

Gideon #1: The Presence of the Lord

by Ed Miller

The sermon explores how the presence of the Lord in Gideon's life exemplifies God's desire to bless us so that we can be a blessing to others.

Duration: 59:53

Scripture: Genesis 12:2-3, Zechariah 8:13, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Gods Presence", "Spiritual Blessings"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the burden he has for the people of God and their need for blessings. He references Genesis 12:2-3, where God promises to bless Abraham and make him a blessing. The speaker emphasizes that one cannot be a blessing until they have been blessed themselves. He then shifts to the story of Gideon in the Book of Judges, highlighting the dark times during the Judges era and the need for God's presence, preeminence, and manifestation in our lives.

Transcript

Well, good evening, brothers. It's so good to be with you, and I've looked forward for quite a while as I've prepared my heart before the Lord to share with you the burden that I think He has put on my heart. So we're glad you're here, and I pray that you've come to see the Lord Jesus, and certainly that's why I'm here.

And I just pray that He'll, as He's been so faithful to visit us, He knows your heart, He knows your capacity, He knows your need, and He's faithful to visit with us. As we come to the study of God's Word, there is a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable. You probably, those that have heard me before, have heard me mention that truth.

That principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. We need academics. We need the human side of this book.

But if that's all we have, then you could have spent this weekend in a better way. We need the revelation of the Lord. And only God can reveal God.

He delights to do it. He longs to unveil Himself. But only He can reveal Himself.

And so at the end of the day, you must come, I must come, as a little child before the Lord, and just say, Now Lord, as far as I know, these are the facts. I've done the donkey work. This is the academics.

Now Lord, dawn on these facts and unveil the Lord Jesus. I've been studying recently the wonderful book of Acts. And a verse struck me.

Let me just set that before your heart before we look together into the Word. It's Acts 9, verse 7. And it has to do with when the Lord appeared to Saul, you remember, on the road to Damascus. And in chapter 9, verse 7, the Bible says that those around him, those that were with him, heard the voice.

But about 20 years later, he was given his testimony telling about the same experience in Acts chapter 22, verse 9. And in Acts 22, verse 9, it says that those that were with him did not hear the voice. So in chapter 9, it says they heard the voice. And then in chapter 22, it says they didn't hear the voice.

Well, I don't know Greek, but I'm thankful for those people who have written Greek in English so I can study it. And so I studied what that's all about. And they gave a long explanation about a special word and a special form in the genitive case.

And this is one of the few words used in that case. But it boils down to this. In chapter 9, it says they heard of the voice.

They didn't hear the voice. They heard of the voice. Probably very much like John chapter 13 where our Lord Jesus heard a voice from heaven.

I have glorified You already and I'll glorify You again. And those around it said it sounded like thunder. And some said it was an angel.

The point I'm making is this. I believe the Lord wants to speak this weekend. And it would be a shame if we just heard of the voice and we didn't hear the voice.

Some people hear of the voice, but they don't hear the voice. It would be a shame if you had to leave and someone says, how was the retreat? You say, oh man, it sounded like thunder. It was like an angel.

We want to hear the Lord. He wants to speak. And we want to hear, not of the voice, we want to hear the voice.

We don't want to hear thunder. We don't want to hear an angel. We want the Lord to speak to us.

Now He's promised if we would open our mouths wide, He would fill them. It's His pleasure to reveal His Son to us. And so I'm going to ask you brothers to bow with me as we commit our time unto Him.

Our Father, we thank You that we can hear the voice, not just of the voice, and that You will speak directly to our hearts. We commit our time unto You now and we pray by Your grace that You would take the veil away. Show us Jesus.

Turn the eyes of our heart unto Him in a living way, in a fresh way. Thank You Lord for Your Bible, every part of it, in a special way this weekend. We thank You for Judges chapter 6-8.

Guide us as we meditate together and we pray that we might behold You. We ask in the precious name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Now though I told you the text, I'll ask you to turn to Psalm 67 please. And even that, we're not going to get to for a minute, so put your thumb there or something. Let me come straight to the burden that's on my

heart for this weekend.

I'm going to give several verses. If you want to look them up, you can, but I'll go by them pretty quickly just to release what I feel like is the great theme that I want to share. Genesis chapter 12, verse 2 and 3, God spoke a word to the father of faith, to Abraham.

And here's what it is. Genesis 12, 2 and 3, I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee. I will make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.

Just the two parts of that verse, I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing. I'll bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing. I can't be a blessing until I've been blessed.

And you can't be a blessing until you've been blessed. The same truth is taught at the end of the Old Testament. Zechariah 8, verse 13.

Listen as I read it. It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you might become a blessing. Do not fear.

Be strong. Isn't that a wonderful word? I will save you that you might become a blessing. I don't know if you're familiar with the song we used to sing it quite a bit, Daniel Whittle's song, There shall be showers of blessing.

You know that song? There shall be showers of blessing. Mercy drops round us are falling, but for the showers we plead. Now, that expression, showers of blessing, is a Bible expression.

That's in the Bible. Showers of blessing. But the King James actually misses the point of the original.

The New American Standard does capture the point. It doesn't say in the Bible, there shall be showers of blessing. In the Bible it says, they shall be showers of blessing.

Not there shall be. They shall be. Ezekiel 34, 26.

I will make them and the places around my hill a blessing. I shall cause showers to come down in their season. They will be showers of blessing.

God wants to bless, but He's chosen to bless through the blast. It seems like the Lord tried to recover that truth in these days with the prayer of Jabez. Remember that prayer, Bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast.

God's blessing is redemptive. Every time God blesses, it's a missionary blessing. It's an evangelistic blessing.

Now, I asked you to turn to Psalm 67. If you just look at that, I consider this to be the greatest missionary psalm in the whole hymnal, in the whole book of Psalms. I want you to look at the terminal points of Psalm 67.

In other words, how it begins, and then how it ends. Look at how it begins. God be gracious to us and bless us.

Cause His face to shine upon us that Your way might be known on the earth and Your salvation among all nations. You see the connection? Lord, bless us! Make Your face shine on us that Your name might be

known on the earth. And then look how it ends.

Chapter 67, verse 6 and 7. God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us that all the ends of the earth may fear Him. It's God's plan to bless us in a redemptive way, in a missionary way.

That's our prayer that God would bless. Proverbs 10.22 It's the blessing of the Lord that makes rich. He adds no sorrow with it.

Now, what could we desire more, really, than that God would bless our convocation, our gathering together this weekend? As you go through the Bible, there are many illustrations and emblems of the blessing of the Lord. But over and over again, there's one symbol that God uses. He repeats it over and over again as an illustration of His blessing.

And I'm talking about the dew from heaven. The dew is an illustration of the blessing of the Lord. It's hard for us to appreciate that figure because we don't have dew like they have it in the Holy Land.

You know, they don't have a lot of rain over there. And they have heavy dew. They bathe in their dew.

They catch the dew off the roof in big tubs. They've got a heavy, heavy dew. And God promises His people that if they live in union with Him, He'll send the dew of heaven.

Listen to some of these verses. He promised that if God's people turned away from Him, if they rebelled against Him, He would withhold His dew. Haggai 1.10, Therefore, because of you, the sky has withheld its dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.

The dew was God's refreshing emblem of Himself. Listen to Hosea 14.5. I will be the dew unto Israel, and he'll grow like the lily, cast forth his roots like a Lebanon. Proverbs 19.12, The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but his favor is like dew upon the grass.

The remnant. That's the Old Testament word for the New Testament word, overcomer. The remnant.

Micah 5.7, The remnant of Jacob will be among many people like dew from the Lord, like showers on vegetation which do not wait for man or delay for the sons of man. And the psalm we read, Psalm 133, When brothers dwell together, it's like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion. There the Lord commanded the blessing.

Life. Life forevermore. The symbol of God's blessing is the dew from heaven.

Now, if you'll turn to Judges. I give you that by way of the background because it introduces us to a special character in the Bible who longed for the blessing of God. And I'm speaking of the fifth judge of Israel.

The man who is associated in a special way because of his prayer for dew. Remember, Gideon asked the Lord, soak the fleece with dew. And then later, soak the land around the fleece with dew from heaven.

Gideon, the son of Joab. Here was a man that longed that God would bless his people. He prayed for God's dew to come down from heaven.

God answered his prayer. And we want to look at that this weekend. God taught him how to be blessed so that he could be a blessing.

So that God could bless through him. I'd like us this weekend, God helping us, to look at Gideon. To examine his life.

To watch God's hand as God moves in his life. The story of Gideon as we'll touch on it. It's a big record.

It's chapter 6, verse 1 of Judges all the way to 835. 100 verses. There's more about Gideon's old age and about his family later, but we'll not get into that.

I'd like to isolate the story of Gideon from its setting in Judges. This much is enough, I think, by way of background. It's enough to know that Gideon's story takes place in the days of the Judges.

The days of the Judges cover about 350 years of Israel's history. Sometimes it's called the dark ages of Israel's history. You know the expression that's used four times chapter 17, chapter 18, 19, and 21 in the book of Judges.

In those days there was no king in Israel. And everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Those were the days of Judges.

Anarchy. Independence. Idolatry.

Immorality. Terrible, dark, dark days. Now, Judges isn't the record of everything, but it tells us the tragedy of the time.

Some people go through Judges and they notice that there are six spiritual declensions. In other words, in that 350 year period, six times they fell away from the Lord. And six times God sent a foreign oppressor to bring them law.

And six times they cried out to the Lord. And six times God raised up a Judge to deliver them. The story of Gideon is the fourth spiritual declension.

I'm just trying to get it in a setting for you. There are 13 Judges altogether. Gideon is the fifth Judge.

God only tells us the story of eight of those 13 Judges. He just mentions the other. But now, having said that, that Judge Gideon takes place in the dark, dark days of the Judges.

God helping us now, I want to lift up 6-8, those chapters out of the book of Judges and share with you the story of this man, and I pray, the heart of God. Before we actually begin in Judges 6, let me give for those that like logical connection a little overview of what I'd like to look at. I'll have four opportunities for which I praise the Lord to proclaim unto you the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tonight, I would like to show you from chapter 6, 1-24, the presence of the Lord. This will make more sense as we develop it, but just to give you an idea, the presence of the Lord. And then tomorrow morning, Lord willing, from chapter 6, 25-7, 8, the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then tomorrow evening, chapter 7, 1-21, the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the release of His life through broken vessels. And then, Lord willing, the Lord's Day morning, 722-835, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I pray that you'll see as we go through this how that ties together.

Turn, please, to chapter 6. The first time we meet Gideon in the Bible, he's standing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how he's introduced to us. The Lord Jesus Christ has come in the person of the

angel of the Lord.

And that's where we meet him. Chapter 6, 11, Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Abizrite. And his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

Our first picture of Gideon as he stands in the presence of the Lord Jesus, he's beating out wheat in the wine press. Now, try to get a picture of that in your mind's eye. Beating out wheat in a wine press.

Now, we're told that the wine presses in those days were in the lowlands. They would have two large slabs of stone, one a little higher than the other. And they would crush the grapes in the one, and the gravity would pull it down.

It would be caught in the bowl in the other one. And it was down in the lowlands. Grapes are heavy.

And so it's easy to bring them downhill than to bring them uphill. But the opposite's true of the threshing of the wheat. They didn't do that in the lowlands.

They tried to find the highest place they could find to beat the wheat. And the reason was because they would use the wind. And they would beat the wheat, and the wind would come and carry away the chaff.

And then the good grain would fall down. And that's how they did it. So why is Gideon threshing wheat in the low ground, in the wine press? Why isn't he up on the mountain where he is supposed to be, on a high place? And the answer is, because of chapter 6, 1-6.

It must have been frustrating for him down low where there's no wind to beat the wheat against the rock, and the chaff would fall down with the grain and all. Chapter 6, verse 1, the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.

The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian, the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves for strongholds. For it was when Israel had sown, the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites, the sons of the east, and go against them.

They would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, leave no sustenance in Israel, as well as no sheep, and no ox, and no donkey. They would come up with their livestock and their tents. They would come in like locusts for number.

Both they and their camels were innumerable. They came into the land to devastate it. And so Israel was brought very low because of Midian.

And the sons of Israel cried unto the Lord, Gideon is hiding from the Midianites. That's why he's not in a high place. See, if he was up there, the enemy would see the cloud of chaff, and then they'd come in and confiscate all of the food.

For seven years they went through this. At every harvest, and a couple of harvests a year, the invaders would come up, the sons of the east and the Amalekites and the Midianites. And they would come up, Judges 6-5 said, like locusts.

And they would just fill the land. And they would devour the crops. And the Bible says what they didn't devour, they destroyed.

Vicious, vicious people. In one of the Psalms, Psalm 83, Asaph looks back at this very record, and he quotes what their leaders said. And the leaders said, Let us possess for ourselves the Lord's pasture.

That's what the enemy says. The enemy is a usurper. And he wants to come in and possess the Lord's pasture.

Now it would be one thing if the enemy just came in and took all the food of an agricultural people. But according to the record in verse 4, they not only took the crops, they took the animals too. They took the ox.

They took the sheep. They took everything. And they didn't just invade it, but they brought in not just soldiers.

But how intimidating. They brought their families. And they brought their camels.

And they brought their servants to take back all the spoils. And they brought their servants to take back the animals. They just filled the land.

Chapter 6, verse 5, they would come up with their livestock and their tents and come in like locusts for number. Their camels were innumerable. Gideon is introduced to us as a man who in that situation is trying to make the best of a horrible situation.

It's a pretty clever idea really for him to figure out a way with these enemies coming in to take the wheat and strike it against the rocks and the wine press in the lowlands. It was hard work and a lot longer to get a little bit of grain to make some bread. Sort of a slick idea I think.

He's trying to outsmart the enemy. We don't know exactly how big his family was. He's trying to provide for his family.

In verse 15, we know that he's the youngest in his father's house. But where are his brothers? Why aren't they threshing wheat in the wine press? Well, we're not dead sure, but chapter 8, we didn't get there yet, but we will. Chapter 8, verse 18 and 19 tells how the Midianites had killed his brothers.

We don't know when. It might have been at this time, and that's why Gideon's by himself. We know his family had ten servants at least.

Gideon is working in impossible situations, impossible circumstances, trying to get enough bread for himself, for his family, for his servants, probably for his neighbors. If you see Gideon's heart, that's our first look at Gideon. That's when Jesus shows up.

Now, that's Gideon from the outside. That's Gideon threshing wheat against a rock in a wine press. Let's look at the inside of Gideon.

Look at his heart. Look at his burden. When we meditate on the conversation that Gideon had with the angel of the Lord, the second person of the Godhead, our Lord Jesus, verse 12, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, the Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.

Gideon said to him, O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian. And the Lord looked at him and said, Go in

this, your strength, and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you? Go back, if you would, to verse 12.

The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior. Commentators have spent so much time on the last half of the verse, they missed the first half. O valiant warrior.

Did you notice that Gideon wasn't too surprised when he said that? The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior. Had Gideon earned a reputation of being a valiant warrior? Maybe some guerrilla warfare and hit-and-run tactics and so on? Seems like the enemy knew who he was. They knew his name.

Remember later on when one of them had a nightmare? One of the enemy, the Midianites? And they said, This is the sword of Gideon, the son of Joab. They knew who he was. Maybe he was a valiant warrior, hitting and running.

We don't know. Some people think that that expression was prophetic. That the angel wasn't saying, O valiant warrior, but he was declaring what he would be.

That God would make him a valiant warrior. That's also a possibility. But as I said, we spend so much time on valiant warrior, we forget the first part.

The Lord is with you. The Lord is with you. Don't read that la-la-la.

Here's an amazing thing, brothers. The second person of the Godhead, our Lord Jesus Christ, came all the way from heaven to stand next to Gideon as he was beating out wheat in the wine press to say, The Lord is with you. Now you might look at Gideon's answer.

His response to that and say, Looks like Gideon had a problem with what the Lord said. The Lord said, The Lord is with you. If you read it one way, he said, yeah, right.

But I think if you read it more closely, you won't see that problem. I don't think Gideon had a quarrel with that. The Lord is with you.

I think he knew that. I don't think he had a problem with that at all. The whole country is impoverished.

Not Gideon. Not Gideon. He's not impoverished.

Nobody had crops. Gideon did. He's beating out wheat.

They didn't have any bread. Gideon did. They didn't have any animals.

In a little while, we're going to see him offer animals to the Lord. He had animals. Where did he get it all? I don't think he's having a problem with this.

Later we're going to see him offer those animals. He brings a bushel of flour. Where did he get it? He brings unleavened bread.

Where did he get it? A day later, he offers a bull seven years old. That's the whole time of the oppression. Where did he get all that stuff? How come he's got servants, and he's got bread, and he's got wheat, and he's got meat, and he's got animals, and he's got goats, and he's got bulls? I think he's doing all right.

And I think it's because the Lord is with him. He knows that. The Lord is with you.

He didn't have a problem with that. Look at his comment to the angel of the Lord. And I think you'll see his heart.

And you'll see his burden. And you'll see his passion. Verse 13, Gideon said to him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, then why has all this happened to us? Gideon didn't have a problem when the Lord said, Oh valiant warrior.

He has no problem with that. Gideon didn't have a problem when he said, The Lord is with you. He didn't debate that at all.

What was bothering Gideon? Did you notice in verse 13, he changed the pronoun? He changed the pronoun from the singular to the plural. The Lord said, The Lord is with you. Gideon, one man, you.

The Lord is with you. And he looked around at his people. And he said, Yeah, but how about us? I know the Lord is with me.

But when I look at these people, when I see your flock, Gideon's heart was beating hot for the body. His heart was beating hot for the people of God. And he said, I know the Lord is with me, but He's not with us.

Look around, Gideon said. The enemy is oppressing us. There are no miracles.

The Lord isn't doing anything. The people are living in darkness, in caves, in the holes in the ground. Look at verse 2. The power of Midian prevailed against Israel because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.

That was killing, Gideon. One of the ways that God answered the prayer, the cry of His people, was He sent a prophet before He raised the judge. And did you notice what the prophet said in chapter 6, verses 8-10? I brought you up from Egypt.

I brought you out of the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians, from the hands of all your oppressors. I dispossessed them from before you.

I gave you their land. And Gideon looks at all that and he says, look at your people. They were saved for more than this.

They shouldn't be living like this. They're living in the mountains, in the holes in the ground. They're living like animals, like moles, like rats in the caves and withdrawn from the light of day.

You know, seeing all those caves in the cover down in Afghanistan really made this come alive for me. Picture God's people redeemed to live on the land and enjoy the fullness. Now they're living like scavenger rats, reduced to living in holes and in caves and in the darkness.

These are the redeemed people of the Lord. Even in the wilderness, they live better than that. And I'm suggesting to you brothers that that's Gideon.

That was breaking his heart. He was doing okay personally. The Lord was with him.

He was a valiant warrior. He was surviving. He was doing okay.

He was figuring out how to trick the enemy and have enough food for his family and for his servants and so on. But when he looked out and he saw the people of God, his great heart began to break. And he said

to the angel of the Lord, Look at them.

Look at them. The way they're living. I know You're with me, but You've abandoned them.

For seven years they've been living that way. Everything they did, miscarried, went right up to the harvest and then it died because they took it. Actually, miscarried is probably not a strong enough word.

It was an abduction. The enemy came in and just took it away before they could enjoy any of it. Brothers, let me home in on this great truth.

Gideon was burning himself out, so to speak, beating wheat against a rock in order that he might be a blessing to his family and a blessing to his servants and a blessing to the people of God. I don't think there's any question about Gideon's burden. And there's no doubt that he's doing everything he can do.

He didn't know what else to do. And so he goes down and he figures out the only thing he can do. If I'm going to bless, if I'm going to help them, if I'm going to feed them, if I'm going to provide for them.

Gideon had the answer right in his mouth, right in his heart. He said it, but he didn't know it. You know how sometimes you can say it? You know the truth, but God needs to teach you what you know.

God needs to reveal what you already know. And we're going to see that three or four times in Gideon's experience. Why are you blessed, Gideon? Answer, the Lord is with me.

That's why I'm blessed. Why aren't they blessed, Gideon? The Lord's not with them. That's why they're not blessed.

He had the answer. It's the Lord's presence that brings blessing. And if there's no presence of the Lord, there's no blessing.

I'm blessed because you're with me. They're not blessed because you're not with them. He had the answer, but he didn't know it.

And now God's about to teach him, quicken him to what he already knows as soon as Gideon spit out that truth. He's with me. I'm blessed.

He's not with them. They're not blessed. Notice verse 14, And the angel of the Lord looked at him.

I love that. The angel of the Lord looked at him. That precious look.

I think it's looked at him, looked in him, looked through him. That's like the look he gave Peter. There's something about the look of the Lord.

And then he said, Go and this your strength. Go and this your strength. What's that all about? Some say, well, it's what follows.

Am I not with you? Certainly that's true. Much of our strength is in our commission. The Lord has sent us.

But I think it's possible, and I'm suggesting this is what is meant by that. It's not referring to what follows. Go and this your strength.

The Lord is with you. But what came before, it's as if the angel was saying to Gideon, Gideon, even though you don't know it, you do know it. You've discovered a great secret.

You've discovered a great truth. You're blessed because of the presence of the Lord. They're not blessed because they're not in the presence of the Lord.

The presence of the Lord is what brings blessing. The only hope for blessing is the presence of the Lord. That's the supreme thing.

That's what matters. And I think what he said is this, Gideon, say it again. The presence of the Lord is blessing.

Go and this your strength. In that discovery, in that secret, in that revelation, you've said it. Now understand what you're saying.

The presence of the Lord brings blessing. And that will strengthen you as you go forward to deliver My people. Brothers, I don't have time to develop it all, but it's a sad fact that God's people today are not really concerned about the presence of the Lord.

They talk a lot about the blessing of the Lord, but not the presence of the Lord. And they think somehow they can bring down the dew of heaven and the blessing of the Lord through some programs or some methods or numbers or books or tapes or conferences or all kinds of things. Who is crying out for the presence of the Lord? That's where the blessing is.

That's where the blessing is. And that's what Gideon discovered. And when he said the presence of the Lord is blessing, God looked right at him and He said, yes, now go in that your strength.

In the knowledge that it's the presence of the Lord. You can't separate the presence of the Lord and the blessing of the Lord. They're like this.

They belong together. Now follow, if you would, what happens in Gideon's heart. He so wants to be a blessing.

He so wants to communicate the blessing of the Lord and he's almost burned himself out trying in his own wisdom and his own energy to bring a blessing. But now he has a revelation of the Lord. He's talked to Jesus.

He's seen the Lord. And he's understood the principle in the presence of the Lord there's blessing. His burden has not been in vain because now God has communicated to him this great principle.

Go in this your strength. And so the next question is how? Thank you. I want to.

How? Verse 15, He said unto him, Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh. I'm the youngest in my father's house. The rest of the Gideon story is the answer to that question.

How can I deliver? Well, there's a simple answer to that. You can't. He said there's no royal blood in my veins.

I have no special gifts. I have no special talents. I'm a nobody.

How can I deliver? Verse 16, The Lord said to him, Surely I'll be with you. You'll deliver the Midianites as one man. When he said, How can I deliver? In what follows, the Lord has written a death sentence over that.

Gideon enters into the beginning of the thrill of what it means to get into the blessing in order to bless. Gideon will not be the judge. He'll not be the deliverer.

He'll be the channel through which the deliverer will deliver. He'll be the instrument through which the Savior can save and the blesser can blast. I want to only get to the heart of this next part and leave you to prayerfully meditate on verses 17-24.

This great transaction. But look at verse 17 and 18. Gideon said to Him, If now I have found favor in Your sight, show me a sign that it's You who speak with me.

Please do not depart from here until I come back to You and bring my offering and lay it before You. And He said, I will remain till You return. What's that offering that He brought? Offering? You say, well, it's clear.

Just read verse 19. He brought a young goat and unleavened bread and an eaf of flour and some broth in a pot. No, it's deeper than that, brothers.

That's just a representation of what He brought. Someone said, well, He just brought a tithe. No, He didn't bring a tithe.

He brought a fellowship meal. It's just a symbol of hospitality. No, it's deeper than that.

I'll tell you what He brought. You see, this was a surrender. That's what He's been doing.

He's been beating wheat against the stone. He's been trying to provide. I'll tell you what He laid down before the Lord.

He laid down His ministry. This was an offering. This was His work.

This was His own effort and His own attempt to try to bless the people of God. And He brought out this great offering, this labor of love that He had. And He laid it down on a rock.

For Gideon, this was a tremendous step of faith. Don't forget the days in which he was living. He brought a tremendous offering here.

And I think his heart was saying, Lord, I've been so tired beating my wheat against a rock. And God's people haven't been blessed. I am so tired.

And I think if any of us have been involved in any of that kind of ministry, it's more like beating your head against a rock. Working so hard and so long for so little. And then you look out and God's people are still living in the caves and in the darkness and impoverished and in bondage to the enemy.

And your heart wants to jump out of its chest and say, Lord, what am I going to do? How can I help them? I'm doing okay. Thank You, Lord, for Your presence. Thank You for the revelation You've given me.

You've provided for me. But Your people, Your sheep, look at them! They're living in a hole. They're living in the ground.

They're like scavengers. They shouldn't be scavengers. They were redeemed for more than that.

They were saved for more than that. And I want to see more than that. And God says, here's the secret.

You've learned it. You've said it. It came out of your mouth.

In My presence, there's fullness of joy. In My presence, there's blessing. You're blessed because you're in My presence.

They're blessed because they're not blessed because they're not in My presence. It's the presence of the Lord. Go with this, your strength.

The knowledge of this truth that it's the presence of the Lord. And so Gideon takes his program, his clever ministry, his ideas, and he lays it on a rock before the Lord. Notice verse 21, And the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread.

Fire sprang up from the rock, consumed the meat and the unleavened bread, and the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. Ashes. Everything he had worked for, his whole ministry, up in smoke.

Gone. And so is the Lord. Great.

Now he's gone too. Everything's gone. And Gideon is standing there.

Don't get me wrong. Gideon, I mean rather, the Lord is not angry at Gideon because of that ministry. When he consumed it, he accepted it.

Thank you for your heart. Thank you for your burden. Thank you for your passion.

But lay it down. That's not how you're going to bless anybody. As far as Gideon was concerned, his days of beating wheat against a rock were over.

Brothers, just a little word of testimony. I can almost remember the day, certainly I remember the season, when I laid my ministry on a rock. I tried so hard to be a blessing.

I didn't understand the presence of the Lord. I didn't understand what it was to know the Lord. And I remember so well, trying so hard, and I had to surrender everything.

And God consumed it. And I was all alone, and he was gone. And I didn't know what to do or which way to turn.

All I know is that I wanted to die. And in a sense, that's where Gideon is. He just wants to die.

He doesn't know what to do. He's seen the Lord. It was such a glorious revelation.

But now he's alone and he's stripped and he's overwhelmed. And then God speaks from heaven now. He's not right next to him anymore, visibly.

He speaks from heaven. Verse 22, when Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, Alas, O Lord God, now I've seen the angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said to him, Peace to you.

Do not fear, you shall not die. And Gideon built an altar there. And he named it God is Peace.

God is Peace. That was the beginning of his destiny. That was the beginning of the life of Gideon, really, right there.

He so longed to be a blessing and longed that God's people would come out of their cave. They shouldn't be cave dwellers. They should be enjoying the fullness of the Lord.

And now God is going to teach him how to be blessed in order to bless. He'll never be the same. But as he stands there with his ministry gone now, he quit his job, and he quit the pastorate, and he has nothing left.

And he just stands there and says, Now what? Did I do the right thing? Did I make a mistake? Was that a blunder laying everything down? No, he took it. And all of a sudden, God gave him peace. He had done the right thing.

And he knew in his heart of hearts, he didn't know where it was going to go from there. All he knew is, I'm not going to beat wheat against a rock anymore to bless the people of God. All of that living and serving from the lowlands is not God's way.

I've learned the secret that in the presence of the Lord, there's blessing. Now I want to get one more concept before your hearts tonight to introduce the burden that's on my heart. And then we'll develop it Lord willing in the days to come.

And it's this. It's based on that truth that in the presence of the Lord, there's blessing. Now wouldn't you think that Gideon's new ministry would be God instructing him how to bring the presence of the Lord to the people.

Since the presence of the Lord brings blessing, here's how to bring the presence of the Lord to the people. But that's not what happens. Marvelous story this.

Follow the story of Gideon. It's so amazing. Because that's not what God teaches Gideon, how to bring the presence of the Lord to the people.

Although it's the people that are living under oppression, and though it's the people that are living in caves, and though it's the people that are living in the darkness, and though it's the people that are living in poverty, and though it's the people that have a desperate need, only indirectly does God deal with the people. You want to help the people? Then I have to deal with you, Gideon, says the Lord. You say, I thought Gideon was doing all right.

I thought the Lord was with him. He has learned this secret. In the presence of the Lord there is blessing.

Now here is the wisdom of God. God stands there and says, Gideon, here is the secret. You learned it.

This will be your strength. In My presence is blessing. God says, now, come on into My presence, Gideon.

Gideon begins to walk into the great mystery which is God. God will watch him take his hand. That is the outline we are going to follow.

God says, come, Gideon, I must show you My preeminence. As Gideon sees the preeminence of God, something happens out here in cave land. After he sees that, he says, come on, Gideon, come more into My presence and learn what it is to release My life through a broken vessel.

And as Gideon comes into the presence of the Lord, the enemy starts to fall away. And people start coming out of the cave. And then God says, come, Gideon, into the secret place, into the glory of the Lord.

And we are going to watch Gideon. Not the people. And as Gideon goes into the Lord and into the knowledge of God and into the presence of God, as he embraces the preeminence of Christ, as he understands what it means to release the life of God, as he lays hold of the glory of God, the enemy is defeated and the people come out of the cave.

Brothers, that is the burden that's on my heart to discharge this weekend. That's the message of the Lord for this weekend. How to press into the presence of the Lord.

As a by-product, you'll be a blessing. That's a by-product. But oh, the importance of following Gideon into God Himself.

It all starts when the angel of God, the Lord Jesus, comes down and says, are you tired of beating your weed against a rock? Are you tired of that ministry? Are you ready to lay it down? Are you ready to let me consume it? Are you ready to let me put the death sentence over it all so there's nobody, just you and me? And then come into my presence. Oh, brothers, it's awesome. And may God help us prepare our hearts as we walk with Gideon into the presence of the Lord.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You so much, so much for Your precious Word. Not what we think it might mean, but what You have inspired it to mean.

Work that in our hearts. Teach us what it means that in Your presence is fullness of joy. Take us, we pray.

Draw us. We'll run after You. Draw us into Your presence that we might be blessed and that we might be a blessing.

We ask it in the precious name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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