**Gideon and the Three Hundred**

Judges 7:1-25

Key verse: 7

The Midianites oppressed Israel for seven years because of her idolatry, which was the root cause of her misery. Israel cried out to God for help. God sent them a message of repentance and appointed a man named Gideon as their deliverer.

Despite his timid nature, God called Gideon to be a mighty warrior. In a life-changing encounter, Gideon worshipped God wholeheartedly for the first time. He successfully carried out God's first mission, which was to cut down and burn the idols of Baal and Asherah and to offer a burnt offering.

In chapter 7, God entrusts him with a second mission: to deliver Israel from the Midianites in an unusual way. Here's what we'll think about today: 1) Spiritual battle is a fight to overcome fear with faith. 2) In spiritual warfare, victory does not depend on numbers or ability. 3) No one else but God saves.

**Part I. You have too many men. (1-7)**

Let’s look at verse 7:1. **Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh.**

All the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples joined forces at the time, crossed the Jordan River, and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. They were determined to plunder and destroy every inch of Israel’s territory. They viewed Israel as a meal table well-prepared for them. With the Spirit of God, Gideon volunteered to become a mighty warrior instead of hiding in the winepress. He sounded the trumpet and called the Abiezrites, Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, to fight against the Midianites and their allies. So, 32,000 men gathered. The Midianite allied army numbered 135,000, four times more than Israel's. (8:10)

Let’s read verse 2. **2 The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her.** But God said, "You have too many men." Here, we see the difference between man's and God's perspectives. In the same situation, we think they are too few outmatched, but God says they are too many. Look at verse 2b. We focus on the enemy and victory, but God's interest goes beyond the outcome and is always on us. Specifically, he is concerned that they might become bragging and arrogant after they win and turn away from God. God wants Israel to learn that God is the Savior, to boast about God, and to give glory to God through this life-death battle. God's interest is always in our spiritual growth and maturity, and He always works in ways that bring us closer to Him. Because of this, sometimes unreasonable situations arise, and God drives us into a dead-end corner so that we can seek and meet Him as our Savior.

**Let’s look at verse 3. 3 announce now to the people,** **'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.' " So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.** God instructed Gideon to downsize his army. 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave! God sent home the trembling men with fear. As a result, of the 32,000 men, 22,000, or about 69%, left the camp. Here, we see God does not want a trembling heart with fear. People think of fear or anxiety as a natural emotion, but when God created humans, there was no fear in the heart. *2 Tim1:7 says that God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, love, and self-discipline.* Fear entered human nature, along with sin and death. Fear is contagious. It destroys the heart of faith. Long ago, when God sent twelve spies to the land of Canaan, the adverse reports of the ten instilled great fear in the people, and that fear spread throughout the congregation and turned them against God. The spirit of fear comes from Satan and enslaves God's children, forcing them to kneel before idols.

What about the 10,000 men remaining in the camp? They were afraid, too, but they overpowered their trembling heart of fear with the faith that God would fight for them and save them. God spoke about this situation in advance through Moses.

*“When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.” (Dt. 20:1). “He shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’” (Dt. 20:3-4).*

Solomon taught this: *The Lord is the only thing you are to fear (Prov. 1:7).* David confessed: *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?.. Though a host encamps against me, my heart will not fear; though war arises against me, in spite of this, I shall be confident." (Ps. 27:1-3).*

Our life is a series of spiritual battles. Undoubtedly, we are afraid in the face of actual problems. The key to overcoming it is the word of God, who fights for and saves us. I pray that we may overcome all fears, big and small, with faith in the Word of God.

Let’s read verses 4-6. **4 But the LORD said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them 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 like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." 6 Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.**

For Gideon, every one of the 10,000 men is an elite unit to defeat the enemy. But God said there are still too many men. God conducts a unique water-lapping test and selects only three hundred men out of 10,000. (picture) How can the three hundred defeat 135,000 Midianite-allied forces? Each person must defeat at least 450 warriors. Plus, they don't even have a sword. It IS impossible. What is the message that God wants to teach on this?

First, no one can save us other than God. God clarified that no one else could claim credit for their salvation. Only God can make the impossible possible, just as He parted the Red Sea, dried it up, and tore down the walls of Jericho without lifting a finger. We must remember that The Lord is our only Savior. We shouldn’t think that we have saved ourselves through our strength. Who has saved us from the power of sins and Satan? Who has blessed us so far? No other than God can save us from all our sins, protect us, and bless us. God wants us to confess that He fought for us! He saved us! He gave us the final victory! He will be exalted and honored by us. Amen. *“Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.”* (Ps. 20:7). *Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me*. (2 Cor 12:9) The three hundred were enough to experience and testify about the God of salvation. It is said 1:1 and disciple-making ministry seems too difficult in this time. Yes, it is. But God can do it. May God help us have faith in God, our Saviour!

Second, God’s salvation does not rely on the number of people or swords. God tested the faith of Gideon and the three hundred so that they would rely only on God and not look at the number of men. In 1 Sam, Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, *“Come, let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.” (1 sa14:6)* Jonathan’s best friend David also declared: *All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.” (1 sa17:47)*

Our church has three families, but U of T students are too many. May God help each of us to experience your salvation by faith!

Look at verse 7. **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 other men go, each to his own place."** This is God’s promise to Gideon. With the three hundred I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. The way God selects people is extraordinary. The test was unlike typical tests, physical and written tests, or interviews. What did God want to see in this water-lapping test? Theologians' opinions vary, but what is certain is that there were very few who lapped the water with their tongues. And the majority group drank in a vulnerable position, the other three hundred in a position of readiness and vigilance. Nine thousand seven hundred men who knelt and drank water were also courageous and had great desires to fight for the glory of God, but they didn’t have the strength to control their physical desires. Meanwhile, a small number stood up alertly, cupped the water in their hands, and lapped it from their hands. Considering the precise tactics they would execute, it seems clear why God chose these 300 men. They accurately carry out Gideon's instructions during the battle.

We see Gideon's faith and obedience to God. In the face of these practical issues of life and death, it was definitely challenging to obey God's outrageous direction, which makes no sense. But he humbly obeyed all the orders of God and believed God’s promise.

**Part II. The Sword of the Lord and Gideon. (7-25)**

How did Gideon and the three hundred terrorize the enemy's hearts and win a great victory? Now Gideon has the three hundred left. Let’s read verses 8-9. **8 So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents 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.** Gideon must have been overwhelmed by the Midianite army, which was as numerous as sand on the seashore. That night, God offered Gideon a sign. Let’s read verses 10-11. **10 If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah 11 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. As expected, they were tremendous in number. Look at verses 12-13. **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.** 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." 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."**

The barley bread they talked about here is a symbol of despise, one of the humble foods eaten by the poor. Who would think that a barley loaf could roll into and destroy a tent? But God makes dream-like things genuinely become reality. This loaf of barley bread meant humble Gideon. They knew that God handed the Midianite over to humble Gideon. Although they were huge in number, they were in fear. Therefore, the only thing they had to rely on was the number of people and swords.

We can learn from this that God has already been working for Gideon. He has been preparing for all the circumstances. What is Gideon’s reaction after hearing their conversation? Let’s look at verse 15. **15 When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands."** He worshipped God as an expression of faith. Although he was like a barley loaf bread, he believed that God would completely destroy Midian through him and his men. Inspired by the barley bread, he divided the three hundred into three groups and prepared trumpets, empty jars, and torches. He strategizes meticulously and shrewdly and leads by example.

The three hundred followed Gideon's orders as if they were one man. Gideon and the three hundred all blew trumpets, broke jars, and lit torches. All the Midianites and the allies panicked and started killing each other. They were running away in a hurry. Here, Gideon and the three hundred shouted, "A sword of the Lord and Gideon." (KJV) Gideon quoted the interpretation of the Midianites' dreams. But he added the sword of the Lord, knowing that God was fighting for them.

After that, those who had returned home came out again and chased the Midianites. The tribe of Ephraim also joined in, blocking the Jordan River and capturing and killing two Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. (23-25)

Compared to the Midianite135,000 troops, Gideon and the three hundred were nothing more than a loaf of barley bread, both in number and quality. However, God made a loaf of barley bread into the sword of the Lord and Gideon, allowing them to defeat the camp of all the Midianite soldiers without an actual sword. Then why did God choose those people who are like barley bread? *N*o matter how insignificant it may be, like only a loaf of barley bread, it becomes a force that destroys strongholds. What is important is that we simply and absolutely believe in God and roll into enemy territory. Then, God will use us to serve the gospel ministry in this generation.

**In Conclusion**, as God said, God revealed that He is the savior. And he received his glory. God wants his children to fight without trembling heart with fear. God uses us, like a loaf of barley bread, as a sword of the Lord to accomplish His work of salvation.