength that accompanies both God’s command and His promise (Ed: By analogy we in the NT can only "go" when enabled by the Holy Spirit. Have you come to that place in your Christian life where you realize that apart from abiding in the Vine you can do absolutely nothing of spiritual value! Jesus sent His Spirit that we might abide in Him by being filled with His Spirit. Are you filled today? See Eph 5:18-note, see chart comparing Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word): “The Lord is with you . . . Am I not sending you? . . . I will be with you” (Jdg 6:12, 14, 16). God is calling Gideon to go forward on the basis of the supplied strength that always accompanies His commission (cp 2 Cor 3:5-6-note). Gideon could only admit that dependence upon his own strength had brought defeat and discouragement. If we look at our strength, we will always end up in defeat, or perhaps worse, in self-deceiving arrogance. But God’s answer to discouragement is never positive thinking but rather the promise of His presence, His provision, and His power. Quite frankly, when I look at the secular world in which we are living and realize the powerful attacks of anti-Christian forces on biblical truths and values, I feel very much as Gideon did before the Midianites—puny, helpless, and insignificant. Paul was right. Christians do not contend with flesh and blood but against powerful satanic forces (Ephesians 6:12). The only answer I know to that kind of satanic discouragement is to claim the promise of the presence of God and order my life around the truth that God’s Holy Spirit indwells me. I do not, cannot, and need not serve Him in my own strength. (Ed: See the Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible " 100/100) There is a clear parallel between Judges 6:14 and Matthew 28:18–20-note. When the Lord commissioned Gideon, it was with the promise of His strength. When He commissions us, His infinitely greater promise is, “Lo, I am with you always (Ed: How is He with us always? By His Spirit called the Spirit of Christ -Ro 8:9-note- or the Spirit of Jesus - Acts 16:7-note, Php 1:19-note), even to the end of the age.” Hudson Taylor, the great missionary pioneer, once said, “All of God’s great men have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on his being with them; they counted on his faithfulness.” That is the divine solution to discouragement—the truth of the omnipresence and adequacy of God. (Ibid)

F B Meyer Our Daily Homily

■ Judges 6:14 And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might.

The strength-giving power of a look from the eyes of Christ! Gideon was weak enough. He said, quite naturally, “My family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my
father’s house” (Judges 6:15, r.v.). But from the moment of that look, accompanied by that summons, he arose in a strength that never afterwards faltered. How truly “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”

It was a look of expectation. — Gideon felt that the angel expected him to save Israel. It is a great matter to excite hope in a man. Tell him that you are anticipating some noble deed from him, and you may light a spark that will set his whole soul aglow. It is of immense importance to stir the timid and retiring with fresh conceptions of the possibilities of their lives.

It was a look of encouragement. — Those gentle, loving eyes said, as though they spoke, “I will be with thee; do not hesitate to look for Me in every hour of need.” Such looks Christ still gives us across the battlefields of life; and if our eyes are fixed upon Him, we shall surely hear Him saying to us, “My grace is sufficient for thee: go in this thy might!”

It was a look of strength-giving might. — It carried help with it. On its beam new spiritual force sped from the speaker to the listener; from captain to cadet. So from the excellent glory one look from Jesus will bring reinforcement. As He looks on us He imparts his strength to us, and says, Go in this thy might. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

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**Judges 6:15** And he said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."

**AND HE SAID TO HIM, “O LORD, HOW SHALL I DELIVER ISRAEL: **This refrain is echoed by other saints...

Exodus 3:11; But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?” (Ex 4:10) Then Moses said to the LORD, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

Jeremiah 1:6  Then I said, “Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, Because I am a youth.”

Luke 1:34  Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

Gideon looked to his own ability ("how shall [I] deliver?").

A sense of our own inadequacy for God's Work is not a bad thing. Who among us when called to serve the LORD in any capacity has not like Gideon felt unworthy and unqualified? Charles Haddon Spurgeon at age 19 was called to pastor Park Street Church in London, but was convinced a mistake had been made and that the invitation was intended for another...
man of the same name. But understanding that his strength came from the LORD, he
accepted and eventually became one of modern history’s most prolific and influential
preachers. God is calling leaders today just as He always has. The question is will those He
calls respond to this call in dependence on God Himself for their strength? It has often
been said that “God’s commandments are God’s enablements.”

Once God has called and commissioned us, all we have to do is obey Him by faith, and He
will do the rest. God cannot lie and God never fails. Faith means obeying God in spite of
what we see, how we feel, or what the consequences might be. Our modern “practical”
world laughs at faith without realizing that people live by faith all day long.

Once God has revealed His will to us, we must never question His wisdom or argue with
His plans. “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?”
(Ro11:34, NIV; Isa40:13, 1Co2:16) “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you
find out the limits of the Almighty?” (Job 11:7, NKJV)

A. W. Tozer wrote, “All God’s acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and
then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time.”

That being true, who are we to question Him?

When you review God’s gracious promises to Gideon, you wonder why this young man
wavered in his faith. God promised to be with him. God called him a “mighty man of valor”
and promised that he would save Israel from the Midianites and smite them “as one man.”
God’s Word is “the word of faith” (Ro10:8), and “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by
the Word of God” (Ro10:17). But Gideon didn’t receive that Word and needed assurance
beyond the character of Almighty God.

**BEHOLD, MY FAMILY IS THE LEAST IN MANASSEH:**

- Exodus 18:21-25; 1Samuel 9:21; 18:23; Micah 5:2
- the least - Genesis 32:10; Jeremiah 50:45; 1Cor 15:9; Ephesians 3:8)

Gideon seemed to think that God could do nothing because he and his family were
nothing. However his family being "Least in Manasseh" may not be completely true as
his father Joash seems to have been a fairly important man (he had a huge altar to Baal)
and the family was certainly not poor (Gideon had 10 servants! Jdg 6:27).

What Gideon does seem to be saying is that he had a overriding sense of his own
inadequacy, which is not a bad place to be ("our adequacy is from God" 2Co 3:5, 6,
"when we are weak then we are strong" 2Cor 12:9-note, 2Co 12:10-note). Inadequate in
ourselves, overwhelmingly adequate in and through our God -- that is the lesson of
Gideon’s life. What we most need is not self-confidence, but God (Christ) -confidence! It is
worth noting that most often the choice by God as His "vessel of honor" is one who
appears to be the least. Jehovah even had to remind Samuel declaring...

“to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his
AND I AM THE YOUNGEST IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE:

Our problem today, friend, is that most of us are too strong for God to use. Most of us are too capable for God to use. You notice that God uses only weak men, don't you? [1 Co 1:26,27, 28,29] God wants weak vessels, and that is the only kind he will use. God follows this policy so that no flesh will glory in His presence. God always does that, beloved. The interesting thing is that Nero was on the throne while Paul was being beheaded. At first glance, it looked like Paul had lost and Nero had won. But history had already handed down its decision. Men name their sons Paul and call their dogs Nero. This is quite interesting, is it not? God is choosing the weak things of this world.

Gideon’s negative response to the Lord’s words indicates his lack of faith and spiritual perception. Here was Almighty God telling him that He was with him and would make him a conqueror, and Gideon replied by denying everything God said! God would have to spend time with Gideon turning his question marks into exclamation points. Gideon was living by sight, not by faith, and had he remained that way he would never have been named among the heroes of faith in Heb 11:32

Gary Inrig - But it does seem evident that Gideon was filled with a deep sense of personal inadequacy and insignificance. He had absolutely no confidence that he could do what he was being asked to do. And that is the response of anyone who is not self-deceived when he or she experiences the commissioning call of God, whatever the task. The wonderful thing is that this is exactly where God begins with a person. Time and time again, as we read the Word of God, we see the Lord cutting away a person’s self-confidence to bring her to the place where she admits that she is totally inadequate to do or to be what God desires. In fact, I do not think there is a single major figure in the Word of God whom God did not bring to a deep realization of personal inadequacy. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 3:5, “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves.” But that is only half the verse. God never leaves us with a sense of our own inadequacy. Paul ends verse 5 by saying: “But our competence comes from God.” Whenever we admit our inadequacy, God confronts us with the truth of His total adequacy. So in Judges 6:16, He makes a wonderful promise to Gideon: “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.” Inadequate in ourselves, overwhelmingly adequate through our God. The actual expression is, “You will strike all the Midianites as one man,” which seems to mean, “It will be as easy as if you were fighting just one man.” And that is remarkably close to what happened.

I wonder to what extent you have allowed the promise of God’s adequacy to minister to your life. God has committed Himself to be with you and to pour His strength into the places of your weakness. Is this a truth you are claiming? Your weakness does not hinder God. In fact, His pattern is to reveal His power in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). What we most need is not self-confidence but God-confidence. (Ibid)
LEADING
The Most Frequently Used Excuses For Not Leading

Some people approached about leading may offer excuses for why they can’t do it. Perhaps you’ve heard some of the following

- “I’m not qualified.” (Ex 3:11)
- “I’m an unknown.” (Jdg 6:15)
- “I can’t speak well.” (Ex 4:10, Jer 1:6a)
- “I’m not credible.” (Ex 4:1)
- “I’m too young.” (Jer 1:6b)
- “I don’t want to.” (Jonah 1:3)
- “I’m too scared.” (Mt 14:30)
- “It’s too risky.” (Esther 4:11)
- “I’m too tired.” (1Ki 19:4)

What is God’s response to these excuses?

“My power is made perfect in weakness” (2Co12:9-note)

“I will be with you” (Josh 1:5b).

Judges 6:16 But the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man."

BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM SURELY I WILL BE WITH YOU AND YOU SHALL DEFEAT MIDIAN:

- Jdg 6:12; Ex 3:12; Joshua 1:5; Isa 41:10,14, 15, 16; Mt 28:20; Mk 16:20; Acts 11:21

The promise is that the Midianites will be defeated as if they were only one man but this Word from the Lord was still not sufficient for Gideon and he wanted a sign, some proof that this summons from God was authoritative. And so we too have been commissioned and charged and encouraged that His presence will be with us in the battle for disciples (Mt 28:20)

AS ONE MAN: NRSV = "every one of them"; NIV = "all the Midianites together"; TEV = "You will crush the Midianites as easily as if they were only one man." BBE= "you will
overcome the Midianites as if they were one man." ICB = "It will seem as if you are fighting only one man"

Judges 6:17 So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Thy sight, then show me a sign that it is Thou who speakest with me.

SO GIDEON SAID TO HIM, IF NOW I HAVE FOUND FAVOR IN THY SIGHT THEN SHOW ME A SIGN THAT IT IS THOU WHO SPEAKEST WITH ME:

- Ex 33:13,16) (Jdg 6:36, 37, 38, 39, 40; Ge 15:8-17; Ex 4:1-9; 2Ki 20:8, 9, 10, 11; Ps 86:17; Is 7:11)

Found favor in Thy sight = a Hebrew idiom which means to be an object of another's favorable disposition or action or to be a recipient of another's favor or kindness. The favor shown may be deserved or at least prompted by the object's character or actions as was Boaz's kindness bestowed upon Ruth in return for her kindness to her mother-in-law had prompted him to reach out to Ruth and meet her needs (Ru 2:10, 11, 12-note).

Sign ('ot) usually refers to an event, object, or person that has special significance. It is used most often to describe awe-inspiring events: God's work to bring the Hebrew people out of Egypt (Ex. 4:8) Gideon asks for a tangible guarantee of the Lord's identity. Such guarantees sometimes, though not always involved a miraculous deed (Ex 4:8, 9; Is 38:7) as in the present case when the Angel miraculously caused Gideon's offering to go up in smoke (Jdg 6:20, 21).

Like Moses (Ex 33), Gideon desired a sign; in both incidents revelation was so rare and wickedness so prevalent that they desired full assurance. God graciously gave it.

Richards - Gideon respectfully asked for a sign—that is, some miraculous evidence that what this stranger was saying was true. This should not be taken as a lack of faith. Deuteronomy 18 indicates that prophets in Israel—those who claimed to speak for God—could and should be tested. A prophet was supposed to make some statement which came true, giving supernatural indication he or she was God's spokesperson (Deut. 18:21, 22). (From Richards, L. 1987. The Teacher's Commentary)

Judges 6:18 "Please do not depart from here, until I come back to Thee, and bring out my offering and lay it before Thee." And He said, "I will remain until you return."

PLEASE DO NOT DEPART FROM HERE UNTIL I COME BACK TO THEE, AND BRING OUT MY OFFERING AND LAY IT BEFORE THEE: Jdg 13:15; Genesis 18:3,5; 19:3
Offering (minchah) could refer to a freewill offering in Israel’s sacrificial system, or it could refer to tribute offered as a present to a king or other superior (cf. 3:15). It can refer to a gift offered as a sign of goodwill or submission (Gen. 33:10; 43:11, 15, 25, 26) where the gift is presented to appease someone whom the offerer has offended. In the present case we cannot state for certain his motivation, although it certainly is reasonable to see it as an act of worship.

Observe that the large amount of food prepared by Gideon (goat’s meat and broth, and bread made from an ephah or one-half bushel of flour) reflected both his wealth in a destitute time and the typical excessiveness of Near-Eastern hospitality. The Angel of the Lord touched the food offering with the tip of His staff and consumed it by fire, thus providing the sign Gideon had requested.

Judges 6:19 Then Gideon went in and prepared a kid and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak, and presented them.

LXE And Gedeon went in, and prepared a kid of the goats, and an ephah of fine flour unleavened; and he put the flesh in the basket, and poured the broth into the pot, and brought them forth to him under the terebinth tree, and drew nigh.

THEN GIDEON WENT IN AND PREPARED A KID AND UNLEAVENED BREAD FROM AN EPSAH OF FLOUR (Jdg 13:15, 16, 17, 18, 19; Genesis 18:6, 7, 8) -- keep in mind that this is a time of general scarcity of food bc of the Midianite raiders. So what Gideon prepares here is essentially a feast, cooking an entire kid and using about 35# of flour to prepare the bread. And it obviously didn't come to fruition instantly like a Big Mac.

Larry Richards...

The word for “offering” is used of voluntary gifts presented to God. Gideon’s gift of 40 pounds of flour in time of famine shows Gideon’s request for a sign was an act of faith. He honored his visitor with a very generous offering.

Judges 6:20 And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.

- lay them Jdg 13:19;
- pour out - 1Kings 18:33,34
Judges 6:21 Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

- Jdg 13:20; Leviticus 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38; 1 Chr 21:26; 2 Chr 7:1

Judges 6:22 When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face."

WHEN GIDEON SAW THAT HE WAS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD: (perceived - Jdg 13:21)

Instantly Gideon was conscious of his sin and guilt and he cried out in fear. But God had not come to judge him but to deliver His people through Gideon.

HE SAID, "ALAS, O LORD GOD!

The sudden appearance of the fire and disappearance of the visitor convinced Gideon that indeed he had seen God and spoken to Him, and this frightened him even more. Since the Jews believed it was fatal for sinful man to look upon God, Gideon was sure he would die. The human heart is indeed deceitful: Gideon asked to see a sign, and after seeing it, he was sure that the God who gave him the sign would now kill him! There is always “joy and peace in believing” (Ro15:13), but unbelief brings fear and worry.

FOR NOW I HAVE SEEN THE ANGEL OF THE LORD FACE TO FACE: Jdg 13:22,23; Genesis 16:13; 32:30; Exodus 33:20; Deut 5:5,24,26; Isa 6:5-8; Jn 1:18; 12:41

In the realization of the presence of God, the sensitive sinner is conscious of great guilt. Fire from God further filled Gideon with awe and even the fear of death. When he saw the Lord, he knew the Lord had also seen him in his fallenness. Thus he feared the death that sinners should die before Holy God. But God graciously promised life (v23). For a similar reaction to the presence of God, see Manoah in [13:22, 23] (cf. Eze1:26-28; Isa6:1-9; Rev1:17).

God told Moses,“No one may see Me and live” (Ex. 33:20).

Gideon recognized the angel as a manifestation of God and was afraid. But the Ex. 33 passage means seeing God in His essential glory, not in another form. Richards, L.

Judges 6:23 And the LORD said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die."

AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM "PEACE TO YOU, DO NOT FEAR; YOU SHALL NOT DIE
God had to give Gideon a message of peace to prepare him for fighting a war. Unless we’re at peace with God, we can’t face the enemy with confidence and fight the Lord’s battles.

Sometimes the Lord calms the storm.  
Sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child.

But God

I know not, but God knows;  
Oh, blessed rest from fear!  
All my unfolding days  
To Him are plain and clear.  
Each anxious, puzzled “Why?”  
From doubt or dread that grows,  
Finds answer in this thought:  
I know not, but He knows.

I cannot, but God can;  
Oh, balm for all my care!  
The burden that I drop  
His hand will lift and bear.  
Though eagle pinions tire,  
I walk where once I ran,  
This is my strength to know  
I cannot, but He can.

I see not, but God sees;  
Oh, all sufficient light!  
My dark and hidden way  
To Him is always bright.  
My strained and peering eyes  
May close in restful ease,  
And I in peace may sleep;  
I see not, but He sees.  
-Annie Johnson Flint

Hannah Hurnard, author of Hinds’ Feet on High Places, was once paralyzed by fear. Then she heard a sermon on scarecrows that challenged her to turn her fear into faith. The preacher said, “A wise bird knows that a scarecrow is simply an advertisement. It announces that some very juicy and delicious fruit is to be had for the picking. There are scarecrows in all the best gardens...If I am wise, I too shall treat the scarecrow as though it
were an invitation. Every giant in the way which makes me feel like a grasshopper is only a scarecrow beckoning me to God’s richest blessings.” He concluded, “Faith is a bird which loves to perch on scarecrows. All our fears are groundless.”

Black Bart was a professional thief whose very name struck fear as he terrorized the Wells Fargo stage line. From San Francisco to New York, his name became synonymous with the danger of the frontier. Between 1875 and 1883 he robbed 29 different stagecoach crews. Amazingly, Bart did it all without firing a shot. Because a hood hid his face, no victim ever saw his face. He never took a hostage and was never trailed by a sheriff. Instead, Black Bart used fear to paralyze his victims. His sinister presence was enough to overwhelm the toughest stagecoach guard.

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**Judges 6:24** Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

**THE LORD IS PEACE**

**THEN GIDEON BUILT AN ALTAR THERE TO THE LORD AND NAMED IT THE LORD is Peace (Jehovah Shalom):** Jdg 21:4; Genesis 33:20; Joshua 22:10,26, 27, 28

*Jehovah Shalom* signifies that the Lord is peaceful, friendly or well-disposed toward Gideon. Gideon is able to confidently name the altar this because the Lord had just said shalom or "peace," to him prior to assuring him that he need not fear and that his life would be spared. The Hebrew word for “peace” (shalom [click here](#)) means much more than a cessation of hostilities but carries with it the ideas of well-being, health, and prosperity. Gideon now believed the Lord was able to use him, not because of who he was but because of who God was.

Wherever Abraham journeyed, he built an altar (Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; 22:9); and Joshua left many monuments of Israel’s march of Conquest through the land. It was customary for the Jews to identify special events and places by putting up monuments, so Gideon built an altar and called it “The Lord is peace.”

Whenever God calls us to a task that we think is beyond us, we must be careful to look to our OMNIPOTENT God (we must know His attributes to experience them in our lives Da 11:32, 2Pet 1:2-note) and not to ourselves. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” God asked Abraham (Ge18:14); and the answer comes, “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Lk 1:37ASV). Job discovered that God could do everything (Job 42:2), and Jeremiah admitted that there was nothing too hard for God (Jer 32:17). Jesus told His disciples, “With God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26); and Paul testified, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Php 4:13-note).

*Wiersbe* concludes that for a man with a worried heart, “The-Lord-Is-Peace” was just what
he needed (Jdg 6:24). You can enjoy God’s peace today as you fight the battle (Php 4:4, 5-note, Php 4:6-note, Php 4:7-note, Php 4:8, 9-note). (Be Available)

Sidlow Baxter - But now look at Gideon's transforming experience. In the first place he became converted. We use the word thoughtfully. By the time that the "Angel of the Lord" had completed his visit to him he had become quite convinced regarding the true God of Israel. Note verse 24, "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah Shalom "There is vital significance about that altar. The altar is ever the place where God and man meet. It is the outward symbol of an inward transaction between the human soul and God. When Gideon built that altar to Jehovah he turned his back on false gods and became a worshipper of the one true God. Moreover he gave that altar a significant name - Jehovah-Shalom, which means, "Jehovah my peace." For the first time in his life this young Hebrew came into a sense of peace. That is always a first product of true conversion. (J. Sidlow Baxter. Explore the Book)

Judges 6:25 Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;

CUT DOWN THE IDOL

NOW THE SAME NIGHT IT CAME ABOUT THAT THE LORD SAID TO HIM: God had sought a sign from God but now God seeks a sign from Gideon.

TAKE YOUR FATHER'S BULL AND A SECOND BULL SEVEN YEARS OLD: to destroy this shrine Gideon is told to employ a bull, the sacred animal of the fertility cult. Before God gives His servants great victories in public, He sometimes prepares them by giving them smaller victories at home. Before David killed the giant Goliath in the sight of two armies, he learned to trust God by killing a lion and a bear in the field where nobody saw it but God (1 Sam. 17:32–37). When we prove that we’re faithful with a few things, God will trust us with greater things (Matt. 25:21).

AND PULL DOWN THE ALTAR OF BAAL WHICH BELONGS TO YOUR FATHER: Ge 35:2; Job 22:23; Ps 101:2) A pagan altar unearthed at Megiddo not far from Ophrah was 26' square and 4.5' high made with stones cemented by mud. Joash's altar was likely of similar size especially since 2 bulls (and 10 men) were conscripted to carry out the desolation.

Wiersbe notes that "It is one thing to meet God in the secrecy of a winepress, but quite another thing to stand up for the Lord in public. That very night God tested Gideon’s dedication by asking him to tear down his father’s idolatrous altar to Baal, and to build an altar to Jehovah. More than this, he was to sacrifice his father’s special bullock (probably reserved for Baal) on the new altar. Christian testimony has to begin at home...God will never use a “secret saint” to win great battles. We must come out in the open and take our
stand, regardless of the cost. (Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament)

**AND CUT DOWN HE ASHERAH THAT IS BESIDE IT:** 1Ki 18:21; Mt 6:24; 2 Cor 6:15, 16, 17

There is an incredible play on words in this verse. Gideon's name means "hacker" or "hewer" and is derived from the root Hebrew verb 'gada (01438) which is translated in this verse "cut down" (or hew down) the Asherah! Get rid of the idols!

**Asherah** (Hebrew = Asherah) signifies the Canaanite fertility goddess believed to be the consort of Baal, thus the worship of Baal and Asherah was often linked together. Asherah most often refers to a carved wooden image of the goddess instead of the proper name. These carved images were frequently associated with high places and fresh trees. The Asherah pole symbolized the fertility supposedly provided by the goddess Asherah, who was viewed as the mother of the gods.

Sidlow Baxter comments - Gideon...became consecrated. He yielded his own will to the will of God. Read verses 25-27. We only need to think our way back into the circumstances a little, to appreciate what an acute challenge to Gideon's new faith and obedience this test was. The command that he should "throw down the altar of Baal" reminds us at once that Gideon lived in a time of widespread religious apostasy. Israel's religious leaders were "modernists," and had caused the people to err. To wreck Baal's altar was to run counter to the popular will, and to invite death. But Gideon did it. And how remarkable was the result! Read again verses 28-32. Gideon's father became converted too! Maybe the old man had secretly sighed for the "good old ways" and had longed for some brave champion of the old-time faith to arise and call his fellow-countrymen back to Jehovah; and now, when his son stood up for the old-time faith Joash was immediately by his side. We may apply this to ourselves. In nine cases out of ten, the reason we have so little influence for Christ among our own kith and kin is that we ourselves are not prepared to go the length of full consecration to the will of God. (J. Sidlow Baxter. Explore the Book)

**Judges 6:26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.**

**AND BUILD AN ALTAR TO** (Hebrew preposition conveys the idea of direction) **THE LORD YOUR GOD ON THE TOP OF THIS STRONGHOLD** (refuge, place of safety and protection!) **IN AN ORDERLY MANNER:** (2Samuel 24:18) (1Corinthians 14:33,40)

Gideon had to first put things right in his own backyard before God would use him to deliver Israel. Before God will use you in His holy service, you have to be holy! That is, you need to "cut down" all the idols in your life. Are you being used by God? Do you sense His presence, His blessing and His power on your work for Him? If not, it might be that you have a basic "root" problem with idols in your life and you need to "root" them out.
AND TAKE A SECOND BULL AND OFFER A BURNT OFFERING WITH THE WOOD OF THE ASHERAH WHICH YOU SHALL CUT DOWN:

It is interesting that the Midianite oppression had lasted 7 years and the bull to be sacrificed up in smoke to God was 7 years old.

What's the lesson for us today? As Gary Inrig says below Baal must go before Midian can go. God's altar is not allowed besides Baal's altar. The Lord allows no syncretism (means the combination of the teachings, practices, etc of two different systems, in this case worship of Jehovah and of idols). The two cannot exist. There can be no worship acceptable to God until we remove the false altars from our hearts and lives. Syncretistic worship is no worship at all. Finally, the place we must begin is our own backyard. If my commitment to Jesus Christ does not first affect my home and family, it is superficial and hollow.

Inrig - Gideon’s own backyard contained a visible symbol of all that was wrong in the nation of Israel. God had made it very clear: there were to be no rival altars, no idols, no other gods. Yahweh alone is God. But Gideon’s father, Joash, had either built a pagan shrine on his property or allowed it to be built. There was an image of Baal as well as a carved wood pole with enlarged breasts and genitalia to represent the female goddess, Asherah. This was not merely a family altar, intended for the family’s private use. What follows makes it clear that this was the village shrine, with Joash perhaps acting as the supervisor or sponsor of pagan worship in the area. This was probably not just a tiny shrine tucked away in a grove. A Baal altar discovered at Megiddo, not far from Ophrah, was twenty-six-feet square and four-and-a-half-feet high, made of stones cemented by mud. Joash’s altar was probably similar. The fact is that Gideon’s own family and village was Canaanized. That backyard shrine was in direct contradiction of God’s command. His will was clear. Until Gideon put things right in his own backyard, God would not and could not use him to deliver His people. He could not fight for the Lord while retaining a shrine to Baal. The Lord’s instructions are straightforward, and they came that very night. There was to be no delay. Gideon was to take one of his father’s bulls,11 one of the prime age of seven years, and use it to tear down the massive altar (the fact that he needed a bull to help shows that it was of significant size). He was then to chop down the Asherah (remember that Gideon means “hewer” or “hacker”) and, using the idol’s wood, to sacrifice the bull on a brand new altar that he was to build for the Lord on a high rock. Several things are worth noting. The two altars could not coexist, any more than the Lord would accept equal status with Baal. The Lord’s altar must replace the Baal altar. Gideon must reclaim this territory for his God. As well, there is a cost to such obedience. A bull, as opposed to a heifer, was a very valuable animal, and few farmers would own more than one. Besides, as the local Baal shrine-keeper, Joash may have intended to offer it to Baal. But that very bull was to be used to tear down Baal’s altar and then offered to the Lord, the only true God. There may also be a symbolism in its age. After all, it was seven years old, and the oppression under Midian’s seasonal invasion had lasted for seven years. When Gideon offered that animal on the Lord’s altar, the years of oppression would begin to go up in the smoke of obedient service.

There are some profound spiritual implications in Gideon’s assignment.
1. **Baal must go before Midian could go.** Before Gideon could be the deliverer of Israel, he had to be the destroyer of the false god Baal. It is the same for us. Before we can have victory in our lives over the sins or problems or habits that are defeating, debilitating, or discouraging us, Jesus Christ must be the unquestioned Lord of our lives. There is no victory where there is idolatry or a divided heart. There can be no compromise if we desire to know the Lord at work in our lives. What might be the Baal or the Asherah in your life? It may be any one of a hundred things, many of them good and valuable in themselves, until they take the place that belongs only to the Lord. Whatever it is, it must be chopped down before God will deal with the Midian in your life.

2. **God’s altar cannot be built until Baal’s altar is destroyed.** The Lord will not allow any mixing or syncretism. The Lord’s altar cannot stand alongside Baal’s. The two cannot coexist. There can be no worship acceptable to God until we remove the false altars from our hearts and lives. And syncretistic worship is no worship at all. He alone must be Lord and King.

In our pluralistic, inclusivistic age, syncretism is a constant temptation. The central issue of the gospel is whether the triune God revealed in and through Jesus is Lord and God. In an article in the Wall Street Journal, Lisa Miller introduces us to several increasingly common types of people: a 36-year-old woman who says, “I’m an Episcopalian, but I think of myself as a practicing non-Jew”; a 57-year-old man who describes himself as “a Mennonite hyphen Unitarian-Universalist who practices Zen meditation”; and a 30-year-old woman who says, “I call myself a Christian Buddhist, but sort of tongue in cheek.” Miller then describes St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, where the ministers, dressed in African robes, hold a service featuring the worship of Jesus, dancing, and the ringing of Buddhist cymbals in a building containing Eastern Orthodox icons, a Shinto shrine, and a Chinese gong.

Lisa Miller summarizes her research in these words:

If America has always been a melting pot, these days its religious practices have become a spiritual hash. Blending or braiding the beliefs of different spiritual traditions has become so rampant in America that the Dalai Lama has called the country a “spiritual supermarket.” Jews flirt with Hinduism, Catholics study Taoism, and Methodists discuss whether to make the Passover Seder an official part of worship. Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a prominent Jewish scholar, is also a Sufi sheik, and James Ishmael Ford, a Unitarian minister in Arizona, is a Zen sensei, or master. The blending of Judaism with Buddhism has become so commonplace that marketers who sell spiritual books, videotapes, lecture series have a name for it: “JewBu.”12

I could multiply examples, but Lisa Miller has put her finger on one of the most significant marks of our postmodern society: a “both-and” mindset. It resents and even rejects “either-or” thinking. It loves to keep its options open. It embraces uncertainty and personal choice and hates the idea of absolute truths. It isn’t popular or polite to call someone to
choose. The postmodern mindset refuses to choose; it wants to try to hold together opposites, to combine, to have it both ways. But the Lord will not tolerate such an arrangement, either in Gideon’s day or in ours.

3. **The place we must start is in our own backyard.** Before Gideon could lead his whole nation to faith in God, he had to deal with the Baal in his family. That is a principle that runs all through Scripture. Begin at home first! If my commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ does not first affect my home life, it lacks credibility. (Ibid)

**Judges 6:27** Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had spoken to him; and it came about, because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, that he did it by night.

**HE WAS TOO AFRAID OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSEHOLD AND THE MEN OF THE CITY TO DO IT BY DAY THAT HE DID IT BY NIGHT:** (Related Resource: How to Handle Fear - 4 Part Study) (Deuteronomy 4:1; Matthew 16:24; John 2:5; 15:14; Galatians 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:4) (Psalms 112:5; John 3:2)

**Warren Wiersbe** summarizes Gideon interaction with God commenting that "He was an unlikely candidate for God’s “Hall of Fame” (Heb 11:32-note). When God called him, he was hiding. When God spoke to him, he raised problems instead of trusting promises. One of his favorite words was "If" (Jdg 6:13, 17, 36). When Gideon did start to obey God, he worked at night (Jdg 6:27) and had to have repeated reassurance that the Lord was with him. But God saw the potential in Gideon and even called him a “mighty man of valor” (Jdg 6:12). God sees the potential in you and says to you as He did to Simon, “You are...You shall be” (Jn 1:42). He knows your weaknesses and will accommodate Himself to your needs so that He might develop your faith. For a man with a worried heart, “The-Lord-Is-Peace” was just what he needed (Jdg 6:24). You can enjoy God’s peace today as you fight the battle (Php 4:4, 5-note, Php 4:6-note, Php 4:7-note, Php 4:8,9-note). (Wiersbe, W: With the Word: Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook. Nelson)

“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” (Mark 4:40, NKJV)

“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid” (Isa. 12:2, NKJV).

After all the encouragements God had given Gideon, his faith should have been strong. **BUT...** before we judge him, we’d better look at ourselves and see how much we trust the Lord.

The point is this that FAITH is not demonstrated by fearlessness but by obedience! (cp 1Co 2:3, 4). So if you obey God and sometimes feel fearful and weak, you are not necessarily expressing disbelief and in fact you are in good company with Gideon and Paul. Very real human fear and wise precaution interplays with trust in an all-sufficient God.

**MacDonald** adds that "Some people might fault Gideon for tearing down the altar at night
because of fear. But we must not lose sight of the fact that he did obey the Lord. His fear did not stop him from being obedient. All of us have fear, and fear in and of itself is not necessarily wrong. But when it keeps us from obeying the Lord, it has become an obstacle to faith and is sin. (Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson)

**Judges 6:28** When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built.

**WHEN THE MEN OF THE CITY AROSE EARLY IN THE MORNING:**

Why this detail? Could it be that it was as one Scottish preacher said "The worshipers of Baal never neglected their morning devotions."

**BEHOLD, THE ALTAR OF BAAL WAS TORN DOWN, AND THE ASHERAH WHICH WAS BESIDE IT WAS CUT DOWN AND THE SECOND BULL WAS OFFERED ON THE ALTAR WHICH HAD BEEN BUILT:**

Torn down *(natas)* means to tear down or to destroy. The idea is the breaking down of a structure so that it can no longer support its own weight. Most often the word signified the destruction of idolatrous religious structures such as the altars that Israel was commanded to tear down on entering the Promised Land. Gideon had obeyed God's command, but sadly his fellow townspeople had become worshipers of Baal and were ready to kill him for his allegiance to the Lord.

Cut down *(karat)* means literally to cut something down or off.

It’s worth noting that true believers can’t build an altar to the Lord unless first they tear down the altars they’ve built to the false gods they worship. Our God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) and will not share His glory or our love with another. Gideon had privately built his own altar to the Lord (Jdg. 6:24), but now he had to take his public stand; and he had to do it without compromise. Before he could declare war on Midian, he had to declare war on Baal.

**Judges 6:29** And they said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing."

**Judges 6:30** Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he..."
may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down
the Asherah which was beside it."

THEN THE MEN OF THE CITY SAID TO JOASH, "BRING OUT YOUR SON, THAT HE
MAY DIE: (Jeremiah 26:11; 50:38; John 16:2; Acts 26:9; Philippians 3:6)

So deep was their commitment to idolatry that these men were eager to kill the one who
destroyed the altar of Baal. (According to God’s law, it was the idol-worshipers who should
have been slain! Dt13:6-9.) Gideon was no doubt wondering what would happen to him,
but God proved Himself well able to handle the situation.

FOR HE HAS TORN DOWN THE ALTAR OF BAAL AND INDEED, HE HAS CUT DOWN
THE ASHERAH WHICH WAS BESIDE IT:

This has to be one of the most graphic pictures of apostasy in all of Judges (even in face of
the prophets message in Jdg6:8-19). Here in the name of a corrupt, decadent god who had
only reaped defeat & oppression for them, they were ready to kill Gideon. How twisted our
perspective becomes when we stray from the living God and seek after gods who are
really No gods at all!

Judges 6:31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for
Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death
by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has
torn down his altar."

BUT JOASH SAID TO ALL WHO STOOD AGAINST HIM: Joash, Gideon’s father, had
ey every reason to be angry with his son. Gideon had smashed his father’s altar to Baal and
replaced it with an altar to Jehovah. He had sacrificed his father’s prize bull to the Lord and
had used the sacred Asherah pole for fuel. (Isa 44:13-20.) But God so worked in Joash’s
heart that he defended Gideon before the town mob and even insulted Baal! “What kind of
a god is Baal that he can’t even defend himself?” asked Joash. (Elijah would take a similar
approach years later. 1Ki18:27.) “What kind of a god is Baal that he can’t even plead his
own cause?” Joash asked. Because of this, the men of the town gave Gideon the nickname
“Jerubbaal,” which means “let Baal contend” or “Baal’s antagonist.”

WILL YOU CONTEND FOR BAAL, OR WILL YOU DELIVER HIM? WHOEVER WILL
PLEAD FOR HIM SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH BY MORNING: (Exodus 23:2; Numbers
14:6; Ephesians 5:11)

TSK Note - The words are very emphatic: "Will ye plead in earnest (tereevoon) for Baal?
Will ye really save (tosheeoon) him? If he be God, (Elohim,) let him contend for himself,
seeing his altar is thrown down."

Joash's incredible transformation must have been stirred by his youngest son's act of loyal
devotion to the most High God. So he defended Gideon in a striking way: "Listen, what you are doing is blasphemy. If Baal really is god, he does not need you to defend him. If he cannot defend himself, he is not worthy of worship. If he is really god, Gideon will be struck dead." It was a basic lesson in Baal theology. So here the one Gideon most feared (Joash) had become his greatest ally. How often it is true that our obedience to the Lord Jesus can do great things in the lives of the most unexpected people. People whose reactions we fear are often the first to respond when they see the reality of our commitment to Jesus Christ.

**IF HE IS A GOD LET HIM CONTEND FOR HIMSELF BECAUSE SOMEONE HAS TORN DOWN** (same word Judges 8:17) **HIS ALTAR:**

- Deuteronomy 13:5-18; 17:2-7; 1Kings 18:40
- 1Kings 18:27,29; Ps 115:4, 5, 6, 7; Isaiah 41:23; 46:1,7; Jeremiah 10:5,11; 1 Corinthians 8:4

Joash's logic is irrefutable: a god who can't save himself is not worth worshiping.

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**Judges 6:32** Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he had torn down his altar.

**THEREFORE ON THAT DAY HE NAMED HIM JERUB-BAAL**

- Let Baal contend: 1Samuel 12:11; 2Samuel 11:21

Jerub-Baal (yerubbaaal) combines a verb with its subject, Baal but the meaning is not clear although given the following explanation it appears to mean "let Baal contend." This name is used as Gideon's name in list of judges in (1Sa 12:11). And so Gideon's new name was a constant reminder to all those around him of God's power and Baal's weakness. So now every time they saw Gideon, they were reminded of the power of God and the weakness of Baal!

**THAT IS TO SAY LET BAAL CONTEND AGAINST HIM:**

Often the unbelieving world gives demeaning nicknames to faithful servants of God. **D. L. Moody** was known as “Crazy Moody” when he was building his famous Sunday School in Chicago, but nobody would call him that today; and Charles Spurgeon was frequently lampooned and caricatured in the British press. If we are given nicknames because we honor the name of Jesus, then let’s wear them like medals and keep on glorifying Him!

Gideon learned a valuable lesson that day: If he obeyed the Lord, even with fear in his heart, the Lord would protect him and receive the glory. Gideon needed to remember this as he mustered his army and prepared to attack the enemy.

**BECAUSE HE HAD TORN DOWN HIS ALTAR:**
Gary Inrig writes "Baal must go before Midian can go. Before Gideon could be the deliverer of Israel, he had to be the destroyer of the false god Baal. It is the same for us. Before we can have victory in our lives over the sins or problems or habits that are defeating or discouraging us, Jesus Christ must be the unquestioned Lord of our lives. There is no victory where that is idolatry or a divided heart. There can be no compromise if we desire to know the Lord at work in our lives. What is the Baal in your life? It may be any one of a hundred things. But whatever it is, it must be chopped down before God will deal with the Midian in your life. (Inrig, G: Hearts of Stone, Feet of Clay. Moody)

Judges 6:33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel.

THEN: Gideon's passing of the Baal test would be a short-lived success, as now an even "bigger" enemy arrives -- the Midainites in town for their 8th annual "all you can eat" in Israel buffet...which would turn out to be their last! Until we demolish the "Baals" in our life, God will not use us to fight the "Midianites".

ALL THE MIDIANITES AND THE AMALEKITES AND THE SONS OF THE EAST ASSEMBLED THEMSELVES:

- Ps 3:1; 27:2,3; 118:10-12; Is 8:9,10; Romans 8:35, 36, 37, 38, 39) (Jdg 6:3; 8:10,11; 1Chronicles 5:19; Job 1:3

Trouble often follows triumph...here in the form of the 8th annual invasion of Israel by Midian, et al.

AND THEY CROSSED OVER AND CAMPED IN THE VALLEY OF JEZREEL:

- Jdg 7:24; Joshua 3:16
- Joshua 17:16; 19:18; 1 Kings 18:45; 21:1

This valley is in the eastern part of the plain of Megiddo ("place of troops"), an historic battleground in the heart of Palestine and probably not far from the Lord's great victory with Deborah, Jael and Barak over Sisera's 900 iron chariots.

The Midianite raiders' success for 7 years w little opposition and great spoils made them now very eager and confident. But it proved that the measure of their iniquity was full and the year of recompence had come; they must now make an end to spoil and must be spoiled, and they are gathered as sheaves to the floor [Micah 4:12, 13] for Gideon to thresh.
Judges 6:34 So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him.

THE SPIRIT OF JEHOVAH
CLOTHES GIDEON

SO THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON GIDEON:

Below are other passages where the Spirit came upon individuals in the OT...

Judges 13:25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him (SAMSON) in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

1 Samuel 10:6 “Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you (SAUL) mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. (Contrast what happened to Saul after his disobedience - 1 Sa 16:14-16!)

1 Samuel 11:6 Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry.

1 Chronicles 12:18 Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the thirty, and he said, “We are yours, O David, And with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to him who helps you; Indeed, your God helps you!” Then David received them and made them captains of the band.

2 Chronicles 24:20 Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, “Thus God has said, ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.’”

Psalms 51:11 Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

The exact phrase "Spirit of the LORD came upon"

Judges 3:10 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

Judges 6:34 So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him.

Judges 11:29 Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of
Here both the Hebrew & Greek state that the Spirit literally "clothed" (Lxx = *enduo*) Gideon, or "The Spirit of Yahweh dressed or clothed (Himself) with Gideon." The human agent became the outer appearance through which the Spirit worked. [1Chr 12:18; see esp the priest Zechariah's boldness upon being clothed by the Spirit & his subsequent martyrdom in 2Chr 24:20]. The Spirit emboldened Gideon to gather followers for his God-given task. God is always as concerned with followers as with leaders. Each role is necessary and important for God. Whom God calls to His work He will qualify and animate for it.

Came upon (clothed, dressed, arrayed, put on clothes)(03487)(labas) literally means "clothed," (cp *enduo* in Ro 13:14-note; Galatians 3:27-note) is normally used of garments and in this figurative use pictures the Lord's Spirit enveloping Gideon and energizing him for action. Labash is used in Ge 28:20 to describe a man putting on clothes or in Isaiah 59:17 to describe a warrior putting on a suit of armor. The Holy Spirit wore Gideon the way a man puts on a suit of clothes! It is a vivid way to say that the Holy Spirit took possession of Gideon.

The first OT use of Labash is Ge 3:21 where "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve and clothed (labash) them." Many writers picture this as God's grace giving them a garment (implying that blood was spilled to obtain it) and replacing their fig leafs, foreshadowing the day when His Son would spill His precious blood and believers would be clothed with Christ and His righteousness (Gal 3:27-note).

Gilbrant on Labash -
The verb *labash* means "to put on," "to wear" or "to clothe." It is well attested in all branches of Semitic. The verb occurs in the OT in three different stems. In the Qal stem, the verb indicates what a person is wearing or what he puts on; in the Pual stem, the verb indicates what a person is wearing; and in the Hiphil stem, the verb indicates what one person puts on another person. In the narrative Books, the verb is used in a literal sense. When reference is made to a person putting on or wearing a particular type of clothing, it is important to the plot of the story. In the Hiphil stem, when someone puts different clothes on a person, it always indicates a change in status for that person. In the poetic and prophetic Books, the verb is often associated with more symbolic ideas.

The following examples illustrate the use of the Qal stem in the narrative Books. Tamar took off the garments of a prostitute and put on the garments of her widowhood (Gen. 38:19). The priests put on one set of clothes to clean the ashes from the brazen altar in the Tabernacle, and they put on a different set of clothes when they took those ashes to a place outside the camp (Lev. 6:10f). Joab told the woman of Tekoa to put on mourning garments (2 Sam. 14:2). These garments acted as a disguise as the woman played out a role in confronting King David. People put on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of mourning (Est. 4:1). In 2 Sam. 13:18, the verb is used in a descriptive sense, explaining how the virgin daughters of the king were generally dressed.

A peculiar phrase occurs three times in the narrative Books. In order to accomplish a particular task, the Spirit of the Lord put on Gideon to call the Israelites to battle (Jdg. 6:34); He put on Amasai to declare support for and the success of David (1 Chr. 12:18), and He put on Zechariah to prophesy (2 Chr. 24:20). In each case, these men are depicted as the clothed with outer covering of the Holy Spirit.

The passive participles of the Qal and Pual stems are used to describe how a person is dressed. First Samuel 17:38 describes the armor Saul put on David in preparation for fighting Goliath, and 1 Kings 22:10 describes the kings as dressed in their robes.

The Hiphil stem presents one person clothing another person in different garments often depicting a change in status for that individual. The Lord clothed Adam and Eve after they ate of the forbidden fruit, indicating that they were no longer in the status of innocence, and their clothing of animal skins underscored the price of sin, namely death (Gen. 3:21). Rebekah clothed Jacob in Esau's clothes, thus pretending to change his identity (Gen. 27:15f). Pharaoh clothed Joseph in fine linen, raising him in status to a ruler in Egypt, likely the post of vizier (Gen. 41:42). Moses clothed Aaron and his sons in the
priestly garments, indicating their ritual consecration to the priesthood (Exo. 28:41).

In the prophetic Books, the Qal stem follows the same types of uses as in the narrative Books. A woman dressed in scarlet because she was a harlot (Jer. 4:30). A soldier put on his coat of mail to prepare for battle (Jer. 46:4). Ezekiel saw the angelic messenger who was clothed in linen (Ezek. 9:3). In the millennial temple, the priests will wear one set of garments while they minister in the Holy Place to the Lord, and they will put on a different set of clothes when they minister to the people in the outer court (Ezek. 44:19). People put on sackcloth as a sign of repentance (Jon. 3:5). Prophets put on a hairy mantle (Zech. 13:4), and people put on clothing to keep warm (Hag. 1:6).

In the prophetic and poetic Books, lāvfish is often used in a symbolic context. The Lord put on strength (Isa. 51:9), He put on righteousness like a breastplate to act in judgment (Isa. 59:17), and the Lord is clothed in majesty, strength and honor (Ps. 93:1; 104:1). In reference to humans, the prince of Jerusalem is wrapped in despair in the time of judgment (Ezek. 7:27); the rulers of the nations put on trembling when they saw the fall of Tyre (Ezek. 26:16). The postexilic high priest Joshua was clothed in filthy garments as a symbol of his sin (Zech. 3:5). The psalmist prayed that his enemies might be clothed in shame and dishonor (Ps. 35:26; 109:29). He desired that the priests be clothed with righteousness (Ps. 132:9). Job said that his flesh was clothed with worms, a metaphor for death (Job 7:5). As a sign of God's abundant blessing, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks of sheep (Ps. 65:13).

The Hiphil stem generally has God as the acting agent. The Lord clothes the heavens with blackness as a sign of his power (Isa. 50:3). He clothes his people with the garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10). He clothed Judah with embroidered garments, bringing her into the status of a beautiful queen (Ezek. 16:10). He will clothe the priests of Zion with salvation (Ps. 132:16). Yahweh has clothed people with skin (Job 10:11). The angel of the Lord removed the filthy garments of Joshua the high priest and clothed him in festal robes, depicting the removal of his sin and the impartation of righteousness (Zech. 3:4f).

In Prov. 23:21, drowsiness clothes a man in rags. Idleness does not produce wealth. (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)
In his sermon on Galatians 3:27 John MacArthur gives us an interesting picture of Gideon - There's a really interesting verse, and I've really hunted around in my head for a way to illustrate this. I'm not sure I can ever illustrate it totally because it's such a deep spiritual truth. In Judges 6:34, it says, "But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." What's so significant about that? The word 'came', in the Hebrew, is labash. (Ed: And is translated in Lxx with enduo) What does that mean? It means 'clothed'. It means to be laid around someone like a coat of armor so that he becomes invisible. It says there that, in preparation for Gideon's battle, the Holy Spirit surrounded him so that he was invisible. That's exactly the same concept you have in Galatians. When you became a Christian, the moment you believed, you became invisible to God, in the sense that you were robed with Jesus Christ, clothed with Him. That's why God can pour out everything on you, because He's pouring it out on Christ. Blessings. This is the great truth of our salvation, beloved, that I am His and He is mine. That's what he said in Galatians 2:20, isn't it? "I am crucified with Christ. I died with him. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God." In other words, it's Christ in me and around me, living through me. Listen, friend, in Galatians 3:16, it says this. "The promise was made to Abraham and to his seed was the promise made. He said not, 'And to seeds,'" God didn't make His promise to a whole bunch of people, He made it to one, "As of many, but of one. 'And thy seed,' which is Christ." Listen, all of God's promise to Abraham was for one person, Christ. The only way you'll ever get in on it is to be what? In Christ. You see the point of that? In Christ. If Christ has the love of the Father, so do I. If Christ has full access to the Father, so do I. If Christ has the full blessing, so do I. In fact, some day, I'm going to be just like Him. I will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2-note). (Sermon)

Sidlow Baxter comments "Finally, Gideon became controlled, by which we mean that he became controlled by the Spirit of God. See Jdg 6:34, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him." He became at once a leader and a saviour of his people. The people recognized the transforming power of God
in him, and flocked to him when he sounded his clarion. The story which follows in the Scripture account tells of Gideon's marvellous victory over Midian, and his freeing of Israel from the alien yoke. What a transformation had now taken place in Gideon! The man who had first been converted and had then become consecrated had now become controlled by the Holy Spirit. That thirty-fourth verse is noteworthy. A near translation would be: "The Spirit of Jehovah clothed Himself with Gideon." Gideon's personality became, so to speak, a garment in which God moved among men. What a sermon, then, is this man to us! Like Abel, "he being dead, yet speaketh." This soul-saving, life-changing, character-transforming experience through which he passed may be known by ourselves - not in its outward accidentals, of course, but in its inward essentials. We may become truly converted to God, truly consecrated to His will, and really controlled by the Holy Spirit. And we may be taken up and used by God as definitely as Gideon was. Converted, consecrated, Spirit-controlled-God grant that it may be true of ourselves! We must get our eyes away from doubt-provoking circumstances, and fix them on the word of God Himself. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (J. Sidlow Baxter. Explore the Book)

A seminary professor tells his students

"In the morning I often pray, 'Lord, here I am. I want to be Your suit of clothes today. I want You to take me and use me, Lord, just walk around in me today.'"

The Midianites and their allies made their annual invasion about that time as more than 135,000 men (Jdg 8:10; 7:12) moved into the Valley of Jezreel. It was time for Gideon to act, and the Spirit of God gave him the wisdom and power that he needed. (See Jdg 3:10; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14.) As we seek to do God’s will, His Word to us is always, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit” (Zec4:6).

When a group of British pastors was discussing the advisability of inviting evangelist D. L. Moody to their city for a crusade, one man asked,

“Why must it be Moody? Does D. L. Moody have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?”

Quietly one of the other pastors replied,

“No, but it’s evident that the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on D. L. Moody.”

**AND HE BLEW A TRUMPET:** (Jdg 3:27; Nu 10:3)

This is very interesting because before the Spirit "clothed" Gideon he was fearful but now seems to be filled with boldness and courage. However go to the next phase of his spiritual progress (Judges 6:36, 37, 38, 39, 40).

**AND THE ABIEZRITES WERE CALLED TOGETHER TO FOLLOW HIM:** (Jdg 6:11; 8:2; Joshua 17:2)

There must have been some in this number who not long before this may have wanted his
head on a platter! So suddenly can God turn the hearts even of idolaters and persecutors!

Judges 6:35 And he sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

AND HE SENT MESSENGERS TO ASHER, ZEFULUN, AND NAPHTALI AND THEY CAME UP TO MEET THEM: (2Chronicles 30:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

Asherites did not join Barak in battle against Jabin and Sisera.

Judges 6:36 Then Gideon said to God, "If Thou wilt deliver Israel through me, as Thou hast spoken,

The Living Bible although a paraphrase does pick up on the thrust of these passages

Then Gideon said to God, "If you are really going to use me to save Israel as you promised, 37 prove it to me in this way: I'll put some wool on the threshing floor tonight, and if, in the morning, the fleece is wet and the ground is dry, I will know you are going to help me!

THEN GIDEON SAID TO GOD: (Jdg 6:14,17-20; Exodus 4:1-9; 2 Kings 20:9; Psalms 103:13,14; Matthew 16:1)

And because these 5 verses are here and not read with careful observation and discernment, they have become a watchword for many to determine God's will for their life "Well, just put out a fleece brother and the Lord will show you what to do." The idea is simple: You say to the Lord that you have 2 options. If You want me to follow plan A, then please do this by Tuesday. Then I will know that it is what you want me to do. If You do not do it, I will follow plan B."

It is worth noting that although the Holy Spirit had come so powerfully upon Gideon, he was still very weak in faith and clearly daunted by the prospect before him. Who would not be? This is a reminder to us that grace does not delete or destroy nature. When God comes into our lives He takes the temperament which He has created and begins to refine and empower it. God wants to maximize our effectiveness and deal with our weaknesses, but it is often His way to keep us conscious of the fact that those weaknesses do exist, so that we depend on Him and not on ourselves. He knows how readily we lean on our own imagined resources and think that we can cope without total dependence on Him.

IF THOU WILT DELIVER ISRAEL THROUGH ME (Lit. = by my hand) AS THOU HAST SPOKEN:
Gideon was not the only one who asked for "signs" that God would complete the work He promised He would carry out. (eg, Moses [Ex 4:1-9] Hezekiah [2Ki 20:9].) And in this example of Gideon's lack of trust in God's sure word, we see the infinite compassion of our Father for He knows our frame, He knows the beginning from the end and He meets us where we are [Ps 103:13,14 - Spurgeon's comment on v13; Spurgeon's comment v14] We all exhibit this Gideon-like tendency from time to time, some more than others for our spirits may be willing to believe Him but our flesh is weak.

Gideon's problem was not one of lack of knowledge (v14,16) or a need for more knowledge but of lack of faith & obedience...like the hymn succinctly yet powerful states "trust & obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus then to trust & obey." (Play Trust and Obey) Amen to that truth. Let it sink in Lord.

**Judges 6:37** behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that Thou wilt deliver Israel through me, as Thou hast spoken."

**BEHOLD I WILL PUT A FLEECE OF WOOL ON THE THRESHING FLOOR**

- Judges 6:37: Gideon's Fleece by Alexander Maclaren
- Fleeces and the Will of God by Kay Arthur
- Deuteronomy 32:2; Psalms 72:6; Hosea 6:3,4; 14:5)

It is very important to observe that Gideon was not seeking to learn God's will, because that had already been clearly revealed to him (in verses 14,16). He put out the fleece to strengthen the weakness of his own faith. Gideon doubted God's promise, His steadfast, sure Word. Gideon's doubts might have included thoughts like: "Does God really want me to lead the Jewish army?" "What do I know about warfare?" So, before he led the attack, Gideon asked God for more signs.

**Put out a fleece** is often used by Christians to refer to asking God to do something special to verify His will. Paradoxically, instead of being an act of faith, such a practice is evidence of unbelief. Yes, God condescended to speak to Gideon’s weakness and He did what Gideon requested. By way of application, God may do that for you; but this is not the level on which God wants to meet and interact with you. Immature faith needs signs for reassurance. A mature believes God's Word and obeys. **Have you ever put a fleece out?**

Note that these arguments against "putting out a fleece" do not mean to imply that God is not able to work through circumstances to confirm His revealed will, for indeed He is. We need to be careful that we are not using "circumstances" like Gideon did to test God, especially when we know exactly what God's will is from His Word. I cannot speak for you, but beloved my problem is in obeying what He has told me to do.
IF THERE IS DEW ON THE FLEECE ONLY AND IT IS DRY ON ALL THE GROUND THEN I WILL KNOW THAT THOU WILT DELIVER ISRAEL THROUGH ME AS THOU HAST SPOKEN: (Ps 147:19,20; Matthew 10:5,6; 15:24)

Gideon already knew God's will but he sought another sign to confirm it. His "faith" seems to have been eclipsed by fear. Requests for signs are often the product of unbelief (Mt 12:38,39, 1Cor 1:22,23, cp Jn 20:25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 4:48, Zacharias Lk 1:18,20). See [Mt 16:1] where the Pharisees asking for signs was equated with "testing" Jesus (and we are not to test the Lord [Mt 4:7, 1Cor 10:9]).

Gideon was actually putting God "in a box", telling God what to do; i.e., what conditions had to be met before he would obey His previous orders. Gideon broke his promise to God after refusing to believe after the first sign and requesting a second. God's response in granting his request does not imply God's approval but only demonstrates His understanding and compassion for the frailty of human nature so that He treats His servants with great patience. Consider Thomas example and Jesus reply (Jn 20:29). Only 2 things are required to fulfill God's will: listen to His voice as you read His Word and then follow His directions implicitly. Gideon was at last ready to obey. Are you?

It was a (probably "superstitious") practice in the ancient world to seek last-minute confirmation of divine support before a battle was joined (cf. ) [1 Ki 22:6-28] but Gideon had the perfect PROMISES of God (Jdg 6:6:14, 16), the awesome revelation of His PRESENCE and the clear evidence of His POWER to deliver and protect against the adversary (Judges 6:26-32), so Gideon's call was a manifestation of his unbelief...it's somewhat analogous to the NT cry "Lord, I believe but help Thou my unbelief" (Mk 9:24).

And in the final analysis of his "faithlessness" at this juncture of his life we see God place his name first in the prestigious list in He 11:32 (note)! Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom & knowledge of God! The entire episode of the fleece provides a study of God's forbearance and longsuffering. (Ro 2:4-note) It is certainly not meant to establish a pattern for others to follow. Gideon felt that he needed a fleece because he did not entirely believe the Word of God! The fact that the Lord complied with Gideon’s request does not sanctify the process. It merely evidences God’s condescending grace toward our persistent doubt.

Gideon’s fleece unveils a danger, the seriousness of which modern sign-seekers should be aware. While such elements in Christianity hold out the promise of a deeper spirituality through miraculous manifestations, a lack of spiritual maturity is actually being evidenced. Many who fall prey to these delusive promises find that they become so engrossed in looking for the signs that they become completely diverted from doing what God has called them to do. Spiritual maturity is seen, in its truest sense, when we are able to trust implicitly in the already fully verified witness of the Word spoken by Jehovah. God had said what He would do; it was Gideon’s duty to believe and obey.

Beware of seeking for signs of the supernatural rather than seeking the the Supernatural Savior Himself! Our flesh is weak and craves for signs be it the shroud of Turin, the "remnants of Noah's Ark", tales that the Ark of the Covenant is in Ethiopia, etc. We have
Jesus' Spirit within us & His perfect word (Ps 19:7 - Spurgeon's note) and thus have all the riches of wisdom & knowledge we need (Col 2:3-note). Let us not be deluded by persuasive arguments (Col 2:4-note).

**HOW NOT TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL**

When John Wesley was 32yo he was a bachelor missionary in the colony of Georgia. While serving a church in Savannah, he met a young woman named Sophia Hopkey. Wesley fell in love with her, but he belonged to a group of idealistic young men in London called the "Holy Club" and one of their ideals was that members should remain single. So Wesley's dilemma was

"Was it the will of God for him to marry Sophie or not?"

To determine God's will he and a friend decided to draw from 3 lots on which were written either

"Marry", "Think not of it this year" or "Think of it no more."

His friend drew for Wesley & selected --

"Think of it no more."

Wesley was heartbroken but took it to be the will of God. He ended the courtship left America for England and wrote in his journal

"Snatched as a brand out of the fire!"

Shortly after returning to England Wesley came to saving faith in the Lord Jesus and began his evangelistic ministry.

During his travels he fell in love with another woman but this time tried a different approach to discern the will of God, listing 7 characteristics he desired in a wife, then evaluating the prospective wife by each & concluding

"Therefore all my 7 arguments against marriage are totally set aside. Nay, some of them seem to prove that I ought to marry and G.M. is the person."

Unfortunately John's brother Charles got wind and did not agree, so he went posthaste to G. M. and told her

"Grace Murray, you have broken my heart!"

Then he fainted at her feet. That shook GM so badly that she hastily married another man. Strike 2 for Wesley in regard to discerning the will of God. Finally, a year and one half later John Wesley did marry a wealthy widow, Mary Vazeille. We don't know his criteria for choosing her but we do know the result. He had a very unhappy marriage and 20 years later she left him, at which time he wrote:
"I have not left her; I would not send her away; I will not recall her."

And so much for Wesley's discerning the will of God in regard to whom he was to marry!

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**Judges 6:38** And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.

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**Judges 6:39** Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Thine anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground."

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**THEN GIDEON SAID TO GOD, "DO NOT LET THINE ANGER BURN AGAINST ME:**


Literally "His nose became hot" so the KJV is closer to the literal Hebrew, a most expressive metaphor for the anger and one of the most obvious examples of the anthropomorphisms for God in the OT.

Twice Gideon reminded God of what He had said (Judges 6:36, 37), and twice Gideon asked God to reaffirm His promises with a miracle. The fact that God stooped to Gideon’s weakness only proves that He’s a gracious God who understands how we’re made (Ps 103:14 - Spurgeon's note). Who are we to tell God what conditions He must meet, especially when He has already spoken to us in His Word? “Putting out the fleece” is not only an evidence of our unbelief, but it’s also an evidence of our pride. God has to do what I tell Him to do before I’ll do what He tells me to do!

**Matthew Henry** writes

Though he took the boldness to ask another sign, yet he did it with such fear and trembling as showed that the familiarity God had graciously admitted him to did not breed any contempt of God’s glory, nor presumption on God’s goodness. Abraham had given him an example of this, when God gave him leave to be very free with him" [Ge 18:30, 32]

**Judges 6:40** And God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.

**AND GOD DID SO THAT NIGHT:**
See how tender God is of true believers though they be weak, and how ready to condescend to their infirmities, that the bruised reed (Isa 42:3, Mt 12:20,21) may not be broken nor the smoking flax quenched.

God is the God of slow learners like Gideon and like you and me and we are all thankful for His longsuffering when I refuse to believe His clear Word in my life. Praise God that He is still the God of [Ex 34:6, 7].

Spurgeon had an interesting application of Judges 6:40 asking...

Who can shut his eyes to the sad fact that in days of revival there are some who are unblessed? I am anxious about you who are like Gideon's fleece—dry when the floor is wet! You remain in a barren spot of ground when all the earth is filled with fertility!

GIDEON’S FLEECE
Jdg 6:36-40
Charles Simeon

IT is a comfort to know, that, however afflicted and apparently desperate our state may be in this world, there is no just ground for despondency. God can never want instruments for effecting our deliverance; or fail in effecting it, however weak and inadequate those instruments may be.

We can scarcely conceive a more hopeless condition than that to which the nation of Israel was reduced at this time by “the Midianites and Amalekites and the children of the east.” These enemies “came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their cattle were without number; and annually, for seven years, they entered into the land to destroy it; whilst the children of Israel hid themselves in dens and caves and strong-holds in the mountains, destitute of any sustenance,” and incapable of resisting their invaders.

But, in this extremity, God was pleased to visit them in mercy, and to raise up for them a deliverer, “even Gideon, whilst he was threshing out some wheat, to hide it from the Midianites.” To satisfy the mind of Gideon, who pleaded his utter incapacity for the office devolved upon him, God gave him a sign: he accepted an offering of a kid, prepared as for food with unleavened cakes, and caused “fire to rise up out of the rock, on which the flesh and cakes were placed, to consume them: and then departed out of his sight.” But still, though further encouraged by the success of his endeavour to destroy idolatry in his father’s house and by the willingness which several of the tribes manifested to enlist under his banners, he yet needed to have his faith strengthened; and for that end, he desired a further sign from the Lord, that so he might be assured that the promise made to him should be fulfilled.
In this circumstance we see displayed before our eyes,

I. The weakness of man—

Gideon could not give full credit to the word of God—

[It had been declared to him by the Lord, “Thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?” On his expressing a doubt how this could possibly be effected by so weak an instrument as he, God had confirmed his word, as with an oath, “Surely I will be with thee; and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.” To remove all doubt from his mind, a sign had been given him, similar to that which had been given at the consecration of Aaron to the priestly office. Yet still he wanted fresh signs, to convince him that God would indeed fulfil his word; and even prescribed to God the signs that should be given, desiring that a fleece might be wet with dew, whilst all around was dry; and again, that the fleece might be dry, whilst on all around it the dew should rest.]

Do we not see in this the weakness of all mankind?

[Abraham repeatedly resorted to a base subterfuge in denying his wife, because he could not trust in God for his protection from Pharaoh, and Abimelech. Sarah, too, though commended for her faith, could not believe that, at her advanced period of life, she should bear to Abraham a son. When Moses was commissioned to bring Israel out of Egypt, no less than three successive signs were given to him, for the conviction of his own mind, and of the minds of those to whom he was sent: his rod was turned into a serpent, and restored from a living serpent to a rod again; his hand was rendered both leprous, and whole again; and the water which he poured out was converted into blood. David also, under circumstances of great trial, found doubts arise in his mind; but confessed, upon reflection, “This is mine infirmity.” And who amongst us has not, on many occasions, “staggered at the promises through unbelief?” The disciples themselves, when a storm arose, were fearful that they should perish, notwithstanding their Lord and Master was embarked with them in the vessel: and the intrepid Peter’s heart began to fail him, when walking on the sea, because the wind became more boisterous than when he first descended from the ship. So, in seasons of trial, we have found it exceeding difficult to place such confidence in God, as to dismiss all fear, and commit our cause to him without any anxiety about the issue of it. We can know but little of the workings of our own hearts, if we have not discovered, that “there is in us an evil heart of unbelief,” and that to place perfect confidence in God is the highest of all attainments. To say under such accumulated trials as Job sustained, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” is
But this weakness of Gideon was the means of displaying,

II. The condescension of God—

God, instead of being offended with his servant, acceded to his request—

[A fellow-creature, who had given such solemn promises, would have been quite indignant at finding his veracity called in question. How offensive was the request, “If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, and do as thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.” Nor did even this suffice: no: he must “prove” God a second time by reversing this request, before he can believe “that God will do as he has said.” Yet, astonishing to behold! God, instead of being offended with him, gives him the satisfaction he desires, and accommodates himself to the wishes of his yet doubting servant.

A similar instance of condescension we behold in Jesus towards his unbelieving disciple. All the disciples had seen our Lord, except Thomas; and all bare the most decided testimony to his resurrection. But Thomas would not believe: no: the testimony of all his brethren was of no avail: he would not even believe his own eyes, if he should see his Lord: he would not believe, unless he should put his fingers into the print of the nails made in the hands and feet of his Lord, and thrust his hand into the side that had been pierced by the spear. How justly might he have been left to the perverseness of his own mind, and to all the bitter consequences of his unbelief! But no: the Saviour appears to him also, and gives him the very evidence he desired.]

And the same condescension may we also expect—

[It is true, we are not authorized to specify the terms on which we will credit the divine testimony, or to expect any visible signs in confirmation of God’s word: yet are we not a whit less assured of his condescension and grace, than Gideon and Thomas were. We shall find, in his very covenant which he has made with us, the very same condescension to our weakness, and the very same desire to satisfy our minds: for “he has confirmed his covenant with an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have the stronger consolation.” And, if we look at the promises, we shall find that they are made in a way purposely to counteract and sustain the weakness of our minds. Mark the repetitions: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the
In all this, however, we discern,

III. The efficacy of prayer—

It was prayer that prevailed in the instance before us—

To us, also, will God vouchsafe his mercies, in answer to our prayers—

right hand of my righteousness.” “Fear not, thou worm Jacob: thou shalt thresh the mountains.” Mark his answers to the objections arising in our minds: “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? Yes; thus saith the Lord: The captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.” We see, then, that at this day God is the same as in the days of old; and that still, as formerly, “he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, till he bring forth judgment unto victory.”

Gideon, with much humility and tenderness of spirit, besought the Lord; even as the Prophet Isaiah afterwards did in behalf of Hezekiah. God promised to Hezekiah that his disorder should be healed, and that he should “on the third day go up to the house of the Lord.” A sign was then offered to him, and a choice was given him in relation to it: and he, thinking it a much harder thing for the shadow on the sun-dial to go back, than to advance, ten degrees, fixed upon that which he conceived to be the more difficult: and “the Prophet Isaiah,” who in God’s name had offered him the sign, “cried unto the Lord; and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.”

We are told that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” And in this respect Elijah is held forth to us as an example: for he, “though a man subject to like passions as we are, prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain; and the earth brought forth her fruit.” Thus also shall it be with us, under circumstances of peculiar trial. I mean not to say, that we shall have any miraculous answers to our prayers; for the age of miracles is past: but I must say, that, even in relation to temporal matters, our prayers shall not go forth in vain; and, in reference to spiritual mercies, they shall descend almost in visible answers on our souls. Let us suppose the whole neighbourhood where we dwell, to be in a state of barrenness, so far as it respects the blessings of salvation: if a man cry earnestly to God, the dew of his blessing shall descend upon him in the richest abundance; (a whole bowl-full shall, if I may so speak, be wrung out from his contracted fleece:) on the other hand, if God’s judgments are poured forth on all
around him, a merciful exemption shall be given to him; even as it is said, “A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” No man can conceive to what an extent God will magnify his condescension and grace towards an humble suppliant, till he has himself besought the Lord, and obtained an answer of peace unto his soul. “We may ask what we will, and it shall be done unto us.”

What now shall I further say to you? This only would I add—

Let your faith in God’s blessed word be firm and uniform—

[Think not of difficulties: “There is nothing too hard for the Lord.” Were your enemies as numerous as the Midianites, and you had nothing wherewith to combat them but a pitcher and a lamp, they should all fall before you. Only be strong in faith: and you shall find, that “all things are possible to him that believeth.”]

JUDGES 6 GIDEON
F B Meyer

Judges 6:1-10 Midianite oppression. -- Israel's sin brought suffering, and this time from an almost despicable quarter; because Midian had been severely punished, and almost annihilated when Israel passed through their land (Nu 31:7). The invaders seem to have possessed themselves of all the valleys, where there would be pasturage for their flocks, etc., forcing the Israelites up into the hills. Their sorrows again drove them to their knees, and they cried to the Lord. Alas! That God has so often to drive men to Himself. Often enough have the hosts of Midianites visited us, and left us very low, leaving no green thing in cornfield or vineyard. It is then that the Lord's voice (Judges 6:8, 9, 10) is heard, reminding us that we have fallen, not by any failure on His part, but by our own iniquity. I brought out; I delivered; I drove them out; I said, but YE have not hearkened to my voice. The path of obedience is the only safe and prosperous one.

Judges 6:11-24 The commission to Gideon was given by an angel, who was evidently the Angel-Jehovah (Judges 6:14).

God sends angels of deliverance as well as prophets of remonstrance, and they come to the men who hide in the winepress, and are least in their own eyes, and meditate on the past mighty works of the Lord. See what a look of the Lord can do; it carries with it might and salvation (Judges 6:14). God always goes with those whom He sends, and though our foes be as swarms of locusts, they perish as one man, when smitten by the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. When faith is weak, God nurtures it by sign of wonder and by fire, tenderly providing materials on which faith can build; and the peace of God is breathed into the heart. What a sweet title! Jehovah-shalom! The Lord is our Peace. He sends Peace
and He is Peace, like the calm of evening settling down upon the heart. When we have seen God face to face, we have no reason to fear man.

Judges 6:25-32 The destruction of idols must precede all successful and victorious work. Before we can be delivered from Midian, there must be an honest dealing with the idolatry of evil in the inner life. The altar of Baal must be thrown down, and replaced by the altar of God, and there must be the burnt-offering of entire surrender to His claims. We are first tested in the less before being called to the greater. It was because Gideon dared to obey God, as far as concerned his home and village, that the Spirit of the Lord "clothed itself with" him for wider service (Judges 6:34, R.V., marg.).

Judges 6:36-40 God's condescension to allay his fears. -- We must not be always looking for signs. God generally guides us by our sanctified judgment. Yet there are indications sometimes afforded to those who walk close with Him (Acts 16:6, 7, , 9, 10). (F. B. Meyer. CHOICE NOTES ON JOSHUA THROUGH 2 KINGS)