

Judges 8:1-17—Good Leadership Needed to Advance Christ’s Kingdom

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: If you have ever seen children play “house,” you would have seen how they assign roles to each other. One will be the mother, one the father, one the child, and one the baby. Each one plays his role. There is peace. And this makes it easy for the parents. When those same children are older, things change. **They all want to do the easy chores around the house** and they whine 发牢骚 and complain when they don’t get the easy chores they want. Then they want payment for the little they do. Parenting becomes much harder, even a struggle, at that time. That’s when good parents shine.

Being a good leader is critical for the survival and thriving of Christ’s kingdom, not just in the family. So you will hear about Gideon’s good leadership - leadership that helped to advance Christ’s kingdom.

Our headings are:

Gideon pacifies the people’s Anger

Gideon rebukes the people’s Selfishness

Gideon conquers the people’s Enemies

Our goals are: That **you will see the benefit of good leadership to advance Christ’s cause and that you will work hard, in your capacity, for the peace, progress, and prosperity of Christ’s church.**

Gideon Pacifies the People’s Anger

1 Now the men of Ephraim said to him, "**Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?**" And they **reprimanded训斥him sharply.** 2 So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the **gleaning拾遗of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage葡萄收获期of Abiezer?** 3 "**God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb.** And what was I able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided消退 when he said that.

1. The men of Ephraim, relatives of Manasseh, were angry that they were pushed aside from the initial chase when the Midianites were fleeing from the trumpets, pitchers, and torches. They strongly rebuked 斥责Gideon, using very harsh words, for bringing them in late.

These men did not take time to rejoice in the victory God had brought to all Israel.

These men did not praise Gideon for his leadership through this trying time.

Instead, they attacked Gideon unfairly, as if Gideon was the one who tried to stop them. Maybe there was some sibling rivalry here: Ephraim (the Joseph’s younger son) was jealous of the glory going to Manasseh (Joseph’s older son), the tribe from which Gideon came.

2. Gideon might have wanted to challenge their bad behavior, their personal false accusations and their unthankfulness, but he realized that it was more important to address their present

concerns - their immediate question. He realized the Ephraimites valued service and they felt snubbed. 冷落 Gideon had to be wise and patient.

3. Gideon quickly removed the sting of their hurt 伤害的刺痛. He knew that he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty.

Proverbs 18:19 **A brother offended is harder to win** than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Proverbs 15:1 **A soft answer turns away wrath** 愤怒, But a harsh 苛刻 word stirs up anger.

Surely dealing with the false accusation and their un-thankfulness would have easier later if he dealt with this one now. He had to avert a civil war.

4. How did Gideon quiet the tensions 紧张, **removed the sting of their hurt, and keep the peace in Israel?**

a. He pointed out that there was no real distinction between the different work each one played for the good of the country. Those who were fighting and those who were supporting both helped. Both were vital. Some were legs, some were hands. Don't even toe nails have their part in the success of a body?

b. Furthermore, **the men of Ephraim were, even in their small effort, more blessed** than Gideon, who was from the Abiezerites. Gideon told them that Ephraimites were better than he and his 300. He said that the leftover grapes from Ephraim were better than the best grapes from his tribe, Manasseh. It appears that **God worked through Ephraim to conquer and kill Oreb and Zeeb, while Gideon only captured regular soldiers.** This pacified the Ephraimites.

5. Lessons:

a. While you may have a strong desire to prove you are right above anything else, there are times when you must wait to do so. A good leader thinks of the good of his neighbor and the glory of God first.

b. Those who get distracted by lesser sins often miss dealing with more serious issues. Take some time this week to think about this. See how your wife's small sin can hurt your ability to lead in devotions, which is a larger sin.

c. Learn not to be easily offended when you don't get a prominent 突出 **mention or a prominent part.** Learn to play whatever part in the kingdom, whatever part God gives you. Together we will build God's kingdom.

Gideon Rebukes the People's Selfishness

4 When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who were with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit.

1. As Gideon came with his 300 men across the Jordan, they were exhausted from the conquering.

But they pressed on because the work was not yet completed. How good this was! What defined purpose! What love of God and man!

Learn not to ever get too tired in well doing. Joy comes in the morning. Tired of teaching and disciplining your children? Don't stop. Tired of witnesses to a person without any success? Keep going! Help bring in Christ's kingdom.

5 Then he said to the men of Succoth, "**Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me,** for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian."

2. So he asked his brothers for food for his men to strengthen his soldiers so they could destroy the kings of Midian, the thuggish凶残 people who were nightmarish噩梦 to Israel. He had destroyed 120000 terrorists, but 15000 had escaped. He did not want to just drive them out of the country, he wanted to drive them out of the world so they could never terrorize Israel again. **As a good leader he was encouraging the participation of others in the war so that they might share in the honor and prize.** It was as if he wanted to make sure that the same thing that happened to Ephraimites would not happen to the men of Succoth.

3. Isn't this how Christians are supposed to act to build the kingdom? Don't you all have different duties? Every good army is like this. Some work in the background. Spurgeon spoke of people in the back room, who were never in the sanctuary, praying for him and for the people listening. Some people have money to help support the ministry more than others. Some have the gift of encouragement. Some are teachers. **Yet, things are not always smoothly working together.** Even as Gideon faced the doubts of his people, and therefore their mocking, you may not always have the confidence of people around you. But you must continue to faithfully fulfill what is right. Remember, you are not working for the praise of men; you are working for the glory of God.

6 And the **leaders of Succoth said,** "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give **bread to your army?**"

4. But the men of Succoth plainly refused. They were a large city with 70 leaders, so they surely had resources to spare. **They should have given him the keys of the city! But they hedged their bets.** They argued that they did not see real hope of victory and therefore they would not invest their resources. They were walking by sight and by doubt, but not faith. **They were rich in food, but they were destitute贫困 of faith and love.** Love makes men bold, not cowards. The Word of God had not sunk into their hearts. **Succoth was the first place that Israel had stayed when they entered the Promised Land east side of the Jordan River.** (Succoth means "tents.") They saw God's promises fulfilled but not they ignored him. They mocked Gideon saying they didn't have bread for his "hosts" or "army."

It is essential for you and your family to get regularly into the Word of God and remember God's promises. This is the only way that your faith will get stronger. Faith makes you bold. Boldness makes you act.

7 So Gideon said, "For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers荆棘!"

5. Gideon then pronounced a curse on those who refused to assist Israel. This curse was instigated策动by God. Gideon said he would severely punish them for their lack of a living faith. **Being beaten with thorns and briers was quite visual.** This is a reminder to every Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Communist, totalitarian, or anti-Christian government who does not protect and help God's people. God will not let him escape. **It is equally true that even those in the church who hinder the progress of the church – through their action or through their lack of faith-will be called nothing on judgment day.**

8 Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. 9 So he also spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower 拆掉这座塔!"

6. Gideon got the same rejection from the men of Penuel. What a shame! Their name reminded them of the God they served, and yet they forgot the God who blessed them. Penuel means "facing God." This was where Jacob changed from wrestling with God to clinging to God and asking him for a blessing.

Genesis 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

But they did not cling to God any longer. And they did not want to play their part in God's kingdom. They placed their lives in the hands of foreign kings. So **Gideon confidently declared judgment of them. He was doing God's work at God's direction!**

7. Learn not to hold too tightly to the things you possess. Share with others, especially of the household of God. Never let a child of God want for love. Never let it be said that a lack of generosity stopped the spreading of the Gospel and the conquering of the world. Ultimately, it is one kingdom you are building!

Gideon Conquers the People's Enemies

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were at Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for **one hundred and twenty thousand a men who drew the sword had fallen.** 11 Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked **the army while the camp felt secure.**

1. While the Midianite kings were settled with their large armies and feeling comfortable, Gideon came and attacked. **The large army did not scare him.** He came to the enemy in a roundabout 迂回 way and destroyed them. He was fighting with the Lord so he knew he could take on the world.

Isn't that always true that those who feel confident in their sin are quickly destroyed, and are on slippery ground?

Isn't true that Christians should learn and practice strategies to spread the Gospel?

12 When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and **he took the two kings of Midian,** Zebah and Zalmunna, and **routed the whole army.**

2. Assisted by God, Gideon and his 300 men routed the large Midianite army. Others may have assisted them as well.

13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of Heres. 14 And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated 询问 him; and **he wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.** 15 Then he came to the men of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, 'Are the **hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand,** that we should give bread to your weary men?'" 16

And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them **he taught the men of Succoth**. 17 Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

3. Gideon then punished the cities that did not help him with food so he could go after the Midianites.

a. The leaders of Succoth were investigated, identified, and punished. You see the irony here. The men of Succoth wanted to be sure that Gideon had the kings of Midian in his hand before they helped him. So he took the heads of the kings of Midian and showed them to the men of Succoth. **Gideon's discipline was considered "teaching."** It was a euphemism 婉辞, just like a parent might say to a child, "I'm going to teach you a lesson."

b. Then Gideon went after the men of Penuel. He tore down their tower and killed their men.

4. Gideon's justice was civil, therefore physical. It is similar in the home. But the church, while we do not have the right to physically discipline, must rebuke those who refuse to play their part in the kingdom work of conquering the nations, choosing rather to have friendships with the world. Exposing the sin of the lazy is a necessity.

Conclusion:

As a wise leader, Gideon averted civil trouble by pacifying the angry Ephramites. As a wise leader, Gideon rebuked those who weren't willing to work together to advance Christ's cause. As a wise leader, Gideon used good strategy, encircling the enemy of God's people and destroying them.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Are you a wise ruler? A wise ruler is one who knows his sin and has received grace through Jesus Christ... and is resting daily on him. He then learns from God's Words what a true leader should be. He doesn't assume he knows everything. More, he is patient and kind, but firm enough to guard the honor of Christ. This is how you must shine. The kingdom needs you.

3. Are you looking for a wise ruler? Are you looking for a husband? Look for wise man who will lead you well. Are you looking for a good church? Make sure it has wise rulers – rulers who are apt to teach and ready to discipline. The work you have been called to do is too great to leave it to one who is a poor leader.

Finally, God's enemies can never escape. If you are his enemy, make peace with him now. He is giving you opportunity to gain peace by letting you plead Christ's life and death as yours. If you do, eternal life will be yours. If you die as an enemy, your days will be spent in the terrors of hell forever.