

GIDEON, AND GOD'S MILITARY STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Judges 7:1-7**. From Roy H. Enoch (03-26-1995).
- B. Thesis: To get each person to assume responsibility in the Church.
- C. It seems that there has always been a lot of fighting in the world.
 - 1. It seems that history is a chronicle of wars.
 - 2. A great part of a nation's history is its military conflicts.
 - 3. The Bible describes many military battles as well as the spiritual battle against sin.
 - 4. There are few families who have not had someone in the military.
- D. The NT uses the metaphor of warfare to describe the Xian's effort to combat sin in his life.
 - 1. In Eph. 6:10-18 Paul describes the Xian's preparations to live the Xian life as putting "on the whole armor of God."
 - 2. See also 1Tim. 6:12; 2Tim. 2:3.
- E. In Gideon's day, God's people were oppressed and abused by the Midianites and Amalekites because of Israel's sins.
 - 1. God sent Gideon to deliver the people when they repented.
 - 2. Gideon gathered an army of 32,000.
 - 3. This was insignificant compared to the Midianites and Amalekites who are described "as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude (Jud. 7:12).
- F. This lesson is about Gideon's incident in Israel's history:
 - 1. God shows how to reduce an army.
 - 2. God shows how to use a reduced and dedicated army.
 - 3. These are lessons for God's people today.

I. GOD SHOWS HOW TO REDUCE AN ARMY.

- A. God said that the army was too large for Him to give a victory, lest they say that they had done it w/ their own hand.
 - 1. So, He told Joshua to send home all who were afraid; 22,000 went home.
 - 2. Although two-thirds left, the army was probably stronger without those who would flee in battle and discourage others.
 - 3. But God said the army was still too large; the people would claim the victory for themselves.
- B. Therefore, God told Gideon to bring them to the water, "and I will test them for you there" (Jud. 7:4).
 - 1. Those who knelt on one knee, dipping their hand in the water and bringing it to their mouth, could watch for danger while drinking.
 - 2. Those who, on both knees, drank directly from the stream, were vulnerable and careless.
 - 3. 300 remained alert while drinking, and these were used by God for a great victory.
 - 4. The 9,700 who got down on their knees to drink were sent home.
 - 5. God still uses water to test the faith of those who say that they believe in Him.
 - a. Baptism does not make "sense" to mankind.
 - b. Therefore, those who are following their own reasoning will reject it.
 - c. Those who really trust the Lord, will not hesitate to do what God asks them to do.
- C. Reducing the army to 300 removes all doubt that the victory was the Lord's and not by human effort.
 - 1. It would also place a much greater significance on each individual following directions, or walking by faith.
 - 2. A few with the faith to do what God says w/out having to see "reason" in it can still accomplish wonders in the world.

II. GOD SHOWS HOW TO USE A REDUCED AND DEDICATED ARMY.

- A. He divided them into three groups:
 - 1. Each group had to respond in coordination with the others.
 - 2. Each individual in the group had to fulfill his responsibility.
- B. God did not equip them with swords, but with pitchers, torches and trumpets.
 - 1. When fighting at night, each commander would have a torch and trumpet so that the men in his company could follow him.
 - 2. When the enemy awoke, and saw the torches around them, and heard the trumpets sound the order to charge, they thought they were surrounded by a mighty army, and attacked anyone they came to in the dark.
 - 3. God caused the enemy to kill each other, as the men of Gideon each stood in his place.

III. THESE ARE LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH TODAY.

- A. There is great worth in a dedicated and faithful individual today.
 - 1. A soldier could be lost in the shuffle of 32,000, but easier to identify his place in a company of 100.
 - 2. It is easier to find a place to work in a church of 100 than in one of 1,000.
 - 3. The most important thing is to dedicate our lives to service in the church and community.
 - 4. Although the early church "multiplied" it was by individual conversion.
- B. We may question what God could do with us.
 - 1. Gideon did not think God could use him to deliver his people (Jud. 6:14-15).
 - 2. But the Angel of God describes Gideon differently (Jud. 6:12).
 - 3. God can do more with you than you imagine.
 - a. You can comfort someone in the nursing home or a shut-in at home.
 - b. You can encourage a friend to study the Bible and follow it.
 - c. You can try to bring back, one who has left the faith. Gal. 6:1; Jas 5:19,20
 - d. You can remind others of their blessings when they are discouraged and depressed.
 - e. You can bring cheer to the lonely and discouraged.
- C. The key to our ability to serve the Lord is a dedication of ourselves to the Lord's work.
 - 1. One w/little ability can do more by using what ability he has than one with great ability who uses it for himself.
 - 2. We can begin to find our place in the Lord's work by accepting that we are asked to do.
 - a. It is depressing to see how many decline when asked to do something in the worship or to visit someone.
 - b. Some do not want to do anything, but only sit and watch others (and sometimes to find fault).
 - c. We begin by wanting to do what we can and to try to learn what we do not know how to do.
 - 3. Most work requires preparation.
 - a. One cannot practice medicine w/out continuing study.
 - b. One cannot practice law w/out great preparation.
 - c. We should be making preparation to teach others.
 - 4. Paul presents us the kind of challenge that each should take personally in (Rom. 12:1-5).

CONCLUSION.

- A. God's people today have two challenges relative to the right relationship to the Lord's work:
 - 1. We need to find OUR place in the Lord's service.
 - a. We must realize that we do not have the same abilities and dispositions as others.
 - b. Rather than trying to imitate someone else, develop our own abilities.

2. We need to serve diligently and faithfully what we can do best.
- B. When a group of Xians succeed today, the reasons are:
1. They did have a basic honesty and dedication of leadership to examine the needs and their abilities.
 2. They identified individual responsibility and knew what they were to do.
 3. They became enthusiastically involved in carrying out their own responsibility, while encouraging and helping others.
- C. Gideon followed God's direction even though it probably did not sound like a logical military strategy.
- D. We also must have enough faith to follow X's word even when we do not see any sense in it (2Pet. 1:8-11).