

'again the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord' (Judges 6:1).

The cycle of sin repeats.

FAMINE: *Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. did not spare a living thing in Israel.....'* (Judges 6:3-5).

Co-existence = compromise. *Israelites mingled with the nations...adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters...'* Psalm 106:34-39

FEAR: *The Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountains, caves and strongholds* (6:2).

They should be free, living in the light (5:31), but instead retreat underground. (Jn 3:19)

"But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented." Psalm 106:44-46

Before sending a warrior, God sent His Word. **'the Lord sent them prophet'** (6-7,10)
Israel suffered covenant curses because they wouldn't listen to the word of the Lord.

The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash... where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites

Gideon expects another invasion. He hides in a winepress. God comes to him,

'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior' (6:11). **God? With me? A warrior?**
Gideon can't reconcile the greeting with the harvest or himself! He puts God on trial.

'But sir...if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?

'But now *the LORD has abandoned us...put us into the hand of Midian. 'Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?'* (14)

'But Lord *how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest...I am the least in my family.'*

John Stott: 'Now you and I are very weak. I wish that sometimes we were weaker.'

God's power perfect in our weakness. *To have God is to have all, though bereft of everything. To be destitute of God is to be bereft of everything, though having all.*

FAITH

A Sign?

*"If I have found favor in your eyes, **give me a sign** that it is really you talking to me.'* Gideon faith is not absent. His faith lacks assurance. His visitor is great. Is he God? (15). Give me a sign that it is really you talking to me." Signs aren't evidence of faith.

Its Time!

"Please, do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you."

The LORD: "I will wait." God is patient. **Gideon is serious about knowing Gods will.**

He prepares a feast: **'young goat...bread without yeast.'** He is willing to sacrifice a lot.

The LORD consumed the food with fire. There was no doubt. God is with Gideon.

The winepress becomes a place of worship. Gideon builds an altar: The LORD is Peace.

Time to come out from undercover No longer afraid. Free from fear and insecurity.

Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height...using the wood of the Asherah pole.

Gideon met God. Now he must meet his father. Gideon's father worshipped Baal in a divided home. Having built an altar to God, Gideon must destroy his father's gods.

Faith rearranges our loyalties. *'Those who love father, mother, sister or brother more than me are not worthy of me'* (Matt 10:37-38). *In the home it can be a hard place to be a Christian.*

Israel is completely Canaanized!"Who did this?" "Gideon son of Joash did it.' **"Bring out your son. He must die.'** *If Baal is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar."* Gideon's faith flowed to his father. His household now follows Gideon's God.

FLEECES?

"If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised- look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." And that is what happened...

He wanted signs that all would be well but God previously **promised him success.**

God didn't want Gideon's fleeces. He wants our trust not tests. *Trust his true Word.*

Uncertain? Apprehensive? Underground? **'the testing of your faith develops**

perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and

complete, not lacking anything." (James 1: 3-4) Faith, like a muscle. grows with use.