

THE DEFEAT OF THE MIDIANITES

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : Judges 7 :9-25 ; 8 :1 -35

LESSON 194 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:7)

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Judges 7:9-25

⁹ And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

¹⁰ But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

¹¹ And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host.

¹² And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

¹³ And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

¹⁴ And his fellow answered and said, This *is* nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

¹⁵ And it was *so*, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

A Small Band

For seven years the Children of Israel were oppressed by the Midianites who went in great numbers into the Land of Canaan to destroy it. When the Children of Israel called unto the Lord to deliver them, God raised up Gideon, a "mighty man of valour."

The Midianites were as numerous as grasshoppers. "Both they and their camels were without number." The army of the Israelites had numbered thirty-two thousand before God sifted out the fearful and unconcerned. When the army was put to God's test, only three hundred men remained in Gideon's band of warriors. The rest of the people went back to their tents. God's army today has a place only for those who are courageous, watchful, and obedient. Although they may be few in number, they are victorious through faith in the Lord.

Gideon had been told that God would deliver the Midianites into his hand. By the three hundred men the enemy would be routed. God does not give an impossible task to anyone, for with the command He also gives the power to carry out the command. God did not give Gideon an impossible assignment. Considering the warfare of those days, it appeared unwise for a man with a band of 300 to attack such a huge army; but Gideon was sent by the Lord. He fought by faith.

Encouragement

God knew that Gideon did not need more men; he needed encouragement for his faith. That is what God gave him. Gideon was instructed to go, that night, to the camp of the enemy to hear what they had to say. Gideon was obedient. He took Phurah, his servant, as a witness. Gideon was a brave and courageous man; more than that, he was obedient to God; his faith was in the Lord. No doubt they slipped very quietly and cautiously through the dark lest an enemy sentry would hear them. As they drew near the camp of the Midianites, they heard voices. Gideon and Phurah stopped to listen, for God had said that they would hear what the enemy had to say.

Gideon heard a Midianite telling about a dream that he had had. He had dreamed that a piece of barley bread tumbled into their camp and overturned a tent. Gideon did not hurry away. It was well that Gideon listened to the interpretation of the dream, for those were the words of encouragement that God wanted him to hear. Some people deny themselves a blessing and needed encouragement because they leave too soon — perhaps leave a meeting and the place of prayer, just short of receiving what God has for them.

As Gideon and Phurah listened, another Midianite told the meaning of the dream of his fellow soldier. He said, "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon." Then he continued by saying that God had given the Midianites into Gideon's hand. Even the enemy knew that they would be overcome by the God of the Israelites.

Worship

¹⁶ And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

¹⁷ And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that*, as I do, so shall ye do.

¹⁸ When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword* of the LORD, and of Gideon.

¹⁹ So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

²⁰ And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal*: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.

²¹ And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

²² And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath.

²³ And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

²⁴ And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them

When Gideon heard the meaning of the dream, he worshiped God. He was just outside the camp of the enemy, on enemy soil, but he worshiped God. He did not wait until he had returned to his own tent. Let us follow Gideon's example to thank God for His goodness to us, to praise Him for His watchful care over "its and the encouragement He gives. Wherever we are, we can lift our hearts in worship. Many people have found that the name of Jesus in a whispered prayer is a good weapon against the enemy, and good protection in time of danger.

Strange Weapons

Gideon was greatly encouraged. He returned to his men, divided them into three groups, and armed them in a strange way. Into the hands of each of the 300 men, Gideon put a trumpet, and a pitcher in which was placed a lamp. Thus the armies of Israel were prepared for battle. They were instructed to do as Gideon did — to blow the trumpets when Gideon did and to shout when Gideon shouted.

The spiritual weapons which are available to God's people today are not as other weapons of war. Paul mentions this in his writings (**2 Corinthians 10:4** ⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;); **Ephesians 6:17** ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: **Hebrews 4:12** ¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart). When the shepherd boy, David, went to fight the armor-clad giant, Goliath, David conquered in the name of the Lord. David said: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (I Samuel 17:45).

Christ, Our Example

Many of God's people have learned that they can be victors in every battle. They follow the example of their leader — Christ. "Christ . . . suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21). In the time of temptation, what weapon did Jesus use? The Word of God. He told Satan, "It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). God's people overcome the enemy by the Word of the Lord, and by "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Gideon's men let their lamps shine in the darkness. We are told to let our light "shine before men" (Matthew 5:16), and to "shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). Letting the light shine from their lamps helped Gideon's men to win the battle.

How many times the shout of victory on the lips of the redeemed has routed the enemy! The walls of Jericho fell by faith when the Children of Israel obeyed God and shouted (Joshua 6:20).

Following Their Leader

This Israelite army of 300 men had faith and confidence in their leader. The men did as Gideon told them to do. The three bands surrounded the enemy. Soon after the watch was changed, Gideon gave the signal. Then 300 trumpets were blown; 300 pitchers were broken; 300 lights shone around the enemy; and a shout went forth, "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon." The sword of the Lord in the hand of Gideon had won the victory.

Great terror gripped the hearts of the enemy. The noise, the light, and the shout in the still of the night confused the enemy, until they fled. In their fright, they fell upon one another's swords.

the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan.

²⁵ And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

Judges 8:1-35

¹ And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.

² And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? /s not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?

³ God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

⁴ And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.

⁵ And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

⁶ And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?

⁷ And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with

The three companies of Gideon's men stood "every man in his place round about the camp." They did not rush into the fray as if eager to fight or to claim the spoils. They awaited orders from Gideon. It would be a fine lesson for us to learn from Gideon's men — for every one to stay in his place. Can God depend on us to be in our places, awaiting His orders?

Complete Victory Wanted

Gideon was not satisfied with chasing the Midianites from Canaan. God had told him that the host of Midian was delivered into his hand. Even though 120,000 of the enemy were slain, about 15,000 fled. with Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. Gideon wanted all that God had promised. He wanted to do the work right — not fulfill just part of God's command.

Ephraim

The men of Israel gathered and pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent word to the men of Ephraim, who captured two princes of the Midianites. The men of Ephraim reproved Gideon. They asked why he had treated them in such a way, for he had not called them sooner into battle with the Midianites. They were offended and perhaps jealous. Gideon was kind to them and said, "What have I done now in comparison of you?" Because of Gideon's meekness and humility the men of Ephraim were angry no longer and were peaceable. In this case, Gideon proved that "a soft answer turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1).

Judgment

Gideon pursued the remaining Midianites across the Jordan River. His men were tired and hungry. They asked bread of the men of Succoth and of the men of Penuel, both in the tribe of Gad (Israelites). This hospitality should have been given to any travelers, to say nothing of the chosen army of the Lord. But none would give to Gideon's men, and Gideon warned those selfish people that they would be punished for it. God later permitted Gideon to teach them not to hinder the armies of the Lord. Their judgment was severe but just, for they had not taken heed to the warning. Gideon did not return home until the enemies were slain and could not again oppress the Children of Israel.

God, Their Ruler

When Gideon and his men returned to Canaan, the Children of Israel wanted him and his family to rule over them because he had delivered them from the Midianites. In a spiritual way, those whom Christ has delivered from the hand of Satan want the Lord to be their Leader and the Ruler of their lives. Gideon was made their leader by the Lord, and he held that place until his death. He told the Children of Israel: "The LORD shall rule over you." Perhaps he felt very much like Paul who told the Corinthians to follow him as he followed Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1** ¹ Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.).

Death of Gideon

The Children of Israel lived in peace for forty years in the days of Gideon. It is true that he made a mistake; he failed to inquire of God. He, no doubt, intended to keep a memorial of the spoils. He gathered the golden earrings that had been taken from the enemies and made them into an ephod. This ephod, a part of the priest's apparel, became an object of idolatrous worship, and a snare to Gideon. How very carefully and prayerfully one must live lest a mistake will be a poor example that someone will follow!

After the death of Gideon, the Children of Israel forsook

briers.

⁸ And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*.

⁹ And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

¹⁰ Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

¹¹ And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

¹² And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

¹³ And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,

¹⁴ And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.

¹⁵ And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are* weary?

¹⁶ And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

¹⁷ And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

¹⁸ Then said he unto Zebah and

the true and living God. They made an idol their god. They forgot God who had delivered them from the enemy on every side. Nor did they show kindness to Gideon's family in appreciation of what he had done for them. Often it is the case; when one forgets God, he also forgets those who have been his friends.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How did Gideon become the leader of the Israelites?
- 2 Why was his army so small?
- 3 What was the dream of the Midianite? and what was its meaning?
- 4 What weapons did Gideon's men use?
- 5 Why were Gideon and his band successful?
- 6 How can we let our "lights" shine?
- 7 Why should we let our "lights" shine?
- 8 Why did the men shout: "The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon"? 9 Why did Gideon chase and completely destroy the enemy?

Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou *art*, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king.

¹⁹ And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: *as* the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

²⁰ And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is*, *so is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

²² Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

²³ And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

²⁴ And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

²⁵ And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

²⁶ And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

²⁷ And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even*

in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

²⁸ Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

²⁹ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

³⁰ And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

³¹ And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

³² And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

³³ And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god.

³⁴ And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

³⁵ Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.