

JUDGES 7:16-25
VICTORY IN BROKENNESS!

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

Here in Judges chapter 7 we see the culmination you might say, of what God told Gideon.

Remember, the children of Israel sinned against the Lord, they turned away from Him and for seven years the Midianites oppressed them.

They would come in at harvest time, and after the children of Israel brought in their harvest, and they would steal it from them.

The Midianites were a nomadic people and thus, they would usually barter and trade for their food, since they did not plant their own crops. They moved often, going from place to place. And now, their ability to get food without it costing them anything, priceless, I guess you can say.

We see this played out for us in Judges 6:3-6, **“So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.”**

Yes, this oppression went on for seven years, which might not sound that long. But when you are “**greatly impoverished**” when they steal the food you need to feed you family, that was a long time!

And there comes a point where the children of Israel come to their senses, you might say, and they repent before God and then we see God call a man named Gideon to deliver the children of Israel from this oppression by the hand of the Midianites.

And Gideon was not a giant of a man. He was not a strong man. In fact, he said of himself, “**... ‘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.’**”

Today we would call that “*low self-esteem.*” But it was not a low self-esteem on Gideon’s part, it was just a reality. He knew he was not strong. In fact, within his own family he was the weakest.

And listen to all that the Lord said to him, first when Gideon first encountered the Lord and then after Gideon says that he is not strong enough to defeat the Midianites. We are told here in Judges chapter 6, verses 12 and 16. “**... ‘The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!’ ... ‘Surely I will be with you and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.’**”

Here’s the thing. God was not looking for a strong man, a tall, dark and handsome man. God was looking for a faithful man who was willing to trust what He told him to do and then walk by faith!

And all through this we see God stretching Gideon’s faith. First here in this calling of Gideon.

Then, when the Lord tells Gideon he needs to take care of the idolatry in his own home. You see, his father, Joash, had set up an altar to Baal and a wooden image to Asherah. And the Lord told Gideon to destroy that pagan altar and image and set up an altar to Him and sacrifice a bull on that altar. In fact, not just one but two!

And Gideon walks by faith and does as the Lord had told him even though he could have had his family and all those who lived in the city mad at him because he destroyed their place of worship.

In fact, the men of the city were mad at Gideon and they wanted Joash to deliver his son to them so they could kill him. And I like what Joash says, as I believe the witness of Gideon brought Joash back to the One True God!

We are told in Judges 6:31-32, **“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!’ Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, ‘Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.’”**

The witness of Gideon changed the heart of his father and he saw the reality of what they were worshipping. In fact, he tells these men to let Baal save himself, but of course that didn't happen because it is just an idol, it is not God!

Then, in Judges chapter 7 we see another faith stretcher for Gideon. You see, Gideon was able to put together some 32,000 soldiers to fight against the Midianites. Which sounds good until you compare that with what the Midianites had, 135,000 soldiers!

And then this faith stretcher in Judges 7:2, **“And the Lord said to Gideon, ‘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.” Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, “Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.”’ And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.”**

So God tells Gideon that he has too many soldiers and He wants to bring that number down because if they would get the victory with these 32,000 men, they might think that it was their might that gave them this victory instead of the Lord.

So any soldier that was fearful, any soldier, fighting man, military man that is fearful could go home. And maybe Gideon thought a few hundred might leave but twenty-two thousand left! That left Gideon with 10,000 soldiers.

He went from 4 to 1 odds, to 14 to 1 odds, and God still is not done bringing that number down!

Now He brings the number of soldiers for Gideon down to 300 soldiers against 135,000 Midianites. In other words, with 450 to 1 odds, there is no way that they are going to win this battle except by the hand of God! And that is the place that God wanted them to be, to trust in Him and walk by faith.

And we see here that God is stretching the faith of Gideon and he was a little fearful and thus, the Lord leads him, at night, into the camp of the enemy and Gideon overhears some soldiers talking in their tent. One had a dream and the other interpreted the dream as this little puny army of Gideon was going to come into their camp and defeat them, the 135,000 Midianites!

This is how it played out for us. We are told in Judges 7:13-14, **“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.’ 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.’”**

And that encourages Gideon and he worships the Lord and he is ready for battle now! He is going to walk by faith and not by sight. And thus, as he comes back into the camp of Israel, he tells his men, **“... ‘Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.’”** Judges 7:15. It is amazing how God encourages us in the darkest of times, if we would only listen and trust Him!

Faith is so important for our walk. And let me say this. Faith must have legs if we are going to walk by faith. What do I mean by that? I mean that we must trust the Lord and that trust is seen in our moving forward, one step at a time, doing what the Lord has called us to do.

There is no doubt here that Gideon’s faith had grown, and he is calling for his men to stand up and get ready for battle.

Think of it like this,

In 1893, engineer George Ferris built a machine that bears his name-the Ferris wheel.

When it was finished, he invited a newspaper reporter to accompany him and his wife for the inaugural ride. It was a windy July day, so a stiff breeze struck the wheel with great force as it slowly began its rotation. Despite the wind, the wheel turned flawlessly.

After one revolution, Ferris called for the machine to be stopped so that he, his wife, and the reporter could step out. In braving that one revolution on the windblown Ferris wheel, each occupant demonstrated genuine faith.

Mr. Ferris began with the scientific knowledge that the machine would work and that it would be safe.

Mrs. Ferris and the reporter believed the machine would work on the basis of what the inventor had said. But only after the ride could it be said of all three that they had personal, experiential faith.

- Source unknown

This morning, as we finish up Judges chapter 7, we are going to be looking at – ***VICTORY IN BROKENNESS!*** We will see Gideon and his 300 men step out in faith; they will walk by faith!

And I have divided these verses we will be studying into four main points. They are,

A WALK OF FAITH – JUDGES 7:16-18

BROKENNESS – JUDGES 7:19-20

VICTORY – JUDGES 7:21-22

FAITH ENCOURAGES OTHERS – JUDGES 7:23-25

So with that as our background, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 7, beginning in verse 16, and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JUDGES 7**VERSES 16-18**

Now, in reading that, doesn't that seem like the most foolish battle plan you can imagine. Well, maybe walking around the city of Jericho for six days, not saying a word, and then on the seventh day walk around the city seven times and then blow the trumpets, shout and the walls will come tumbling down, is probably first.

And yet, with Jericho, God gave them the plan and God gave them the victory.

But here, it seems like this is Gideon's plan. He told his men that he wants his army divided into three divisions. Each man was to receive a trumpet, and a pitcher with a torch in it, and then they are to follow what Gideon says.

Can you imagine his men! ***"Are you kidding me Gideon? Come on man, where are our swords and what is the plan to defeat this enemy, which is much, much larger than ours? Don't you have anything better for us? I mean, you have not even given us one sword. Just a trumpet and a pitcher with a torch in it. Come on man!"***

I don't believe that Gideon came up with this plan. I don't think this was his idea of how to win this battle.

Now, you may be wondering how I came to that conclusion since we don't see God mentioned in these verses, just Gideon and this plan.

Back in Judges 6:34 we are told, "**. . . the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon . . .**"

Thus, Gideon was Spirit led in a very natural way and that is how God works many times!

When I look at this battle plan, even though Gideon was not a soldier, there is no way he came up with this on his own. This was God speaking to Gideon and thus, this was God's plan to give Gideon and his men this victory against the Midianites.

There are two main points I want to bring out in all of this. First of all, make no mistake about it, this was a walk of faith on the part of Gideon and his men.

Keep in mind that they were outnumbered 450 to 1, and thus, to say this was a walk of faith on their part is putting it mildly!

Remember what Paul wrote in Hebrews 11:6, **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

Think about that. How were you saved? You were saved by faith, faith in Jesus and faith in the promises that God has given to us in His Word.

So without faith you can't even believe in God. You have to trust what He has said to you in His Word. There is no guarantee, nothing that we can physically see that assures us of our salvation, except faith in the Word of God and in the One who has given us His Word, Jesus!

But, once we are saved, we must then walk by faith. You might say we were birthed or born again by faith in Jesus but now that we are born again, we must walk, taking one step at a time!

Let me show you what I mean in regard to trusting in the Lord even though you might not see any results, at least not yet. We are told,

Faith honors God and God honors *faith!*

A story from the life of missionaries Robert and Mary Moffat illustrates this truth.

For 10 years this couple labored faithfully in Botswana without one ray of encouragement to brighten their way. They could not report a single convert.

Finally, the directors of their mission board began to question the wisdom of continuing the work. The thought of leaving their post, however, brought great grief to this devoted couple, for they felt sure that God was in their labors, and that they would see people turn to Christ in due season. They stayed; and for a year or two longer, darkness reigned.

Then one day a friend in England sent word to the Moffat's that he wanted to mail them a gift and asked what they would like. Trusting that in time the Lord would bless their work, Mrs. Moffat replied, "Send us a communion set; I am sure it will soon be needed."

God honored that dear woman's *faith*. The Holy Spirit moved upon the hearts of the villagers, and soon a little group of six converts was united to form the first Christian church in that land.

The communion set from England was delayed in the mail; but on the very day before the first commemoration of the Lord's supper in Botswana, the set arrived.

- *Source unknown*

Isn't that what Paul said faith is all about in Hebrews 11:1, "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].**"

In other words, faith, in a sense, gives us evidence of the invisible, of those things we can't see and yet with the same confidence to what we can see with our physical eyes, in fact it should be even stronger than what we can see with our physical eyes.

Think about it for a minute. Our senses can lie to us and we can be deceived. Have you ever seen something that looked so good to eat and once you ate it, took a bite of it, you found it to be the exact opposite? Your senses deceived you!

Now people have all kinds of strange ideas of what faith is about and I want you to listen to what this so-called ex-Christian, which means he never was a Christian in the first place, has to say about faith because many are led astray by listening to the reason of man instead of the Words of God.

And He will even use the Word of God and twist it to make his point and I know another person who did that in the Garden of Eden and that was Satan!

Listen carefully to what he has to say about faith. He wrote,

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines "faith" thusly: (1) firm belief in something for which there is no proof (2) complete trust. The Bible confirms and expands this definition. According to Hebrews 11: 1,

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Unpacking that a bit, we get, "faith is the evidence of things not seen." The author, then, is claiming that believing, itself, is evidence of whatever you believe. This is the ultimate in circularity; if you think it's true, then it's true. He might as well have said, "Don't worry about evidence or truth, just accept your ignorance and keep hoping you're on the right track."

So, being ignorant is just fine, but there is more. Hebrews 11:6 says,

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

This suggests that you are expected to believe first, on the word of others, in order for god to “reveal” himself. In fact, Hebrews 11 is all about faith, throughout. One might even say that we have here, in Isaiah, [not sure where he got Isaiah from] a sort of second-order circularity, where ignorance breeds religion, which breeds ignorance. It’s no wonder it’s so hard to break through to the faithful, they’ve fenced themselves off so completely.

- <https://bit.ly/2Ybm28E>

Is that really what Paul is saying here in Hebrews about faith?

Not at all and let me show you what I mean and what true faith really is.

Paul is saying that faith is the “**substance**” which is the Greek word HUPOSTASIS, (hoop-os’-tas-is) and it speaks of a reality instead of just the appearance. It is an assurance or evidence. In fact, this word literally means to “***stand under.***” Think of it like the solid ground that is under the foundation. That is the idea here with this word.

It also carries with it the idea of “***assurance***” and this word was also used in reference to signed papers to prove ownership of a property. In other words, it is like a legal title deed that gave the person assurance and proof of ownership.

So this faith gives us the assurance, it is supported and solid so that what we hope for will come to pass.

Now when we think of “**hope**” we think of wishful thinking again, maybe it will come to pass and maybe it won’t. That is not the idea here. It is a word that speaks of trust, it will come to pass.

So I think this idea of “**substance**” that is being spoken of is related to Jesus. He is the solid ground in which we build our faith upon and His promises to us we know will come to pass, not might!

Look at Hebrews 11:24-26 where Paul says, “**By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.**”

Moses, instead of grabbing for the material things of this world that were before him, he forsook them and grabbed hold of that which he couldn’t see with his physical eyes but saw with his eyes of faith, the coming of the Messiah. Keep in mind that this was still some 1400 years down the road and yet he believed it by faith and lived his life accordingly. The Messiah was where his faith was placed in!

And we as Christians do hope in the Lord’s return as Titus 2:13 tells us, “**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

It is not that the Lord might come back but that He is coming back and that is our blessed hope.

When the Lord tells us something, He is not lying nor is He unable to bring it to pass. What God has promised us He is more than able to bring to pass and He will!

Thus, the idea here with this word “**substance**” is that we place our faith in Christ and that functions as the title deed you might say and it guarantees and assures the believer that God is going to fulfill all the promises He has made to us! That we will be taken to glory, we will get resurrection bodies, that we will be with the Lord for eternity, that we will reign with Him, that sin will be done away with and-so-on.

Next, Paul says that faith is “**The evidence of things not seen.**”

The Greek word for “**evidence**” is ELEGCHOS, (el'-eng-khos) and it speaks of having proof of something by testing it to be true.

First of all, let me speak on this in regard to the Bible and then I will share with you another way to look at this word “**evidence.**”

What proof do we have that God is real? The Bible! God’s Word is true, we can trust it 100% of the time. God does not lie nor does He deceive us, but He speaks the truth and as Jesus said in John 17:17, “**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**”

And as we examine the Old Testament and the New Testament texts, we see how accurate they are. Yes, we don’t have the original manuscripts, but we have over 22,000 manuscripts of the New Testament and with the Old Testament, when you compare the scroll of Isaiah from around 100 B. C. to the one from around 900 A. D. some 1,000 years apart, there are only minor discrepancies and many times it has to do with spelling.

We can look at the scientific aspect of the Bible – it is accurate.

We can look at the historic aspect of the Bible – it is accurate.

We can look at how the Bible deals with hundreds of controversial subjects and yet, it is in complete harmony – it is accurate.

So we can trust God's Word, it is truth. It has been examined over and over again, and it has stood the test of time!

So faith supports those things we know to be true, the promises of God even though we might not see them with our physical eyes, but through the eyes of faith we believe. And that belief is the evidence or the confidence we need to live what we believe. You see, faith truly begins when all other possibilities end, it is out of our hands and in the hands of God.

Now this word "**evidence**" can also mean that we are confident of what God has said even though we have not seen it yet and thus, we know it will come to pass.

You see, this is not a blind faith but a faith that places its trust in what God has said, that His Word is true.

Thus, as we know the promises of God, as we believe the promises of God then we need to live accordingly as these promises of God are manifested in our life, the things we do. It is trusting in God and living accordingly!

Remember, the "**substance**" is Christ and the "**evidence**" is His Word!

That was Gideon, he trusted in the promises of God regarding this battle against the Midianites and he walked by faith.

The second way to look at these verses is like this. Gideon told his men, "**... 'Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do just as I do.'**" Judges 7:17.

In other words, Gideon wants his men to follow him, just as Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, "**Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**"

And this is important because it is easy to tell people what to do, but when someone says follow me, it speaks of them being engaged in the work as well and as they go, others will follow. We will see this more as we look at our last point, ***FAITH ENCOURAGES OTHERS!***

What I want you to glean from these verses is that it truly is ***A WALK OF FAITH!*** God is calling us to take those steps, to trust in Him even though what we see with our physical eyes may not look good, it may not look right, as we see here with the battle plan that Gideon gave his men. But with spiritual eyes, a Biblical perspective, they were able to walk by faith and so can we!

VERSES 19-20

Here is the timeframe of the battle.

The middle watch was about 10:00 pm (first watch 6-10 pm, middle watch 10 pm - 2 am, morning watch 2-6 am).

And so, most of the enemy was sleeping, and the army of Gideon is all around them, split up in three divisions.

Now, when Gideon blew his rams horn, all his men where to do the same.

Then they broke their pitchers making this loud startling noise.

And when they took their smoldering torches out of their pitchers and waved them in the air, the embers would burst into flame.

They then shouted, “**The sword of the LORD and Gideon.**”

And please notice who gets first billing you might say here, it is the ***LORD, YAHWEH!***

That is the way it should always be folk’s! And as this took place, all this noise and light brought mass panic and confusion within the camp of the enemy, as we shall see.

But first, let's look at this idea of – ***BROKENNESS!***

Before the light was seen, their pitchers had to be broken.

I think that is what needs to happen in our lives many times before we can shine for Jesus, brokenness.

Paul spoke of this in II Corinthians chapter 4.

First of all, listen to what he wrote in II Corinthians 4:6-7, **“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”**

God has placed His glorious light in these earthen vessels, you and me!

When a jeweler wants to display the beauty of a diamond, he places it on a black cloth.

Why does he do that?

Because all the attention is drawn to the diamond and because of the blackness of the cloth, the diamond shines forth its brilliance!

Think about that for a minute.

God has taken this treasure, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the light of God, this beautiful diamond you might say, and placed it in these bodies of flesh, kind of like the black cloth!

Why? Because I can't boast in how great I am and how lucky God is to have such a wonderful man as me, and neither can you – all the glory goes to God! He shines brilliantly and brightly if we don't cover Him with our lives but let Him shine through us!

Make no mistake about it, as Christians we all are these **“earthen vessels”** in which God has placed the treasure of the Gospel of grace, this diamond and He has command us to go into all the world and share it with those in darkness!

And we see that here with Gideon and his men. The clay pots had to be broken before the light of the torches could shine and thus, Paul is now going to speak of brokenness, a brokenness that allows God to shine forth through us!

Listen to what he says in II Corinthians 4:8-12, **“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.”**

Look at what Paul is saying about all that they were going through. They were hard-pressed, they were crushed, they were perplexed, they were persecuted, struck down, and out of all that brokenness we see, **“... that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. . . .”**

Yes, these are just earthen vessels that the Lord indwells, but until there is that brokenness the light of Jesus will not shine forth.

I think that brokenness helps us to be more compassionate towards others, feel their pain, their hurt instead of being judgmental and condemning.

It is easy to sit up in our ivory towers and look down upon sinful man, but in doing that we are not shining the light of Jesus upon them.

We are acting like the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day who did the same thing. They looked down upon the common people and thus, the light of God was not shining from them, in fact, they were nothing more than a tomb filled with dead men’s bones, there was no life in them.

I don't think we can be truly effective for Jesus apart from being broken. Maybe that is why the church is so ineffective today because it is not about brokenness but about building myself up, making myself feel good, it is all about me and the light of God is not shining forth.

Now some may be upset in what I am saying, and I am sorry but that is just the reality.

If you don't believe that, let me ask you this question. Do you think the people of this world are living lives without any problems, without any fear, without any anxiety, without any hope and-so-on. And of course, if you are honest with yourself, you would say, ***“Of course not, we all have difficult times in our lives.”***

And that is so true. There is so much difficulty, trouble, problems, that people are going through and unless we get down off our ivory tower and mingle with them, get to know them, and use the brokenness that God has given to us to help them, we are not going to shine!

Listen again to what Paul wrote in II Corinthians 4:7, **“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”**

And now listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse, **“However, we possess this precious treasure [the divine Light of the Gospel] in [frail, human] vessels of earth, that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves.”**

You see, it is only as we are broken before the Lord that we can shine for Him. If we think it is about us, if we are proud, then what others will see is the darkness of our heart and not the light of Jesus. But again, if we are broken, it is then that the light of the gospel will shine forth from our lives! There is victory in brokenness!

For Gideon and his men, this **BROKENNESS** is going to lead to their **VICTORY**, as we will see as we read on.

VERSES 21-22

Now keep in mind that these 300 men of Gideon don't have a sword as far as we can tell.

And, keep in mind that it is late at night and the enemy is sleeping and all of a sudden there was this bright light and all the noise of the trumpets scared the bejeebers out of them. And yes, bejeebers is a real word, I looked it up.

And so, the enemy was so confused by the noise and the light that they started killing each other, as they thought the enemy was within their camp.

And Gideon and his men defeated around 120,000 men, while 15,000 tried to escape according to Judges 8:10. And I guess Gideon and his men didn't do this, they killed each other, while the others fled!

Remember the dream that the Midianite had, and how it was interpreted that the Lord and Gideon would defeat the Midianites and thus, they were ready to fight, the only problem was they were fighting and killing each other!

Thus, it was the Lord who gave them this victory because at this point the men of Israel, the 300 of them, did not even draw one sword!

Now we can try to explain this miracle away and make up all kinds of reasons why they did this to each other, but we are missing out on a huge point, God gave them this victory. It was not their battle plans, their strategy, it was the Lord!

Let me show you how God gives the victory against all odds.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians he was in jail for his faith in Rome. He was awaiting to bring his case before Nero.

Now let's think this through for a minute. Paul has been preaching Jesus to a multitude of people. He has planted many churches. He has been persecuted for his faith, been through many tough situations, even stoned to death and God raised him up.

And now this, in prison. And we may think how unfair this is. We might think that this is so wrong, how can God place this man who is serving Him in prison. Wouldn't he be better off being free and able to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Listen to what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:12-18, **“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”**

Keep in mind that this letter has been called the Epistle of Joy because Paul speaks of all the joy he has in the Lord, even in prison.

And here we see Paul, not complain about the Gospel being chained because of his imprisonment, but that the Gospel is *NEVER* chained!

He tells them that **“the whole palace guard”** got saved. Keep in mind that they were chained to Paul twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And every six to eight hours they would change guards.

Paul had a large number of soldiers that he was able to witness to and see saved. The Gospel is not chained!

Not only that, but the brethren in Rome, when they saw Paul and how God was using him, even in prison, they become more confident in their faith, and they were “**much more bold to speak the word without fear.**”

Can you imagine, he was encouraging believers who were free, not in prison while he was in prison. The Gospel is not chained!

Make no mistake about it, God gives the victory in the most unlikely of situations, when things look bad, when we are outnumbered, outgunned. He is God, He can do that, and He does do that.

Let me share this with you. We are told,

Every schoolchild in Scotland knows the story of how the thistle saved the country.

In the year 1263 when the Scots and Danes were at war, the Danes managed to land unobserved on the coast of Scotland. Under cover of darkness the Danish invaders removed their boots and crept on bare feet toward the unsuspecting Scottish army.

Victory seemed certain for the invaders when suddenly a sharp cry of pain shattered the stillness. A Danish soldier had stepped on a thistle and ruined the surprise. The alerted Scots sprang into action and drove the invaders from the country's shores in *victory*.

- *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations – 14121*

I like that and truly, that is how our God works. Listen carefully because I am sure we all struggle with the situations that we face in this life. We are told,

God champions the underdog. This is a continual theme throughout Scripture; God's presence ensured the victory of the nation of Israel when the odds were stacked against them.

David defeated Goliath, Israel triumphed over the Amalekites, Gideon's army was reduced to a practically minuscule size.

It's a great reminder to us today, as well: If God is on your side, you will be victorious even when the odds are stacked against you.

As Jonathan said:

Perhaps the Lord will help us, for nothing can hinder the Lord. He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few. ~1 Samuel 14:6b, NLT

It's not the smarts you have, the resources available to you, or your own brute strength that will determine your victory; it's is the Lord's favor because you are His child.

Here are 7 Things to Remember When the Odds Are Stacked Against You:

- ***Be confident in the Lord.***
So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6, ESV)
- ***God is holding your hand.***
For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you." (Isaiah 41:13, ESV)
- ***Call on the Lord.***
"I called on your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!' You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' (Lamentations 3:55-57, ESV)
- ***God will not leave you.***
Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6, ESV)
- ***You are not a slave of fear.***
For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15, ESV)

➤ ***You've been redeemed.***

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. (Isaiah 43:1, ESV)

➤ ***You are not alone.***

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9, ESV)

God is your champion. You are His. Don't fear, don't worry, don't lose sleep. Rest in the knowledge and peace that your God, the One who loves you, fights for you.

- <https://bit.ly/3eW5OGr>

If we enter these battles we face each and every day with the mindset that God is in control, He is the one who will give us the victory, and then just walk by faith, it will take that heavy burden, that pressure off of you and you can lay it at the Lord's feet, He can handle it.

Our ***VICTORY*** is in the Lord!

And that leads us to the last point as people watch us walk by faith – ***FAITH***

ENCOURAGES OTHERS!

VERSES 23-25

Make no mistake about it, our ***FAITH ENCOURAGES OTHERS!*** And that is what we see here.

And here we see Gideon call for reinforcements to go after the 15,000 remaining soldiers.

First of all, this was not a lack of faith on Gideon's part? Not at all!

Yes, God did start the work, but I believe He is now going to work through not only the 300 men but also the other men from the other tribes that joined in this battle to defeat the enemy.

In fact, Gideon is listed in that section in Hebrews called the hall of faith, where other men of faith are listed and thus, Gideon was a man of faith, not perfect and I believe here he acted wisely!

And maybe some of these men who went away fearful, some of them who were not involved in this battle even though they were there with the original 32,000 soldiers. And in the end, there were only 300 left to do battle with Gideon, 31,700 went home, returned.

You see, with the faith of Gideon and this victory, I am sure we see some of these men coming back to fight.

I think that is an important point.

And I will speak for myself. I have so many people that encourage me, they help me to continue on.

I have my wonderful wife who is my biggest supporter besides God. Faith encourages!

I have the family here at Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc who encourage me tremendously. Faith encourages!

I have my Pastor, Pastor Phil who encouraged me when I was praying about coming up here. Faith encourages!

I have Pastor Dwight who has encouraged me tremendously by asking me to teach at the conferences he has at Calvary Chapel of Appleton. Faith encourages!

There is Pastor Chris Quintana, Pastor John Higgins, Pastor Charlie Flores, and many, many others who have encouraged me. Faith encourages!

I remember several years ago, when Roger Oakland was here, and before he left he told me, as Calvary Chapel was moving away from where it started, that we reminded him what is was like in the beginning with Calvary Chapel with Pastor Chuck Smith. Faith encourages!

And I can go on, but let's face it, we all need encouragement. And let me turn that around, may we be men and women whose faith is real and that people see and it spurs them to go forward, to move ahead, to engage in the battle for the souls of men and women!

I pray that I have encouraged you, challenged you over the years to walk by faith by my example, because . . .

FAITH ENCOURAGES OTHERS!

Now we also see in these verses that the two princes of the Midianites, Oreb, which means, "raven," and Zeeb, which means, "wolf," being captured and killed by the men of Ephraim.

God blessed the men of Ephraim in this battle. But, as we will see next time, they are not happy with Gideon and how this all played out. I guess you just can't please everyone, but Gideon's response to these men of Ephraim should encourage us that when you take fuel away from a fire, the fire will go out, and that is what Gideon will do.

Look at what we have seen in these two chapters about Gideon. We are told,

The story of Gideon began with a man hiding in a winepress (6:11), but it ended with the enemy prince being slain at a winepress.

Gideon's great victory over the Midianites became a landmark event in the history of Israel, not unlike the Battle of Waterloo for Great Britain, for it reminded the Jews of God's power to deliver them from their enemies. The day of Midian was a great day that Israel would never forget (Ps. 83:11; Isa. 9:4; 10:26).

The church today can also learn from this event and be encouraged by it. God doesn't need large numbers to accomplish His purposes, nor does He need especially gifted leaders. Gideon and his 300 men were available for God to use, and He enabled them to conquer the enemy and bring peace to the land.

When the church starts to depend on "bigness" – Big buildings, big crowds, big budgets – then faith becomes misplaced, and God can't give His blessings. When leaders depend on their education, skill, and experience rather than in God, then God abandons them and looks for a Gideon.

The important thing is for us to be available for God to use just as He sees fit. We may not fully understand His plans but we can fully trust His promises, and its faith in Him that gives the victory.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament, Vol. 1, p.447

Absolutely. Look at what we have seen this morning.

We have looked at – ***A WALK OF FAITH!*** And how the battle plans were the most outrageous and there was no way that they could win with them. And yet, the Holy Spirit spoke to Gideon and gave him these plans and now he needed to walk by faith and encourage his men to walk by faith. His charge to them – **“Arise for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.”** Judges 7:15. ***A WALK OF FAITH!***

Then we looked at – ***BROKENNESS!*** And I believe that we must be broken before the Lord, and that brokenness helps us to feel empathy, compassion towards others, and then the light of Christ can shine through us. ***BROKENNESS!***

Out of that we see the – **VICTORY!** With impossible odds for victory, they walked by faith, they were broken before the Lord, and He gave them this great victory against the enemy!

VICTORY!

And we finished up by looking at – **FAITH ENCOURAGES OTHERS!** And as others see our faith, may they be encouraged by what they see and may it spur them on! **FAITH ENCOURAGES OTHERS!**

Let me close with this. We are told,

One of the best-loved hymns of the faith, ***“It Is Well with My Soul,”*** was written by Horatio Spafford. Mr. Spafford, a wealthy businessman in Chicago, lost much of his real estate holdings in the Great Chicago Fire.

After the fire, he sent his wife and four daughters on a ship to Europe, intending to join them later, for a time of rest as well as to assist Moody and Sankey with a revival in Great Britain.

But the voyage was struck by disaster, and Spafford received a cable from his wife with the painful message, “Saved alone.”

Spafford quickly made arrangements to join his wife. When they reached the spot where his daughters had drowned, Spafford marked that sad event with words of hope: ***“When peace like a river attendeth my way; when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well with my soul.’”***

These powerful words written in the midst of such pain are a reminder to us today that, even though we may be enduring great suffering and hardship, it is not the end of God's plan for us. Sometimes God's children get discouraged because it appears that life is going better for those who are doing wrong. Yet the end result of both paths is already settled. Those who fear God will be able to say, **"It is well."** Those who oppose God will quickly find that the end of their path is death and destruction. Keeping the end result in mind helps us keep doing right.

- Kenneth Osbeck, 101 Hymn Stories

And look at those words of that hymn and how many have had their faith stirred, encouraged by them over the years. May we never forget, the brokenness we endure will help others in their faith as the light of Jesus comes shining through us! ***"It is well, it is well with my soul."***