The Potter and the Clay

Judges 7:8 – 25

Introduction:

Wouldn’t you like to be able to tell the future? I can tell what the score of a game will be before it ever starts! If I really could give the final score before the game starts, I could be rich.

Today, we are going to see that Gideon knew the final outcome of a battle before the battle began.

The guarantee came from God v 9 – and, Gideon shared it with his men in v. 15.

I. The Pledge of Success – 7:8-11

A. The Pledge Reveals that Success is of God

God started out by creating the heavens and the earth – by Himself. Throughout history He has proved that He does not need great armies, He just uses those who believe in Him and follow Him. In the end He gets the credit for the success.

B. The Pledge Requires Obedience for its Fulfillment - We do have a part to play:

God said, I’m going to deliver the Midianites into your hand. But you have to arise and go down and fight them.

Philippians 2:12

“Therefore, my beloved, ﻿﻿as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, ﻿﻿work out your own salvation with ﻿﻿fear and trembling;”

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These verses are telling how we are suppose to live out our salvation in service for the Lord. v. 13 is the key.

“for ﻿﻿it is God who works in you both to will and to do ﻿﻿for *His* good pleasure.”

C. The Pledge Reassures God’s People with His Presence

“If Jesus goes with me I’ll go anywhere.”

The important part is where is Jesus going.

D. The Pledge Recognizes the Battle as Already Won.

God is not limited to the “now”. He not only knows the future, He plans the future.

He speaks of things that are not as though they were.

Romans 4:17

“God ... calls those ﻿﻿things which do not exist as though they did;

Romans 8:30

“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also ﻿﻿called; whom He called, these He also ﻿﻿justified; and whom He justified, these He also ﻿﻿glorified.”

Here, He is calling a battle that has not even been fought yet as already won,

“I have given the Midianites into your hand” (7:9,15).

II. The Revelation of Success – 7:12-15

A. The Strength of Gideon’s Enemy - 7:12

“Now the Midianites and Amalekites, ﻿﻿all the people of the East, were lying in the valley ﻿﻿as numerous as locusts; and their camels *were* ﻿﻿without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.”

B. The Significance of Israel’s Weakness – 7:9-11, 13-14

“Arise, go into the camp.”

(This command means, “go into the battle”) I have delivered them it in to your hand.

Then God says, “If you are afraid to go down, (to do battle) go down and look around and I will give you confirmation. [What are the chances that he is afraid?]

So Gideon goes down into the camp. In all that hoard of people, God leads him to the very tent where a Midianite man has just had a dream.

“And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, “I have had a dream: *To my* surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.” Then his companion answered and said, “This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand ﻿﻿God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.” (7:13-14).

What is the meaning of the dream?

A cake of barley was a sign of poverty. Barley was animal food. It was eatable, but barely.

Revelation 6:6

“And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A ﻿﻿quart of wheat for a ﻿﻿denarius, and three quarts of barley. The “barley loaf” stood for Israel and their poverty. i.e. weakness.

C. The Surprise of Attack

The tent is a picture of the Midianites.

God now reveals the surprise attack.

“*To my* surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.” (7:13b)

This is a picture of what is about to happen to the Midianites.

D. The Success of Gideon’s Strategy – 7:15

They had been watching the camp of Israel.

They could see 22,000 men leave.

Then they saw 9,700.

What kind of trick is this? They began to fear. There is no fear like the fear of the unknown.

Then (with Gideon still listening) the companion of the dreamer says,

“This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand ﻿﻿God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.” (7:14b)

God had planted the fear of Gideon and of Gideon’s God into the hearts of the Midianites. “They ain’t seen nothin’ yet!”

“And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.” (7:15).

III. The Readiness for Success – 7:16-20

A. The Instruments of Warfare – 7:16

He divides the 300 into 3 companies.

He gives them:

Trumpets to sound

Torches to shine

Jars to shatter

Voices to shout

That is not much in the way of weapons.

The question is, “How will they be used?”

B. The Instruction of Warriors – 7:17-20

“And he said to them, “Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, ‘*The sword of* the Lord and of Gideon!” (7:17-18)

It’s what you do with what you’ve got.

It doesn’t matter what you’ve got.

It’s what you do with it, that pays off in the end.

“Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” (7:20).

The Midianites were confused and terrified by the sudden light and noise.

They began to kill each other:

Midianites killed Amalekites

Amalekites killed Midianites

Midianites killed Midianites

Amalekites killed Amalekites

The 301did not have to do another thing, except to stand and watch the plan of the Lord unfold.

God was making sure that they didn’t take the credit for the success of the battle.

They had to do what they were told to do, but in the end, it was God’s show. To God be the glory!

IV. The Rules of Success – 7:21-25

A. The Rule of Fervency

They listened to Gideon

They watched Gideon

They obeyed Gideon,

They acted as one man.

Remember in 6:16

﻿“Surely I will be with you, and you shall ﻿﻿defeat the Midianites as one man.”

I said there that it probably meant:

“You shall defeat the Midianites “as [though they were] one man.”

Well, here they acted as one man. So maybe we could interpret 6:16 as,

“You shall defeat the Midianites [acting] as one man.”

B. The Rule of Faithfulness – 7:21

“And ﻿﻿every man stood in his place all around the camp; ﻿﻿and the whole army ran and cried out and fled.”

There is nothing more important than just standing there if the Lord has said, “Just stand there”.

They stood; one continuous line of torches, trumpets and shouting, each in his own place.

I Peter 4:10-11

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, ﻿﻿as good stewards of ﻿﻿the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him* *speak* as the ﻿﻿oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that ﻿﻿in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the ﻿﻿dominion forever and ever. Amen.

C. The Rule of Fear

Who was afraid at first? – Gideon.

And who was confident at first? – The Midianites.

Now the Midianites are so afraid they forgot who the enemy was, they killed each other and Gideon is just watching the Lord work!

God has taken the fear of Gideon and put it in the Midianites and the confidence of the Midianites and put it in Gideon.

That is quit an exchange program.

It is very much like our salvation: God put our sin on Jesus so that He could pay for it on Calvary. He put Jesus’ righteousness on us so that we could have fellowship with Him (II Corinthians 5:21).

D The Rule of Follow-up

The battle is over – Mission Accomplished!

But, v. 22 says that some got away. They headed for home on the east side of the Jordon. They may go, regroup and come back another day.

The victory must be completed.

“Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the ﻿﻿mountains of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.” (7:24)

These may have been the one who went home before. They are no longer afraid, so they join in the chase.

“Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and ﻿﻿seized the watering places as far as ﻿﻿Beth Barah and the Jordan. And they captured ﻿﻿two princes of the Midianites, ﻿﻿Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the ﻿﻿other side of the Jordan” (7:24b-25).

Conclusion:

Now that we have the whole story, we could say this was amazing. It was good for them.

But there’s more. We need to learn from what they learned so that we will not do what they did.

There seems to be a parallel passage in the New Testament:

II Corinthians 4:5-10

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels” reminds us that God has put the life of His Son and ministry of the Holy Spirit as lights in us. Jesus said that we are the light of the world.

Gideon’s army had their lights in earthen vessels (clay pots) also. The light could not be seen and therefore was useless until the clay pot was broken.

Sometimes God has to break our clay pot so that the others may see the light of God that is within.

When trouble, heartache and sorrow come, we often pray, “Lord, take it away, I don’t need this.” When, in fact, we do need it so that we can be the testimony to the world that He saved us to be.

Maybe the next time we should say, “Lord, I dedicate my troubles to You. Don’t take them away, help me through them; so that You can use them for Your glory.

Then stand still and see the Lord work through our dedicated broken clay pot.