

GIDEON: PUTTING OUT THE FLEECE

Tuesday, July 6

Reading: Judges 6:25-40

Judges 6:39 *Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew."* **40** *That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.*

Before starting the larger task of fighting the Midianites, God give Gideon the smaller task of destroying his father's idols and building an altar to God in their place. Still fearful, Gideon and his servants do this at night so no one will see. But the townspeople still discover that Gideon was responsible and demand his death. Gideon's father Joash saves his son's life by calming the people and telling them that if Baal was truly a god, let him defend himself (6:25-32). This is when Gideon gets his 'nickname' – Jerub-Baal – meaning "Let Baal contend."

The Spirit of Lord now comes on Gideon to prepare him for the task ahead. But even as he begins to assemble an Israelite army Gideon still has doubts that God has chosen the right man. And so he requests a sign that God had really chosen him. In the morning, if the wool fleece was wet but the ground around it was dry, Gideon would know that God had really chosen him. And God responds. But that is not enough to soothe Gideon's doubt. Perhaps he realized that the ground would naturally dry faster than a fleece and so this time he asks that the opposite take place – that the fleece would be dry while the ground was wet. Once again God miraculously answers Gideon's test (6:33-40).

We learn two things about God from this passage:

HE IS A JEALOUS GOD – We usually think of jealousy as a bad thing. And much of the time it is! But this is a good kind of jealousy. God has a consuming love for His people and will not share their affections with anything else! God must have first place in our lives. This statement about God is repeated several times (Exodus 20:4-5; 34:14; Deut. 5:9, 6:15; Joshua 24:19 et.al.). This is why God told Gideon to destroy the idols. Before He could save the nation, God wanted the idols they were worshipping removed. He would not share the people's worship. Is there anything in your life that is more important than your relationship with God?

HE IS A GRACIOUS GOD – Gideon had the promise of God's presence. He had God's guarantee of victory. He knew exactly what God had called him to do. He even the Holy Spirit empowering him for the task and still he doubted. He allowed his fear to trump his faith. This act of Gideon is not something that we as Christians should emulate. Many Christians read this passage and put out their own fleeces. They test God to determine His will. Like Gideon, they not only demand a sign but even tell God what that sign should be! This is NOT an act of faith. It is an evidence of our own fears and doubts. It is evidence of our lack of faith in God. But God is gracious. He did not rebuke Gideon, but fulfilled his request. And so God does with us. He sometimes accommodates our weak faith and helps us to grow. But asking for signs does not increase faith. In fact, it often just gives one the desire for more. If we are trusting in God's Spirit to lead and empower us then we will step out in faith and do what we know God has called us to do.

READ THRU THE BIBLE: Psalms 67-69; 1 Corinthians 4