



## Sermon, Sunday July 25, 2021 “Gideon’s 300 Men”

**SCRIPTURE: Judges 7:1-14** <sup>1</sup>Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops that were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was north of them, below the hill of Moreh, in the valley. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to Gideon, “The troops with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Israel would only take the credit away from me, saying, ‘My own hand has delivered me.’” <sup>3</sup>Now therefore proclaim this in the hearing of the troops, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home.’” Thus Gideon sifted them out; twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Gideon, “The troops are still too many; take them down to the water and I will sift them out for you there. When I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go with you; and when I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” <sup>5</sup>So he brought the troops down to the water; and the LORD said to Gideon, “All those who lap the water with their tongues, as a dog laps, you shall put to one side; all those who kneel down to drink, putting their hands to their mouths, you shall put to the other side.” <sup>6</sup>The number of those that lapped was three hundred; but all the rest of the troops knelt down to drink water. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD said to Gideon, “With the three hundred that lapped I will deliver you, and give the Midianites into your hand. Let all the others go to their homes.” <sup>8</sup>So he took the jars of the troops from their hands, and their trumpets; and he sent all the rest of Israel back to their own tents, but retained the three hundred. The camp of Midian was below him in the valley. <sup>9</sup>That same night the LORD said to him, “Get up, attack the camp; for I have given it into your hand. <sup>10</sup>But if you fear to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah; <sup>11</sup>and you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to attack the camp.” Then he went down with his servant Purah to the outposts of the armed men that were in the camp. <sup>12</sup>The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the east lay along the valley as thick as locusts; and their camels were without number, countless as the sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup>When Gideon arrived, there was a man telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, “I had a dream, and in it a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell; it turned upside down, and the tent collapsed.” <sup>14</sup>And his comrade answered, “This is no other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel; into his hand God has given Midian and all the army.”

### Introduction: Purpose of the Book of Judges

The Book of Judges is written to tell the reason why the people of Israel experienced Babylonian captivity and what they should reflect on through it. Judges 5:31 and 6:1, which is the background of today's text, says that the Israelites did evil before the Lord when they were at peace for 40 years without the threat of war. However, the Midianites invaded to completely destroy Israel. (Judges 6:4-5) When the Israelites are in a difficult situation due to the Midianite attack, they cry out to the Lord for help. (Judges 6:6)

The Lord appoints Gideon as a judge for the people of Israel. The process of Gideon being born again as a leader of Israel, and the story of the 300 warriors who fought with Gideon, show us what kind of thoughts and hearts we should fear from the Lord.

### Body: Gideon Defeats the Midianites

#### 1. Judge Gideon

In Judges 6:12-13, the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said that the Lord was with Gideon. But Gideon asks why the people of Israel are suffering because of Midianites if the Lord is with Israel. Gideon's reaction is very similar to ours when we experience difficult things.

The Lord tells Gideon to do everything in his power to save the Israelites from the Midianite attack. But Gideon is uncertain and afraid in his heart. **So he says: “How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” (Judges 6:15)**



Despite Gideon's response, the Lord says again that He will be with Gideon. And the Lord says that Gideon will defeat the Midianites very easily. (Judges 6:16) But Gideon has uncertainty in his mind and asks the Lord for a sign. (Judges 6:17)

Gideon, who was called by the Lord as a judge, goes through the process of becoming a true leader. The Lord makes Gideon a man of the word, a man of faith, a man of obedience, and a great warrior. The Lord commands Gideon to destroy the altar of Baal where the Israelites served. Gideon was afraid of criticism from the people of the city, so he took ten of his servants at night instead of day and demolished the altar of Baal. And because of this, Gideon gets the nickname Jerubbaal (Let Baal defend himself).

Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. After the Spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon, then Gideon summons an army from among the Israelites. He asks the Lord for two signs. Gideon said to the Lord, **"If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised - look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said."** This is done as Gideon wanted.

Then Gideon said to the Lord, **"Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew"** This is also done as requested.

## **2. 300 warriors of Gideon**

Afterwards, thirty-two thousand Israeli soldiers go out to fight the Midianites. But the Lord said to Gideon, **"The troops with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Israel would only take the credit away from me, saying, 'My own hand has delivered me.'"** (Judges 7:2)

Israel's thirty-two thousand men are far too few compared to the one hundred thirty five thousands men of their enemies. And Israel has no certainty of victory in the hearts of its soldiers. Nevertheless, the Lord tells Gideon that the number of Israeli soldiers is large. Then He tells why Israel shouldn't have a large number of soldiers.

### **1) If the number of soldiers is large, it is because they do not depend on the Lord.**

This is because when the number of Israeli soldiers is large, rather than depending on the Lord, they believe in their own strength and try to accomplish something with it. That is why, in the prayer of Agur in Proverbs 30:9, it is said that when a man is too rich, he does not depend on the Lord and does not know the Lord. Even when we have a lot of money and affluence, we need to look at ourselves to see whether we have faith to depend on the Lord or not. What, then, is the second reason why the number of Israeli soldiers should be small?

### **2) After winning the war Israel will think it won the war by its own strength.**

Because after winning the war, Israel will think they won on their own. This is because human beings are not wise. We must win in the midst of our shortcomings to acknowledge that the Lord has accomplished it.

The Lord has a clear lesson He wants to give to Israel through the war against Midianites. It is to make the people of Israel understand that the Lord's salvation is not with sword and spear.

So, the number of Israeli soldiers is determined by the purpose the Lord has planned. That is, it is determined by whether the people of Israel will confess that the Lord has done it. In the end, only the number and quantity that makes us dependent on the Lord alone are given to us.

Therefore, if we want to live a life worthy of the Christian name, we must also learn patience, worship the Lord, and put His Word into practice.

So, according to His purpose, the Lord has Israel fight the Midianites in small numbers. The Lord commands Gideon to send the frightened soldiers back home. So twenty-two thousand Israeli soldiers are sent back home, and ten thousand remained. The Lord makes the Israeli soldiers go down to the water to further reduce their numbers.



The Lord distinguishes those who have to fight on the battlefield from those who return home through drinking water. So, only three hundreds soldiers remained.

The three hundred Israeli soldiers left behind by the Lord are not as skillful as fighters. Instead, they are those who can absolutely obey the word of the Lord. The Lord has three hundred Israeli soldiers to fight the one hundred thirty five thousands Midianites. They were equipped with an arm's horn, which is a clay jar with a torch in it. So with only the obedience of the Israeli soldiers and the help of the Lord, Israel is victorious in the war against the Midianites.

**"When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords." (Judges 7:22)**

**Apostle Paul says: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (Romans 11:33).**

**Also Ecclesiastes 3:11 says: "Yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."**

### **Conclusion: The Lord is always the same**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. What can we learn from Gideon's story of 300 warriors?

#### **1) Let go of greed.**

Let go of the idea that having a lot is always good. Greed is said to be idolatry. We must rely on the Lord who makes our lives rich and poor, but with a good purpose. And we must be faithful to the Lord from the little things we are given.

#### **2) Don't rush.**

The Lord is not as impatient as we are. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, the Lord prepared Moses for them for a long time. Also, the Lord prepared Gideon as a judge in today's text.

Therefore, we must be able to trust and wait on the Lord, even if the time of patience is long and sometimes the circumstances we are given do not make sense.

#### **3) Let's listen carefully the Lord's word.**

When Gideon is having a hard time because of the decrease in the number of soldiers, the Lord tells him to take one of his men and go to the enemy's camp. And he lets Gideon hear what the soldiers of the enemy camp are saying. (Judges 7:11) A soldier in the enemy camp says he had a dream that a loaf of barley bread came to a tent and destroyed the tent. Another soldier who heard this interprets the dream as "The Lord has delivered Midian and all its allies into the hand of Gideon." Gideon listens to their words and goes to war with courage. Gideon trusted the word of the Lord more than the number of his enemies.

We also need wisdom to listen carefully to the promises the Lord has given us and put them into practice. Our circumstances can always change. Our situation can be good or bad. But the Lord's love and promises for us are always the same. Through the story of Gideon's three hundred warriors, I hope we will have the blessing of confessing that the one we can rely on is the Lord.

