

Making God's
Power Obvious

Judges 7:1-18

Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod. And the camp of Midian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. The LORD said to Gideon, “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 therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying,

‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.’” Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained. And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ shall not go.”

So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, “Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.” And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. 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. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant.

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 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.

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.”

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.” 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.’”

Judges 7:1

Then **Jerubbaal** (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod.

Judges 6:32

Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “**Let Baal contend against him,**” because he broke down his altar.

Judges 7:2

The LORD said to Gideon, “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.**’”

Human nature is such that, if there is the tiniest opportunity to boast in our work, we will.

- Tim Keller

1 Samuel 14:6

Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of the uncircumcised. It may be the LORD will work for us, **for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or a few.**”

Judges 7:3

Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.'" Then **22,000 of the people returned**, and 10,000 remained.

For one as fearful as Gideon himself, the sight of more than two-thirds of his troops (twenty-two thousand of thirty-two thousand) abandoning him must have been both shocking and dismaying.

- Daniel Block

Judges 7:5-7

So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, “Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink.” And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. And the LORD said to Gideon, **“With the 300 men who lapped I will save you...”**

The problem with this kind of exposition is that it has no basis in the text. The text does not hint at any virtue or vice in how one guzzles water. The attention lavished on the quality of the three hundred actually obscures what the text is trying to say, for when verse 2 stresses the necessary weakness of Israel, one doubts if it means to laud the vigor of this minority. The three hundred are the sign of Israel's weakness, not the epitome of her strength.

- Dale Ralph Davis

2 Corinthians 4:7

We have this treasure in jars of clay,
to show that the surpassing **power**
belongs to God and not to us.

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.**”

Judges 7:19-22

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him...blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands...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!” Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled...**the LORD set every man’s sword against his comrade and against all the army.**

Isaiah 19:2

And I will stir up Egyptians against
Egyptians,
and they will fight, each against another
and each against his neighbor,
city against city, kingdom against kingdom;

You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken **as on the day of Midian.**

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle
tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder
and his name shall be called
**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**