

**Subject: *Faith is the Victory***

**Scripture: *Judges 7:1-8***

Faith is so important in the Christian life that God devoted one whole chapter to it (Heb. 11). Gideon is listed as one of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. From that great chapter we learn three things about faith: faith believes the incredible; faith sees the invisible; and faith does the impossible.

***Hebrews 11:6*** *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

God is looking for men and women of faith. This must be faith in God. Faith is no better than its object. Many people claim to have faith, but the Bible says real faith is seen by the way we live. James says: “Faith without works is dead.” Gideon is a story of faith in action, and we see three important things about faith:

### **1. God tests our faith in Him (vs. 1-8)**

A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. One man said that faith is like a toothbrush—everybody should have one and use it regularly, but it's not safe to use somebody else's. Dr. Adrian Rogers told about the time in Florida when the headlights went out on his car and he tried to follow the car in front of him. He said he learned a lesson from that: don't try to drive using somebody else's headlights. You can't live your life by somebody else's faith.

God tests our faith for at least two reasons: to reveal our faith (whether it is real or counterfeit); and to strengthen our faith (for what God wants to accomplish through us). God put Gideon's army to the test and in the process reduced the troops from 32,000 down to 300 soldiers.

#### **A. God removed the cowards (vs. 1-3)**

All who were afraid could leave and go home. After the dust settled some 22,000 of the original 32,000 left the battlefield. Fear is contagious. Two things would be devastating to Israel—pride and fear. Pride would rob God of His glory, and fear would rob the soldiers of their unity and strength. John Wesley once said, “Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but sin and love nothing but God, and will shake the gates of hell!”

#### **B. God removed the careless (vs. 4-8)**

God put the remaining 10,000 men through another test by letting them get a drink of water from the river. None of the soldiers knew he was being tested and sorted out. We never know when God is testing us in some ordinary experience of life. God can't use cowards (test one), and God can't use the careless. Some bent down and cupped their hands and lapped the waters out of their hands and others got down on their knees for a drink. Gideon set aside 300 men who drank from their hands. Gideon's army shrank from 32,000 to 300 men, that's less than 1% of the original amount of the army! Winston Churchill said this about the Royal Air Force during WW2, “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed to so few by so many.” Through the tests God sorted out the cowards and the careless so that Gideon ended up with the committed.

***Deuteronomy 20:5-8***<sup>5</sup> *And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.*<sup>6</sup> *And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard,*

*and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.* <sup>7</sup> *And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.* <sup>8</sup> *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.*

Four groups of soldiers were allowed to leave the battlefield and return to their families: those who had a new home; those who had a new vineyard; those who had a new wife, and those who were afraid. The battlefield is no place for those who are distracted, double-minded, or faint-hearted. The battlefield is a place for those who are focused and committed.

## **2. God encourages our faith in Him (vs. 9-15)**

God knew that Gideon was still reluctant and a little bit afraid, so He did two things to help him:

### **A. Gideon received another promise (vs. 9)**

God had already promised Gideon that he would defeat the Midianites (6:14, 16; 7:7). Notice the past tense of God's promise ("for I have delivered").

### **B. Gideon received another sign (vs. 10-14)**

God had already given Gideon three signs to build his faith: fire from the rock (6:19-21); the wet fleece (6:36-38); and the dry fleece (6:39-40). The Lord already told Gideon that victory was sure, but this time Gideon heard it from the mouth of the enemy. It took courage for Gideon and his servant to move into enemy territory to overhear the conversation of the enemy soldiers. They talked about a dream. God often revealed truth through dreams, but we shouldn't assume that is still God's method of revealing His will. We can know God's will in any situation through prayer, His Word, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. In this dream a barley cake tumbled into a tent and made it fall to the ground. Barley was used by the poorest of the people, so this was a picture of the weakness and humility of Gideon's army. Gideon didn't mind being compared to a barley cake (or loaf of bread) because now he knew for sure that he would defeat the Midianites. Gideon responded in worship. Worship must come before we enter the battle.

## **3. God honors our faith in Him (vs. 16-25)**

### **A. Gideon had a strange battle plan**

These were strange weapons for an army: a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch. God doesn't use conventional methods.

**2 Corinthians 10:4** *(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds).*

In Deuteronomy 20, as Israel prepared to go into battle, the priest spoke to the army and reminded them that victory was in God's hands.

**Deuteronomy 20:2-4** <sup>2</sup> *And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people,* <sup>3</sup> *And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not*

*tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; <sup>4</sup> For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.*

B. Gideon had a surprise battle plan

The enemy was startled when they woke up and they seemed to be surrounded. This took place around 10:00 pm. Notice that every one of Gideon's men stood in his assigned place (vs. 21).

C. Gideon had a successful battle plan

It was successful because it was God's plan, not Gideon's. The Midianites panicked and started killing each other in an effort to escape. It was a case of friendly fire and total confusion. They self-destructed.

We can all be encouraged by the story of Gideon and his 300 men. We need to be available so God can use us. We may not understand His plans, but we can always trust His promises.

**1 John 5:4** *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

God honors faith because faith honors God.