

Judges, Sermon #28

Judges 8 – new chapter

Gideon has won a tremendous victory through God's working and deliverance.

Oh, what a victory—300 men, routed them, we won, the Midianites, 135,000 strong, are done—celebration, excitement, joy

I wish we could end the story of Gideon here.

Listen, what happens immediately after great victories? We get blindsided.

Judges 8 focuses on Gideon's responses to various people *after he had won the battle*; and it tells us how he handled some difficult situations.

I've entitled tonight's sermon "The Battle Isn't Over!"

Judges 8:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Judges 8:1-4

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

The Battle Isn't Over!

Things have been going great!
 Victory is at hand, God is working when BANG!
 Satan lowers the boom on God's man.

Win the battle, lose the war
 We need to be as watchful after the victory as we were before.

What happens after a huge triumph? Let down
 Satan is sly—he likes to attack when a great victory is won.

Just like in the old westerns—just when the good guy turns his back on the defeated
 foe, he's shot down.

First Principle: After great triumphs—prepare for adversity
 Multiple times it comes to Gideon in Judges 8.

When we make right decisions for God—expect to get slapped.
 The victory of making church a priority, reading the Bible faithfully, giving some money.

Second Principle: If Satan can't hinder God's people from without, he will endeavor to
 destroy God's work from within using God's people

Vs. 1 – men of Ephraim

★Most churches are not attacked by the government or by unbelievers, but by the
 attendees themselves.★

In the case of Gideon, Satan used the proud tribe of Ephraim to attack Gideon – vs. 1

Ephraim descended from Joseph.

They were a large and important tribe

And Ephraim was insulted because Gideon didn't call them to the battle.

For seven years, the Midianites have been coming and raiding Israel.

How do God's people dampen or even destroy the work of God?

First, they have a wrong spirit – vs. 1e

When the men of Ephraim should have been thanking Gideon for delivering the nation, they were criticizing him and adding to his burdens with immature and miniscule stuff.

How many church people, deacons, elders, pastors just walk away, saying, "I've given up" (pettiness of God's people)?

In Ephraim's wrong spirit, first we see the complaint—complaining/murmuring is a sin.

Vs. 1 – Ephraim has a bone to pick.

In this wrong spirit, we also find pride and envy.

Ephraim complains from personal jealousy and injured pride.

Selfishly they exclaim, "Why didn't you call us to fight the Midianites!"

They are not rejoicing at all in the victory.

Instead, they are bitter, jealous and feel they have been robbed of glory and the spoils of 120,000 dead Midianite soldiers. Prov. 14:30 – . . . *but envy the rottenness of the bones.*

Usually when people criticize something you've done, there's a personal reason behind their criticism; and you may never find out what the real reason was.

I've learned to say, what's really bothering you?

Let's get by the surface issues and get to the heart.

The devil loves to see feuding among God's people—practice conflict resolution.

Satan knows when we are fighting ourselves, we get side-tracked, and stop pursuing the enemy.

We have an enemy that we are fighting—Satan, his workers, his philosophies, his world—and we don't need additional wars within our own ranks.

Have you ever seen two brothers fighting?

Basically, this is what we have here.

Gideon is from Manasseh which is a brother tribe.

Joseph had two sons—Ephraim and Manasseh.

And Manasseh's man, Gideon, had brought a great victory.

Vs. 1e

They chided sharply with Gideon.

Chide means strong, bitter, cutting words.

How do you think Gideon felt? "I can't believe this stuff! We've got work to do!"

I'm sure he is hurt.

1. It is defeating—instead of a pat on the back and encouraging words
2. It is deflating—what for? Why? Go through all of this and give my best only to have people focus on things that don't matter.
3. It is disheartening

This is what we see in the Christian world today—defeat, deflated, and disheartened Christians.

It's these kinds of things that set Gideon up for failure later

Nothing will put out the fire of enthusiasm / of a spouse, employee, school teacher, pastor, or a child like cutting, attacking, untrue, angry statements.

They zap the life out of the person. They break their heart and their spirit.

I've seen this at the workplace.

I've seen this in competition where the player walks off—they played good—but Dad saw that one thing.

Daughter hands her father the report card—good grades, save one

The Ephraimites were proud and selfish.

Their selfish attitude caused them to be concerned about how everything affected them. Selfish people are not concerned about their responsibility or their treatment of others.

They did not care about Gideon.

How does Gideon respond to this garbage?

II. The Control of Gideon 8:2-3

Gideon is determined not to get sidetracked and take his eyes off the enemy he was pursuing.

He has fifteen thousand Midianites to go! (vs. 10)

Gideon was wronged but he demonstrated that the unity of God's people is more important than personal pride.

As a victorious general, a national hero, and the people's first choice for king, Gideon might have used his authority and popularity to put the tribe of Ephraim in its place, but he chose to use a different approach.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1).

Gideon demonstrated he could control his troops, his temper, and his tongue.

Proverbs 16:32, *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”*

He gives the Ephraimites the glory and praise they wanted and their anger was abated.

The same problem surfaces again.

The judge Jephthah is victorious in battle over the Ammonites.

Ephraim gripes again, “Why didn’t you call us? We are going to burn your house down!”

Jephthah did not respond the same way—in the battle with Ephraim, 42,000 are killed.

Gideon was complimentary . . . Jephthah condemns them.

Proverbs 16:18, *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Selfish jealousy and pride continued to grow in the Ephraimites till it destroyed them.

This can happen to us too.

We can be making strides in our spiritual life.

Or, we can be the ones that are dampening or even destroying the work of God in a person’s life.

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Remember the battle isn’t over.

Keep your head up—don’t let people discourage you—keep focused on God’s work.