

GIDEON'S BAND OF SELECTED WARRIORS

BIBLE TEXT : Judges 7:1-8

LESSON 193 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Timothy 2:4).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Judges 7:1-8

¹ Then Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

² 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, Mine own hand hath saved me.

³ Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

⁴ And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

⁵ So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

⁶ And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men:

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Rejected Army

1 Gideon and all the people arose early to prepare for the battle, Judges 7:1;

Joshua 3:1

¹ And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

Joshua 6:12

¹² And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

2 God rejected most of Gideon's army, lest they vaunt themselves, Judges 7:2;

1 Samuel 14:6

⁶ And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

2 Chronicles 14:11

¹¹ And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;
²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:
²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.

2 Corinthians 4:7

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

3 All who were fearful and afraid returned home, Judges 7:3;

Deuteronomy 20:8

⁸ And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man *is there that is* fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

Revelation 21:8

⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

II God's Chosen Band

1 The Lord said that the 10,000 soldiers who remained were still too many, Judges 7:4;

1 Samuel 16:7

⁷ But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Psalms 33:16

but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

⁷ And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.

⁸ So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

¹⁶ There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

2 The Lord made a division in the army, Judges 7:5, 6

3 Victory was promised through the 300 men, Judges 7:7;

Isaiah 41:14-16

¹⁴ Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵ Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat *them* small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

¹⁶ Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, *and* shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

4 The band of 300 prepared themselves for battle, Judges 7:8;

Numbers 10:9

⁹ And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.

NOTES:

Thirty-two Thousand Men

The Spirit of the Lord had come upon Gideon, and he blew the trumpet of war that Israel might be gathered after him against the Midianite invaders. The Children of Israel had suffered much in the hands of this enemy, and many seemed willing to answer Gideon's call. The 32,000 soldiers were gathered with their captain and pitched camp beside the well of Harod, a situation that placed them on high ground overlooking the hosts of the Midianites who were pitched in the valley. However, something was wrong in Gideon's camp. God knew it immediately, and no doubt Gideon knew it also: there was great fear in the hearts of many of the people, and the Lord knew that many of the soldiers would vaunt themselves against Him. The well of Harod, a name meaning trembling or terror, possibly received this name from this circumstance of fear in the hearts of the Children of Israel.

There is not continual terror in the hearts of men who call themselves God's soldiers. The work of God calls for faith in God and an obedience to Him. Faith in God is of far greater value to the human soul than all wealth, influence, knowledge, or power that the world affords. Fear is the direct opposite of faith; therefore, fear must be put out of the way. If a man cannot cast fear out of his heart through the help of God, then that man will find himself cast out of God's service. Fear bolts the door of a man's heart, so that when God would work, He finds the only channel through which He can operate in man closed against Him. The greater the amount of fear in a heart, the tighter is the door of faith shut against God.

The Rejected Battalion

Little wonder, then, that God would direct Gideon to proclaim in the ears of the people, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead." This proclamation was according to the Law of Moses: "The officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deuteronomy 20:8). Fear, terror, and faintheartedness are as contagious in the ranks of Christian soldiers as they are in any other walk of life; and, if for no other reason, God would weed them out. Christian soldier, do not expose yourself to these soul-destroying elements.

Another reason for God's dismissing these men was that

they might be prevented from taking credit unto themselves for the victory that was to be given by the Lord. Men who do not have the moral courage to face the enemy in combat would have no scruples in claiming the victory to themselves after the combat was successfully ended. God wanted the honor of this battle reserved to Himself, that the world might know and respect Him; therefore He separated from the ranks those who would not give Him honor. Pride and self-conceit in man are abominable to God, and He cannot and will not use the man who is proud and self-conceited.

Victories of Faith

The enemies of Christianity have often used the weapon of fear in the past, and do still today, to try to overthrow the faith in the lives of God's children. Many a soldier of the Cross has gone down because of a fearful heart; but the pages of Christian history are also marked with the glorious triumphs that others have won by standing for their faith in God. The Christian has a Captain who never lost a battle, anywhere, any time; and He has often turned the ways of the wicked upside down before His people.

It takes an individual faith to win the battle in your life, but God yearns to instill that faith in your life and to strengthen it as the days go by. It has been estimated that 50 million people have suffered martyrdom for Christ rather than renounce their faith in Him. Their faith speaks convincingly for the integrity that the Gospel is able to put into the heart of man, and it also speaks eloquently to the shame of those who have quit the Camp of the Redeemed before the fight ever started or the sound of battle was heard in their ears. Do not flee, but fight; for it is the only way to win. Come to God for renewed courage, strength, hope, and faith. He has promised that He will not send the hungry away empty.

Still Too Many

When Gideon saw 22,000 soldiers lay down their implements of war and start for home, he probably considered the 10,000 soldiers who remained a very small number. He did not lose heart, however. Did not Barak and Deborah deliver Israel from the hands of Sisera with a like number? (**Judges 4:14** ¹⁴ *And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.*). As Gideon surveyed the scene, the Lord said that the people were too many still. God instructed Gideon to bring the army down to the water, that He might choose the ones who should go on to the battle. The Lord's standard is very high.

The signal that God gave to Gideon to determine who should go and who should stay at home was not an ordinary signal. "Every one that lapped of the water with his tongue, as a dog lapped, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink" (Judges 7:5). The number of men who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men. The Lord told Gideon that by these 300 men He would deliver the Midianites into Israel's hand.

Small Numbers

Many times it is a small distinction that marks the difference between men. Paul the Apostle recommended to the Ephesians: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15, 16). God does not always require great numbers of men to do His work, but He does demand that those who work for Him be spiritually qualified. John Wesley said: "Give me one hundred

preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a stray whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates Of hell and set up the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."

It was not a great thing that marked the separation between the band of 300 men and the 9,700 men who were rejected. There was a vast distinction between the 22,000 men who were fearful and afraid, and the 10,000 men who remained at the first trial. It might seem that God overruled the will of man in this separation of the 300 from the 10,000, but on closer examination we shall note that it still remained an individual matter with all the men concerned. There are times when some small characteristic in a man, seemingly harmless in itself, will cause that man to be ruled out of God's choice group. There is not such a thing as being too careful in every attitude and action before God.

Nine thousand and seven hundred men came to the water and knelt down on their knees to drink. The enemy was directly before Israel's army, yet these soldiers could forget everything else for the moment to take their refreshment. It was not so with the 300 men who lapped water. They had not forgotten the years of suffering they had endured under the hands of the Midianites. Here was a chance for deliverance, and they were eager to be about the business. There was not time to drink leisurely their fill of water; they put their hand to the water and drank whatever they could get in this manner, all the while keeping their eyes and thoughts upon the action that would soon engage them. God said that by these 300 alert, determined, circumspect men, He would deliver Israel.

Self-Restraint

There are many things in the world that are lawful to the *use* of the child of God, but overindulgence in the use of anything will cause God's displeasure. This lesson is taught very clearly in the lives of Gideon's soldiers. No one can say that it is a sin to drink water, yet the manner in which the 9,700 men took their time and ease in drinking water showed their true spiritual condition and caused their dismissal from the ranks of God's chosen band.

In the scenes of business activity the man whom the world considers most successful is the man who applies all his time, talents, and energy to the prosecution of his business. He considers life primarily in the sense of earnest endeavor, and takes but an occasional time for relaxation. He seeks every opportunity for the furtherance of his business or profession, and while he keeps in this frame of mind, his business prospers.

All that can be said of success in secular business can be repeated in favor of the calling of being a Christian soldier. Such a one must consider duty first and pleasure afterward, and this is the natural bent of the one who is truly serving God. His pleasure lies in doing the will and bidding of his Captain. Pleasure and duty to the child of God are one and the same thing. The longer a man or woman serves God, the more is this truth brought to light. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31).

Few but Mighty

God does not need great multitudes with which to do His work. The multitudes could be used in a wonderful way if their hearts were right in His sight, and the people were willing to do God's bidding. The sad fact remains that God cannot find many people who allow themselves to be pliable in His hands. But God is not so much interested in quantities of workmen in His vineyard, as He is

in finding the quality of material that He can use. Success in most endeavors depends more upon the qualification of the individuals than upon the number employed. This is just as true in the Lord's work.

During Jesus' ministry on earth, the Son of God found eleven men whom He could trust and to whom He gave the commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Eleven men against the whole world seemed to be fearful odds, but Jesus promised them that He would be with them always, even unto the end of the world. Did the Gospel fail because the messengers were so few? Not at all. It spread with incredible speed during those early Apostolic days, and is still making its way and place in the world. The influence of the Gospel has no measure, but we are told that the judgments of an angry God are held back only by its power. The Christian soldier is in a fight to the finish, and his principal enemies are the "rulers of the darkness of this world" and "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Satan is doing his utmost to set up his kingdom and power through the Antichrist, but the Spirit of God in the hearts of His people is holding this power at bay. One day the Church will be raptured: then the world will be at the command of the most despotic ruler that it has ever known.

God's Choice Group

There are vast armies of religious people in the world today, and all claim to be a part of God's army. What a wonderful thing if every professed soldier of Christ were of the stamp of Gideon's band! The sad truth remains that the ratio between the true soldier who is willing and ready to venture all that he has for the cause of Christ and those who are fearful and afraid, or those who would rather take their ease than face the enemy, is still about the same as it was in Gideon's day. One man out of a hundred passed the exacting test that God put them through. What a startling thought! "Who then can be saved?" the disciples asked Jesus when they heard of the exacting measures that led to entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. It still remains an individual matter whether you will be saved or not. Ample provisions both of grace and glory have been provided for each traveler along the highway of holiness. "You can if you will" is a motto that has been used by Christians for many years, and is as true in your life as it was in the life of the one to whom it first was spoken. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32)

QUESTIONS

- 1 How many men answered Gideon's call to war against the Midianites?
- 2 Why did God tell Gideon that the people were too many?
- 3 What was the first test put before the army? and how many people went back?
- 4 Who tried the army on the next occasion? What was the test?
- 5 How many men passed this second test?
- 6 What great lesson is to be learned from this test that God put Gideon's soldiers through?
- 7 How does God try His soldiers today?