

God's Power Perfected in Our Weakness

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to the book of Judges. The book of Judges, if you're visiting with us, the book of Judges chapter 7, in that black Bible in the chair in front of you, the black Bible is beginning in Genesis, first book, and go to page 185, page 185 in that black Bible.

Judges chapter 7, we're working our way through the book of Judges, and I was actually gonna do Judges chapter 7 and 8, and then Friday had a great idea, after my shower I went, you know what, this is what I'll do.

So I actually decided to split it up, so I should do chapter 8 next week. I was gonna do 7 and 8 today, but we'll do just chapter 7 today, and then we'll do chapter 8 next week, which I think would, it flows better.

So, all that to say, Judges chapter 7, I'll read, and then we'll jump in. Judges chapter 7, page 185 in that black Bible, then Jeroboam, that is Gideon, remember Jeroboam means let Baal contend, then Jeroboam, that is Gideon, and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harad, and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

And Yahweh said to Gideon, the people who are with you are too many for me to give Midian to their hands, lest Israel become boastful, saying, my own power has delivered me. Now therefore come, proclaiming the hearing of the people, saying, whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.

[1:44] So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained. Then Yahweh said to Gideon, the people are still too many. Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there.

Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, this one shall go with you, he shall go with you. For everyone of whom I say to you, this one shall not go with you, he shall not go. So he brought the people down to the water.

And the Lord said to Gideon, you shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, so less everyone who kneels to drink. The number of those who lap, putting their hand to their mouth, it was 300 men.

All the rest of the people kneeled to drink water. And Yahweh said to Gideon, I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands, let all the others go, each man to his home.

So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands, and Gideon sent all the others of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

[2:45] Verse 9. Now the same night it came about, that the Lord said to him, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands. But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah, your servant, down to the camp, and you will hear what they say.

And afterward your hands will be strengthened, that you may go down against the camp. So he went with Purah, his servant, down to the outpost of the army that was in the camp. Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts.

Camels were without number, as numerous as sand on the seashore. When Gideon came, behold, a man was ready in a dream to his friend. And he said, Behold, I had a dream. A loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian.

And it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and it turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat. And his friend answered and said, This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel.

God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand. Verse 15, It came about when Gideon heard the count of the dream and its interpretation, that he bowed in worship. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, Arise, for Yahweh has given the camp of Midian into your hands.

[3:58] And he divided 300 men into three companies. And he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them with torches inside the pitchers. And he said to them, Look at me and do likewise.

And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, Yahweh and for Gideon.

So Gideon, verse 19, And the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch. They had just posted the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands. And the trumpets in their right hands were blowing and cried, A sword for Yahweh and for Gideon. And each stood in its place around the camp.

And all the army ran, crying out as they fled. And they blew 300 trumpets. The Lord set the sword of one against another, even throughout the whole army. And the army fled as far as Beth Shittah toward Zerazera, as far as the edge of Abu Meholah by Tabath.

[5:07] And the men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asherim and all Manasseh. And they pursued Midian. Verse 24, Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, Come down against Midian and take the waters before them as far as Beth Barah and the Jordans.

All the men of Ephraim were summoned and they took the waters as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. And they captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeib. And they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb.

They killed Zeib at the wine press of Zeib while they pursued Midian. And they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeib to Gideon from across the Jordan. His name was Brandon Bullsworth.

He was a walk-on college football player. You heard this? A walk-on college football player ended up becoming All-American. There's a movie about him called Greater.

Hollywood kind of fluffs it up a little bit probably. Apparently, though, Brandon was a Bible-believing Christian and actually the movie portrays that pretty accurately. Here's this, he was a walk-on college football player.

[6:19] He was a nobody. He ended up becoming All-American. Yet, tragically, 11 days after being drafted to the NFL, I believe the Indianapolis Colts, Bullsworth was killed in a car accident near Alpena, Arkansas, on April 28, 1999, on his way back to his hometown of Harrison after a workout.

He was an example of a nobody who ended up becoming greater, that's the movie, name of the movie, than he imagined anyone would ever imagine.

So what about this guy, Gideon? Kind of the same. Now, he was a nobody. Gideon was a nobody. And yet, for Gideon, though, he didn't work up to being greater because it really didn't end up being about him.

No, God stripped him of everything and brought him to a place where he was totally weak and he had to depend upon the Lord. That's what he did. And as we come to this, the overall theme of Judges, God's overwhelming, never-ending, relentless love for his people, today, you'll see God's power perfected in our weakness.

God's power is perfected in our weakness. God's power perfected in our weakness.

[7:56] And remember the sub-theme of Judges. Don't forget this. God wants us to solely want him and he'll discipline us to make that happen.

He disciplines us so that he'd be our one and only love so that you would want him most above everything, above anything, above anyone.

He wants us to want him. And here we see God's power perfected in our weakness. He loves us so much, he will use our weakness to magnify his power all so that we would depend upon him and love him the most.

He'll strip you of everything. That's how much he loves you. He loves you so much, he'll strip you of everything so that you will see that he's the only one, only thing that you need.

It's him. So you would depend upon him so you would love him most. He loves us so much that we use our weaknesses to magnify his power all so we would depend upon him and love him the most. [9:24] God's strength is made perfect in weak nobodies to show just how awesome, glorious, powerful, gracious, and merciful he is.

It's not about you. It's about him. Is this not the epitome of the gospel? This is the gospel. God used the biggest, greatest nobody, Jesus, to die for sinners. He had no form, no majesty, no great appearance.

That's what Isaiah 53 said. He was nothing great to look at. He was no Dwayne Johnson with the big blood.

He was none. Jesus wasn't like that. He was a nobody. And yet, Christ dying on the cross, such weakness, such failure, no, such glory.

[10:33] God shows his power. God shows his glory. In the world's eyes, it's opposite. It's weakness. It's failure.

It's stupidity. It's foolishness. But to us, it's the power of God. And yet, we, I, you, don't like to be made weak, do we?

We're not supposed to. We're Americans. You're not supposed to be made weak. Right? No, but God will use weakness.

God, God used weak Gideon to show his glory. He is so gracious with our weaknesses and he'll use it to magnify his power so we understand it's all about him, not us.

It's not about our comfort either. And we talked about this a couple weeks ago. God loves to use nobodies.

[11:42] The obscure. Remember Shamgar? He was a nobody. There's like one verse about him. Ta-ta-da. And he's a judge. God loves to do that.

Just to use obscure nobodies and show his glory. The most unlikely people he loves to do that. Now we need to establish or define what do we mean when we say weak? What do we mean by that? What does it mean to be weak? Well, one writer puts it like this, which I think that's a good way to put it.

It means, quote, you're stripped of all human resources and are forced to lean upon God alone. End quote. That's his definition. That's good.

You're stripped of all human resources and you're forced to lean upon God alone. And it doesn't, has very little to do with how you feel. Like you might feel weak when you get the flu, you get a cold, you feel sick, you feel, it has little to do with how you feel.

[12:54] It's not about how you feel. Why feel weak? Well, so? It doesn't matter. You might not feel weak right now, but guess what? You're weak. And so am I.

You just are. So let's walk through the text. Now we establish definition, got an introduction. First, number one, God makes us weak.

Verse one through three. And notice verse one. It's like, yeah. Then Dribba, oh, there's Gideon. A lot of people that were with them. They rose early. They got up at 4 a.m.

Right? They camped inside the spring. They turned on, I am the tiger. Okay, there we go. Camp, they got their swords. Right? And then verse two, the Lord said to Gideon, the people with you are too many.

Wait, what? Yahweh reassured Gideon that he would indeed be the one to deliver Israel. Mm-hmm. But now he's gonna weaken him.

[14:03] Gideon got too many soldiers. I'm gonna strip you of yourself and make it about me, says the Lord. Okay, so did you hear that? This is what he's telling you.

He's gonna strip you of yourself and make it about him. Remember, Gideon showed weak faith earlier.

We looked at it last week. Remember? He had weak faith, but God was graciously patient with him because he's graciously patient. You know, you're always really gonna teach him, Gideon, about trusting him.

A huge radical army reduction. Verse three, now therefore come proclaiming the hearing of the people saying, whoever's afraid, trembling, let him return and apart from Mount Gilead.

Hmm. So how much, Gideon, do you really trust my word? How much, Gideon, do you really trust my promise?

[15 : 12] God wants to make sure we understand and see our weaknesses so that we understand how much we completely depend upon him in everything. That's what he does.

And his purpose so that we would love him. He's glorified. So, how much, oh, oh, Christian, do you really trust God's word?

How much do you really trust his promises? Jesus. See, you have here the end of verse three, 22,000 people returned.

First group went home. According to Deuteronomy chapter 20, verse eight, people were scared, sent them home. Okay. So here's Gideon.

Okay. I got 10,000. I'm good. I'm good.

[16 : 19] Can I handle that? Well, this isn't what I wanted, but I can handle it. Now God makes us weaker.

Verse four, then Yahweh said to Gideon, the people are still too many. No. Bring them down to the water.

I'll test them for you there. Just be there. And I say, this one shall go, he'll go. I say, this one will not go, he will not go. So you brought the people down to the water.

You're gonna separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps. This one's everyone who kneels to drink. Verse six, remember those who lap putting their tongue, excuse me, hand to their tongue.

Their mouth was 300 men, but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink. Then verse seven, and Yahweh said to Gideon, I will deliver you with the 300 who laps and will give the Midianites into your hands so that all the other people go free each man to his home.

[17 : 24] Two groups were distinguished. Those who lap with their tongues like a dog laps and those who got down on their knees to drink. Now, you read some guys and they try to make something about, virtuous about the guys who were the lappers versus the kneelers.

The lappers were the guys who were on the alert. The kneelers were the guys who were slackers. No, don't do that. It's not. And the moral lesson's not, you know, you should be lapping like a dog not kneeling down to drink.

That's not, don't do that. No, no, no. If anything, it's this. The 300 displayed Israel's weakness, not their strength.

By Israel's weakness, I'll show my strength, says the Lord. In our weakness, God shows his strength. Power is perfected in our weakness.

The focus needs to be on our Savior, not upon us. That was Paul's point. That's why you read 2 Corinthians 12. Remember that? I'm not as dumb as I look.

[18 : 39] That's why I put that up there on the screen so that you're reading that. So that you have this, these gospel glasses on and you understand my grace is sufficient.

My power is perfected in your weakness. That's what our Lord did to Paul. That's what the Lord did to Gideon.

That's what he does to you. He makes you weak and then he'll make you weaker. In our weakness, God shows his strength.

Do you see that? And then verse 8, they took the people's provisions. Trump is in their hands. He sent all the other men home. He used to his tent but retained the 300 and the camp of Midian was below in the valley. Now you notice we skipped something.

[19 : 46] Go back to verse 2. The people who are with you are too many for me to give Midian into their hands.

Notice, lest Israel become boastful saying my own powers deliver me. Why did God do this? Because our tendency is to steal his glory and his praise.

That's what you do. And you know what? You do that very well. And you know what?

You're looking at somebody who does that even better than you. We steal his glory. We steal his praise.

Israel would glorify itself against me. Our own powers delivered us, man. Yeah. They would give credit to themselves, not God.

[20 : 59] Isn't that interesting? 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Remember when Paul said that? To keep me from... What's the word that he used? To keep me from...

boasting. Messenger of Satan tormented him. Remember that? 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

To keep me from... boasting. To keep you from boasting, God makes you weak. So you won't say, it's all about me.

My guns. Yeah. We're prone to glorifying ourselves instead of glorifying God. We end up trusting in our own efforts, our own methods, our own great cleverness.

We pat ourselves on the back. Good Jim. Good Jim. Good Jim. Good Jim. What is happening in your life right now where you feel really weak?

[22:04] And maybe it's something physically. And God's not healing you. How come God's not gonna heal me? He's supposed to heal me. Really? I know that's part of the kingdom, but suffering is also part of this life.

What if he doesn't want you healed? What if he wants you to stay weak until the day you die? You ever thought about that? I'm not saying that's easy.

And I'm not saying that you're gonna like it. Because I don't. Why does God do this? Because our tendency is to steal his glory and his praise.

And yet, you know, you know what's great about this? God makes you weak. He'll make you weaker.

Then remind you, you always wanna steal my glory. But then, God gives his assurance. Because Jesus is strong and kind.

[23:16] God gives you hope. Verse nine. Now the same man came about that Yahweh said to him, arise. Look at these verbs. Arise.

Go down. Notice verse 10. If you are afraid. Verse 11. You will hear what they say and afterwards your hands will be strengthened. Do you see these verbs here?

Isn't this great? Isn't this great to know? God does not mock or ridicule you for your fear. He knows you're fragile. He knows that.

And he won't mock you for it. He won't ridicule you for it. He was so gracious to Gideon that he gives him assurance.

Gideon's Israel's weakness is established. God gave assurance. Encouragement.

[24:20] Notice verse 10. But if you're afraid, I'm afraid. I just think it's funny. Don't you think that's funny? But if you're afraid, wouldn't you be afraid?

Look at verse 12. The Mennonites, the Malachites, and all the sons in the east were lined in the valley as numerous as locusts and their camels were without number as numerous as sand on the seashore.

I'd be freaking out. Wouldn't you? I am going to die. Back to verse 10.

But if you're afraid, yeah. Yeah. Go with Purah, your servant, down to the camp and you'll hear what they say and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp.

And then God does this. And if you struggle in your life with sovereign election and the sovereign decrees of God, then you're going to have a problem with this because in His sovereign decree, God arranged the whole incident for Gideon.

[25:38] Everything. The dream, directing Gideon down that right path to those specific men, the timing of his arrival, even protecting Gideon the whole time he's like right down there listening to these guys talking.

Everything. It's in God's sovereign decree. The very, right down to the very millisecond, God planned planned it all out. Everything.

He didn't need to do this. Why does God need to do this? He didn't need to do this. He already told Gideon. He already told Gideon He would deliver Midian to His hand.

Chapter 6, verse 14. Chapter 6, verse 36. Chapter 6, verse 37. Chapter 7, verse 7. Chapter 7, verse 9. And then Gideon reflects back on it in verse 14 of chapter 7.

1, 2, 3, 4. Five different times God tells him into your hands, into your hands, into your hands, into your hands, into your hands. He didn't need to give them this assurance because Jesus is strong and kind.

[26:52] He's gracious. He's gracious. that's God's grace. He directs us right back to His word reminding us of His truth.

And here's Gideon. He was no Bruce Lee, no Dwayne Johnson. He wasn't John Wick. He was like Mr. Bean.

He was a nobody. And yet God graciously encouraged him with the ironic twist.

He went with a purist servant at the end of verse 11. Verse 13, Gideon came, made a dream. I had this dream. Here's a loaf of bread. Tell me to the camp. And verse 14, his friend answered, this is nothing less than the sword of Gideon, son of Joash, man of Israel.

He's giving a million all to camp to his hand. You know, God's word comes at times in the oddest, strangest ways.

[28:08] Brings it to your mind. Oddest, strangest ways and yet at the right time. I mean, who would have thunk?

Is that a word? Who would have thunk that God would bring a dream to some young soldier this private? And then another guy would tell him, yeah, yeah, Gideon's gonna knock us silly.

What? And who would have thunk that mocking priests and mocking theologians would speak gospel truth as Jesus is hanging up there on the cross and what did they say?

He saved others. He can't save himself. Yeah. Exactly. Wait a minute.

Switch it around. No, I said it right, right? Yeah. He saved others but he can't save himself. Exactly.

He can't save. That's the whole point, right?

[29:15] Isn't that the gospel? He saved others. He can't save himself. Exactly. Exactly. I mean, these mocking priests are actually giving the gospel as Jesus is hanging on the cross.

Gideon heard this guy relate this dream to a fellow soldier. The guy told him, we're gonna get it. Gideon responds.

Notice what he does. Verse 15. It came about when Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation. What did he do? He bowed in worship.

Do you see this? Gideon worshiped Yahweh. For this assurance. God makes you weak.

Then he'll make you weaker because he doesn't want you, because you're prone to, steal his glory. But he's gonna give you assurance in the midst of that because his power is perfected in our weakness.

[30:22] He's gonna encourage you. Isn't that good? And then you see from verses 16 all the way to verse 25.

Trust God and do what he commands. There's a quote that's, this gal says, the end of the quote, the last part of the quote, she says, learn to love what must be done.

Learn to love what must be done. This is Gideon. He's gonna trust God can do what he commands. So you see, in verse 16, he has the 300 men, breaks open three companies.

They have these trumpets and pitchers and he had these torches and maybe they had no other weapons or maybe they had the swords at their size, possibly.

The torches were inside the pitchers so we kind of hide the light. So Gideon and the 100 men were with them there and they came out to the outskirts of the camp in verse 19.

[31:29] And then the three companies, they blew the trumpets, they broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the right hands for blowing. They cried, a sword for Yahweh and for Gideon. In verse 21, they stood in his place around the camp and all the army ran crying out as they fled.

You see, Yahweh set the sword of one against the other. The Lord fought for his people. They were killing each other.

And then they fled. They ran. And we fled as far as the edge of Abel, Meholah and Tabath. And then Gideon, he summoned the others from Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh and they proceeded, go get them boys.

And then he called Ephraim, verse 24, hit them off at the pass. And they did, they captured these important generals, Oreb and Zeib.

What do you see? You see Gideon trusting God and he does what he commands, what God commands him. Yahweh had fulfilled his word to Gideon by his hand the Lord delivered Israel and he pursued them.

[32:49] So where does this leave us? Right back where we started. He loves us so much. God loves us so much. He will use our weaknesses to magnify his power all so that we would depend upon him and love him the most.

And this is the epitome of the gospel. He used weak Jesus who hung on the cross on behalf of sinners that looked like failure and yet it was victory.

Which is why you're called, if you're here and you're not a Christian, you're called to trust in that failure, to trust in that Jesus who died on the cross.

You're called to repent and put your trust in Jesus. God should judge you. He has every right to. He's not obligated to in any way. And yet he's strong and kind. He shows his mercy in Jesus who as a failure, he brings victory. As a loser, you win because you're given grace and mercy and you're given forgiveness.

[34:12] Come. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. Repent. Trust Christ. God's strength is made perfect in weak nobodies to show just how awesome, glorious, powerful, gracious, and merciful he is.

Again, the cross. Put your gospel glasses on. This is the display of the gospel right here. He uses our weakness to display his glory.

He used the weakness of the cross which is, that's why Jesus said, now Father, glorify the Son for chapter 17 of John's gospel. Glorify. The hour has come.

Glorify your Son. Glorify. As he's hanging on the cross, yes. Because it looked like failure and total weakness. What does Paul say to us is the power of God.

Would you pray with me? We are amazed that you use our weakness.

[35:25] It's hard, Father, though, because we don't like to feel weak. We don't like to be weak. because we feel vulnerable.

But that's exactly where you want us to be depending on you. Oh, yes, but thank you.

Thank you that you're finished on that cross. Thank you how precious is the cross. How rich is the cross.

How victorious glorious is the cross. The greatest show of weakness in all of human history.

And yet, the greatest show of your strength in all of human history. Jesus, we lean upon you. Jesus, we trust you.

[36:43] Jesus, we love you. You're strong and kind. Thank you that you welcome us when we're weak. And so we cry out.