

# EMERGING STRENGTH

## The God of Less Than...

**Text: Judges 6–7**

### Judges 7

<sup>1</sup> Then Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. <sup>4</sup> And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. <sup>5</sup> So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. <sup>6</sup> And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. <sup>7</sup> 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 *other* people go every man unto his place. <sup>8</sup> So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

## A. The Cycle of Judges

Read **Judges 6:1**

**1**Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.

**6:1 The Israelites did evil** The wording used here situates the narrative at the beginning of the repetitive cycle that reverberates throughout the book.

**into the hand of the Midianites for seven years** The Midianites inhabited the northern Sinai Peninsula and western Arabia. The Bible describes them as distant relatives of the Israelites through Keturah, Abraham's second wife (Gen 25:2–4). Compare Judg 6:3, where the Amalekites join the Midianite oppressors.

**Take-away:**

- **Israel's disobedience opened the door to strife**
- **Midian didn't randomly appear...they were invited by compromise**

**JUDGES 2:11-15**

**11Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, 12and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. 13So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroath. 14The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.**

**Discussion Questions:**

- What kinds of "Midianite pressures" show up after prolonged disobedience?
- Why does God sometimes allow us to struggle with what He could remove instantly?

## **B. Who Are the Midianites?**

a nomadic people who were enemies of the Israelites in Old Testament times. The Midianites were distantly related to the Israelites, since they sprang from MIDIAN, one of the sons of Abraham. But they usually were foes rather than friends of the Hebrew people. Abraham sent the children of Midian "to the country of the east" (Gen. 25:6)

Spiritually, the Midianites often symbolize strife, judgment, oppression, and contention, representing internal struggles or external enemies that oppose spiritual growth, particularly in biblical allegory where they embody challenges to faith, idolatry, or even the "spirit of poverty" that hinders destiny. However, they also appear as God's instruments for testing Israel, showing divine sovereignty, and their defeat by Gideon signifies overcoming spiritual opposition through faith and divine truth.

### **Key Spiritual Meanings**

**Strife & Contention:** Their name itself means "strife" or "judgment," representing inner turmoil, divisive thoughts, and battles against God's people.

**Oppression & Bondage:** Spiritually, they can represent forces (like poverty or false beliefs) that enslave believers, mirroring how Midianites bought Joseph into slavery.

**False Worship & Idolatry:** They led Israelites into idolatry (Baal-Peor) and moral compromise, symbolizing temptations and false standards that pull people away from God.

**Enemies of God:** In allegorical interpretations, they represent spiritual enemies or false gospels that are ultimately defeated by God's power through believers.

**Divine Tools:** God used the Midianites (like Babylonians) to discipline Israel, highlighting His sovereignty even in using difficult circumstances or people to fulfill His plans.

**Testing & Purification:** The conflict with Midian (like Gideon's battle) teaches that spiritual victory comes from relying on God's word (truth/light) and faith, overcoming fear and worldly standards.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why are internal enemies often harder to defeat than external ones?
2. What does it mean that Midian came from Abraham's line but not the promise?

## Read **Judges 6:11–13 NASB**

11Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

12The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.”

13Then Gideon said to him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

## **Example: Judges 6:2-6 NASB**

2The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. 3For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. 4So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. 5For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it. 6So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.

## **c. THE GOD OF LESS THAN**

### **Judges 7:1-8 NASB**

1Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

2The LORD said to Gideon, “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, ‘My own power has delivered me.’

3“Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.’ ” So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.

4Then the LORD 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; but everyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

5So 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, as well as everyone who kneels to drink.”

6Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people knelt to drink water.

7The LORD said to Gideon, “I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home.”

8So the 300 men took the people’s provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What does “kneeling to drink” symbolize spiritually?
- How does comfort make us vulnerable?

## **GOD CONFIRMS BEFORE THE FIGHT (Judges 7:9–15)**

9Now 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.

10“But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp,

11and 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 outposts of the army that was in the camp.

12Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

13When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating 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 turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.”

14His friend replied, “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.”

15When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hands.”

- The enemy already knows Gideon’s name

### **Discussion Questions:**

- Why does God sometimes let us hear confirmation instead of giving explanation?
- What changes when worship comes before the victory?

### **FAITH OVER RESOURCES (Judges 7:16–22)**

16He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers. 17He said to them, “Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. 18“When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon.’ 19So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands. 20When 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 for blowing, and cried, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” 21Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled. 22When 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 Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

### **Discussion Question:**

- What have we been trying to network our way into that only faith can unlock?

### **Personal Reflection**

Ask everyone to silently answer:

1. What has God been reducing in my life?
2. What fear disqualified me from stepping forward?
3. What “Midianite pattern” keeps returning?

## **TAKE-HOME ACTION (THIS WEEK)**

### **Challenge:**

- Identify **one thing you've been relying on instead of faith**
- Intentionally release it in prayer
- Replace it with obedience