

Relying on God's Power

Key Verse: *“Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.”*
—Judges 7:15

Selected Scripture:
Judges 7:1-22

An invading host of about 135,000 Midianites were camped in the valley of Jezreel. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, who then sent messengers to four different tribes of Israel, asking them to meet him.—Judg. 6:33-35

After 32,000 men had gathered to Gideon, the Lord said to him, “The people that are with thee are too many, ... lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.” (Judg. 7:1,2) God directed Gideon to announce to the group of men that those who were fearful of the impending conflict were free to return to their homes. This was a test of faith. Out of the men gathered, 22,000 were fearful and went home, and 10,000 remained.—vss. 2,3

Then God said to Gideon, “The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there.” Gideon brought the remaining 10,000 men down to the water. Then the Lord said, “Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.” Those who bowed down upon their knees to drink would be oblivious to any potential dangers surrounding them and would

be deemed unfit for service. Only 300 men did not do this and instead reached down into the water, “putting their hands to their mouth” to drink, demonstrating their alertness and attention necessary to carry out the task that lay ahead. God told Gideon he would deliver the Midianites into their hand with just these 300. (vss. 4-7) Thus was manifested the Lord’s wisdom and power in such a way that no one would doubt it was God who had delivered Israel.

The manner in which the Israelite army was reduced to 300 contains important lessons for the Lord’s followers. Gideon’s call to service can be likened to the heavenly calling that has been offered to the Lord’s followers since Pentecost. (Rom. 12:1,2) The 22,000 men who, through fear, left to return home, could represent those who, during the present Gospel Age, count the cost of sacrifice and are unwilling to give their lives in complete consecration to God.

The second test was the way in which the remaining 10,000 men drank the water. Water is a symbol of God’s Word found in the Bible. (John 4:14; 7:37,38; Eph. 5:26) There are two classes of the Lord’s people that could be illustrated in this second test. Many have been anxious to drink of the water of Truth. Most, however, are not alert and “bow down,” drinking only for themselves. Others, few in number, are alert to the life-long work of transforming their desires and conduct toward holy things and are looking around for opportunities to serve the Lord. These are the ones who not only respond to the heavenly calling and drink of the water of Truth, but also are proven to be “more than conquerors,” and are “they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”—Heb. 3:1; Rom: 8:35-39; Rev. 14:1-4

Letting our light shine forth will inevitably cost us something. However, we should go forward “in full assurance of faith,” remembering that it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”—Heb. 10:19-22; Zech. 4:6 ■