



September 16, 2007
Tim Strickland

Sermon Notes

Journey Through Judges #10
Decline of a Leader
Judges 8:1-35

Judges 8:22-28 (ESV) Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian." [23] Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you." [24] And Gideon said to them, "Let me make a request of you: every one of you give me the earrings from his spoil." (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) [25] And they answered, "We will willingly give them." And they spread a cloak, and every man threw in it the earrings of his spoil. [26] And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars that were around the necks of their camels. [27] And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family. [28] So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel, and they raised their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon.

Introduction

Gideon: The Rest of the Story

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1. Ephraim: What About Me? (1-3)

A Soft Answer Turns Away Wrath - Proverbs 15:1

- a. Ephraim: A "What About Me?!" attitude
 - Gideon uses great wisdom by responding humbly and gently, thus defusing a dangerous situation
 - In Judges 12:1-6, a similar situation occurs and there is civil war when Jephthah is not so gentle in his response

2. The Consuming Drive for Revenge (4-21)

Gideon's Relentless Pursuit of the Midianites

- a. Gideon's requests for help from Succoth & Penuel are denied (4-9)
 - Succoth and Penuel were cities east of the Jordan River in the inheritance of the Israelite tribe of Gad
 - These cities appear to be afraid that if they help Gideon, Midian may punish them
 - Gideon threatens them for their failure to help
- b. Gideon captures the Midianite kings (10-12)
 - He surprises them at Karkor, which was likely 100 miles east of the Dead Sea—far from home! (D. Block, Judges)
 - He wins despite 50:1 odds (15,000 vs. 300)
- c. Gideon teaches the men of Succoth and Penuel a lesson (13-17)
 - Severe punishment – appears to be excessive & vengeful
 - Ignores God's repeated graciousness and patience with him
 - Reminds us of Jesus' teaching on forgiveness
 - Matthew 21:21-35, esp vv22-23
- d. Gideon puts the Midianite kings to death (18-21)
 - We now learn the reason for his relentless pursuit
 - Blood vengeance – vv18-19 – They had killed his brothers (likely in an unrecorded previous event)
 - Deuteronomy 32:35-41, Romans 12:19, Heb 10:30
 - Gideon asks his son Jether to kill them, but he is afraid so Gideon kills them himself

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3. The Abuse of Power (22-34)

Gideon says "No" to Being Named a King, "Yes" to Acting Like a King

a. Israel does not give the Lord credit for saving them (as the Lord had predicted in Judges 7:2) and ask Gideon to rule over them (22)

- "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also

b. Gideon gives a "textbook-correct", theological answer (23)

- "The Lord will rule over you" (1 Sam. 8:7, 10:19, 12:12ff)

c. Gideon acts like a pagan king in many ways. See Deut. 17:14-20

1. He is chosen by the people, not the Lord (22)
2. He executes absolute, vengeful judgment (13-17, 18-21)
3. He takes the Midianite king's symbols of royalty (21, 26)
4. He requests a large share of the spoil (24-26) – Deut. 17:17
5. He uses the gold (about 42.5 lbs/19.3 kg) to make an 'ephod' and place it in his home city, Ophrah – it becomes "a snare to Gideon and to his family". (27)

- An ephod was a piece of clothing that God commanded be made for Israel's priests to wear – Exodus 28:1-35, 39:1-26

- A breastpiece connected to the ephod contained "Urim and Thummim", which was used to find the Lord's will – Ex 28:30, Num 27:21, Ezra 2:63

- An ephod also referred to a device used to determine the Lord's will in a matter (perhaps the same priest's clothing, perhaps a container holding the objects of divine judgment)

- David consults the Lord - 1 Sam. 23:9-12, 30:7-8

- Making his hometown a worship center would give him significant political power

- His desire for power/signs leads Israel back into idolatry

6. He has many wives and a concubine (likely Canaanite) (30-31)

- names his concubine's son Abimelech = 'the king is my father' - see Judges 9 for Abimelech's wicked reign

- His sons appear ready to rule over Israel – Judges 9:2

4. The Aftermath (28-34)

a. Israel returns to Baal worship as soon as Gideon dies (33-34)

b. Israel does not repay Gideon with kindness for good he did (35)

c. Despite Gideon's failures...

- The Lord gives 40 years of peace during Gideon's life (28)
- Gideon is remembered for his faith – Hebrews 11:32

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Our Response

1. When you experience victory in the Lord, watch out for temptation that often comes quickly thereafter!

Matthew 26:41 (ESV) *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

2. Be a promoter of justice, not revenge.

Romans 12:19 (ESV) *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*

3. Seek the Lord's wisdom in whatever areas of leadership you are given and do not use your power/authority selfishly.

Mark 10:43-44 (ESV) *But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.*

Questions for Application

1. Have you ever known someone with a "What About Me?!" attitude? Have you ever had that attitude? How can you avoid such an attitude?
2. Have you ever experienced great temptation after a time of spiritual victory?
3. Why is it tempting to take revenge? Why does revenge not satisfy us like we think it will?
4. Have you ever seen a godly person fail when they abused the power they were given? How can you avoid a similar failure?
5. Pray for strength and wisdom to use whatever leadership you are given (be it at home, work, church or community) for His honour and glory.

Questions, Comments? - inthebeginning@look.ca

If you have questions or comments about today's message, please drop me an email to the address above. Thanks,

Tim



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