

Gideon and the Fleece

God calls a fearful farmer to deliver Israel. Gideon asks for signs with a wool fleece, and God patiently confirms His call.

Judges 6:1-40

CHARACTERS: Gideon, The Angel of the Lord, God

THEMES: God uses the weak, Seeking confirmation, God's patience with doubt

THE ISRAELITES DID evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years He gave them into the hands of Midian. The Midianites and other eastern peoples invaded like swarms of locusts, ruining the land and leaving Israel impoverished.

Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites when the angel of the Lord appeared to him. 'The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.'

Gideon replied, 'If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened? Where are all His wonders our fathers told us about? The Lord has abandoned us.'

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?'

'But Lord,' Gideon asked, 'how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.'

'I will be with you,' the Lord answered, 'and you will strike down all the Midianites together.'

Gideon asked for a sign and prepared an offering. The angel touched it with his staff, fire flared from the rock and consumed the offering, and the

angel vanished. Gideon was afraid—he had seen the angel of the Lord face to face! But the Lord said, 'Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.'

That night, God told Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal. Gideon obeyed, but he did it at night because he was afraid. When the townspeople discovered what happened and demanded Gideon's death, his father defended him: 'If Baal is a god, let him fight for himself.'

When the Midianites and their allies gathered for battle, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He blew a trumpet, and men rallied to him. But Gideon still struggled with doubt.

'If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised,' he said to God, 'I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and the ground is dry, I will know.'

In the morning, Gideon squeezed a bowlful of water from the fleece, but the ground was dry.

Gideon said, 'Do not be angry with me. Let me make one more request. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew.'

That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry, and the ground was covered with dew.

God was patient with Gideon's weakness and doubt. He would use this fearful farmer to accomplish an impossible victory.