

GIDEON: THE STRENGTH OF FAITH

Part Seven: Retribution, Yahweh's Rule, Many Wives and Israel's Demise

Judges 8:18-35

- **Even Faithful Men Seek Retribution upon Their Enemies and Leave a Pattern for Their Children.**

v. 18-19

1. Gideon has captured Zebah and Zalmunna. They admit to killing Gideon's brothers at Tabor.

- God had ordered Gideon to slay the Midianites. He had relentlessly pursued these two kings, and even slew the men of Penuel, plus punished the elders at Succoth for their failure to help Gideon in the pursuit. **God knows all about both justice and mercy.** Justice required that the kings die for slaying Gideon's brothers at Tabor. Gideon showed no mercy.

v. 20-21

2. Gideon asks Jether, his first-born, to slay the kings. The child succumbed to his fears and would not kill them. Remember that Gideon knew all about fear, but always conquered his fears by faith in God's plan.

- **God loves to teach object lessons to children.** Jether would probably remember the day he would not strike the kings, and probably also remember that his father killed them. **Fathers set the example every time. They should be very careful of the example they set.**

- **Humans Always Seek a King To Rule over Them. They Glorify a War Hero. Be Sure You Always Let God Rule and Gather All the Glory to Himself.**

v. 22-23

3. The men of Israel asked Gideon to rule over them because he had delivered them from the Midianites. They wanted to install the dynasty of Gideon. Gideon declined.
 - **God delivered Israel, not Gideon. Gideon never forgot his service to God. Sometimes we face people who want us to rule over them. God alone deserves that privilege and we should never usurp His authority.**
 - **Sometimes we learn lessons that no one else learns. We must teach the lesson of God first, always, even when well-intentioned people seek to thwart God's will.**
 - **This test could have been the greatest test Gideon faced. Would he take the credit, or not. Gideon passed with flying colors.**

- **Faithful Servants Sometimes Receive an Earthly Reward for Their Service. Even Faithful Servants Must Guard against Riches Becoming Idols.**

v. 24-27

4. Gideon requested an earring from the victors. The term Ishmaelites, who wore gold earrings, referred to a group of nomadic traders, including the Midianites.

5. Gideon became a rich man, with approximately 40 pounds of gold. He took the gold and made an ephod. Ephods in the Old Testament often referred to a garment worn by the priests, but in this case, it appears to be some other object. One of Gideon's first tests of faith was to destroy the idols of his father. Now, having won the big battle, he succumbed to idolatry again. The spoils of victory eventually caused a serious defeat in his life.

- **We should always be careful that the things we desire most do not amount to idols in our lives. For Gideon, he had no problem refusing the power of being king, but he did accept the wealth of a king. That wealth entangled him and Israel in idolatry.**

- **As the People of God, We Have a Constant Need for God To Strengthen Our Faith. So Often after the Battle, We Stop Living on the Strength of Faith and Return To Our Own Ways of Living.**

Vv. 28-35

6. God had subdued Midian and they were subdued for 40 years. Jerubbaal lived in his own house, and had 70 sons from many wives. He even had a concubine that lived in Schechem with her family. Gideon died at a ripe old age and was buried with his father.

- **Gideon had complained to God in Judges 6:15 that he came from a family that was least in the tribe of Manasseh. Apparently, Gideon intended to strengthen his standing among his countrymen, and perhaps, so that his children would not feel unimportant like he did. Recall, however, that God used Gideon because of Gideon's humility. He would always give the glory to God because**

Gideon knew in himself that He had to depend entirely upon God's strength. As Gideon grew older, he changed for the worse.

7. As soon as Gideon died, the sons of Israel returned to their idolatry. Baal worship included the worship of false gods and worship of the Ashtaroth, the female consorts of Baal. In this verse, Baal-berith means the Baal of the covenant. The idolatrous practices included the worship of demons (compare 1 Corinthians 10:19; Revelation 9:20), temple prostitution for males and females, and sometimes human sacrifices.
 - **Living in the strength of faith means that we continue in that strength for the rest of lives. In the Book of Judges, we see a pattern of Enemy Persecution, Deliverer Arises, Deliverer Triumphs, Deliver Dies, People Slump, Idolatry, and Enemy Persecution. The cycle repeats itself. The same cycle can overtake your life unless you determine to live in the strength of faith.**

8. The people of Israel forgot God's deliverance. Remember how Gideon had started. He questioned where was the God who delivered from Egypt? (Judges 6:13). These same people also failed to remember God's servant Gideon for all the good that he had done Israel.
 - **God alone strengthens faith. Our lives may be a testimony to faith, we should be careful to be an example of strong faith at all times. But ultimately, as people forget what God does for them, and why they are now free from enemy oppression, strength often subsides and faith declines. God faithfully strengthens faith and raises up faithful people to encourage and deliver believers.**