

## **Judges 8:18-35 –Leadership: Rewards and Dangers**

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ: **It is tough being a leader anywhere.** There are many responsibilities that don't stop at 5:00PM. Your mind has to keep working about fixing a problem or what you might have to do tomorrow. **Being a spiritual leader** is tougher. The spiritual leader's **duty does not end at 5:00 PM.** He always **has to be available for members** and he has to **think about solutions to problems and give helpful advice.** He must deal with heart issues. It is a stressful job and many elders and ministers develop health issues. Added to that, he **has to be spiritually prepared.** If he is not up to the job, the consequences can be severe. So God wants you to learn from a leader of his people, Gideon. He wants you to learn from his good and his ugly. And even as you learn from Gideon, let your mind reflect on the one who perfectly led his people, protected them, willingly died for them, and continues to keep them safe today.

Our headings are:

**Gideon Preserved Justice (公义)**

**Gideon Prevented Idolatry (偶像崇拜)**

**Gideon Permitted Corruption**

Our goals are: **That you see the necessity of good leadership in promoting and preserving the kingdom of Jesus Christ, that you let Christ strengthen you for the task, and that you will learn to guard against pitfalls (陷阱).**

### **Gideon Preserved Justice**

18 And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?" So they answered, "As you are, so were they; each one resembled the son of a king." 19 Then he said, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you."

**1. Gideon captured the 2 foreign leaders of their enemies, Zebah and Zalmunna, questioned them, and found out that they had killed all his brothers.**

**2. He then called for their execution because they were guilty of "war crimes."** Zebah and Zalmunna did not kill Gideon's brother in the heat of battle. They executed them after their capture instead of holding them as prisoners of war. As the magistrate (治安官, 法官) of Israel, he had the right and responsibility to execute murderers.

20 And he said to Jether his firstborn, "Rise, kill them!" But the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he was still a youth.

**3. Gideon then called his own firstborn son to execute the 2 kings.** But because Jether was young, he did not want to be an executioner (行刑者). It was hard. So he declined the honor of executing his uncle's murderers. (Normally family members of the victim led in the execution.)

21 So Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man is, so is his strength." So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments (月牙圈) that were on their camels' necks.

**4. Then being challenged by the 2 kings, Gideon personally executed them.** Then he took their ornaments that were on their camels' necks. This was a good example for the young man. He had to learn the price of freedom. Justice had to be carried out.

#### **5. Lessons:**

**a. The world today is terrified by public executions (公开处决).** Many countries have abandoned executions. But God commanded execution from the beginning for the unjust taking of human life. Our feminized leaders in society are a disgrace. We act like the world should be all marshmallows and daffodils. **But because of sin, it isn't. We need justice.**

Gen 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man. Other countries have abandoned execution of criminals because of past misuse and execution of the innocent. What they should have done was to fix the system of justice, not "throw out the baby with the bath water." Don't ignore attacks on God's image!

**b. Sometimes you have to make tough decisions as leaders for the blessing of the kingdom.** Sometimes you will have to cut off a child's inheritance, or put a child out from the home. Some have to be excommunicated(被逐出教会). If you don't properly carry out discipline, how will the wicked learn, will they not shame the Lord? How will others be warned to do better?

**c. Discipline must be speedy or it loses its effectiveness.** It takes about 17 ½ years in the US after a conviction (定罪) for an execution. Most people forget the horror of the crime and become sympathetic to the criminal. The same thing is true in the family. If a child is not disciplined promptly, he won't remember why he is being disciplined. The infraction (违规) could seem less egregious (极坏的,恶劣的).

### **Gideon Prevented Idolatry**

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian." 23 But Gideon said to them, "I

will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

**1. The men of Israel then clamoured**(大声地要求,喧嘩) **for Gideon to become their king.** They sweetened the deal by promising that Gideon's children and grandchild would continue his dynasty(王朝). Not only that, even praised Gideon for their deliverance ... as if it were Gideon's strength that caused the destruction of Midian.

**2. Gideon refused the offer.** He made it clear God ruled them, insinuating(暗示) that it was God who delivered them from the Midianites. Also, Israel had no right to ask for a king just to be like the other nations. God had made provisions for their rule. Gideon did not let personal ambition(野心) get in the way of usurping(篡夺) authority. Even the thought of having a dynasty he set aside!  
1 Samuel 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; **for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me,** that I should not reign over them.

24 Then Gideon said to them, "I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings(耳环) from his plunder." For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.

25 So they answered, "We will gladly give them." And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. 26 Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments(月环), pendants(耳坠), and purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were around their camels' necks.

**3. Instead, Gideon asked for a reasonable payment.** He had been a mighty warrior. He risked his life to save Israel. He took the responsibility of 300 men. He saved their economy. So he asked for the gold earrings that the Ishmaelites wore. The Ishmaelites wore many earrings, up to 15 per ear. The people agreed and gave Gideon about 50lbs of gold.

#### **4. Lessons:**

**a. This is the same type of idolatry in churches today.** Leaders are idolized. Jesus is ignored. Listen to Zechariah. Jesus is our king and deliverer and all attention must be drawn to him.

Luke 1:74 To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,

**b. You must be willing to serve wherever the Lord calls you,** but he must call you to that work. **Don't take on what doesn't belong to you** – especially authority. Punishment is severer on a leader who fails.

**c. God's workmen are worthy of their due, even double honor!**

### **Gideon Permitted Corruption**

27 Then Gideon **made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah.** And all Israel **played the harlot** with it there. It **became a snare to Gideon** and to his house.(基甸以此制造了一个以弗得,设立在本城俄弗拉,后来以色列人拜那以弗得行了邪淫.这就作了基甸和他全家的网罗.) 28 Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon.

**1. While Gideon prevented idolatry – by telling the people to look to Jehovah as their God and not to him, yet he opened the door for idolatry.** Gideon made a golden ephod – an article of clothing which only the High Priest (who lived in Shiloh) wore when he was making petition(祈求)for the people. Some think Gideon opened this door because his cup of success intoxicated(麻醉) his soul. **But it seems more likely that Gideon did not mean for people to worship the ephod.** He simply made an ephod of gold, probably as a memorial for the people to remember the great victory. **So even though Gideon's intention was good, the act was bad, wrong, and sinful.** God wanted no innovations in worship. But this is what happens when you try to use your own ideas to worship God. This is why the severest judgment was put on those who polluted or altered his worship.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And **lean not on your own understanding;** **Gideon's idolatry then became a trap for his family.** And men quickly forgot what he did. **Israel then literally prostituted(行淫) themselves to the golden ephod.** They worshipped the gold rather than the God who gave them the gold. This was spiritual adultery.

#### **2. Lessons:**

**a. What do you do with all the wealth God has given to you?** All your possessions, because they belong to God, must only be used according to his directions.

**b. Do you see how one man can easily lead many astray?** Do you see how this can happen to your children who put education too high on their accomplishments... as well-meaning as you might be? Think of women in leadership. It seems like a small thing and a desire to be inclusive, but it unravels(揭示,解开) what happens in the family. Women now have headship over their husbands. Children lose the concept of biblical headship. Consider how some, in a well-meaning way, want to tolerate homosexual marriages(同性婚姻). But it is not about "their rights." It is about the glory of God. A man and a woman are to get married, have children, and rule over the world, but homosexual marriages turn that upside down. Consider how innovations in worship have reduced worship to entertainment!

**c. Take warning against imitation Christianity.** Many like the idea of being Christians without the direction

submission (顺服) to our Covenant Keeper, Jesus Christ – just like Israel did under Gideon. This is why most people still like to have marriage ceremonies in churches. Sadly, churches collaborate in this sin and perform marriages to give people a sense of religion without the sense of sin.

**d. Israel needed a new Shepherd.** Ezekiel 34. John 10. Gideon was good, but not good enough. Israel needed a better Savior – one who would teach the truth and change their hearts so his people might believe the truth.

29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and **dwelt in his own house**. 30 Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, **for he had many wives**. 31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, **whose name he called Abimelech**.

**3. While Gideon's faith remained, and he showed it by his humility in dwelling in his own house, not a palace, he showed obvious spiritual weaknesses.**

- a. His family then became corrupt.
- b. He sinfully multiplied wives.
- c. He named his son "Abimelech," which means "My father is king."

32 Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

**4. Then Gideon died. The spiritual beauty and accomplishments of his life was diminished by his weakness.**

33 So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again **played the harlot** with the Baals, and **made Baal-Berith their god**. 34 Thus the **children of Israel did not remember** the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; 35 nor **did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal** (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.

**5. Israel fell deeper into idolatry. Gideon's carelessness laid the groundwork for this deep idolatry.** They then worshipped Baal Berith. This literally meant "god of the Covenant." But it was just **an imitation Covenant God**. And they did this, probably in a literal sense, **prostituting themselves** before Baal. **They forgot the true God and what he had done for them**...giving credit to other gods for their deliverance from their enemies around them. Further still, they **forgot Gideon** and did not care for his children.

## **6. Lessons:**

- a. Isn't it wretched(可怜的,恶劣的) when people get **wealthy they forget God** and then their families suffer?
- b. **What kind of legacy(遗产) are you leaving for your children?** Do you teach your children that it is good to serve God during hard times, but when things are going well and wealth and ease are around, it is okay to bypass him? Do they see you embracing the Savior, or the stuff that he gives?

## **Conclusion:**

**Gideon preserved justice by executing murderers** with quickness and with clear testimony. **Gideon prevented his people from making an idol of him** and ignoring God. He was a boon (恩赐) to Israel. But later, **Gideon's making an ephod and setting it up, even with his best intentions, caused the people to ignore God** and worship the golden ephod. Then they went into full-scale idolatry.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

**1. Jesus died on the cross for your sins.** He perfectly taught you truth. He set a perfect example. He permanently protects you. He is the true leader. You must now serve your Savior.

**2. One of the biggest areas of need in serving him is having good leadership.** Good leadership is often missing in your homes, churches, and nation. This means you have to learn to lead. This is not natural. You are not natural born leaders. You would rather promote yourselves. There are no shortcuts to gaining this skill. Take the time to learn. Pray for and support your leaders.

**2. In leading, promote Christ by your word and works.** This will reflect and promote Jesus.

**4. If you don't lead well,** your children will prostitute themselves to the things of this world – things that aren't worth idolizing – rather than prostrate themselves to the Savior! **And remember, leadership is not a state of mind. It is an act.**

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you are trapped in idol worship(偶像崇拜) of one kind or another. Your idolatry will lead you to the doors of hell. To be saved from hell you have to become a child of God. To become a child of God, you have to trust in Jesus Christ – who lived and died for sinners.