

Judges 7:4-25 - Thursday, October 25th, 2012

(4) But 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. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." (5) So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." (6) And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. (7) Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his place."

- These four verses are replete with a myriad of life lessons all of which have the propensity to be absolutely life changing in their application.
- I'm keenly aware that saying this, this way, may come off as sensational and provocative, however, I think you'll see why here in a moment.
- I'll preface this by saying that, for the most part; many Bible commentators seem to agree with each other concerning the 300 that are left.

- Be that as it may, I have to break from most of these commentators, not because I disagree, rather it's that I think there's more to the text.
- Yes, the 300 speak to how we respond to the necessary as opposed to the unnecessary, and the ordinary as opposed to the extraordinary.
- More specifically, these 300 were chosen because they did not give unnecessary attention to necessary things such as quenching thirst.

- Furthermore, these 300 men were chosen because they were faithful in the ordinary, and thus they could be trusted with the extraordinary.
- Again, I believe that's a lesson that can be learned from the text, I just don't believe it's the only lesson that can be learned from the text.
- Here's why; in the context of, and to be consistent with the narrative, supremely that of God receiving all the glory, it teaches us even more.

- Years ago I heard Gayle Erwin, one of my favorite Bible teachers, speak about what he saw as the reason these 300 men were chosen.
- Gayle explains the reason that these 300 men didn't get down on their hands and knees and lap the water like a dog was that they couldn't.
- The reason they couldn't is because they were the lame, blind, and crippled, as it were, and as such, they had to cup the water to drink it.

- To me, this is a much better fit with the narrative, in that, God is doing everything and stopping at nothing to insure that He gets the glory.
- It just makes sense and stands to reason as Jon Courson says in his commentary, these 300 men were too fat and old too drink like a dog.
- If you really think about it, there's no way that these 300 men, whether they were too handicapped or too old and fat, could take the credit.

1 Corinthians 1:25-31 NIV (25) For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. (26) Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. (28) He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, (29) so that no one may boast before him. (30) It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. (31) Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

- At the risk of reading too much into this, I would suggest that God separated those using their tongue to drink from those using their hand.
- Here's how I get there, the tongue is used to boast about what we do for God, whereas the hand is what is used to receive from God.
- So too is this true for me and you, by virtue of how it is that we receive as a gift from God, and for the glory of God, so we cannot boast.

- One final thought before we move on to verse eight; I can't help but wonder what these 9,700 men along with the 300 men were thinking.
- By any stretch of the imagination these 9,700 were strong men with an unflinching fearlessness having passed the first fear test, if you will.
- So why is it that God would not choose to use them? I believe with all my heart that it was because they were too strong for God to use.

- We need look no further as to why God won't choose to use those whom we judge, by their outward appearance, to be the most qualified.
- It's been said that God does not call the qualified rather He qualifies the called. Better said; God isn't looking for impressive resumes.
- That said, God is looking at the heart, and he's searching to and fro throughout the earth looking for those hearts fully reliant upon Him.

2 Chronicles 16:9 NKJV For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."

- It's interesting to note that when the God spoke this to King Asa through the prophet, he had relied on God for victory over the Ethiopians.
- This prophetic warning to this king came because he had not relied on the Lord and instead had allied with and relied on the king of Syria.
- What's really striking about all this is that he actually wins the battle in his allying with Syria, but loses the war in his relying on the Lord.

- Just as King Asa had become too strong for God to use, and in the end would lose, so too did the 9,700 lose out on whom God would use.
- The reason they would lose out, and the 300 wouldn't is, God had permission to be strong on their behalf because of their devoted hearts.
- I'm sure these 9,700 men were impressive in their outward appearance, but the problem is that God is only looking at what's in their hearts.

1 Samuel 16:6-7 NKJV So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed *is* before Him!" (7) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the* LORD does not *see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

- The common denominator between both David and Gideon's 300 hundred men is that they had a humble heart after God's own heart.
- I'll take it a step further and submit that they were also very small in that the odds were so stacked against them it was impossible for them.
- The odds for David were 7:1, and the odds for Gideon's army went from 4:1, to 14:1, then ultimately to 450:1, which is precisely the point.

(8) So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all *the rest of* Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. (9) It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. (10) But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, (11) and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who *were* in the camp.

- There's something here about fear that's woven into the fabric of the passage, and it's something for which we may not see at first read.
- It would appear that fear has once again reared its ugly head in Gideon's heart and it can actually bring much encouragement to our heart.
- Here's how, instead of Gideon's fear being met with God's anger, it's met with God's kindness by both strengthening and encouraging him.

- It's not so much "that" God does this, it's "how" God does this, such that it speaks to how God frees us of our fears in the battles of this life.
- In effect, God has Gideon take his servant Purah down to the Midianite camp in order to hear what the enemy was both saying and doing.
- Sometimes the Lord let's us in on what He's doing behind the scenes in the enemy's camp so as to strengthen and encourage us for battle.

(12) Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude. (13) And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: *To my* surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed." (14) Then his companion answered and said, "This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp." (15) And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshipped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand."

- There are some fascinating details given to us here, the first of which is the barley bread used in the dream to collapse the Midianite tents.
- Barley was considered to be the least of bread making materials, and this loaf was more like a bun, which means that it was very small.
- You probably know where this is going but it's fascinating none-the-less how that God has Gideon hear the details of this Midianites dream.

Charles Spurgeon - It was a singular providence that one soldier should dream such a dream, that another should give it such an interpretation, and that Gideon should be listening during their conversation. The wonders of providence deserve the careful and adoring eye of the observer. The dream was just what Gideon wanted. He was as despised as a poor barley cake, and yet he should overturn the pavilions of Midian."

- Two thoughts, first, this is God's way of showing us how it is that He goes before us, because He is for us, and nobody can be against us.
- Second, this is God's way of showing us that we should never be afraid and that the opposite is true. The enemy is the one afraid of us.
- The reason the enemy is afraid of us is, God supernaturally put the fear there in the first place. That's why He's not given us a spirit of fear.

- Notice how that subsequent to God allowing him to hear the telling and interpretation of this dream, Gideon's response is to worship God.
- The irony of this is amusing at best, convicting at worst, because this is the same Gideon that was afraid of the Midianites just days prior.
- This is the same Gideon of whom it seemed cruel that God would address him as a mighty warrior when he was acting like anything but.

- So what changed Gideon seemingly overnight from a fearful coward to a mighty warrior? I believe the answer is found in verse fourteen.
- The reason I believe that is because the Midianite's dream is interpreted to be about Gideon, the son of Joash, which they had heard of.
- In other words, word got out overnight about this mighty warrior by the name of Gideon who tore down the altar of Baal in just one night.

A while back I happened upon a humorous Facebook post that I've sort of changed to illustrate how the enemy should be more afraid of us than we should ever be of him. It goes like this; "Be the kind of man or woman that when your feet hit the floor each morning, the devil says, "Oh no! They're up!"

(16) Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. (17) And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: (18) When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '*The sword of* the LORD and of Gideon!'"

- Can you imagine what these 300 men must have thought when Gideon lays out this most unusual battle plan using trumpets and torches.
- If I was one receiving these marching orders, I would have asked for AK47's instead, which may explain why I wasn't given these order.
- Also, notice conspicuously absent from the narrative is any complaint from any of them. Why? They don't know how, they just know that.

(19) So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands. (20) Then 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 they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" (21) And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. (22) When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath. (23) And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites.

- This being at the beginning of the middle watch would have meant that it was at 10:00pm when the Midianites were already falling asleep.
- Then, except for those that they had posted watch, the 135,000 men were awakened by the sound of three hundred trumpets blowing.
- In addition to the sound of three hundred trumpets blowing, you had the sound of three hundred pitchers breaking, which terrified them.

- The reason they were so terrified was because the military strategy of that day was such that each trumpet represented 1,000 warriors.
- In other words, for them to hear the sound of 300 would mean that there were 300,000 men, against whom 135,000 would be no match.
- If that weren't bad enough, they heard the words the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, which was the final straw breaking the camels back.

- They became so afraid they actually turned on each other and slaughtered one another in their blinding fear in the darkness of the night.
- The lesson here becomes quite clear in the sense that the victory comes when the great and loud trumpet sound of God's word is heard.
- Not only is it when the Word of God is heard, it's when the vessel chosen by God is broken, and the light of the Lord is able to shine forth.

(24) Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan." Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. (25) And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

- As we'll see in chapter eight, what should have been met with an unspeakable joy is inexplicably met with an unthinkable complaining.