

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Judges 8

We are continuing our study through the book of Judges

And this will be the third and final chapter that is dedicated to how the Lord raised up Gideon to deliver the Children of Israel.

In our study last week – we saw the Spirit of the Lord come upon Gideon, Gideon assembled an army to fight against the Midianites and the Amalekites and then we saw that the Lord told Gideon that the army that he had assembled was too large – so the Lord cut down his troops from 32k to 10k to 300.

The Lord did this because He wanted all the glory –

And the Lord gave them victory over the enemy – we saw how He used psychological warfare –

What we are going to see in our study this evening is an example of an individual who was handed victory – but he still ended up losing the spiritual battle

And the significance for the believer is that Jesus has given us the victory, through the cross – But we can still yield to our flesh, rather than to God, and sin - losing the battle even though the war is won

Let's pray...

**[Jdg 8:1-35 NKJV] 1 Now the men of Ephraim said to him, "Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?" And they reprimanded him sharply. 2 So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? [Is] not the gleaning [of the grapes] of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3 "God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.**

The Midianites, in the chaos, they began to kill each other –

And Gideon commanded some of the tribes to pursue the Midianites – he didn't want them to get away.

Do here at the beginning of chapter 8, Gideon is met by the men of Ephraim – and instead of rejoicing in victory, as they are no longer oppressed

They are upset with Gideon.

Now, a little background about Ephraim would help to understand why they were upset.

- Toward the end of Genesis – Jacob blessed Joseph’s sons – he blessed Ephraim over Manasseh, even though Manasseh was the oldest – (don’t forget that Gideon was from the tribe of Manasseh)
- Toward the end of Moses life – when he blesses the tribes before he died, when he gets to Manasseh and Ephraim – Deut 33:17, Moses says, They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, And they are the thousands of Manasseh
- Joshua, the one who led them to the Promised Land was from Ephraim
- The tabernacle resided in Shiloh – which was in Ephraim.

So the tribe of Ephraim was used to being prominent among the tribes of Israel.

They were the leader

So, now – after they hear about the victory, how 301 men were able to defeat the Midianites – they feel slighted.

Their hearts are filled with pride and envy.

They wanted the glory

But remember, Gideon only did what the Lord told him to do.

So the people of Ephraim were not rebuking Gideon, but they were actually rebuking God.

When we as believers are envious toward others who serve within the church we are rebuking God,

We are disagreeing with Him.

We are revealing that we dislike His plans – just like the people from Ephraim

Now – I want you to look at how Gideon handled it –

Because instead of defending himself –

Gideon says, “You guys are awesome!

I mean, wow – look at who you are!

You’re the mighty tribe of Ephraim!”

“Why, even the leftovers of your grapevines are way better than the best grapes of the vines where I live.”

“And this day, you guys caught the princes of Midian. Man, you guys rock!!!”

So, Gideon is telling them what they want to hear – he doesn’t want to deal with them – there is still work to do, so he reaffirms their pride.

**4 When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who [were] with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit.**

So – Gideon hasn’t lost any of his men yet

**5 Then he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian." 6 And the **leaders of Succoth** said, "[Are] the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?" 7 So Gideon said, "For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers!"**

Gideon and his men are in pursuit of the Midianites – his guys are hungry, he asked the leaders of the city (note) for provisions from the men of Succoth – and they refuse. They want to remain neutral – they are worried that if they help Gideon and give his men provisions and the Midianites defeat him, they are going to come back and take it out on them.

So Gideon responds with, has delivered the kings of Midian into my hands, I am coming back and I am going to put a hurtin on you.

**8 Then he went up from there to **Penuel** and spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. 9 So he also spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!"**

So Gideon goes to the next town over – Penuel

Now, Penuel is a significant place because this is where Jacob wrestled with God (Gen 32)

This is where God changed his name from Jacob to Israel

The name means – “facing God”

And the same thing happens.

The people refused to help.

And Gideon tells them that when he returns he is going to destroy their tower –

Many theologians believe that this tower was a place where they would hide when the Midianites came – they would lock themselves in there until the enemy left.

**10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna [were] at Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew the sword had fallen.**

So here we see that 120k men killed themselves in the chaos that we saw last week in ch 7.

There is only 15k left and Gideon and his 300 men are chasing them.

**11 Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while the camp felt secure.**

Despite being outnumbered – Gideon attacks the Midianites – he knows God has given him the victory -

Now, the Midianites – they think they have gotten away. They are back in their neck of the woods – they are licking their wounds, trying to regroup and they are attacked.

**12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.**

Gideon and the army persevered – and experienced the promised victory.

Keep this in mind – they won despite never receiving the provisions from Succoth and Penuel.

Even though they were tired and hungry – God sustained them.

They denied the flesh and were led by the Spirit

If chapter 8 finished right here – Gideon would be everyone's favorite judge.

**13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of Heres.**

**14 And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated him; and he wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.**

**15 Then he came to the men of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, '[Are] the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your weary men?' " 16**

**And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.**

So after capturing the Midianite kings – Gideon wants to feed the flesh

He is looking revenge – he is going to punish the cities that didn't give provisions to his men.

He caught one of the men of the city who he found outside the city walls and had the guy give him a list of the leaders of the city.

And I asked you to make a note of the phrase he taught the men –

Gideon didn't sit there with a book

He laid the seventy-seven men, naked and face down and he beat them with these branches filled with thorns.

**17 Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.**

Against Succoth – Gideon went after the leaders because they were the ones that denied the help.

But in Penuel – it was the entire city that refused to help.

He kills all the men of the city –

It gets weirder!!!



**18 And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men [were they] whom you killed at Tabor?" So they answered, "As you [are], so [were] they; each one resembled the son of a king." 19 Then he said, "They [were] my brothers, the sons of my mother. [As] the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you."**

So here are the Midianite kings that he captured –

And Gideon begins to have a conversation with them – and he asked them,

“When you guys starting oppressing my people, what did the people look like that you killed?”

And they responded – they look just like you Gideon – and I had you make a note that they said they resembled the son of a king...(maybe they are trying to butter him up)

And Gideon says – you guys killed my bros

Now, according to the law – Gideon has every right to avenge the death of his brothers.

But notice what he does -

**20 And he said to Jether his firstborn, "Rise, kill them!" But the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he [was] still a youth.**

Gideon is not exactly – father of the year material.

It is not like he is taking his son to get his first deer or duck.

He is asking his son to kill these two kings.

Now, notice that the writer of the book of judges makes it a point to tell us that Gideon's son was young.

This was an improper request –

Why would Gideon have his son do it?

Maybe to shame the kings?

It would be a disgrace to die at the hands of a young boy – remember king Saul, fell on his sword.

Maybe because it would be more painful? – a skilled swordsmen would know exactly where to stab right / it would be quick

**21 So Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man [is, so is] his strength." So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments that [were] on their camels' necks.**

The Midianite kings provoked Gideon to kill them and he did – and he takes a victory trophy with him.

**22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian."**

The men of Israel were asking Gideon to become their king, and to establish a dynasty of succession in his family

The men of Israel thought Gideon qualified because he had "delivered [them] from the hand of Midian."

Gideon had done no such thing.

God had made it clear at each step that it was He Who delivered Israel, using Gideon and as few men as possible.

He did it precisely so He, and not a man or men, would get the glory. Nevertheless, God's glory was given to Gideon.

There is a very important lesson for us all here church –

Give God the glory – always

Don't hold up a man, or a woman, who is merely a servant, and give them glory.

We can encourage one another; we can be grateful for spiritual people in our lives; we can love them, and show respect.

But in the end, it is Jesus Christ who began this great work in us, and He is the one bringing it to pass.

**23 But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."**

When we first read verse 23 –

Our immediate reaction is – Go Gideon!!!!

Even if the chapter ended here – we could overlook him trying to get his young son to kill the two Midianite kings – we could overlook the fact that he killed the men of Penuel or what he did to the leaders of Succoth

Don't make me a king, don't make my sons kings over you. We have a king already and that is the Lord.

Sounds good doesn't it –

But look what happens next -

**24 Then Gideon said to them, "I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder." For they had golden earrings, because they [were] Ishmaelites. 25 So they answered, "We will gladly give [them]." And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. 26 Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred [shekels] of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which [were] on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that [were] around their camels' necks.**

Gideon turns down their request of making him king – but he still wants the spoils of victory.

So passes his hat around and collects 43 lbs of gold – that is the conversion.

So he didn't want to be made king – but notice, he wants to live like a king –

Remember what the two Midianite kings told him – back in verse 18 – the resembled sons of a king, then the people wanted him to be king -

**27 Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.**

Now if you remember from our study in the book of Exodus – The original "ephod" was a vest that was worn by Israel's high priest. It had on it twelve precious stones - one for each of the tribes of Israel.

The priest would use it to determine God's will – this is where the Urim and the Thummim would be placed.

Gideon goes home – he melts the gold from the earrings and he makes himself a vest.

Not only was Gideon acting like a king; he was in some sense acting like a priest - or at least someone with authority in discovering the will of God.

And the people began to treat it like an idol.

Before, the people were worshipping Baal and Asheroth but now, they are worshipping something that resembles something that God allowed – however, it is still idolatry.

**28 Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon.**

Here we see the goodness of God

Even though the people turned to worshipping of the ephod and Gideon failing to put God first, God honored His word and gave them peace.

This is out of His grace –

This will be the last time of peace that Israel will experience in the book of Judges.

The following two judges (Jephthah, Samson) did not bring a period of peace.

**29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. 30 Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives.**

Gideon didn't want to be made king – but here we see living like a king by having many wives.

**31 And his concubine who [was] in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.**

So not only did he have many wives – he also had concubines – mistresses.

Now, sons of concubines did not have any rights to any inheritance – only the sons of the king's wives.

But Gideon called this one son from the concubine Abimelech – the name Abimelech means, “my father is king”

Remember – he said he didn't want to be made king.

And what we are going to see next week in chapter nine – is Abimelech taking it upon himself to become the leader of Israel -

**32 Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. 33 So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. 34 Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; 35 nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.**

The Lord went to great lengths to show the Children of Israel that it was He that delivered them from those that oppressed them, for their own good and for His deserved glory.

Yet the people honored Gideon instead

And when Gideon finally died –

They went back to the cycle of worshipping false gods –

They forgot what the Lord had done on their behalf –

There used to be a pizza commercial on TV in the 90's – for tombstone pizza

“What do you want on your tombstone”

What do you want people to remember you by?

And the people in the commercial would say pepperoni and cheese

Gideon's legacy, after what we just read, was that he was after earrings and ornaments.

What is our legacy – what do we want on our tombstone?

It is up to us to carve out our legacy – and I pray that we may have a spiritual legacy

I pray that we may remember the Lord, and be remembered as His servant.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, “I am a sinner.”



Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'