

Unarmed Attack

Gideon's men faced a lot. Gideon had wavered before God's instructions. God had called Gideon to free his people from the Midianite plague and he took him time to accept that God was really speaking to him, calling him to accept the task of rescuing his people.

Gideon was very insecure before this calling, but God patiently encouraged him several times. At the very last God sent him down to the enemy camp to hear from the mouth of his enemies that *Yahweh* had conceded victory to the Hebrews. It seems a Biblical refrain that we do not listen to God's word from God's prophet, but we listen with greedy pleasure to the same word from a contrary source.

Gideon was encouraged and placed his men around their enemies. 300 men stood against 130,000 enemies, armed with torches, pitchers, and trumpets. They circled in the enemy camp. They prepared a war cry to announce the beginning of the battle.

There was one small detail. On taking up a torch in one hand and a trumpet with the other, what happens with sword and shield?

Perhaps this little detail was why God was so patient with Gideon's insecurity. God called him, not to be a great and mighty warrior, but to place his life in danger without dependence on anything more than the action of *Yahweh*, God of Israel. God called him to take his stand on the hillside around his enemies, silhouetting himself visibly in the light of their torches, but without the benefit of any defensive or offensive weapons.

God did not call him to fight. God called him to take a stand beside *Yahweh* and in confidence that his liberation would come simply through divine action. God placed him in an unarmed position, not to make him worry, but so he might see up close God's action. It was a posture of confidence, not of human strength, just like what God calls us to today.

—*Christopher B. Harbin*

Judges 7:12-21

¹²The camp was huge. The Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern nations covered the valley like a swarm of locusts. And it would be easier to count the grains of sand on a beach than to count their camels.

¹³Gideon overheard one enemy guard telling another, "I had a dream about a flat loaf of barley bread that came tumbling into our camp. It hit the headquarters tent, and the tent flipped over and fell down." ¹⁴The other soldier answered, "Your dream must have been about Gideon, the Israelite commander. It means God will let him and his army defeat the Midianite army and everyone else in our camp."

¹⁵As soon as Gideon heard about the dream and what it meant, he bowed down to praise God. Then he went back to the Israelite camp and shouted, "Let's go! The LORD is going to let us defeat the Midianite army."

¹⁶Gideon divided his little army into three groups of one hundred men, and he gave each soldier a trumpet and a large clay jar with a burning torch inside. ¹⁷⁻¹⁸Gideon said, "When we get to the enemy camp, spread out and surround it. Then wait for me to blow a signal on my trumpet. As soon as you hear it, blow your trumpets and shout, 'Fight for the LORD! Fight for Gideon!'"

¹⁹Gideon and his group reached the edge of the enemy camp a few hours after dark, just after the new guards had come on duty. Gideon and his soldiers blew their trumpets and smashed the clay jars that were hiding the torches. ²⁰The rest of Gideon's soldiers blew the trumpets they were holding in their right hands. Then they smashed the jars and held the burning torches in their left hands. Everyone shouted, "Fight with your swords for the LORD and for Gideon!" ²¹The enemy soldiers started yelling and tried to run away. Gideon's troops stayed in their positions surrounding the camp. (TLA)