

# God Uses Unlikely People

November 28 - December 4, 2021

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## **MAIN POINT**

Our hope rests not in what we can do to fix our own problems, but in the power of God to deliver and redeem us.

## **INTRODUCTION**

**What is something that you've dreamed of accomplishing or experiencing that still sticks in your mind? Why do you think you can't seem to move past that dream?**

**Have you ever been a part of an underdog team or a Cinderella story? What was that experience like? How did you win despite the odds being against you?**

**In today's passage from Gideon's story, we will read about God's power to deliver and redeem us from whatever we face. What is a battle you are currently facing? Keep that in mind as we discuss how God led Gideon to victory.**

When Gideon gathered his troops for battle, he may have wondered how his small army would be able to conquer the vast army of the enemy. He did not have to ponder this for long, because the Lord quickly whittled Gideon's army of 24,000 down to a mere 300 men. As Gideon and his men went into battle that day and saw the enemy falling, they had to admit that salvation came from the Lord's hand and not from human strength. The same is true for us. Our hope rests not in what we can do to fix our own problems, but in the power of God to deliver and redeem us.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

God called Gideon to be the deliverer for His people. Even though Gideon was bold in obeying the Lord, he did not know what the outcome would be. In today's text, we see God's plan unfold.

### **READ [JUDGES 7:1-8](#).**

**Why did God want to reduce the size of Gideon's army? What was God trying to teach Gideon by winnowing down his army?**

### **READ [2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10](#).**

**In what way is Gideon's winnowing experience similar to Paul's experience of God's grace made perfect in human weakness?**

Doing what would seem contrary to military sense yet was obedient to God, Gideon winnowed his force down to a minimal size. Then God commanded Gideon to move out and make the attack. God said He was the One who would achieve victory over the Midianites—"I will deliver." The sheer magnitude of the odds against the 300 men would make it clear that God was the One who had miraculously delivered His people. Regardless of seemingly inadequate resources, the Lord still assures His people of victory when they depend on Him.

**READ JUDGES 7:9-11.**

**What was a time when God, through some means, spoke to you in a difficult situation?**

**The Angel of the Lord was a physical appearance of the Lord, not just an angel messenger. What did the Lord promise Gideon? What did the Lord instruct Gideon to do, and how did he respond?**

Ideally, Gideon should have assaulted the Midianite camp then and there. However, he was still less than confident in faith and heroics; he needed more moral support. Again God graciously obliged. Purah's presence would encourage Gideon, and the conversation they overheard in the Midianite camp would give them the courage they needed to attack.

**Why do we sometimes find it hard to accept the encouragement God sends our way? What can we do to ensure that we accept and follow through in a timely manner?**

The Lord knows our needs and will provide for them. When we perceive His provision through circumstances and people, we simply need to accept them. Then we will be encouraged. The important point we can take from these verses is this: God takes us as we are, and in His grace makes provisions for us to succeed.

**READ JUDGES 7:12-15.**

**How did the Midianite's dream emphasize God's sovereignty?**

**How did Gideon respond to God?**

Gideon overheard one man tell another his dream concerning a loaf of barley bread that came tumbling into the Midianite camp, struck a tent, and it fell. The other man then interpreted the dream to mean that Gideon and his army would be victorious against them in battle. Gideon's overhearing of this conversation could not have been a coincidence. He was fully convinced now that victory would be his. He bowed in worship, and then he got the attack started. God may speak to us in different ways from how He spoke to Gideon, but He does speak to us. We will do great works for God only when we hear and respond in bold faith to the encouragement He sends us.

**Gideon was encouraged by hearing the enemies' dream. What encourages you most in your spiritual life?**

**READ JUDGES 7:16-25.**

**What stands out to you from the description of the battle?**

**How did Gideon's army win? What is the takeaway for us?**

Gideon had only 300 men, but those men were courageous and committed. The church today needs spiritual soldiers who will stand in their places. Regardless of the level of one's abilities, everyone can be faithful to stand in his or her place. God can do great things with a person who will simply be obedient to His directions. As Gideon's army depended on the Lord, the Lord brought victory. God brings victory through His people as they depend on Him.

**APPLICATION**

**How does the story of Gideon's victory relate to you in your life?**

**When has God used one of your weaknesses or failures to help someone else?**

**Which weakness of yours does Gideon's story prompt you to see differently today?**

**Where are you feeling outnumbered or needing immediate intervention from God?  
How can our group be praying for you in regards to that situation this week?**

## **PRAYER**

Close in prayer, thanking God that our hope rests not in what we can do to fix our own problems, but in the power of God to deliver and redeem us. Spend a few minutes praying for any specific "battles" that were brought up during your discussion time.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **JUDGES 7:1-25**

**7:1-3.** Having proven to Gideon's satisfaction that He was present, the Lord emphasized the point that His presence was all Gideon needed. The army was strategically camped at the spring of Harod, where water supply would not be an issue. The name of this particular spring means "Spring of Trembling," which describes the state of Gideon's army. Yet from the Lord's perspective, there were too many people there. If an army of this size won, even against the innumerable hordes of the Midianites, Israel might be tempted to take credit for the victory. To show that the victory was entirely His, the Lord reduced the size of Gideon's army.

**7:4-8.** The Lord gave Gideon an additional test to reduce the size of his army further, by taking them down to the water to drink. It appears that those chosen scooped water up in their hands and lapped it from there, while those who got down on all fours and drank directly from the river like a dog were rejected. Gideon's army now numbered just 300. Nothing must detract from the truth that the Lord can save as easily by using a few as by using many (see 1 Sam. 14:6).

**7:9-14.** The army was now sufficiently small, so the Lord commanded Gideon to get up and begin the action against the camp of the Midianites. Yet instead of immediate action, there was further delay while Gideon's continuing fears were addressed. The Lord told Gideon that if he was afraid to go against the Midianite camp, he should secretly visit it and listen to what the Midianites were saying. He crept down to where he could see the Midianites, Amalekites, and Qedemites (the "eastern peoples," [6:3](#)) spread out like a swarm of locusts, with innumerable camels. Visually nothing had changed since the opening verses of chapter 6. Yet what Gideon heard told a different story—God had given members of the enemy force a dream that was utterly demoralizing. It is ironic that the Midianites were quick to grasp the significance of a dream, while Gideon was slow to believe repeated signs and direct messages from the Lord.

**7:15-16.** Eavesdropping on this conversation at last had the desired effect on Gideon. In response, he bowed in worship, acknowledging the truth of the Lord's words, now that he had heard them repeated by pagans. He returned to Israel's camp and finally delivered to his men the instruction he had received from the Lord in verse 9. Gideon divided his small army into three divisions and "armed" them with a ram's-horn trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch. Clearly, unless the Lord fought for them they would have no chance of victory.

**7:17-18.** Gideon's earlier hesitancy was now gone. He led his men to the battle, instructing them to follow his example. When they came to the outpost at the edge of the Midianite

camp, they were to blow their trumpets and to shout as their battle cry, For Yahweh and for Gideon. The pairing of the Lord's name with that of Gideon strikes a discordant note. After all, this was a battle that the Lord had taken great pains to make clear would be won by His might alone, greatly reducing the size of the Israelite army so that they would not be able to boast (v. 3).

**7:19-25.** The strategy worked out exactly as planned. The beginning of the middle watch would be midnight. Gideon's three groups, spread out surrounding the camp, would sound like a much larger army. The element of surprise, combined by a divinely induced fear, sent the Midianites fleeing for their lives and fighting one another in the confusion. The victory was not just the result of successful psychological tactics. It was the Lord who set the Midianites' swords... against each other. The surviving Midianites fled toward the Jordan River, though the exact locations of the places mentioned in verse 22 are uncertain.

At this point, with victory assured, Gideon called out the men of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh—presumably the remainder of his original army of 30,000—to join in the pursuit. He also called out the men of Ephraim to seize the fording places over the Jordan to cut off any retreat for the remnant of the Midianites. It seems discordant with the spirit of holy war for Gideon to call in reinforcements after the Lord had already won the victory with the smaller force. This was perhaps a sign of Gideon's growing self-confidence. Oreb and Zeeb were Midianite princes, or military commanders.