Gideon – A Man of Faith I

- Hebrews 11:32-34 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Gideon (or Gedeon as he is called in the letter to the Hebrews) is listed among others in the ‘Hall of Fame’ of mighty men of God. He is listed along with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Is it not remarkable how the Omnipotent, Omniscient God chooses that which is at the other end of the spectrum to His majestic qualities? He chooses the basest of His creations to carry out His purposes. Instead of choosing the mightiest King, or most renowned scholar, Almighty God goes for the impoverished menial, or the illiterate peasant. All the above characters are not only famous for their faith, they are also renowned as ‘normal’ people. Abraham tried to ‘help’ the Lord’s plans along by having a son through Hagar. Look at the problems that have resulted from that unnecessary union. Isaac could only follow in the steps of his father. Both of them lied about the relationship of their particular wives. We all know about Jacob the supplanter, and Moses the murderer. Yet, each one became mighty in the hands of the Lord.

Here, in our subject we have a person, who even in his own eyes is a servant of servants, a mere nothing in the tribe of Israel.

- Judges 6:15 ...my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.

But this is the type of clay that the Lord, the Potter, can mould to good effect, as we shall discover in these articles.

We first meet Gideon as he is threshing wheat in a winepress, for fear of the marauding Midianites. To use his words, as ‘the least in his father’s house’, he was the most expendable. If the Midianites caught him, as a fit young man he would have been taken captive and either used or sold as a slave, just as Joseph, his paternal forebear, was.

The Angel of the Lord, in this context, is an expression used to signify the pre-nativity appearance of Christ to His people. That this Angel is not one of the mighty creatures is confirmed by the following verses:

- Judges 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?
- Judges 6:23 And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.
- Judges 6:24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day, it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Only The Lord has the power and authority to send a person on a mission; to confirm that death will not occur; and who alone is worthy of a sacrificial altar. No created angel, no matter how powerful, would assume such authority (with the exception of that fallen angel Satan, who would love to have such ministrations attending his person).

From the opening words of the Angel, Gideon would have been forgiven, for looking around, to see if anybody else was being addressed.
Judges 6:12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

Gideon appears to be a worshipper of the living God, as he later relates the doings of God concerning his ancestors, and how the Lord worked mightily on behalf of Israel, but now, such misfortunes had become them that the tribes assumed that the Lord had left them. Therefore, the phrase ‘the Lord is with thee’, would have been a blessing and a comforting opening, but it was what the Angel finished with that shocked Gideon – ‘thou mighty man of valour’.

Here he was, the least in the family, which was the least of the tribes, hiding from the Midianites in order to thresh corn by hand, so that they could make bread. The normal method of threshing corn was by using an ox and a threshing cart, but the noise, dust, and bellowing of the animal would have aroused the interest of any passing band of marauders. Therefore, Gideon was skulking in a winepress, full of fear, trying to quickly finish a dangerous job. There was certainly no valour in him at all (at least, according to his thinking).

When Gideon was told that he was ‘a mighty man of valour’, he did not flinch at that appellation, but simply wanted to know with what means he could possibly save Israel. It would seem that this idea was not new to him, that he had thought about the history of his people and understood that, with the Lord’s help, Israel was always brought back from the brink of annihilation. It might have been that, in the dreams of youth, while threshing the wheat, he saw himself leading Israel to victory like Deborah and Barak, or as a powerful Othniel. However, his thoughts were not initially upon his prowess (or lack of it), but upon the absence of the Lord of Hosts from the lifestyle of his people. Gideon realised that without the presence of God amongst them, then all their works were in vain.

Judges 6:13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD 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 the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

He had an understanding of that which Paul wrote about to the Romans.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

John also understood this concept.

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Although Gideon did not phrase his query to the Angel in such terms, this was the dominant idea that was in his mind. With God, Israel was victorious; without God, Israel was what it was in the natural, simply a tribe of nomadic herdsmen, at the prey and mercy of every passing warrior band.

“If the Lord be with us...”. Gideon had no doubt that, were the Lord present amongst them in the manner in which He was to the founding Fathers, then none of this tribulation would have come upon them. That is faith – the belief in the active presence of a Saviour. He genuinely believed, based upon historical precedence, that the Lord had left them. The fact that the Lord had not left them, but merely turned His face away, so to speak, until Israel repented, was not a concept understood by Gideon. The very fact that the Lord had visited Gideon, in the form of the Angel, proves that He had not deserted His chosen people.

Under the New Covenant, believers also have this assurance of the presence of the Lord.
Matthew 28:20b Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Even when the Lord Jesus physically ascended to the right hand of His Father, He left a comforting message for us.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.

For the born-again elect, it may appear at times that the Lord ‘hath forsaken us’. This feeling of desertion, terrible as it is, can be good for the soul. It forces the saint to call out to the Lord for Him to renew His presence; it brings about true contrition for sin and strengthens the faith of that person.

Psalms 51:11-12 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Psalms 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Psalms 139:7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

The Lord’s words to Gideon immediately strengthened and gave him a vision for the future, albeit at the moment, only a hazy vision.

Judges 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

John Gill comments upon this verse in the following manner.

Have not I sent thee? to do this great work, save the people of Israel, from whence Gideon might perceive who it was that talked with him, and, having a command and commission from God, had authority enough to go about this service.

My next Scripture will be obvious enough!

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The very words of the Angel to Gideon can be applied to every single person called and redeemed by God. “Have I not sent thee?” However, the commission together with its requisite authority to make disciples is only applicable to the teaching of that which the Lord has commanded, all of which can be found in the true version of the Bible. This mandate from God rules out any teaching that is man-made, man-honouring, or that is not in agreement with the inspired Word of God. That in itself rules out the mandate for the modern apostate church, which has devised its own rules and regulations, based upon what is politically correct, satisfying to fellow-humans, and contrary to the Word of God.

The elect of God, either yet to be called into the church, or who are already part of that powerful remnant, need to hear and be taught the full length and breadth and height and depth of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. A watered-down version neither saves nor feeds.
Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

1 Peter 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Our mandate is like that of the Apostles, who...

Acts 5:42 ...daily in the temple, and in every house, ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Gideon’s task was possibly more daunting – thou shalt save Israel from the hands of the Midianites. This was not to be a cozy round-table conference to air disagreements. This would be hand-to-hand combat in order to remove the invader from the land. However, I ask the question, is it not more daunting to confront apostasy and error, and to contend for the faith once given to the saints? The protagonists of the deception in the church have a vast array of skilled speakers, logically crafted texts, fine-sounding phrases like “the Lord has told us to...”, or even “Thus saith the Lord...”. Blasphemy is sweet in their mouths, and the word of God is treated as an out-of-date, mythological story. Our human flesh might be severed with a sword, or pierced by a bullet, yet it will heal. Our human pride, once wounded, seems to fester and ulcerate as though it would never heal. Many prefer physical conflict to spiritual engagement. As usual, we always forget what the Lord has promised. He promised it to Gideon, and He promises it to us.

Judges 6:16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely, I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

Such comfort, such support, such blessing – surely, I will be with thee. Not might be, not hope to be, but I will be with thee!

2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Not only is God with us, He dwells in each born-again elect believer. He is no longer on the outside, but on the inside.

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 6:56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

God could not have made it any more plain – He dwells in the believer, and He is with that believer 24/7, and for all eternity!

This should be an even greater encouragement to us than it was to Gideon who simply said...
• Judges 6:17 ...if now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

The Angel agreed to Gideon’s request. We too have had a sign given to us that we might know the truth of our commission and authority.

• Matthew 12:38-40 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the only sign that we need to prove that all His teaching and commandments were, and still are, from Almighty God.

• Romans 1:3-4 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

• Romans 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

• 1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The resurrection is our ultimate proof and our final hope. The next sign that we shall see, will be the awesome return of the Lord in glory, as He comes to judge the world.

• Matthew 24:30-31 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

We are assured of the truth of Holy Writ, by the indwelling Spirit and by the confirmation of the resurrection. However, there are other signs in the world of which we need to take heed. The coming of the Lord Jesus in glory is not the only sign that will be apparent as this age comes to a close. Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians warns of a time before the Second Coming of Christ, in which signs and lying wonders would be seen.

• 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

• 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of
unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

If our times do not qualify under the above description as the time of ‘falling away’ which in Greek is ‘apostasia’ ἀποστασία (G646 = apostasy), then all we can do is pray that the Lord will have mercy on that future generation. The love of the truth is no longer a desire of the nations. Deceit, lies, half-truths, even downright falsehoods are the order of the day – black is the new white! Who can believe any politician or political party to maintain truth and integrity throughout their term of office? Who would believe what they read in the papers, hear on the news, or even watch on the TV or internet? No one who is a follower of the Lord Christ is completely taken in by their signs and lying wonders. The church is apostate, and only the remnant seeks after the truth.

Gideon, like the true believer, served the living God. He prepared a meal for the Angel and ministered to His (perceived) needs. We too, can and must minister to the Lord Jesus, and to His Body, the Church. In these perilous times, leaders and led alike need prophecy.

- 1 Corinthians 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to (1) edification, and (2) exhortation, and (3) comfort.

We all need that building up in our holy faith. We need to be encouraged to run with patience the race that is set before us, and we need comfort in our times of trials and tribulations. We all need to be strengthened in that knowledge that Christ loves us, irrespective of what we think, feel, or imagine.

- Romans 8:35, 37 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

We are the church! We are made up from the bricks and stones that the world has thrown away. Just as the walls of Jerusalem were reconstructed from the remnants of the old walls that had been thrown down and discarded, so too we are built up upon a solid foundation – no sinking sand for the Church of Christ!

- Nehemiah 4:2-3 And he (Sanballat) spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

To the rest of the world, the church has become an irrelevance, an obsolete establishment, just as Tobiah thought, and that it can only help a few people to achieve some sort of temporary tranquillity. Oh, my friends, how wrong the world is. The Church is the Bride of Christ, and the Bridegroom is coming soon to claim His wife. Not only is the Church His Bride, He is the Master-builder, and He is building His church!

- Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- Mark 14:58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.
- Acts 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.

This is the same One who said to Job,
Job 38:4-7 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Our builder is almighty, His plans are perfect, and His foundations sure.

- 2 Samuel 22:32 For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?
- Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

When Gideon finally brought the Angel His meal, he saw a pre-Elijah miracle, as the Angel touched the flesh and bread with the tip of His staff. The meal had been soaked in the broth (gravy), yet a fire arose out of the rocks and consumed the food. Upon which the Angel disappeared from sight.

We too have had our fleshly appetites burnt.

- Luke 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Our lives have been put upon an altar, which is the foundation of Jesus Christ, and the fire of God reveals what is of Him and what is of flesh

- 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

- Hebrews 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Works of man may appear impressive, crowd attracting, and desirable, but when examined by the fire of God’s Word, they will crackle and vanish like thorns in a fire. Those works are as the chaff from the threshing and will receive the same end.

- Jeremiah 23:29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?
- Matthew 3:12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Refined gold, that which has been through the fires of purification, is far more costly than the raw ore, or a dross-filled sample. The refiner works hard to ensure that the purified metal is as free from impurities as he is able to make it. When the Refiner is Almighty God, there is no limit to His refining ability!

- Malachi 3:3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.
We are those sons of Levi, priests of the Most High God, and our work is refined, so that it becomes an offering in righteousness. So when the flames seem to be more intense than usual, when you think that you have just had a spiritual ‘roasting’ and are unsure why, it is more than likely that you and/or your works are being refined and purified to make them an offering in righteousness. It may be grievous to you, but always remember that neither gold nor silver in refining ever lose anything except the dross. No precious metal is destroyed by the fire, only hay and stubble are consumed, so that the end result is a purified ingot of high value to the owner.

Finally, as the Angel disappeared from sight, Gideon began to fear because he had seen an angel of the Lord face to face. We too would fear, if we were to see Almighty God face to face (if that were possible), but clothed in the Robe of Righteousness imputed to us in and through the Lord Jesus, we can boldly come before the Throne of Glory to speak with our heavenly Father. Again, the words that the Lord said to Gideon, He has also said to us.

When the Lord approached the disciples in the early hours of the morning on the Sea of Galilee, they, naturally, were afraid. The words of comfort that He spoke to them, are the same words of comfort that He speaks to all when He comes to them – be not afraid.

- Matthew 14:27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John heard the Word of God from the cloud and were sore afraid. Once again, the approach and presence of Jesus brought about peace.

- Matthew 17:5-7 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

It is this freedom from fear that the Lord Jesus brings to all who abide in Him. He gave this promise to us all:

- John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

There is no fear in coming to Christ. He is the Peace of God, who brings reconciliation between Almighty God and sinful, rebellious mankind.

- Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

We, like Gideon, can continue our work for the Lord in the knowledge that we have peace with God. There is nothing to fear, providing that we remain in Christ. It is like being out in a rainstorm. Provided you remain under an umbrella, your head and shoulders will not get wet. As soon as you come out from under the protection, you get wet!

With that peace in his heart, Gideon built an altar to Jehovah Shalom, Jehovah our peace, well-being, health, prosperity, safety. He knew, just as we know that in Christ, the rest promised to believers in the letter to the Hebrews is a reassuring reality.

- Hebrews 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.
Hebrews 4:10-11 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

On this positive note of peace in Christ Jesus, for those who are called according to His purpose, let us rest physically and spiritually in the knowledge that He is returning for His bride, the Church and that we will be with Him for all eternity.