

Judges, Sermon #29

Judges 8

The Midianites had been oppressing the Israelites for seven long years.

God called on a weak fellow by the name of Gideon.

God raised him up—God grew him a man to do His work.

Gideon's star is on the rise—his faith has been increasing to the place where Gideon and his 300 men won a decisive victory over the Midianites—135,000 strong!

We left off last time with Gideon chasing after the last 15,000 Midianites.

As they were chasing after, the men of Ephraim were upset and angry at Gideon.

They should be praising God and thanking Gideon for being free and celebrating, but they were jealous of Gideon and his tribe.

Judges 8 focuses on Gideon's responses to various people *after he had won the battle*.

It's enough to battle against the enemy—battles against our own people—we cannot win for losing.

Acts 20:29-30, *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."*

To undo, undermine

I've entitled tonight's sermon "The Battle Isn't Over! Part 2"

Judges 8:4

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

Judges 8:4-21

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

The Battle Isn't Over!

Gideon moves forward with his little army of 300 men—little is much when God is in it.

He kept up the pursuit all the way to Succoth, which was some forty miles from where the battle had first taken place.

As the tiny army crossed the Jordan River, they were exhausted, totally drained.

Work for the Lord can be very tiring—listen—those who are in choir and drama!

Gideon and his boys are “out of gas,” physically speaking, but they are pressing onward.

They are faint, yet pursuing—vs. 4—tired, but still going

Galatians 6:9, *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

I Corinthians 15:58, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*

Our life may be characterized by discouragement, distress may be all around us—we may be physically drained.

No matter what our situation, God has promised the strength we need to go on.

With the help of the Lord, we can be faint, yet pursuing.

II Peter 3:17-18, “. . . [Let us not] *fall from our own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.*”

Notice Gideon's concern for his troops in vs. 5

Gideon requested loaves of bread from the people of Succoth for his army to refresh the troops.

They needed to be strengthened. They are outnumbered 50 to 1, yet pursuing.

Gideon asked for help—minor help—nothing major

Many people help only when it's convenient or good for them to do so.

Gideon informs them he is pursuing their enemies, the kings of the Midianites.

You would think they would be thrilled to help defeat their enemies, but notice their response in verses 6-7.

They were still thinking about themselves.

The officials refused.

They were worried about suffering retribution from Midian.

They were like Christians today who are afraid to take a stand for Christ, afraid to lose their job, friends, lose their position in their church.

Instead of encouraging Gideon over his victories, they discourage and discredit him.

I found when people do not support the work of God, they do not have much good to say about the workers of God either.

Gideon asked for bread and they wanted to know if they had the kings already.

They are like the politician who wets his finger and puts it up to see the direction the wind is blowing.

Gideon told them he'd be back—give them a whippin'.

Shockingly, the same rejection was experienced at Peniel.

Again, Gideon issued a warning.

The citizens of Peniel were just as the citizens of Succoth.

They did not believe that God would give victory to Gideon and his small army.

Let me remind you that hospitality is one of the basic laws of the East, and custom demands that the people meet the needs of strangers and especially relatives.

When the people of Succoth and Penuel withheld their support from Gideon, they demonstrated they were against God's work.

I want to remind us of what Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 – “*He that is not with Me is against Me.*”

There is no neutrality or gray areas in God's work.
Neutrality is impossible.

The refusal to give bread actually aided the enemy.

Leadership decisions have consequences.

It robbed the soldiers of strength that they needed to overcome their enemies.
They played the role of traitor.

Many Christians fill this role—instead of being on board, working for the cause of Christ, invested in the Kingdom work—inactive, **devested**—selfish and tearing down the work and the people who are doing the work.

Succoth and Penuel failed to realize that giving bread to Gideon's men would assure them of future bread.

So what does Gideon do? Does he give up? No, he continues to go forward.

Listen, believers, there are times when no one helps you in the fight—they may even harm you.

So, what should you do? Pursue! Press on! Press toward the mark!

Gideon condemns their treacherous actions and said, “I will return!” He would destroy the landmark of their city, the fortified tower that stood as a monument to the city’s strength and importance (vs. 9).

Gideon was a man who endured and persevered. The two Midianite kings and their army of 15,000 had fled as far as Karkor, which was far enough from the Jordan River that they felt safe and secure.

Gideon arrived and began the final assault.

The two kings somehow escaped, but again Gideon persevered and continued the pursuit.

Eventually, he captured and routed the entire army (vs. 12).

Once he had captured the two enemy kings, Gideon retraced his steps and returned to Succoth.

He captured a young man and questioned him, securing the names of the 77 city officials.

Gideon paraded the two enemy kings before the citizens of Succoth.

Then using thorns and briars, he executed justice by having the city officials either lashed or drug over the thorns and briars (vs.16).

Most likely, they were executed after the lashing; although, this is not known for sure.

Gideon **taught** the men of Succoth—vs. 16e

The word “taught” means “*to cause to know.*”

Vs. 17

Starting in verse 18, Gideon interrogated the two Midianite kings about some horrendous, murderous acts they had committed at Tabor.

Gideon had a personal matter to settle with these two kings.

And they actually confessed to killing Gideon's brothers.

The Bible doesn't tell us when this wicked act took place, but it must have occurred during one of the annual Midianite raids.

Gideon pronounced the verdict: death.

And he offered his oldest son the honor of executing the kings, but the son refused because he was only a child and was afraid.

At this point, the two kings requested that Gideon carry out the execution himself.

Why would Gideon ask his son to do this?

It would be considered a great honor for his son and it would be utter humiliation and shame for these kings to die at the hands of a child.

In those days, how a soldier died was important to his reputation.

Remember, Abimelech didn't want to die at the hand of a woman.

She dropped a rock from the city wall—he didn't want people to say, a woman killed him.

For a child to kill a king would be the ultimate in humiliation thus Gideon told his young son Jether to execute the two criminals.

By doing so, Jether would not only uphold the law of the land and humiliate the two kings, but he would also bring honor to himself.

For the rest of his life, he would be known as the boy who executed Zebah and Zalmunna.

Jether couldn't do it, so his dad finished them off.

Then Gideon claimed the trophies of victory, taking the ornaments off the camels that had belonged to the kings (vs. 21).

Gideon mopped up the rest of the Midianites along with some of his own people who failed to help.

The battle is not over just because you win a great war.

Well, Gideon is on his way home. Don't miss next week and the next chapter of Gideon's life.

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Are you tired, weary, ready to quit?

Press on!

Instead of being helped or encouraged, you are finding discouragement and no help.

Press on!