

300 (and how they conquered the gods)

Judges 6-7

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Prayer

Father, we thank you that you are fire. We confess that we have been your enemies and so the fire burns. Lord, today we pray that we would fall into your fire and that you would be the fire that burns within us, the fire that precedes from us. I pray that you would help us to preach in Jesus' name, Amen.

Trailer from the movie 300

[Dramatic music plays as multiple images of war scenes, strong soldiers, and armies in peril battle the mighty Spartans]

Narration: *"We Spartans have ascended from Hercules himself, taught never to retreat, never to surrender. Toward the death and the battlefield is the greatest glory one can achieve in life. Spartans. The finest soldiers the world has ever known."*

Another similar sequence of images, warriors and dramatic dialogue continue. The words "They were 300 men against million" flashes on an ominous background. A small army of very well built and threatening soldiers marches forward in confidence as an enemy army storms upon them. The sequence ends with the commander of the army cries, "Spartans, tonight we dine in hell."

Message

"Tonight we dine in Hell..."

I don't know if that's such a wise thing to say, but it's Father's Day, and that's a pretty cool clip, and those are some really great abs.

[Image from the movie 300 with a man with great abs]

(I have great abs. And you can see 'em if I stand at the right angle to the sun, pull my fat down and flex really hard.)

As you probably know, that was the trailer for the movie 300, loosely based on the legendary battle of Thermopylae, during the Persian wars in 480 BC. The man yelling was King Leonidas of Sparta, who chose to defend Greece against Xerxes the Persian who, by the way, was married to Esther, from the Bible. That's the very same guy.

Well supposedly, Leonidas and 300 select Spartan warriors withstood a massive army of Persian warriors at a narrow pass called hot gate—Thermopylae, which led south into

Greece. They failed. But the 300 received great glory because of their great skill and well-defined abdominal muscles.

(I did some research. It turns out that there were over a thousand other Greeks who defended the pass as well, but they obviously didn't possess such high quality abdominal muscles and so the legend is about the 300 Spartans . . . not the 1,000 chubby Corinthians . . . or whatever.

Well, the 300 Spartans are legendary, but they're not the original 300. About 700 years earlier, 300 Israelites under the direction of a fellow named "Hacker," which in Hebrew is pronounced Gideon, routed 135,000 Midianites and their gods. It wasn't a failure, but a victory, and by the numbers even more impressive than Thermopylae, and yet the Spartans get the glory and a Hollywood movie.

My theory is that the legend of the 300 Spartans is like a human corrective on the Biblical story of the 300 Israelites, for the 300 Israelites appear to have no special skills or well-defined abdominal musculature.

Last week, we began looking at the story of Gideon and the 300. I'd like to review a little bit, ask a few questions, and then, look at how the 300 routed the Midianites, saved Israel, and defeated the gods of the land.

Judges 6:1-2

The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD (Yahweh), [In most English Bibles, whenever "LORD is all in caps, the Hebrew word is Yahweh] and the LORD (Yahweh) gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.

The people cry out to *Yahweh*, and He answers through a prophet.

Judges 6:10

I said to you, "I am the LORD (Yahweh) your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But you have not obeyed my voice."

So the evil that Israel did was fear . . .

In specific, fear of the gods of the Amorites, Midianites, and Amalekites.

Because they feared those gods, they worshipped and served those gods . . . like Americans fear, worship, and serve American gods.

Israel worshipped Baal, Asherah, and a host of lesser Canaanite gods.

And, what do you suppose should be their punishment?

- They're already prisoners of fear...
- They're already weeping and gnashing their teeth in dark caves under the mountains.

- The Hebrew word for a place like that, is “Sheol,” and in Greek “Hades,” and in some English Bibles, “Hell.”
- It’s not that there might not be a place like that after the body dies, it’s just that Israel is already there while their hearts are still beating.

Judges 6:11-17

Now the angel of the LORD (Yahweh) came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

The winepress was like a pit in the rock or the earth. Gideon, like the rest of Israel, is hiding in the earth and choking on fear, but surrounded by the ingredients for making bread and wine when, under a tree, suddenly appears a man, who is God, and also the Word of God—this has got to be Jesus—so pay attention:

And the angel [messenger] of the LORD (Yahweh) appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD (Yahweh) is with you, O mighty man of valor.” And Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD (Yahweh) is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD (Yahweh) bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD (Yahweh) has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.” And the LORD (Yahweh) turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” And he said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” And the LORD (Yahweh) said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.”

“One man” . . .

Gideon has got to be wondering:

- *How can you call me a “mighty man of valor,” when I’m hiding in a wine press choking on fear?*
- *What do you mean by this might of mine? What might?”*
- *And how can I save Israel?*

“Israel?”

Now this is a fascinating question for Evangelical Christians:

How do you save people that are already, supposedly “saved?”

I mean, Israel is God’s chosen people, “called out” for His service—

- “People called out” is the Hebrew word “*qahal*,” which for some reason gets translated from the Hebrew as “assembly” or “congregation” in most English Bibles.
- But the Jews of Jesus day translated it with the Greek word, “*ecclesia*.”
- When *ecclesia* is translated from the Greek into English in the New Testament, it always gets translated “Church.”

I'm saying that, in Scripture, Israel is clearly God's Church. And now, so are we. We are the people called out (*ek kaleo*) for God's service and grafted into Israel. "And the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" writes Rabbi St. Paul.

So, Gideon is not sent to save the "unsaved." He's sent to save the Church. So what is he saving the Church from?

Well, he's obviously saving the Church from at least Midianites...

But did you know that two times in the Old Testament Yahweh says, "*Beside me there is no savior.*" (Isaiah 43:11, Hosea 13:4) That clearly means that anytime anyone gets saved from anything, God's doing the saving

- Your cheeseburger saved you from starvation—God did that.
- Your car saved you from walking—God did that.
- Your shirt saved you from sunburn—and God did that.

In Scripture, "save" is a really big word. It means "help." God is your Helper.

WELL . . .

Gideon is sent to save God's Church/Israel from:

#1 Midianites and

#2 God's wrath...

I mean God gave them into the hand of Midian and the Bible describes that as "wrath" (Romans 1).

Gideon is called to save Israel from Midianites, wrath, and from hiding in caves under the mountains. Remember: the Hebrew word to describe that is *Sheol*.

#3 He's saving them from Sheol, often translated "Hell." *Sheol* is *Hades* in Greek and often translated as "Hell."

- In the New Testament I count eighteen direct warnings given to people about what we call "Hell."¹
- Eighteen direct warnings about Hades, outer darkness or Gehenna.
- Eighteen warnings and all eighteen are issued by Jesus.
 - But not one warning is issued to a tax collector, prostitute or Gentile.
 - All are issued to Israelites, God's Church:
- Fifteen of the eighteen times, the people warned are identified as followers of Christ.
- The other three times, they are identified as Pharisees—who were arguably the group closest to Jesus in what they believed.

So, it's clear that Jesus warned folks about something we call "Hell," but it seems that the people most in danger of going there were people who thought they weren't going there, and were convinced that others were going there, and could never get out—that is

¹ The Revelation talks about a lake of fire and divinity, but it can't be Hades because Hades is thrown into that lake and death is no more.

self-righteous, religious people. It's almost like "the measure you give is the measure you get."

Well, Gideon is sent to save his Church from Sheol.

He's sent to save them from hiding under the earth—

But of course, they've chosen to hide under the earth, in fear.

#4 He is to save the Church from fear.

And of course, the thing Yahweh says they have feared is "*the god's of the people in whose land they have come to occupy.*" They fear Baal, Asherah and gods like Molech—the god of the underworld. Of course, they're all idols made by man, and yet Scripture claims they're also systems of thought inhabited by demons.

#5 Gideon is sent to save the Church from gods, idols, and demons.

At this point, I have a slew of crazy stories and even a video, but they freak people out, such that they often miss the point.

So for now, suffice it to say, that we still battle the principalities and powers. And from experience, I know that these have included spirits named, Secrets, Antichrist (that means imitation Christ), Lucifer (who poses as an angel of light), and recently, Asherah (who tempts with control promising life, but delivering death)...²

So, Gideon is sent to save the Church from false gods and idols. And like we said last time, the idol behind every idol is you. By that I mean, "me"-sus instead of Jesus.

By "me"-sus, I mean the belief that "me" (the self that I create) is salvation, When the name Jesus literally means, "*God is salvation,*" *Yahweh* is salvation. *Yehoshua*, shortened to *Yeshua*, Jesus as opposed to "me"-sus.

"Me"-sus is a particularly American God, and it seems to me that much of the Church in America confuses "me"—sus with Jesus and that's why they get so offended at the idea of Jesus saving all. For if Jesus saves all—it reveals that "me" saves none.

From Scripture and my freaky weird experiences, I've learned that satan and his demons, gain their power (maybe all their power) by convincing people of one of two lies, or both.

1. That God doesn't love them, that is, that God doesn't *want* to save... OR
2. That God *can't* save, because "me"-sus is stronger than Jesus.,
That our bad will is stronger than God's Good Will,
That our sin is stronger than God's Grace.

² They gain their power by convincing people to believe lies, seize control, and hide in fear. I don't believe they gain much power, if any, through Led Zeppelin, Harry Potter and Pokémon cards, but they gain power through fear of Led Zeppelin, Harry Potter, and Pokémon cards.

Once I began to discern those lies, I was horrified to realize that I most often heard those lies in Church. And I was horrified to hear the Church attribute attributes to God that don't describe God, but do describe false gods, like Asherah and Baal. I was horrified to hear the Church solicit obedience the way Asherah, Baal, Lucifer and satan solicit obedience.

I was horrified to realize that the Church often preaches "me"-sus instead of Jesus.

Faith in "me"-sus may produce buildings, budgets, programs and institutions, but "me"-sus cannot save you, for "me"-sus is you.

"Beside Yahweh, there is no Savior."

Not your fear, not your works, not your supposed "free-will," not anything—
not even your well-defined abs. So...

#6 Gideon is sent to save Israel from themselves.

He's sent to save Israel from their own body of death—what Paul calls the flesh.

- The problem with flesh is not that it's physical, but that it's self-centered.
- Your flesh feels only it's own pleasure and pain.
- It grows by consuming life and excreting death.
- Your flesh is made of earth and it gets bigger by consuming life that is also made of earth—that's how you grow your earthen vessel, your jar of clay.
 - That can be good if the life is offered in love, and received in gratitude.
 - But it's evil if the life is taken in fear and possessed in pride.
 - And that's what we've all done in an effort to make ourselves in the image of God.
 - That's how each of us has become his own worst enemy, his own deepest hiding place, his own greatest fear, and his own false god.

#7 So, Gideon is sent to save God's people from their sin.

Do you see? God's Wrath burns toward Israel's sin,
Which is trusting themselves to save themselves,
Which causes them to serve demons,
And live in fear, and hide in Hell.

And so that's why God delivers them into the hand of Midian, that they would come to know "God is Salvation"—*Yehoshua, Yeshua*, the God-man, Jesus.

Well, God is sending Gideon to save Israel from all those things AND to save Israel for something else.

In Genesis 28: 14 God said to the man Israel, "*Your seed shall be like the dust of the earth... and in you and your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"³
"*All the families*" (The word "families" is also translated *peoples, tribes and nations*)

³ If you knew that someone in your family, like your husband, wife or children was endlessly tortured, would you feel blessed?

"In you and your seed shall all the nations be blessed."

That would include Midian, and every family in Canaan.

You see? Even God's punishments on Israel or Canaan—even death and Hades—all of God's punishments are ultimately blessings.

Gideon is sent to save Israel, so that in and through Israel, all humanity might be saved. Gideon is sent to save, but asks "How can I save?" And that's a great question. I hope it's already occurred to you...

If only God saves, how can Gideon save?

(Isaiah 43:11 *"I, I am Yahweh. And beside me there is no savior."*)

And that reminds me of our other question:

The God man says, *"Go in this might of yours and save Israel."*

What is this might of Gideon's and how does he go in it?

See? This is quite a conundrum for Gideon, for you, and for all human flesh and all human religion.

Gideon cannot *acquire* this "might"

- He can't develop a plan for achieving the "might" some time in the future.
- He cannot teach a class at church called, "How to get the might"
- He can't acquire the might, 'cause the God-man says, He already has the might.
- You can't make yourself a mighty man of valor, if God already calls you a mighty man of valor.
- You can't make yourself, "Peter the Rock," if Jesus just said, "You are the Rock."

Well, I've experienced what some would call "God's might." Since I was a kid, I've prayed in tongues, but it happened because my friend Ricky said, "Hey Peter, you wanna pray in tongues?"

I've experienced miraculous healings and a couple times prayed for folks that were miraculously healed, but it didn't happen due to my depth of knowledge—even though I've taken classes on healing prayer. And it didn't happen due to the strength of my will—but something more like the end of my will.

I've been literally pinned to the ground by the power of God, but it wasn't because of my obedience, but more like my disobedience. And I've cast out demons, gods like Baal and Asherah, and even Satan, but it wasn't in situations that I controlled, but situations in which I felt like I lost all control and God was in control.

Well, those things are what some call "God's might," but Jesus referred to those things as signs. And He said, *"An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign."* We're all to desire "gifts of the Spirit," but there is "a still more excellent way." Think about it: gifts of the Spirit are not the Spirit

And think about it, on His last night with His disciples Jesus said, *“Truly, truly I say to you whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these shall he do because I go to the Father”* (John 14:12). He then later sends the Spirit.

We think “*greater works*” means greater gifts or greater signs... (That’s John 14). But Jesus goes on to describe the greatest work (in John 15): *“There is no greater Love”*—and remember love sums up all the works that God asks us to do, and if it’s not love, it’s nothing—*“There is no greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). Literally: *“That a man lay down his psyche, (his soul, that is, his earthen vessel).”*

- So, God’s might is not achieved through the strength of our will.
- And God’s might is not achieved through the depths of our knowledge. God’s might is not achieved through the strength and wisdom of the earthen vessel, but through the surrender of the earthen vessel...
The earthen vessel that you *think* is you.

God is Love, and Jesus is the Word of Love.

There cannot be a greater might than the Word of Love through whom all things are created and sustained. God’s might is The God-man, who is with Gideon in the wine press as he chokes on fear. He says, *“But Gideon I will be with you.”*

See? Gideon can’t make that happen, he can only believe it *has* happened. He can only believe *now*. And he can only believe now because the God-man is causing him to believe. And maybe He’s causing you to believe, *now*. He is the Word of God. And hopefully that’s what I’m preaching.

He says, *“But Gideon I will be with you.”*

- ✓ And at that Gideon runs and gets a goat and some bread. Puts it on a Rock. The God man touches it and it is consumed by fire.
- ✓ Then the God man vanishes in the fire.

Scripture says that God is Love and God is fire—that means Love is fire. Love in us, is the fire of God in an earthen vessel.

- ✓ In Judges 6:25-35 Gideon then destroys the altars to Baal and Asherah in the middle of his town and is named Jerubaal, which means, “let Baal contend against him.”
- ✓ Then Baal does contend against him in the form of 135,000 Midianite warriors.
- ✓ But “clothed in the Spirit” Gideon assembles 32,000 Israelite warriors.

He musters the troops by the Spring of Harod:

[Image of the Spring of Harod]

I took this picture of that spring when we visited Israel ten years ago.

32,000 against 135,000 and God says to Gideon,

[7:2] *"The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'"*

"Gideon the troops are too strong," says the Lord, *"too strong"*

"Lest Israel have faith in 'me-sus' rather than 'Jesus,'"

"Lest my Church have faith in the idol that is themselves rather than the salvation that is me."

"Too many troops, Gideon—not to win the war with Midian, but to win the war with fear, Sheol, idolatry, flesh, and sin."

So, through Gideon God says to the 32,000, *"If you're afraid go home."*

- 22,000 do go home.

And what do you suppose they did when they got home?

I would suppose they hid in caves, and threshed wheat in winepresses choking on fear. Their punishment is to remain as they are, in bondage to fear . . . at least until the God-man shows up in their winepress . . . and causes them to believe.

Do you know you're not better than anyone else? But you might be further along than everyone else, in which case maybe you could help someone else move along.

Well, at the spring, God makes Israel weak that they might know His Strength. And then He makes Israel foolish that they might know His Wisdom.

Judges 7:4-7

...the Yahweh said to Gideon, "The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' shall not go." So he brought the people down to the water. And the Yahweh said to Gideon, "Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink." And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. And Yahweh said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home."

There are all sorts of theories as to why 300 men who lift water to their mouths are better soldiers than 9,700 who bend all the way down and drink like a dog.

- Some argue that the 300 kept their head up and were more alert, but the spring faces a wall . . . remember?

[Image of the Spring of Harod repeated]

And surely one of the other 10,000 could've said, "I'll

- check for Midianites while you take a drink.”
- Rashi, the medieval Rabi, taught that the 300 didn't bend as low, and in this way demonstrated a lesser propensity to kneeling before idols.
 - One author I read thought it was some sort of IQ test.

All of these explanations are an effort to explain why these 300 Israelites were stronger or wiser than all the other Israelites—just as the 300 Spartans were stronger and wiser than all the other Greeks.

In my mind, all these explanations miss the point.

Last week Karl said, “Hey Peter, the 300 that lifted the water to their mouths, must've been the guys with the biggest bellies who couldn't bend all the way down to the water. They must've been the guys with the worst abs.”

And I think that is the point (pretty much *exactly*).
God didn't want Israelites that would glory in their abs.
He wanted Israelites with the weakest earthen vessels.
He wanted guys like this:

[Image of two men pressing their beer bellies up against a wire fence that creates the illusion that they have washboard abs]

Now if you think I'm joking, listen to Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians:

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

So that, no human being, might glory in “*me*”-sus, rather than Jesus.
For that reason, God chose the weak and the foolish in this world.

I used to feel pretty strong and wise, but for the last ten years I've been feeling progressively more weak and foolish.

So maybe I'm chosen, and maybe you're chosen.

Maybe we're chosen to save the Church from her bondage to the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness...⁴

⁴ You know Paul, and Peter, and the early Church preached what we preach, until the fifth and sixth century when the Church became part of the principality and power called Rome. Ever since then, believers have tried to free the Church from faith in herself...

Maybe we've been chosen to save the Church, so the Church can get on with saving the world.

We used to be several thousand, but now on our best day (Christmas and Easter) those assembled here are about 300, and most of us have poorly defined abs.

Well, God shrinks the troops, saying, *"If you're afraid go home."*
Then, He shrinks them some more, and makes them feel foolish;
He weakens the earthen vessel...
And it turns out that Gideon is still afraid.

So, God has Gideon sneak down to the Midianite camp, where he overhears a Midianite sharing a dream that another Midianite interprets. He says, God is giving Midian into the hand of Gideon. God is so in charge that He controls Midianite dreams and even the thoughts in their heads,

- Which makes us wonder, "Why doesn't God just smite the Midianites?"
- Why include Gideon in all this drama?
- Well, maybe God isn't battling Midian; He's battling Gideon's fear...
And helping Him to believe in God, who is Salvation."
- Maybe God is helping you believe in God, who is Salvation, right now.

Well, Gideon is so overwhelmed at the realization that God is truly Almighty—
And that God is so intent to save that He begins to worship. Scripture doesn't say how, but when Gideon worships. Gideon knows what to do, and it doesn't even require well-defined abs.

Judges 7:15-22

As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped. And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand." And he divided the 300 men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars (earthen jars), with torches inside the jars. [We're talking fire in an earthen vessel] And he said to them, "Look at me, and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.'"

All glory belongs to the Lord, but God delights in sharing it with Gideon, for Gideon knows, *"It's not by might, not by power, but by my spirit says the Lord."* Gideon knows that all the glory is Grace... (and none belongs to his abs.)

So 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 set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars [—like a ring of fire]. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” Every man stood in his place around the camp, and all the army ran. They cried out and fled. When they blew the 300 trumpets, the Lord set every man’s sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled as far as Beth-shittah (beth means house so Beth-shittah means house of “Shittah”) —toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

So how did the 300 defeat the Midianites and the gods of the land?

#1 They blew trumpets . . . But not just any trumpets, they blow the shofar—the ram’s horn, the strength of the lamb.

At this point, it’s happened three times in Scripture so far.

- In Exodus 19 and 20 a shofar is sounded, by God. And it means that Israel can come to His Holy Mountain.
- In Leviticus 25 we read that it was to be blown on the Day of Atonement, that begins the year of Jubilee.
- In Joshua 6, on the seventh day, the seventh time around, seven priests blew seven trumpets—and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

The Shofar signals the in-breaking of the Seventh Day when everything is Good, sin is atoned for, all are set free and share all things, and all come home to the Holy mountain.

The trumpet is the Gospel announcement that “God is Salvation”
And the trumpet is judgment on the lie that “me’ is Salvation.”

If you believe, “God is Salvation,”

I bet God is calling you to speak, “God is Salvation.”

Eph. 1:19 *“There is an immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe.”*

You may say, “But I’m weak and foolish and have flabby abs...”

Maybe that’s exactly why God has chosen you to speak.

Speak to your friends, your family, your neighbors and your church.

Saying: God is love and so desires to save.

God is almighty and so can save.

God is Jesus and so does save.

And so, you can trust Him and stop hiding in fear.

In the fall, I’ll be teaching a five-week class on Wednesday nights that will help you defend that biblically, but you don’t need to wait for the class to share the Good News.

You’re to become like a child, talking to another child, saying,

“I know Dad hurt your feelings and sent you to your room...”

But He doesn’t hate you and He won’t hurt you; He’s teaching you...

Our Father loves you, more than you know, and you can trust Him.”

In just that simple statement is the Word through whom all things are created,

- The Word that's living and active and sharper than any two edged sword.
- The Word that destroys the work of the devil and makes *all* things new.

2 Corinthians 10:4

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh (that's our earthen vessel). For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion [proud thought] raised against the knowledge of God.

Just saying, “God is Salvation,” destroys the demonic stronghold of “‘me’ is salvation.”

Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 12:9

[The Lord] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The 300, blew their trumpets, and then broke their earthen vessels revealing Holy Fire.

Your Body is an earthen vessel.

And the Spirit of God is Holy Fire.

The Spirit, which is the breath, is in the blood.

God calls you to tell people of His Salvation,

And bleed His blood, which is fire.

Like I said, I've had some undeniable and truly amazing encounters with demonic powers. And I've seen captives set free from the deepest of prisons. It has involved lots of prayer, spiritual gifts, words of knowledge, the breaking of curses, and proclamations of deliverance in Jesus' name.

BUT in the end, it's all about helping a person believe that

God is Love and so desires to save.

God is almighty and so can save.

God is Jesus and so has saved.

And in every case, the deliverance is started because someone with flabby abs, who named the name of Jesus, was willing to bleed for that person in bondage . . . just a little bit. And what they bled was Holy Fire.

I think the Sanctuary is called to preach, “*God is Salvation*” to the Church in bondage to false gods and on her way to outer darkness. I think we're called to preach the Gospel, and prove it by bleeding Love.

Revelation 12:11 *"We overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony."* We overcome by blowing the trumpet and allowing our earthen vessel to be broken in the service of Love.

I don't think God has used anyone in my life to make me fall more in love with Jesus, than my dad. But it wasn't because He was a pastor; it wasn't because of what he learned at Princeton Seminary, and it wasn't because of the strength of his abs. It was because I saw my father broken, and when he was broken he bled Love; he bled Fire.

It's not a curse to be broken in the service of Love,
It's an invitation, to wield the greatest of all weapons...
It's an invitation to bleed our Lord's blood.

Once the Lord showed a friend of mine that her wounds were His wounds, and that those wounds bled Fire,

She served communion in church one night and her hands burned . . .

Jesus showed her that they burned, for fire had come out of her old wounds...

And He showed her that Fire had come out of the communion cup...

He showed her that it was the same fire and the same blood that came from the cup and now poured out of her wounds.

It burns evil and sets the captives free.

The Fire is Love poured out. It's Forgiveness, Mercy, and Grace.

Fathers listen closely:

You have no greater weapon in your arsenal than this:

That you allow yourself to be wounded by your children . . .

And that when you let them break your heart . . . you bleed nothing but Love.

Communion

And so Jesus, from the bosom of the Father, took bread and broke it, saying,

"This is my body." And He took the cup saying, *"This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you."*

In the morning He *allowed* us to break His earthen vessel. And He bled, Holy Fire. Come to His table and drink it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

[Several worship songs are sung]

Prayer

...Yahweh, you are Lord of all and we hail the power of Jesus' name. Not because it's something we wear on t-shirts with pride but because it means "Yahweh is salvation." We thank you for the power in that name that breaks all other chains, curses, pronouncements, all the things that bind us and hold us in fear. Lord God, we crown you Lord of all and we praise the power of Jesus' name...

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

I hope that you would blow the trumpet. You actually believe that God has the power to save; He's good at it and He has the power to pull off what He set out to do. So blow that trumpet. You don't have to know everything and understand everything. We have some things to help you do that, but just blow it and tell people: "God is Love and so He desires to save. He's almighty and so He can save. [Peter points to the cross] He's Jesus, look at how He saves! When you say that to people and you really mean it, you'll get kick back. People get angry. When they get angry sometimes they'll hurt you. And then this is your assignment: bleed fire. In Jesus' name believe the Gospel; blow the trumpet and bleed Fire. Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.