

Mission: Possible
Victory! Story of Gideon Part 1
February 9, 2014
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Turn in your bibles if you would to Judges 7:1-25 and we're going to get into this story of Gideon's victory over the Midianite army and I'm telling you....there is some GOOD STUFF here in this passage!!!!

And over the next two messages we are going to specifically look at the idea of how we can experience victory in our lives!!

As Christians we should be living the victorious life!! We don't have to walk around defeated and deflated like is often the case! One author says this about our experience. "True victorious Christian living would be to experience God's presence in the midst of the things that try to defeat it, and to live in such a way that everyone around you sees the reality of both."

So let's get into this story to see how you and I might be able to experience Victory in our lives.

"Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. ² The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, 'My own strength has saved me.' ³ Now announce to the army, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.'" So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

⁴ But the LORD said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

⁵ So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink." ⁶ Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

⁷ The LORD said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home." ⁸ So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. ⁹ During that night the LORD said to Gideon, "Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. ¹⁰ If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah ¹¹ and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp." So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. ¹² The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

¹³ Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed."

¹⁴ His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands."

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands.” ¹⁶ Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

¹⁷ “Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. ¹⁸ When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”

¹⁹ Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. ²⁰ The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” ²¹ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

²² When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. ²³ Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. ²⁴ Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.”

So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah.

²⁵ They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.”

Alright, so let’s pull out some application for our lives if we are going to experience VICTORY!!!

1. We have to rely on God’s strength, not on our own!

- a. If were to jump back into Chapter 6:15, we would see where Gideon and God are having this conversation and Gideon asks God, “so...how am I to save Israel? My clan is the weakest, and I’m the very least in all of my family?” And God responded with this....”I will be with you, and you will strike down all of the midianites.”
- b. Gideon’s army consisted of 32,000 men and they were facing The Midianite Army that had 135,000 men and they were at a significant disadvantage even before they began!! Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever feel like there are times in your life when before your feet even hit the floor in the morning, that you are starting out with a disadvantage and there seems to be no possible way that you can experience victory for that day or for the issue that you are facing that is so heavily weighing on your heart and mind?? Gideon, by human standards, was at a significant disadvantage and then God did something that would deem this situation, even more impossible!!
- c. God told Gideon to let go of 31700 men before He would give the Midianite Army into Gideon’s hands!! This now means that 300 men would go to battle with 135K men and that would seem to us to be a complete impossibility!!!
- d. But God wanted Gideon and his men, and you and I today, to learn this lesson.... If we’re going to experience victory, we will have to rely on the strength and the power of God
- e. You see, Self-sufficiency is an enemy when it causes us to believe we can always do what needs to be done in our own strength. If we think that we can survive spiritually without God and without the community of faith, we’re going to be in trouble!! The idea of lone-ranger,

independent, be an island unto yourself Christianity is not what God wants, nor is it a part of His plan!!

- f. We have to get to a place in our lives where we recognize the danger of fighting in our own strength
- g. And God knew that this would be a potential problem or attitude among Gideon's soldiers, and so He reduced their number from 32,000 to 10,000, to 300 and said "Hey.....watch and see what I can do!"
- h. And with an army this small, there could be no doubt that the victory they would soon realize was not from themselves, but from God!!
- i. **God will do whatever it takes in your life and in my life to make sure that we are fully relying on Him and that we've emptied ourselves of our abilities, talents, and resources, and our strength, and our weaknesses, so that when we SEE Victory in our lives, we know, without a shadow of a doubt, that it was God who brought it to us!**

If we are going to experience victory,

2. We cannot allow fear to get in the way of what God wants to do in us!

- a. When given the option of staying or leaving, 22,000 men, because they were afraid, missed out on experiencing the Victory that God would soon bring!
- b. 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us that God has not given us a spirit of fear and throughout scripture we are encouraged to "not be afraid" 81 times!
- c. Ill. Charles Stanley wrote an Article about the "Side Effects of fear" and here's the summary of what fear can do in our lives. **Fear stifles our thinking and actions.** It creates indecisiveness that results in stagnation. I have known talented people who procrastinate indefinitely rather than risk failure. Lost opportunities cause erosion of confidence, and the downward spiral begins. **Fear hinders us from becoming the people God wants us to be.** When we are dominated by negative emotions, we cannot achieve the goals He has in mind for us. A lack of self-confidence stymies our belief in what the Lord can do with our lives. **Fear can drive people to destructive habits.** To numb the pain of overbearing distress and foreboding, some turn to things like drugs and alcohol for artificial relief. **Fear steals peace and contentment.** When we're always afraid, our life becomes centered on pessimism and gloom. **Fear creates doubt.** God promises us an abundant life, but if we surrender instead to the chains of fear, we'll never accomplish all that God has in store for us!
- d. How many of us, because we allow fear to get in the way, miss out on what God has in store for us?? How many of us give up too quickly on a project, or a dream, or a relationship because fear sets in and takes control of our lives!?
- e. Don't Let FEAR get in your way of experiencing VICTORY!!!!!!!!!!

If we're going to experience victory,

3. When it's our time to go to battle, we better be ready

- a. There were 300 men that God chose to go to battle. We don't know a whole lot about them, but we can clearly assume that because God chose them, they were ready for what was ahead.
- b. Now Gideon doesn't exactly feel like the 'valiant warrior' and that he is ready for battle when the Lord first calls him. And as for him delivering Israel by himself is just a little crazy talk! In fact Gideon feels more like a weakling than a warrior or someone valiant. 'You know the entire Manasseh tribe?' he says to God... 'Well my family is bottom of the barrel. Dead last! And in the most insignificant family in Manasseh, yep, I'm the youngest and weakest! You may have bet on the wrong horse I'm afraid!'
- c. Have you Ever felt like that? Have you ever felt that maybe you really don't have anything much to offer God and probably can't be used? Well, here's some encouragement for us

- d. *We are always in the majority when God is with us!!* ‘I will be with you’ God tells Gideon, and that is all that we should ever need to know in order to be ready for the battle! Thankfully, this was enough for Gideon to know and his focus on his own inadequacies was not so deep rooted that it stopped him being obedient. Gideon was ready because he had the assurance of the One who called him!!
- e. Now, Out of the 10,000 men that remained, 9700 kneeled down and drank straight from the water where as 300 evidently stood, and used their hands to bring the water to their mouth. God was only interested in the smaller group who were more watchful and alert, and didn’t give themselves over completely to their natural needs. The other thing to note is that the people themselves, all of whom were to be used to fight Midian, didn’t even know there was a test going on. And there are times in our lives when God tests us, looking for hearts that are truly His, and these tests come in the ordinary events of our daily lives often without our knowing. So in all, 300 people remained... that’s 300 Israelites versus 135,000 Midianites. Israel was outnumbered 450 to 1! But they were ready, and God had chosen them!!
- f. It’s appropriate for us to consider Ephesians 6 – “There will be a battle that we must face! And we are to get ready!! ¹³ *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.* ¹⁴ *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,* ¹⁵ *and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.* ¹⁶ *In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.* ¹⁷ *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*
- g. **III. My Commitment as a Christian** – written by a young African pastor – “I’m part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I’m a disciple of His. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I’m finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don’t have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won’t give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problems recognizing me - my banner will be clear!”
- h. This is a testimony of someone who is READY!!! And the question that we have to ask ourselves is “Will I be ready when God calls on me to go to battle?”
- i. If we don’t go to battle, we’ll never experience victory!
- j. Don’t shy away from the battles in life!
- k. Can you imagine the change of spirit in the lives of these 300 men who when faced with an impossible situation, knew that because they had been ready, they chased and won a battle against 135,000 warriors!!!?

If we’re going to experience Victory, we need to know that

4. Not everybody who starts out the battle with you, will stay with you!

- a. Can you imagine being Gideon in this situation.....not only was his army outnumbered from the beginning, he had to wrestle with the fact that the people he thought he could count on, bailed!! “If any of you tremble or fear, turn back now....and 22,000 men, LEFT!!!” They left their leader, the left the one who they knew had been appointed by God! They were disloyal. They betrayed Gideon, and they basically washed their hands and said, “nope, we’re not willing to play this game anymore, Gideon. The stakes are too high, the risks are too much....Good luck!!, you’re on your own!”
- b. And when those things happen to us, it hurts, doesn’t it? It hurts when the spouse that you love and have cared and have stayed with for so many years, calls it quits! (wash hands – I’m done with this relationship). It hurts when your kids take a different path in life than the one you would have chosen for them. (wash hands – Thanks for meeting my needs all these years, and giving me what I need and taking care of me, but I’m going to go out and do my own thing now on my own). It hurts when you’ve invested your life into someone and you’ve laughed with them, cried with them, have been there for them, and then one day, without explanation, without a word, they’re just not around anymore. It hurts when you do life with someone in a community of faith and then for whatever reason they just decide that their relationships and connections in that community of faith are no longer important to them and so they bail!! It’s not fair, it’s not right. It hurts deeply, but here’s what I know...
- c. We can’t look to that.....We have to keep our eyes focused on God. And that’s exactly what Gideon did.....he lost 31,700 men from his army and he still continued on in God’s plan toward victory!!!
- d. We might get sad, we might get depressed, we might grieve and mourn a bit when people who started out with us, don’t finish with us but know this!
- e. Don’t let the reality of people leaving you deter you from experiencing victory!!
- f. Our God is greater than that!!! And he will bring Victory to us!!

Pray