The Lord said to Gideon, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand." (Judges 7:9)

Merciful Father, your grace extends to those who love you and to those you choose by your glorious favor. Grant that we would cherish your forgiveness and mercy in our lives and so extend that to others. Thank you for watching over us and protecting us from our enemies. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen..

Introduction

The Israelites had been driven from their homes by Midianite raiders, who forced them to hide out in the hills. But God raised up an unlikely leader in Gideon. By sending his people into battle against their enemies, God proved that he himself would provide the victory.

Read: Judges 7:1-23

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

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The Biblical Context

The historical books of Joshua and Judges include some of the most violent stories in Scripture. These two books, as well as the Book of Ruth, are all set in the time previous to the Israelite Monarchy.

When we first meet the character of Gideon in Judges 6:11, an angel appeared to him as he was hiding out in a winepress, hoping the Midianites would not see him as he did his work. The angel of the Lord greeted him by saying: "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor." At that point in the story, Gideon had demonstrated neither valor nor might.

But that fits the theme of today's story. Gideon himself (and later, his army) were not victorious by their own strength or power. They only defeated the Midianites because the Lord was with them.

Discussion Questions

1. The Israelites had been forced into the hills to hide from Midianite raiders. What do you think had given Gideon the confidence to come out of hiding and lead his people into battle? Was it his own courage, or something else?

2. Starting out with such a large army, why did God tell Gideon to send home so many of his military men? What lesson did God want the Israelites to learn, and what assumption did he want to break?

3. Many try to explain God's methods here by saying he was choosing the best fighters. How does this explanation contradict the main point of the story?

4. What tactics did the Israelites use in their battle? On what was their plan based?

5. What happened to the Midianites when the attacking Israelites yelled, "For the Lord and for Gideon!"? How did this accomplish God's plan?

6. In your own life, when have you depended on God to help you with something that may have seemed overwhelming on your own? What did you learn from the experience?

7. In Philippians 3:4b-11, Paul explained that in faith, he no longer looked to his own accomplishments and qualities to measure his worth, but only the worth of Christ. What is the difference between self-confidence and God-confidence?

8. How does the story of Gideon illustrate the way God saves us — by his grace and not by our works?

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