

What On Earth Am I Here For Judges 7:8-25 “Created To Make Spiritual Warfare”

Introduction

When Gideon left the Midianite encampment that night after his reconnaissance mission, he was forever changed. After hearing the terror in the voices coming from the enemy's tent, he knew that God was going to give him and his three hundred men of faith an incredible victory. Gone were the questions of “How, when, and why”. Gideon was now a “mighty man of valor” just as God had foreseen all along. His doubts and fears had been erased by total faith. The time had come to go to war against the enemies of God's people. I imagine that his soldiers could see the change in him as he and his servant came back up the hill to their camp. What an amazing passion he must have conveyed to them all as he recounted the nightmare and the interpretation that he had overheard from within the enemy soldier's tent. People long to follow a leader with conviction. I can only imagine that Gideon's men were just as fired up as he was when they saw how emboldened their commander was in his new found faith! “Arise, for The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands!”, he shouted (vs. 15). I love that verse. Notice, he didn't say “The LORD will give”, but rather, He said “The LORD HAS given”. As far as Gideon was concerned, this battle was over before it even BEGAN! Now THAT'S faith.

Would to God that the modern day church had that kind of faith today. Just imagine what we could do if we truly believed that God had already guaranteed the outcome of our mission? Think of how emboldened that we would be as we take the message of the gospel behind enemy lines! Imagine a church ready to “do battle” as we storm the gates of hell with complete confidence that they can not withstand the onslaught, because Jesus has already secured for us the victory (Matthew 16:15-20). You see, Gideon's men had been assembled, tested, and finally encouraged. The time for talking was at an end. The time had come to go to war. Sadly, many churches today never seem quite ready to take that last step. Oh we get together and talk about going to war. We teach about going to war. We discuss the horrible tactics of the enemy. We rail against the sin and wickedness that has taken over our cities and our nation, but that seems to be all that we are willing to do about it. We gather every Sunday in a “Holy Huddle”, yet when we dismiss with the final “Amen”, it's back to business as usual. We shudder at the thought of mentioning the name of Jesus in our schools and workplaces for fear that someone “may not like us”. Just like Gideon, we are cowering down in the winepress complaining under our breath about what Satan is getting away with all around us. Newsflash! We weren't created to cower! We were made to do battle. We are God's warriors! The victory is ours. All we must do is: 1) Shadow The Commander; 2) Smash These Jars of Clay; 3) Sound The Battle Cry; and 4) Shine The Light of Christ.

Shadow The Commander

I can only imagine how “fired up” Gideon's troops were after he gave them the report of what had transpired down in the Midian encampment. Great leaders are able to inspire their followers, and I am quite certain that Gideon was no exception. After all, Gideon had told them that God had already given them the victory. All that was left to do at that point was to go and fight. Little did they know that yet another surprise lay in store for them as they lined up to get their swords and other necessary battle gear. The surprise was, THERE WAS NO BATTLE GEAR! The Israelites had been raided by the Midianites for seven long years. No doubt, any swords or fighting weapons of any sort had long been confiscated. And to make matters worse, there were no blacksmiths in all of Israel (1 Samuel 13:19). So making new weapons was out of the question. So what did Gideon give his men as they lined up to receive their armaments for war? A ram's horn (Shofar in Hebrew), a clay pitcher, and a torch! I would have LOVED to have been there to see those guys faces. You just know that at least one of them stared at those “weapons” in his hand and said, “What the...?” The poor guy couldn't even finish the sentence since there were no curse words in ancient Hebrew!

Gideon gave the men some very specific instructions. He told them to “Watch him” and “Follow HIS lead” (**vs. 17**). You see, these men had no idea how to use the weapons that Gideon had given them. They had no clue as to what Gideon had in mind for the battle strategy. That is why Gideon told them to just watch him and do as he did. Gideon was the leader and for the battle strategy to work, they simply had to have enough faith in him to do exactly as he commanded. Did you catch the spiritual implications of that? The only way the army could effectively use the weapons they had been given to wage war was to shadow their commander perfectly. To imitate his every move.

Jesus is our Great Commander. He has called us to make spiritual warfare against the territories held in captivity by Satan. We do not fight this war with earthly weapons, but rather spiritual ones, for it is a spiritual battle (**Ephesians 6:10-12**). Christ, like Gideon, has given us weapons with which to fight this battle. These weapons are called “Spiritual Gifts” (**1 Corinthians 12**). When you think of it, they are just as “strange” as the weapons that Gideon gave to his soldiers. After all, who in his right mind would ever think about going into war armed with “The Gift of Service” or “The Gift of Giving” or even “The Gift of Teaching”?! You see, God’s ways are not OUR ways (**Isaiah 55:8**). He knows how to fight against Satan and his minions, while we would never stand a chance on our own. But, if we FOLLOW His lead, and do what He does, then we WILL be victorious. Jesus commanded us that if we want to have a victorious life then we MUST stay connected to him (**John 15**). So, how’s your prayer life? Are you being led into battle by The Commander or are you just making it up as you go along? We, just like Gideon’s men, must “shadow” our commander. We must do as He commands, follow where He leads, and live as He HE LIVED (**1 John 2:6**).

Smash These Jars Of Clay

The plan was to light the torches and then place them inside the clay pitchers in order to douse the light until just the right time. Gideon intended to catch the enemy off guard by first creeping up to surround them as they slept. He wanted his men to keep their flaming torches hidden until the whole army was in place looking down from the hilltops while surrounding the enemy encampment on the valley floor. He waited until the change of the watch (**vs. 19**) so that the new guards in the camp would be wide awake to shout the alarm and thereby enhance the sense of panic that was about to descend upon the camp. When Gideon gave the order to blow the trumpets and smash the clay pots, the sentries would begin to scream and shout that they were under attack, and this is exactly what Gideon wanted them to do.

A torch can only smolder inside a clay pot. It needs oxygen in order to shine. These jars of clay would hinder the effectiveness of the torch inside them. For the light to penetrate the darkness, these jars of clay would need to be shattered. Of course, Gideon could have had his men simply remove the torches from the pitchers and let them shine, but no doubt he wanted the sound of three hundred pottery pots shattering in the darkness to have a terrifying effect on the sleeping enemy below. I can only imagine how powerful the effect of it all. The men, following Gideon’s lead, blew the shofars in what is known as “The Teruah”. The Teruah is a war cry that consisted of nine short blasts (three times three) of the rams horn. The Teruah was sounded by three hundred shofars, and as the men shattered three hundred clay pitchers, the light of three hundred torches burst forth and lit up a ring of fire surrounding the camp. After all, Gideon had heard from the enemy’s own lips earlier that very evening, that the men in the encampment were already filled with a sense of dread, so why not treat them to a little noise and a light show to take advantage of the fact? The plan worked. For when the men shattered their pots and the light burst forth, accompanied with the blasts of the ram’s horns, the sleeping men below awoke from their fitful slumber in complete panic and disarray. The LORD sent them into such confusion that they actually turned their swords upon one another (**vs. 22**)! The spectacle below was one of complete chaos and violent bloodshed. The enemy soldiers who were not instantly struck down by the “friendly fire” fled for their lives in sheer terror. It was a battle like no other. It was a battle between the forces of evil and an Almighty God. Evil never had a chance.

I want to look for a moment at the spiritual implications of the light hidden inside these jars of clay. The apostle Paul must have been thinking about Gideon when he wrote to the Corinthian Church to explain to them that in order to be effective in our struggle against evil, it is essential for each of us to deal appropriately with our own flesh. We are but jars of clay, but if we belong to Christ, then we have His light shining within us (**2 Corinthians 4:6-7**). In order for that light to shine, we must destroy our flesh. Simply put, we have to rid ourselves of sin to follow Jesus. Christians who live, speak, and act just like the rest of the world are smoldering the light of Christ within themselves. So many “preachers” these days are saying, “Just ask Jesus to forgive your sins”. But sadly, they are forgetting to mention that in order to be forgiven we must also REPENT (turn away from) our sins. You cannot live in sin and follow Jesus at the same time. I know that this is an unpopular truth these days, but it is TRUTH nonetheless. In order to let Christ shine out of us, we must be broken, just as Gideon’s jars of clay. We cannot fight spiritual battles in the flesh. We must rid ourselves of our fleshly desires and set our minds on Christ so that His light can shine out from us and eradicate the darkness. To claim the name of Jesus and live just like the world is to grieve The Holy Spirit within us (**Ephesians 4:17-32**). Living by the flesh will smolder that light within us, just as those clay pots in Gideon’s army smoldered the light of the torches until they were destroyed. It is time for the army of God to shatter these jars of clay and let the light of Christ burst forth to illuminate this dark and sinful world. Today is the day to deal with your sin, once and for all, and crucify the flesh. Do you want to fight in God’s army? Then get rid of the sin in your life and be transformed. Don’t think like the world thinks. Think like Jesus thinks (**Romans 12:2**). Shatter those Jars of Clay! Your victory is at stake here.

Sound The Battle Cry

Gideon knew that the Midianites were afraid of him. It was God that had placed that fear within them. Gideon was also wise enough to know that this battle was God’s, and not his. He had his men blow the Teruah on the shofars and shout in a loud voice, “The Sword of The LORD and of Gideon”. He wanted the enemy to know that he had come in the name of The LORD, and it was only by that name that they would prevail. This was God’s fight. These were God’s soldiers. And Gideon was God’s man. These three hundred Israelites, who had been tested to prove their faithfulness and worthiness, were fully aware that they would only prevail by declaring the name of The LORD over the battlefield. I would have loved to have heard the shouts that night as The Name above ALL Names was pronounced from the hills surrounding the enemy camp. The Name of God was their Battle Cry!

If we are to win this spiritual war that we are called to fight, then we must remember to speak The Name of JESUS over the battlefield. I have seen so many people try to “do ministry” in their own flesh, by their own power, and their own worldly wisdom. This is a recipe for disaster in the church. I cannot begin to tell you how many times I have seen a “minister” read about some program that a successful church is doing, and then try to copy that program to successfully grow their church. This isn’t about any PROGRAM, METHOD, or ONE SIZE FITS ALL PATH TO VICTORY! It is about FOLLOWING CHRIST. Period.

If we are going to wage this war against the gates of hell in Jesus name, we had better make sure that we know the One in whose name we are fighting. There can be no substitute for walking with God. If your prayer life is in trouble then your chances of winning are zero (**John 15:5**). Simply put, don’t try to fight against the devil in your own strength and then “attach” The Name of Jesus as an afterthought. Too many “Churches” these days are coming up with a battle plan and then throwing up a prayer afterward saying, “Here’s what we have decided to do Lord, now just bless it!” This is the very opposite of how it SHOULD be! How about seeking God’s will in prayer and let HIM give you the battle plan? Sounds simple doesn’t it? So why do so many people still try to fight spiritual battles in their flesh?

I am reminded here of a Jewish priest named Sceva in the book of **Acts, Chapter 19**. God was doing great works through the apostles in the early church, so Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, decided to get in on the act. I guess he was getting tired of people leaving his congregation to follow after the apostles. He decided (foolishly) that if Paul could cast out demons in Jesus name, then so could he. He decided to test his theory on a demon possessed man that lived nearby. Sceva spoke to the demon and said, “In the

Name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out". To which the evil spirit replied, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you? "The demon possessed man then attacked Sceva along with his seven sons, and they subsequently all ran from the house "naked and bleeding" (**Acts 19:13-16**). Well THAT certainly didn't go as planned, huh? Moral of the story? Don't go around invoking the Name of Jesus over your battlefield, unless you actually KNOW Jesus. That being said, if you truly are a believer and a follower of Christ, and you know that He has commanded you to stand and fight, do not be afraid. Proclaim the Name of Jesus over your battlefield and watch God work.

Shine The Light of Christ

When I was a kid my father used to work on cars. He would often ask me to come out to the garage and hold up a light for him, so he could see better into the dark recesses of the car engine that he was working on. Being a kid, I always hated doing that. There were so many better (or so I thought) things that I could be doing with my time. My model cars, my comic book collection, or listening to my stereo are just a few of the things that come to mind. In short, I didn't want to help my dad, because I was much more interested in doing my own thing. It wasn't till much later in my life that it occurred to me that my dad didn't need my help to hold up the light. There were plenty of lights in our garage, and he even had one that would hang over the motor anywhere that he wanted. My dad had been asking me to hold the light for him so that he could spend time with me. He was a great mechanic, and he wanted me to come to the garage and watch him work. Who knows, I might have even learned something from the experience, if I had just been willing to forget about myself for a few minutes and spend some quality time watching him do what he was so very good at doing. Sadly to say, more often than not, I made excuses rather than just go out to the garage and shine the light so I could watch my dad work. I'm older now, and I am truly regretful that I passed on so many opportunities to work with my dad.

Why am I telling you all this. Because we have a Heavenly Father, who wants to include us in what He is doing. He doesn't NEED our help, but He longs to include us nonetheless. Why? Because He loves us. That day on the battlefield, the three hundred men who wanted to see God more than they wanted to go home and do their own thing got to witness something truly miraculous. They got to hold up a light and watch God at work that night in the Midianite camp. I am quite certain that it was a moment that they would never forget. I am also quite certain that every man, who because of their own selfishness returned home and missed out on that miraculous victory, was not only ashamed, but also filled with regret because of doing so. A careful examination of the text will allow us to see that God in his amazing grace allows them to come and rejoin the fight to round up the remaining enemy soldiers who fled from the battle (**vs. 24-25**).

God wants to include us in His work. In fact he created us to take part in His work. To miss out on this tremendous opportunity is to miss the very meaning of life. I cannot tell you how many times I have sat at the bedside of someone who wished they had made The Kingdom their life's priority. Time has a way of marching on. Opportunities missed will very seldom re-present themselves. Make the most of your every opportunity to let your light so shine that men will see your good works and glorify your Heavenly Father (**Matthew 5:6**). Jesus is The Light of the world. Hold Him up for all to see and just watch God work! He has promised us that if He be lifted up, then HE will draw men to himself (**John 12:32**). As much as we would like, or as hard as may try in our own strength, we cannot save anyone. But Jesus can. Our only hope of victory against the dark forces of evil that outnumber us is that we, The Church, simply lift Him up for the world to see. Lift up the name of Jesus in our schools, our homes, and our workplaces. Lift up the name of Jesus in every facet of our lives. Lift Him up, and let His light shine in this world, and watch God go to work. Then, we will witness firsthand God's miraculous victory against evil as we SHADOW OUR COMMANDER, SMASH THESE JARS OF CLAY, SOUND THE BATTLE CRY and SHINE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST. God Himself will do the rest! You were designed and destined for this fight. Don't miss it because of selfishness or lack of faith. The victory has already been won. Do you truly believe that?

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!