

Title: Gideon and the 300 - They Were Not Warriors.

Main Scripture: Hebrews 11:32

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We have been saved entirely by the grace of God. Therefore, we give glory to God alone. Greetings to all of you. Today's passage is Hebrews 11:32.

32 What more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets.

There are several individuals mentioned in the passage, but today the topic is "Gideon and the 300 - They Were Not Warriors."

Contrary to current beliefs, Gideon was not a great warrior when first called by God. Furthermore, the so-called 300 warriors with Gideon were not true warriors. Let's look at Gideon's calling by God and his situation at that time. Judges 6:11 mentions, "The son of Joash, Gideon, threshed wheat in the winepress to keep it from the Midianites." In other words, he was doing it secretly, trying not to be discovered, threshing wheat in a winepress. Not exactly the behavior of a brave warrior.

Gideon was among the weakest in Israel. Judges 6:15b states, "'But Lord,' Gideon asked, 'My clan is the weakest in Manasseh.'" You know, the tribe of Manasseh is not even one of the original twelve tribes of Jacob. Manasseh, being the son of highly esteemed Joseph, became a tribe because Jacob squeezed him into the original tribes. Moreover, Manasseh, despite being Joseph's firstborn, underwent an unexpected turn of events when his grandfather Jacob intentionally crossed his hands while blessing him and his brother. Consequently, instead of being ahead of his younger brother Ephraim, Manasseh ended up behind him. So, to anyone looking, Manasseh appeared to be a very weak tribe. Furthermore, if you continue to the latter part of verse 15, it says, "I am the least in my father's house." This was Gideon's situation. Therefore, can we truly assert that Gideon was a hero and great warrior when first called by God?

So, was Gideon brave or courageous? No, he was not. As mentioned earlier, he was so afraid of being noticed by the Midianites that he threshed wheat in a winepress inside his house instead of openly on the threshing floor. Therefore, Gideon was nothing more or less than an ordinary farmer, and not even a good one, let alone a hero.

To such a person like Gideon, the Lord sent an angel, as recorded in Judges 6:14, "The Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand.'" Reading this verse casually might lead to the misconception that Gideon was being told to rely on his own strength to save Israel. However, that's not the case. In the preceding verse (verse 12), the angel says, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." So, when it says, "Go in the strength you have," it refers to the strength mentioned in the previous verse, which is the strength provided by the presence of the Lord. "The Lord is with you."

Therefore, the first part of the verse, "mighty warrior," and the phrase "in your strength" in verse 14 do not refer to Gideon's inherent strength. What the angel of the Lord is referring to as "your strength" is the strength that will come about by being with God. Therefore, in verse 16, when it says, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive," it is referring to the strength that God will grant Gideon. So, this "your strength" is the strength given by God, the strength that comes into being by being with God.

Now, let's examine the subsequent events of the war. Judges 6:33 states, "Now all the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel." The Midianites intended to completely control Israel. At that time, as mentioned in verse 34, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet." Then many Israelites unexpectedly rallied around Gideon and followed him. It seems that the people turned to Gideon when they felt threatened.

However, God was not willing to accept everyone who volunteered to go with

Gideon. At that time, if you read further about the people who gathered around Gideon, a total of 32,000 people had gathered. However, in Judges 7:2, God said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands."

Why did God say this? It was because, as the latter half of the verse indicates, God was concerned that the people following Gideon might boast, saying, "My own hand has saved me," even though the 32,000 were already nothing compared to the Midianite army.

Yes, most of them were sent back to prevent such pride. Since God's intention was to prevent self-exaltation, how could God have chosen a leader, a judge who would be known as a powerful warrior? If a renowned warrior was chosen, wouldn't he attribute his success to his own strength? How could God's concern to thwart this pride be alleviated had He chosen a mighty warrior? So, it is reasonable to think that God did not choose a mighty warrior.

Therefore, in reality, God deliberately chose and called Gideon, identified as the weakest son of Joash in Judges 6:15—"the weakest in my family, my father's house"—from the Manasseh tribe, the tribe which had barely secured its place among the twelve tribes of Israel. Isn't this the case?

This fact, which the Bible speaks of as God's intention, raises a question: Why is Gideon distorted into a renowned hero, as if he were a great warrior who saved Israel from the hands of the Midianites? In reality, and according to the Bible, he was not. Why has he become famous through this distortion, and what is obscured by his distorted fame? The magnificence and accomplishments of God are eclipsed by the distorted glory of Gideon. In the present day, when the glory of God and His deeds are overshadowed by the glorification of Gideon, how should we navigate this situation?

The incident of Gideon, the event of delivering God's people from Midian, is indeed an event of salvation, as mentioned in the second part of Judges 6:14,

demonstrating God's deliverance of His people from the darkness of this world, the kingdom of death, and the forces of darkness symbolized by Egypt or Midian. In other words, this event serves as a typological representation of our salvation from the devil and death. Doesn't it?

In John 5:39, it is recorded, "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me." Therefore, the event of God's people being saved through Gideon serves as a true foreshadowing of our salvation. We have received salvation completely by God's grace, and the Gideon incident clearly symbolizes such salvation. Therefore, if one were to speak about the salvation through Gideon as if someone other than God did it, attributing it to a prominent figure among them, or claiming it was done by any notable person in the Scriptures, then it would not be an event of salvation by God's grace. Understanding and acknowledging this event as a manifestation of God's grace is essential for the knowledge and confession related to this event to be connected to eternal life.

Therefore, Gideon whom God chose should not have been a renowned warrior from the beginning. He was meant to be someone unknown as a warrior. Where else would we find such a person like Gideon? Even his so-called three hundred warriors, scripturally speaking, were by no means actual warriors. They were not supposed to be warriors.

Judges 7:12 states, "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." Despite the vast number of the Midianites and Amalekites, God considered the army of 32,000 led by Gideon too many to confront this formidable enemy. He instructed Gideon to send back a significant portion of the army, reducing it to just 10,000. Even after this reduction, God said there were still too many, and He led them to the water for a test. These 10,000 were somewhat courageous individuals. They were bold enough to go to the water, kneel down, and drink directly by lowering their heads into the stream. To engage in battle, one

would expect this level of courage. However, even among them, God instructed Gideon to send many away, stating that they were not suitable for the task.

So, they were sent away, and who was left? As mentioned before, the enemies were still lying in their own camps, just as described in Judges 7:12. Despite the fact that the Israelites had observed them just waiting and lying down, some, perhaps out of fear that the enemies might attack, were cautious and checked their surroundings. As recorded in Judges 7:6, those who, when bringing water to their mouths, lifted it with their hands and lapped were left by God. These individuals were cowards from anyone's perspective. They were indeed cowards. These were the ones God left behind for Gideon's army. Their number was not many; only 300 remained. Yet, God commanded Gideon to go into battle with these 300.

Were these 300 men warriors? Following the biblical narrative, it's clear that they were not. In fact, it was precisely because they were not warriors that God sent them into battle. This is the Bible.

God chose Gideon, who was weak, and even the 300, who were not real warriors, to prevent the great mistake mentioned in Judges 7:2b, "Lest Israel boast over me, 'My own strength has saved me.'" Therefore, God intentionally selected those who were not renowned heroes. The criteria for selecting those who would be sent into this salvation war was such that those chosen were never meant to be judges or people considered great warriors. And even among those individuals, God did not want many of them. This is evident in Judges 7:2b.

So, how could weak Gideon and these 300, who were not real warriors, defeat the mighty Midian? Did God truly deliver His people from Midian through them?

Let's see. God, on the day just before the war, on that very night, shared a dream with a person. In Judges 7:13, we see that someone had a dream, and in this dream, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the Midianite camp. Upon

entering the camp, this loaf struck the camp. The camp was overturned and collapsed, and the entire camp fell. This remarkable event occurred in the dream. The person who heard this dream, as mentioned in verse 14, shouted that the loaf represented the sword of the Lord and Gideon.

So, wouldn't this dream be extraordinary for Gideon and the 300 soldiers who were preparing to fight against Midian? Wouldn't this amazing dream spread quickly? Indeed the dream spread instantly, becoming widely known. With this development, God instructed Gideon to take his cowardly army of 300 and go into the battle. So, what did God instruct them to do? To simply blow their trumpets and break the jars they held, as stated in verse 19. According to the command, they shouted, as recorded in verse 20, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" That is all they did.

Yet, in Judges 7:22, the soldiers of the Midianite army turned on each other, destroying themselves, and the enemy collapsed without Gideon and his 300 having to fight properly. Gideon and his 300 achieved the salvation of God's people Israel from the powerful forces of Midian without engaging in a full-fledged battle. It was entirely through the work of God and His grace.

So, Gideon and the 300, who went to war, could not deny this fact. The people who received salvation also had no choice but to accept this reality. What would they have shouted? Wouldn't it be something like, 'Oh! Our God, You alone have saved us!'

Yes, indeed. They had to realize that the salvation they received in this war was from God. When they went to war with this understanding, their salvation could be connected to the kingdom of Father God, to eternal life.

God desired to lead them into eternal life in the kingdom of God after the end of the world. The salvation war from Midian was a foreshadowing of the salvation war for eternal life, given by God solely through His grace. Therefore, from the very beginning, Gideon and his 300, used in the war against Midian, were not supposed to be the kind of warriors they are known

as today. Oh, the glory of God!

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, through today's message, we face significant challenges and make new commitments. We used to think of Gideon as a great warrior who saved Israel from the hands of the Midianites. However, through your word, we have come to understand that he was not a warrior. Also, the 300 who followed Gideon were actually cowards.

Yet, with distorted biases, we regarded them as great heroes. We even said, "Gideon's 300 warriors, Gideon's 300 warriors," implying that we should be like them. But will this attitude save us? Will it keep the salvation we received?

We now realize that Gideon and his 300, despite not being the heroes we thought, may hinder the glory of God if we glorify them as great warriors. Lord, may we give glory to You alone, relying solely on You. Let the Holy Spirit move and inspire us to understand according to the Scriptures.

Oh our God! Only You have saved us. Jesus, our only Savior, no one else can save us. God, do not let anything obscure Your glory. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we earnestly pray and make our requests. Amen, Amen.