

## Gideon's Warriors

Gideon lived in a time in which Israel was being oppressed by their enemies. The account is recorded in Judges Chapters 6 and 7. Whenever Israel sowed their seed, the enemy came against them and destroyed their crops, so they were left with nothing. Israel was impoverished because of the enemy, so they cried out to the Lord.

The Lord reminded them of how He had delivered them from a life of bondage and drove out the enemy, and told them to remember His deliverances and *not to fear* the enemy—but they did not obey.

Then the Lord Himself came to Gideon and said, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor (of fearless courage).” Gideon asked: “If the Lord is with us, why is all this happening to us? And where are all His wondrous works which we have heard about? But now the Lord has forsaken us.”

God did not chastise Gideon for asking why. He reassured him and strengthened him. The Lord “looked upon him” and said, “Go in this your might and you shall save My people from the enemy.” He had just said, *the Lord is with you*. And now He says, *go in this might*. It was the power of His might that Gideon was to go in! It’s just as He says to us: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10). God ended by saying, *Have I not sent you?*

When God commands you to do something, He has commissioned you for it. This means He authorizes you to act or perform that service. He empowers you to carry it out.<sup>1</sup>

Gideon’s response was like so many of us at a time like this. He said, “O, Lord, how can I do that?—I’m too poor and too small. I’m a nobody.” But the Lord said to him, “I will for sure be with you and you will beat the enemy.”

Gideon said, “If I have truly found favor in Your sight, show me a sign that it is really You telling me this. Please stay here and don’t leave, while I go get an offering for You.” The Lord said He would wait until Gideon returned.

Gideon went and fixed a meal (as an offering), and presented it to the Lord. The Lord then instructed him what to do with the offering and Gideon did it. The Lord caused fire to consume the offering and then He disappeared from his sight. Gideon then knew it was really the Lord! And he had really seen Him! After the Lord disappeared from his sight, just because Gideon could no longer see the Lord didn’t mean He wasn’t with him.

The Lord said to him (after He had disappeared): “Peace be to you, do not fear, you will not die.” Gideon built an altar there to worship Him and called it: “The Lord My Peace” (Jehovah-shalom). God revealed Himself personally to Gideon as “The Lord My Peace.” All revelations of God lead you to want to worship Him.

Even though the Lord was no longer visible He continued to speak to him. That night the Lord spoke to Gideon again and told him to go pull down the devil's altars and destroy any symbols of demonic things. And in their place, God said, "Build an altar to the Lord Your God on top of that stronghold with stones laid in proper order, according to the instructions I have given you, and offer a sacrifice there." God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:40). And even though Gideon was not a priest who was authorized to make sacrifices on the Lord's altar— God's call gave Gideon sufficient authority. It was by God's special order, which otherwise would have been presumptuous sin. This command was extraordinary.

Gideon then took ten men with him and did as the Lord had commanded him. But he did it by night instead of day, because he was too afraid of the other men of the city. When the other men found out what had been done and that Gideon had done it— they wanted to kill him. But Joash stood up for him. The Lord gave a special revelation to Gideon to not be afraid, because He knew what was going to happen. Not only would the enemy want to kill Gideon, but some of his own people would want to destroy him as well. But God had someone stand up for Gideon. Joash wisely replied sharply to the people, "Will you plead for Baal? Will you save *him*? He that will plead for Baal, let him be put to death while it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one has cast down his altar!"

Gideon's own people calmed down, but then something even worse happened. The enemy amassed to come against Gideon, but it says the Spirit of the Lord (which was the Holy Spirit) Himself took possession of him (took over in him). In the Hebrew it says: "The Spirit of the Lord clothed him. John Wesley said, "Clothed him as a robe, to put honor upon him; clothed him as a coat of mail to put a defense upon him." Those things were given in proportion to the danger and difficulty that the position demanded. I want to be clothed with the Holy Spirit. I want Him to have full possession of me. It is the Holy Spirit that gives wisdom, strength, courage, energy and perseverance.

Gideon blew a trumpet to gather the people together and he sent messages to all the other people further away and they came to meet them also.

Then Gideon had the nerve to ask God for a sign. He said to God, "If You will deliver Your people by my hand, as You have said, give me a sign." He laid a fleece on the ground and said, "If there is dew on the fleece and not on the ground around it— I will know You will do as You have said." And it happened. Then Gideon said to God, "Please don't be angry with me, but let me test this one more time, just to be sure. This time, let there be dew on the ground, but the fleece be dry. Then I will know for sure." And God did so. Those signs reveal God's understanding and tenderness toward us. God graciously gave him the confirmations.

So the enemy was all coming together to go against Israel and Gideon had sent out the call for everyone to gather together with him to fight the enemy. Then the Lord said to Gideon, "There are too many with you for Me to give the enemy into your hand or the people will boast that they did it themselves." So He told Gideon to tell everyone who was fearful and afraid to leave and go back home. Deuteronomy 20:8 reveals why. It says, "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." Fear is contagious. But it

was also an attitude of the heart or the character of the other men by which God weeded them out. It was not just because of fear, because as we will see in verse 10 that Gideon had fear. God was looking for courage. You can have courage even if you are afraid.

22,000 of the men left and 10,000 remained. But God said there were still too many, so He had Gideon bring the men down to the water to test them. God said He would tell Gideon who should go with him and who should not go with him. So Gideon took the men down to the water and God told him to divide the men into two groups—the ones who lapped up the water with their hands and those who got on their knees to drink. Those who lapped the water with their hands were 300 and the rest got down on their knees. I believe the ones who got down on their knees to drink were careless and the ones who lapped it up from their hands were more alert.

God said He would deliver the enemy into Gideon's hand with the 300 men. He sent the others home. It was the same to God whether to deliver them with few or with many, but He chose few so that *all* the glory and praise would for sure go to Him. We must never forget that the glory of our successes always belongs to God.

Gideon's army was stripped of their strength, but this also reveals something very important for us. When we are weak, then we are strong, because we must cast ourselves totally on God (2 Corinthians 12:10).

That night God told Gideon to get up and with his 300 men to go down against the enemy's camp. He said: "Arise, go down to the host; for I have delivered it into your hand." When God has determined to do something, it is as sure as if it were already done. Then He added: "But if you are afraid, take your servant with you and go down to their camp, and I'll let you overhear something that will boost your confidence. Your hand will be strengthened to go against them." So Gideon did choose to first go down to the enemy's camp with just his servant and God let him hear something that greatly strengthened his faith. How many times have you been upset or fearful about something and God let you see or hear something that strengthened or encouraged you? God knows you so well. He knows when you need something to boost your faith. He knows just what you need and He is loving and gracious to give you what you need.

What Gideon heard was a man telling a dream he had. He said a cake of barley tumbled into their camp, and came to the tent and knocked it down flat. His comrade said, "That's none other than the sword of Gideon, a man of Israel. God has given us all into his hand!" It gave Gideon confidence and strength to know that his name was known among the enemy and that they knew about His God, whose reputation was to take care of His people.

God had told Gideon not to fear—but if any fear remained—He removed it. God fully prepared Gideon for the work He had to do. He increased Gideon's confidence and it was just what he needed. Gideon responded with worship: *God, I adore You for what You have done for me.* Through this special encouragement, God confirmed it all again.

The odds are thought to be 300 to around 135,000. That would be pretty scary, but God had personally arranged for Gideon to hear something that gave him strength. So he went back and divided the 300 men into 3 divisions. They were going to have to fight with their faith, but God

had given him a firm foundation to build his faith on. He had God's word and His promise to assure him of success. This would have seemed to be impossible in the natural, but God's strength and power are *supernatural*. I'm sure God gave him the specific instructions of what to do. What he gave them to carry were trumpets and empty pitchers with torches inside. This was incredibly clever. The pitchers concealed the torches. Then Gideon told them to watch him and do what he did. "When I blow the trumpet—you blow the trumpet and everyone shout: *The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon!* He knew it wasn't going to be his sword that won the battle—it would be the Lord's.

What is the Sword of the Lord? The Word of God! And they were to speak it!

Because Gideon had heard that conversation in the enemy's camp, he knew they had heard about him—and the fame of his God. So by having the 300 men shout, *The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon*, it would confirm the enemy's worst fears! Knowing this brought fear to them—he used it against them. These words also gave great courage to his men, knowing their Lord God Jehovah was fighting for them. With that shout and the trumpet blasts startling them from their sleep, they were all terrified. In their terror and panic they killed their own men and Gideon's men didn't even have to lift their weapons. Actually, God's instructions kept them from lifting their own swords (if they even had them). They had their trumpet in one hand and the torch in their other hand—they had no hand free for a sword. They used the Sword of the Lord, which is the *rhema*, the spoken word. In this case it was shouted.

They all went down to the camp and blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers—which left them holding the torches in their hands. So they had the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands. They shouted: *The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon!* And every man stood in their place. They stood firm!

Look at these other times when the people were told to stand:

- “And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:13-14).
- “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you” (2 Chronicles 20:17).
- “For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength...” (Isaiah 30:15).
- “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. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Ephesians 6:13-17).

Gideon’s men obeyed and stood in their place. They stood still and saw the salvation of the Lord.

The men continued to blow their trumpets and all the enemy were thrown into terror and confusion. When they heard all the trumpets, they believed there was a huge army that had already penetrated their camp. They had gone in the darkest dead of the night, which add to the surprise and terror, and also concealed their small numbers. The enemy thought that each man they saw with a torch was the torch-bearer for their own company of soldiers. This strategy was ingenious! Instead of 300 men, they believed there were 300 companies of men! They were in such a panic and filled with hysteria that they turned their swords against anyone they met and ended up killing each other or running away. This reminds me of where God records some of the blessings for obedience and it says, “The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways” (Deuteronomy 28:7).

I don’t think anyone could think up a better strategy or have it better executed— or be more totally successful. They went after the ones who ran away and completely destroyed the enemy! Though at a great disadvantage—they came out victorious because of the power of God and their obedience and devotion to Him.

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<sup>1</sup> *Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary.*