

What You Need to Know About GIDEON & SAMSON:

“The Dangers of Losing the Final Lap”

Study Number Four – Judges 8:1-32

Remember thus far in our study, Gideon lives in the city of Ephraim and they've been in bondage to the Midianites for seven years. The Lord called Gideon for the express purpose of liberating His people.

After the first encounter with the Lord, Gideon is finally found at the altar of peace. And at the altar of peace his focus naturally is on the Lord. There he can trust the Lord's going to take care of things.

But the first thing the Lord says is, “I want you to tear down the altars of Baal. Replace them with the altars of Jehovah.” This was a surprise to him because he was expecting to go immediately against the Midianites. The Lord said, “No, I want to deal with the Baals before I send you to battle. I need you to worship before I send you to war.”

And at the end of that particular study Gideon has a great deal of apprehension about going against the Midianites, simply because it was a scary deal. He nearly lost his life in that. If his dad hadn't stood in the breach and done some things he feels like were pretty scary.

Then at the end of that study he throws the fleece twice. The first time he wants it wet and the ground dry. And the next time he wants the fleece dry and the ground wet.

Now he is ready again to be confronted with the people who are in the valley of Jezreel—135,000 to be exact. And as he gets ready for this, he goes to his local people in Manasseh and he gets a few thousand people. Then he goes to Asher, the other tribe, and gets a few thousand. Naphtali and Zebulun—just four tribes out of twelve. He neglects eight of them and he ends up with 32,000. And the account in our last study was a substantial reduction of the forces.

The Lord said, “You have too many. In fact, all those that are scared, go home.” And he nearly got killed in the rush. Twenty-two thousand headed for the house. He’s left with 10,000 and the Lord said, “You still have too many.” He then reduced it to 300.

And we had that beautiful statement of faith from Gideon, who after the dream that he heard down in the camp, he comes back and says, “Arise, the Lord has given the Midianites into your hand.”

That’s the first time he expresses a statement of faith. And so they follow the instruction, the battle takes place, and they watch what the Lord does in liberating the nation.

Now they’ve been fighting all night as the scene of our story

opens. They've been chasing the Midianites and Amalekites all over the place.

These people scattered to the four winds. Some of them went up into the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, and that's why we have them here in this first verse, with their noses bent out of joint. They're upset by the fact that they haven't been consulted.

So as the scene opens, realize that they've been going at it since midnight when they blew the trumpets and said, "For the Lord and for Gideon." And they've been chasing them since that and probably early in the morning now as the scene opens with verse 1.

v. 1 Then the men of Ephraim said to him, "What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?" And they contended with him vigorously.

"Then the men of Ephraim said to him, 'What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?' And they contended with him vigorously."

Now remember he only got people from four tribes. He didn't only neglect Ephraim, he neglected eight of the tribes. He just got 32,000 to start with and that was too many.

Now why is Ephraim upset? Well their pride's been injured. There's another thought here and that is everybody likes a

winner, don't they? When we have a winner, everybody wants to be on that team.

For instance, when the Cowboys lost in the Super Bowl we say, "They lost." If they had won we would say, "We won!" We want to identify with a winner. But if they're a loser, "They lost."

And so these guys from Ephraim want to get on the bandwagon. They want to be the ones who recognized the fact that they had a part in the liberation that's taken place.

Now instead of rejoicing over the fact that for the first time they're going to be free, they're going to be able to eat their own crops and not have interference from the Midianites, they're upset. It says, "they contended with him vigorously."

That's like an NFL football coach contending with a referee over a questionable call. There is contention vigorously at that point. And that's the picture that's described here in this particular verse.

Look at verse 2. Here's how men handle strong contention that comes toward them. They relieve it with a compliment.

v. 2 But 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?"

“But 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?’”

He asked him a question, “You guys in your mop-up operation in the gleaning process, did more than we did. All we’ve been doing is standing on the hill. We watched the Lord do all of this.” And then in verse 3 he underscores it.

v. 3 “God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

“God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.”

A lot of times we can give a compliment, a genuine compliment, we can speak positively in the face of somebody being angry at us. It’s amazing how the anger begins to subside and they are no longer content.

Let’s look at a couple of verses from the New Testament that parallel that.

Philippians 2:3, 4

Do nothing from selfishness and empty conceit, but with a

humility of mind let each one regard the other as more important than himself. Do not merely look on your own things, but look also on the things of others.

Have a genuine concern and begin to live in the other person's world. And maybe we have to say, when a guy gets on our case, "Hey, you must have had a bad day." And think of something we can say that is complimentary. And instead of getting horns back, we're going to kind of get a soothing effect.

And that's what has happened here. He's got him settled down now and so we're going to go back to pursuit.

v. 4 Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, weary yet pursuing.

"Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over,"—then underline—"weary yet pursuing."

Think about that for a minute. That kind of just stood out in the text because we knew what was going to happen and how sad the end was going to be.

Galatians 6:9

Let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

And we can couple that with:

Psalm 126:5, 6

They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth
bearing precious seed
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bring his sheaves with him,
the evidence of his harvest.

Now one of the things that delights the heart of God the most is for us to keep on keeping on. We all come to the point where we want to quit and we always stop and we start feeling sorry for ourselves. When we feel the price is too big, we come to the wall in the marathon, we want to stop.

We'll never say with the apostle Paul, "I fought a good fight, I finished the course, I kept the faith." (ref. 2 Timothy 4:7)

Although they've been up all night, they are still "pursuing." They're thinking of the freedom for Israel and the accomplishment of God's purpose and no matter what the price is, they're going to stay with it until the task is done and the victory's complete!

"weary yet pursuing."

Now let's see what happens. They get over the Jordan River.

v. 5 And he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

“And he said to the men of Succoth, ‘Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.’”

They got across the river and came to the city of Succoth. This is a little city that was very prominent in the life of Jacob.

Jacob came up out of Laban’s house to Penal and he had that wrestling match with the angel and then he came up and met Esau. Instead of going to be with Esau, he crossed over and stayed in the city.

The reason he stayed here was because he found a lot of rich pastureland for his cattle and his flock. And so he settled right down there.

This is a very rich, fertile place. And these people had plenty. And it should have been their responsibility, as brother and sister Israelites, to have taken care of the army, being excited about the fact that pretty soon they were going to be liberated. But these people, although they are Israelites, they are Midianites in heart.

That didn't have anything to do with it! In fact, they must deal out words of reproach and discouragement to Gideon.

v. 6 And the leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?”

“And the leaders of Succoth said, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?’”

“We aren't giving you any bread. When Zebah and Zalmunna get through with you guys, they're going to come back and get us if we feed you.”

Total unbelief and reproach!

At least give them some breakfast so they can get on the road. Not a bit of it!

v. 7 And Gideon said, “All right, when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

“And Gideon said, ‘All right, when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand,’—there's our second statement of faith by Gideon.

Remember the first one back in verse 15 of our last chapter

when they got so excited? He said, “Arise for the Lord has given the camp of Midian into your hand.” (Judges 7:15)

Here’s the second statement:

“when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand,”

“There’s no question about it. I can tell you, you residents right there in the city of Succoth, that it’s coming!” He’s seen enough already. He is totally convinced that the Lord’s in this and what’s yet to be done is going to happen. There’s going to be victory so he can speak with faith.

“then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

He says, “Guys, I’ll be back. And when the Lord has given them into my hand, I’ll thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

“Guys you’re going to have a painful thrashing and it’s going to hurt! Count on it! I’m coming back”

v. 8 And he went up from there to Penuel, and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

“And he went up from there to Penuel,”—now this is another city. They’re not too far away.

“and [he] spoke similarly to them;”

He said, “Would you feed my army? We’re weary pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna.”

“and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.”

He said to them, “What about this business? Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands?”

And now he’s really upset—verse 9.

**v. 9 So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying,
“When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.”**

“So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, ‘When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.’”

Now what’s “this tower?”

In Genesis 11 they built this great big tower trying to reach God. Well a lot of the worship of those days was to build ziggurats, which are towers, which are to point toward God and they’re to be places of worship. It’s to be like the Space Needle up there in Seattle or the Hemisphere in San Antonio. Some prominent tower.

And he said, “Guys, when I come back that’s coming down. It’s

an act of judgment upon you for being unwilling.”

And notice the third statement of faith in that ninth verse:

“When I return safely,”

“There’s no problem. I’m coming back.”

“When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.”

Alright, now back to the battle—verse 10.

v. 10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

“Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.”

Through that night and through those hours the battle confused them in the darkness—120,000 of that 135,000 army is gone.

There are 15,000 left. Now what is Gideon thinking?

“Well Lord, if I had my original 32,000 we’d have 2 to 1 odds against them now.”

The Lord said, “Right. And if you still win it’s going to be a miracle, isn’t it? Right. And I guess you’re going to have to just trust Me, aren’t you? Right.”

That’s the way he wants it. He’s still got an impossible situation with 15,000 opportunities for God to work.

v. 11 And Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp, when the camp was unsuspecting.

“And Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp, when the camp was unsuspecting.”

It’s toward evening and they’re all settled down there. And why not go with a winner? It worked last night. So he got the torches, he got the pitchers, and he got the trumpets. And they said, “For the Lord and for Gideon!” They broke the pitcher, had the lights, and blew the trumpet. And there was chaotic confusion.

And in the process, verse 12 says:

v. 12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

“When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.”

v. 13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.

“Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.”

And while he was coming back he sees a guy out there riding his dirt bike and in verse 14 says:

v. 14 And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

“And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the princes”—and the city council members—“of Succoth”—all of its leaders—“and its elders, seventy-seven men.”

Now he’s got the ones that are responsible for the turn down of the previous invitation, or opportunity that was given to them.

v. 15 And he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Behold Zebah and Zal-munna, concerning whom you taunted me, saying, ‘Are the hands of Zebah

and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?”

“And he came to the men of Succoth and said, ‘Behold Zebah and Zal-munna, concerning whom you taunted me,’”

He’s saying, “Guys, put your eyeballs on this. Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me,” and he lays right before them their exact words so that he can be just and the judgment and the sentence that is going to be executed.

“saying, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?””

v. 16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them.

“And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them.”

He disciplined them just like the Father disciplines us when we fail to respond to the way He’s working in our lives. It’s part of the training process. And we can avoid that if we’re willing to trust Him and be more cooperative of what He’s doing in our lives.

v. 17 And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

“And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.”

Evidently the looters of that particular city also lost their lives in the process when the tower came down.

Now Gideon has a responsibility as the leader of the land to perform the final act of liberation. And that is, taking care of these two kings. And he doesn't want to do it, but as we're going to see, he has no alternative. Look at the next verse.

v. 18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?” And they said, “They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king.”

“Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, ‘What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?’”

Tabor was the first battle when the Midianites came in to take the land seven years ago. And at that battle several of Gideon's brothers were involved. And some of them lost their lives. So he puts his finger on the sin that is going to be responsible for Zebah and Zalmunna surrendering their lives right now.

He says, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at

Tabor?” And look at their answer:

“And they said, ‘They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king.’”

“And that’s right. Well, come to think of it, they looked just like you.” And they give him a compliment of respect, “They were just like a king, resembling the son of a king.”

Now Gideon gives his response.

v. 19 And he said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.”

“And he said, ‘They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.’”

Deuteronomy 19:6

Lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer in the heart of his anger and overtake him because the way is long, and take his life...

It is the responsibility of the relative in this situation to bring about the judgment upon those who have taken family members in physical death.

v. 20 So he said to Jether his first-born, “Rise, kill

them.” But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

“So he said to Jether his first-born,”

Now this is the reproach for a young boy to take the life of two prominent kings. To die at the hand of a great warrior is one thing, but to die at the hand of a youth would be rubbing salt in an open wound. And so Gideon turns to his son and he says

“‘Rise and kill them.’ But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.”

v. 21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself, and fall on us; for as the man, so is his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels’ necks.

“Then Zebah and Zalmunna”—recognized the fact that this was just what’s going to happen.

“Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, ‘Rise up yourself, and fall on us; for as the man, so is his strength.’ So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels’ necks.”

Now the next verse is the crowning act of Gideon.

v. 22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over

us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian."

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

Now they're free. And because of their freedom, they're so grateful. Everybody is excited! They're going to be able to put crops in the ground and reap the harvest and enjoy food on the table! The economic crisis is over. Everything's going to begin to go back to normal and they're going to be pastored and they're excited!

And so they turn to Gideon, who's responsible for leading the armies, and they say, "Gideon, rule over us! We want you for president because you have delivered us from the Midianites."

Now what's wrong with that statement? Who did it? This is the Lord's doing! And Gideon recognizes it. Isn't that beautiful humility? It's exciting to see what he says in the next verse.

v. 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."

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

"I don't want anything to do with political leadership! I don't

want that position! That belongs to the Lord! He's the one who's given us the victory!"

What excitement! It's the crowning act of glory that he performed. But there's a "YET" in verse 24.

v. 24 Yet Gideon said to them, "I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil." (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

"Yet Gideon said to them, 'I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil.' (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)"

Gideon is an awful lot like Ghazi in 2 Kings 5. Elisha, by God's grace, provided the prescription for Naaman to be healed by the Jordan waters. When Naaman comes back so appreciative to give gifts, Naaman says, "I don't want your gifts." And as Naaman leaves to go home, Ghazi is always with his greed, never looking a gift horse in the mouth, he goes chasing after him for personal advantage!

He's so appreciative of what's been done through Gideon, so he gives him a gift. When he comes back we'll see that the leprosy that left Naaman is now going to be Ghazi's. From that day on he went out as a leper.

Isn't it amazing what greed does to an individual?

Gideon has taken unfair advantage of these people. Are they appreciative of him? Why sure they are! Are they vulnerable? Why sure they are!

How many times in Christian circles does that happen? Lives get an unfair advantage if being used greatly by the Lord in a great campaign or something and then they take an offering. And people just unload their purses! Are they grateful! Why sure!

Making it only for personal material advantage of the one who's been used by the Lord.

They'd do anything to give a gold earring to Gideon at this point. We can see it in their response.

Now the Midianites and the Amalekites are descendants of the Ishmaelites. And like the Arab brothers of today, men love to wear jewelry. And there was lots of it. And so this was taken as part of the spoil in the battle.

v. 25 And they said, “We will surely give them.” So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil.

“And they said,”—look at that, it's enthusiastic, it's exciting!—
“We will surely give them.”

“Oh that's the least we can do, Gideon.”

“So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil.”

And that’s not all. They got excited about giving a gift to Gideon!

v. 26 And the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that were on their camels’ necks.

“And the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold,”—that’s 50 pounds of gold—“besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian,”— they just loaded it up—“and besides the neck bands that were on their camels’ necks.”

Just poured it in! They got excited about doing one thing for him.

Talking about this encounter with a former athlete he said, “You know, I think Gideon is just like an athlete who has begun to read his press clippings. I think he really began to believe what people were saying about him.”

Great articles of appreciation, Heisman trophy and the whole bit. They just lay it all on him! A fantastic accomplishment.

He also said, “When a guy starts believing in his press clippings, he’s no longer playing for the team but for personal advantage.”

“It’s no longer the king. It’s me now. I’m the star.”

And for Gideon he falls prey to this. He turns the political leadership but he does something in the religious realm so that everybody will remember it and appreciate it. He can almost feel like that athlete who has just won the big ballgame and then the crowd forgets him as he fades on and becomes just another person.

For that moment he was in the center of the eyes of the world, but now the lights are out. Gideon is afraid that if he doesn’t memorialize this everybody will forget him. And after all, we need to memorialize it. And what better way to do that than in a religious fashion.

v. 27 And Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

“And Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah,”

What’s an ephod? An ephod was the garment that the high priest wore and also the priest.

There were two kinds of ephods. The ephod that the high priest wore was a beautiful garment. Purple, blue, red, lots of color in it. A gorgeous, spectacular thing, reaching clear down to the ankles. On this ephod was also a place, the breastplate, that had the twelve stones that had the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on those stones. That's an ephod.

Now the regular priest wore what was called a linen ephod. It was white. It was of a much less quality, but it marked out the difference between the high priest and the regular priest in the service of the Tabernacle.

Once a year the high priest, donning this garment with the breast plate, would take the blood of the sacrificial lamb and go past the altar of incense, through the holy of holies, into the holy place—to the very Holy of holies, the ark of the covenant—and sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat. That was called the Day of Atonement.

His function was very special. What is Gideon thinking? He's thinking, "You know, I'm going to knock their eyes out. I'm going to make something you have never seen. It is going to be the best ephod! Oh it's going to be something! Nobody's ever seen an ephod like this one! It's going to outdo any other ephod you ever saw and it will be of pure gold."

Why? To memorialize the fact that Gideon, a fine religious man, was the one who led the people in battle and to victory.

What's happened? It's made for Gideon and for the Lord. We

just turn it around.

Gideon is now first and it's religious, it's for the Lord.

We're living in a day when countless thousands of churches are doing the same thing. They are building ephods to memorialize a man's ministry. Oh I know it's made out of bricks, stone, wood and stained glass windows, but it almost seems like it's got to be bigger and better than the next one. We have to have more and finer facilities. It's got to reach further. And a man's ministry is almost measured by the size of his plate and the size of his sanctuary these days, rather than the number of people who are coming to know Jesus Christ and who are growing in grace and the knowledge of Him.

It'd be really interesting to see how much money in the United States we spend on buildings and facilities and how much we spend on our foreign mission programs. Just to take it and look at it. It would startle us to realize where we're spending our funds to memorialize our lives and the ministry of someone.

It was D.L. Moody who had it so right when he said, "The only monument I want in glory is the two-legged one." All he's saying is, "If there's someone there that came to know Jesus because of my ministry and my life, that's all I really want."

And he was reflecting Paul's words in Philippians 3 when he says: "Philippians, you are our crown. You are our crown of

rejoicing, you are our glory. The fact that you're there sharing glory is all I really want." (see Philippians 4:1)

First Corinthians 1:29 says: "That no man should boast before God."

It could be that Gideon had in his mind that he was one day going to wear that golden ephod and offer a sacrifice to God. That would have been totally wrong because the only priesthood that God recognized was a descendant of Aaron. And that priest was already functioning in Shiloh.

And for Gideon to do this would be just like King Saul when Samuel delayed, he forced himself to go ahead and offer the sacrifice. And when Samuel came he said, "Saul, God is taking away your kingdom from you today because of what you've done."

And no matter how we look at this, Gideon has made a tragic mistake. Look what the response of the people is to it.

"and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household."

Paul speaks of the "snare of Satan" in 2 Timothy 2:26.

It became a snare. What happened? Gideon, in this last act, undid everything he did in his first act.

That's the tragedy of his life. In his first act he tears down the

altar of Baal and in his last act he erects an ephod for everybody to worship as another idol.

It's just made of gold and it's got religious connotations because it's a picture of a garment of a high priest made out of pure gold. And they worship it! And sure, it's in Ophrah and it memorializes Gideon and the victory over the Midianites.

Deuteronomy 17:17

Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he greatly increase in silver or gold for himself.

That's a warning from Moses to the leaders of God's people. Not to multiply wives and not to multiply gold. Gideon does both of those.

He gets the gold, he makes an ephod. Now that he is giving in to idolatry, he also begins to live in immorality.

Immorality is the direct result of an empty religious experience or relationship. And we'll see it here in conclusion.

v. 28 So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads any more. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

“So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did

not lift up their heads any more. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.”

v. 29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

“Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.”

He went back and settled down.

v. 30 Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.

“Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.”

v. 31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

“And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.”

v. 32 And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

“And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and he was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.”

Has he run well? He ran well, but he didn't end well.

Things aren't over for us either. We're still alive, pulsating with possibility to the accomplishment of God's will. And when He is finished with our assignments we'll be called home.

We just pray that we can say we're weary, yet pursue. For Gideon his life ends in idolatry and immorality. And it all started when the focus left the Lord and got on him.

And under the guise of a religious idol that he made, the people returned to the place they were when first he came across the sacred page and was called to liberate the people from the Midianites.

Now there are a number of lessons that come out of this particular study.

Lesson #1: Sometimes contention can be relieved with a compliment.

It's the mature person who can, in the face of anger and hostility, quietly speak in a complimentary fashion.

Gideon has excellent control of his faculties at that point. His contention, the contention against him, as he leads by confidence.

Lesson #2: Please be weary yet for sin, when it comes to the

final chapter of your life.

Galatians 6:9

Let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

Isaiah 40:31

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Lesson #3: We desperately need the support of one another to gain the victory.

Gideon really needed those residents of those two cities, but they turned a deaf ear to his plea. We need each other to gain the victory.

Lesson #4: Two times in our lesson Gideon expresses his faith.

He says, “When the Lord has given them into my hand, I will return.” And then he says, “When I return safely.” Even before it happened, he knows that the Lord is in this and he expresses faith ahead of time.

Lesson #5: The chastening of these two cities is the picture of God’s dealing with us as we resist what He’s trying to accomplish in our lives.

Lesson #6: In the last act of building an ephod, he undid his first act in tearing down the altar of Baal.

Lesson #7: I believe the reason for building the ephod was because Gideon got his eyes off the Lord and on himself.

He really wanted people to line up and have an appreciation dinner for him because of what he has been able to do in risking his life to liberate the people. And the focus comes around and it's the reversal. It's for Gideon and for the Lord.

Lesson #8: Gideon's immoral personal life is a revelation of his empty religious life.

Where does this study find us? First, does it find us with a relationship to Jesus Christ? Or are you without Christ?

Maybe we'll learn from his life. How has God spoken to us? What has He said? Has He warned us? As we're moving toward old age and wondering whether or not it's worth it to continue, and taken a big challenge with Paul that we're going to fight, we're going to finish, we're going to keep the faith so we can hear "well done thy good and faithful servant"? That'd really be neat.

What is it that God is saying to us personally through Gideon's life? Share it with someone else and discuss what He's saying.

Lord, we thank You that even in the times when the biblical text records failure, Lord we realize that we too are just as vulnerable. But oftentimes after a moment of great victory like this, and even an act of humility and turning the kingdom, the evil one waits through the guise of religious activity to undo everything that's been done and everything that we've lived for. Father, we realize that the people were hurt. They were ensnared in this whole thing and involved. And Lord we pray that this might sound a serious warning to us that we would recognize that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, wickedness in high places. And that only by the strength of the Spirit of God can victory in Jesus Christ be ours. Grant that such would be our desire, that we might finish well. To begin well, to run well, and to finish strong. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

What You Need to Know About GIDEON & SAMSON:

“The Dangers of Losing the Final Lap”

Study Number Four – Judges 8:1-32

NOTES

v. 1 Then the men of Ephraim said to him, “What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?” And they contended with him vigorously.

v. 2 But 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?”

v. 3 “God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

v. 4 Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, weary yet pursuing.

v. 5 And he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

v. 6 And the leaders of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?”

v. 7 And Gideon said, “All right, when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

v. 8 And he went up from there to Penuel, and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

v. 9 So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, “When I return safely, I will tear down this tower.”

v. 10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

v. 11 And Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the camp, when the camp was unsuspecting.

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v. 12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

v. 13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.

v. 14 And he captured a youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

v. 15 And he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me, saying, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?’”

v. 16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them.

v. 17 And he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

v. 18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?” And they said, “They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king.”

v. 19 And he said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.”

v. 20 So he said to Jether his first-born, “Rise, kill them.” But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

v. 21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself, and fall on us; for as the man, so is his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels’ necks.

v. 22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son’s son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.”

v. 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.”

v. 24 Yet Gideon said to them, “I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil.” (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)

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v. 25 And they said, “We will surely give them.” So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil.

v. 26 And the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that were on their camels’ necks.

v. 27 And Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

v. 28 So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads any more. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

v. 29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

v. 30 Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.

v. 31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

v. 32 And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Judges 8:1-32 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Why do the men of Ephraim get upset, according to verse 1?

3. How does Gideon handle the situation in the next verses?

4. What is Gideon's request of the men of Succoth, and what is their response?

5. What do the men of Israel ask of Gideon, according to verse 22?

6. What is Gideon's request in verses 24-26?

7. What does Gideon do with the gold that he receives?

8. Describe what happens in verse 27.

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Sometimes contention can be relieved by a compliment.

LESSON #2: Let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Isaiah 40:31

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

LESSON #3: How much we need the support of one another in the securing of the victory.

LESSON #4: Gideon expressed his faith in knowing in advance that the Lord was going to give him the victory.

LESSON #5: The chastening of Succoth and Penuel is a picture of the chastening hand of God upon us as His children.

LESSON #6: Gideon was successful in rejecting the leadership which belonged to the Lord over his people, but he was not successful in the religious realm.

LESSON #7: In this last act of building an ephod, he undid everything he did in the first act of destroying the altars of Baal and tearing down the Asherah.

LESSON #8: Gideon's immoral personal life is a revelation of his empty religious life.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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