

Judges 8:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.

Analysis

And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.

This verse captures the paradox of divinely empowered human weakness. The phrase **faint, yet pursuing** (ayefim ve-rodphim, עַיִפִים וֶרְדָּפִים) juxtaposes exhaustion with relentless determination. The participle ayefim (עַיִפִים, "faint, weary") describes physical depletion—Gideon's 300 had fought through the night (Judges 7:19-22), pursued enemies, and marched many miles. Yet rodphim (רֶדָּפִים, "pursuing") indicates they continued the chase despite exhaustion. This embodies Paul's paradox: "when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Crossing the Jordan marked a significant geographical and symbolic transition. The pursuit moved east of the Jordan into Transjordan territory, extending the campaign beyond Israel's primary holdings. This pursuit demonstrates obedience to God's command to completely defeat enemies rather than settling for partial victory. Incomplete conquest had plagued Israel's conquest under Joshua (Judges 1:27-36); Gideon refused to repeat this failure with the Midianites.

The specific mention of **the three hundred men** emphasizes God's economy in victory. The Lord had winnowed Israel's army from 32,000 to 300 (Judges 7:2-8) to ensure Israel couldn't boast: "Mine own hand hath saved me" (Judges 7:2). That these same 300 pursued to complete victory despite exhaustion demonstrates that

God's power perfects human weakness. This foreshadows Christ's finished work—He cried "It is finished" (John 19:30) only after complete victory over sin, death, and Satan, refusing partial deliverance.

Historical Context

The Jordan River formed the traditional eastern boundary of the Promised Land, though Israelite tribes (Reuben, Gad, half of Manasseh) settled in Transjordan (Numbers 32). Crossing eastward into the wilderness regions where the Midianites and Amalekites originated pursued the enemy to their own territory, preventing future raids. The Jordan's fordable points varied with seasons; late summer after the barley harvest (when the Midianite oppression typically occurred, Judges 6:3-4) meant lower water levels facilitating crossing.

Ancient warfare required extraordinary physical endurance. Soldiers marched 15-20 miles daily carrying weapons, armor, and supplies. The overnight battle, pursuit to the Jordan, crossing, and continued chase would have covered 30-40 miles without rest. That Gideon's men continued despite exhaustion demonstrates extraordinary commitment, likely sustained by confidence in divine backing after witnessing God's miraculous intervention.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the phrase 'faint, yet pursuing' encourage believers experiencing spiritual exhaustion in their sanctification journey?

- What does Gideon's refusal to stop at partial victory teach about persevering to complete obedience rather than settling for minimal compliance?
- In what areas of your life are you tempted to stop pursuing God's purposes due to weariness rather than pressing on to complete victory?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּבֹא	גִּדְעוֹן	בְּרִיאָה	עַבְרֵר	וְשָׁלָשׁ
came	And Gideon	to Jordan	and passed over	he and the three
H935	H1439	H3383	H5674	H1931
מֵא	מֵאָשָׁר	אֶת	עִירִים	וְרָדְפִים:
hundred	men	and	that were with him	yet pursuing
H3967	H376	H834	H854	H5889

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 4:16 (Parallel theme): For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Galatians 6:9 (Parallel theme): And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

1 Samuel 30:10 (Parallel theme): But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.