

Judges, Sermon #30

Judges 8

The oppression of the Midianites is gone, and the physical battle is over, and Gideon and his men are coming home—total victors.

Gideon is at a zenith moment in his life.

The children of Israel are free again.

We pick up the story in Judges 8:22

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

Judges 8:22-35

Let us pray

You may be seated.

I've entitled tonight's message "The Decline of Gideon"

This story focuses on two requests, one from the people to Gideon and the other from Gideon to the people.

Now, the people request a king (vs. 22).

So popular was Gideon that the people asked him to set up a dynasty, something altogether new for the nation of Israel.

This was one way they could reward Gideon for what he had done for them in defeating the Midianites.

Gideon was a true hero in the eyes of the people, very popular.

This is the first indication given to us in Scripture that the children of Israel wanted a king to rule over them.

Because Gideon had delivered them from bondage, they wanted him to accept the position of king.

Gideon was the first one to have been offered this high position—the privilege, the honor—and he turned it down.

In great humility, Gideon rejected their offer.

And note what he had to say to the people – vs. 23

Later on, we will discover that Israel asks for a king again.

In fact, they insist upon having a king, and finally they demand one – I Samuel 8:4-7.

It was God who had used Gideon so remarkably.

It was God who had given him the victory.

What Gideon said was commendable, but what he did later was very puzzling.

After rejecting the throne, *he lived like a king!*

First of all, Gideon requests gold – vs. 24

Gideon demonstrated greed.

The soldiers ended up giving him a large sum of gold.

Instead of using the occasion for God's glory, he used it for his own profit.

Gideon became quite wealthy, partly from the spoils of battle and partly from the gifts of the people.

Gideon started out as a servant, but now he was an important celebrity and the result was decline for him, his family, and his nation.

★At this point, the man of faith led the people into idolatry; for Gideon made an ephod, and the people "played the harlot" with it (vs, 27).

Gideon seems to have assumed priestly duties

In Scripture, idolatry is looked upon as prostitution—we see the strong language used here in vs. 27.

Gideon led the people into false worship.

The man of faith led the people into idolatry. How?

He made an ephod, an apron-like garment to be placed only upon the chest of the High Priest and worn only by him.

It was made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and gold thread that had been made from thin gold sheets cut into thread-like wires.

Stones were attached to the ephod that had Israel's twelve tribes engraved on them.

This symbolized that the priest represented and carried the names of God's people in prayer before the Lord.

Gideon made an ephod.

The people worshipped the ephod.

The young man who had courageously taken a stand against the false worship of his father had now fallen into the same temptation.

Gideon missed a great opportunity to bring reformation and perhaps revival to the land.

As Gideon aged—from this point on until his death—he slipped more and more into a permissive, wicked lifestyle.

He compromised more and more, until by the time of his death, he became an utter disgrace to the holiness demanded by God.

This is clearly seen in the disobedient, immoral life he lived.

He actually practiced polygamy (vs. 30), marrying many women, and bearing many children, including seventy sons.

God's pattern is found in Adam and Eve. One man for one woman till death do us part.

Gideon took these many wives and had all these children—fulfilling his lustful desires for women.

God had forbidden them to have more than one wife.

The record makes it clear that his actions brought tragedy to the nation of Israel.

God does not hide anything. God paints the picture of man as it is.

He paints mankind in all of his lurid, sinful colors.

This is the same old story, is it not? The hoop of history continues to roll.

One day we are up, and the next day we are down.

God never intended our spiritual lives to be that way.

Gideon failed to live a life of holiness, a life separated and set apart to God (vs. 31).

A concubine was like a second-class wife who was purchased like cattle or was captured in battle.

She was inferior in social status.

His concubine who lived in Shechem bore a son named Abimelech.

Abraham, in the Book of Genesis, made the same mistake with a concubine named Hagar.

We see the compromising, immoral, unholy life that Gideon is living.

He disobeyed the commandments of God and suffered the consequences, that of spiritual decline.

Right after his death, the Israelites soon began to live lives of rebellion against God. No sooner had Gideon died than his legacy took hold.

And the people prostituted themselves to false gods and false worship.

Once again, they began to worship the false god Baal, particularly Baal-Berith (vs. 33-34).

This term “Baal-Berith” means Baal of the covenant.

Apparently, the people actually made a covenant with Baal, the false god who in the minds of the people “watches over agreements.”

They forgot God – vs. 34

But this was not all the people forgot.

They forgot all the good that Gideon had done for them (vs. 35).

And they failed to show respect and kindness to Gideon’s family

Gideon is an example of an inconsistent life—unstable life.

Many people live inconsistent lives and it causes all kinds of problems, problems both for the inconsistent person and for those who observe his inconsistency.

And, Gideon's legacy only gets worse in the next chapter.

The decline of Gideon

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Gideon takes a nosedive!

Do we find ourselves tonight—

Moving the ancient landmarks in our lives?

Moving away from the former convictions we held.

Are we inconsistent and unstable, up and down? More down than up?

Are we saying the right things and living the wrong things?

Let us learn from Gideon's life that this is not the path to follow.

Let us finish strong/well—like the Apostle Paul.