

Judges 7:1-8

Pentecost 14; August 21, 2016

Sin destroys our relationship with God. If you were to write down a list of sins that are really dangerous to the Christian faith, where would you start? I think, the sin that would be at the top of the list is the sin of pride. Pride is the sin by which Satan fell from heaven. Pride is the sin that brought down Adam and Eve. Pride makes us think more of ourselves than God. Pride brought down many a person in the pages of Scripture. The Apostle Peter said that he would never deny Jesus. He only makes it a few hours before he falls. The Apostle Paul warns the Corinthians: **"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"** (1 Cor. 10:12)

One of those "wise" men who falls was King Solomon. Solomon was given the gift of wisdom by God himself. God tells us that **"King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart."** (1 Kings 10:23-25) Yet, God also tells us that: **"Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command."** (1 Kings 11:10) Solomon learned the dangers of pride. It is Solomon who writes the words that are familiar to many: **"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."** (Prov. 11:18)

God understood how dangerous a proud heart was for a man named Gideon and the children of Israel. He was about to give Israel an incredible victory. He knew how easy it would be for Gideon and these 300 soldiers to look at themselves and say: *"Look what we did!"* This morning, as we look at this account of Gideon, we see the incredible power of God, but we also see God giving a warning to us. Last week, we looked at God warning us how the Word of God does not always bring peace, but it divides. This week, God also warns us. He warns us about how easy it is to have a pride-filled heart that doesn't trust God, and one that thinks that *"it is all about me."* Why the warning? He knows how easy it is for all of us to be consumed with ourselves.

The time of the judges was an interesting period in the history of Israel. The events of this time period followed a pattern. The people of Israel would forsake the Lord and his ways to follow the idols of the nations around them. Because of this the Lord would deliver them into enemy hands as punishment for their rebellion. When the people would cry out for help, the Lord would send a "judge" who would rise up to defeat the enemy. And then there would be a period of rest where Israel would return to the Lord to follow him for a time. Then the whole cycle would once again begin. In our text, this morning, Israel is in one of those cycles.

They had been utterly devastated by a tribe of people known as the Midianites. The people now were crying out to God for help. Once again, he would deliver his people. This time, he would use a man named Gideon. It is amazing how God uses the most unlikely people to carry out his plans. God sends an angel to Gideon with a simple message: **"The Lord is with you, mighty warrior."** Gideon at first doesn't believe the angel. Gideon says: **"Pardon me, my lord, but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?"** He also doesn't think that God has the right person. **"Pardon me, my lord, but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."** In other words, *"where do you get this mighty warrior stuff. I'm just a simple, unknown farmer."* God's reply to his objections: **"I will be with you!"** He was about to show that to Gideon in an amazing way.

So, Gideon musters together an army to fight against the Midianites. He rounds up 32,000 men. That sounds impressive, but the Midianites have 135,000 soldiers on their side. God, though, is going to make the situation look even more impossible. God says to Gideon: **"There are still too many men."** Through a number of steps, God gets the number down to 300. You can almost hear Gideon and his men say: *You have got to be kidding God!* It is about to get even crazier. The weapons that they will take with them: trumpets, torches and jars. God is placing them into an impossible situation. Why? God wanted them to see that it wasn't all about them, but it is all about God!

Have you ever felt overwhelmed? Imagine how Gideon felt when the number of soldiers went from 32,000 to 300. That is 450 men to 1. What God is asking Gideon to do, is going to take an incredible amount of trust. It would be absolutely impossible for Gideon to think that he was about to accomplish this. He was going to be all about God. Sometimes, we find ourselves in situations that are going to take an incredible amount of trust in God. How could Gideon go forward? He could trust God because of one simple, little promise: **"I will be with you!"**

How could God give such a victory with 300 men armed with trumpets, jars and torches? Gideon splits his troops into 4 groups of 100. During the night when the signal is given, they sound the trumpets, break the jars so that the Midianites could see the torches. With the confusion that is created, the Midianites begin to swing their swords and end up killing many of themselves in the dark. Not one of the 300 soldiers would be killed. The Medianites had thought that there was no way they could be defeated by the Israelites. But God had different plans. His plan was a plan that no one would have done by themselves. God's plan was decisive. All Gideon and the 300 soldiers could do was to marvel at the plan of God.

How do we go through those "impossible" situations in life? Has God ever changed your plans? Have you ever found yourself in a position that you were absolutely convinced that your plan was the right way. Then the plan changed. What do we do? We have hearts that are filled with fear. How do we get through that change in plan? The same way Gideon did – with the Lord. How do we know that God is with us? Jesus says: look to the cross. There you see an incredible battle happening. The Son of God does battle with the Devil. He wins. With that one victory of Jesus, we have eternal life. Just like Gideon could never have won this battle by himself and his soldiers, we can't win the battles that we have with Satan by ourselves. But God can and he did.

I don't know all of what God's plan is for you in your lives. I don't know all that he has planned for me. But I do know that God is a part of that plan. Live every day with the confidence that Jesus has opened the narrow door for you. Celebrate every day because it is all about God. Amen.