

“God Uses Small Things”
Judges 7:1-8
(Preached at Trinity, March 15, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. God has placed His call upon Gideon as the deliverer of Israel and has promised to be with him to defeat the Midianites.
Judges 6:16 NAU - "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man"
2. As we came to the final verses of **Chapter 6** we saw Gideon's faith begin being stretched. The Midianites and the Amalekites had assembled for battle. It was a fearsome army of great proportion. It is described here in **Chapter 7**.
Judges 7:12 NAU - " Now 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."
3. The Spirit of God came upon Gideon and he sent messengers throughout the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali to assemble an army. Gideon assembles an army of 32,000 soldiers. Gideon is fearful. His army is tiny in comparison with the Midianite army. So he tests God by demanding a sign through the fleece.
4. It is possible, however, that Israel might prevail in the war and they would boast in their own power.
Judges 7:2 NAU - "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.'"
5. God is always mindful of His own glory.
Isaiah 42:8 NAU - "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images."
Isaiah 48:11 NAU - "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can *My name* be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another."
6. God is unequalled. He is independent, self-existent, self-sufficient. He is described by the name He shared with Moses – “I Am.” He is the God who is. He is the Creator of all things – all things find their source in Him.
7. Gideon sees himself as small and insignificant.
Judges 6:15 NAU - "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."
8. But he isn't small enough. God would humble him even further.
 - A. Gideon's army is too large. How can 32,000 be too large beside the innumerable host of the Midianites? But God said, “Too large!”
Judges 7:2 NAU - "he 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.'"

- B. God quickly trims off 10,000 reducing it to 22,000.
 What! 22,000! That's ridiculous before the strength of the Midianites.
 But God said, "Still too many."
Judges 7:4 NAU - "The people are still too many"
- C. God sends Gideon down to the water for the men to drink. Those who drank from their hand were chosen. It's been suggested that these were chosen because they were more watchful – in other words, they didn't lower their heads. But that misses the point. It wasn't because of their strength. It was Gods' strength!
 Gideon's army was reduced from 32,000 to 300.
9. It was a tiny army, a weak army. What possible chance would they have in battle against the Midianites?
 But don't underestimate the power of God. Without God Gideon was tiny, weak, and insignificant. With God Gideon's strength became infinite.
10. God uses small things so that His power might be magnified before the face of pride filled men.
11. We need to consider this carefully tonight. God is most able to use us when we are the smallest and the weakest.
- I. Consider Moses
- A. Before God called him Moses was a man full of pride and self-sufficiency.
1. He was raised with wealth and affluence. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh.
 2. When he was grown, knowing his ancestry, he acted as Israel's self-appointed deliverer. He killed an Egyptian who was mistreating one of the Israelites. The next day he quickly learned that self-appointed deliverers are not easily accepted.
Exodus 2:14 NAU - "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"
 3. Moses was proud, impulsive, and given to fits of anger.
 God would humble him. It took 40 years. Moses became a humble shepherd until he was 80 years old.
- B. God uses small things, weak things
1. When God called Moses he had been thoroughly humbled
Exodus 4:10 NAU - "Then Moses said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."
 2. Later it would be said of Moses:
Numbers 12:3 NAU - "(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)"
 3. How foolish it is for men to think they have some ability.

II. Consider Peter

A. He was always impulsive

1. He was quick to speak. John MacArthur referred to him as the Apostle with the foot-shaped mouth.
2. He was rugged, bold and outspoken. It was Peter who drew the sword when Jesus was arrested.
3. But God wasn't through shaping him.
 - a. Peter didn't know his weakness
 - b. And he underestimated the power of the adversary and how desperately he needed the power of Christ.
Luke 22:31-32 NAU - "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; ³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you"
4. Peter was reduced to trembling before a servant girl – (the word signifies a young girl.)
Luke 22:56-57 NAU - " And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." ⁵⁷ But he denied *it*, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him."

B. It was after Peter's failure that he became the mightiest

1. Peter had many leadership qualities but he had to be humbled. God humbles us, shapes us and then uses us.
2. Peter would later write:
1 Peter 5:5-6 NAS - "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time"

III. God doesn't use mighty men

A. God doesn't need mighty men

1. Paul stated this truth concerning the salvation of men
1 Corinthians 1:26-27 NAU - " For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,"
2. God uses poor helpless pieces of clay that He shapes
He reminds Moses:
Exodus 4:11-12 NAU - "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?
¹² "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say."

B. This is the danger of Arminian theology.

1. It glories in freedom of the will and in human ability. Faith is reduced to the insight and prerogative of man. The great distinction between one man and the other is his personal inclination to turn to Christ.

2. This is exactly what God will not allow
Ephesians 2:8-10 NAU - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."
1 Corinthians 1:30-31 NAS - "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."
 3. We aren't saved because of any strength in us. We are saved because we have no strength! God has mercy upon dead men. And He saves us after He humbles us!
- C. God reminded Paul of the importance of standing small before God
1. There was nothing particularly impressive about the outward appearance of Paul, and apparently he wasn't a great speaker.
2 Corinthians 10:10 NAU - "For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."
1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NAU - "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, ⁴ and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."
 2. Paul was greatly used of God and he was granted visions of glorious things. He was in danger of being puffed up in pride.
 3. God humbled Paul through the thorn in the flesh
2 Corinthians 12:7 NAU - " Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-- to keep me from exalting myself!"
 4. After Paul prayed three times God revealed to him that his greatest strength is in his weakness.
2 Corinthians 12:9 NAU - "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

IV. God used this tiny army to defeat the innumerable host of Midianites

A. God encouraged Gideon for the third time

1. God sent Gideon into the Midian camp

Judges 7:9-11 NAU - "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. ¹⁰ "But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp, ¹¹ 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 outposts of the army that was in the camp."

2. God often takes pity upon our fears and weaknesses and He encourages us

Judges 7:13-15 NAU - "When 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." ¹⁴ His 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." ¹⁵ When 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."

B. It was an unconventional battle

1. Gideon and his men did not lift a sword

2. God alone received the glory

3. Sadly, the battle cry of the army was insufficient

Judges 7:20 NAU - "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

4. This would prove detrimental for Gideon

V. Have you come to the place in your life where you can appreciate small things?

A. Do you understand your smallness?

1. Are you looking for some great thing? Are you seeking that which will receive the greatest recognition of men, the loudest applause? The greatest Christians upon the earth are most likely those who are unknown.

2. Christians in our day are guilty of celebrity worship. The internet has encouraged this. This isn't God's way!

a. The Church of Corinth had this problem. Paul condemned them for being fleshly and immature.

1 Corinthians 3:1-6 NAU - "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men? ⁵ What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

- b. There are no great men!
Mark 9:33-35 NAU - "They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them* was the greatest. ³⁵ Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."
Matthew 19:30-20:1 NAU - "But many *who are* first will be last; and *the* last, first."

- B. Humbly serve Him. Don't despise the smallness of the task – God is honored by your willingness to serve Him
1. We used to have a man that planted flowers in large pots outside our church building and kept them watered throughout the hot summer. Few knew who was responsible. He considered it an honor.
 2. As we honor God in small things He blesses us with greater things
Luke 16:10-12 NAU - "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹ "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? ¹² "And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"
Matthew 25:21 NAU - "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'"

Conclusion:

1. Cast aside everything upon which you glory in yourself or your own ability. God will not be robbed of His glory. Is it your education or your promotions or your advancements or accomplishments?
 Dale Ralph Davis – Does this passage not speak to us? "Does it not tell us there is a certain deviousness in God's people, a tendency to steal God's praise? Does it not teach us that sometimes he cannot trust us with his work unless we realize how inadequate we are to do it?"
2. Cast your fears upon the One who is all powerful.
3. Cast your self-confidence upon the only one upon whom we can truly trust.
4. In all humility cast yourself upon His mercy. He will see you through every trial and deliver you from every enemy.
1 Peter 5:6-7 NAU - "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."