

Too Many to Win - How God Guards His Glory in the Fall of Midian

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Judges 7

God raises up Gideon as a deliverer, and in him we see the preparation necessary for usefulness in God's kingdom: a servant emptied of self-reliance so that the glory belongs wholly to God. It is summarized in **2 Corinthians 12:9–10** — “*For when I am weak, then I am strong.*” In **Judges 7**, God empties a man and his army with the aim of protecting His glory. He reduces the army by ninety-nine percent (from 32K to 300), and He strengthens a fearful man, so that when the victory comes, Israel cannot say, “*My own hand has saved me*” (7:2).

I. Why Did God Reduce Gideon's Army? (Judges 7:2)

This verse governs the whole chapter. God is not solving a military crisis; He is guarding His own glory!

NOTE: *This is not divine insecurity but holy jealousy. God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 48:11), because there is no other to whom it rightly belongs; so, He arranges victory such that Israel cannot claim any credit.*

- A. **To fix Gideon's focus solely on God.** By every measure, Gideon already had too few — 32,000 against a host “*like locusts in abundance.*” God trims the army further, so Gideon looks to God's power, not to troop strength.
- B. **To rest Gideon's expectations solely on God.** The reduction removes every human basis for expecting to win. Going into battle, Gideon can count on nothing but the Lord — the victory must come by a means his army cannot produce.
- C. **To direct Gideon's boast solely to God.** This is the reason the text itself gives (7:2): so that no one could say, “*My own hand has saved me.*” God will not share the credit (**1 Corinthians 1:27–29** — “*God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong ... so that no human being might boast in the presence of God*”).

II. How Did God Reduce the Army? The Two Siftings (Judges 7:3–8).

By design, neither test leaves the men anything to boast in...

- A. **The first sifting – the fearful and trembling (Judges 7:3)** {32K to 10K}. The standing law in Israel. (**Deuteronomy 20:8**, *And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own.’*) The Lord is defending His covenant people in their national inheritance (the land).
 - 1. Fear is contagious. God removes the fearful to prevent the virus of fear from spreading.
 - 2. Faith is necessary. Those who don't trust the Lord were released. This faith was not a faith of winning the battle; rather, it was a faith trusting the outcome to a sovereign God.
- B. **The second sifting – the water test (Judges 7:4–7)** {10K becomes 300}
 - 1. There is no textual basis for why “*lapping*” is the preferred manner of drinking.
 - 2. This “sovereign sorting” process should be viewed through **vs. 2**. The criterion is arbitrary by design, so that the results rest wholly on God's choosing and not on any quality in the three hundred. The point of lapping is that there is no point in the lapping. God does not let even the test become a boast!
- C. The result is 300 men remain, and the trumpets and provisions are put into their hands (**Judges 7:8**).

III. Who were the 300? (Judges 7:8)

- A. Ordinary men. (Not angels, not an elite army of heroes: nothing in them explains the victory).
- B. Not professionally trained warriors.
- C. The 300 were “the unlikely” victors. The enemy himself will confess the battle is already lost before it begins (see **7:14**, “*God has given ...*”) — an echo of Rahab's confession that the Lord had given the land and the enemies' hearts had melted (**Joshua 2:9–11**). God had said so; that settled it.

IV. How God Strengthened the Weak Deliverer (Judges 7:9–15)

God has emptied the army of any boast; now He steadies its leader.

- A. **God condescends to Gideon's fear (7:9–11).** “But if you are afraid to go down...” — the very words show Gideon is still trembling after the army is cut to three hundred. God does not rebuke the fear; He stoops to it, sending Gideon down to the edge of the camp to listen.

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- B. **The Midianite's dream — the barley loaf (7:13–14).** A cake of barley bread, the bread of the poor, tumbles into the camp and overturns the tent. The enemy interprets his own defeat: “This is nothing but the sword of Gideon ... God has given into his hand Midian.”
 - C. **Gideon worships before he fights (7:15).** He bows down and worships — having not yet lifted a sword. Here is “*when I am weak, then I am strong*” in narrative form: the deliverer is strengthened by grace, not by numbers.

V. What were the Divine Means of Victory (Judges 7:16-23)

- A. The weapons were empty jars, hidden torches, and trumpets — no swords in hand at the first (7:16–20). The instruments themselves preach the theme: the power is God's, the vessel is nothing.
- B. The decisive blow is God's, not Gideon's.
 - 1. Our role is obedience and faith. The victory is by a means that Gideon's army could not produce.
 - 2. **1 Samuel 17:47**, *And that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand.*”
- C. The weapon God wields is confusion. Midian's panic became self-slaughter — friendly fire — a consistent instrument of divine warfare (cf. **Exodus 14:24**).
- D. Midian's strength is turned upon itself. The outcome never depended upon the size and skill of Israel's army. **Zechariah 4:6**, “*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.*”

VI. What are the Lessons for us?

- A. **Negatively** — We are not to reckon our might the agent of victory, nor our numbers, nor our skill.
- B. **Positively** — God did more than merely reduce the army's size; He came down to the fearful Gideon and strengthened him. The weakness that keeps us from boasting is the very thing that qualifies us to be used, “*so that no human being might boast in His presence.*”
- C. **Christ** — Gideon is a deliverer raised up because Israel had no king, and he is himself a flawed and fading rescuer (see chapter 8). He cannot be the deliverance; he can only make us long for it. The New Testament carries the same logic to the cross, where God chose the weak to shame the strong and won the decisive victory through apparent defeat, “*that no flesh should boast.*” The God who saved Israel by three hundred saves the world by a crucified Christ.
- D. **Light for our Path:** Where, this week, are you counting your thirty-two thousand — the competence, the reputation, the reserve you cannot bear to lose? Name it, and ask God to reduce it — not to leave you defeated, but to teach you to say, with Gideon and with Paul: “*The victory was God's; my only part was to trust and obey Him. The glory is His, and the privilege is mine.*”