

## *The Trouble w/Victory*

### I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. *Baked Goods* for Harvest Festival
- B. Hope Outreach Ministry - this Sat, 10am, families with special needs kids.

### II. Intro: *The Trouble w/Victory*

- A. Slide2a The *spirit of the Lord is upon me*. Actually, *The Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon*
- B. (7:2) It's not that Gideon had too many, **God** had too many.
  1. So, military cutbacks, from 32,000 minus 20,000.
  2. Sometimes there is *strength by subtraction*.
  3. Often we think the answer is praying, *God provide more*, but maybe our prayer should be *God I'll trust You w/less*.
- C. Slide2b A faith that is not **tested** can't be **trusted**.
  1. Your **faith** is like a *muscle*, it needs to be **exercise** in order for it to **grow**.

### III. Slide3 **GIDEON'S SUBDUES (1-21)**

- A. Slide4a *Ephraim* - the most prominent of the 12 tribes. The tabernacle was in their territory.
  1. They were impressed with their own importance. So they complained about not being included in the call to war.
  2. Gideon gives a diplomatic response. *He hadn't accomplished nothing compared to the Ephraimites* (they killed 2 Midianite princes). *This momentarily preserved the fragile operation between tribes*.
  3. Slide4b It also allowed him to *stay focused on the mission*, Defeating the enemy
    - a) As God's people we face the same thing today. Churches and Christian organizations breakdown when *selfish concerns* overshadow *the cause*.

B. Slide5 (4) Exhausted *but* still in pursuit - msg *bone-tired but still pressing the pursuit.* kjv *faint yet pursuing.*

1. *Hey saints* we resemble these followers of Gideon...*exhausted but still in pursuit*
2. *Exhausted* because we are pounded by *bodily cravings, filthiness of spirit, a depraved nature, all sin & error, the present evil world, the devil & his minions*...no wonder we are *exhausted*.
  - a) *And, these are not for a season...but for life!* We can't received any proposals of peace, enter into a truce, & not even go bury the dead. We are to fight through summer & winter, by day & night, in every situation & condition.
  - b) *In conversion* we throw away our *sheath*. *Only in death* do we lay down our *sword*<sup>1</sup>
  - c) So we say, *Lord I'm tired, exhausted, yet I will pursue.*
3. Slide6 *But still in pursuit* - The Christian life is full of contrasts. Like Moses burning bush, *burning but not consumed*. We are cast down but not destroyed. sorrowful but always rejoicing, dying & yet behold we live.
  - a) We are confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it. That which is *divine* is durable, is invincible.
  - b) The fight we fight & stay in pursuit of is a good warfare, it is a Just War. Our conscience approves of it. Angels applaud it. Every in the conflict feeds courage.
    - (1) It would be better to be **foiled & frustrated** in this cause than to **conquer & crush** in any other.
  - c) Slide7 It was said proverbially at Rome, that it was *unbecoming a Roman soldier to fear while Caesar was alive*. Slide8 It is much more unworthy a *Christian soldier* to fear while Christ is alive; for He says, *because I live, you shall live also*.
    - (1) Saints, it is **God** who goes before us. **He teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze**. It is **He** that provides for us. It is **He** that renews our strength. **What limits have his wisdom & power? Did He ever lose an battle yet, or a single private in His army?**

C. (20,21) Never ask a boy to do a man's job.

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<sup>1</sup> Morning Exercises, William Jay, July 3.

1. Obviously it was to humiliate & shame them.

#### IV. Slide9 GIDEON'S EPHOD (22-28)

- A. The men of Israel credited **Gideon** for delivering them from the Midianites, **rather than the Lord**.
  1. **Gideon made two mistakes**: he neglected to build an **altar** in tribute to God's deliverance. **And**, he did not **call the people to worship**, as the other judges did, right after their victories.
  2. **This probably is what led him into pride & self-worship**.
- B. Gideon rightly refused the formal title of **King**, **but** he began to take on the accoutrements & trappings an mindset of **royalty**.
  1. The request of **their earrings** lead them to **idolatry**.
  2. And, the naming of his son to **Abimelech** which means, **my father is king**.
    - a) **Actions do speak louder than words**. (action/naming of son **vs** words/*I will not rule over u*)
  3. Gideon was called to be a **judge & deliverer**, not a **king**.
- C. **Slide10a** In taking about 40 lbs of gold from them & making an ephod shows the extent of his pride. Gideon was a Benjamite, not a Levite.
  1. **Slide10b** Gideon the idol-**breaker** **became** the idol-**maker**. Ps.106:39 **Thus they were defiled by their own works, And played the harlot by their own deeds**.
  2. See, an **ephod** was that special vestment worn by a priest.
    - a) It represented **the presence of God & intimate access to Him**...for this reason it was restricted to the high priest.
- D. (28) **And the land had rest** - last time this appears in Judges. *They turned a corner*.

#### V. Slide11 GIDEON'S DEATH (29-35)

- A. What a **contrast** between the frequent references to *God guiding Gideon* in the **earlier** part of his story **vs** the entire absence of it in **the end**.

- B. What do we learn from Gideon that he was able to be an able leader during the *national crisis* but then *fail* during the *time of peace*? Do you only follow hard after God...when you are *up against it*?
- C. Gideon's story inspiring, yet his small concessions to evil eventually disgraced himself, his family, his people, & Yahweh.
1. What a reminder for us to *finish strong*.

## VI. Slide12 **FINISH STRONG** (Heb.12:12-14)

A. Here the writer runs back, to his running analogy (vs1 let us run w/endurance the race set before us)

1. Remember, the spiritual life is **a long distance run**.

## B. **RUN TOUGH** (12)

1. The call here is to *tough it out, suck it up, gut it out*.
2. The picture is that of a runner nearing the finish line, *completely exhausted*, wanting to give up, blistered feet, cramping calves, dry mouth, & heavy legs.
  - a) Isaiah said, **Strengthen the weak hands, & make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come.** 35:3,4

## C. This is what we call *Muscular Christianity*

1. Slide13 The U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER HEALY is designed to break 4 1/2 feet of ice continuously at 3 knots and can operate in temperatures as low as -50 degrees F. The ship slams against the wicked ice of the Northwest Passage. From inside the vessel's belly, the ice seems to be fighting back, roaring, screaming, pounding against the steel hull. The ship is stopped cold in the frozen tracks of the passage. It pauses, backs up in black water, then rams the great white frozen ridges again. The weakened ice finally bends and gives way. The Healy, the newest icebreaker in the U.S. Coast Guard, moves slowly forward, as if putting a foot through the throat of the Arctic. But to either side of the ship, the ice is untouched, 6 feet thick, looking like a frozen extension of land. **Push on.**

a) **No** it's not a *do-it-yourself Christian Life*...**but** Christians must *will to tough it out* by **God's** great grace.

D. **Slide14 RUN TOUGH TOGETHER** (13)

E. **Straight paths** – the track made by the feet of the runners. Or the running lane.

1. (NIV) *Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.* Help everyone finish the race! :)

2. The idea is clear...*put the paths in better order so as to make the race easier for the Lame.* [As soon as hurdlers were finished, get hurdles off track for next race]

F. The image is of the **weak runners** helping the **weaker runners** at the end of the race. **And** it is the **strong runners** coming back after their race, to help those **struggling to finish**.

G. The call here is to **corporate toughness** in helping each other to run well.

a) What a great snapshot of Church life.

H. **Salvation** is free, **but seeing God's glory** will cost you everything.