

Gideon's Defeat Over the Midianites

by Chuck Smith

God thins out the ranks of the Israelites to make it impossible for them to take credit for their own successes, and to receive the glory for the victory over the Midianites.

Duration: 25:04

Scripture: Judges 7:1-5, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28

Topics: "Gideon"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California, leads a verse-by-verse study through the Bible. He focuses on Gideon's defeat over the Midianites as described in Judges, Chapter 7, Verse 1. Pastor Chuck explains how God instructed Gideon to select only 300 men to fight against the Midianites. These men were chosen based on their method of drinking water, and God promised to deliver the Midianites into their hands. Gideon and his men were given trumpets, empty pitchers, and lamps, and they followed God's instructions to surround the Midianite camp and blow their trumpets, declaring the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. The sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on God's power and guidance rather than human arguments and abilities.

Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul
Oh, let Him have the things that mold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life and make you whole
Welcome to The Word for Today, the broadcast ministry of Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. Pastor Chuck is currently leading us on a verse-by-verse study through the entire Bible. And on today's edition of The Word for Today, we'll be looking at Gideon's defeat over the Midianites as we pick up in Judges 7, verse 1. And now, picking up with today's message, here's Pastor Chuck Smith.

Then Jerobabel, who is Gideon, and all of the people that were with him rose up early and pitched beside the well of Harad so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley of Jezreel. So from the spring of Harad, you can look out across the valley and they could see the vast host of the Midianites out there. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, My own hand hath saved Me.

It is interesting that though they were outnumbered by a vast amount, 135,000 Midianites were slain, there were 32,000 Israelites, yet God said, If I deliver the Midianites to the 32,000, they'll vaunt themselves and they will declare what they have done. They won't give God the glory. God, when He works, desires to receive the glory for the work that He has done.

He doesn't want man taking the glory that belongs to God. And yet there seems to be a prevalent danger of men taking the glory for what the Lord has wrought. God does not appreciate that.

God did not want that. And so God said, Cut the army down. Go out to the men and proclaim to the ears of the people, saying, Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and depart early from the Mount Gilead.

And there returned of the people 22,000 and there remained only 10,000. And so God now is thinning out the forces in order that He might get men that He might use to bring the victory to Israel in such a way that God will get the glory for the victory. And the first that God eliminates are those that are fearful and those that are trembling.

They were disqualified. God knows that those that are fearful are looking at the enemy rather than looking at God. God knows that those that are trembling are weak, cannot stand up to the fight.

And so He sent home those that were fearful and trembling. And the Lord said to Gideon, The people are still too many. Bring them down to the water, and I will try them for you there.

And it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with you, the same will go with you. And whosoever I will say unto you, These shall not go with you, the same shall not go. So He brought the people down to the water, and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that laps the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shall you set by himself.

And likewise, every one that bows down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hands to their mouth, were three hundred men. But all of the rest of the people bowed down on their knees to drink the water.

So the division was made between those that would cup the water in their hands and drink it out of their hands, and those who just got down and put their face in the water. And those who would cup the water, the three hundred, then God said, verse seven, By these three hundred, I will deliver the Midianites into your hand and let the rest of the people go home to their own villages. So the people took vituals in their hands and their trumpets, and they sent home the rest of Israel, every man to his own tent.

And they retained the three hundred men, and the host of Midian was beneath them in the valley. Now it came to pass that same night that the Lord said unto him, Arise and go down to the host, for I have delivered them into your hand. Okay, get in, go down and wipe them out.

But if you are afraid, now remember he sent home those that were afraid, those who were fearful and trembling. If you're afraid, if you are fearful, go down with Purah, your servant to the host, and you will hear what they are saying, and afterwards your hands will be strengthened to go down unto the host. So he went down with Purah, his servant, which of course indicates that he was fearful, unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.

And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east were laying along the valley like grasshoppers for multitude. Their camels were without number like the sand by the seaside for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream to his friend.

And he said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo, there was cake of barley bread, and it 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. 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 of the host.

So here was a fellow who was sharing his dream and another guy who interpreted his dream. And Gideon hears his name in the interpretation. That's Gideon, the son of Joash.

And God's delivered Midian into his hand. And so it was that when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and the interpretation, he worshipped. All right, Lord.

And he returned to the host of Israel and he said, Arise, for the Lord has delivered into your hand the host of Midian. So he divided the 300 men into three companies. He put a trumpet in every man's hand with empty pitchers and lamps within the pitchers.

And he said unto them, Now watch me and do as I do. Behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, and it shall be as I do that you shall do, when I blow with the trumpet and all that are with me, then blow with your trumpets also on every side of the camp and say, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch or at 12 o'clock midnight because they had just newly set the watch.

The middle watch was from 12 o'clock midnight to 3 in the morning. And they had just newly set the watch, so it was just about midnight. And they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands, so the flaming torches.

And so the Midianites were awakened out of their sleep in the middle of the night with a blare of these trumpets. They looked and here were these flaming torches and the trumpets blaring. And confusion came upon them.

And the three companies blew their trumpets, broke the pitchers, held the lance in their left hands, trumpets in their right hands. And they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp and the host ran and cried and fled.

Panic struck the Midianites. And the three hundred blew the trumpets and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow. So they started swinging with their swords, but they were wiping out each other in the darkness there.

Even throughout all the host and the host fled to Beth Shittah in Zerahath and under the border of Abel-Meholah unto Tabath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali and out of Asher and out of all of Manasseh, and they pursued after the Midianites. Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim, saying to the tribe of Ephraim, Come down against the Midianites and take before them the waters unto Beth Barah and Jordan.

In other words, go cut off the pass so that they can't cross over Jordan and escape. And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and took the waters unto Beth Barah and Jordan. And they took

the two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeb, and they slew Oreb on the rock, and Zeb they slew at the winepress of Zeb, and they pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeb to Gideon on the other side of Jordan.

So they caught two of the princes, beheaded them, and brought the heads to Gideon. And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Now why have you treated us like this? Why didn't you call us when you went out to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with them sharply. So here are troublemakers.

Why didn't you call us? Had Gideon been defeated, it would have been a different story. You can be sure of that. But victorious, they're chiding.

They're really getting on his case. And Gideon shows some real diplomacy here. He said unto them, What have I done in comparison to what you have done? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim? Now the gleanings is going in and just picking the grapes after the harvesters are gone through.

Those little grapes that are still there. Just the gleanings. Are not they better than the vintage that is the first picking of Abiezer? Man, you guys.

Your gleanings are more than our vintage. What have we done compared to you? God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian. Oreb and Zeb.

What was I able to do in comparison to what you did? Then their anger was abated toward him when he said that. Very diplomatic to be sure. And Gideon does show some depth of character.

And Gideon came to Jordan and passed over. He and the 300 men that were with him. And they were fainting.

They were weak and still they were pursuing. And he said unto the men of Succoth. Give I pray you some loaves of bread unto the people that follow me.

For they are faint and I'm pursuing after Ziba and Zalmunah, the kings of Midian. And man, these guys have quite names, don't they? Ziba and Zalmunah and Zeb and Oreb. Their names are sort of terrifying.

Zinzindor, Zalmunah. And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Ziba and Zalmunah now in your hand that we should give bread unto your army? And Gideon said, Let me tell you something, fellas. When God has delivered Ziba and Zalmunah into my hand, I'm going to tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with the briars.

Here he came to the men of Succoth. He was needing bread. He was needing supplies for his troops.

But they were trying to play it safe. They said, Hey, you haven't conquered them yet. What if they defeat you? Then they're going to come back and get even with us.

And so they refused to help. And so he came to Penuel. And they answered him the same way as the men of Succoth.

And so he said to the men of Penuel, When I come again in peace, I'm going to break down your tower. Now Ziba and Zalmunah were in Kharkor. And their hosts were with them.

There were only about 15,000 left of all of the children of the east. They had already slain about 120,000 of them that drew the sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in the tents on the east of Noba and Jogbaha.

And he smote the host for the host was secure. And when Ziba and Zalmunah fled, he pursued after them. And he took the two kings of Midian, Ziba and Zalmunah.

And he disconfited all of their hosts. And Gideon, the son of Joash, returned from battle before the sun was up. And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth.

And he inquired of him. And he said, Describe to me the princes of Succoth and the elders of the city, even 77 men. And they came to the men of Succoth.

And he said, Behold, here is Ziba and Zalmunah, with whom you did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Ziba and Zalmunah now in your hand, that we should give you bread for your men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city. And he took the thorns of the wilderness. He got some cacti type plants and briars.

And with them, he taught them a lesson. Man, if they used and they do grow some pretty thorny bushes and all around that area, be pretty miserable. And then he came to Penuel.

And he beat down the tower in Penuel and slew the men of the city. And then he said to Ziba and Zalmunah, What manner of men were they who you killed at Tabor? And they answered, they said, They're a lot like you. Each one of them resembled the child of a king.

And he said unto them, They were my brothers. They are the sons of my mother. And as the Lord lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not kill you.

And he said to Jether his oldest son, Kill him, son. But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still just a young boy. Then the king Ziba and Zalmunah said, Rise up and fall on us.

For as a man is, so is his strength. In other words, be a man. And Gideon arose and slew Ziba and Zalmunah and took away the ornaments that were on their camel's necks.

Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule over us and your sons and your sons' sons. For you have delivered us from the hand of the Midians. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, nor will my sons rule over you.

The Lord shall rule over you. So again, the depth of the character of Gideon, tremendous. Here they're wanting to elevate him.

Rule over us and let your sons. They're wanting to set up really a dynasty. They're wanting to set up a monarchy.

He says, No way, the Lord will rule over you. So Gideon said, I will just have one request. I'd like to have all of the earrings that you took off of those guys that you wiped out.

So they brought the, he laid out a blanket and they willingly gave the earrings on the garment. And the weight of the gold in these earrings was about 50 pounds of gold. Pretty good amount.

Besides all the ornaments and the collars and the purple raiment that were on the kings that he took. Beside the chains that were about their camel's necks. So Gideon made an ephod.

Now an ephod is sort of a divining instrument. An instrument by which they could ascertain the will of God. And it could be that Gideon's purpose in the ephod was to ascertain God's will.

He made the ephod out of the gold that he was taken. But it became sort of a idol to the people of Israel. He put it in his city in Orpah there.

And all of Israel went there whoring after it. And it became a snare unto Gideon and to his house. It became a real problem as it became an object of worship.

And thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel. And they lifted up their heads no more. That was the end of Midian's power.

And the country was in quietness for 40 years during all of the days of Gideon. And Jerobabel the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. And Gideon had, listen to this, 70 sons begotten of his own body for he had many wives.

And so this was a period beginning in Israel where there was a multiplicity of wives but 70 sons. He had a concubine that lived in Shechem and she also bore him a son whose name is called Abimelech. Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father there at Orpah in Abiezerites.

And it came to pass as soon as Gideon was dead what do you suppose? The children of Israel turned again and went a-whoring after Baalim and made Baal barith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not Jehovah their god who had delivered them out of the hands of all of their enemies on every side and neither showed they kindness to the house of Gideon or Jerobabel namely Gideon according to all of the goodness which he had shown to Israel. So again important lessons that we can learn from this story of Gideon.

Never worry when God thins the ranks. If God is cutting down the numbers he's doing it for a purpose. It's interesting to me that God had to thin the ranks until it became ludicrous.

300 men against 135,000 the draw sword. I mean God made the odds so impossible that there was just no way that man could boast. You know sometimes God lets things get so bad that only he could deliver so that you can't possibly take any credit or glory to ourselves.

But God will not allow any flesh to glory in his sight. And so sometimes we just make it tough on ourselves because of our desire to glory and God just lets it get worse and worse and worse as he sort of thins out the ranks until we say hey God help there's nothing I can do. Lord this is hopeless Lord.

And then he works and all I can say well man it was a hopeless mess but God took care of it. To God be the glory great things he has done. We'll return with more of our verse by verse study through the book of Judges in our next lesson as we look at the conspiracy of Abimelech.

And we do hope you'll make plans to join us. But right now I'd like to remind you that if you missed any part of today's message or perhaps you'd like to order a copy for that special friend or loved one you can do so by simply contacting one of our customer service representatives and they'd be more than happy to

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And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck Smith continues his verse-by-verse study through the book of Judges. That's right here on the next edition of The Word for Today. Now once again here's Pastor Chuck Smith.

May the Lord be with you. May the Lord bless you. May He keep you in His love.

May He guide you through this week. And may we give thanks unto God continually for His grace and His mercy and His love towards us through Jesus Christ. I'd like to invite you to listen and watch this year's Senior Pastors Conference on DVD now available to the public.

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And Pastor Greg Laurie. Ultimately in heaven we will look back and say all things indeed did work together for good. May each of us experience that special touch from the Lord and may He give us ears to hear.

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