

The Book of Judges: Gideon

When we obey and trust God, He will overcome our doubts, weaknesses, and fears to accomplish His plan.

Judges 6-7

April 14, 2019/ April 17, 2019

TODAY'S TEXT

Text: **Judges 7:2-22**

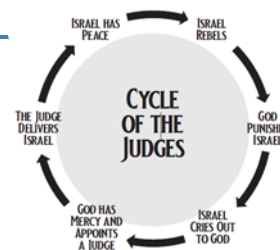
The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, 'My own strength has saved me.'³ Now announce to the army, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.⁴ But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."⁵ So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink."⁶ Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.⁷ The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home."⁸ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others. Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley.⁹ During that night the Lord said to Gideon, "Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands."¹⁰ If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah¹¹ and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp." So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp.¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.¹³ Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed."¹⁴ His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands."¹⁵ When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands."¹⁶ Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.¹⁷ "Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do."¹⁸ When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon!'"¹⁹ Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands.²⁰ The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"²¹ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.²² When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.

FIRST THOUGHTS

Fear is a great enemy of faith. What are some fears you had as a child? What would you do when you were afraid as a child?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Following their deliverance by Deborah, the Israelites again returned to doing evil and rejecting the Lord. God used the Midianite raiders to oppress His people. They would swoop into the land, pillaging as they went, and leave Israel with no food and no resources. The Bible describes them as locusts. Remember the locusts in the movie "A Bug's Life"? The ants lived in fear of them. So the Israelites lived in fear of the Midianites. We first meet Gideon hiding in a winepress. Throughout this story, Gideon is seen as afraid yet God patiently guides him to victory.



Who were the Midianites? They were related to the Israelites but rejected God. They were the descendants of Midian, a son born to Abraham after his first wife Sarah had died by another wife Keturah (Genesis 25). They were a nomadic people who inhabited the areas close to the Red Sea. When Moses fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian slave master, he sought refuge in Midian in the house of Jethro who became his father-in-law (Exodus 2).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

GIDEON'S FEAR

> Read Judges 6:1-5

- Where is Israel on this cycle at the beginning of chapter 6? What would it be like to live in Israel at this time under the threat of the Midianites?

> Read Judges 6:11-16

- How would you describe Gideon as he appears in these verses? What clues do we have as to his faith as we see how he interacts with the angel?

- ° Have you ever felt like you were supposed to do something but you doubted yourself? Where did that doubt come from?

GIDEON'S FAITH AND FLEECES

> Read Judges 6:36-40

- ° How would you describe Gideon as he appears in these verses? What clues do we have as to his faith as we see how he interacts with the God's commands?

Gideon's faith is growing but He still seeks assurance of God's presence by asking for miraculous confirmation (laying out the fleeces).

- ° Have you ever "laid out a fleece" (asked God to give you miraculous confirmation) about something? What happened? Is asking God for confirmation right or wrong?

WATCH THE VIDEO

Look for these truths in today's video:

- Lesson #1: When God wants to use us, He first weakens us.
- Lesson #2: God patiently deals with faltering faith.
- Lesson #3: Success means joining Jesus wherever He is.

GIDEON'S FIGHT

> Read Judges 7:1-8

- ° Why does God reduce Gideon's army?
- ° Does Gideon seem any different in these verses than in the previous chapter? How so?
- ° Can you think of any other examples of God weakening someone in order to use them greatly? Do you believe God has ever weakened you to use you? How does weakness teach us dependence on Him?

> Read Judges 7:9-18

- ° How is God's patience with Gideon revealed in this passage?
- ° What else does God do here to make sure He and not Gideon's army, gets the glory for the victory?

> Read Judges 7:19-22

- ° Why are we tempted to take the glory for things God has accomplished on our behalf? How can we guard against this temptation?
- ° How does our boasting and pride reveal our selfishness? Why is it hard to give credit to others?

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

As we think about Easter coming up next week, we are reminded of the ultimate act of selflessness—Jesus giving up all he had to go to the cross so we could be with God. We really do have nothing to boast about, but can be reminded all this week as we approach Easter that God is for us.

Select one of these things to do this week:

PRAY: Ask God to show you the ways you are being selfish. Bring these unconfessed sins to Him and repent.

INVITE: Who's your one? Who is one person you can invite to join you in church on Easter? This is the time to pray for them. Don't let any fear you have hold you back from inviting them. Remember, God is with you!

BOAST: But make your boasting about God and not yourself. Make it a goal to tell someone each day something about God—how He's moved in your life, what you're thankful for, or what He's done for you

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- We won't have LifeGroups for 2 weeks so here's some follow up to do on your own. Read the rest of the story of Gideon's downfall in Judges 8-9 Watch J.D. Greear's teaching on this by logging on to www.rightnowmedia.com If you don't have a log in, visit www.chetscreek.com/rightnow to request your free access. Search for the Judges series (it's on the Chets Creek Channel on the left hand side) and watch Session 6: Judges 8:1-10:5

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

14th – 1 Samuel 15-16; 1 Chronicles 5; Matthew 1 | **15th** – 1 Samuel 17; Psalm 9; Matthew 2 | **16th** – 1 Samuel 18; 1 Chronicles 6; Psalm 11, Matthew 3 | **17th** – 1 Samuel 19; 1 Chronicles 7; Psalm 59, Matthew 4 | **18th** – 1 Samuel 20-21; Psalm 34, Matthew 5 | **19th** – 1 Samuel 22; Psalm 17, 35; Matthew 6 | **20th** – 1 Samuel 23; Psalm 31, 54; Matthew 7