

The Sword of Gideon

Out of the entire population of Israel God chose one man, Gideon, to deliver His people out of the hand of Midian, “...Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites...” (Judges 6:14). This directive was in answer to the fervent prayers of the people, “*And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD*” (Judges 6:6). Even though Gideon himself cried unto God because of the Midianite oppression, rather than eagerly agreeing with God, he protested against being chosen to be the one to do the work, “...*Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house*” (Judges 6:15). Not only once did he protest but he did so several times, essentially asking God to convince him through signs that he would succeed at this God-given task.

Finally, after two infallible signs from God, Gideon was convinced enough to gather an army of 32,000 fighting men—the Midianite army had 135,000 men. Then God did something incomprehensible to the mind of man. He reduced the Gideon army to 300 to make obvious that no one can take credit for any good work they are involved in, “...*lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me*” (Judges 7:2). Wisely, God prepared the way for Gideon's victory by placing a fear of Gideon in the hearts of the Midianites and by allowing Gideon to secretly observe this fear while on a spying mission near the Midian camp, “*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. 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. ...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*” (Judges 7:13-15).

Going forward Gideon's task in dealing with the oppressor was simple: follow God's plan. By faith he was to approach the much larger army with nothing more than “... *a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers*” (Judges 7:16). In the dark of night Gideon's men approached the Midian camp on three sides, broke their pitchers (exposing the light from within) and blew their trumpets. So much confusion arose among the Midianites that they fought one another in the darkness trying to defeat an imagined enemy. It was then that “*the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites*” (Judges 7:23). Obviously, it was God, not Gideon or the rest of the Israelites, which delivered the children of Israel from the hand of their oppressor. They were required by God to participate in this campaign but none of them could take credit for the victory.

Today, God still delivers people who cry out to Him in earnest prayer from whatever sin that oppresses them. Our task in dealing with the great oppressor, Satan, is simple: follow Jesus' plan of salvation, “*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*” (Luke 24:47). As ambassadors for Christ believers must participate in this plan by preaching the forgiveness of sins to penitent souls but, as with Gideon, it is God who gives the victory—the gift of living faith, “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 2:38). As was true with Gideon, God chooses who He wants to do His work here on earth. And he provides those who answer His call with Gideon's tools: a trumpet and a light hidden within a vessel of clay. God equips all believers (clay vessels) with the indwelling light of the Holy Ghost and with the trumpet of the spoken word. You are to “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:16). The spiritual significance of the lamps hidden within a pitcher is that the light of the Holy Spirit is exposed only when God commands the

pitcher to be broken—merely blowing your trumpet would do no good. God’s bidding is not done from a position of self-pride and strength but from a humble and contrite (broken) heart, “...for my strength is made perfect in weakness...” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Only from spiritual weakness can we effectively show how God has delivered us from the oppression of sin.

The account of Gideon illustrates another important point and that is that doing God’s work is a shared responsibility. One cannot expect to do His work alone nor should anyone expect others to do it for them. Once Gideon had routed the enemy, it was the other children of Israel who helped bring about Midian’s complete defeat. Thus, together we continue to work in His vineyard exposing men to the light of the gospel, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of

darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

God’s Peace,
Charles Korhonen

Feb 5	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Feb 12	Nathan Ruonavaara	
Feb 19	Ken Storm	
Feb 26	Chad Kuivanen	Potluck Meal following

Winter Schedule

Sunday School/Bible Study 9:45am Church at 11am

Bible Study at 7pm on Wednesday.

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