

# Gideon #2: The Preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ

by Ed Miller

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*The secret of God's blessing is His presence, and it is found in the preeminence of Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:14:00

**Scripture:** Judges 6:6-7, Judges 6:36-37, Judges 7:1-22, Judges 8:35, Isaiah 30:18, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Christ Preeminence", "Spiritual Transformation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Gideon from the book of Judges in the Bible. The main theme is the preeminence of Christ and the invitation for believers to come into the presence of God. The preacher emphasizes that there is blessing in being close to the Lord and that everything that hinders this union must be removed. Gideon's journey of discovering God's heart and embracing the truth of God's desire to be the one and only leads to a dramatic transformation in his life.

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## Transcript

I'll ask you to open the Judges chapter 6, please, if you would. As we come to the study of God's Word, there's a principle of Bible study that's absolutely indispensable. A principle we can't take for granted, ever.

We can't live without it. God will use many, many principles as you study the Bible. He'll use many, many helpful tools and helpful aids.

But there's only one thing indispensable, and that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. The Lord desires to reveal Himself. Let me give you a couple of verses.

First, I want to give you one verse concerning the Lord, and then a prayer request that I have, and I'll ask you to join me in it. Isaiah 30, verse 18 says, The Lord longs to be gracious unto you. That, of course, is true.

The Lord longs to be gracious unto you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. And then the verse ends, How blessed are all those who long for Him. What a glorious verse.

Isaiah 30, verse 18. Sometimes I don't know what to pray, and so I pray in the very words of Scripture, because I know I'm on inspired ground when I pray in the very words of Scripture. And what I'd like you to

pray for me today is, actually there are two verses.

Paul asked for prayer. So this is inspired. Two times he used the expression, as I ought to speak.

He said, pray that I might speak as I ought to speak. One time he said, I'm paraphrasing now, I'll give you the verse in a moment. One time he said, When I speak, I will be speaking the mystery of the Gospel.

Pray for me that I might speak as I ought to speak, when I talk about the mystery of the Gospel. And the second time he said, Pray for me, because I'll be speaking about the mystery of Christ. Here's the exact verse.

Ephesians 6, 19 and 20. Pray on my behalf that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel. And then in Colossians 4, verses 3 and 4, he says, praying for us, so that we might speak forth the mystery of Christ, that I may make it clear as I ought to speak.

Two times, as I ought to speak. And he says, when I come to the mystery of the Gospel, pray that I might say it boldly as I ought to speak. And when he came to the mystery of Christ, he said, pray for me that I might make it clear.

As I ought to speak. Brothers, I'm asking you to pray as Paul requested, that utterance may be given to me as I open my mouth, and as I touch on the mystery of the Gospel, that I might speak it boldly as I ought to speak. And as I touch on the mystery of Christ, that I might speak it clearly as I ought to speak.

Now, we're not going to understand the mystery of the Gospel because I shoot straight. And we're not going to see the mystery of Christ because I make it simple. We're going to see it if God opens our eyes, opens our heart, and lets us hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

It's the Lord that must show us Christ. There's no way in the world, all the academics in the world, are not going to unveil Him. Only He can unveil Himself.

And He waits on high to have compassion. He longs to reveal Himself. It's His pleasure, He said, to reveal His Son.

And so, with those encouragements, will you bow with me, and let's ask the Lord to meet with us. Our Father, we thank You again that we're not on our own as we come to this precious book. But Thy Holy Spirit lives in us, in our lives, in our hearts, to search the depths of God and to make us know the things of Christ.

Lord, I ask that You would give me utterance as I open my mouth, that I might speak the mystery of the Gospel boldly, the mystery of Christ clearly. We do pray for Your anointing on our hearts, on our ears, and on this precious book. Watch over Your Word to perform it.

We ask in the precious name of our Lord Jesus, Amen. I'm going to ask you to turn to Judges 6 as we continue our archaeological dig. When you look into these Old Testament histories of redemption and begin to sweep off the facts and see that God has fossilized everlasting true treasures in some of these old histories.

Just for interest, are there some brothers that were not here last night? Quite a few, alright. Then the other brothers, bear with me just a moment as we get again the burden and just review a little bit of what we

looked at last evening. We're looking at a very precious truth from God's Word, and it's illustrated from a very precious portion of God's Word.

The truth in a sentence is this, that there's blessing in the presence of the Lord. That's the great truth and the theme that we're looking at this weekend. The illustration of that truth is, at least for our purposes, the fifth judge in the book of Judges.

We're looking at the life of Gideon. We're looking at the hand of the Lord in the life of Gideon, the son of Joash from the tribe of Manasseh. Gideon was a man whose heart beat hot for the body, for all the tribes, for the people of God, for God's flock, for God's children.

Because of sin, they had forfeited the presence of the Lord. And when they lost the presence of the Lord, they lost the blessing of the Lord because there's no blessing apart from the presence of the Lord. Judges chapter 6, verses 1 to 6, describes the pitiful condition that God's people fell into because they lost the sensible presence of the Lord.

God had raised up, because they turned away from Him, a rod, a chastening, a strap of three cords, the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the sons of the east. And God used that oppressor in order to bring God's people low. And they were brought low.

If you look at the first six verses of chapter 6, you see that God's people had been reduced to living in caves, in the holes of the earth, in the ground, like animals, like rodents. They were running into the hills away from the enemy. They had become scavengers just to exist.

They had turned from living to surviving. Gideon knew that the redeemed were redeemed for a higher life than that. And as he looked around and saw the people of God, it just broke his heart.

He didn't know what to do. He wanted to help them. He wanted to serve them.

He wanted the enemy driven out and God's people allowed to come back from the darkness and into the light of God. He longed for that. And because he didn't know what to do, he came up with a program.

And from dawn to dusk, every day, he began to beat wheat against the rock and try to eke out an existence for himself, for his family, for his neighbors, and for the people of God. But as the story goes on, glorious day, God looked down from heaven and God saw this man with a burden for God's people. He wanted to be a blessing, but he didn't know what to do.

And so the second person of the Godhead, the one who is now at the right hand of God, came down in the person of the angel of the Lord and stood by this man as he was beating wheat against the rocks, the side of the winepress in the foothills. The Lord, the angel of the Lord, addressed Gideon with these words, The Lord is with you. And he knew that.

And that's why he was blessed. But he looked around at all the people and he acknowledged to the angel, yes, the Lord is with me, but the Lord, you've withdrawn your presence from them. And though he knew that, that the Lord was with him and the Lord wasn't with them, and that he was blessed because he had God's presence, and they were not blessed because they did not have the Lord's presence, though he knew that, he didn't know it.

He knew it, but he didn't know it. And God had to teach him what he already knew, as God often has to teach us, what we already know. He knew the facts.

He knew the principle. But God had to teach him again. I'm convinced in my heart of hearts that this weekend, the truths that I'm going to share and the concepts and the realities and the principles, I'm convinced you already know them.

You're not going to hear that for the first time today. I think you've heard it many times and probably have taught these very truths. But sometime God has to teach us again what we already know.

And I'm talking about the truth in its organic form. The truth as it is in Jesus. Not the truth as it is in an abstract way and separated from the Lord Jesus.

God knows how to quicken us. The truth that God's presence is the secret of God's blessing. That's so obvious.

But it's not so obvious. And Gideon had to relearn that truth. God in His grace was teaching them.

If he's ever going to be the channel through which the blesser can bless his people, then he must allow God to take him deep into that truth. The truth of the presence of the Lord. I tried to show you last night that the starting point for Gideon and we're following Gideon, the starting point of that instruction was Gideon's... the grace he was given to lay down every attempt to bless in any other way than through the presence of the Lord.

And Gideon did that. He took that which represented his service. He took that which represented his work, his ministry, his labor, his burden for the people of God.

And you know the story. He laid it down on a rock before the Lord, before the angel of the Lord. And then as we continued the story, we saw the angel of the Lord reach out the rod, the staff that was in his hand, and he touched that ministry, that offering.

And in a cloud of smoke and in a moment of time, everything that Gideon had tried to do to bless God's people was a pile of ashes. It has to start there. And Gideon began by laying it all down before the Lord.

He was burdened for the body because they had been reduced to cave dwelling and living in darkness. He wanted them blessed. He wanted God to send down His due from heaven.

And God answered his prayer. And this is where we left off last evening. How does God answer? You'd expect since Israel, the people of God, have the problem that God would begin by dealing with Israel.

But Gideon's the one with the passion to bless. And Gideon's the one with the burden to see something happen so that God's people can be delivered from the oppressor and come out and live as they were redeemed to live. And so we see in the story, God does not begin by dealing with Israel.

But He says, as Gideon, you want to be a blessing, then I must deal with you. And God begins then to deal with this precious man, Gideon. And I'm suggesting, brothers, if we're ever to be those channels of blessing, I pray you do have a burden for the body because it's sad how they're living.

It's sad. It's pitiful. It should break your heart.

If you have that burden, then like He did to Gideon, He's going to call you and say, now you come into My presence. I want us to watch this weekend as how the Lord deals with this precious brother and invites him into His heart. And the closer Gideon gets to the Lord, you look back and something's happening to the enemy.

And Gideon goes further into the Lord and something else happens to the enemy. And Gideon goes further into the Lord and something happens to the people and they start coming out of the caves. This is the great message that's on my heart that I want to discharge God assisting.

Let me review the simple outline that we're following for those that like logical connection and then we'll move to our new material. In chapter 6, verses 25 all the way to 7-8 is what I'd like to look at this morning. And God invites Gideon to come into His heart, into Himself, into the truth of the preeminence of Christ.

That's what I'd like us to look at this morning. And then Gideon says, alright, I've laid hold of that truth. Now will Your dew come down from heaven? Now will You bless? God said, not yet, Gideon.

And then God invites Gideon to come deeper into His presence. And we'll look at chapter 7, the first 21 verses. Gideon, you've got to know about my life and the release of my life through broken vessels.

You've got to know about the manifestation of Christ. And so God takes him in and he begins to learn this. And marvelous things happen as he's pressing into God.

And he says, now, will the dew come down? And the Lord said, not yet, Gideon. I want to take you in and we'll look at that tomorrow night, Lord willing, from chapter 7-22 to the end, chapter 8-35 or whatever it is. God says, you need to come into My glory.

And as Gideon walks into the glory of God, the problem's dealt with and God's people are set free. That's how to bless. You've got to be in the blessing if you're ever going to be a blessing.

And so we're looking this weekend at what it means as we follow Gideon. To press into the Lord. To the knowledge of the Lord.

To go into His presence. And the deeper, brothers, we go into His presence, the more the Lord can use us to bring His dew upon His sheep. Well, that's pretty much what we looked at.

Now, I'm going to ask you to turn to chapter 6, please. Before we actually get to the principle that I want to share, I want to say a word about chapter 6, verses 6 and 7. If you'll glance at that, please. So Israel was brought very low because of Midian.

And the sons of Israel cried to the Lord. And now it came about when Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian that the Lord sent a prophet and so on. That expression, the sons of Israel cried unto the Lord.

See, that looks like cause and effect. It looks like they cried, and therefore God answered. But their cry describes when God moved.

Not why God moved. He didn't move because they cried. You know, when I first read this, it looked like they were crying out and repenting.

In fact, the last time I taught the book of Judges, I had the seven times Israel repents. Boy, I crossed those notes out fast. If you have those notes or those tapes, you mark that out.

Because they did not repent here. I thought they repented. And so God heard them repent.

They cried and repented. And so He sent a prophet. And then He bowed to heavens and came down in the person of the angel of the Lord.

And then He raised up a judge in the person of Gideon. No, that's not what happened. If you look carefully, you'll see they were far, far, far from repentance.

At this time, and we'll see it, they were worshiping the Baal. And when God used Gideon to tear it down, they wanted to kill him. That's not repentance.

There's a long way from repentance in their hearts. The Bible tells us in chapter 6 why they were crying. Because they were oppressed.

It wasn't repentance. They were burdened because of the Midianites. So much like the thief on the cross, the unrepentant thief.

He cried out for salvation, the unrepentant thief. It was salvation from nails. Not sin.

That's what he wanted. Get me out of this mess. Get me out of this situation.

That was their cry. Now, God responded to that cry. When you study the Old Testament, let me encourage you what the epistles are to the New Testament.

That is explanation and heart. It explains the history. The poetical books are in the Old Testament to the Old Testament.

It's heart. It's the explanation. And over and over again in the Psalms, God explains some history in Genesis or Exodus or something like that.

And the cry is explained in the historical Psalms. Let me just say a word about that. You might want to look at it.

Psalms 106. Just a couple of verses here. Psalm 106, verse 43.

Actually, it's verse 43-46. Did I say Psalm 103? It's 106? Oh, I said 106. Alright.

I'm going to begin reading at 43. Many times He would deliver them. They, however, were rebellious in their counsel, and so sank down in their iniquity.

Nevertheless, He looked upon their distress. Now watch this. When He heard their cry, He remembered His covenant.

Now that's a different thing altogether. When He heard their cry, He remembered His covenant for their sake, and relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness. It was His covenant that moved them, not their cry.

It was His heart, not their voice. They didn't repent at first until God remembered His covenant. It's when He began to act that they came to repentance.

It's new covenant repentance. Do you know what new covenant repentance is? Jeremiah describes it in chapter 31, verses 18 and 19. Jeremiah says, Bring me back that I may be restored, for You are my God.

Jeremiah said, After I was turned, surely then I repented. You don't repent first. God turns you.

After I was turned, surely then I repented. After I was instructed, then I was ashamed. Jeremiah 31.

I just didn't want you to put too much stock in their cry. Praise God they cried. But it's His heart.

It's His love. It's His compassion. It's His grace.

It's His covenant that moves Him to deliver us. Now let's get back to Gideon. Let's follow God's heart as He draws this wonderful saint into His presence.

If Gideon is ever to satisfy the burden that's on his heart to bless the people of God, he must be brought into the presence of the Lord. That's where the blessing is. And so God begins at the beginning when He remembers His covenant.

Chapter 6, verse 8. The Lord sends a prophet. Now this is actually before He appeared to Gideon. He sends a prophet.

And He always sends the prophet. Now it's not clear whether this prophet had to go in and out of all the caves and all the dens in order to reach these people. Some suggest, well, they didn't have an open square.

We're going to have a meeting today. The prophet will meet you at a certain time. Maybe he had to go in and out of those caves.

I don't know. The Bible doesn't say. We don't know if the enemy was there all the time or if it was just at the harvest that they came and invaded the people.

I'm not sure. I think that they probably stayed a lot longer than most people realize. Anyway, verse 7. It came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on Aconimidian that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel.

And He said to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians, from the hands of your oppressors, dispossessed them before you, gave you their land. I said to you, I am the Lord your God.

You shall not fear the God of the Amorites in whose land you live, but you have not obeyed Me. As I pointed out yesterday, they weren't saved to live like they were living. He said, I redeemed you from the house of bondage.

I brought you to live on the land which pictures My Son. To live in abundance and to live on the land. Not to hide away in some dark cave.

But then He says, You have not obeyed Me. When this unnamed prophet, at the end of his message said, You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites. He wasn't talking about fear like trembling.

Don't be afraid of them. Don't cower. Don't have your knees knocked together.

He's not talking about that. He's using the word as we say, Fear the Lord. You shall not fear the God of the Amorites.

He's talking about reverence. Talking about worship. He's talking about service.

Fearing the gods of the Amorites. And with that message, the prophet disappears off the pages of the Bible. Do you notice what the prophet didn't say? He didn't say turn or burn.

He didn't say repent. He didn't say look to the Lord. He didn't say pray.

He didn't say fast. He didn't say hang in there. God's going to send you a judge.

All he said was, Look at you. Do you know why you're like that? You disobey. That was his whole message.

He didn't give one drop of hope. He didn't encourage them in any way. The prophet came in and said, You are living like this.

You shouldn't be living like this. I didn't save you to live like this. I redeemed you for something higher than this.

And you want to know why? I'll tell you why. I told you not to fear the God of the Amorites, and you did. And he leaves.

When the sons of Israel cried, even though they were only seeking salvation from nails, the Bible tells you why they cried. Chapter 6 and verse 8. On account of Midian. That's why they cried.

On account of the Midianites. They knew their problem. There was 135,000 of their problem out there.

The Midianites, the Amalekites, the sons of the east. And they cried to the Lord, Deliver us from our problem, the Midianites. The purpose of the prophet was to turn their eyes from what they thought the problem was.

The Midianites. And to turn their eyes to the real problem. And that's how God always begins.

By sending a man of God to tell us that the problem is not the problem. When we deal with symptoms, we're just chopping off weeds at the surface. Nothing is happening.

We can't beautify the Christian life with peat moss. Just put it on the top. God loves me too much.

And God loves you too much. To let you deal with problems that are not problems. It's a glorious thing when the Lord takes your eyes off the problems, plural.

The Midianites all over the place. Put your eyes on the problem, singular. That's why it's so important because, brothers, if the problem is not the problem, then the solution is not the solution.

It's not too deep. But it's tragic because God's people are running after solutions that are not solutions. And God will not scratch you where you don't itch.

He's going to get to the problem. He's going to touch the heart of it. And like Jonah, you can throw everything overboard, but until you get to Jonah, the storm is going to keep raging.

See, they thought the problem was out there. Amalek, Midian, sons of the east. They had a problem in here.

They had a problem in their heart. Chapter 6, verse 16, when the angel commissioned Gideon, he had actually told him the same thing. The Lord said to him, Surely I'll be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.

See, the angel was calling attention to the fact there's one problem. See, you could ask the question, How did you get into this mess? What's the problem? And they'd say, Problem? Don't make it singular. It's problems.

135,000 of them. Look out there. They're like locusts all over the land.

That's why we're in this mess. It's their fault. God said, No, you don't have many problems.

The problem's never the problem, and the solution's never the solution. There's always, ever, only one problem. And there's only one solution to that one problem.

And that's the ministry of the prophet. And until you defeat the problems as one man, you won't have the victory. There's always the one.

And so God begins here in verse 16, Not many, just one. Gideon had met with the Lord. Gideon had talked to the God of heaven.

Had laid his ministry down at His feet. Had watched God receive it and consume it. Had come to the place where He did the right thing.

He had peace with God. He named it, God is Peace. Because God settled it in His heart.

And now God is ready. Gideon, come into My presence. The same night that God talked to him.

He begins again. Verse 25, On the same night, that is the same night that the angel of the Lord had met with him during the day. On the same night He said to him, Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal, which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah, which is beside it.

Build an altar to the Lord your God on top of the stronghold in an orderly manner. Take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah, which you shall cut down. Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken unto him.

Because he was too afraid of his father's household, and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night. And so God homes in, not on the problems, but the one problem, the problem of the heart. And you can see here, You shall not fear, said the prophet, the gods of the Amorites.

And God's word to Gideon, Tear down the Baal. Tear down the Baal. See, all of this has to do with preliminary preparation for the blessing.

Joash, Gideon's father, who was the head of the clan, had set up the Baal and its counterpart, the female counterpart, the Asherah, in a grove on a high hill up there in Ophrah. Now let me do a little donkey work with you brothers. Some of you probably know the background.

Let me just sort of fill you in a little bit, an overview. Why is there so much in the Bible about Baal? There are other false gods as well. And you don't see them mentioned as much.

But all the time you say, in their hearts went a hoary after the Baal, and they set up the Baal. What is this all about the Baal? How did he get so famous? This Baal. It's the meaning of his name.

It's the title Baal. It's a legitimate word. It means husband.

It means husband in the sense of Lord, Master, Husband. See, the Baal represented in the Bible all idolatry and the chief evil of all idolatry. And that is, Baal worship was supposed to represent a relationship with God.

He's a husband. It had to do with relationship. And the intrinsic evil of Baal worship, that it was an imitation of the true worship.

It was a copy. It's amazing when you do the background of Baal worship, how close it was to the true worship. It was just an imitation.

An ape. A shadow image. Do you realize this? Sometime when the true people of God, would it shock you if in prayer, I led in prayer and I said, Oh Baal, will you please... Would that shock you? See, that didn't shock them.

It just meant husband. It was a word that meant husband. And they recoiled.

God was so holy, they wouldn't use another name for Him. And so sometimes they'd call in Baal. Hosea 2, verse 16.

God is speaking. And you know, that whole book of Hosea has to do with relationship and knowing God and the intimacies of the marriage tie. It's a lovely book.

Wonderful. Hosea. And in that book, He says in verse 16, It shall be in that day, saith the Lord, that they shall call Me Ishi, and they shall no more call Me Baal.

They called Him Baal. You say, what does the word Ishi mean? It's another word for husband. It means husband.

What's the word Baal mean? It means husband. God says call Me Ishi. Don't call Me Baal.

What's the difference? Ishi means husband, lover. Baal means husband, master. And God said there's going to come a day when you're going to understand you're not going to call Me husband, master.

You're going to call Me husband, lover. The bridegroom lover of My soul. You know how sometimes the Bible gives us compound names of our dear Lord? Jehovah, Jireh, and Jehovah, Rahman, Jehovah, Shalom.

Go through the Scriptures. Baal had compound names too. Baal Hermon, Baal Bereth, and Baal Peor, and Baal Zebul, and Baal Zebub, and so on.

Say, what do those mean? Baal Hermon, gracious husband. Baal Bereth, the husband of the covenant. Baal Peor, husband of love.

They were using those names. A copy. Close, but no cigar.

It's not the real thing. It's an imitation. You see, Baal worshipped.

They had their temples. They had their altars. And they had their priesthood.

And they had their prophets, the prophets of Baal. They didn't know they were committing idolatry. They thought it was the true God.

See, we just sort of read these things, la, la, la. You've got to get into understanding what was going on in their hearts. The very first mention of Baal in the Bible talks about the high place.

And they would find the highest place. And they put up this image of Baal. And in order to illustrate relationship, the female sided at the Asherah.

There's a lot more that goes with it, and it gets pretty twisted and gross. The prophets constantly spoke out against the high places of Baal. In 1 Kings 14, 23, it says, On every high hill and under every luxurious tree, they would have these idols to Baal.

Well, that's what you have here back in Judges. Joash, father of Gideon, had set up an image of Baal and its counterpart in the highest place. And it was called the fortress in the book of Judges.

And they just found the fortress and it was the best place. And they just put him up there praying that someday Baal, through relationship, would become fruitful and there would be fruit on the land and the land would be blessed and so on. Judges 6.25 God commands Gideon pull down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father.

That was the symbol to God of a broken relationship. They had turned to a substitute husband. He had been jilted.

He's the broken-hearted lover now as we continue this story. They had left their first husband. They played the harlot and ran after imitation husbands.

And so God says to Gideon, tear down the Baal. I'm a jealous God. Look up jealousy in the dictionary.

First definition. Intolerant of rivalry. Second definition.

Insistence on exclusive devotion. God is a jealous God. He's a husband.

And He can't have another husband. And then He says, that's the first part, tear down the Baal. But verse 26, build an altar to the Lord your God on top of the stronghold.

Tear down the Baal and in its place an altar. An altar to the Lord. Take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah, which you shall cut down.

Israel didn't have many problems. They only had one. And the angel of the Lord and the prophet of the Lord turned their eyes to that one problem.

It boils down to this. Who's in the high place? Who's in the high place? Was the true God preeminent? Or was there some substitute husband sitting on the throne that belonged to Him? There can be no deliverance. There can be no dew from heaven.

There can be no blessing of the Lord until Christ is in the high place. And every substitute husband has been torn down. God is about to deliver His people from the sin of polyandry.

Polygamy, many wives. Polyandry, many husbands. And they had fallen into that sin.

This is the truth, I believe, of Colossians 1.18 that in all things, finish it, brothers, that in all things He might have the preeminence. Do you know the difference between preeminent and prominent? See, the difference between preeminent and prominent is this. You can have many prominent things in your life.

And you can only have one preeminent thing in your life. You can have many prominent things in your life and good things. Family, fellowship, church, ministry, service, vocation, vacation.

Many prominent things in your life. But the Lord does not want to be prominent. Many, many Christians have made Him prominent.

And God says, I can't send the blessing until He's preeminent, not prominent. Jesus doesn't want to be first and family second and church third. He doesn't want to be on that silly priority list.

I don't know if you have a priority list. First this and first that and the other thing. Colossians 3.11 Christ is all.

Christ is all. You see, putting Christ first implies a second. And there's no second to Jesus.

He said, I'm the first. And I'm the last. And I'm the alpha.

And I'm the omega. And I'm the whole list. Don't you put me on your priority list.

Even if you put me on top. It's a bail. It's got to come down.

I don't want to be prominent. Do you realize this? Satan doesn't care if you make Christ prominent in your life. He doesn't care.

But he will hate you with an infernal hatred. If God ever dawned on you what He dawned on Gideon, that Christ is preeminent. When I come to the word preeminent, I like to just use the expression a one and only.

Christ does not want to be prominent. Brothers, He wants to be a one and only. And until He's a one and only, and Gideon has to see Him as a one and only, there can be no blessing.

This is the first lesson that Gideon must learn. Now let me show you how this is done and illustrate from the principles how Christ takes the preeminent place. There's been a lot of discussion in chapter 6 about whether there's one animal or two animals.

I don't know if you studied that, but it's not at all clear. From verse 25, it looks like it could be two animals. Most of the commentators, that's all they get out of it.

Arguing, is it one or is it two animals? Some people think, well, there's only one. He's called the second bull to distinguish it from Joash's other bull. This is the one.

Make sure you do the one. That's seven years old. Probably, some say, because they had been in oppression for seven years.

And there's some symbolism there. From my own study, I incline to the idea that there was probably just one animal, but it doesn't change the principle. There's no doubt in my mind from verse 26, that that bull that was offered as a burnt offering, that was offered on the altar in the place of the substitute husband, I have no doubt that that pictures our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, when you see an animal sacrificed on an altar and it's called a whole burnt offering, it automatically takes you to our Lord Jesus and the finished work and the cross. And I think the bull sacrificed, when they woke up in the morning, it was to the scent of the sacrifice of Christ. I'm suggesting that if the bull pictures Christ on the altar, then the bull pictures Christ before it got to the altar.

It's a picture of Christ all the way. And I call attention to that for this reason, because the same bull, the same picture, the same Christ who died, He's the one that must pull down the bale. We have no power to pull down the bale.

And that bull was used first to pull down the bale. And then, at the cost of his life. Oh, what a revelation of our Lord Jesus.

Brothers, I don't have power in my life to pull down any substitute of Christ. You don't have any power in your life to pull down the bale. We generally look at the bale, and we just think some gross sin.

That represents a terrible sin. Pull down the bale. And I'm sure it does.

It includes that. There's no way you can pull down. Have you tried to pull down the bale of sin in your life? Some bale of loss and passion.

You say, man, I tugged at that thing, and I pushed at it, and I used a ramrod. I did everything in the world to get that thing to come down. It wouldn't come down.

Only Christ can pull down that bale. Some bale of pride and some bale of jealousy and vainglory and all that. You can do anything you want.

It's not going to come down. You need the Lord to pull that bale down. Some strong habit in your life or some addiction.

You need Christ to pull that down. See, we sort of think of bale that way. Oh, that bale, terrible thing, sin.

Here's the other side. You have no power to pull down prominent things in your life that are bales. No more than you have the power to break the chain of abiding corruption.

You have no power, and I have no power. If Christ is to be preeminent and enthroned in the high place, He's the one that's going to pull down all the substitutes. I asked you to pray, and I prayed that I might speak boldly concerning the mystery of the Gospel and clearly concerning the mystery of Christ.

I pray that God will communicate what I'm trying to say here. But if any prominent thing has taken the place of the preeminent one in your life, it has got to come down. It's got to come down.

You say, well, missions is very prominent in my life. It's not Jesus. If you have made missions, given missions the high place, it's got to come down.

If you've given Christian service the high place, it's got to come down. If you've given family the high place, it's got to come down. If you've given the local church the high place, if you've given spiritual gifts the high place, if you've given the fellowship of God's people the high place, if you've given the will of God the high place, rather than the God whose will it is, it's got to come down.

And only Christ can pull it down. It takes a mighty miracle of God. Everything must fall that militates against the union with the bridegroom lover of my soul.

Everything must come down that militates against the union between your heart and the bridegroom lover of your soul. Little did Gideon know that night as God was introducing him to his heart and bringing him into the presence of God, little did he know that that discovery, that God wants to be a one and only, that with the embracing of that truth, the line would be drawn. He had no clue.

He had no idea. You see, you get the idea that this is just going to be a non-dramatic event in his life. And God will teach him, alright.

God, Jesus is preeminent. All false husbands must come down. It's not like that.

This is not academic. This is revolutionary. This thing transformed his life.

When Gideon discovered that, he was afraid at night. I'm going to do this thing undercover. This is an amazing thing.

And he watched the power of the bull pull down the bale. And he built an altar. And he put that bull, and he sacrificed that substitute bull as a picture of the Lord.

And it went up. And he went back into his house or into his cave. But the line was drawn because of that truth.

Let me mention a couple of ways the line was drawn. First of all, it identified Gideon with Christ. Let me use New Testament expression.

It identified Gideon with Christ outside the camp. You're familiar with that expression. You know what I mean by that.

Chapter 6, verse 30. In the morning, when Christ is in the highest place, Christ is preeminent. They come to the door and they say, Bring out your Son, that He may die.

The line was drawn. What did he do? He just set Jesus in the high place. And the line is drawn.

We're talking about His family. These are His brothers. These are His neighbors.

They weren't trying to kill Gideon when he was beating wheat against a rock. They weren't enemies then. Don't think, brothers, if God gives you the revelation that Jesus is the one and only, and you embrace that, don't think if you challenge prominent things in people's lives that they're not going to come against you and want to tear you to shreds.

I'm telling you, you start talking about, Look to Christ, not missions. Look to Christ, not discipleship. Look to Christ, not stewardship.

Look to Christ, not missions. Look to Christ, not any of these things. Family.

And they'll say, What are you saying? And they'll go right up against you. The natural heart does not want Jesus to sit on a solitary throne. That's what Gandhi said one time.

I can accept Jesus, but I can't put Him on a solitary throne. That's exactly where He ought to be. The one and only on a solitary throne.

The line was drawn, and Gideon became identified with Christ outside the camp, but the line was drawn in another way as well. Verse 32, Joash said to Him, or said to all who stood against Him, Will you contend for Baal or will you deliver Him? I think this is the first time Joash realized that he wasn't worshiping the true God. That this was a false God.

Whoever will plead for Him shall be put to death by mourning. If He's a God, let Him contend for Himself. Because someone has torn down His altar.

Therefore on that day, He named Him Jerob Baal. That is to say, let Baal contend against Him because He's torn down His altar. Not only did Gideon, by embracing the preeminent Christ, identify with Christ outside the camp, but Gideon now had a new name.

And he's going to have this name forever. He's a Baal fighter. He now has a direction.

He has a destiny. He has a ministry. He's the one who speaks boldly and clearly and opposes all false husbands.

They've got to come down. He has a new name now. He has declared war on Satan.

He's declared war on hell. He's a Baal fighter. Do you notice in the record how quickly the enemy gathered after the Baal came down? Look in verse 33.

It begins with the word, Then. When. As soon as the Baal came down, the enemy forces began to gather.

I'll tell you, the line was drawn. According to 2 Corinthians 10, Satan doesn't just oppose everything. Satan doesn't oppose everybody.

According to 2 Corinthians 10, Satan opposes the knowledge of God. And with weapons that are not carnal, we pull down everything set up against the knowledge of God. We've got to come down.

Oh, may God give us grace. The line was drawn. Gideon saw the preeminence of Christ.

It's him and him alone, and all false husbands must come down. And taking a rugged stand on that, even God's people came against him. Everybody came against him.

But he had a new name now. He was a Baal fighter. Jarrah Baal.

Against Baal. One more truth I want us to see before we wrap this up. Once again, God must teach Gideon something he already knows.

Simple truth. Let me state the truth for you. Show you how simple it is.

And then illustrate it from the text. And by God's grace, we'll try to develop it this evening. Those who come to embrace the truth that Jesus is a one and only.

He's the bridegroom lover of my soul. He's not one among many. He's all by himself.

He's preeminent. He's exclusive. Those who have embraced that, almost the first fruit of that knowledge is this.

It's not by strength or by power. Say it. Bless you, Lord.

It's not by strength or by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord. And we walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. Simple enough, right? We all know that.

That's one of those things we know that God has to teach us. Thank you. Exactly right.

And over and over again. Chapter 634 So the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He blew a trumpet and the Bezerites were called together to follow him.

As soon as he embraces the preeminence of the Lord, he experiences the Spirit of the Lord coming on him. This is new. This is wonderful for Gideon.

I can't prove it, but I have an idea. I know what's going on in Gideon's heart. I think Gideon is thinking something like this.

Oh, that's it! I just need to embrace the preeminence of Christ up with Jesus, down with every other husband. Yeah, they're going to be against me. Yeah, I'm going to fight them.

But now it's over. The Spirit of God comes on him. Blow the trumpet.

It's time for the dew to come down. I think that's what Gideon thought. I've learned it.

I've seen the preeminence of Christ. He's the one and only. Send down the dew.

Bring down the blessings. Mercy drops around us that are falling. But for the showers, we do it, Lord! And he blows the trumpet, and they begin to come.

It's marvelous. This is a war cry. He blows the trumpet, and under the guidance of the precious Holy Spirit, they come from the east and the west.

The Bible tells us that volunteers came from Manasseh and Asher and Zebulun and Naphtali. It must have been so encouraging. Here comes 30 men.

Here comes 50. Here comes 80. Here comes 1,000.

Here comes 3,000. And he's just standing there. Blowing the trumpet.

It's going to happen. God's going to deliver us from the Midianites. Finally, the blessing, they're going to come out of their cave.

His heart is thrilled. And they come and they come and they come by the thousands. And when the day is all over, they look all around them.

32,000 people. It must have been so encouraging. Let me ask you this, brothers.

In the mind of Gideon, was that a large army or a small army? 32,000. The Bible tells us that there were 135,000 armed men in the enemy. That's four to one odds.

And besides, the Bible also says that they brought their families and they brought their servants. And it looked from the hill of Ophrah like locusts all over the place. He didn't see 135,000.

He saw more than that. And then he looked, I speak as a fool, at his paucity of troops. 32,000 was not a big number.

And he looked at his little army that had gathered. At first, he was so encouraged. Then he looks at the 32,000.

Verse 36, And Gideon said to God, If You will deliver Israel through me as You have spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there's dew on the fleece only and it's dry on all the ground, then I'll know that You will deliver Israel through me as You have spoken. And it was so when He arose early in the morning and squeezed the fleece.

He drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water. Then Gideon said to God, Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more. Please, let me make a test once more with the fleece.

Let it now be dry only on the fleece and let there be dew on all the ground. God did so that night for it was dry only on the fleece and there was dew on the ground. Next time we gather, I want to speak more about this passage.

But let me give you the main point now. Don't miss the main point by arguing what's meant by the dew and what's meant by the fleece and what's meant by the dry ground and what's meant by the bowl and what about the bowl full of water and all of that. I have no doubt that those questions are precious and lead to unveilings of the Lord.

But what's the main point here? Chapter 636, Gideon said to God, If You will deliver Israel through me as You promised. The chief burden on Gideon's heart, he's beginning to wonder if he heard God correctly. He's beginning to wonder if he got the right message.

He looks at the troops. He looks at the enemy. I'm not sure I heard you right.

Lord, I promise I'm not doubting You. I'm doubting me. I'm not sure I heard right.

Did You really say what I think You said? I want to be sure. I want to be absolutely clear. I don't want to make a mistake.

I don't want to be rash. I don't want to do something stupid and foolish. I'm willing to go with them if that's Your will.

But I want to know it's Your will. Why did Gideon flip the sign over? Didn't he say at first, verse 37, If there's dew on the fleece only and it's dry on the ground, then I shall know. Then why didn't he know? That's what he said.

If you do this, then I shall know. I can't get into Gideon's head, but I think it was something like this when he woke up in the morning and he saw that dew and that thing was sopping wet and he ran it out and it filled the whole bowl. I think his heart said, Thank You, Lord, now I know.

I know. Wait a minute. That's pretty natural come to think of it.

I mean, if there's dew, it's going to be attracted to the fleece and not to the ground. The ground's going to dry up before that. He said, Lord, don't get angry at me.

Don't get angry at me. But I have an idea. I don't want... This is his heart.

I don't want it to be natural. That's too natural. That's too physical.

That's too scientific. Somebody can come up with an explanation for that. And I want to know it's You.

I want a miracle. I want something supernatural. Because I know it's not by might nor by power, but by Your Spirit.

And I'm not dead sure that's by Your Spirit. That could just be a natural thing. So, Lord, so that I know it's supernatural.

So that I know it's not natural. It's not man. It's not me.

It's not some physical law. So I know it's You. Again, Lord, I'm not doubting You.

I'm doubting me. I want to be sure. He said, Lord, if You're not angry, please do it the other way because that's not natural.

That's supernatural. And so He put the fleece out again. He woke up the next morning.

And brothers, you know the record. The ground all around was sopping wet. By the grace of God, that fleece was bone dry.

That's what He knew. It's not by power, not by might, but by My Spirit. What God does next, and again, we'll look at it this evening, but I want you to get what's happening.

God loves to teach us what we already know. And now He knows. It's God.

It's the Lord. He did the sign. And I flipped it over.

I was willing to let my sign be turned on its head. And it was. And God did it.

And now I know it's the Lord. It's not by man. It's not by flesh.

It's not me. It's not a law. It's God.

It's God. He did it. And so He said, Okay, you paucity of troops, get ready.

Chapter 7, 1-7. Don't miss the work of God here. God looks at His paucity of troops, and He begins to reduce them.

You know the record. Gideon knows what he knows. It's not by man.

It's by the Spirit of God. And so God says, Alright, now, so that you know what you know, it's not by flesh, I'm going to touch your flesh. And He begins to reduce the tribe.

Did Gideon really know it? His heart sunk. He goes, Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Wait a minute.

I know the principle. It's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord. Don't reduce my truth.

See, he knows it, but he doesn't know it. He's got to learn it again. It's an amazing thing, brothers, that we can say it's not by flesh, but let God touch our flesh, and we tremble.

We know it's not that, but let God even touch that. What are we made of? What vessels of clay are we? This is the first step. God says, I need to teach you something.

You need to know that Christ is the one and only, and that it's by my Spirit. You need to know those two things. Brothers, I've said nothing new today.

You know it. I'm standing up here talking about the story again. Is there anybody here who has never heard that it's just Christ that needs to be in the high place? Man, you know that? Anybody here that knows it's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit? That's all I said today.

It's Him. It's His Spirit. And Gideon says, Now, I'm ready.

Bring down your blessing. God says, Not yet, Gideon. You haven't begun to know me after you have made Christ preeminent, and after you have learned it's not by you, but by Him.

You're not ready to go. God says, Come on. Deeper.

Into my heart. And God takes Gideon by the hand. We'll look at it tonight.

And He says, You need to see this too. And God brings Gideon into the presence of the Lord so that He can bring blessing on the people. Oh, may God help us as we, men of God, press into His heart.

Father, we thank You again for Your Word. We just know You constantly watch over it to perform it. If there's something that was not from You, protect Your children.

We pray that we might embrace everything that came from You. Lord, we ask Your forgiveness for the times we've insulted You by making You prominent in our lives. Lord, pull down all the false husbands, all the copies, all the imitations, that Christ might be a one and only.

And teach us what it means. Not by might. Not by power.

But by Your Spirit. We ask in Jesus' name.

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