



## COWARDLY & CARELESS OR COMMITTED?

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In the book of Judges we learn that God's people drifted into apostasy again and again, worshipping idols and serving false gods (Judges 2:10-11). God, in His infinite wisdom, would chastise His people by allowing the surrounding nations to oppress them. God's people would eventually turn back to Him and cry out for His protection. Full of tender love and mercy God would raise up a judge to deliver them out of the hands of their oppressors (Judges 2:16).

In one time of chastening the Midianites destroyed Israel's crops and homes, leaving them homeless.

They were left to live in the mountains and caves. God's people were so impoverished by the Midianites that they finally gave up on false gods and cried out to the Lord for deliverance (Judges 6:1-6).

While the Midianites were assembling a massive army of 135,000 warriors, Gideon was able to pull together an army of about 32,000 (Judges 6:32; 7:12). In spite of being outnumbered four to one, the Lord told Gideon his army was too big! God wanted His people to know that it was His strength and not their own that drove out the Midianites. So God scaled down Gideon's army from 32,000 to just 300 by releasing the cowardly and the careless (Judges 7:2-7).

There are some great lessons for us in the scaling down of Gideon's army. We could say that there are three attitudes of people in the world today. There are the cowardly, there are those who are careless and there are those who are committed enough to trust in the promises of God. It takes this kind of commitment to be courageous, choosing to "shun the wrong and the do the right" as the hymn says.

Fear and cowardliness downsized Gideon's army from 32,000 to 10,000. Fear keeps many

people from doing what they know is right and it is very contagious. It kept a whole nation out of the Promised Land and it can keep us from entering Heaven (Deuteronomy 20:8; Numbers 13:1-33; Revelation 21:8). Jesus said the way of salvation is not easy and it is fear that will keep many from entering this narrow and difficult path (Matthew 7:13-14).

Carelessness dropped another 9,700 off the roles of Gideon's army. Spiritual carelessness is no different. Many are careless with their souls just as the warriors who got down with their faces to the water were careless with their lives. Jesus once said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). It is truly shocking what people will trade for their souls! Fame, popularity, wealth and ease are all exchanged for eternity. The pleasure sin offers is only for a short time, but the end of such a lifestyle is eternal death (Hebrews 11:25; Romans 6:21). The careless will miss out on eternal peace with God and live instead with eternal regret, like the rich farmer in Luke 12:13-21.

Finally, we're down to just a few who are committed to doing what's right no matter the cost. The Lord downsized Gideon's army leaving him with only 300 men, but they were 300 valiant men who were totally committed. That's who we want to be, the few who are committed to the Lord come what may (Matthew 6:33; 22:37).

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