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The Tests of Leadership

GIDEON'S 300

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For every Joseph, there's a prison house. For every David, there's a backside of the mountain. For every Daniel, there's a lion's den. But for every Joseph who passes the test, there's a position of rulership in the land of the enemy. For every Daniel who stands true, a position of honor in the land of the enemy. For every David, those after God's heart, there is the call to establish His kingdom. This pattern is repeated again and again throughout the Bible.

In a word: God is not going to use you if He hasn't tested you. He's not going to place you in a crucial battle, not knowing whether you're going to stand or run. God doesn't want any in His army who doesn't want to fight; nor the fearful, the disbelievers, or those who run under pressure.

He needs people He can count on in the battle. That's exactly what happened to Gideon in the time of the Judges. Today many of God's people, and even some ministers, don't want to fight.

They're preaching an easy, social gospel. As a result, many Christians do not know how to "*endure hardness as good soldiers,*" but they are "*entangled with the affairs of this life,*" Paul said in 2Timothy 2:4. They are not ready for war.

Some people only join the military for the benefits: college tuition, job training, medical insurance, etc., and they do not expect to ever have to go to war. If they are called up for active wartime duty, many may be militarily qualified, but mentally unprepared.

The Test of Courage

God doesn't use untried, unproven people. He is going to put them through the test first. I wish it were like the easy gospel some have espoused: *No more trials and tests, no more hard places.* The Christians who swallow that doctrine panic when the test hits them. They can confess all they want, but they can't confess it away. Some in this last-day

church aren't prepared for the test. They haven't gone with Joseph into the prison house to know that God can deliver them, and that He will be with you in the prison house. Before you can be promoted to the position of prime minister like Joseph, God is going to put you to the test. Before He sends you out to face the enemy's crack troops, He's going to see if you will stand in the fight.

Like in Gideon's day, some saints today don't want to fight. They've already surrendered to the devil. They've already surrendered their children, their city; they're willing to be overlorded by the enemy and just eat a little bit of bread and water to survive.

In the OT, the rule of God's army was: "Everybody fearful can go home." God instructed Moses to tell the officers to speak to the men: "What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house" (Deut.20:8). This meant: *Everybody who doesn't want to get under the burden, everybody who doesn't want to put on the armor, everybody who doesn't want to fight, go home!* Why? Because they would murmur and complain, and cause the ones who did want to fight to become discontented, and then they wouldn't want to fight. God told Moses: "Lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." Discouragement and fear are contagious!

The Best of the Least

I have learned in the Bible and by personal observation that God rarely uses the crowds. When Gideon got his army of 32,000 men, God said *it was too many!* Gideon was probably thinking, *I'm already out-numbered almost 5 to 1, but God says that I have too many!* Then God instructed Gideon what He had told Moses— "Tell those who are fearful and fainthearted—Go on home!"

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead" (Jud. 7:2-3).

When Gideon told his 32,000 men to go home if they were afraid, 22,000 went, and he was left with 10,000! But God was not finished! He told Gideon *he still had too many!* I can read Gideon's mind, *My God, I was shook up when I had 32,000. Now I've only got 10,000 and God says that it's still too many!* Then God had Gideon take those 10,000 men who wanted to fight, who were not fearful and not afraid to go to battle, and put them to another test.

Let's visualize the battlefield:

Across the wide valley of Jezreel, at the bottom of Mt. Moreh, were 135,000 Midianites and children of the east (Jud.8:10). Up on the hill of Mt. Gilead, were Gideon and his 10,000. In the valley between them was water. God told Gideon to send the 10,000 down to the water and let them drink. Remember, *these men wanted to fight*. They weren't afraid. They had their chance to go back, and they chose to follow Gideon and fight the enemy. Over two-thirds of his original army had gone home, but these valiant men stayed. This is the first step in doing God's will, but God is going to test them further.

The Test of Vigilance

The Lord said, *"The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try (test) them for thee there"* (vs.4). It was another test of courage to see if they weren't afraid, because in order to go down to drink, they would be exposed in the open valley on level ground where the enemy could see them and attack them quickly. The test was passed by all 10,000; for they all went down to the water to drink. Nevertheless, God still only chose 300 of these men. Out of the 10,000 who got down on their faces and drank the water, only 300 stuck their hands into the water, got a handful, and lapped it up like a dog.

"So he brought down the people unto the water, and the LORD said unto Gideon, Everyone that laps of the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that bows down upon his knees to drink.... And the LORD said unto Gideon, by the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the people (rest) go every man unto his own place" (vv.5-7).

Only 300 kept their eyes on the goal, and the goal was to destroy the enemy. The other 9,700 had taken their eyes off the enemy when they bowed down to drink. A lot of people say they want to join in the fight, but they have taken their eyes off the goal and allowed other things come in and get their attention. We have to keep our eyes on the enemy and on the goal at all times.

For seven years these Midianites had afflicted the children of Israel. They were a slick enemy. They had strategized: "We won't come and put them in chains; we'll have to feed them. Instead, let *them* work hard to plow their fields, sow them and weed them, and then at harvest, when they get all the harvest in, and have done all the work, we'll chase them and take it from them back to our strongholds in the desert." But Gideon and these 300 made up their minds they were not going to

let the enemy do it again. This was it. They had done it for seven years, and that is complete.

First, God had instructed all of those who were fearful and didn't want to battle to go home. Many Christians today have fled the battlefield. The numbers who are standing are fewer, and God is in the process of testing the "10,000" to get His true 300 to see if we will keep our eyes and hearts on the goal.

The Lord once showed me that a big percentage of the last-day church is like the Galatian church. The Holy Ghost through Paul said to the Galatians: "*You did run well...*" To elaborate, God was saying: "You had good intentions. You had good motives. You ran well for a while. You put the plan into operation, and you took the burden; you prayed and you fasted. You were concerned, touched and moved by My Spirit, and you started out to do something for My kingdom—*But what did hinder you? What stopped you?*" (Ref. Gal.5:7).

God needs His tried and true 300! He has to have vessels; He has to have a people He can work through. Jesus is not going to come down again in a physical body. I wouldn't want Him to have to come every 50 years and go to the cross! He's called out in every generation a people, and *we are the body of Christ*. We're the vessels He's going to use to put

His light in to shine forth in this present darkness. Paul said, "*But we have this treasure in our earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*" (2Cor. 4:7)

After He had proven and chosen the 300, God gave Gideon a plan to take clay vessels and put lights in them. If we don't have a light in our vessels, we're no good. Jesus said, "*As long as I am with you, I am the light of the world, but when I'm gone, you're the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they might see your good works and glorify your father in heaven*" (Matt.5:14-16). *Good works* means *God works*. How can we show this atheistic generation that there is a God? By doing good works—by doing the works that only God can do.

The Plan...

What a plan God gave to Gideon. He divided the 300 into three companies, and gave every man a trumpet in one hand and a clay pitcher with a lit candle inside in the other hand. I wonder what the great generals MacArthur and Eisenhower would have thought of this plan! Gideon and the 300 were preparing to face 135,000 enemy troops. That was about 450 enemies to every man! They had to have faith that God was with them. Gideon said, "*Take a trumpet in one hand, and*

the pitcher in the other with a candle in it. These are going to be the weapons you will use." Scripture says that *God uses foolish things to confound the wise and weak things to confound the mighty* (1Cor.1:27). No other time was this more clearly demonstrated than when He used Gideon and his 300 men against the Midianites!

Gideon and his three groups of men surrounded the camp of the enemy. Inside the pitchers, the light of the candles couldn't be seen. Gideon said, "When you hear me give the signal, all together do the same thing I do, and blow your trumpets." The shofar blast meant victory. (Saints, go out on the battlefield knowing God is going to give you the victory!)

Gideon declared, "*When I blow the trumpet, blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say: The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*" (vs18). They were to break the pitchers in their hands and let their lights shine forth as they shouted. When they obeyed Gideon's orders, there came such confusion and fear amongst the enemy's hosts, many began to kill one another while others fled for their lives!

Sometimes we will face *multiple tests* just like Joseph did. You would have thought that after Joseph had passed the test in Potiphar's house, he would have been

elevated, but where did he go? He went to jail! I can imagine when he got there, the devil said, "You fool! Look at you now! That's what you get for serving God."

Triple-Tested!

First God reduced Gideon's army to those who were willing to fight. Secondly, they had to be tested to see who would keep their eyes on the goal. Only 300 passed this crucial test. *Then these had to be tested again!* Would they follow God's plan even though it seemed ridiculous? Would they be obedient to follow Gideon without murmuring and complaining? Would these 300 go out against the enemy with nothing but a trumpet and a pitcher with a candle in it; when their enemy had swords, spears and camels? When they were a mere 300 against 135,000? 450 to one? Yes! They are in place; they are all in God's will; they will not be fearful!

A Prophetic Vision

In the early years of my ministry our church was located near downtown Baltimore. At the time, God gave me a vision, and I believe we're in the last stage of this vision. When I first had it, I thought because we were involved in the Vietnam War that we would have war in America and be bombed, but later I came to realize its true significance.

In my dream, I was running

down streets toward the Inner Harbor where we had our church. Everywhere there was nothing but piles of bricks and stone. Everything was torn down and devastated like in a war. (It turned out to be Baltimore's major inner harbor renovation at which time they tore all the old buildings down.) I was trying to find my church. I was running through rubble all over south Baltimore when from a distance, I could see several church buildings, but they looked like caskets. The first two caskets I saw had cement lids that were closed. They were sealed shut. In other words, they were absolutely dead and ready to be put into the ground.

The Spirit of God began to write the names of various *denominations* on the caskets. I won't say which, but I've seen those denominations dying, and some are dead just like God predicted. The Holy Ghost is not among them anymore. Then I saw a third casket, but the lid wasn't completely down yet. It was still slightly open. As I got closer, it turned into a building of bricks and mortar. I could see in the windows people looking out with their hands on their chins, just staring blankly. Then the Holy Ghost let me look through the walls right into the building. It was a gigantic dormitory in its sanctuary. It had rows and rows and rows of beds; people were

lying down at ease, and some were sleeping. God told me, "*This is the Full Gospel movement.*" The movements I had seen before were already dead with the lids shut, but the Pentecostals were *at ease in Zion*, looking out the windows, unconcerned about the conditions outside, and many were sound asleep. That was over 50 years ago, and I'm afraid that the lid's almost shut. There are a few people scattered here and there, like the 300 Gideon had, that God can still rally to the battle.

I wonder how many in the church today are like Gideon's 300? All some are concerned with is, "Let's go to church so God can give me everything, and let Brother Hardy lay hands on me, and let him be a channel, and let God put the Spirit on me and bounce me around a little bit. But I'm not concerned about my city. I'm not concerned about my generation. I'm not going to deny myself. I'm not going to buffet my body in prayer and fasting and bring it under. I'm not going to sacrifice."

Some have become so selfish, they don't even pay their tithes. Others are *only* being blessed and holding on, because they are still paying their tithes. Otherwise, if they didn't pay their tithes, they wouldn't be of any service to God at all! They don't pray anymore. They don't intercede for their loved ones. They don't go out on the streets and the highways to

bring others into God's House.

This church (Faith Tabernacle) is not a social club. I don't fit that type, and you wouldn't like me in that mold. I can't play that role. I'm too crude. I'm just a plain street boy that knows how to fight. Ever since I can remember, I had to fight. I was thrown out into the world, a little fellow, and everybody picked on me. I had to be the best fighter in the group, and I was. But God was training me to be a fighter, so I would know how to fight the devil and to deliver our boys and girls. And if he punches me in the nose, I'll wipe it and fight some more!

I remember when I was a kid, I fought this boy who was head and shoulders above me. Every time I came in for a punch, his big fist hit me right in the nose, until he splattered my nose all over my face. But I kept coming at him. I was wearing a robin's egg blue sweater, and it was red from the elbow down from my wiping my blood on the sleeve. Every time I came in, he'd bust me in the nose, and there came the blood again. I kept coming, and you know what? I won! I beat him, because he got tired of hitting me. *He lost heart, and I beat him.*

Every day afterward, I met him after school and beat him. I let him know: "I can beat you, Boy, and every time I see you, I'm going to beat you!" I don't

care if the devil busts me in the nose, I'm going to wipe it and come on back. I'm going to beat him in the Name of Jesus! I'm going to beat him, because I'm going to kill self. You can't hurt anybody that's already dead. Paul said, "*I am crucified with Christ! Nevertheless, I live. But not I: It is Christ that lives in me...*" (Gal.2:20). I'm going to get into the prayer closet. I'm going to get all the idols out. I'm going to say, "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart, I pray. See if there's any wicked way in me. Get the idols out." I'm going to the mount of prayer and build again the altar of God and put the sacrifice God said to put on the altar. God is going to hear from heaven and let the fire fall and give me the anointing and the power and the tools to deliver this generation!

Remove the Idols!

Gideon had to first remove all the idols from his life *before* God prepared him to lead the 300 to battle. When the Lord first appeared to Gideon, he was actually *hiding* behind the winepress trying to thresh a little bit of wheat out of sight of the invading Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said, "*The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour*" (Jud.6:12), I can just see Gideon looking around in astonishment as if to

say, “Who? Me?”

The Lord said, “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: Have not I sent thee?” (vs14). But Gideon was not convinced. He pointed out the fact that his family was poor, and he was the least in his father’s house. But God let Gideon know right up front, it was not his ability that would bring deliverance. He said, “Surely I will be with thee...” Later that night God spoke to Gideon again and instructed him to “throw down the altar of Baal” that was near his father’s property and to “tear down the grove by it.” Then God told Gideon to erect an altar on the top of the mountain unto the Lord God, and to burn a sacrifice using the wood of the grove that he had cut down. He was to tear down the idols and restore true worship to God.

That night Gideon and ten of his servants did as God had commanded, and the next morning when the men of the city arose, they found the altar of Baal cast down. They were outraged and demanded, “Who hath done this thing?” They were ready to kill Gideon because he had torn down the altar of Baal! But his father Joash answered them, “Will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? ...If he be a god, let him plead for himself!” (vs.31).

After this, the Midianites

gathered against them in the valley of Jezreel to invade Israel just as they had done every year for seven years. “But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet,” and the men of Israel were gathered unto him to fight the enemy (vv.33-35). It was after Gideon obeyed God to remove the idols of Baal from his father’s house that God anointed him to lead His people to victory!

“...You can get too big for God to use you, but you can never get too small!”

I want to say like Moses said when he came down out of the mountain of God, and the people were worshipping the golden calf. “Who is on the Lord’s side?” (Ex.34:26), I’m going to say with Joshua, “As for me and my house (and I hope I can speak for this church), we are going to serve the Lord!” (Josh.24:15). We’re the right people God can use. We’re the right ones, because in the world we’re nothing. Paul said that we’re counted as “the off-scouring”—scum of the world (1Cor.4:13). We all have faults and weaknesses. Maybe we don’t come from the right background; we are not educated; we are little.

You know, you can get too big for God to use you, but you can never get too small! The smaller you are in your own eyes, the bigger you are in God's! Some of the greatest men for God were those who protested to God how unable they were—like Gideon—like Moses!

WOE-LO-GO!

Isaiah had been prophesying for five whole chapters when he saw God. He said, *“Woe is me! I’m not as good as I thought I was.”* When we see God, we’re going to find out just how unclean we really are. The more aware we become of God’s holiness, the more aware we become of our own uncleanness! When Isaiah saw the LORD high and lifted up in all His holy majesty, he cried out:

“Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts” (Isa.6:5).

Quickly, one of the seraphim (angels with six wings) flew to Isaiah with one of the live coals which he had taken from the altar, and laid it upon Isaiah’s mouth and said:

“Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.”

Then Isaiah heard the voice of

the Lord saying, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* Now that he had been cleansed, Isaiah answered, *“Here am I! Send me!”* (vv.7-8). Once he had been purged of sin and his lips purified, he was no longer under condemnation. He could boldly speak the Word of God without guile or idolatry in his heart. Then the Lord replied:

“Go, and tell this people...” (vs.9). Isaiah became the most fluent, perceptive prophet of the OT. He delivered most of its messianic prophecies, including Chapter 53—the astounding prophecy of *the Suffering Servant*—God’s Lamb, Jesus Christ. When he realized how holy God is, and how unholy his human flesh was, he exclaimed **“Woe!”** But the angel answered **“Lo—** Now you are clean.” Then God could say, **“Go!”**

Follow the Leader

Gideon commanded his 300 valiant men: *“Look on me, and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do”* (Jud. 7:17). These men were not afraid to follow their leader even with such insurmountable odds. They saw Gideon was *a changed man*. He had received a word from the Lord, and his leadership inspired his men to obey his commands without hesitation.

“And they stood every man in

his place round about the camp...” This is what it takes to win the battle: Inspired leadership and fearless, obedient followers—every one in his own place—ready to act on command. The prophet Joel told of a future day when *“The Lord will blow the trumpet in Zion, and the mighty army of the Lord shall march every one on his way, and they shall not break rank”* (Joel 2:7). God is preparing His people for that great day, but like Gideon’s 300, we must learn to follow the leader, and if we are in a leader—ministry position, we must have a word from the Lord to inspire and lead.

“...And all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man’s sword against his fellow... And the men of Israel gathered themselves together, and pursued after the Midianites” (Jud.7:21-23).

When word spread of the great victory the Lord had given Gideon and his 300, others joined in the fight. We saw that *fear is contagious*—but so is *bravery*! Gideon put out a call to the men of Israel, and recruits came from four other tribes in the area. They quickly pursued the fleeing Midianites, and the tribe of Ephraim even took their two princes, *Oreb* and *Zeeb*, and slew them (vv.23-25).

The Test of Humility

This great victory won, Gideon was then tested on his diplomatic skills as a leader, and he showed great wisdom and restraint in a potentially volatile situation. The men of Ephraim were quick-tempered and loved to fight. This is clearly seen in Judges 12 when once again they were ready to fight their own brethren! Their quick temper erupted here with Gideon, and *“they did chide with him sharply”* (Jud.8:1). They were angry, because Gideon did not call for them in the beginning to go up against the Midianites! Gideon was from the tribe of Manasseh, and he had called out to them and three other near tribes.

The question is: Since they loved to go to war so much, why didn’t they come to their aid during the seven years of harassment the Midianites had afflicted on their brethren? Because they had no strong leader with a word from the Lord! Gideon was God’s choice, because he was weak in his own flesh, and God would get the glory!

Paul said, *“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. That no*

flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor.1:27-29).

When God called Gideon, he was hiding behind the winepress. When he was told he would deliver Israel, Gideon replied, "*Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am least in my father's house*" (Jud.6:15). Gideon stuttered, "I'm the least of the poorest—and you want to use me to deliver Israel?" God's answer is the same to all such objectors—whether to Moses or Joshua, or you, or me, or Gideon: "***Surely I will be with thee, and thou shall smite the Midianites as one man***" (vs.16). Think about this—the 135,000 men of Midian would be like going up against one man!

So when the Ephraimites got their back up because Gideon hadn't called them to go to war from the start, Gideon didn't get indignant, because he knew it was God who had given them the victory, and he was not about to take the credit! Gideon responded graciously: "*What have I done now in comparison of you? ...God hath delivered...*" (He was careful to give God the credit!) "*...into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward them when he said that*" (Jud.8:2-3).

What diplomacy! What humility! Gideon could have put them

straight how he and his 300 men went to battle when the majority had fled in fear, and the remainder had failed the test of vigilance. He could have told them off and stirred up more anger in the always ready-to-fight Ephraimites. Instead, he wisely chose to diffuse the situation and made their *clean-up operation* of the fleeing enemy greater than the initial battle of his 300 men. Moreover, Gideon's handling of this explosive situation must have pleased his own 300, because no one rose up in anger against the Ephraimites' accusations. This is truly the mark of a great leader. He knew he still had more enemies to fight in Midian, and he didn't need to pick a fight with his own brethren.

The Test of Perseverance

"And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over; he and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them" (v.4). Don't you love that last part? "*Faint—but yet pursuing the enemy!*" These 300 valiant men had passed the tests of courage, vigilance, restraint, and now they were faint physically, but they kept on pursuing! They did not faint! They did not break rank!

Of course, they needed food, and when they came to the city of Succoth, Gideon asked the men of the city to give his men bread: "*For they be faint, and I am pur-*

suings after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.” (Oreb and Zeeb were *princes*, but these two were *kings*—the big guys!). But the princes of Succoth said, “*Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?*” (vs.6). There is no doubt that these Israelites were selfish and hard-hearted; yet compare Gideon’s response to them with his earlier response to the Ephraimites:

“*When the Lord hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand...*” (Gideon expressed faith that God would deliver them!) “*Then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers*” (vs.7).

There is a lesson here for us all, but especially for those in leadership: *Be careful when you are faint from the battle, and weary in your body, that you don’t respond in anger.* We are more likely to say the wrong things when we are overtired physically and exhausted emotionally, and the enemy will seek to take advantage of us at such a time.

The Test of Pride

After Gideon had conquered the Midian kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, he took all their jewelry, including the ornaments on their camels’ necks. The taking of the spoils was allowed by God according to the laws of victory in

battle. Then the men of Israel, grateful for deliverance and inspired by Gideon’s brave leadership, came to him and said, “*Rule over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son’s son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian*” (vs.22).

This was the biggest test Gideon had faced to date: *The test of pride!* It is the one that many, even Lucifer, failed. But Gideon knew very well that he had not delivered them from the hand of Midian—the Lord had! It had taken Gideon *one angel appearance, two fleeces, and a dream* to get enough faith to obey God in the beginning (See Judges 6:36-40, 7:9-15). He was not about to exalt himself now! Gideon humbly answered:

“*I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: **The LORD shall rule over you***” (vs.23). This is one of the greatest examples of passing *the test of pride* in Scripture. Gideon had not gotten a big head over his mighty conquests. He had no aspirations of ruling by man’s choice. He had now passed the tests of obedience, courage, wisdom, perseverance, and pride. But tragically, he was about to fall for another deadly temptation, one which has ensnared many even to this day.

The Test of Greed

While Gideon had refused their offer to make him their ruler,

he did ask them for a gift: *"I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)"* (vs.24).

He already had the spoil from his conquest of the two kings of Midian, but he apparently allowed greed to enter into his heart. He had gone from barely scrounging enough wheat to survive for seven years to such great spoils, and he wanted more. The men *"willingly gave him, every man the earrings of his prey.... and the weight of the golden earrings was 1,700 shekels (53 lbs.), besides ornaments, collars, purple raiments, and the chains that were about their camels' necks"* (vv.25-26).

Then Gideon took the gold and *"made an ephod thereof and put it in his city, even Orphrah..."* (vs.27). A shekel is 1/2 ounce, so this was 850 ounces of gold. At today's value of gold, it would be millions! Since it was so heavy, it's doubtful it was actually worn by the priest; rather it became an idol: *"...And all Israel went thither a-whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house"* (vs.27).

The lesson here is we must continually remain vigilant against the temptations and snares of the devil. In his earlier calling, Gideon had faithfully and obediently removed the idols of Baal from his father's lands, tearing

down his altars and cutting down the grove. *This was a prerequisite to victory in the battle.* But after the battle was won, the victory secured, and the rightful spoils of victory claimed, the lust for gold crept in, which became a snare to the house of Gideon, and ultimately led the entire nation into idolatry.

How many ministers we see today who have become ensnared by financial blessings God intended for them to use to preach the Gospel effectively, and not to live lavishly in the name of Bible prosperity. Let us who would walk in the victory and glory of Gideon's 300, be sober, temperate, and vigilant in our times of testing, so we can provide examples to those over whom we have influence, exhorting them in the words of apostle Paul: *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"* (1Cor.11:1).