Fleecing Is Not Pleasing

Judges 6:36 - 7:7

Introduction:

We are studying the book of Judges. It covers a period of Israel’s history of approximately 400 years,

It is a Cyclical Period:

Israel would sin against God;

 God would set a nation to rule over them;

 They would cry out to God;

 He would raise up a Judge to deliver them;

They would serve God as long as the Judge lived;

 Then they would sin again, etc.

We are now looking at Gideon.

He gets the most press coverage in Judges –

Gideon gets 100 verses – 6 sermons

Samson gets 96 verses – 4 sermons

Today we see Gideon trying to find God’s will.

How do you Discern the Will of God?

1. Roll the dice; Rock, paper, scissors. Flip a coin; Fickle finger of fate. Matthew 27:5; Luke 10:37; John 13:27.

2. Gideon used none of these. He made up his own -- It is called “putting out the fleece” method.

As you know the Midianites were different from the other enemies of Israel. With the others it was a continuous occupation. With the Midianites the occupation was selective. They came in at harvest time and took from Israel all that they could carry away. They were about to make another visit as we approach chapter six / verse thirty six.

The Section for Today can be Readily Divided:

Gideon testing God – 6:36-40

 and

God testing Gideon – 7:1-7

I. Gideon Testing God – 6:36-40

It should sound very strange, knowing what we know, that Gideon is still testing God. But that is the case. How can this be?

A. Gideon Discounted God’s Word

“So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— ﻿look, I shall 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 shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.” (6:36-37)

So, what is Gideon asking God? God has already said that He would deliver Israel by his hand.

1. By Gideon’s Own Admission – 6:36, 37

2. Also, previous to this in 6:14:

“Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. ﻿﻿Have I not sent you?

“Surely I will be with you, and you shall ﻿﻿defeat the Midianites as one man.” (6:16)

He knew what God had said. He was trying to find a way to keep from doing what he knew he had to do. The enemy is overpowering and Gideon is afraid.

Some say, “God said it, I believe it and that settles it.

Let me rearrange that, “God said it, that settles it, and I believe it.

If God has spoken clearly, there is no further need for confirmation.

Illustration: “I know what the Bible says, but I’m not going to do that and God has given me peace about that.

So, why do we need to hear that today?

Because with many people God’s Word is only one of the elements in finding God’s will.

Others include:

What about my happiness?

How many others will be hurt?

I may never get another chance like this.

Or, if it’s a business decision, I could give more money to the church.

B. Gideon Doubted God’s Will

“If You will save Israel by my hand…”

God has already stated His will, but Gideon needed more affirmation.

This is not something new. Abraham asked for a sign in Genesis 15:8 even though God had told him that He would give him the land (Genesis 12:1-3)

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“And he said, ‘Lord God, ﻿﻿how shall I know that I will inherit it?”

God gave him an oath. (Genesis15:9-21)

Hebrews 6:17-18 explains:

“Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to ﻿﻿the heirs of promise ﻿﻿the ﻿﻿immutability of His counsel, ﻿﻿confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two ﻿﻿immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we ﻿﻿might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope ﻿﻿set before *us.*

You might say, “but I can’t know what God’s will is”

The Bible indicates that we can know and understand the will of God. But there is a primary prerequisite.

The prerequisite is: being willing to do it before you know it.

Give God a blank sheet of paper, sign it and let God fill in His will.

Romans 12:1-2

“I ﻿﻿beseech ﻿﻿you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies ﻿﻿a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your ﻿﻿reasonable (logical) service. And ﻿﻿stop being conformed to this age, but go on ﻿﻿being transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may ﻿﻿approve the will of God which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Also, in Ephesians 5:17 Paul says:

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“Therefore do not be unwise, but ﻿﻿understand ﻿﻿what the will of the Lord *is.*

C. Gideon Dictated God’s Way

Abraham asked simply for a sign.

Gideon directed God as to how He should give the sign

God had already given him a sign.

The Angel of the Lord, Who is the Lord, Himself, accepted his sacrifice and caused fire to consume it.

Gideon says, look, I shall 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 shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.”

It was so. He squeezed a bowl of water out of the fleece.

Then he may have thought, “It is logical that the fleece would soak up the moisture and leave the floor around it dry. So, let’s try it in reverse.

God graciously did what Gideon had asked. And the result was the way he asked it.

If you want to use Gideon’s method, you must put yourself in Gideon’s place. He did not have the revelation that we have. He wasn’t able to see the many examples in the O.T. that we can see. He did not have the miracles of Jesus or revelation of the Epistles that we have.

When we try to use the fleece method, we wind up in some strange situations. Or maybe He lets us learn from our weakness.

I went to college and seminary by the Gideon method. But He let me know that it was the wrong method.

Here are four good steps to knowing the will of God:

1. Be willing to do whatever His will turns out to be.

2. Know the Word of God. Find out what the Word says about your situation.

3. Rely upon the Holy Spirit.

4. Talk to Godly advisors.

5. Ask God for peace about the decision.

II. God Testing Gideon – 7:1-7

A. The Confidence Test

“Then ﻿﻿Jerubbaal (that *is,* Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.”

How well do you think Gideon slept that night? He may have thought that God would bring in more troops from somewhere. But God had other plans.

“And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands,

Let’s see now, I have 32,000 they have 135,000. (See 8:10) Divide 32,000 into 135,000 = (4.22) to 1 odds.

And I have too many?? Wait, it gets worse.

He will wind up with only 300. Then the odds will be 450 to 1.

Why so few? God is going to make it so impossible that, when it’s over, only God gets the glory.

“lest Israel ﻿﻿claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me” (7:2b).

God is not going to use Gideon (or us) until we have no confidence in ourselves and put all of our confidence in God.

Paul reiterates that sentiment in II Corinthians 4:5-7

“For it is the God ﻿﻿who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has ﻿﻿shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, ﻿﻿that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

B. The Courage Test – 7:1-3

So God said to Gideon:

“Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ﻿﻿‘Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’ ” And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.”

This instruction right out of the Jewish Military Handbook

Deuteronomy 20:2-3, 8

“So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. ﻿And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them;… “The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ﻿﻿‘What man *is there who is* fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, ﻿﻿lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.’

The surprise here is not how many left (22,000) but how many stayed. 10.000 passed the courage test.

C. The Commitment Test – 7:4-7

Gideon now has an army of 10,000.

“But the Lord said to Gideon, “The people *are* still *too* many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ the same shall not go.” So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink.” And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Then the Lord said to Gideon, ﻿﻿“By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his ﻿﻿place.”

The test probably tested their watchfulness.

So what did it prove about them?

1. They were Different - They didn’t follow the crowd.

97% got down next to the water to drink. That’s 97 out of 100. 3% remained standing. Presumably ready for battle.

The majority were interested more in their own comfort than in the purpose for which they had been called.

These were the few, the proud, the marines (of Gideon’s army) They were different.

2. They were Disciplined -

They were looking around.

They were waiting for orders from the commander.

They fit the description of a soldier by Paul in II Timothy 2:4:

“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”

3. They were Devoted

If the test had been, “whoever does not drink” The results would have been the same 300.

They were ready to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 2:3)

D. The Conviction Test

“Then the Lord said to Gideon, ﻿﻿“By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his ﻿﻿place.” (7:7)

After this battle was over and you asked Gideon, “What was the hardest thing you had to do?”

This speech might have been in the top 10 on that list. That battle was God-sized project.

If we stay in our comfort zone an attempt projects that we can do in our own strength, we will achieve man-sized results.

God is still looking for men and women like Gideon who through faith subdue kingdoms.

When the dust settled on that battlefield and these 300 men went back to camp in Israel, they knew this life-changing truth:

Little is much when God is in it.

Labor not for wealth or fame, there’s a crown and you can win it, if you go in Jesus’ name.

Go thou and do likewise!