

## God's Army October 25, 2014

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**Introduction-** Last week, we looked at Judges chapter 6 and saw how Israel had sinned against God by turning after other gods and worshipping them. God then turned from blessing Israel to allowing the neighboring nations to punish them. When the children of Israel cried out to God, he called Gideon to service to deliver them.

Judges 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

God told Gideon to tear down an altar and cut down a grove of trees that his father had built and planted to worship the god Baal and build an altar to God and burn offerings on it.

Once Gideon was obedient to do this first thing, God was ready to use Gideon as he had promised and gave him reassurance through the fleece that he put out.

We saw how in our own lives as Christians, we get away from God and tend to build up altars in our lives that we worship at, not in the literal sense but in the sense of putting things before God.

If you weren't here last week, you can listen to that sermon online.

This week we're going to look at the army that God chose to help Gideon battle the Midianites.

Judges 7:1 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.

A battle is about to take place and the people of Israel have joined together behind the leadership of Gideon to fight the Midianites.

In our own lives there are spiritual battles taking place all of the time around us.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Judges 7:2 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.

God wants the Israelites that to know that victory is because of him and not by anything that they have done under their own power.

They are already outnumbered here. As they look across the valley there is a sea of tents that is the host of Midian. We know from reading chapter 7 and 8 that there are 32,000 children of Israel gathered to fight against 135,000 of the host of Midian.

God knows the hearts of the Israelites and knows that if he gives them victory over the Midianites they will think they lift up in pride and claim the victory for themselves instead of giving God the glory.

How many times in our lives has God delivered us through trials or tribulations? The problems seemed overwhelming at the time and we truly seemed to be in a battle. We were driven to our knees and cried out to God for help and he answered our prayers. At the time we had no doubt that it could have only been resolved by God's intervention, but then after a little time and space, we begin to give God less and less credit.

Gideon had asked God, "Where are the miracles that our Fathers told us of from the time when you delivered us from Egypt?" and now God was going to leave no doubt in their

minds about who was going to win this battle for them.

It is in the way God reduces the army of the children of Israel that we see a picture of the modern day Christian. You see, even though people went home and weren't a part of the battle, they were still part of God's chosen people.

For the modern day Christian who has truly put their trust in Jesus Christ, they are truly saved from an eternity in hell.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

It is the choices we make that cause us to miss seeing or being a part of those spiritual victories.

As we will see, it is when we are too Fearful of fighting the battles that God allows us to leave the battlefield and it is when we become Careless and don't watch for the enemy that we may exclude ourselves. It is those who aren't afraid to stand against the enemy and are Careful to remain alert to the dangers that God uses to fight His battle.

First let's look at

## **The Fearful**

Judges 7:3 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.

God let those that were afraid leave the battlefield. In Deuteronomy, we see that it is to keep them from spreading fear to the other soldiers.

Deuteronomy 20:8 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.

There are Christians who are afraid of getting to close to the battle because the more they know, the more accountable they become.

If you could look at the earth from space you would see a planet where mankind lives and think "all the world's people should be as one" If you get closer you will see continents. Get closer still and you see that there are different

nations. Learn more and you will learn that there are different states within those nations.

Learn even more and you will discover different counties. All the way down to Cities and to neighborhoods and houses and families and individuals with their own lives and their own desires and dreams.

The closer you examine something the more detail and differences you find.

If you look at religion from a distance you might think that you see a common denominator in all of them. "All religions are about man practicing his faith in some way."

As you look closer you will see that a lot of religions have multiple Gods and some have only one God.

You see, anyone can say that they "have faith" and still get along with 99 percent of the world.

If you begin to take a stand those differences will become larger.

If you say you have faith in God you might lose a few atheist friends but you can still be a guest on prime time tv.

If you say that you have faith in God and Jesus Christ, you've narrowed down to

Christianity, Mormonism and Jehovah's Witness.

If you have Faith in Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. There are still a lot of churches you can get into.

Faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God who has made a way for us to get to heaven. You're narrowing down but you can be in the non-denominational churches and get along.

Faith in Jesus Christ who is the only way to heaven. Uh Oh, now you're becoming one of **them**.

If you really want to cut down on your party invites, just dive right into the Bible and take a stand on solid Bible doctrine and put a label on yourself for all to see:

"I am an Independent Baptist who has placed my trust in Jesus Christ the son of God who died on the cross to save me from an eternity in hell to which all who have NOT put their trust in His blood which was shed for the remission of my sins are condemned to suffer eternal damnation in the literal everlasting fires that are not quenched and the worm dieth not. And by placing my trust in and accepting His sacrifice I now have everlasting life, a relationship with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ and though someone put a

knife to my throat and demand that I deny him, I know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord and if I deny him before men, then he will deny me before the father.”

Now you'll be accused of judging other religions and condemning good people to hell.

Now a lot of your friends and some of your family won't even talk to you or they bristle up when you even mention God or the Bible.

Jesus warned us this would happen in Matthew

Matthew 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Matthew 10:35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

Matthew 10:36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

And the Bible says about itself

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,

and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

That's the living Word of God. If you read that bible with the right heart, God will use it to bring conviction to the comfortable and comfort to the convicted. It is piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. It knows the thoughts and intents of your heart.

If you want to find fault in it, God will allow that too. There are some atheists who know their Bible better than most Christians and will use good old worldly wisdom to try to discredit it.

1 Corinthians 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

1 Corinthians 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

1 Corinthians 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

I can understand why people would want keep what they feel is a safe distance; however, God went through the trouble of preserving His word down through the ages and we have

today, a complete copy of a book that the Christians before us only had parts of.

A book that Christians gave their lives to preserve and pass down so that you might have eternal life.

There is a song that is from my former days that has a line in it that has always struck me.

“If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice.” They go on to say, that they will choose “Free Will” so it is a song against religion; but, other than the choice they make, I would argue the same to you today.

Everyone knows John 3:16 but how many have read a little further down to 3:18

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

So again, I say “If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice” and if the Bible is right, on the Day of Judgment you will stand before God and all of your works will be tried in the fire and everything that wasn’t of God will burn as “wood hay and stubble” so if your relying on your works to get into heaven

without conforming yourself to God's word, it will be a very sad eternity for you.

B. There are some who are afraid of getting hurt in the battle.

They've seen the battles before. They've seen friends hurt and seen friends fall away. They may have been hurt themselves and they may not be ready to get back into the battle.

C. There may be others who are afraid of being a hypocrite. They know they can't live sinless and they accuse those in the church of being hypocrites.

How many times have you heard someone say that the church is full of hypocrites? That used to annoy me, because sometimes it was the same ones who cleaned up their act and their language as soon as they found out I was a preacher.

But then I realized, they're telling the truth. If a church has people in it and most of those people are saved then there are hypocrites in the church. A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something they aren't.

Look, the Christian life is full of contradictions

“I deserve hell but I get to go to heaven.”

“I want to do the right things but I do the wrong things.”

“I am full of sin but God looks at me through the blood of Jesus and sees the righteousness of His Son.”

We are saved from the penalty of our sins but we aren't supposed to continue in sin.

Paul said

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Romans 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

John says

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We don't come to church because we are right with God, we come to church to get right with God.

Some will always stay away from the frontlines never seeing God work in their lives while others may just need to sit out a battle or two and spend some time at the feet of Jesus like Mary did while her sister Martha went about serving.

Judges 7:3 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.

When Gideon told the fearful to go home as God told him to do, then 22,000 out of a total of 32,000 people went home leaving just 10,000

At the end of chapter 6 we worried that Gideon might not have enough faith when he put out the fleece to God for reassurance. First asking God to make the fleece wet and the ground dry and when that was done, asking God a second time to make the ground dry and the fleece wet.

With his army down to 10,000 against 135,000 Midianites, you would think that would be good enough but God promised Gideon in Judges 6:16 that he would “smite the Midianites as one man” and Gideon doesn’t complain or argue one time.

When your faith is established, your doubts will diminish.

Reading on in Judges 7 we see that God now separates the Careless from the Careful

Judges 7:4 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.

God will get the glory in all that is done, and here God is reducing Gideon’s army even further and Gideon’s self-doubt has turned to faith in God as we see only obedience and a desire to do what God tells him.

Judges 7:5 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.

Judges 7:6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

Judges 7:7 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.

God tells Gideon to take the men that are left and let them drink water. This made perfect sense to the men who were about to go into battle, but they don't know that God is allowing them this so that they can show their true colors.

God said "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."

Here we see God separating the Careless from the Careful.

## **The Careless**

You've got to remember the setting that this is taking place in. There is a literal, physical battle that is about to take place. When I looked up the Well of Harod, I found pictures of the well or spring. There was a man who had been there that wrote under one of the pictures "f you go a little to the east of it, there is a path through which you can see the valley, and that would have been the view that the children of Israel had of the 135,000 Midianites." The enemy wasn't far away and could attack at any time.

Now, we don't fight a literal physical battle but we fight a spiritual battle. Remember

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

And our enemy is never far away.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

In looking at the differences in the way these soldiers satisfied their thirst we can see a picture of the way Christians satisfy their own needs and desires.

When the men bent down to get a drink, some kneeled down and brought the water up to their mouths in their hand while others got all the way down on both knees and put their face to the water to be able to take in as much they could.

The careful were those that brought the water up to their face were able to see around them while they drank. They didn't have to put down their sword or let down their guard. They weren't able to bring as much water to their mouth at one time, but they were still able to get as much as they needed while watching for the enemy, ready at any moment to defend both themselves and their fellow soldiers.

The Careless were those who got down on their knees and put their lips to the water to be able to take in as much they desired. They would have to put down their weapons and while their faces were in the water they would be vulnerable to enemy attack. They didn't watch out for the enemy and were thinking only of themselves.

## **Careless**

There are careless Christians who think only of what they want and put aside their spiritual armor without giving a second thought to the enemy or the battle that is about to take place.

Imagine with me if you will a squad of soldiers who are in a war. Some of the soldiers have seen what the enemy can do. They have seen tricks that the enemy has played on their fellow soldiers in order to kill them off and they have seen friends hurt, wounded, and bleeding because of the mistakes that others have made. There are some new soldiers with them that are fresh from boot camp. Sent to the battlefield. They've got some training in them but they still have a lot to learn.

(Sometimes it's what you don't know that you don't know that can hurt you.)

Imagine this squad of soldiers walking through the streets. Everything is calm and quiet. The inexperienced soldiers want to see some action and think this trip is a bust. The experienced soldiers think that it is too quiet.

One of the newer soldiers is walking along, thinking that there is no enemy around and something catches his eye, something shiny and neat. He leans over to pick it up and one of the battle hardened soldiers sees him and shouts at him, the other soldiers look and see what he is about to do and they begin to look for cover as they back away from him.

The battle hardened soldiers know that what the new guy is about to pick up is going to blow

up in his face and kill not only himself but kill or maim those around him.

Christians get cocky like that. A young Christian gets saved he's not afraid of the battle but he's not watching out for the enemy. Things seem quiet, God is on his side, and Satan can't touch him.

He reaches down to pick up something shiny and play with it as the more seasoned Christians try to warn him and other Christians look for cover. They know that when that shiny thing is a trap laid by Satan. They know that when it blows up it's going to hurt people because they've seen it before.

They may latch on to a Bible verse or passage in the Bible and misappropriate it to apply to their lives because they aren't rightly dividing their Bible.

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- A. They may be put into a position of service or want to take on something that they aren't ready for.

In the list of qualifications for a Bishop or pastor

1 Timothy 3:6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

The same could be said of someone who is put into a ministry before he is ready.

They become lifted up with pride and instead of realizing that they are in that ministry to serve God and help others the song changes from “It’s all about you Lord to It’s all about me”

It’s the same sin that Satan committed

Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, **O Lucifer**, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

Btw Your King James Bible is the only one that calls Satan by his name.

Isaiah 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, **I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:** I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

Isaiah 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the most High.**

Our prayer should be

Psalms 36:11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

Instead of “I’ve got this Lord, would you mind blessing it.”

They may think that now they are saved, they can be around the same things and not be affected. They are over confident.

Is it any surprise that if you repeat the same things, you’ll get the same results.

2 Peter 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

And others are hurt and wounded in the process. Those who were watching you who aren’t saved. Those who stumble that caused you to sin.

## **The Careful**

Are the ones who walk in the Spirit and not the Flesh.

Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

They are the ones who know they are running the long race as Paul said in 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

1 Corinthians 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

1 Corinthians 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

And they keep their Sword and armor always at the ready.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

Ephesians 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Ephesians 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

That passage in itself is a sermon for another day but until then you will have to study it out for yourselves.

When all was said and done, there were only 300 men left to go up against 135,000. And God routed with the enemy with those 300 not by the sword, but by blowing trumpets, breaking earthen vessels and revealing the light within, and Proclaiming

“The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon.”

You may be Fearful and you may be Careless and if you are God has already shown you in your heart, but you don't have to be.

You can give it over to God. You can be one of the careful that God uses to proclaim his word.