



## LESSON IX.—NOVEMBER 30.

**Gideon and the Three Hundred.**

Judges vii., 1-8, 16-21. Commit vs. 19-21. Read Judges, chs. 6-8.

**Golden Text.**

'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.'—Ps. cxviii., 8.

**Home Readings.**

Monday, Nov. 24.—Judg. vi., 7-24.  
Tuesday, Nov. 25.—Judg. vi., 33-40.  
Wednesday, Nov. 26.—Judg. vii., 1-8.  
Thursday, Nov. 27.—Judg. vii., 9-18.  
Friday, Nov. 28.—Judg. vii., 19-25.  
Saturday, Nov. 29.—Zech. iv., 1-10.  
Sunday, Nov. 30.—Isa. l., 21-31.

**Lesson Text.**

(1) 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. (2) 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. (3) Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return to depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. (4) 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. (5) So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lapped of the water with his tongue, as a dog lapped, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that bowed down upon his knees to drink. (6) 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. (7) 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. (8) 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.

**GIDEON AND HIS ARMY.**

(Condensed from Matthew Henry.)

Gideon applied himself with all possible care and industry to do the part of a good general, in leading on the hosts of Israel against the Midianites. 'He rose up early' (v. 1), as one whose heart was upon his business, and who was afraid of losing time. Now that he is sure God is with him, he is impatient of delay. He pitched near a famous well, that his army might not be distressed for want of water, and gained the higher ground, which, possibly, might be some advantage to him, for the Midianites 'were beneath him in the valley.' Note, faith in God's promises must not slacken, but rather quicken our endeavors. When we are sure God goes before us, then we must bestir ourselves. 2 Sam., v. 24.

God provides that the praise of the intended victory may be reserved wholly to himself, by appointing three hundred men only to be employed in this service. The

army consisted of thirty-two thousand men; a small army, in comparison with what Israel might have raised upon so great an occasion, and a very small one in comparison with that which the Midianites had brought into the field; Gideon was ready to think them too few, but God comes to him, and tells him they were too many; v. 2. Not but that they did well, who offered themselves willingly to this expedition, but God saw fit not to make use of all that came. Two ways God took to lessen their numbers.

(1) He ordered all that would own themselves timorous and faint-hearted to be dismissed, v. 3. He was now encamped on a mountain close to the enemy, called 'Mount Gilead,' from Gilead, the common ancestor of these families of Manasseh, which were seated on this side Jordan (Num. xxvi., 30). And from thence, perhaps, they might see the vast numbers of the enemy; those, therefore, who were disheartened at the sight, were left to their liberty to go back if they pleased. There was a law for making such a proclamation as this. (Deut. xx., 8.) One would have thought there would have been scarcely one Israelite to be found, that against such an enemy as the Midianites, and under such a leader as Gideon, would have owned himself fearful; yet above two parts of three took advantage of this proclamation, and fled off when they saw the strength of the enemy and their own weakness, not considering the assurances received of the Lord, and, it is likely, delivered unto them. Some think the oppression they had been under so long, had broken their spirits, others, more probably, that consciousness of their own guilt had deprived them of their courage. Sin stared them in the face, and therefore they durst not look death in the face. Note, fearful, faint-hearted people, are not fit to be employed for God; and among those who are listed under the banner of Christ, there are more such than we think there are.

(2) He directed the cashiering of all that remained, but three hundred men; and he did it by a sign. 'The people are yet too many for me to make use of,' v. 4. See how much God's thoughts and ways are above ours: Gideon himself, it is likely, thought they were too few, though they were as many as Barak encountered Sisera with; (ch. vi., 14), and had he not forced his way through the discouragement by dint of faith, he himself would have started back from so hazardous an enterprise, and have made the best of his own way back: but God saith, There are 'too many,' and when diminished to a third part, they are yet 'too many'; which may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the Church and its interests; its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by; God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be 'exalted in his own strength.'

Gideon is ordered to bring his soldiers to the watering, probably to the well of Harod (v. 1), and the stream that ran from it; he, or someone appointed by him, must observe how they drank. We must suppose they were all thirsty, and were inclined to drink. It is likely he told them they must prepare to enter upon action immediately, and therefore must refresh themselves accordingly. Now, (1) some, and, no doubt, the most, would kneel down on their knees to drink, and put their mouths to the water as horses do, and so they might get their full draught. (2) Others, it may be, would not make such a formal business of it, but as a dog laps with his tongue, so they would hastily take up a little water in their hands and cool their mouths with that, and be gone. Three hundred there were of this latter sort, that drank in haste, and by those God tells Gideon he would rout the Midianites, v. 7. By this it was provided that none should be made use of, but, 'First,' Men that were 'hardy'; that could endure long fatigue, without complaining of thirst or weariness; that had not in them any dregs either of sloth or luxury. 'Secondly,' Men that were 'hasty'; that thought it long until they were engaged with the enemy, preferring the service of God and their country before their ne-

cessary refreshments: such as these God chooses to employ, that are not only well affected, but zealously affected in a good thing; and also because these were the smaller number, and therefore the least likely to effect what they were designed for. God would by them save Israel. Now let us see how this little despicable regiment, on which the stress of the action must lie, was accoutred and fitted out. Had these three hundred been double-armed with swords and spears, we should have thought them the more likely to bring something to pass. But instead of making them more serviceable by their equipment, they are made less so; for, (1) Every soldier turns sutler; they 'took victuals in their hands,' v. 8, left their baggage behind, and every man burdened himself with his own provision; which was a trial of their faith, whether they could trust God when they had no more provisions with them than they could carry, and a trial of their diligence, whether they would carry as much as they had occasion for. This was indeed living from hand to mouth. (2) Every soldier turns trumpeter. The regiments that were cashiered left their trumpets behind them for the use of those three hundred men, who were furnished with those instead of weapons of war, as if they had been going rather to a game than to a battle.

The Midianites were shouted out of their lives, as the walls of Jericho were shouted down, that Gideon might see what he lately despaired of ever seeing, the 'wonders that their fathers told them of.' Gideon's soldiers observed their orders, and 'stood every man in his place round about the camp,' v. 21, sounding his trumpet to excite them to fight one another, and holding out his torch to light them to their ruin. They did not rush into 'the host of Midian, as greedy either of blood or spoil, but patiently stood still to 'see the salvation of the Lord,' a salvation purely of his own working.

**C. E. Topic.**

Sunday, Nov. 30.—Topic—Missions: a meeting in the interests of Foreign Missions. 'The world for Christ.' Isa. lv., 12-23.

**Junior C. E. Topic.****GOD'S GOODNESS.**

Monday, Nov. 24.—Always thankful. Eph. v., 20.  
Tuesday, Nov. 25.—Practical thanksgiving. Prov. iii., 9.  
Wednesday, Nov. 26.—Grateful for everything. Phil. iv., 6.  
Thursday, Nov. 27.—The table blessing. John vi., 11.  
Friday, Nov. 28.—Unnumbered joys. Ps. l., 5.  
Saturday, Nov. 29.—The chief thanksgiving. 2 Cor. ix., 15.  
Sunday, Nov. 30.—Topic—A year full of God's goodness. Ps. cvii., 1, 2, 21, 22. (Thanksgiving service.)

The Rev. A. E. Dunning, D.D., remarks: 'I had in my Sunday school, twenty-five years ago, a class of six boys from ten to twelve years old. All except one came from good families. The parents of that one were dead. He seemed to be the most gentlemanly boy of the class. When they came to be about fifteen or sixteen years old they organized a club. It was secret, but they said its purpose was their moral improvement. After awhile it was said that liquor was taken to their club-room. One day one of the young men came to me and said that he had got into the habit of drinking, and that his parents had found it out. His mother, he said, was almost distracted. He begged me to go to her and tell her he would never drink again. But he went from bad to worse till he disappeared. Friends of another came to tell me that he had by forgery secured money from a bank. Employers of another came to say that he had made false entries in their books, and had defrauded them of a considerable sum of money. Another within a few years died a common drunkard. None of these boys at ten years of age seemed likely to be exposed to temptation to drink.'—'Christian Herald.'