

What You Need to Know About GIDEON & SAMSON:

“The Dangers of Losing the Final Lap”

Study Number Three – Judges 7:1-22

In the two studies that we’ve had thus far in the life of Gideon, we have noted first of all that the Lord called him to be the judge that was going to liberate the children of Israel from the Midianites.

This gypsy and warlike type of people had Israel in bondage for seven years. And the Lord finally calls Gideon to be the one to liberate them.

Gideon goes through a process of going from one thing to another. The Lord first gives him a command, and he asks the questions—Why? and where? and how? And then after he gets over that, he says, “Well I want a sign that this is really You.” And so there is an altar and there is a sacrifice that is given.

And at the end of that first study we leave him at the altar of peace. And we’re always in peace when we’re at the altar if we focus upon Him, because He’s got everything in control.

“Thou will keep him in perfect peace as your mind is stayed in Him.” (ref. Isaiah 26:3)

Then in the second study we're a little bit confused because the Lord called him to deliver the nation Israel from the Midianites but the first thing the Lord says is, "Go get rid of that high place to Baal."

We learned some principles from that. We learned, first of all, that the Lord deals with the Baals in our lives before He trusts us with the battle. He deals with the WORSHIP before He deals with the WAR.

And for Gideon it had to be a clearing out of all of that which was actually opposed to His lordship before the Father was going to allow Gideon to liberate the nation.

That was successful. But now Gideon's got another problem. And that is, there are 135,000 opportunities down in the valley of Jezreel for the Lord to work; because not only have the Midianites gathered, but they've got their friends the Amalekites. And now we have a mob down there.

Gideon has second thoughts. Like many of us, when we come out of one group and we're getting ready to go into another, we get a little scared. We get a little apprehensive. And he's a little wishful that the Lord might have changed His mind about the whole deal because he says, "Lord, I'm going to put a fleece down and if it's wet and the ground's dry tomorrow, I'll know that this is what You want to do."

And we learned from that experience with the fleece that it is always wrong for us to come to the place where we tell the

Lord what He has to do to convince us of His will. Rather we need to learn to live with divine authority and to submit to Him and allow Him to do what He wants to do in our lives.

Now we're going to see a graphic demonstration of that in our passage. At the end of the last study what Gideon has been successful to do is to go to four different tribes. He got some local yokels, the Abiezerites, from the tribe of Manasseh. Then he sent some messengers to the tribe of Asher, to the tribe of Naphtali, and to the tribe of Zebulun.

And he evidently got about 8,000 from each of those tribes. So his total army, as the scene of the story opens, is 32,000.

And if he had 32,000 and there's 135,000 in the valley, what is the immediate human response to that?

"Lord, we need a national revival. Either that or to require the draft because we need more bodies. Lord, do You realize that every one of my men has got to nail four of those before he loses his life for us to even come out?"

Four to one odds—and so Gideon in the thought process is trying to anticipate what has to be done before the Midianites will ever be given. That's what he's thinking right now.

Many times as believers, at the first particular point where we're in the greatest danger, we're trying to anticipate what we have to do to help God, what God is going to have to do in order to bring the answer to our prayers. Instead of just

saying, “Lord, make known Your will to me and however You want to do it, it’s Your deal. But I’m just going to trust You and rest in faith to believe You’re going to do it.”

Gideon is given to fear with his melancholy temperament. And those fears are going to come to the surface now as he sees the statistics militarily. And as the scene of the story opens we get a picture of what actually takes place.

v. 1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

“Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.”

Now there are the statistics because Gideon, or also known as Jerubbaal—that’s his new name. That means “let Baal contend with him.”

That’s the name his daddy gave him so that every time the people around there saw that Gideon was prospering and being blessed, he was a testimony to the fact that Baal doesn’t exist, because Baal hadn’t done anything to bother him yet.

And as he’s continuing to be successful, that’s evidence of the

fact that God is the one who is alive and not Baal.

v. 2 And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’

“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, “My own power has delivered me.”’

Now when he hears that statement what is he prone to do? He’s almost saying, “Wow Lord, I don’t know if You graduated from mathematics or not. Are You sure that the people I have are too many?” And that’s probably about all that he hears.

Now there are a couple of verses in the Old Testament that can be really helpful to us at this point.

Isaiah 55:8, 9

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” saith the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

As a Christian it’s a constant battle of just learning how to let God be God and learning how to submit to His way of doing things and not running ahead.

Now if we want a great Old Testament illustration of somebody who tried to do it their own way, go read the life of Jacob and see the mess he got in. He was one who tried to figure it all out, work it out on his own—scheming and politicking—and we see the mess that he got into.

Many Christians are in that particular state.

Now Gideon's got a choice. He can listen to the word of the Lord and submit to it. Thankfully he does.

The Lord gives an explanation here and it's simply this:

“The people ... are too many for Me to give Midian into your hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’”

If in fact they did have enough men and they went to battle and were successful, Israel would get the big head and say, “My own power has delivered me.”

To make it quite clear, there will never be anybody who by himself has been able to work things out.

If God thought that we could do it by ourselves, He would have never taken the drastic measure of sending Jesus Christ into the world. Salvation is a gift from God so that God gets the total glory for what's taken place.

God is not a joint-venture with us either. It is totally His program. Salvation is a gift, Ephesians tells us. And it's "a gift of the grace of God not of works, lest any man should boast." (see Ephesians 2:8, 9)

And whatever our basis of salvation, if it's other than our personal relationship to Jesus Christ, we aren't going to make it.

Now there is another thing that we need to learn as Christians, and that is before God can use us He's got to have us in a place of total and complete dependence upon Him.

The reason there are too many in this army is that Gideon could depend upon his own strength and his own resources and his own military acumen and plan. And God will strip us out of our lives and put us into a position more times than not.

And if the Lord could say to Gideon, "You've got too many because you've got to be put in a place of trust where you have to depend totally upon Me to do something or you'll fail! And the whole thing will fall apart."

So that's why the Lord at this point says, "Gideon, you've got too many." Something else has to be done.

v. 3 "Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000

remained.

“Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, “Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.” So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.”

Talk about having a sense of humor. Isn't that fantastic? Gideon gets up before these 32,000 guys who've looked down in that valley and saw the 135,000 opportunities and he says, “Guys, I've got a message from the Lord. If you're scared, go to the house.”

And truthfully, if Gideon wasn't the leader he'd have been heading back. Because he is flat scared to death. But since he's the leader, he stays around.

Now what would happen if we looked out to see 22,000 men gone—or 11,000 empty two-man tents? As a result of all the work we've done to put together an army of 32,000 and we don't think we have enough?

What's Gideon's thinking? He's just as human as the rest of these. He's thinking, “Lord, You really did it this time. Boy now we are in a mess. Lord, do You realize what the odds are now against the 135,000?”

v. 4 Then the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that

he of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

“Then the Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people are still too many;’”

Isn’t that the way the Lord works? We go through the first part of it all and think we can’t go on any further and the Lord comes in and says, “We aren’t done yet. Still too many, Gideon. Still too many.”

That also tells us something else. That tells us that the men He’s going to use in His service are going to have a high and holy privilege of watching God liberate Israel through those people who are chosen.

If we have the glorious privilege of teaching a Sunday school class, of being involved in some ministry for the Lord, count it a high privilege because we’re not indispensable.

Psalm 75:6 and 7 says: “Promotion comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. God is the judge. He puts down one and he picks up another.”

Don’t get into that way of thinking we’re on our own now. “I’ve got to serve the Lord again.” We have the opportunity, we need to get so excited about it we just can’t stand it. Recognize the fact we have a great, great privilege to serve the Lord.

Twenty-two thousand have already headed to the house because they're scared. They're filled with fear rather than faith. They've disqualified themselves by that.

And now the Lord says to Gideon, "There's still too many!"

"bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that when I say to you, "This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, "This one shall not go with you," he shall not go with you."

"Bring them down there by the water Gideon, the ten thousand that are left, and we're going to give them a little test. And I'm going to tell you which one is going to go and which one stays."

Now the Lord added that because if Gideon would have been the one making the choice, he wouldn't have lost many on this choice. And the Lord knew that before He took him down there, that's why He said, "Now I don't want you to get too excited down there because I'm going to tell you which ones are going to go and which ones are going to stay."

From a human point of view, he would have made the wrong choice. We'll see that shortly.

v. 5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a

dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink.”

“So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink.’”

Alright, we have two groups—the kneelers and the lappers.

The kneelers must be the pray-ers and so it would naturally be the kneelers from a human point of view. And besides, when there are 9,700 kneelers we’d expect that’s going to be the one that the Lord chooses.

Let God be God, because look at what happened—verse 6.

v. 6 Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water.

“Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water.”

Now there’s the guy that could just scoop down in the water, and while they were watching—as two military men should, as the enemy drank—lapped out of their hand.

The other guys, 9,700 of them, just bellied up, laid down and got after it. And verse 7 says:

v. 7 And the Lord said to Gideon, “I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home.”

“And the Lord said to Gideon,”

Now good, Gideon’s thinking, “Well I only lost 300 on that so I’ve got 9,700 left, which isn’t all that bad.”

“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his own home.’”

When the Lord presses us beyond, crushes us, breaks us, destroys our plans, and we see our vision die, it’s at that time the Lord is ready to work.

And it’s also at that time that the Lord gives us a promise. And isn’t that a precious promise in verse 7?

“I will deliver you with the 300 men”

Now that’s a promise.

“Now Gideon, if you want to go with the 32,000 and on your own try to do it, you’re sure going to make a mess of it and you’re going to lose. But I will deliver you with the 300 so let the other 9,700 also go to the house.”

All he ends up with is 300 men and a promise!

Gideon's saying, "Lord, I lost 31,700. Lord, I've only got 290 more than I had when I was tearing down the altar of Baal! Lord, do You realize that this is 450 to 1 odds? Lord, I guess if You're going to do it, it's going to be a miracle!"

And the Lord says, "Right. Gideon I guess you're just going to have to trust Me."

When it's not Gideon saying, "How am I gonna do it?" It's the Lord saying, "I will deliver you with the 300."

The total focus is no longer on Gideon. It's on Gideon's Lord and His reputation to keep and fulfill His promises. And that's what God wants in our lives.

He wants to stand aside, wants us with John the Baptist to be continually decreasing and for the Christ to continue to be increasing so people see Him.

When He's lifted up, He'll draw all men to Himself.

"Gideon, I'm going to deliver you with those 300 men who lap. And Gideon, I'll give the Midianites into your hands so let all the other people go, each to his own home."

v. 8 So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent

all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

“So the 300 men took the people’s provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.”

Now the full impact gets him. He’s seen a reduction of his armed forces to just a very small force of 300 men. And as they sit up there on that ledge, peering down into that valley, the full impact of what God’s going to have to do to fulfil that promise, really begins to break in on him.

He’s going to get scared again, because the more he looks to the valley instead of the Lord of the valley, the quicker he gets scared.

v. 9 Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands.

“Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, ‘Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands.’”

See the direct command again? But isn’t the Lord precious? He knows that Gideon’s scared out of his wits—verse 10.

v. 10 “But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp,

“Now if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp,”

“I want to minister to your needs if you’re scared Gideon and so I understand that. I’ve had several experiences with you already at the altar of peace and also with the experience of pulling down the altars of Baal and with the fleece. So Gideon if you’re still scared, let Me minister to your needs. Take your servant and go down to the edge of the camp. I want you to hear something that’ll prepare you and give you confidence.”

This is the last step that the Lord takes to get Gideon to make his first expression of faith. So many times we leave it so quickly and we just miss everything and we don’t get the blessing that’s there.

v. 11 and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp.” So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.

“and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp.’ So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.”

They snuck down to the outer edges of the camp. It's getting toward dark and they're listening to what's being said. And listen to what they hear.

v. 12 Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

“Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.”

What a mob.

v. 13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, “Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.”

“When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, ‘Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.’”

“Now that's my dream.”

This dream from the Lord is designed to do TWO THINGS:

1. to scare the enemy and
2. to strengthen Gideon and his forces.

The Lord really has to be in this so that Gideon won't miss it.

Now Gideon immediately recognizes the fact that he's just an old barley bum, but he also likes the excitement that a tent turns over in the process.

v. 14 And his friend answered and said, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."

"And his friend answered and said, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."

Here are these two guys talking. He said, "Wow, the interpretation of that dream is that Gideon the son of Joash from Israel, the Lord's going to give us into his hand!"

Now what do we think they start talking about among those 135,000?

They are scared because here the dream is given and God's

going to do something through Gideon!

Now Gideon's excited. Want to see a statement of faith? Look at verse 15. This is the first time we've gone through all these fears and all these tests and everything, and here it is. Nothing more refreshing than when a guy expresses faith.

v. 15 And it came about when Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, that he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands."

"And it came about when Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, that he bowed in worship."

Isn't that beautiful? He just stopped and said, "Lord, you know I really owe you a lot. I'm really sorry that I've taken so long throwing the fleece and done that whole bit, to be so totally uncooperative with You in resisting You all the way. And right now, I realize You're in this and You're really going to do it! And thank You! I praise Your name."

Isn't that the way it is with us? Job goes through all this old trauma and suffering and says, "Wherefore I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes. Lord, I've just been so ugly and Lord, I just thank You for who You are and how great and how good You are."

Many times we do that when we go through trauma in our

lives. We think God will never bring anything out of this! And we turn the corner and say, “Boy God, I’m really sorry. If You hadn’t done that there never would have been a blessing in my life like that.”

And we’ve just got to fall and worship. And here’s Gideon. We can almost see them get out of there, away from the camp where no one can hear him, and say, “Wow Lord, this is straight from You! We thank You!”

That’s the third time he worshipped. He was at the altar of peace in our first episode. And last week he was up there on the hill with the brand new altar, making that sacrifice to the Lord in our last study. Here he is now, pausing in worship and praise to the Lord.

Now here’s his statement of faith:

“He returned to the camp of Israel and said,”— underline the rest of it and write FAITH in great big letters outside the verse, because this is so great—“Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands.”

Now isn’t that something? We probably meet so many people when we ask, “Are you a Christian?” They say, “Well, I really don’t know.”

That’s exactly where Gideon’s been in the whole thing. When we come to know Jesus Christ as Savior, He said He’d come in, right? Did we ask Him to come in? Yes. Well, did He come

in?

Alright, our answer to that is our expression of faith.

Gideon for the first time, just as refreshing as pure water, says, “Arise guys, time to go to war. The Lord has given the Midianites into our hands.”

Now has the Lord been saying that? He sure has. We’ve had many indications. But the Lord is patient and precious as He deals with us as His children.

Now remember he’s a melancholy and a melancholy is the guy who’s meticulous with detail so he’s got to train his 300 men here. It must be, we’ll have to suffer now. And he’s got until midnight—he has about four or five hours here to get his act together with these 300 guys. And so he’s got them all in groups of 100. He’s getting them trained here.

v. 16 And he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.

“And he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.”

No weapons, just a trumpet, a pitcher and a torch.

Those things typically speak of us, if we're believers. Paul says we have this treasure in cracked pots in 2 Corinthians. That the glory might be of Him and not of us. And He is the light who shines from within. And the vessel's got to be broken so the light shines out. (see 2 Corinthians 4: 6, 7)

And every believer goes through the process of becoming a broken vessel, so the light of God's love and grace, the radiance of Jesus Christ can shine all that light.

The trumpet is the message that we proclaim.

They have just three instruments as they prepare to go to war. They have a pitcher, a torch and a trumpet.

In 2 Corinthians 10 the apostle is describing his weapons of warfare and this is what he said:

2 Corinthians 10:4

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but they're mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.

Isn't that beautiful? Our weapons aren't like a lot of human beings think. But our weapons are mighty through God, for the pulling down of strongholds bringing people into His family.

v. 17 And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the

camp, do as I do.

“And he said to them, ‘Look at me, and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.’”

v. 18 “When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp, and say, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’”

“When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp, and say, “For the Lord and for Gideon.””

Underline that last phrase, “For the Lord and for Gideon.”

Now dear Christian friends, that phrase is the key to the failure of Gideon.

Remember we said he began well, he ran well, but he didn’t end well. The reason he didn’t end well is because it’s turned around and becomes “for Gideon and for the Lord.”

There are guys crumbling in the ministry and we see this same tragic result. How quickly they can think more highly of themselves and end up saying, “For me and for the Lord.”

Gideon has the privilege of being used by the Lord and he says, “This is for the Lord and for Gideon.”

v. 19 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 posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

“So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch,”

Alright, this is midnight. They’ve been grilling and training up on the hill for several hours. They’ve all got their pitchers and their torches and their trumpet. And they’re in their well-regimented groups of 100 and they begin to descend on the camp on three sides.

And as they come down, it’s midnight. Now they change the watch at midnight. The guys have been in the sack for quite a while. And since nothing has happened since they’ve been in bed, many of them have fallen into a deep slumber, thinking that dream wasn’t all that great anyway.

And the guard had just changed and they were settling down for a long slumber. Now:

“when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.”

v. 20 When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their

left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

“When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, ‘A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!’”

Guys were getting killed in the rush into the valley as they came tearing out of their tent and all they could see was torches and they heard the breaking pitchers, the trumpets, and “For the Lord and for Gideon!” They think they’ve been overwhelmed by the greatest army that ever hit the earth.

Suddenly all of this appeared.

v. 21 And each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.

“And each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.”

“each stood in his place around the camp;”

These men are going to have the privilege of watching God do the delivering!

Now if this were the only time that this were true, we wouldn’t make an issue out of it. But most of the great

liberations of the Old Testament are just like this.

Remember when the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt and they came to their first crisis at the Red Sea? The Egyptians have changed their minds and they are chasing them and the sea is in front and the Egyptians are behind.

Moses said, “Set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord.” (see Exodus 14:13)

And as he puts out the rod, the sea opens and Moses says the last one ends in Egyptian. They moved across, miraculously God provided salvation. They witnessed it.

In 2 Chronicles 20:17, Jehoshaphat has been surrounded. He is the king in the southern kingdom. Jerusalem is the headquarters. There are forces coming out of the north, they've gotten some reports that there's some coming out of the east and the west. The city is surrounded by the enemy.

And Jehoshaphat says, “Lord, we don't know what to do but our eyes are upon thee.” (see 2 Chronicles 20:12) What's the Lord's answer to that situation?

2 Chronicles 20:17

You need not fight in this battle. Station yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, Oh Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed. Tomorrow go out to face them for the Lord is with you.

They see these 300 guys standing on the hill, holding up their torches, and they just get through saying, “For the Lord and for Gideon,” blowing on their trumpet, and breaking their pitchers. They’re standing there singing, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” That’s all they’re doing! Just standing there, holding these torches. And down in the valley there’s nothing but chaos and mass confusion.

“And each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.”

v. 22 And when they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Bethshittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abelmeholah, by Tabbath.

“And when they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Bethshittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abelmeholah, by Tabbath.”

Down in that valley they were killing one another in all of the confusion that arose as a result of what took place by these 300 men on the hillside.

Sometimes the Lord just speaks to us in kind of a special way when reading a passage of scripture and it just moves us to tears, although that isn’t exactly what’s being taught.

We realize that one day the Lord is going to come again and He's going to see the church, His body. Think about it. This is exactly what the Lord is going to see if He came today. Brothers and sisters in His body divided up into fighting little groups! Knifing and cutting one another because we can't trust each other.

So suspicious, so overly concerned about minute and picky details that are totally irrelevant to the major issue! And yet we fight among ourselves.

Someone said that the Christian army is the only army that attacks its own wounded. That's the way we are.

Well, the Lord gives them the victory. In our next passage of study all they've got to do is have the mop-up operation. Then we've got the tragic completion to the life of Gideon.

Here are the lessons from our passage:

Lesson #1: "Faithful is he who is calling you who also will bring it to pass." (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

Lesson #2: The Lord wants the glory by Himself for the victory. That's why He trims the forces to 300.

Lesson #3: The Lord meets Gideon's fears with a promise.

The promise is: "I will deliver you with the 300 men who

lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands.”

Lesson #4: The Lord provides additional assurance through the dream.

Lesson #5: Victory came to Gideon and the men as they stood and watched God work.

Lesson #6: The pitcher must be broken before the light can shine out.

“The Lord is near to a broken and a contrite heart.” (ref. Psalm 51:17)

Lesson #7: “For the Lord and for Gideon” is the right order.

Lesson #8: Faith is expressed for the first time by Gideon when he says, “Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands.” (ref. Judges 7:15)

Lesson #9: The principles undergirding this passage are the principles that relate to two things in our life:

1. our SALVATION and
2. our SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

First, our salvation—if we’re going to be saved, if we’re going to have eternal life, we’re going to have to watch God do it in

answer to our faith.

And now Christian, don't get on a performance kick. "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord by faith, so walk ye in Him!" (ref. Colossians 2:6)

He is the One who is responsible for spiritual growth in answer to our faith!

Trust Him. He can give the victory over the flesh, that old nature, over the world and all its allurements. And over the evil one because "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world!" (ref. 1 John 4:4)

Our problem is we go to battle ourselves! And we try to do all that! Instead of in simple faith, believing that the God who saved us is also the God who can keep us and can produce Christlikeness in our lives.

"Set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord." (ref. 2 Chronicles 20:17)

As we are cooperative with His program and in faith we entrust ourselves to Him, we become His child! And in Christian growth, growth is the result of our faith and trust as we read His Word and communicate with Him in prayer. Deepening the relationship, we begin to become more Christlike and we see progress in our spiritual life.

That runs contrary to what so many think and what so many

take, but that is biblical truth. And it's the principle that's illustrated in this whole study.

Father, we thank You for the closeness we feel to our many brothers and sisters in Your family already. They've been such a sweet source of encouragement. Lord, now we pray that something was said that will be applied to each situation. And Lord for the man or the woman who still is resisting you, who's missing so much, Lord we just pray that Your hand will be heavy upon them in conviction. And a lack of rest and an intense anxiety to get things right with You and come to know Christ by faith. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Copyright © 2025 by Bible Teaching Resources by Don Anderson Ministries. The author's teacher notes incorporate quoted, paraphrased and summarized material from a variety of sources, all of which have been appropriately credited to the best of our ability. Quotations particularly reside within the realm of fair use. It is the nature of teacher notes to contain references that may prove difficult to accurately attribute. Any use of material without proper citation is unintentional. Teacher notes have been compiled by Genevieve Martin.

What You Need to Know About GIDEON & SAMSON:

“The Dangers of Losing the Final Lap”

Study Number Three – Judges 7:1-22

NOTES

v. 1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

v. 2 And the Lord said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’

v. 3 “Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.’” So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.

v. 4 Then the Lord said to Gideon, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

v. 5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, “You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink.”

v. 6 Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people knelt to drink water.

v. 7 And the Lord said to Gideon, “I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home.”

v. 8 So the 300 men took the people’s provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

NOTES

v. 9 Now the same night it came about that the Lord said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands.

v. 10 “But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp,

v. 11 and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp.” So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.

v. 12 Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

v. 13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, “Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.”

v. 14 And his friend answered and said, “This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand.”

v. 15 And it came about when Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, that he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands.”

v. 16 And he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.

v. 17 And he said to them, “Look at me, and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.

v. 18 “When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp, and say, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’”

v. 19 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 posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

v. 20 When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!”

NOTES

v. 21 And each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.

v. 22 And when they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Bethshittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abelmeholah, by Tabbath.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Judges 7:1-22 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does the Lord say to Gideon in verse 2?

3. What is the test given in verse 3?

4. How many were left as a result of the second test, according to verse 7?

5. What does Gideon overhear in verses 13 & 14?

6. How does Gideon respond to the dream and its interpretation, according to verse 15?

7. Describe Gideon's preparations for battle.

8. What is the result of the warfare?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: “Faithful is he who calls you and who also will bring it to pass.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

LESSON #2: The Lord wants to get the glory for giving the victory so He trims down Gideon’s forces substantially from 32,000 to 300.

LESSON #3: The Lord meets Gideon’s fear with a promise: “I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands, so let all the other people go, each man to his own home.”

LESSON #4: The Lord provides assurances for Gideon through the interpretation of the dream.

LESSON #5: Victory came as the 300 men plus Gideon stood and watched after they were obedient to break the pitcher and to blow the trumpet and to shout, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon.”

LESSON #6: The pitchers must be broken so the light can shine out.

LESSON #7: “For the Lord and Gideon” is the right order.

LESSON #8: Faith is expressed the first time by Gideon when he says, “Arise, for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hands.” (ref. Judges 7:15)

LESSON #9: Watch the Lord work. He is the One who is responsible for spiritual growth in answer to your faith!

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
