# Living by Faith

**Hebrews 11:6** But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him,* for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- In order to please God, we must have faith.
- This is not a condemning statement or a works-based statement, like, if you ever doubt then you are not pleasing to God.
- This is because all of the Christian life is based on faith, and not of anything we can do ourselves.

Our salvation is by faith

- **Romans 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Our sanctification is by faith

- **(Paul's conversion) - Acts 26:18** to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

**Paul says it again in 2 Thessalonians. Look at the last phrase:**

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and **belief in the truth**

**How do we live a life of faith?**

- It begins with belief in the truth
    - Believe that Jesus died for your sin and then rose from the dead.
    - Believe you are righteous because God says you are.
    - Believe you are holy, because God said He made you holy.

**It comes down to this: Believe that God is who He says He is. Believe God will do what He says He will do. Believe You are who God says you are.**

Faith for our justification (salvation) and then faith for our sanctification (holiness) is the beginning point of living a life by faith. Without faith for these 2 things, everything else will be significantly more difficult if not impossible. But the gospel is only the first thing God tells us. Living by faith means believing everything He says, about who He is, who we are, and what He will do.

The next step in living by faith is realizing that our faith comes from Jesus. Again, He supplies everything we need:

- **Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in (**from**) the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- (actual Greek translation –Through faith I live from the Son of God)

And finally, living by faith is doing whatever we are doing through the strength of God, not our own abilities.

- **1 Peter 4:11** If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**So there are 3 principles**

1. Believe what God says.
2. Know that God supplies everything you need, including faith
3. Act in God's strength, not your own

Let's take a look at the life of someone struggling through learning to live by faith. Watch for each of the three principles in Gideon's story

Israel has done evil before God. God allows Midian to plunder them for 7 years. Finally, Israel cries out for deliverance.

**Judges 6:11–12** Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which *was* in Ophrah, which *belonged* to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide *it* from the Midianites. **12** And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!"

- Even while in distress, and in hiding, God refers to Gideon as a mighty man of valor. And He tells Gideon He is with him.
- Believe you are what God says you are!
- Believe it when God says He is with you! He has given us that promise too!

Gideon's response: **Judges 6:13** Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And 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 forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

- This is not a faith filled answer!
- Gideon shows doubt. Doubt that God is with him like God said He was.
- Gideon looks at his circumstances, not at what God is saying.

God's response: **Judges 6:14** Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

- God reinforces the strength He is giving to Gideon and what God is calling him to.
- Note that God does not really respond to Gideon's lack of faith, but proceeds to speak to Gideon with words that build faith.
    - This is love, no condemnation.

Gideon responds: **Judges 6:15** So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house."

- Again, looking at outward appearances, Gideon doubts.

God responds: **Judges 6:16** And the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.”

- God reiterates what is going to happen
- And God is not dissuaded by Gideon’s doubts. They don’t disqualify him.

**Gideon is beginning to believe that God is going to deliver Israel.**

At this point Gideon goes through a process of testing God to make sure it’s really Him and finally begins to trust that it really is God talking with him. This sets off a series of very incredible events.

**God tells Gideon to tear down the altar of Baal.**

**Judges 6:27** So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he feared his father’s household and the men of the city too much to do *it* by day, he did *it* by night.

- Gideon obeys, but with fear. And that’s ok. There is no rebuke from God. Gideon is learning to trust.

But only learning:

Gideon tests God again with a fleece - And he messed up the test and had to ask God to do it again!!! *(Make sure to tell about the first fleece test)*

- **Judges 6:39–40** Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.” **40** And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.
- As Gideon began to live by faith, he still encountered doubts. But he took those doubts directly to God to have Him deal with them
- **Doubt is not the opposite of faith. Trusting in yourself is the opposite of faith. Trusting in circumstances is the opposite of faith. Trusting in anything other than God is the opposite of faith.**

**Gideon assembles an army**

**Judges 7:1–3** Then Jerubbaal (that *is,* Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. **2** And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' **3** Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.' " And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

- Watching 2/3 of the army disappear had to be disheartening.

**Judges 7:4–6** But the LORD said to Gideon, "The people *are* still *too* many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, "This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." **5** So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." **6** And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

- The army was separated into 2 sections, 300 and 9,700. Gideon probably figured he didn't need those 300 anyways.

**Judges 7:7** Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his place."

- God chose the 300. This must have been a surprise to Gideon.
- It also guarantees the credit can't go to Israel (7:2). This is principle 3 in advance: the victory has to be God's strength, not theirs.

- But Gideon proceeds. He has learned that God said He will deliver the Midianites, so he is trusting in God.

**Judges 7:9–12** It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. **10** But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, **11** and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp.” Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who *were* in the camp. **12** Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.

- God recognizes that Gideon is still afraid, so God prepares something for Gideon to give him greater faith.
- This is principle 2: God supplies everything we need, including faith.

**Judges 7:13–15** And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, “I have had a dream: *To my* surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.” **14** Then his companion answered and said, “This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.” **15** And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.”

- I believe that this is the point where Gideon has moved from trying to muster up faith to using the faith that is a gift from God.
- Prior to this Gideon had lots of fear, but he was doing his best to trust what God was saying. Now he will move forward without fear.
- And now Gideon is repeating what God has said to him to others.

**The plan**

**Judges 7:16–18** Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. **17** And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: **18** When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, "*The sword of* the LORD and of Gideon!' "

- The plan is – Wake up the enemy in the middle of the night by blowing trumpets. Get them real mad.
- Then, since it will be dark, we'll break the pitchers that are hiding our torches so the enemy can see exactly where we are.
- Then we'll shout "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" so they'll know exactly who we are – and they will hear that we are a tiny army.

**The result**

**Judges 7:19–22** So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands. **20** Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" **21** And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. **22** When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath.

- Note – Torches in the left hand, trumpets in the right – no hand for a sword. But they yelled – the sword of the Lord. It was God's sword.
- And it worked. God delivered Israel from a massive army in such a way that it could only have been God.
- That is principle 3: acting in God's strength, not our own.

**Putting it together**

Look at how far Gideon traveled. He started out hiding in a winepress, and he ended up leading three hundred men with trumpets and torches. He got there by learning the same three things we have to learn.

1. **Believe what God says**. God kept answering Gideon's doubts with who He is and what He would do: "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor." When Gideon chose to believe that, it gave him the courage to tear down the altar of Baal. But belief is where faith starts, not where it ends. Even the demons believe that there is a God (James 2:19). Faith is belief that goes on to receive from God and to act on what He says.

2. **Know that God supplies everything you need**, including faith. God gave Gideon the fleece, and He gave Gideon the dream in the Midianite camp. Gideon didn't have to manufacture faith. God handed it to him. And we have even more: the Holy Spirit lives in us, and our faith comes from our connection to the life of Christ.

3. **Act in God's strength, not your own**. Trumpets, empty pitchers and torches, with no hand left for a sword. It might be the worst battle plan in history, even worse than Jericho, and that is exactly the point. Gideon was acting in God's strength, so the victory could only be God's.

It took Gideon time to get there. He went from trying to believe, to letting God give him the faith, to acting in God's strength. And all along the way, God never condemned him. He met every doubt with another promise.

And He will do the same for you.

What does this look like in our lives? Most of us will probably not be called on to defeat an army.

Maybe God has called you to something that seems too difficult for you to do.

Maybe the challenges of life seem to overwhelm you, and you feel incompetent. Or like the wrong person for the job.

Or maybe even just trusting God to see you through this season is challenging enough.

**First** – Do you know what God says.

- What is He calling you? Child? Loved? Strong? Sufficient? Mighty? Worthy?
- Who is God? Provider? Healer? Comforter? Counselor?

**Second** – Trust that God has everything you need to get through this, or to accomplish whatever.

- **2 Peter 1:3** as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

**Third** – Act in God's strength

- Now that you know who He is, and you know that He will supply – don't try to do it yourself.
- Allow God to accomplish it through you.
- This will likely take lots of prayer.

Let's go back to where we started. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." That can sound like a very high standard. Then look at who shows up later in the same chapter.

- **Hebrews 11:32** And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets:
- Gideon. The man who hid in a winepress, argued with the angel, tested God with a fleece twice, and tore down the altar at night because he was afraid. God does not list him as a man who doubted. He lists him among the people of faith.
- That is how God sees faith that keeps turning toward Him, even when it is shaky.

So the faith that pleases God is not flawless faith. It is faith that believes what He says, receives what He supplies, and moves in His strength.

If you have never put your trust in Jesus, it begins right where we began today: believe that Jesus died for your sin and rose from the dead, and receive the righteousness He gives. You don't have to have it all figured out. Bring your doubts to Him, as Gideon did. If you would like to talk about that, come find me after the service.

And for those of us who already follow Him, here is this week's step. Pick one place where you feel too weak. Say out loud what God says about you. Thank Him that He supplies what you need. Then take the next step in His strength, not yours.

Let's pray.