

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
2-21-24

Judges 7

God Tells Gideon To Tell All His Soldiers Who Are Afraid To Go Home – Verses 1-3

¹ Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. ² The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’ ³ Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

7:2 Self-sufficiency is a handicap when it causes us to believe we can do what needs to be done in our own strength. To prevent this attitude among Gideon’s soldiers, God reduced their number from 32,000 to 300. With an army this vastly outnumbered, there could be no doubt that victory was from God. The men could not take the credit. Like Gideon, we must recognize the danger of fighting in our own strength. We can be confident of victory against life’s challenges and temptations only if we put our confidence in God and not ourselves.

Gideon Must Separate The Men According To A Particular Test Verses 4-8

⁴ But the LORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” ⁵ So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink.” ⁶ Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. ⁷ The LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.” ⁸ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others. Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley.

7:4 The people are still too many: God already reduced Gideon’s army from 32,000 to 10,000. Here He reduced it from 10,000 to 300. He did this because 10,000 were still too many for God’s purpose. We rarely think that bigness can be a hindrance to the work of God. Yet it is harder to truly rely on God when we have many wonderful resources at hand. Though it certainly can be done, it is hard to be big and to rely only on the LORD. When we are big, it is possible to do a lot in human resources and “give the credit” to God.

7:5 Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there: This seems a strange test, and there are different ideas as to why God used this to separate the soldiers. Perhaps it was because those who cupped the water in their hands and brought it to their mouth were better soldiers because they kept their eyes on their surroundings even when taking a drink.

7:7-8 By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand: God assured Gideon that victory was certain, even through only 300 men. Now the Israeli army was

less than 1% of its original size and the proportion was 400 Midianite soldiers to each Israeli soldier. Gideon could only trust in God because there was nothing else to trust.

Gideon Must Spy On The Camp Of The Midianites And Find Encouragement – Verses 9-11

⁹ During that night the LORD said to Gideon, “Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. ¹⁰ If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah ¹¹ and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp.

7:10-11 Facing overwhelming odds, Gideon was afraid. God understood his fear, but he didn't excuse Gideon from his task. Instead, he allowed Gideon to slip into the enemy camp and overhear a conversation that would give him courage (7: 12-15). Are you facing a battle with internal or external foes that have defeated you in the past or appear invincible today? God can give you the strength you need for any situation. And don't be startled by the way he helps you. Like Gideon, you must listen to God and be ready to take the first step. Only after you begin to obey God will you find the courage to move ahead.

God Reassures Gideon Through The Midianites – Verses 12-15

¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore. ¹³ Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. “I had a dream,” he was saying. “A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.” ¹⁴ His friend responded, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.” ¹⁵ When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands.”

7:12-13 Midianites were camel-riding marauders composed of five families linked to Abraham through Midian, the son of Abraham's second wife, Keturah. They inhabited the desert regions from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea. A loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian: Only the very poor ate barley bread. The vision meant that the camp of the Midianites would be knocked over by a humble nobody.

7:14 This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon: God allowed Gideon to see a great confirmation of His future work. This was obviously no coincidence and no display of luck. God used this situation to build the faith of Gideon, and it worked so well that all Gideon could do was worship God. It must have built the faith of Gideon to know that his enemies were afraid of him. When we are weak in faith we often make our enemies stronger than they really are. We could say that the devil himself is afraid of the normal Christian - or at least afraid of what they could become.

7:15 Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand: Gideon's encouragement was contagious. Having received encouragement, he could not help but spread that encouragement to others and his encouragement built their faith.

Gideon Announces A Strange Battle Plan – Verses 16-18

¹⁶ Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. ¹⁷ “Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When

I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. ¹⁸ When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”

7:16-18 He divided the three hundred men into three companies: There is no specific mention that God gave Gideon this plan through supernatural revelation. Yet, because Gideon was a Spirit-filled man (Judges 6:34), the supernatural can operate very naturally in his life.

God Strikes The Army Of Midian With A Surprise Attack – Verses 19-23

¹⁹ **Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. ²⁰ The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” ²¹ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. ²² When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. ²³ Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites.**

7:19-20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers: The Midianite soldiers awoke to an explosion of noise, light, and movement coming down on them from all directions. No wonder they thought they were being attacked by an army even bigger than they were.

7:20 And they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon”: This cry was not the result of pride on Gideon’s part. Instead, it showed wisdom in the attack because clearly the Midianites were already afraid of the sword of Gideon (Judges 7:14), and shouting helped to send them into panic.

7:21 The LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp: The first phase of the battle wasn’t between Israel and Midian, but as the Midianites fought themselves. This is a good example of how we can be more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37). We get the spoils of victory though Jesus won the battle for us.

7:21 Gideon’s warriors simply watched as the army of Midian fell into panic, confusion, and disordered retreat. Not one man had to draw a sword to defeat the enemy. Gideon’s small army could never have brought about such a victory in its own strength. God wanted to demonstrate to Israel that victory depends not on strength or numbers, but on obedience and commitment to him.

Working towards total defeat of Midian – Verses 24-25

²⁴ **Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.” So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. ²⁵ They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.**

7:24 Come down against the Midianites: This was not unbelief on Gideon’s part. Though God started the work with a small number of soldiers, once the work began, Gideon wanted many to get involved in the work. God blessed the effort of people of Ephraim, and they made good success against the enemy and their leaders.