

JUDGES 7:1-7
ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 7 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Judges.

We are currently looking at the Judge Gideon. Gideon is the fifth Judge in Israel and there is more spoken of this Judge than any other. There are some 100 verses and 3 chapters dedicated to this man, Gideon. The only other Judge who comes close is Samson and there are 96 verses dealing with Samson and 4 chapters.

Now when you think of Gideon you may picture him as this mighty warrior! Kind of like with Samson, and we will get to him as we continue on in our study of Judges. But with Samson, we see him as having these bulging muscles, the guy must have been like Charles Atlas!

But I don't think so. I think he was a guy like me, like many of you. An average guy, maybe very thin, and muscles, are you kidding me.

Why do I feel that way? Because it was God who was working through Samson and not the strength of Samson that was going to give him these victories.

And I think the same is true with Gideon and we do see that in our study here in Judges.

God calls Gideon, "**The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!**" Judges 6:12.

Again, the indication so far is that he was strong, a great fighter. But as we read on, we find out that this was far from the truth. He was not a strong military man! God was looking at the heart of Gideon, not his outward strength.

Remember as Gideon was trying to thresh wheat and he was down in the winepress so the Midianites would not see him and come and steal his wheat. He is cowering in fear, you might say.

And then he starts to come up with excuses why he is hiding, and he blames God. He wants to know where God was at as they are encountering all this persecution. In fact, listen to how he responds to the Lord. He says, “**... But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.**” Judges 6:13.

In spite of what Gideon said, listen to what the Lord tells Gideon next. He said, “**... Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?**” Judges 6:14.

Keep in mind that the Midianites have oppressed Israel for seven years and now the Lord is telling Gideon that he needs to step out and he will have victory against this enemy!

And here is this mighty man of valor and he tells the Lord, “**... O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.**” Judges 6:15.

Keep in mind that the Lord is sending Gideon into this battle and Gideon is arguing why he can’t fight, why he can’t win, even though the Lord told him that He would give him the victory!

It is out of all that we see Gideon worship the Lord and Gideon finds peace in the Lord.

And his first battle is not with the Midianites, but with his own family and town. You see, his father set-up an altar to Baal and a wooden image to Asherah and the people would come to worship these false god’s.

So the Lord told Gideon that he needed to destroy these altars and images and set up an altar to the Lord and worship the Lord there. Which he did.

Now, when the people got up the next morning, the men of the city, they were upset that their idols were gone, and they found out Gideon did this, and they were not happy to say the least.

So they go to Joash, Gideon's father, and they tell him to hand Gideon over to them so that they can put him to death for what he had done. Keep in mind that Joash is the one who set-up this altar and this idol to worship, but now something has changed in Joash.

And I think that the faith of Gideon touched the heart of his father, Joash and listen to what he tells these men, **“But Joash said to all who stood against him, ‘Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!’”**

Judges 6:31.

Notice the change in Joash. From worshiping these god's to mocking them as he stands up for Gideon and really the Lord!

And then we see the Spirit of the **LORD** come upon Gideon, and he is gathering his army together, 32,000 men for this battle!

Now that might not seem too bad until you consider that the Midianites had 135,000 men of war to fight against Israel according to Judges 8:10.

That means Israel was outnumbered 4 to 1! Not great odds.

So to make sure that God is really in this, even though Lord has told him several times that He was, Gideon puts out a fleece to see if he should go forward and the Lord says that he is.

But he is still not sure. The first fleece dealt with putting wool out and having it soaked with water and the ground dry in the morning. And, like I have said, that took place.

The second fleece was the opposite, he wanted the fleece or wool to be dry and the ground to be wet. And God showed Gideon that he was to go forward, this is what God wanted him to do.

Now let me say this. We are no longer called to put fleeces out. We don't see Jesus teach it in the Gospel's. We don't see it done in the book of Acts. And we don't read it in the Epistles or letters.

What we see is the Holy Spirit's direction, He will show us through the Word, through others, and even speaking to our hearts. But, keep in mind that the Holy Spirit will never tell you to do something that is contrary to the Word of God – ***NEVER!***

Now, as we move into Judges chapter 7 this morning, God is going to do some work with the number of soldiers that the children of Israel have.

Keep in mind they are outnumbered 4 to 1. The Midianites had 135,000 soldiers; the children of Israel had 32,000.

And thus, we might think that God is going to increase the number of soldiers for the children of Israel. Well, not exactly!

I have called this study – ***ARE YOU KIDDING ME?***

And as we go through these verses this morning, you will see why, and I think many of you already know the reason.

This truly is a test of Gideon's faith and I think what God is showing us is that He wants to test our faith as well, He wants to see our faith grow.

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

I don't recall too many chapel messages from my years as a seminary student, but Vance Havner gave a message that has stayed with me and often encouraged me. Speaking from Hebrews 11, he told us that because Moses was a man of faith, he was able to ***“see the invisible, chose the imperishable, and do the impossible.”*** I needed that message then and I still need it today.

What was true for Moses centuries ago can be true for God's people today, but men and women of faith seem to be in short supply. Whatever our churches may be known for today, they're not especially known for glorifying God by great exploits of faith. ***“The church used to be known for its good deeds,”*** said one wit, ***“but today it's better known for its bad mortgages.”***

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith” (1 John 5:4 NKJV).

Christians are either overcome because of their unbelief or overcomers because of their faith. And remember, faith doesn't depend on how we feel, what we see, or what may happen.

The Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier put it this way in “My Soul and I”:

Nothing before, nothing behind;

The steps of faith

Fall on the seeming void, and find

The rock beneath.

The rock is the Word of God.

The familiar and exciting account of Gideon's wonderful victory over the Midianites is really a story of faith in action . . . If we're to be overcomers, and not be overcome, we need to understand and apply these principles.

- Warren W. Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, p. 444

And we will see how this all plays out in the life of Gideon as we go through this chapter over the next few weeks.

In these verses we will be looking at this morning, I have broken them down into five main points. They are as follows:

MEN OF WAR? – JUDGES 7:1

THE GLORY BELONGS TO THE LORD – JUDGES 7:2

SEPARATING THE FEARFUL – JUDGES 7:3

SEPARATING THE DOGS? – JUDGES 7:4-6

WHAT? – JUDGES 7:7

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 7, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at this topic – ***ARE YOU KIDDING ME?***

JUDGES 7**VERSE 1**

Picture in your mind what is going on here.

At the well of Harod, which is located at the foot of Mount Gilboa were Gideon and his 32,000 men.

The Midianites were about 4 or 5 miles away at the foot of the hill of Moreh with their 135,00 men.

And I have called this verse – ***MEN OF WAR?*** Now I put a question mark there and there is a good reason for that.

And please understand, my focus here is not the soldiers from the Midianites, but the children of Israel.

It is great that 32,000 men rose up to fight with Gideon against the Midianites. But the reality is, you can put on an army uniform and still not be willing to fight.

Let me show you what I mean. When I was in Nursing School, and no, Florence Nightingale was not in my class, there were a lot of students in my class.

And some were very good at the academic part. They would pass their tests with ease.

Now this was not very nice I guess, but I would watch my fellow students, and others did this as well, and I would pick out the ones who I thought would not make it in nursing.

And the reason they would not make it was because knowing what the books say and then actually applying that in real life situations, are two different things.

And I was pretty good at guessing.

And, as we will see, that is true here. Just because they put on a military uniform, just because they were willing to fight, did not make them – ***MEN OF WAR!***

What about us?

Yes, we are Christians. That is not the issue here. And we probably all would say that we are ready to go to battle no matter the cost.

And then you see the strength of the enemy. You see what this battle might cost you. Are you going to drop out or are you going to forge ahead? Are you going to let fear drive you or are you going to let God guide you?

That is what we will be looking at in a few minutes.

But first, we need to look at – ***THE GLORY BELONGS TO THE LORD!***

VERSE 2

I am sure at this point that tensions are high, especially for the children of Israel as they are far outnumbered, some 4 to 1!

And can you imagine as the soldiers are waiting to get their orders from Gideon, that the Lord speaks to Gideon and He tells Gideon, ***“Son, hold on a minute, you have too many men! We have to bring those numbers down a little!”***

And you can just picture the facial expression on Gideon as he might be thinking, ***“Are You kidding me? A, Lord, I think you have that all wrong. They have too many men, so take away some of their men and let’s even up the score here!”***

But listen again to what the Lord told Gideon. He said, **“The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”** Judges 7:2.

First of all, this was not about Gideon and his men winning this battle. This battle was the Lord's. He was going to obtain this victory, through Gideon and his men, against the Midianites.

Why was this such a big deal?

Because the glory of this victory would be taken away from the Lord and the children of Israel would think, "**My own hand has saved me.**"

There is the danger. God gives us great victories and we think we are the ones who have obtained it, and we get the glory, the praise, the pats on the back for what we have done, and God doesn't!

Now please understand that God does not need our praise or this glory from this victory. He is God and all the glory and honor goes to Him if we agree with that or not, if we give Him this glory or not!

The big problem for us is thinking we are special, and we have done some great thing.

Let me show you what I mean.

In Ephesians 2:8 we are told, "**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.**"

This is pretty straight forward. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus. Grace means unmerited favor or that we don't deserve eternal life with God, we don't deserve heaven, but God ***FREELY*** gives it to us through His Son's atoning work on the cross of Calvary.

And just in case we miss that point, Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:9, "**not of works, lest anyone should boast.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**Not because of works [not the fulfillment of the Law's demands], lest any man should boast. [It is not the result of what anyone can possibly do, so no one can pride himself in it or take glory to himself.]**"

And The Living Bible puts this verse like this, **“Salvation is not a reward for the good we have done, so none of us can take any credit for it.”**

In other words, since we did not do anything to obtain our salvation, this was a gift from God to us, then there is nothing for us to boast about.

And make no mistake about it, we would and some still do.

But if we think we did something great to attain this salvation, we are bringing glory to ourselves and if we are doing that, we are taking the glory away from God who deserves it since He saved us!

Think about it like this, what Paul said prior to what he said here in Ephesians 2:8-9. He wrote, **“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”** Ephesians 2:4-7.

We were dead in our trespasses and sins and there was no way out. We are already guilty before God and there was absolutely nothing that we could do to make us unguilty.

And then those precious words, **“But God.”**

What we couldn't do, God could do, and He did do, He saved us by His grace giving us heaven, which we do not deserve, and by His mercy, not giving to us death, which we deserved!

But what about this word ***“glory”***. What does this word ***“glory”*** mean?

Let me share this with you. We are told,

The glory of God is the beauty of His spirit. It is not an aesthetic beauty or a material beauty, but it is the beauty that emanates from His character, from all that He is. James 1:10 calls on a rich man to “glory in his humiliation,” indicating a glory that does not mean riches or power or material beauty. This glory can crown man or fill the earth. It is seen within man and in the earth, but it is not of them; it is of God. The glory of man is the beauty of man’s spirit, which is fallible and eventually passes away, and is therefore humiliating - as the verse tells us. But the glory of God, which is manifested in all His attributes together, never passes away. It is eternal.

Isaiah 43:7 says that God created us for His glory. In context with the other verses, it can be said that man “glorifies” God because through man, God’s glory can be seen in things such as love, music, heroism and so forth - things belonging to God that we are carrying “in jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7). We are the vessels which “contain” His glory. All the things we are able to do and to be find their source in Him.

God interacts with nature in the same way. Nature exhibits His glory. His glory is revealed to man’s mind through the material world in many ways, and often in different ways to different people. One person may be thrilled by the sight of the mountains, and another person may love the beauty of the sea. But that which is behind them both (God’s glory) speaks to both people and connects them to God.

In this way, God is able to reveal Himself to all men, no matter their race, heritage or location. As Psalm 19:1-4 says, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands; day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world.”

Psalm 73:24 calls heaven itself “glory.” It used to be common to hear Christians talk of death as being “received unto glory,” which is a phrase borrowed from this Psalm. When the Christian dies, he will be taken into God’s presence, and in His presence will be naturally surrounded by God’s glory. We will be taken to the place where God’s beauty literally resides - the beauty of His Spirit will be there, because He will be there.

Again, the beauty of His Spirit (or the essence of Who He Is) is His “glory.” In that place, His glory will not need to come through man or nature, rather it will be seen clearly, just as 1 Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

In the human/earthly sense, glory is a beauty or vibrancy that rests upon the material of the earth (Psalm 37:20, Psalm 49:17), and in that sense, it fades. But the reason it fades is that material things do not last. They die and wither, but the glory that is in them belongs to God, and returns to Him when death or decay takes the material. Think of the rich man mentioned earlier. The verse says, “The rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.”

What does this mean?

The verse is admonishing the rich man to realize that his wealth and power and beauty come from God, and to be humbled by the realization that it is God who makes him what he is, and gives him all he has. And the knowledge that he will pass away like the grass is what will bring him to the realization that God is the one from whom glory comes. God’s glory is the source, the wellspring from which all smaller glories run.

Since God is the one from whom glory comes, He will not let stand the assertion that glory comes from man or from the idols of man or from nature. In Isaiah 42:8, we see an example of God's jealousy over His glory.

This jealousy for His own glory is what Paul is talking about in Romans 1:21-25 when he speaks of the ways people worship the creature rather than the Creator. In other words, they looked at the object through which God's glory was coming, and, instead of giving God the credit for it, they worshiped that animal or tree or man as if the beauty it possessed originated from within itself. This is the very heart of idolatry and is a very common occurrence. Everyone who has ever lived has committed this error at one time or another. We have all "exchanged" the glory of God in favor of the "glory of man."

This is the mistake many people continue to make: trusting in earthly things, earthly relationships, their own powers or talents or beauty, or the goodness they see in others. But when these things fade and fail as they will inevitably do (being only temporary carriers of the greater glory), these people despair.

What we all need to realize is that God's glory is constant, and as we journey through life we will see it manifest here and there, in this person or that forest, or in a story of love or heroism, fiction or non-fiction, or our own personal lives. But it all goes back to God in the end. And the only way to God is through His Son, Jesus Christ. We will find the very source of all beauty in Him, in heaven, if we are in Christ. Nothing will be lost to us. All those things that faded in life we will find again in Him.

- <https://bit.ly/3b9vJbi>

Make no mistake about it, God will not share His glory with anyone or anything. It is like we read in Isaiah 42:8, “**I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.**”

All that we are, all that we have, comes from God and thus, He deserves the glory, we don't.

And that is what we see here in Judges.

But let's be honest. If we are outnumbered 4 to 1 and the commander says that we are going to send in even less troops, I would not be too eager to listen to him.

And the same is true here in this situation with Gideon. But please understand that we are looking at this from a purely human perspective and God is going to do something that is far beyond our control. He will work it out, all we need to do is walk by faith and that is what we are seeing here with Gideon and his men. God was showing them that He would give them the victory and they need to give to God the glory – ***THE GLORY BELONGS TO GOD!***

Now, as we read on, we will see how God is going to separate these soldiers and He will do them in two ways. The first way is – ***SEPARATING THE FEARFUL!***

VERSE 3

Remember what the Lord told Gideon, that there are too many soldiers and that He was going to cut that number down. But how was God going to accomplish this?

We see here that the Lord tells Gideon to ask how many of his men are fearful and all those that are fearful can go home.

And the Lord is just re-instructing them of what He said before they even entered the Promise Land back in Deuteronomy 20:8, **“The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.’”**

You see, where there is fear there is no faith and that can spread to the other men.

Thus, if they were fearful, they were not to go into battle.

Now hear me out on this because some take this to the wrong conclusion. I think all of us are fearful from time to time in what the Lord has called us to do. That is not the issue. This is much more than just being nervous or unsure about going into battle, much more!

This was a fear that would paralyze them in this battle and maybe they would not even fight but run away.

And, as the Lord said, **“Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.”** Judges 7:3.

Notice that they were not only told not to go into battle, but they were told to go home, to leave the area of Mount Gilead.

Why would the Lord tell them that, it seems kind of harsh?

Because, like I have said, that fear can be caught by others and if it infected all of them, no one would go into battle.

We saw that with Moses when he sent out the twelve spies, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to spy out the Promise Land, the land of Canaan.

And they went in and spied out the land, and found it to be bountiful, beautiful, ***BUT!***

The “*but*” was for the giants in the land. The “*but*” was for the fortified cities that they occupied. The “*but*” was for the number of people that the enemy had. There was no way they were going to win this battle.

So as they came back and reported what they found, ten of the twelve spies gave a negative report, discouraging the children of Israel from entering the land of Canaan, the Promise Land, the land that God had given to them, promised them.

Two of those twelve spies, Joshua and Caleb gave good reports, not denying the fortified cities or the giants that were in the land, but their focus was on the promise that God had given them this land.

And those ten spies, their fear, was caught by some 2 to 3 million people and they did not walk by faith, they did not enter the land. Do you see how that fear was caught!

In our homes, at work, in our neighborhoods, at the store, do people see us as someone who is fearful or faithful? They are watching.

Your wife, your husband, your children are watching how you handle situations. I am not saying you are not fearful, that I have never been fearful, but I have not let fear paralyze me but faith to move me! And that is what we are seeing here, their faith paralyzed them, they were not going to move into battle, but they were going to go home.

So the Lord instructs Gideon to find out how many of his soldiers are fearful, and I am sure Gideon thought maybe a few would go home. I mean, think about it. These are the guys who rose up to come for this battle in the first place and thus, there is no way there is going to be that many who are fearful, right? Wrong!

So here is Gideon, he asks his men who is fearful and 22,000 of his soldiers walk away, they go home!

Can you imagine what was going through Gideon's mind at this point?

“Lord, did you see that? 22,000 men left! I didn't see that coming, did you? What are we going to do? I understand that if there is fear then there is no faith and yes, they should not be in battle. But if we have no soldiers, then we have no army!”

Yes, Gideon didn't say that, but I am sure he was thinking about that!

Why would God do this?

The first reason is so that He would get the glory, but there is more to it than that.

I think this was done to test the faith of Gideon and his men. To stretch their faith. One writer put it like this. He wrote,

J. G. Stipe said that faith is like a toothbrush; Everybody should have one and use it regularly, but it isn't safe to use somebody else's.

We can sing loudly about the ***“faith of Our Fathers,”*** but we can't exercise the faith of our fathers. We can follow men and women of faith and share in their exploits, but we can't succeed in our own personal lives by depending on somebody else's faith.

God tests our faith for at least two reasons: first, to show us whether our faith is real or counterfeit, and second, to strengthen our faith for the tasks He's set before us.

I've noticed in my own life and ministry that God has often put us through the valley of testing before allowing us to reach the mountain peak of victory.

Spurgeon was right when he said that the promises of God shine brightest in the furnace of affliction, and it is in claiming those promises that we gain the victory.

- Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, p. 444

So these 32,000 men that Gideon had were too many as we see the ***SEPARATING THE FEARFUL!***

Now they only have 10,000 men against 135,000 soldiers that the enemy had. And, we did see that ***THE GLORY BELONGS TO THE LORD*** and through this the Lord was showing the children of Israel that He alone was going to give them this victory. Thus, all the glory would go to the Lord!

It is as we are told in Psalm 33, **“No king is saved by the multitude of an army; A mighty man is not delivered by great strength. . . . Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield.”** Psalm 33:16, 20.

Again, the Lord is going to show them that it is not because of them that they will be victorious, and He will show them by whittling down the number of soldiers even more.

You see, it is **“. . . ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.”** Zechariah 4:6.

Now think about this. If you truly believe that, then numbers will not matter even if the odds are 14 to 1 against you!

I like what John Wesley said, “Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but sin and love nothing but God, and I will shake the gates of Hell!” I agree!

But, like I have said, God is not done.

We are going to be looking at next, – ***SEPARATING THE DOGS!***

VERSES 4-6

So Gideon’s army has decreased from 32,000 soldiers, down to only 10,000. As I have said, that does not sound good.

And then we see here in Judges 7:4 that the Lord tells Gideon, “... **The people are still too many . . .**” Are you kidding me?

To separate the soldiers this time, God calls them to go to the water, and it was a pool of water that they would gather at, and have the men drink from this water. And those who lap the water with their tongue like a dog, separate them from those who get down on their knees and drink the water.

And there were 300 who lapped the water like a dog and the other 9,700 soldiers got down on their knees and drank the water.

Can you imagine what is going through Gideon’s mind at this point?

I am sure he is thinking, *“Okay Lord, this is not too bad. I mean, last time I lost 22,000 soldiers, and now, maybe 300. We are down to 9,700 soldiers, and yes, it is a small number compared to the enemy, but we might be able to pull this off!”*

The thing is, God didn’t want to bring the number of soldiers that Gideon had down to a number where he could win this battle. Even though he is far outnumbered right now.

No, God wanted to bring the number down so there is no way Gideon could win this battle!

Now that is shocking when we look at it like that. But that truly is the reality. Gideon was not going to win this battle, the Lord was going to give them this victory and thus, they needed to walk by faith and see the salvation that the Lord would bring to this situation.

So we have seen here - ***SEPARATING THE DOGS*** and as we will see, that separation is going to be far different than what Gideon thought, which leads us to our last point – ***WHAT?***

VERSE 7

Now you know why I have called this verse – **WHAT?**

The Lord tells Gideon to separate those who lapped the water like a dog from those who got down on their knees to drink the water. And the ones who would go into battle were the 300 who lapped the water like a dog! That means the other 9,700 were going home!

Think about this for a minute. Gideon's army went from 32,000 to 10,000 and now he is down to only 300 men!

He went from odds of 4 to 1, and then to 14 to 1 and finally 450 to 1 against them!

He went from probably not winning this battle with 32,000 men to no way is he going to win this battle with only 300 men!

Now some may wonder why God sent those 9,700 soldiers' home and kept those 300, and the Scriptures really don't tell us.

But it is possible that these men were not paying attention to what was around them when they were drinking the water, down with their head in the water drinking.

But the others, who lapped the water like a dog were aware of what was going on around them.

That is possible, but maybe we are reading too much into it. The reason may be as simple as this. The Lord only wanted 300 men! I know, simple and yet, I think that is the reality of this situation!

Listen to the Words that God spoke to Gideon to encourage him that this battle is already over before it started because, “**. . . By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. . .**”

Wood makes this application for us today. He wrote, “The thought is disturbing, but it may well be true, that the composition of God’s army to fight Satan’s hosts in any day is really little different. How many Christians are so fearful of the enemy that they are of no real use in this warfare, and how many of the remainder are so self-centered, rather than God centered, that they find little place for effective ministry.”

Make no mistake about it, we can think too highly of ourselves and we can miss all that God wants to do, how He wants to use us.

You see, we can be too big for God to use us but not too small. If you think too highly of yourself, you will not be looking to the Lord. But if you know it is beyond your ability, you will look to the Lord.

Paul was brought low so that God could use him mightily. And that is a strange concept to think about, but listen to what Paul said in II Corinthians 12:7-10, where we are told, **“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”**

Did you see that? Paul said that God has allowed this **“thorn in the flesh”** this physical problem in his life to keep him humble and depending on the Lord!

Are you kidding me?

Not at all.

Think about all that God had shown Paul, “**the abundance of the revelations**” and that could have caused Paul to think too highly of himself. And thus, this “**thorn in the flesh**” to keep him humble.

Let me show you what I mean about trusting in the Lord or boasting about what we have or what we have done.

We are told,

“There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few” (1 Sam. 14:6). Some churches today are mesmerized by statistics and think they’re strong because they’re big and wealthy, but numbers are no guarantee of God’s blessing.

Moses assured the Jews that if they would obey the Lord, one soldier could chase a thousand and two would *“put ten thousand to flight”* (Deut. 32:30).

All Gideon needed was 27 soldiers to defeat the whole Midianite army of 135,000 men (Judg. 8:10), but God gave him 300.

- Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, p. 445

That is the perspective we need to have, because if we don’t, we are going to lose hope, we are going to become fearful of how big, how strong, how influential the enemy is.

But if we rest in the Lord, if we trust in what He is telling us to do, then we will walk by faith and not become paralyzed in fear!

And that can happen to us.

We talk a lot about faith. We tell others to be strong in the Lord. We tell others not to fear, God is with them. We tell others that God will see you through. We tell others that God is with them, keep your eyes upon God, He will give you the victory. We tell others that yes, the situation looks hopeless, but remember that all things work out for good! And we can go on, but I think you get the idea.

We have no problem telling others what they should do, the faith that they should have, but what happens when we are called upon to step out in faith? Many times we become paralyzed with fear or we run away!

Let me show you what I mean.

This is a story by Ken Davis, and he wrote,

In college I was asked to prepare a lesson to teach my speech class. We were to be graded on our creativity and ability to drive home a point in a memorable way.

The title of my talk was, "The Law of the Pendulum." I spent 20 minutes carefully teaching the physical principle that governs a swinging pendulum.

The law of the pendulum is: A pendulum can never return to a point higher than the point from which it was released. Because of friction and gravity, when the pendulum returns, it will fall short of its original release point. Each time it swings it makes less and less of an arc, until finally it is at rest. This point of rest is called the state of equilibrium, where all forces acting on the pendulum are equal.

I attached a 3-foot string to a child's toy top and secured it to the top of the blackboard with a thumbtack. I pulled the top to one side and made a mark on the blackboard where I let it go. Each time it swung back I made a new mark. It took less than a minute for the top to complete its swinging and come to rest. When I finished the demonstration, the markings on the blackboard proved my thesis.

I then asked how many people in the room **BELIEVED** the law of the pendulum was true.

All of my classmates raised their hands, so did the teacher.

He started to walk to the front of the room thinking the class was over. In reality it had just begun. Hanging from the steel ceiling beams in the middle of the room was a large, crude but functional pendulum (250 pounds of metal weights tied to four strands of 500-pound test parachute cord).

I invited the instructor to climb up on a table and sit in a chair with the back of his head against a cement wall.

Then I brought the 250 pounds of metal up to his nose. Holding the huge pendulum just a fraction of an inch from his face, I once again explained the law of the pendulum he had applauded only moments before, "If the law of the pendulum is true, then when I release this mass of metal, it will swing across the room and return short of the release point. Your nose will be in no danger."

After that final restatement of this law, I looked him in the eye and asked, "Sir, do you believe this law is true?"

There was a long pause. Huge beads of sweat formed on his upper lip and then weakly he nodded and whispered, "Yes."

I released the pendulum. It made a swishing sound as it arced across the room. At the far end of its swing, it paused momentarily and started back.

I never saw a man move so fast in my life. He literally dived from the table. Deftly [skillfully] stepping around the still-swinging pendulum, I asked the class, “Does he believe in the law of the pendulum?”

The students unanimously answered, “NO!”

- Ken Davis, *How to Speak to Youth*, pp 104-106

As funny as that story is, many Christians do the very same thing with the Word of God, what God speaks to them about. They say things like “***Yes, I believe you Lord!***” until the 250-pound ball comes swinging towards them and they run for cover, they basically show that they don’t believe.

Now we all have done that from time to time, but my prayer is that we would learn to trust God and His Word in our lives.

That we would grow and no matter if things are going well or a 250-pound ball comes swinging our way, we will stand strong in the Lord, trusting in Him!

The only way you are going to do that is by getting to know Him and then walking by faith. Read His Word, trust in what He has said to you, and walk with Him by faith!

Look at what we have seen this morning.

We looked at – ***MEN OF WAR?***

And we saw that just because you wear a uniform or you call yourself a Christian, doesn’t mean you are going to engage in battle.

Then we looked at – ***THE GLORY BELONGS TO THE LORD!***

Make no mistake about it, apart from God we can do nothing. We live and breathe all because of God. Thus, as God uses us all the glory needs to go to Him because He will share His glory with no one. And if we take that glory, He will remove us from ministry!

We also looked at – ***SEPARATING THE FEARFUL!***

Make no mistake about it, you can let fear stop you dead in your tracks and cause you to flee what God has called you to do. For Gideon, because of fear, 22,000 soldiers went home. Don't let fear stop you from serving the Lord!

And we looked at – ***SEPARATING THE DOGS!***

As we have seen in these verses, God needed to bring the number of soldiers down even more, and thus, those who got down like dogs and drank water from the pool of water were separated from those who got down on their knees and drank water! What does that mean?

We saw what God was doing as we read on and looked at – ***WHAT?***

God was bringing down the number of soldiers from 10,000 to only 300. As crazy as that sounds, the key is this – “**. . . By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. . . .**”

That is the perspective we need to have. Strong in the Lord, but we are nothing apart from Him!

For Gideon, all he had to trust in was the Lord for how in the world can an army of only 300 men defeat an army of 135,000 men?

And I will leave you with these words from I Samuel 14:6. Here we see the Saul and the children of Israel doing battle against the Philistines. And really, King Saul was doing nothing and thus, his son Jonathan took a step of faith and we are told, “**Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, ‘Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.’**”

May we never forget that because God does not need many for the victory, but He wants to work through you!