

HEROES OF FAITH - GIDEON
"He Trusted the Lord's Power"
Judges 6-8 (esp. 6:11-16)

INTRODUCTION ... Imagine an army general in wartime saying: "We have too many men in the army" - especially if the enemy army is much larger! Amazing! - but that's what the Lord told GIDEON, today's HERO OF FAITH

I. "Hello! I am GIDEON ...

"I was surprised, too! ... my army had 32,000 men, but the enemy had 135,000 soldiers! The Lord said WE had too many, so God told me to send home any men afraid of battle. 22,000 went home; now we had 10,000... but the Lord said that we still too many ... then I sent all home - except 300! I learned to trust the Lord's power, not the power of our army ... the Lord will give us victory - and He did! If we have a big strong army, maybe we will think we won because of our own strength enemy. We attacked at night with torches, horns, and shouts - not with swords or bows ... God made the enemy so confused and filled with fear that they attacked each other while they fled! Yes, 300 soldiers were enough, because the Lord won the battle and gave us the victory.

"I remember the day the Lord came to call me to lead His people ... He called me a 'brave and mighty man'. I thought God was joking, because I was not brave nor mighty ... I was busy hiding from the enemy soldiers ... I thought the Lord had forgotten and left us alone. But God sent a prophet who told us why we were having so much trouble: 'I saved you ... I brought you to this land ... I am your God, and you should not worship the false gods of the people around you ... but you have not listened to Me!' He chose me, even though I at first had a very weak faith ... He told/showed me what He would do ... and I began to trust His power. He defeated the enemy for us ... He let us have peace for many years.

"But let me also tell you about a trap that caught me - a temptation that led me to sin against the Lord. After our victory, the people wanted to make me king ... I refused, saying that the Lord was our King, and we did not need another king. But pride touched me: I asked the people to give me the gold earrings they captured from the enemy. With that gold I made a fancy garment for the priest (an ephod, or an idol [TEV]); but people began worshiping that instead of the Lord ... again people forgot the Lord and His love, mercy, and salvation ... they went

looking for other gods."

II. The Lord's power - for our lives.

Power to save ... He saves us - we don't save ourselves. We can't save ourselves! Often Satan tempts us Christians to praise ourselves, so that we say, "I found the Lord ... I believe in Jesus" - "I" ... "I" ... "I" ... But remember: God came to us while we were still SINNERS ... Jesus came to seek and save LOST people ... SICK people, not healthy people, need a doctor. Those sinners, those lost people, those sick people - that's what we were ... but He found us and saved us - and we did nothing! His power seems to be weakness - Christ was a servant, He suffered, He died, He was buried ... but through that weakness He defeated the enemy for us - that enemy of sin, death, and the devil. We see His power in the weakness of the Cross and grave ... we see His power in His love and mercy.

Power to live ... life still has many traps/temptations for us, as for Gideon. Pride, greed, trust in our riches/things (cf Gospel, Luke 12:13-21) - these can easily catch us and pull back down into the depths of sin. Christ forgives these sins, just as all other sins, and save us - NOT so that we should continue doing those sins, BUT so that we can live a new/clean life for our God and Savior. He gives the power to change our life

... to put away the sins we love ... to say "NO!" to the temptations that so easily defeat us ... to say "YES!" to God's commandments, because those commandments show us how God wants us to live and act in response to His salvation/forgiveness. When we are weak, He is strong ... when we fail or fall, He is there in love to pick us up again. Again: we see His power in the cross/grave, in His love/mercy.

CONCLUSION With faith in Jesus, let us trust God's great power to help and save us, His power to guide us in the way of righteousness.