



**Charles Spurgeon** said:

*Doubt discovers difficulties which it never solves;  
it creates hesitancy, despondency, despair.  
Its progress is the decay of comfort, the death of peace.  
"Believe!" is the word which speaks life into a man,  
but doubt nails down his coffin.*

As we've been studying the life of Gideon you would be right to ask why the Lord would choose such a man of doubt to save Israel from its enemies.

Early on in our studies about Gideon, we recognised that he doubted God's word. He doubted the Lord was with him (because his life was in such a mess); he doubted his standing within society and his lowly position in his family, and that it would disqualify him from leading; even after a face-to-face meeting with an angel of the Lord he doubted he would live!

Gideon doubted and questioned the Lord's calling to lead Israel against the Midianites. His story demonstrates that doubt leads to fear and he feared man more than he feared God! Gideon's doubt was overcome by faith, as his relationship developed with the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I invite you to consider 3 questions from our scripture this morning:

1. Is doubt the enemy of faith?
  2. Does doubting God's word open a door to fearing man?
  3. Like Gideon, must you also test God before you believe and trust in the Lord with all your heart?
- We can all agree that Gideon's story displays many human weaknesses and perhaps that was why he was chosen by the Lord.

#### **I Corinthians 1:26-29**

*Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him.*

The Lord said to the Apostle Paul: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Comforting words to us, when we think of our own calling.

The good news is that the Lord established a relationship of grace and favour with Gideon, just as He does with you and me. Even though Gideon's family and all Israel deserted God to follow worthless idols, He still demonstrates his amazing love to us and His patience while we mature in our faith.

God passionately desires to be in relationship with you and me, despite our past record of failures. He is for us not against us and will stand with us through the good times and through the bad. If you have any lasting doubts about his love, mercy and grace, look to the cross of Calvary!

## Judges 6:33-40

*Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.*

*<sup>34</sup> Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.*

*<sup>35</sup> He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.*

*<sup>36</sup> Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—*

*<sup>37</sup> look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said."*

*<sup>38</sup> And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water.*

*<sup>39</sup> Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew."*

*<sup>40</sup> That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.*

This segment of scripture is what most people remember from the life of Gideon. The term 'putting out a fleece' is often quoted in Christian circles but I'm not suggesting it is a good way to justify why you would put God to the test or indeed doubt His word to you.

The Apostle Paul encourages us to learn from the past, not to repeat it!

## Romans 15:4

*For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.*

Gideon is now close to his moment of truth, as the enemies of Israel gather in the valley of Jezreel ready to steal, kill and destroy, as they had been doing for 7 years - But just at the right time the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon.

Notice what Gideon did first when the Spirit of the Lord came on him – he blew a trumpet and summoned those closest to follow him. Then he sent messengers out to call people to take up arms against their enemies. There was a good response to Gideon's trumpet call, especially given their history of cowardice (hiding in caves).

Just out of interest, the trumpet Gideon blew is called a "shofar", which is actually a ram's horn and a biblical symbol of strength. Throughout scripture the shofar was sounded on many different occasions and will again be heard at the resurrection of God's people!

The shofar was also used in temple worship as a vessel to hold anointing oil; the shofar makes for a good bible study in itself.



The Shofar

It is also worth pointing out that throughout the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon particular people, at particular times and for particular reasons. Whereas in the New Testament the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost on all believers who turned in faith to Jesus and He remains with us today, Hallelujah!

We shouldn't be surprised at Gideon's response to God's word, as doubt has been around for a very long time. The first instance of doubt recorded in the bible is when Satan deceived Adam and Eve by questioning God's command.

**Genesis 3:1**

*... the serpent said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

**Genesis 3:4**

*"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.*

Doubt led Adam and Eve to sin and sin led to fear not faith.

**Genesis 3:9-10**

*But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*

Doubt belongs to the old, sinful nature but when we turn from our past life and come to faith in Jesus, doubt along with all other human frailties was crucified with Christ. The truth from scripture is that we died with Christ, were buried and rose with Him to a new life of 'resurrection power', power to overcome and conquer the past. In Christ doubt is dead and faith is alive!

Jesus asked Martha in the Gospel of John "do you believe this"?

When we are born again of God's Spirit we come into a right relationship with the Father, through faith in His Son and are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we are called to live by faith and to trust in the Lord with all our heart, not lean on our own understanding...

We have assurance from God's word that our new life in Christ is one of overcoming. Our faith and belief is in God's word, empowered by His Spirit and it leads us to trusting what is true. Therefore, doubt is overcome by faith and our relationship deepens with the Lord as we walk in faith day-by-day.

**Romans 1:17**

*For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

**Challenge to the church this week:** Let us take God at His word and walk by faith this week, trusting in the Lord, not doubting his word. He really does love us and wants the very best for us. We can trust what He asks of us ...for His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

What did Jesus have to say about seeing and believing?

**John 20: 27-29**

*27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*

*28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

*29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

AMEN.