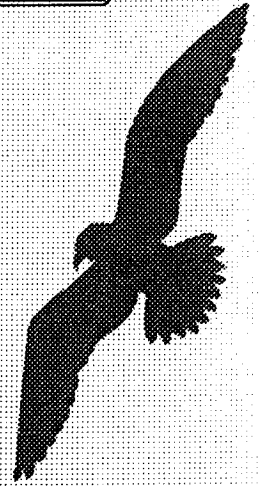


*'They shall
mount up...*

ON EAGLES' WINGS

*... with wings
as eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



AERY NUGGETS

Gideon

Judges 6: 1-16

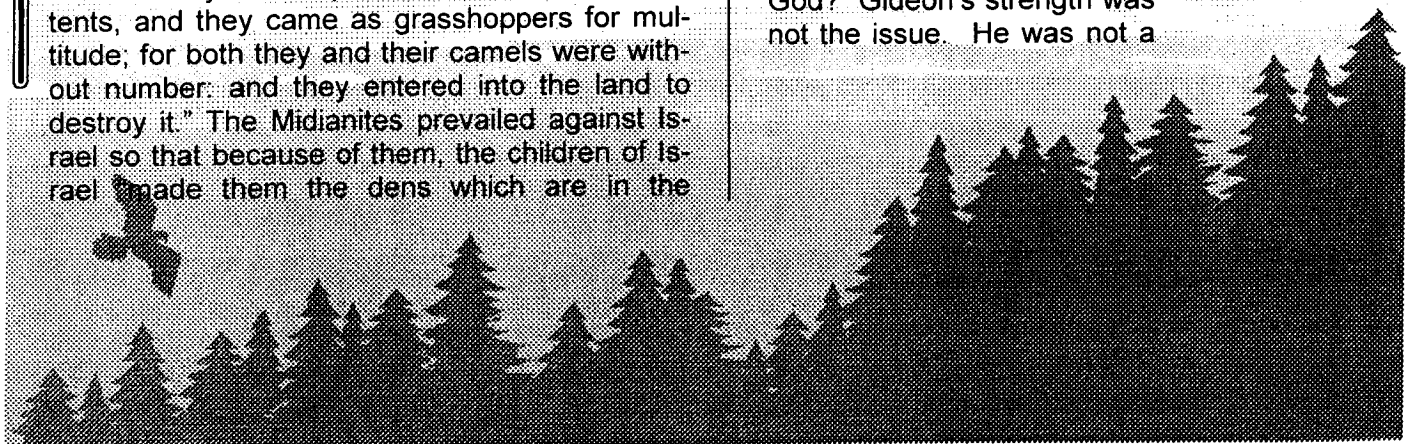
Dear friends,

Did you ever feel like you were being over-run by the trials and challenges of life? Consider the great conflict before Gideon, and how God prepared him for it. As we read in verse 1, Israel had sinned against the Lord, and the Lord had given Israel into the hands of the Midianites seven years. The Midianites were a staggering force, and they plundered the land of Israel leaving nothing but ruin in their path. In verses 3-5 we read, "And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it." The Midianites prevailed against Israel so that because of them, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the

mountains, and caves, and strongholds." (v. 2). I imagine the Midianites were quite mobile with their camels, like an enormous light cavalry, probably able to arrive in great numbers within hours of their scouts sighting livestock or grain to be plundered, and they destroyed or took everything in their path. It must have seemed that the children of Israel could not grow a single stalk of grain that the Midianites didn't swoop down and snatch it up. The children of Israel were powerless to stop this horde, and could apparently do nothing but hide themselves.

Such was the enormous hostile power facing Gideon and the children of Israel, but God did not prepare Gideon for the conflict before him by putting him first in mind of the power of the enemy. He began instead by telling Gideon of the power that was for him: "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor" (v. 12). Gideon was then instructed of God in v. 14, "And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" He might be the least of his house, and his family the poorest in Manasseh, but what is that to God? Gideon's strength was not the issue. He was not a



military leader, nor probably a leader at all; and he certainly didn't have the wealth to gather and equip an army to go against the countless host of Midian. But to all such objections, God responded, "...Surely, I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man" (v. 16). The issue was not the power of the Midianites, nor that of Gideon, but the surpassing power of God.

For what is all the power of the world to God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). In the end, the Lord used Gideon to rout the host of Midian with only 300 men armed with horns, clay pots, and torches. Similarly, the experienced commander Sisera brought his 900 iron chariots against Barak who had only inexperienced, lightly armed men; but we read, "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera (Judges 5:20)," and he and his chariots were swept away. Jonathan, in 1 Sam. 14, took only his armor bearer with him when he attacked and defeated a group of 20 Philistines saying, "come and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us, for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (v. 6).

Did you ever feel overwhelmed by seemingly endless waves of problems? We may live in a land relatively free of the kind of aggression seen in our portion above. We may not have hosts of armed foes poised on our borders threatening to take everything leaving us desolate. Yet at times, the trials and afflictions of this world can seem to pour down like torrents of rain, threatening to sweep us away with irresistible force. Perhaps you have experienced failures in business or school, disabilities or infirmities that have ruined your plans, or personal tragedies involving your family or loved ones. Perhaps your heart has even cried out like Gideon in verse 13, "Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." My dear Christian friend, Satan hurls his fiery darts against the children of God for the purpose of bringing about doubt and discouragement. The enemy of our souls is ever seeking to take trying circumstances and use them against us to cast us down and take away our joy and confidence, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," (Ephesians 6:12).

The power that is arrayed against us is very

great. But as in the case of Gideon, God does not prepare us for the conflict by showing us first the power of the enemy or our own lack of strength. In Ephesians 6:10, we are directed: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Our enemy may be much stronger than we are, but consider the surpassing power that is for us--"greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). The Lord is on our side, and how encouraging and comforting that is! Our enemy is powerful in the extreme, and we may be relatively weak, but God is greater than this, and he is on our side! We must go in the strength of the Lord, and not in our own strength ("I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Phil. 4:13.) Are you discouraged and frightened just now? Cheer up and look up! "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," (Psalm 50:15).

Isaiah 43:2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Much love through Christ

Stephen J. Faulkner

*Nothing but Christ, as on we tread,
The Gift unpriced—God's living Bread,
With staff in hand and feet well shod,
Nothing but Christ—the Christ of God.*

*Everything loss for Him below,
Taking the cross where'er we go;
Shewing to all, where once He trod,
Nothing but Christ—the Christ of God.*

*Nothing save Him, in all our ways,
Giving the theme for ceaseless praise;
Our whole resource along the road,
Nothing but Christ—the Christ of God.
—S.O'M. Cluff*

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