

Judges Chapter 6 v 1 - 32

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's good to welcome all of you this morning, particularly good to have visitors with us and we trust that together as we worship the Lord we might be encouraged to know his presence, his blessing, his help and his word. Now I've chosen a verse from Proverbs to start us off this morning. It's on the screen there behind me. Proverbs chapter 29 verse 25.

Fear of man will prove to be a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe. Fear is going to be much of the theme of our service this morning and the antidote to fear, the answer to fear and here's the answer to fear. Trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord is what delivers us from fear. Trust in the Lord our God, our maker, our creator, our redeemer and of course in the Lord Jesus Christ, our saviour. So let's stand and sing to the praise of our God, the one in whom we've put our trust, the one who turns our fears into faith. 625. Oh my soul, arise and bless your maker. 625. 625. 625.87.

Oh, my soul, a wise and best you'll make, For he is your master and your friend.
So to rock, but rich in tender mercy, Worship the Savior, Jesus.

[1 : 55] King of grace, his love is overwhelming, Red or bright, he's all I'll ever need.

All his blood has purchased me forever, Tilt at the cross of Jesus.

And I will sing for all thy grace, Heaven's love come down, Each breath I take will speak his praise,
Till he calls me home.

When I pray, I know that... Let's continue in our worship and praise of God, Our Maker and Redeemer.

Let us pray together. Let us all pray. Most gracious and glorious God in heaven, We come to you again this morning, As those who have put our faith and trust in you.

[3 : 08] Oh, Lord, we thank you, That you are the God who never lets us down. That you are the God in whom we can put our hope And our faith, Knowing that, oh Lord, you are faithful, Dependable, reliable, consistent.

And Lord, even at the outset of this new week, At the outset of, in one sense, A new direction for the government of our country, At the outset of this day, We thank you, oh Lord, That you have not changed.

For you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. You are the God who is from everlasting to everlasting. All around us we see change. All around us we see decay.

We see things going wrong. We see people's plans falling to pieces in their hands. And yet, Lord, we thank you, That as we read from your word, All who put their trust in you, You will keep safe.

Oh Lord, forgive us, Because we are a people who often do not trust you. We're often a people who trust in our own strength. We trust in our own power. We trust in our own intellect.

[4 : 20] We think that we can conquer the world. We can overcome the problems of life. And yet again and again around about us, We see how humanity constantly falls and fails, And trips over and gets it wrong.

And yet, oh Lord, we thank you, That you never get it wrong. You never make a mistake. You always know what you are doing, And you always bring your plans to fulfillment.

And we're here this morning, As part of that wonderful plan of your salvation, Your rescue plan for humankind. That plan that you purposed before the world was made.

That plan that you have been bringing about And fulfilling throughout history. That plan which reached its wonderful climax In the Lord Jesus Christ, In him coming into the world, The Son of God, To take our sin and to die in our place, But to rise again to life everlasting.

We thank you that Jesus ever lives, And because he lives, We can know life ourselves.

Resurrection life, Newness of life, With newness of purpose, Newness of meaning.

[5 : 32] A life which is not simply going round on the old treadmill, Of trying to get enough money to make things work, Trying to find enough contentment, Trying to find pleasure, Happiness, Whatever it may be, Going round and round, Month by month, Year by year.

We thank you that all who put their faith in Jesus, Have found life in its abundance, Life in its fullness, Life in relationship with the God who made us, Life as it's meant to be.

Not perfect, Not yet. For Lord, Just as we've sung, We look for that day, When we shall see you face to face. We look for that day, When all evil and wickedness in this world, Will be wiped away. When there shall be a new heavens and a new earth, In which righteousness lives. We thank you, Oh Lord, That because of Jesus, Those who put their faith in him shall live there too.

We shall see you, Oh Lord, Our God. Now we walk by faith, Trusting your word, Trusting in you. But Lord, One day we shall see you, And we shall rejoice in you, And enjoy you, And delight in you.

[6 : 38] And all the things that spoil this world will be gone. Oh Lord, Help us to keep our eyes lifted up to Jesus, The author and finisher of our faith. Keep us, Oh Lord, Walking by faith, Trusting in you.

Help us even now in this time. Build and strengthen our faith. Where we have none, Oh Lord, Grant and give faith. Where that faith is just small and weak, Then fan it into flame and cause it to grow. Where that faith has been perhaps dented. Where that faith, Oh Lord, Has been lost, We might even say, And misplaced. Oh Lord, We pray that you would again bring our faith into focus, Upon you, And all that you are, And all that you do.

For we ask these things, As we bring to you, Our praise and thanks, And trust, In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. We're going to turn together now, In our Bibles, To God's Word, And to the book of Judges.

Book of Judges. And if you've got one of the church Bibles, That's page 247. Judges chapter 6, Page 247.

[7 : 53] If you're not sure where that is in the Bible, Then you start at the beginning, And you go around about six books, And then you'll come to Judges.

So Judges chapter 6, Begin at verse 1, And we're going to read through, We'll read through to verse 24, And then we'll pick up the reading a bit later on, When we come to this passage. And we're going to be looking at the life of Gideon, We're going to look at his life, And what we know of it here, In the book of Judges, Over the next few weeks.

Just a mini-series in that sense, On this one particular character. So let's read together then, From Judges chapter 6, Beginning at verse 1.

The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, And for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, The Israelites prepared shelters for themselves, In mountain clefts, caves and strongholds.

Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, The Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples, Invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza, And did not spare a living thing for Israel, Neither sheep, nor cattle, nor donkeys.

[9 : 13] They came up with their livestock, And their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them, Or their camels. They invaded the land to ravage it.

Midian so impoverished the Israelites, That they cried out to the Lord for help. When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of Midian, He sent them a prophet who said, This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says.

I brought you up out of Egypt, Out of the land of slavery. I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians, And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors.

I drove them out before you and gave you their land. I said to you, I am the Lord your God. Do not worship the gods of the Amorites, In whose land you live.

But you have not listened to me. The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah, That belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, Sorry, the Abiezrite, Where his son Gideon was threshing wheat, In a winepress, To keep it from the Midianites.

[10 : 21] When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, He said, The Lord is with you, mighty warrior. Pardon me, my lord? Gideon replied. But if the Lord is with us, Why has all this happened to us?

Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about, When they said, Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt? But now the Lord has abandoned us, And given us into the hand of Midian.

The Lord turned to him and said, Go in the strength you have, And save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you? Pardon me, my lord, Gideon replied.

But how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, And I am the least in my family. The Lord answered, I will be with you, And you will strike down all the Midianites, Leaving none alive.

Gideon replied, If now I have found favor in your eyes, Give me a sign, That it really is you talking to me. Please do not go away until I come back, And bring my offering, And set it before you.

[11 : 27] And the Lord said, I will wait until you return. Gideon went inside, Prepared a young goat, And from an ephah of flour, He made bread without yeast.

Putting the meat in a basket, And its broth in a pot, He brought them out, And offered them to him under the oak. The angel of God said to him, Take the meat and the unleavened bread, Place them on this rock, And pour out the broth.

Gideon did so. Then the angel of the Lord Touched the meat and the unleavened bread, With the tip of the staff, That was in his hand. Fire fled from the rock, Consuming the meat and the bread, And the angel of the Lord disappeared.

When Gideon realized, That it was the angel of the Lord, He exclaimed, Alas, Sovereign Lord, I have seen the angel of the Lord, Face to face. But the Lord said to him, Peace.

Do not be afraid. You are not going to die. So Gideon built an altar to the Lord, There, And called it, The Lord is Peace. To this day it stands, In offer of the Abizorites.

[12 : 35] May God bless to us. His word. We'll read. If you see, too, please, Would you turn back to Judges in chapter 6? We're going to pick up the story, The events in the life of Gideon.

Page 248. Verse 25. Reading through to verse 32.

That same night, The Lord said to him, That's Gideon, Take the second bull from your father's herd, The one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal, And cut down the Asherah pole beside it.

Then build a proper kind of altar, To the Lord your God, On the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, Offer the second bull as a burnt offering.

So Gideon took ten of his servants, And did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family, And the townspeople, He did it at night, Rather than in the daytime.

[13 : 41] In the morning, When the people of the town got up, There was Baal's altar demolished, With the Asherah pole beside it cut down, And the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar.

They asked each other, Who did this? When they carefully investigated, They were told, Gideon, son of Joash, did it. The people of the town demanded of Joash, Bring out your son.

He must die. Because he has broken down Baal's altar, Cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, Are you going to plead Baal's case?

Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him, Shall we put to death by morning? If Baal really is a god, He can defend himself, When someone breaks down his altar.

So because Gideon broke down Baal's altar, They gave him the name Jerob Baal. That day, saying, Let Baal contend with him.

[14 : 42] So we've already spoken to the children, The young people, About phobias, And about fear. And I think all of us, In some measure or other, Not only have a fear, But maybe a phobia.

I do. I confess. I suffer with claustrophobia, Which means I don't like being in an enclosed space, Or a small place like that.

The very thought of going potholing, I can't even watch it on the telly, Because it brings me out in the sweat. The thought of going through those tiny gaps and holes, It's just my nightmare.

But fear is a powerful thing, isn't it? Not just phobias, but fear itself. Much more than the irrational fear, Or phobia, Fear itself. Fear is powerful.

It can cripple. It can debilitate. It can coerce. It can control. And fear has been used, Again and again, In all sorts of situations, Whether it be in marriages, Whether it be in governments, Or dictatorships, Whether it be in families, All sorts of places, Fear has been used, To control, To manipulate, To keep people under.

[15 : 57] Fear. And perhaps fear in your life, Has controlled you. Controls the way you behave, Towards others. Controls the way that you act, The mask perhaps, That you put on.

Fear controls the way that you live, Your life. Keeps you from saying things, That you think you should say. Keeps you from being the person, Perhaps that God particularly, Wants you to be.

Fear controls. Well Gideon, As we meet him here, Is a young man who, Is controlled by fear. His whole life it seems to be, One long fear.

He's afraid of the Midianites. We see that particularly in verse 11, Where the angel of the Lord meets him. He's in this small enclosure. He obviously wasn't claustrophobic, Because he's in the wine press, Which is just really a, Sort of a largest half a barrel.

And he's in there threshing the wheat. Well if you were to thresh wheat, You need a good air flow. Because what would happen is, That you'd get the wheat and the chaff, Beat it all up, And then throw it in the air, And the wind would blow through, Or the air would blow through, And blow away the chaff, Or the rubbish part of the wheat, And you'd be left with the wheat.

[17:07] Well you can't do that in a barrel. You can't, There's no air flow. So he's still trying to, To keep some wheat, From being captured by the Midianites, Hiding in this barrel.

We know he's very afraid of God, In the wrong sense, Particularly as some people can be. Verse 22, When he says, Alas sovereign Lord, I've seen the angel of the Lord face to face, And God has to say to him, Peace, Don't be afraid.

And he's afraid of his family, Isn't he? Afraid of his townsfolk. There in verse 27, He took ten men at night, Because he was afraid of his family, And the townspeople.

So here's a man who is afraid, Fears all around, Controlling him, Controlling what he does, How he acts, And his understanding of God. He sees God as something fearful.

And there's a right fear of God, But there's a very wrong fear of God as well. And yet to this man, This young man, This fearful man, This timid man, The angel of the Lord comes, And says to him, The Lord is with you, Verse 12, Mighty warrior.

[18:17] That's ironic, Isn't it really? You can almost say, You're taking the mick. A mighty warrior. Somebody who hides away in a barrel. Somebody who dares do anything to upset his family.

Somebody who is constantly living by fear. But that's what he calls him. God is going to cure his phobia, His fears, And he's going to make him, As we shall see later weeks, He's going to make him into this mighty warrior.

It's a prophetic word. It's a word of God's belief in himself. Not his belief in Gideon, But his belief in what he can do, And how he can change, Even this man, And bring him into being somebody, That he is not of himself.

That's the wonderful work of God. Wonderful work of God is, That he is able to take us as we are, And to transform us, And change us into what we can be. The potential within each one of us, Is vast and great in the hands of God.

Whether we're young, Whether we're old, Whatever our circumstances, Or background, Or intellect, God chooses, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, The foolish things of this world, The weak things of this world, To show that the power is of God.

[19:31] A Christian is not somebody, Who is able to keep going, In the Christian faith, Because they are strong in themselves, Or have faith in themselves. It's because their strength, Their power comes directly, And only from the Lord.

So God is going to cure him of his fear. People will go to all sorts of lengths, And extremes to be cured of fear, And phobias. They'll take medication of course, And things like that.

They'll go to a hypnotist, Who will be able to help them, To cure their fear. They may try all sorts of medicines, Acupuncture and so on. The old fashioned way, Apparently was confrontational.

If somebody was afraid of something, Then you made them face it, Face their fear and overcome it. Perhaps you've had to do that yourself, Maybe with heights, Or something like that. Apparently, Saint Francis of Assisi, The one who's always associated, With birds and animals and so on, He was very much afraid of leprosy, A very common disease in his day.

And he avoided anybody with leprosy, He was so afraid of catching it. At last he overcame his fear, When one day he saw a leper, Walking towards him on the highway, As it were, As he was walking.

[20:51] Usually he'd keep a clear path, And walk the other side of the road. This time, He went up to the leper, Embraced him and kissed him. He was never afraid of leprosy again, And he didn't catch it, You'll be glad to know too.

But God's cure isn't like that, It isn't medication, It isn't hypnosis, It isn't acupuncture, It isn't confrontation. Though in one sense, At the end, As we shall see in the coming weeks, God brings him to that place, Of confronting the Midianites, Those which he feared the greatest, With a wonderful outcome.

Now God causes this fear to be dealt with, By causing his faith to increase. God deals with his fear, By giving him faith, Maturing his faith, Strengthening his faith, So that by faith, He was able to live, Fear free.

And so we're back to what we asked the children, What are you afraid of? What is the fear that you have?

Perhaps it's the fear of losing something, Losing your home, That's a real fear, Perhaps with your work, You just have to keep working, You're so afraid, I'll lose my home. Perhaps as you're getting older, You're afraid of losing your health, Whether that be your mental health, Or your physical health, And you're afraid of that, And you're putting it off, As much as you can.

[22 : 13] Perhaps you're afraid of losing, Members of your family. Not only in death, But perhaps through falling out, Losing your job. For many people I think, There's a great fear of losing, Other people's acceptance of us.

We're afraid of what people will say about us, Or think of us. Perhaps we're afraid of losing, Pleasures, Possessions.

Perhaps as we look through that list, With the children, And there's fears, And there's fears that particularly, Strike a chord with your heart, And your life. What are you afraid of? Well fear is the very opposite of faith.

It's impossible to have, Faith and fear living together, In one place. They are diverse. They are completely opposed, To one another. Either fear, Will drive out faith, From our hearts, Or faith, Or faith, Will drive out fear.

There's a correlation, Between the two. The greater our faith, The less our fear, The greater our fear, The less our faith. Jesus spoke to the disciples, When he was on that ship, When he was on that ship, And they were crossing the lake, And it was about to sink.

[23 : 25] He spoke to the storm, And said, Be still. He said to them, You of little faith, Why are you afraid? They had little faith in Jesus, So they had great fear of the storm.

Whatever you're afraid of, Dear friends, Let me say to you, That the only way that fear can subside, The only way that fear can be relieved, The only way that you can be free, From fear, Is through having greater faith in Christ.

Greater faith in Christ. Well how did God build up the faith of Gideon? How did he cause his faith to grow? How did he cause his faith to be strong? Well first of all, By revealing himself to Gideon. By making himself known to Gideon. Then verse 22, He says, Alas sovereign Lord, I've seen the angel of the Lord face to face.

It's clear from the conversation that takes place, Between this angel of the Lord, And Gideon, That Gideon is engaging with God himself. He's hearing God speak to him, He's hearing God, Seeing God deal with him.

[24 : 31] This angel of the Lord was not an ordinary angel. When you go through the Old Testament again and again, You see this particular person, The angel of the Lord spoken of.

And we understand that this is God the Son, The Lord Jesus Christ. Before he came into the world, As he came as that babe born in Bethlehem, He came into the world from time to time, As the angel of the Lord, Speaking with people, At particular vital moments in history.

It's the Lord who meets with him in that winepress, In that place of fear, Where he's hiding away. The angel of the Lord, The Son of God, Coming and meeting with him.

That's why we see again and again, The Lord said, The Lord said, And referring to the angel as the angel of the Lord. Here's where we have to begin.

We have to begin, With coming into the presence of God. We have to begin with knowing Christ. Knowing him truly.

[25 : 35] Knowing him in one sense, Literally face to face. For there alone is peace. Notice there verse 23, In the midst of all his fear, The Lord said to him, Peace, Do not be afraid.

It's as he met with God, And as God revealed himself to Gideon, That that peace was able to be spoken. That peace was able to be received. See, we cannot have peace in our hearts.

We cannot have peace About the circumstances of our situation. We cannot have peace instead of fear, Until first, We've got right with God. This is why our world is in the mess it's in, Because sadly, Again and again, We think that we can make peace, Or create peace, Or cause peace, Or educate peace, Or pay for peace, Without God.

And for many of us, That's how we hope to live our lives. We want to have a peaceful life. We want to have a life which is satisfied, Content. We don't want to be afraid. We want to be comfortable, And we want to be happy, And everything else.

But we want to do it without God. And it just cannot happen. Until we have peace with God, We cannot have peace within. And we cannot have peace with others.

[26 : 49] So as a Christian, Let me just speak to Christians here for a moment. Those of us who have fears that we have, Concerning the future, Or fears concerning circumstances, Situations. Do you find that daily, You are meeting with Christ?

Are you daily meeting with him in prayer? Are you daily meeting with him in his word? And when you are fearful, When a problem comes up, Or a fear arises in your heart, Is the first thing you do, Is go to Christ in prayer.

Is meet with him. So that you might see more of his goodness, More of his faithfulness, More of his trustworthiness. Isn't it true, sadly, That when a fear comes to the letterbox, In the shape of a bill, Or whatever it may be, The first thing we do, Is we worry ourselves sick, And we tell other people about it.

But we do not come to God in prayer. The only reason that we have fears, Is because we have doubts.

We have doubts about God, And because we have doubts about God, God fears come in. And those doubts can only be dispelled, By getting to know him better.

[28 : 01] By getting to know him for who he is. Getting to know him, How much he loves us. Getting to know him for his faithfulness. And we get to know him better, By reading his word, By sitting under the preaching, By fellowshiping with God people, And in prayer.

If we spend no time with Christ, How can we ever expect to know him better? As if we were in a relationship, Or a friendship, We never spent time together. How can we ever get to know one another? Or trust one another?

Trust comes by, Time spent, Isn't it? Trust comes by, Building relationship. The more we know about Christ, The more we find, That the shadows of doubt, Are dispelled by the light of his face. The light of his glory. The light of his love. And so God meets with Gideon. And my question to you this morning is this, Have you met with God? Do you know him?

Have you put your faith and trust in him? Have you trusted him as your saviour? Fear. Because until you do, Then you'll always have fear. You'll always have fear.

[29 : 09] And it will never go away. The next thing that God deals with, To build the faith of Gideon, He deals with his reluctance, To do God's will.

Gideon doesn't want to obey God. God comes to him and says, Mighty warrior. And he says, But pardon me, God isn't with us.

Then he says to him, Go in the strength you have, And save Israel. Go, I'm sending you. So God is commanding him to go, As his mighty warrior, To save the people from these terrible, Awful Midianites, That keep stealing all their food, Killing all their animals, Leaving them destitute.

But he's reluctant. He's reluctant. He doesn't want to do it. Isn't that one of our problems? Isn't that one of the reasons why we're afraid?

Is because when God tells us to do something, We sort of weigh it in our minds. We say, Well, no, I don't think that's possible. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to be obedient.

[30 : 13] You see, when we have real faith, Strong faith, Then it produces obedience. Because faith says, God is good. Whatever he calls me to do is for my good.

And for whatever he calls me to do, He gives me the strength to do. Therefore, I will trust him, And I will obey him. We know that God's will is best. We know that what God wants is ultimately For our blessing and for our good.

See, that's the problem, isn't it? We think we know better than God. We think that we know what's best for us To do the things that please us, The things that serve our purposes, Our will, Our plan. But actually, Faith believes that God knows best, And we don't know best. He knows what's good for us, And he's commanded what's good for us. He's made it plain for us, And when we trust him, We'll do it.

But here we see the power of fear, Again, to control. To put down, to oppress. Gideon has not yet got faith in God, And so he is paralyzed.

[31 : 20] He cannot obey God. He will not obey God. He is kept in that barrel, as it were, Still. Because he's more afraid of the Midianites, Of his family, Than of God.

As long as you are afraid, Then you will always be paralyzed. You will always be limping. You will always be, And I use this in, Disabled.

Emotionally. Mentally. So what does God do? How does God deal with his reluctance to obedience? Well he gives him a, Slightly easier task to do.

Before cranking up the level of scariness, Before putting him right on the front line, God gives him something to do, Which is a little easier. A task which is difficult, Nonetheless.

But a task which, Well, He could do it. There in verse 25, That same night, The Lord said to him, Take the second bull from your father's herd, The one seven years old, Tear down your father's altar to Baal.

[32 : 23] Baal was a, A, A, A god, A false god, A, A god of the people of that land. Cut down the Asherah pole, That was another god. So in that village, They just wanted to make sure, They got all the bases covered.

They'd not only crossed their fingers, And they got a rabbit's foot, They got an Asherah pole to one god, And a Baal altar to the other god, Just to be sure that everything would go well. Which of course it wasn't, Because the Midianites were still stealing all their food, And killing all their livestock.

So clearly those gods were worthless. So Gideon is to cut them down, Use the wood from the pole, Make an altar, And kill the bull, Offer it to God, And burn it.

Now remember, This wasn't easy, It wasn't as if God was saying, Just do this very simple thing, To build your faith, It's a hard thing. It's one sense, It's nailing his colours to the mast, It's him saying and standing up, And saying to everybody, Look, I believe in the Lord God, I don't believe in your gods, The gods of this town, I don't believe in the things, That you worship and serve, I believe in the Lord God.

So it's nailing his colours to the mast, He's going against his father, It's his bull, A seven year old bull, It was very, Very valuable, It was like his Porsche Cayman, As it were, In the garage, He's saying, Take it out, And set the torch it, Don't doubt be very pleased about that.

[33 : 51] And all the townsfolk, Of course, Believed in those gods, And prayed to those gods, And worshipped those gods, So it's not simple. But it also had great consequences.

What seemed to be a smaller task, Was also a very big step, For Gideon, And a very big step, For the people of God, Because it was from here, That Gideon was to go on, To be the mighty warrior. And sometimes we think, What can I do for God? What great thing does God want me to do for him? Does he want me to be a missionary, And go across the other side of the world? Does he want me to be, Somebody who goes to college, And learns how to teach the Bible?

Does he want me to, To do these great things? But actually what God wants you and I to do, Is right here in Whitby. God wants us to start, Where we are.

To start in our home, To start in our family, To start in our workplace, To start in our streets, To start in our shops. He wants us to do, In one sense, Be obedient to him here, To nail our colors to the mast here, Amongst the people that we know.

[35 : 00] Actually that's much more difficult, Than going off to South America, And being a missionary. Because nobody knows you there, Do they? And nobody knows about you, You can go and be as bold as you like, And talk about Jesus, It may be very difficult, And hardships and so on, Please don't think I'm playing down missionary work at all.

But it's very hard for us to do it here, In the middle of our town, To stand up and say, I am a Christian, I'm nailing my colors to the mast, I do believe in Jesus Christ, And I am going to live for him.

And so that when you say to me, Go and worship this God, Which is the pub, Or worship this God, Which is something else, I'm going to say no. That's where it has to start.

Remember when Jesus said to the disciples, When the Holy Spirit comes upon you with power, You'll preach the gospel, To the ends of the earth. But he said, Beginning in Judah, Or Jerusalem, Beginning in your hometown, You'll preach the gospel, Then Samaria, Then Judah, Then to the ends of the earth.

So it's a big challenge. But perhaps dear friends, That's the challenge that you and I need. We haven't nailed our colors to the mast, That we follow Christ, And love Christ.

[36 : 15] Not really. We've said, Oh on Sunday I'm going to church, Well that may be a big thing, That may be a first step. What is it that God is commanding, Calling, For you to do, And that you're shirking, And afraid of, I'm afraid of what they're going to say to me, If I say I'm a Christian, I'm afraid, Of what they're going to do to me.

So Gideon does it, Yes he does it by night, He's still clearly afraid, He does it with a bit of trepidation, Don't think that suddenly when we stand up, And nail our colors to the mast, And live for Christ, Suddenly we can do it, And we're going to be completely free of all fear, And it's going to be so easy, Of course it's not, Most of us go about with our knees knocking, And that's exactly what Gideon does, His teeth are chattering, His knees are knocking, As he goes in the middle of the night, When everybody else is asleep, Cuts down the pole, Builds the altar, Slaves the ball, And so on.

And yet what's happening? What's happening is that this man, Who was hiding in the barrel, This man who was so afraid of everybody, Is now finding that he has faith, To do something that God calls him to do, He's beginning to become the mighty warrior, He's beginning to overcome the fears he had, He says how can I do it?

How can I? And so he begins to see that yes, God is with him, Yes God will help him, Yes God strengthens him, See this is the reality, It's only as we step out in faith, That we realize we have faith, Put it this way, It's only as we act upon God's word, That actually we find that God supplies, The strength to keep his word, Paul writes in Philippians 4, I can do all things through him who strengthens me, It's as we attempt the all things, That we find the strength provided, Imagine the Olympics, And there is a weight lifter, And never before in his life, Has he lifted this weight, It's so big, It's so large, He's never done it, How does he know if he can lift it or not?

By looking at it? No, By picking it up, And lifting, And he finds that, There in that situation, In the great Olympic stadium, There he has the strength, To lift what he's never lifted before, Dear friends for us, We are often so afraid, That we never attempt, To do the things that God calls us to do, Because we, Don't think we're going to have the strength to do it, But if our faith and trust is in God, Then he provides the faith, And the strength to do it, As we step out, We find that he provides, As we go, We find that he leads, That's why fear paralyzes, And faith frees, And it's not just in the big things, Not just in the great huge things, It's in the everyday things, It's a life attitude, Not the occasional flash, Of doing something amazing for God, Good though that may be, It's day to day, Putting our faith in God's word, And putting God's word,

[39 : 24] Into action in our lives, Trusting him day by day, Proving him faithful day by day, In the smaller things, In what seems to be the little things, But it begins with, Repentance, And it begins with faith, It begins with coming to Christ, It begins with trusting him as our saviour, And only then do we find that God gives us, The strength to carry on, How many of us, When we began the Christian life, Felt that we were able to do everything, Felt that we could manage everything, Perhaps we did at the beginning, It didn't take very long, Before we realised just how weak our faith was, First challenges, The first opposition, The first difficulties, But as we went through them, We found that our faith grew, We found that more and more, We were relying on the Lord, More and more, He was providing for us, The strength we needed, And there's one last thing here,

That's very appropriate in that sense, The next thing that God brought into Gideon's life, To strengthen his faith, Was resistance from others, Verse 28, They asked each other, Who's done this?

They find out it's Gideon, Verse 30, They say to Joash, Bring out your son, We're going to kill him, So the response that he was afraid of getting, Was actually the response he got, So yes, Sometimes when we step out in faith, And we trust the Lord, That we speak for Christ, And we live for Christ, That people do, Reject us, That people do despise us, That people do mock us, That people do, The things that we're afraid they would do, That's exactly what they did here, The first step of faith, Was not greeted with enthusiastic encouragement, It called for his death, And his father steps in with words of wisdom, I'm sure his dad wasn't all that pleased, That he'd killed his bull, Put his porch, Came into the torch, But, He meets this crowd of antagonists, And says to him, Well go on, If this Baal, If this God that you've worshipped, So strong and brilliant, I'm sure he can punish Gideon, You don't need to do it, He can punish him, If he's God, Can't he? Which of course, He never does, Because Baal is no God, He doesn't exist, There's a principle here, Isn't there, That as we follow Christ, As we seek to do his will, As we are obedient to him, There will be opposition, There will be resistance, There will be difficulties, Not everyone will

understand, Most will not understand, Many will be offended, But that's exactly what happened to Jesus, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Lived that perfect sinless life, In this world, And from the moment he was baptised, And in one sense, Set on his path, To go and to minister, And be the Messiah, And saviour of the world, He met resistance, He met the temptation, And the attack of Satan, And then he met the resistance, Of the religious leaders, Day by day, Week by week, Several times people tried to kill him, Throw stones at him, Chase him off a cliff, And if we are followers of Jesus, Then we have to expect the same, Jesus said, The servant's not greater than the master, If they treated the master in this way, They treat the servant in the same way, Jesus was the most obedient son of God, But he was the most opposed, And rejected, And so it is with us, But I've said that resistance, And people being unpleasant, And opposing us, Is actually going to build our faith, Well how does it build Gideon's faith, How can it build our faith, When people are off with us, For speaking up for Christ, Or for living for him, Because Gideon's faith is increased, Because he sees God's wonderful protection of him, God's wonderful provision for him, His deliverance for him, He may have feared his father, More than he did the townsfolk, We're told he did, Verse 27, He was afraid of his family, And after that altar,

[43 : 45] And that bull, Was built, He was expecting, Them to be some backlash, But here in the midst of it, His father, Who would be the most reason to be angry, Turns out to be his greatest defender, Surely this is God's intervention, Surely this is God being with him, This is God doing the unexpected, He expected the townspeople, He's more afraid of his father, But actually when he stands up for God, Stands up for the Lord, It's actually his father, Who comes to his defence, God has promised, That he will be with him, And he was, And so we find, When we go through those times of testing, The times when the world is against us, God does surprising things, The person perhaps, That we thought was going to be most, Mocking of us, Or ridiculing of us, Or difficult with us, Is actually the one, Who is most understanding, The one who is most willing to listen, Perhaps even the one, Who is able to share the gospel with,

And see come to faith, He was witnessing God's remarkable, Deliverance, But also, Notice as well, He was overcoming that great fear, The great fear, Of people's approval, That great fear, Of popularity being lost, Of acceptance, Acceptance, He was realising, That it was more important, To have God's acceptance, Than men and women's acceptance, Weak faith, Faith which has fear, Is always worried, What will people say, What will people do, More fearful of people, Than of God, More fearful of offending people, Than God, More fearful of losing people, People's care and love, Than losing the care and love of God, That's weak faith, And God wants it the other way around, And so what does He do, He shows us the fickleness, Of human beings, He shows us the faithlessness, Of those that we've put our trust in before,

Sadly all of us, As people are still sinful, And we fluctuate, We let one another down, And we get it wrong, And the more we see that, Actually the greater our faith in God, Should be, Because the more we realize, How faithful and good, And trustworthy he is, God was increasing the faith, Of Gideon, By making men oppose him, And reject him, Gideon was in fact, Coming closer to God, Finding him more reliable, Now Gideon hasn't overcome, All his fears, We'll see that next week, When we look at this incident, Of the fleece, But his faith is growing, And this is the thing dear friends, Sometimes we want faith, To be like a magic potion, We want God to give us, This great faith, We want him to sort of, Give us a pill to take, Or to read a verse, And suddenly from fear, We'll come to great faith, From having little faith, We'll have massive faith,

But look all the way, Through the scriptures, Look all the way through life, Look through your own life, If you're a Christian, You'll see that God, Grows faith, Increases faith, Steady, Steadily, Steadily, Steadily, And perhaps at this moment, In your life, You say, Well I want to believe, And I know that I need to believe, But I just don't have the faith, I just don't have the trust, I'm worried that, I'll just start off, And then I'll fall, What did Jesus say, If you've got faith, The size of a mustard seed, Mustard seed is, About that big, Tiny, If you've got faith, The size of a mustard seed, You can say to this mountain, Be moved, And it will move, See it's not the size, Of our faith, It's the size of the God, Our faith is in, If we put our faith in him, Even if we put us, Tiny mustard seed, Amount of faith in God, He will never let us down, He will cause that faith, To grow, And to develop, And be enlarged, And so dear friends, For us, That's what God wants, He wants us to go, From fear to faith, It's not overnight, It's not some, Miraculous, Miraculous cure, It's God working, Changing, Through the circumstances, Through our obedience, Through getting to know him, To getting to find out, That he indeed, Is faithful, So let's not be discouraged, Because our faith is small, Let us pray, Pray as the

disciples did, In the New Testament, Increase, Our faith, And as we do so, We shall find our fears,
Falling away, And our faith, Increasing, Here's the verse, I'm going to close with, From Philippians,
In chapter 4, Do not be anxious, Or fearful, About anything, But in every situation, By prayer and
petition, With thanksgiving, Present your requests, To God, And the peace of God, Which
transcends, All understanding, Will guard your hearts,

[48 : 49] And your minds, In Christ Jesus, Let's sing together, Our final hymn, It's a hymn, Which
speaks of, The firmness, The certainty, Of God's promises, In his word, That we can trust, 612, How
firm a foundation, You saints, Of the Lord, Again, Please let us invite you, If you're visiting, Please
stay, And have lunch with us, You'll be very, Very welcome, Be more than enough, To share, And
we can continue, To fellowship together, 612, 612, Do not be anxious, About anything, But in every
situation, By prayer and petition, With thanksgiving, Present your requests, To God, And the peace
of God, Which transcends, All understanding, Will guard your hearts, And your minds, In Christ
Jesus, Amen.

Amen.