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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**Gideon's Army...Hopeless, Helpless and Broken**

**Judges 7:1-8**

**Prayer:** *Father God, we do again come before you and we praise you and thank you for who you are, for the incredible gift to us of your Son, for the gift of your word, for the gift of this church. And Lord, this morning as we are again unpacking some of these gifts, we are unpacking your word, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, Lord, your Spirit is who makes your word make sense. And we pray that you would accompany us, open our eyes, open our ears, give us the ability to make this of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we have been talking about powerlessness as a means of experiencing God, and we've been talking about Gideon's story. And Gideon's story is a classic example and so we pick up on Gideon's story. It's the eve of his attack on the Midianites. This is this vicious enemy of Israel who have been plundering them for years now. And the Midianites, they're amassing on the plain of Megiddo and they are 135,000 strong. Gideon has managed to muster an army of 32,000 and now God is going to demonstrate that it is his

miraculous power at work in defeating them. Twice God does this extreme job of winnowing down Gideon's army telling him in *Judges 7:2*: *"The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'"* Now on the eve of the battle Gideon finds himself with 300 men. He started out with 32,000 men making his odds against the Midianites 4 to 1. After the first winnowing the odds went to 13 to 1, and now they're at the impossible level of 450 to 1. *Judges 7:7* says: *And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home." So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets, and he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. That same night the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand."*

Now many of you have heard the story of Gideon probably many different times. And we know that it's a story of victory against incredible odds and I've been focusing on Gideon himself as a leader. But I wondered this past week about the 300 soldiers that make up Gideon's army. I mean, bad enough they're going to take on the Midianites at 4 to 1 odds. Now due to their leader Gideon's own actions, this army is so decimated that the odds of success

have gotten literally a hundred times worse. Well still we see that they're going to get the victory by doing precisely what they were told, trusting in God and in Gideon. And we see as we're looking at this in scripture that God even addressed Gideon's fears about the mission. He seeks to give Gideon some practical encouragement. So he first sends him on a mission that seems like a jump directly from the frying pan right into the fire. This is verse 9. It says: *That same night the LORD said to him -- that is to Gideon -- "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant."*

Now I want you to just put yourself into Gideon's place. He's already facing an outlandish battle scenario. And God's encouragement to him is to send him directly into the enemy's camp. How about this guy named Purah, Gideon's servant, he gets to accompany Gideon and they're going right into the enemy's camp. Well God told him that there was a great encouragement awaiting him there. He says in verse 11: *"And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hand shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the East lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without*

*number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance. I just want you to picture yourself sneaking up on a group of people that are literally beyond your capacity to count. Understand Gideon's got an army of about 300. Now if you were to pack this place to the rafters, if people were standing, everybody was kind of standing in place and you filled the middle aisle, you could probably fit those 300 in this sanctuary. I mean it would be a fire risk but just about every one of them could fit in here. And I was trying to figure out a way to kind of show you the scale here. Do you have that picture? I wanted to show you a picture. This is sort of the size of the army that Gideon was facing, with one problem, it's minus 30,000 additional. This is Ohio State Stadium which holds 105,000. Gideon was facing 135,000. The people were like locusts. The camels were like the sand on the sea. So Gideon and his servant Purah, looking for encouragement, sneak into this enemy's camp and they overhear a conversation. It says: *When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade. And he said, "Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat." And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp."**

Okay. Let me get this straight, a barley cake knocks down a tent and what else could it possibly be but Gideon overwhelming the Midianites? What? I mean this is clearly God at work. You have to understand that Gideon and all of Israel was a military laughingstock and it had been so for the last eight years. They've been completely disarmed, they've been completely disheartened by the Midianites who gathered every single year at harvest time to strip them of every single thing they could produce. Israel represented no threat whatsoever to the Midianites. And so it's no wonder that this dream was a great encouragement to Gideon. It was so far out of the realm of possibility that it had to be an encouragement. And understand, Gideon's army received three different miracles. I mean two of them are the fleeces that he put out, now he gets this fourth sign that victory is at hand. Verse 15 says: *As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand."* Now these incredibly brave remaining 300 warriors are going to receive their specific battle orders from Gideon. Verse 16 says: *And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars. And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the*

*trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.'*"

Now you may have noticed, something is missing in this picture. Gideon is sending his 300 men out with a trumpet in one hand and an empty jar with a torch in it in the other hand. Something that is absolutely critical to waging a battle is missing and that's a weapon. I mean not only is Gideon's army hopelessly outnumbered, they're going into battle unarmed. I mean God doesn't mess around when he wants to demonstrate his strength through our weakness. But you know, Gideon isn't just hoping for a miracle, he's actually planning for one. There was a very specific battle plan that he had here. If you remember, Megiddo is a very large, open plain. It's got a mountain on one end and what Gideon wanted to do was break into three battalions and then surround the Midianites on three sides of the open plain and kind of push them back towards the mountain on the fourth side. Verse 19 says: *So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch -- that's the middle of the night -- when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. The torches in all likelihood were made up of bound up reeds that just kind of smoldered while they were inside the earthen vessel and then would burst into flame when the jars were smashed. The*

trumpets, they were normally dispersed very sparsely among the army because there were very few soldiers who could be spared just to blow a trumpet. And the purpose of the trumpet as it's always been since the days of the cavalries was to guide and to direct the soldiers. And obviously the purpose of the torches was to supply just enough light for a nighttime operation. And this whole thing is planned so that the Midianites were going to think that they're facing a far larger army. And by having everyone in three separate divisions break their vessels and blow their trumpets at once, Gideon was able to create the impression that the army which is again, it's attacking in the middle of the night, to create the impression that this army was far greater than it actually was. Verse 20 says: *Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hand the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled.*

Well there's two very distinct courses of action that are taking place during this battle. One of them is human, I mean, Gideon didn't simply throw up his hands and say God's going to give us the victory here, boys, let's just relax. He has a very specific battle plan with very specific goals based on the wisest course of action for a force of 300 against 135,000. I mean he clearly did

the human part to the very best of his ability, but that would never, never have turned the tide or done the trick. I mean we know what made all the difference was the divine input. Verse 22 says: *When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. As Gideon's men broke their vessels, God sent a powerful spirit of confusion into the camp turning each of the Midianites against their companion. In essence the Midian army, Midianite army basically slaughtered itself. It says: And the army fled as far as Beth-Shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh, and they pursued after Midian. Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and capture the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they captured the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan. And they captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. Then they pursued Midian, and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon across the Jordan.*

You might consider that a pretty good victory. But once again we ask the question what does a battle, I mean even with these



miraculous overtones, what does that have to do with us here in the 21st century? I mean we talked last time about the fact that we are in a spiritual war, the fact that every one of us is engaged in a spiritual battle. There are three aspects of the battle that Gideon's soldiers were engaged in that are a picture of the battle that we are engaged in. I mean number one, the situation was absolutely hopeless. I mean I would say that any battle that you're going into outnumbered 450 to 1, that qualifies as hopeless. Number two, they were essentially helpless. I mean even if these were hardened, battle-ready soldiers, there's one thing that stands out as unique as they're going into this battle and that's they were to a man unarmed. Again this is Gideon equipping his men for battle: *He divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars.* So you've got a trumpet in one hand and you've got an empty jar with a torch inside in the other hand, you've got no place for what is usually the most important piece of equipment when going into battle which is obviously a weapon. I just want you to picture what's going through the minds of Gideon's men as they're assembling for battle. I mean they're hopelessly outnumbered, they have no weapons, they've just got a trumpet and a jar; and number three, their only hope of success was through brokenness. It was their broken vessels that would be the key to victory. I can't imagine what these soldiers must have been

thinking as Gideon is assembling them and he's getting them ready for battle, but he prepares them and he prepares them by giving them only one specific instruction. It was really the only instruction that they needed. This is verse 17 again: *He said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, "For the LORD and for Gideon!"*" That's the instruction. Gideon says just look at me. Look at me and do what I do. Well that's all the instruction his men needed to go into an absolutely hopeless situation, helplessly unarmed.

Again: *So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"* There's a picture here, and the picture is the victory came literally by letting light shine through their broken earthen vessels. And the results were absolutely miraculous. It says: *Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled. When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD*

*set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army.*

Now I'll be the first one to admit it's very easy to over-spiritualize something like this battle that Gideon was engaged in. You can say, well, this signifies that and that signifies this. Before you know it you've spun this marvelous tale that really is not all that connected to what actually took place. Well this is a little different. You see in this instance we can kind of zoom forward to the New Testament for a picture that I'm not painting about this but one that I believe Paul painted. It certainly seems to be Gideon's battle that Paul is using as an example of hopelessness, helplessness, and the critical importance of brokenness as a means of letting your light shine. Listen to how Paul puts this in *2 Corinthians 4:5*. He says: *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.* You know first thing

off Paul speaks of the hopelessness of the spiritual battle all of us are facing, and that's the battle to advance the kingdom with a world that considers those efforts to be insulting at best and hostile at worse. Paul says: *We're afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies.* You know the culture. You know what we operate in. I mean you can talk about Jesus all you want as a slang word, I mean, you can use Jesus's name all you want as an epithet. You can speak about him as a teacher, you can speak about him as a philosopher, you can even speak about him as a political leader but there's one area that you just can't talk about with regard to Jesus and the gospel; that's the death of Jesus, that's the cross. One of the reasons that Paul was afflicted in his life and ministry is that everywhere he went, he carried in his body the death of Christ, that is Christ crucified. Let me tell you something. Any gospel that does not carry with it the death of Christ is not the gospel at all. I mean Jesus did not come to earth just to teach and lead and philosophize; although he did that, that's not why he came. He came to die. He came to offer up his life as payment for our sin. I mean it should be the best news that human ears have ever heard. But you and I, we all know that it's not.

I mean when I was a brand new believer, I was so overwhelmed with the wonder and the glory of understanding that God himself had actually come down to earth in the form of a baby and that he had lived out his life perfectly among us and then went to the cross offering up his life of perfection for our life of sin, and that if we would simply by faith trust in his sacrifice and give our lives over to him, then we too could live and reign forever with him. In my mind that was good news and good news doesn't get any gooder -- pardon the grammar -- than that. But I quickly found out as I'm sure many of you have as well, that not only did people not grasp this good news, they intensely resented anyone attempting to share it. You know, I should have known. I mean I used it to mock those knuckle-dragging fundamentalists myself. I thought they were funny, I thought they were pathetic, I thought they were actually both. It wasn't until God miraculously opened my eyes and I started sharing the gospel which seemed to me to be so incredibly reasonable that I started getting this intense kind of pushback that anyone who shares the gospel is familiar with.

You know, Tim Keller once compared this reaction to the gospel to trying to rescue a kitten that you discover in a rapidly rising stream and you know that this kitten is facing certain death and you go to pick it up, to literally lift it out of death's grip and it hisses and it claws and it scratches. And you know exactly what

it is facing and you know that it doesn't have a clue. Well, the temptation is certainly to just drop it to keep from getting bitten. But I know this, I know as I look back on those who shared the gospel with me, I realize that I did my share of hissing, I did my share of clawing, I did my share of scratching and yet people still loved me enough to continue sharing the gospel in spite of the fact when to them, it looked absolutely hopeless. I mean it sure looked, for all intents and purposes, like I was absolutely determined to go to hell. But in spite of my belligerence, in spite of my mockery, these people pressed on and God used them to bring me from death to life. So yes, the battle in human terms is absolutely and completely hopeless. The battle we're talking about is the reason you and I have been put on this planet. That is to glorify God by advancing his kingdom through sharing the good news of his death and resurrection.

Now I concluded my message last week with a hopeless declaration. It was a declaration that Jesus' disciples made when they realized the impossibility of bringing someone from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light through human earthly endeavors. If you remember Jesus once said in *Matthew 19*, he said: "*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*" The impact of that statement largely escapes us and that's because we look at wealth far differently

than the disciples looked at it. You see, they considered that anyone in the nation of Israel who was wealthy was someone who was particularly blessed of God. I mean if you're rich and you can't enter the kingdom, who in the world can? I mean this is where the prosperity gospel gets its false narrative from. It's the idea that wealth automatically confers on you God's favor. The disciples thoroughly believed that notion. That was one of the false notions that Jesus had come to destroy. And a statement about making entrance into the kingdom of heaven difficult if not impossible if you're wealthy was astounding to the disciples because they thought exactly the opposite. And that's why their response was astonishment. Verse 25 says: *When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"* Well it was a great question based on a terribly flawed understanding. There's a simple answer. The answer is apart from a sovereign act of God, no one, no one can be saved. When it comes to sharing the gospel, every one of us in here, we are Gideon's army of 300. Don't worry that the chances are stacked against you. They already are and the odds are already impossible. But you have to understand "impossible" means nothing to God. I mean "who then can be saved" is precisely what the world wants you to think. You know if Gideon thought that way, he would have never undertaken the battle, but he did. And the fact remains we are all Gideons called by the same God into the same hopeless battle. And Jesus has the

answer. He said: *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

Secondly, Paul speaks to the helplessness that we all feel and how this world seems to outnumber, outman and outgun us. Jesus told us: *"The thief comes only to steal and to kill and destroy"* and we look around and we sense it, we know it, it's pretty obvious that his playing field is highly tilted his way in this life. I mean he can lie, he can cheat, he can do whatever he wants. He's got the weapons. We're unarmed. And having forsaken the weapons the enemy is quite comfortable with, we proclaim something the world doesn't want to hear. Frankly, that can make us feel helpless. I mean Gideon's army, they went into battle with a trumpet in one hand and a jar in the other. It must have seemed almost laughable to them if it wasn't so deadly. And again, the gospel demands that we put away our weapons and go into battle stripped, as it were, of all of those earthly things that can give us confidence.

I spoke last week about Patricia. This was the young woman that I had the privilege of sharing the gospel with who gave her life to Christ some 40 years ago and is now still going strong, still advancing the kingdom. What I didn't tell you last week was what God was doing in my life at that time. You know as I said, I used to mock and belittle Christians. I thought they were not very



bright, I thought they were easily persuadable, that they believed in fairy tales. I was a cynics's cynic. And so God had to knock me off my horse like he did to Paul, which he did, and for which I am eternally grateful. But he also had some very specific work that he had to do in my life. See, I'd always been very, very proud of my ability to reason and to argue and debate, and when I became a Christian, I simply shifted those earthly desires into a heavenly mode and for a while, you know, God actually blessed it. I mean I had an incredible success rate in sharing the gospel with people. I mean many people actually they stopped, they listened and they gave their lives to Christ. And I very quickly adopted this attitude that this was a partnership venture, Jesus' death on the cross plus my cleverness is what led people to Christ. What I didn't realize is that I was secretly and deeply still ashamed of the gospel. And what I thought was this noble effort to learn as much as I could to hone my argument in the best possible way was really the means that I had chosen to cloak my insecurity about now believing what I had previously thought only knuckle draggers believed in and to cloak it with an air of erudition. By the way that's a fancy word for wanting people to think that you're smart. I made sure that I can come out of these discussions having won the argument with a layer of sophisticated argumentation that was designed much more to make me look good than promote the gospel. And when people actually got saved in spite of me, not because of

me, well, I just took it as a further signal that God was so pleased with my efforts. Well shortly after Patricia had come to Christ and we had had a whole series of exchanges where I just pounded on her, and literally she came to Christ in spite of me, and shortly after she came to Christ, I remember thinking how fortunate God was to have me on his team. And I distinctly remember God telling me, not audibly but very, very clearly, "Tom, for now you are finished. You're done. Your effectiveness is over." And almost instantly my ability to share the gospel just disappeared. I mean I still said the same things but now people laughed or snorted or just outright dismissed me. And that action went on for years until I realized that sharing the gospel and seeing someone come to Christ is a privilege that God alone confers and that it's not something you earn by being clever. Listen to what Paul said in *2 Corinthians 2:14*. He said: *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? Well fact is no one, no one is sufficient for these things.*

Gideon's soldiers went into battle knowing that they were

helplessly outmanned and outgunned from the perspective of earth but they also knew that they were divinely empowered, and that's just what Paul is getting at here. He says *who is sufficient for these things* and what he means is it is God alone who is sufficient but that God's already gone ahead of us. When we share the gospel, our job is not to make converts but to accurately share the truth of the gospel in love. And when that finally sinks in, you cannot believe how liberating that is. I mean even the great Billy Graham agreed. I was looking at all of the statements that people were making about Billy Graham upon his death and I was reading John Piper, and he said -- he quoted Billy Graham, he made the statement, he said Billy Graham "told students in 1964 at Harvard Divinity School 'I used to think that in evangelism I had to do it all, but now I approach evangelism with a totally different attitude. I approach it with complete relaxation. First of all, I don't believe that any man can come to Christ unless the Holy Spirit has prepared his heart. Secondly, I don't believe any man can come to Christ unless God drives him. My job is to proclaim the message. It's the Holy Spirit's job to do the work, period.'" See, sharing the gospel is a job of every single believer. Making converts, that's God's job alone. I remember years ago I was told this biblical quote, it says God's word never returns to him void. You've heard that, you've all heard that, I'm sure, and I never quite knew what that meant because I knew that I had shared the

gospel with many, many people who clearly seemed to be making a good stab at making it void by the way they were responding. I understand it now in the context that Paul is getting at here, and what he's saying is that we are to share the fragrance of Christ wherever we go. And what he's saying is to some people that's going to be the sweetest aroma they've ever smelled, something that will literally lead them from death into life, but to others it's going to stink, it's going to stink on high and it's going to have the stench of death attached to it. God says *who is sufficient for these things?* And what he's saying is it's not up to us to decide whose spiritual nostrils react what way. He's saying it's up to Him. You see, when you share the gospel as God intends it to be shared and that's not just "God loves you and has a perfect plan for your life," it's also that God is holy, that God is just and that we are separated sinners on our way to hell. That's the whole gospel. And when you share that whole gospel, you will either be a fragrance from life to life or you will be a stench from death to death. Here's the amazing thing. What God is saying in that text in Isaiah is that either way you're going to glorify God. You see, those who mock and reject the gospel are those who are embracing the stench of death; they will glorify God's justice. Those who embrace the sweetness of the gospel are those who embrace the savor of life, they will glorify God's mercy. But either way they prove the truth of what Isaiah was saying when he said: *So shall my word*

*be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty -- or void -- but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.* See how that last part of that verse carries the thought? And what is being said here is no matter what response you get to the gospel, God will be glorified. It shall succeed in the thing for which he sent it. See, this is what spiritual warfare is all about. This is why we go into battle knowing that, just like Gideon's army, the outcome is hopeless and that we are helpless but it's okay because we know the outcome is not up to us. It's up to God.

And finally we have the third part of Gideon's army's strategy. I mean we get that the situation is hopeless, we get that we are helpless and that's okay because we trust that God has gone ahead of us, but there's another part of this strategy, there's another part of the gospel. It's a part that's absolutely critical. And Paul refers to it here comparing it to those jars that Gideon's soldiers carried into the battle. Paul says in *2 Corinthians 4:5: For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* See

Gideon's soldiers carried a light, they carried it in jars of clay. And as long as it stayed in those earthen jars it wasn't only worthless, it was an impediment. Just to go backwards, it says: *So Gideon and the hundred men we were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands.*

See, there was only one way for Gideon's army to let the light shine out of the darkness and it's the very same way for us. I mean Paul is very clear to tell us, we are the earthen vessels. And if we refuse to be broken, that light's just going to stay smoldering inside. I am so grateful to God that he loved me enough to break me about my boastful attitude towards Patricia. Let me tell you it was painful seeing my effectiveness simply disappear but it was incredibly necessary. The gospel that I shared today is essentially the very same gospel that I shared 40 years ago with one major difference, that's God has broken me open and he is still breaking me continuously in order to let that light shine.

Practically speaking, okay, practically speaking what does that mean? Well, I remember one person saying sharing the gospel is nothing more than one beggar telling another beggar where he has found bread. Here's what this means practically, it means this,

it's an attitude thing. You can't say do this, do this, do this, it's what's inside. And the attitude is this, if you don't have a beggar mentality when it comes to sharing the gospel, that is to say if you don't realize that you bring to the table absolutely nothing and that God brings to the table virtually everything, if you don't realize that, you are in no position to present the gospel and in fact you may even need the gospel. See, God is very clear in telling us: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. He can't make it clearer than that. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* See, Gideon's army was in so deep over its own head that it had no choice but to listen to Gideon when he said, *"Look at me. Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do."*

See, when things are hopeless and when you are helpless, you are far more inclined to hear and obey just like Gideon's army did. Well, you know, Paul says to us exactly what Gideon said to his soldiers. He says it in *1 Corinthians 11: Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.* See, we would do well to be imitators of Paul as he imitates Christ. We approach the gospel knowing like Gideon knew that we are hopelessly outnumbered in the flesh but that God goes before us. And we approach the gospel knowing that in our own flesh that we are like Gideon's soldiers, absolutely helpless, but

*2 Corinthians 10 says: For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We know what our weapons are, we know what our task is, we know that our task is not to convert anybody. That's God's job. Our task is to be the aroma of Christ and to some that's going to be the savor of life; to others that's going to be the stench of death, but either way it's going to accomplish what God sent it to do. And so we present the gospel knowing that it is hopeless apart from God's Holy Spirit, that we are helplessly outmanned and outgunned by the enemy and not sufficient for the task but that God says: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." And finally we go about the task of presenting the gospel knowing that only when we are willing to be broken vessels, only when that happens will the light of the gospel be freed up to do its work. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.*

*Father, I pray for everyone in this room. We are Gideon's army. We are facing a hopeless task, we are helplessly outmanned and outgunned, and you have said in order to be effective, in order to communicate the gospel as you would have us communicate it, we need to be broken. The light will not escape the earthen jars unless*



*it's broken. So I pray, Lord, that you would give each and every one of us not only a heart to share the gospel but a heart to share our brokenness, a heart to approach those that we are sharing the gospel with knowing that we are beggars as well and that we found bread. Give us that grace, give us that privilege, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*