

His name was

GIDEON

He was at the very least slightly strange, but he had a plan or so he thought. Hiding in a wine-press he was threshing wheat to try and keep it hidden from the Midianites because they had oppressed the nation of Israel for over seven years now. Gideon was tired of it but his efforts though admirable were at best insignificant. Maybe he could get a little food and keep it from the enemy. Was he in for an awakening, and very soon.

Out of nowhere without any warning there he was. The angel of the Lord stood before Gideon and he was saying something that made absolutely no sense. Gideon thou *mighty man of valor*, you shall deliver this nation as one man, have I not sent you.

Now just like any fear based man he began to make excuses about his family status, their position in the community and that after all he was the least in his Father's house. Amazingly none of these things had any bearing on what the angel had said. Circumstances do not change the Word of God. As was the custom Gideon asked the angel to remain while he prepared an offering for him. The angel agreed. Gideon went about preparing and brought his offering before the angel. He told Gideon to place it on the rock. Upon doing so fire came out of the rock and consumed the offering. This was Gideon's first supernatural encounter. Of course being the *"man of valor"* that Gideon had become he realized he had seen the Lord and he was going to die. At this point in this story God continued his dialog with Gideon and told him fear not, you will not die. Gideon then named the place "Jehovah-Shalom" God is my peace. It would seem that God is always having to deal with fear amongst His children, how sad.

As Gideon's journey continues we have to interject that this process has one major purpose and that is to free Israel from the bondage and oppression from the Midianites which had been non-stop for seven years. God speaks again and gives Gideon his first assignment. Gideon I want you to go and tear down the altar and the grove your Father has built and build an altar to God on the same spot and use the wood from the grove to build a fire then offering a sacrifice to God. Again Gideon being the *"mighty man of valor"* took ten men with him and did what God asked, but did it at night, but he did it.

The next morning finds the town in an uproar crying out, who has done this thing? And it was known that Gideon was the one. The people went to his Father's house and demanded he bring Gideon out. He said no, because if this was Baal's altar and Baal was God let him fight for himself. Gideon's father gave him a new name - - Jerubbaal (contender with baal). Now with the idolatry torn down we continue.

The spirit of the Lord came on Gideon and he blew the shofar calling the tribes together to get ready for battle. He sent messengers to gather them. They were 32,000 strong. Gideon was still struggling with this whole thing. So he asked God that if this were really true show me a sign. I will put my fleece on the ground and in the morning let the dew be upon the ground but none on the fleece. As Gideon has asked God did. This was Gideon's second supernatural encounter. Now this should have been enough for most, but not Gideon. He said, "God if you would not be angry with me and one more time, I will place the fleece on the ground and let there be dew only on the fleece but none on the ground. So God humored him once more, it was as Gideon asked. This was his third encounter with the supernatural of God, but still Gideon was not fully convinced.

Gideon gets the army together and sets up camp and God speaks again. Gideon there are too many. Send those home who are fearful. So he tells the people who ever is afraid return to your homes, 22,000 went home. But as this was God's plan He speaks again and tells Gideon there are still too many. Tell them to go to the water and get a drink. Those who lap water from their hands shall remain, those who bend over to drink straight from the water shall go home. 9700 left. There remained 300. God said it is enough. God

always needs less to work with than we determine. He is a big God, performing great miracles with small numbers and small unknown people, just like you and I, just like Gideon.

Gideon is really not convinced. So God speaks to him and tells him to go down close to the enemies camp and listen. And if you are afraid take your servant with you. He did. Close to the camp they overheard a soldier telling another about a dream he had. A large barley load had rolled over and smashed the tents. He said this was none other than Gideon and they were given into his hand defeated. Upon hearing these words Gideon worshipped God. Returning to his camp he proclaimed "Arise for the Lord has given the enemy into your hands".

Gideon related the strange plan of God to defeat the enemy. We will divide into 3 groups of 100 each. Each of us will have a shofar, a jar with a torch in it and we will shout "The sword of the Lord and Gideon". So as God said they surrounded the enemy on 3 sides. At the change of the watch about 11:00 pm at the signal they blew the shofars, broke the jars, lifted up the torch and shouted, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon". The Lord set the enemy at each other and their defeat began. When it was all over the Midianites, their kings and all the army was no more. The oppression and bondage of Israel was over, 120,000 men of the enemy fell that day.

With what we would have called insignificant God delivered a nation. And as He so often paints a picture for us of things to come or things that are. Three is a number used of salvation in scriptures. It is also representative of the trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I believe the 3 groups painted this picture. The word relates, the battle is the Lord's. A note here that the men who were left were warriors, men who would not break rank but would do what they were told and would not run from the overwhelming circumstance they were seeing but stand unmoving trusting God's plan for victory. We must become like them, steadfast, and unmoving in God.

The shofar's were the announcement that God is here, God will save. I also believe it was a sound of war being declared on the enemy. The clay jar is symbolic of us, having to be broken, humble before God, surrendered, submitted, committed by letting God break us from those things which are not of Him. Then and only then will the light of God that is within shine forth illuminating all the darkness. And last but not final, the shout of victory declaring the Sword of the Lord, or the Word of the Lord that was spoken is now come to pass. And for Gideon who was used up by God as the one to lead the deliverance. Gideon may have struggled with unbelief and with fear but he obeyed God every time.

What do we take away from this awesome story?

God will use whom He chooses. God will anoint whom He will with the power and authority to do what God needs. Our position, age, education, popularity, and such things do not matter to God in His choosing. If He used Gideon He will use you and I. God's plan may seem a bit strange at times, but we must obey. We have given ourselves over to Him completely and are His clay pots to break at His will, releasing the light in us to the world the gospel of Jesus Christ. Living in Him we proceed forth without fear, trusting God, God's plan or way, declaring His Word, declaring what God has done. We then individually can be used to deliver a nation, a city, a church, or the person next door. We are mighty men and women of valor, we belong to Jesus, we are God's children.