

GIDEON

(Philippians 4:13)

Purpose: To teach the true meaning of trusting and obeying God.

The Bible tells of a time when the Midianites, a wicked and war-like people, came like a plague of grasshoppers and swarmed over the land of Israel.

The Midianites just took over the land, and hopelessly outnumbered by their enemies, the people of Israel left their homes and fled for their lives into the wilderness, leaving most of their possessions behind.

Living in the wilderness often meant being hungry and cold and the Israelites had a real struggle for existence. The rich people became poor, and the poor people became destitute.

Israel, as a nation, was poverty-stricken and they cried to the Lord to deliver them from this miserable existence.

We read in the Bible that the family of Gideon was one of the poorest in Israel . . . and Gideon was the youngest son.

That, according to custom, made him the least important. So Gideon was used to taking orders and to plenty of hard work.

When Gideon was told by an angel of the Lord that God had chosen him to deliver Israel from the Midianites, Gideon's reaction was much as we might have expected it to be.

"Me? I'm supposed to deliver my people from the Midianites?" Gideon felt sure that a mistake had been made.

Gideon explained to the angel that his family was poor, and being the youngest son, he wasn't an important person at all!

But the angel told Gideon no mistake had been made. Gideon was the one God had chosen, and God would help him if he would do as he was told. So on the basis of his personal faith in God Gideon started to work.

In the camp of the Midianites, the midnight hour was the time for changing the guard. It was a noisy affair and that provided a wonderful opportunity for Gideon.

While the Midianites were changing guards, Gideon and his men carried out the first part of their plan.

As far as the Midianite guards were concerned, there was nothing surrounding their camp but the emptiness of the night air.

Little did they realize that Gideon and his men were stealing through the darkness on a very peculiar mission, each one carrying a pitcher in one hand, and a trumpet in the other, and hidden within each pitcher was a lighted firebrand.

At last every man was in position, waiting for the signal from Gideon, ready to do exactly as their leader did.

Then Gideon blew on his trumpet . . .

... he broke his pitcher . . .

... and he held high his torch and cried . . . *"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"*

And all around the camp of the Midianites the 300 men did as their leader had done.

The Midianite guards were struck dumb!

In a matter of seconds the camp of the Midianites was a scene of fear and confusion. They thought a great army had taken them by surprise.

Their entire camp must be surrounded! Where could they go? What should they do?

Like a herd of wild animals in utter panic the Midianites began to stampede.

Suddenly in the midst of all this confusion, Gideon's men blew loud and long on their horns again.

Then a strange thing happened in the army of the Midianites.

Every man turned blindly on his neighbor and began to fight one another... for the Lord caused it to happen.

Gideon drove the Midianites clear out of the land, and they never came back again! And the Lord gave a tremendous victory to Gideon, because he believed in God enough to let Him do it.

Gideon learned that where God is concerned believing and doing go together. But more important still, one man multiplied by God's power equals victory, no matter what the odds!

The Bible says in Philippians 4:13, *"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."*