

The Weapons of Our Warfare

by A.B. Simpson

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the power of spiritual weapons in warfare, illustrated through Gideon's reliance on God amidst weakness.

Scripture: Judges 7:20, 2 Corinthians 10:4

Topics: "Faith and Obedience", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the power of spiritual weapons in the Christian life, illustrating how God uses the weak and seemingly foolish things to achieve victory, as seen in Gideon's battle against the Midianites. He highlights that our weapons are not carnal but mighty through God, and that faith in God's unseen support is crucial for overcoming challenges. Simpson encourages believers to present themselves as broken vessels filled with the light of Christ, proclaiming the Gospel with urgency and clarity. He reminds us that while God fights our battles, our obedience and cooperation are essential for His work to be accomplished. Ultimately, the message is one of faith, trust, and the power of God working through our weaknesses.

Transcript

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." 2 Cor. 10: 4.

"And the three companies blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands and cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place around about the camp; and all the host ran and cried and fled." Judges 7: 20, 21.

This is the crowning illustration of the supreme lesson of Gideon's life, the strength of weakness. In the weapons of Gideon's warfare as well as in Gideon and his followers, we see how God can use the weak things of this world to confound the strong, and the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are.

In the commencement of the final assault we still see the timidity of Gideon himself. As God sends him forward for the final attack upon the Midianites, He recognizes the fears of His timorous servant. "Arise," He says, "get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered them into thy hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah, thy servant, down to the host." And so God again encouraged the trembling faith of His child by giving him another sign. Stealthily Gideon and his servant creep down to the edge of the

hostile camp, and they listen cautiously outside one of the tents of the sleeping soldiers. It is just after ten o'clock at night, and the camp is wrapped in profound slumber. But one of the sleepers is suddenly wakened from a troubled dream, and he is telling his comrade how in his dream a round cake of barley bread came rolling into the host of Midian, and struck the tent and smashed it into ruins. The companion of the sleeper at once interpreted the dream. "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." That is enough to satisfy Gideon that God is already working, and the fears of the enemy are prophetic of their fate.

And so God is ever working for those that trust Him. He can fight our battles for us in the very hearts of our enemies, and discomfit them before the conflict begins. Oh! for the faith to recognize our unseen Ally, and the forces and resources which are waiting at His command on every side to cooperate with those who trust and obey Him. The soul that you are seeking to save, and to which you may speak the final word to lead it to decision, has been under a preparation for that word through a whole chain of divine providences with which you have had nothing to do; and when you pass on God has still other agents and influences to take up your work and carry it on to consummation. When Elisha stood at Dothan surrounded by the Syrian armies it seemed to his frightened servant that all was lost; but there were armies in the sky and on the mountain tops more mighty than all their foes. And faith reckons on the unseen, and steps out into the darkness alone with God to find that He is just as able to turn the Midianites against each other as to strike them by the sword of God and that He is already beginning to melt their hearts like wax, and prepare them by their very dreams for the panic and disaster which is so soon to follow. So it matters not if Gideon's forces are but three hundred against one hundred and thirty-five thousand of his foes. It matters not that their weapons are but lamps, and pitchers, and trumpets, for they do not need to strike a blow in this great battle. Jehovah is going to turn the Midianites against the Amalekites, while Gideon's army stands waving the torch and blowing the trumpet of victory as they shout, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

These simple and apparently foolish weapons are fitting types of the weapons of our warfare which "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

1.THE PITCHER

This was just a vessel of earthenware. It did not need to be strong or beautiful. If it had been of iron, or of brass, it would have been useless. Its very frailty was its chief advantage, for it was of no service until it was broken. How well it represents these vessels of clay through which God is pleased to accomplish His high commissions and concerning which He says: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God," and "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness unto God." These members are represented here as weapons. Our hands, our feet, our lips, our eyes, our ears, our physical senses are all so many weapons to be used against evil and for the Lord. Gideon's vessels had to be empty. And so God requires our bodies and spirits to be given to Him exclusively, and to be emptied of all our willful, selfish and absorbing preemptions and ready at any moment for His use and service. Then, when they are filled with all of His indwelling life and broken like Gideon's pitchers so that the light may shine through, God will use them in their very weakness for the revelation of His glory and the accomplishment of His plans. We need not be troubled about the breaking of the pitchers. God will do that, or, at least, allow it to be done, but the circumstances and trials, perhaps the wrongs that come to us will furnish the occasion for the victory of His grace. I have seen a child of God standing unmoved amid intense provocation, when the natural impulse would have been to speak the quick word and to take up and resent the wrong in a manner that might have seemed to the world more dignified and becoming. But instead of this there was nothing but

the flushing crimson of the brow, the starting tear in the eye, the self-suppression that cost a moment's effort, and then the gentle silence and the sweet smile, and I have seen a strong man broken down by that victory of love and led to seek the grace that enabled a Christian child to triumph over his unkindness, and to let the light of God's love flash through a broken vessel and shine out because of the cruel wrong. I have seen some worker for Christ stand in silence and misrepresentation and wrong and wait for God to vindicate, and in the waiting days exhibit the spirit of Christ and glorify God by that silence as no self-vindication could ever have done, and then in the end come forth with God's own seal of approval and a vindication that human word's could never have afforded.

God lets these things come in our lives just that we may through them reveal the light of His grace and the Spirit of Him, whose agony in Gethsemane and shame upon the cross were but the background on which the glory of His grace shone out with a luster transcending even the Transfiguration light.

2. THE LAMPS

Gideon's lamps represented not only the light of truth and the source of all light, the Holy Ghost, but more than this -- the light of the indwelling Christ as an actual life in the innermost soul of the child of God; for the lamps were inside the pitchers and the Lord of Life must be in us if we would shine. They say that travelers in Arctic zones can take a piece of ice and shape it into a burning glass to concentrate the rays of the sun until they can kindle fires. But not so can human souls be kindled. The medium must be burning, too. Icy hearts cannot set other souls on fire.

"Thou must thyself be true,

If thou the truth wouldst teach.

Thy heart must overflow, if thou

Another heart wouldst reach."

In speaking of the true seed of the kingdom Christ says the good seed are "the children of the kingdom." And so again He says, "Ye are the light of the world." It is not what we say, but what we are and what Christ is within us that constitutes the strength of our testimony and the power of our life. It is the life of Christ within shining through the broken vessel in a suffering saint, a feeble instrumentality that most honors God and most effectively works for His kingdom and glory.

3. THE TRUMPETS

This is God's symbol of the Gospel message. A trumpet is just an artificial voice proclaiming a loud and startling message of alarm, or warning, or of command. How perfectly it represents the message of the Gospel. The trumpet is not a musical instrument. It has no fine inflections of tone and no sweet cadences of elocution, but it is a loud, short, sharp summons meant to arouse and to move. The very word used for preaching is based on this figure, the trumpet of the herald. When Christ sent forth His disciples to preach He did not say, Go, and give eloquent orations and artistic speeches, but He said, Go, and proclaim as a herald the glad tidings of salvation. Our message should be as clear and as urgent as the herald's trumpet, and so simple that none can misunderstand it. This was what John the Baptist said he was, "A Voice." There was not much honor in being a voice to express another's thought and message.

This is the chief business of the missionary of Christ. Let us not be misled by the inductions of our own reasonings and led into the idea that we are sent forth to heathen lands simply to gather about us bands of little children and train them up in the truths of Christianity and thus gradually prepare a Christian community; giving up as comparatively hopeless the hardened hearts of those that are mature in years and steeped in sin; for God sends us to these sinful and hardened lives, to men and to women, to homes and families, to the cannibal chief and the savage barbarian to flash before him the light of the living Christ, and proclaim in his ears the message of his God; believing that He who spoke to Midian's myriads in the very dreams of the night, and filled their hearts with fear, can still speak to the hearts of men and arouse them to repentance and obedience by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Let this be the aim of our work and the claim of our faith, and we shall still find that the weapons of our warfare are as mighty as of old, and that we need not be "ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

4. THE BATTLE CRY

The battle cry of Gideon's band is full of instructive meaning. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" it is translated, but if you look closely at the verse in Judges 7: 18, you will see that the word "sword" is not in the original, and it might truthfully be translated "God and Gideon" or "Jehovah and Gideon." It was indeed a startling battle cry -- "God and Gideon!" There was no waste of words, but there could be no heightening of emphasis. The very words were almost as startling as the blast of the trumpet loud and long. "God and Gideon!" How it rang out over the midnight air until it echoed back from the hills and ravines, until it was answered back by the shrieks and groans of the terrified and wounded men. "God and Gideon," it was a fitting watchword linking together the two great principles of divine operation and human cooperation. God comes first, for the battle is the Lord's. It is He who strikes down the enemy. It is He who uses and prepares the instrument. It is He who turns the foemen upon each other. It is He who fills their hearts with fear, and really decides the battle before it begins. It is He who is still present in all His unchanged omnipotence, and whose eyes run to and fro throughout the earth to show Himself upright in behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him. It is He who saves us. It is He who sanctifies us. It is He who is our Healer, and Deliverer in temporal distress. It is He who, as the God of providence, still works in the events and circumstances of life in answer to His people's prayers. It is He who sits upon the throne -- an ever present God, making all things work together for good to them that love Him. It is He who by the Holy Ghost convicts the world of sin and of righteousness and judgment. He can break the hardest heart. He can change the most obdurate will. He can break down the iron walls of Hindu caste, and bring tribes and nations to seek and acknowledge Him. He can change the persecuting Saul into a humble apostle of Jesus Christ. He can prompt the hearts of men to lay their treasures at His feet, and supply the needed resources for the work of the Gospel and evangelization of the world. He does not need our religious tricks and our shameful compromises with the world in order to gain the favor of the rich and win the popularity of the crowd. Christianity is supernatural power, and the same God that led Israel with a Pillar of Cloud and Fire, who spoke at Pentecost through the tongues of flame, and opened Peter's prison door, and then struck his persecutor down upon his throne in his impious pride, is waiting to work the greater wonders of His grace in these last days of Christian advantage. Oh, for the sword of God! Oh, for the faith to claim it! Oh, for the proof of the promise, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He worketh."

There is the sword of Gideon, too. There is a place for man's obedience as well as for man's faith. So Gideon must himself be true, and his three hundred men must be adjusted and ready, and they must follow him just as closely as he followed Jehovah; for his command is urgent and imperative, "Look on me,

and do likewise. As I do, so shall ye do." There must be perfect unity and precision of action. There is not much for us to do, but what He bids us, that must we do, and do just as He bids us to. And then, when the victory was won and the tide was turned, there was still something to do. The foe must be followed up and pursued; the battle must be complete; the enemy must be cut off in their retreat at the fords of Jordan, and the very men that had been rejected the day before, the nine thousand seven hundred who had been sent home because of their failure at the testing waters, they now were permitted to come in at the finish and cut off the fleeing foe. And so there was a part for all.

This was the part of Gideon, and this the object of our obedience and fellowship in the Gospel. God teach us to trust, as if all depended upon God, and to obey, as if all depended upon us.

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