

Judges 7:15-25 – “Faith Really is the Victory”

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Intro: One of my History professors in college had formerly been a major in the army, and had commanded troops stationed in Germany. He told us a story to show us how he knew that his troops trusted him. He said that while they were on training maneuvers once, his troops were reviewed by a visiting general. The men had been in the field, ice cold and without any hot food for several days. What did the visiting general ask the men about? “Have you had any hot food?” To a man, the men assured the general that they had and were being well cared for. Without commending his men’s duplicity, my professor said, “And that’s how you know that your men trust you – when they are willing to lie for you, you’re in their good books!”¹ Maybe one of the reasons the army of the United States is feared around the world is that the troops trust their officers. As we’ll see tonight, the army of saints draws strength from that same principle: Trusting the One who is in charge is the key to victory in our fight against evil. Sin attacks us with overpowering force. It intimidates; bullies; and frightens us, just as the Midianites were doing to Gideon and the nation of Israel. But faith really is the victory that overcomes the world, as the old hymn and tonight’s text assure us.

Proposition: “Faith is the victory that overcomes the world,” so show up and do what God tells you to do!

Billboard:	(vv.15-18)	An Inspired Plan
	(vv.19-23)	A Divine Strength
	(vv.24-25)	A Complete Rout

(vv.15-18) An Inspired Plan – Words are supernatural things, and the beginning of Gideon’s victory over his fears and Israel’s victory over the Midianites came through inspiring words that God sent Gideon to overhear at the edge of Midian’s camp. We pick up the result of Gideon and Purah’s overhearing of the Midianites’ dream in these verses: **Judges 7:15–18 - 15** *As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the host of Midian into your hand.”* **16** *And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars, with torches inside the jars.* **17** *And he said to them, “Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.* **18** *When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’”* The effect of what Gideon and Purah overheard was electric in the timid soul of Gideon. Words are supernatural things. They come from the eternal, pass through the temporal, and lodge in the souls of men. A bullet of truth fired from heaven, through the lips of those enemy soldiers, struck a fire of inspiration in Gideon, with three tremendous effects: Gideon became a man with 1) An Inspired Heart; 2) An Inspired Plan; 3) and An Inspired Leader.

An Inspiring Heart – Gideon’s heart moved him to worship God. All true service begins in worship. There is no motive for serving God beyond worship. A desire to do good alone, is inadequate. Our good deeds must be done for His glory. Concern for God’s people is of little value unless our concern is an expression of God’s love for His Church. All true service to God begins in seeing the glory of God and worshipping.

An Inspiring Plan – Gideon rose from worship with a plan in his heart. We are not told how God did it, but there can be little doubt that Gideon’s command to divide his forces into three bands equipped with torches, ram’s horns and pitchers came from God. What human being would possibly think that the

¹ That’s a paraphrase of what he said. I can’t recall the exact words at this distance!

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pathway to victory ran through this kind of scheme? Nevertheless, this was what God instructed Gideon to do, so Gideon gave the orders.

An Inspiring Leader – Who is this guy? Suddenly Gideon is in charge, and everyone is willing to fall in line with his harebrained plan. There is supernatural power in this kind of inspired leadership. Gideon’s men must have been perplexed as to how the weapons they were given, torches, trumpets, jars, and words, were going to defeat so powerful a foe. God didn’t explain, nor did Gideon. They had to have faith to follow the One who commanded them when the commands didn’t make sense, but that is always God’s way (cf. Hebrews 11:27). Vance Havner put it best: **“Faith sees the invisible and does the impossible.”**

[DOCTINAL POINT] Victory starts with God’s inspiring words.

[ILLUSTRATION] “The Gettysburg Address is a speech that U.S. President Abraham Lincoln delivered during the American Civil War at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of November 19, 1863, four and a half months after the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy at the Battle of Gettysburg. It is one of the best-known speeches in American history. Lincoln's carefully crafted address, not even that day's primary speech, came to be seen as one of the greatest and most influential statements of American national purpose. In just 271 words, beginning with the now famous phrase "Four score and seven years ago," referring to the signing of the Declaration of Independence 87 years earlier, Lincoln described the US as a nation "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," and represented the Civil War as a test that would determine whether such a nation, the Union sundered by the secession crisis, could endure. He extolled the sacrifices of those who died at Gettysburg in defense of those principles and exhorted his listeners to resolve “that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”² To this day, Lincoln’s words continue to inspire our hearts when we hear them, and that is the power that the right word, at the right moment can have. Lincoln knew this, and so does our heavenly Father.

[APPLICATION] God knows how to use words to change the world. His whole plan to rescue His people begins with words. He inspires our hearts, shares His plans, and brings us leadership through words. Words are supernatural things, and we dare not undervalue them.

(vv.19-23) A Divine Strength – Gideon and his men entered into the victory by showing up and doing what they had been told to do. **Judges 7:19–20 - 19** *So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. 20* *Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!”* Gideon and company showed up as commanded and followed through with what they had been told to do, crazy as the plan must have seemed from a human point of view. That is what faith is: Trusting and Obeying God. Faith is based first on a firm foundation of confidence in God, a certainty that He exists and that He always keeps His promises (cf. Hebrew 11:6). Faith does not originate from unregenerate humanity but is a gift from God (cf. Ephesians 2:8). Just as we have seen God seek out and reveal

² Wikipedia.

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Himself to Gideon, so God has done for each one of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Son. With this gift, we can enter all that God has prepared for us since before the world was created (cf. Ephesians 1:4). What is our part in all of this? Like Gideon and his army, our part is blessedly simple. **To enter all that God has for us we merely must show up and do what we’re told to do.** That is what faith is. The simplicity of this is illustrated through the actions of Gideon and company after obeying their orders: **Judges 7:21 - 21** *Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled.* There is no word here of Gideon’s 300 lifting a sword. They smashed their jars, waved their torches, blew their horns, said their piece, and stood still. God provided all the fireworks. **Judges 7:22–23 - 22** *When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man’s sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.* **23** *And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh, and they pursued after Midian.* Isn’t it interesting? The weapon of fear the Midianites were using on Gideon and Israel, became the weapon God turned on the Midianites at that moment. How was Midian defeated? God fanned the growing fear in their hearts into self-destructive panic. How? Through a simple set of words, “*A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!*” Gideon and his army were handed victory by God, and all they needed to receive the victory was faith.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Victory is received through faith alone.

[ILLUSTRATION] “Words, words, words,” replied Hamlet to Polonius’ question, “What do you read, sir?” Hamlet was suggesting that words are meaningless because they are merely a medium for thought and not action, but if that is what Shakespeare meant when he wrote those words, he was certainly mistaken. Everything began with a word – “*Let there be light.*” Words are the means through which God reveals Himself to fallen humanity. God speaks, and makes Himself known, and for those who are given ears to hear, nothing can ever be the same again.

[APPLICATION] When sin entered the creation in the Garden, it came in because our first parents refused to trust God’s words. Now, God has ordained that the damage sin has brought can only be undone in one way – we must enter into the victory over sin He has ordained by trusting and obeying what He has told us about His Son. Man’s nature rebels against this. We arrogantly think that we can be our own savior somehow, but God’s having none of it. The only way out of our dilemma is through faith. We must trust and obey if we would have victory. This goes beyond the question of changing our destiny, though it is blessedly true in that realm, too. It also has to do with how we defeat the world’s temptations; reject the flesh’s enticements; refute Satan’s lies. Everything we need from God we receive from God in one way only – by faith. Faith really is the victory that overcomes the world.

(vv.24-25) A Complete Rout – When the Midianite army fled, they apparently scattered in all directions to the east and south. Gideon chased some across the Jordan, but others headed toward the south eastern ford near Beth-barah. **Judges 7:24–25 - 24** *Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and capture the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.” So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they captured the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.* **25** *And they captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. Then they pursued Midian, and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon across the Jordan.* How should Gideon consolidate the victory God gave Israel? He apparently had no instructions, so he did what made sense to do: He called for help – he recalled the 31,700 men he had sent home a day before. Remember who these men were. These were people who only a short while before, like Gideon, had

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been hiding in caves, winepresses, and holes in the ground for fear of the Midianites. Now, they became instruments of God to complete the victory God had started. Could there be a greater demonstration that human strength is never the source of victory when it comes to fighting God’s battles? This whole story is one of God picking up and using Gideon, the 300, the 31,700, simply because He had them at hand.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Victory is consolidated through whomever God has at hand.

[ILLUSTRATION] Warren Wiersbe makes this point better than I can:

“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 blessing. When leaders depend on their education, skill, and experience rather than in God, then God abandons them and looks for a Gideon.”³

Conclusion: [APPLICATION] Don’t miss the point of tonight’s lesson! The victory was given because God initiated it all. He called Gideon. He gave Gideon faith. He propped up Gideon’s courage. He assembled, then reduced Gideon’s army. He gave Gideon a plan and the weapons needed to carry out that plan. He confused the enemy. He completely routed Israel’s foes. Gideon and his men contributed nothing: they just showed up and did what they were told to do. Faith really is the victory that overcomes the world, and it must be so for in no other way can God get the glory rather than men.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1994). [*Be available*](#) (pp. 66–67). Victor Books.