

## Judges 6:33-40 – “Gideon Fleeces God”

(Pew Bible Page: 206)

**Intro:** Some people *live* for a challenge. I read recently of a man who climbed Mount Everest carrying a paragliding outfit that only weighed a little over two pounds, specially made for mountain climbers. A paraglider is a type of parachute that can be steered. You’ve probably seen paragliders thrilling the crowd by dropping into sporting events at half-time. It’s a trendy thing to do just now. This South African man who climbed Everest received permission from the Nepali authorities to paraglide off Mount Everest’s South Col – an altitude of 26,246.72 feet in height, and glide to the bottom. It sounds easy, but it’s a lot riskier than you might think. At that height, the weather conditions must be near perfect all the way down. The winds and weather must be just right at high altitude, mid-altitude, and low altitude. On just such a day, this man jumped and eight minutes later arrived safely at his destination. When asked why he did this, he made it clear that he didn’t do it for fame or monetary gain. He’s done this kind of thing before without anyone much noticing, and he holds a full-time job in South Africa so that he can pay his own way, receiving funds from no one. Why, then, do it? He does it for the challenge. He did it for personal enrichment if you will. His point, I suppose, is to develop his soul. Though I am not sure Gideon was that kind of man, I’m pretty sure that what God had in mind for his reluctant servant was along these lines: God sought to develop Gideon’s faith and courage as a demonstration of what God can do with an ordinary human being. Gideon, as we’ve seen, wasn’t a man of great faith or courage when God called him to be His servant. But God didn’t leave Gideon in that condition. As we’ll see tonight...

**Proposition:** God patiently endures our weaknesses so that He can make us strong at last.

Billboard:	(vv.33-35)	Testing and Power
	(v.36)	A Man of Little Faith
	(vv.37-39)	Gideon Fleeces God

(vv.33-35) Testing and Power – God had chosen Gideon as His instrument to deliver Israel from Midian, but Gideon needed development before God could use him as fully as He wished. **Judges 6:33–35 - 33** *Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. 35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them.* Two things to note in these verses: 1) Whenever God gives faith, He tests faith. Gideon was immediately faced with crisis: 135,000 (cf.8:10) Midianites camping out in his backyard! Gideon had been brought to faith. He had seen the angel of the Lord face to face and believed that God had called and commissioned him to act against the Midianites. Now God tested Gideon’s faith to see if it was real or not. And Gideon passed the test. He called for Israel’s troops to gather and the tribes around him responded. Gideon’s faith was real. **God always sends testing because He knows that testing is an opportunity that leads to faith’s growth.** Testing is an opportunity to experience God’s presence through the exercise of faith (see Acts 12:1-19 for a parallel example of this principle – like Gideon, the church acted in faith and prayed, while doubting that God would answer their prayers). 2) God equips His people with the power of the Spirit needed to help them

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*pass the test.* The text tells us that, “*The Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon,*” meaning what? It means that Gideon was provided with the faith and courage he needed to act according to God’s revealed will. At this point Gideon is “trusting God and doing what made sense to do.” God equips His people with the power of the Spirit so that they can carry out the work He commissions them to do. **The Spirit of God is given to us to “change us, help us want to obey Him, help us understand [God’s Word], and help us do all sorts of things we could never do without Him.”**<sup>1</sup> The Spirit’s presence was proven by Gideon’s action of calling Israel’s army together and by Israel’s response to Gideon’s call: 32,000 soldiers gathered around Gideon. 32,000 soldiers may not seem like enough in the face of the 135,000 enemy, but as we’ll see, it was far more than Spirit-filled Gideon needed when all was said and done.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God tests His peoples’ faith through trials, but He also equips His people for victory by giving us His Spirit.

[APPLICATION] Expect to encounter trials but remember that God has given you His Spirit so that you can overcome them.

(v.36) A Man of Little Faith – Though Gideon’s faith was *real*, and the Spirit’s presence was with him, Gideon’s faith and courage were still *weak*. **Judges 6:36 - 36** *Then Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said...”* Clearly, Gideon is still struggling with unbelief and not fully trusting God. “*If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said...*” is not a great statement of confidence in God! Gideon plainly doubts that God will keep His word. Here is the weakness of the Garden of Eden still at work: “*Did God really say...?*” **It is sin that causes us to doubt God’s willingness to keep His promises.** Unbelief is wavering or absent commitment to God. God is inseparable from His Word. When we doubt God’s Word, we doubt God Himself. Gideon is a man of faith, but he is a man of *little faith* at this point. **Faith is a matter of the heart, but strong faith or maturity, is a matter of the head.** God brings us to faith by giving us a new heart but grows us to maturity by renewing our minds (cf. Romans 12:2). This is why growing in the knowledge of doctrine is important for all believers. We don’t have to know much doctrine to be saved (blessedly) but we do have to understand doctrine to be stable (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16). Weak faith is untaught faith (cf. Romans 14 & 1 Corinthians 8). God put Gideon through a training program to grow His faith and courage.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Gideon’s faith was weak because he did not yet know God as the one who always keeps His promises.

[APPLICATION] If your faith, like Gideon’s, is weak, realize its fault: it does not yet rest on an adequate knowledge of God.

(vv.37-39) Gideon Fleeces God – The weakness of Gideon’s faith is demonstrated by Gideon’s setting God a test and promising to trust Him only if He passes that test. **Judges 6:37–39 - 37** *behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the*

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<sup>1</sup> Lifeway Press, “Spark Studios VBS,” 2022.

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ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” **38** And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. **39** Then Gideon said to God, “Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew.” Gideon didn’t trust God when God stooped to Gideon’s weakness and passed the test as Gideon had demanded. Gideon put God to a second test of the same nature as the first. **The amazing thing is that God accommodated Gideon’s unbelief, for unbelief it was!** Let’s be clear: putting God to such a test is a direct violation of God’s law: **Deuteronomy 6:16 - 16** “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. Why, then, is this account given to us and what are we to make of it? **Like other Biblical stories of people doing wrong but good coming of it (ex. Rehab’s the prostitute’s lies; Samson’s violations of his Nazarite vows; Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery) this story is descriptive not prescriptive.** The Bible tells us what happened without commending that we imitate the action. It is reporting the weakness, not recommending it as a pattern to be followed. The purpose is to reveal God’s patience with Gideon’s unbelief, not to commend unbelief. The purpose is also to show how God in patience stoops to strengthen the weak faith of His children. Our faith is strengthened through experience with God. **God graciously works, even through our unbelief to grow us up into mature faith and courage, as He did with Gideon.** The miracle here isn’t God’s wetting or drying the fleece; it is God’s patience with His faithless servant.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Gideon “fleeces” God, yet God stooped to Gideon’s weakness to strengthen His servant’s faith and courage.

[APPLICATION] Rest in God’s patience with our weakness. Trust Him to develop your greatest weakness into true faith and courage, as a demonstration of His patience and glory.

**Conclusion:** Some people *live* for a challenge. The thought of paragliding from Mount Everest may not be your idea of healthy self-development, but let’s be clear: God intends for you and me to face *moral* challenges in our lives that are just as intimidating. And He has given us His Spirit so that those challenges confronted and triumphed over will build our faith and courage to maturity in Him, just as the challenges that Gideon faced produced true growth in Gideon. In C. S. Lewis’ “Chronicles of Narnia,” one of the children asked Mrs. Beaver if Aslan (the mighty lion standing in as the Christ-figure in the books) if Aslan was safe. Mrs. Beaver replied, “Safe? Oh, no. He’s not safe. But he is good!” If you started your life with Christ looking for a safe relationship with Him, you’ve missed the point. He’s not safe. He will lead you into all kinds of challenges that will make the hair on the back of your neck stand up straight! But you need not worry! He’s good, and that makes all the difference. The challenges are for your good when its all been said and done.