

Gideon Judges 7-8

In both Gideon's triumph and tragedy, we discover how faith, or lack thereof, shapes our legacy.

Gideon - Leave a Legacy of Faith

Your legacy is not complete till your life is complete

- Countless times I've seen a great leader wash up at the tail end of the race
- You get 99 yards down the field of life and then fumble... and you've got nothing
- Your salvation can't be lost by late-in-life sin... but your impact on the world for Jesus can

That's what we will see in Gideon's life this morning

- **We'll see him start incredibly well through faith**
- **But then fail in the end through compromise**

We find Gideon's story in the book of Judges

- Sad book – whole book going round & round a cycle of sin and judgment
- **When we meet Gideon, Israel is at the low point of one of these cycles**
 - o **READ 6:1**
- God gave Israel over to the Midianites for 7 years
 - o huge army on camels - the tanks of the ancient Middle East!
 - o Israelites so afraid they hid in caves!
- In the midst of that oppression, the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance
- And so, God called Gideon to be their deliverer

What do we know about Gideon?

- **He was a believer** – you will see Gideon in heaven... assuming you also believe
 - o The Christian life always begins with belief
 - o For Gideon – belief in the One True God
 - o For us living after the cross, it's belief in the good news about Jesus
 - o If you believe, then you have eternal life & will see Gideon in heaven
- **Faith is the starting point of the Christian life for all of us**
- **But now that we're saved, we're not done with faith!**
 - o God wants our faith in Him to grow
 - o That's what the Christian life is all about: growing to trust Him more each day
 - o The more you trust God, the more good God can accomplish thru you
- **That's the challenge Gideon faced – would he choose to trust God more and more?**

Let's see how Gideon does in the 2 major tests of faith God gave him

TEST #1: Defeat an Undefeatable Enemy

- God called him to defeat the Midianites - that test occupies most of his story

It begins with an impossible task - READ 7:1-9

- Does what we'd expect - raises an army
 - o v3 - add those numbers = **33,000 soldiers** - not too shabby!
 - o ...until you compare it to the Midianites!

- **READ 7:12** - huge and well equipped army
 - How big? ch 8 - 135,000 “men who drew the sword”
 - Gideon outnumbered **4:1**
- **Hard to win a war with those odds... but not hard enough in God’s opinion!**
 - Gideon could possibly still win in his own strength with 4:1 odds
 - God doesn’t want any chance Gideon and his soldiers can take credit if they win
- So God makes it harder
 - whittles it down to 10,000 by excusing all who are afraid... now outnumbered **13:1**
 - still not hard enough! Arbitrarily whittles it down to 300!... outnumbered **450:1**
 - 10x worse odds than defenders of Alamo - you know what happened!
 - You don’t win when you’re outnumbered 450:1 - suicide mission!
- But God’s command is clear in v9 - take these men and conquer the Midianites

Gideon faced a HUGE test of faith... and chose to trust God

- **READ 7:16-18**
- God gave Gideon a RISKY battle-plan!
 - Spread out - not in defensive positions
 - Don’t even have their swords out!! Sitting ducks if this goes wrong
- But Gideon doesn’t care. He’s chosen to trust God no matter what.

And God doesn’t let him down... won a huge victory through Gideon

- **READ 7:22-23**
- Even before Gideon’s army arrived, God was already at work sowing fear
 - Gideon’s “attack” was just the match that lit the fire God had built
- The Midianites destroyed themselves.
 - According to ch8 - **120,000 Midianites died at their own hands** in this battle
- Then Gideon’s 300 men chased down the rest
- It was a complete and unmitigated victory – Midian never a threat to Israel again

Here’s the lesson for us from Gideon’s first test: God can overcome impossible odds!

- **450:1 - God laughs at those odds!**
 - Make it a million to 1! He couldn’t care less.
 - He still wins! He’s God. Nothing is impossible for Him.
 - Hunger Games: “May the odds be ever in your favor”
 - If you walk with God by faith, then they are!
 - The odds are always in your favor if you are leaning on God! Because He is GOD!
- **If you will trust Him, He will make the impossible, possible**
 - **I have seen men & women caught up in devastating addictions**
 - have chosen to trust God and get help from Celebrate Recovery
 - they have overcome!! Still tempted, but living sober lives - loving, helping
 - they’ve gotten better because they chose to believe God can conquer any sin!
 - **I have seen men & women who were hurt so badly**
 - in the eyes of the world - right to be angry, bitter, seek vengeance
 - but they chose to trust God for the supernatural power to forgive
 - they are now examples to the world of the power of God’s love
 - vengeance is easy; forgiveness is infinitely harder!
 - they have forgiven that which the world would never forgive
 - because they were willing to trust God with their pain
 - **I have seen people crushed by physical illness or financial hardship**
 - in the eyes of the world - they have no hope
 - reasonable to succumb to despair and selfishness

- but they chose to trust in God's goodness and love
- and have become models of joy, peace, and generosity
- walking contradictions: live with broken bodies or in extreme poverty yet practice gratefulness and generosity

There is no limit to the victories God can win in your life if you will trust Him

- no temptation too powerful, pain too deep, trial too great for God
- choose every day to believe that God can overcome the Midianites in your life!
- even against impossible odds, God can give you victory if you will trust Him

That's what we learn from Gideon's unprecedented victory in chapter 7

And if only the story of Gideon had ended in chapter 7!!

- He would be a hero if it ended here... but it doesn't
- As great as his victory in ch7, it pales in comparison to his failure in ch8...

TEST #2: Resist the Temptation to "Get Yours"

A tempting offer - READ 8:22

- **Offer: be our king – enjoy the power and wealth you deserve**
- **Problem: not Gideon's right to be king**
 - Israel was a theocracy - God's in charge - He chooses who gets to be king
 - Read Dt 17:14-15a
 - But God hadn't chosen Gideon to be king - it was not their right to crown him
- **The Israelites knew that, but they didn't care - wanted to be like everyone else**
 - they wanted to be like every other nation – would give legitimacy & strength
 - wanted that so bad that they were willing to rebel against God

Gideon's 2nd test: Will he be content with what God has given him, or will he "get his"?

- In the eyes of the world – 'getting yours' is the obvious choice!
- If you succeed, it's your right to enjoy all the spoils of victory
- You don't ever leave money or power on the table

You take all you can... that's what Gideon chooses

- **Begins by faking faithfulness to God - READ 8:23**
 - Those are the right words!
 - Unfortunately, Gideon's actions do not align with his words...
- **He chooses to act like a king:**
 - READ 8:24-30
 - **v26 - he collects a king's fortune**
 - 1700 shekels of gold = ~43 pounds - incredible fortune at that time
 - **he dresses like a king**
 - collected the Midianite kings' ornaments, pendants, purple robes
 - **v30 - he builds a harem fit for a king – had "many wives"**
 - There was not a surplus of women to go around!
 - Only kings could have "many wives"
 - **ironic: look back to Deut 17 - read Dt 17:17**
 - God warned Israel about what evil kings would do
 - Exactly what Gideon was doing!!
 - He's not only acting like a king - he's acting like a corrupt king!
 - But even worse than the money and cloths and women...
 - **v27 - he solidifies his power by building an idol – an "ephod"**

- = elaborate garments and accessories priests wore
 - = symbol of religious authority in ancient Israel
 - Gideon was claiming spiritual authority
 - “You have to come to my house to worship God!”
 - Eventually the ephod itself became their God - worshipped it
- **Gideon was acting like a corrupt king**
- **And later in his life - he drops all pretense - reveals his true intentions...**
 - **READ 8:31**
 - “Abimelech” literally means, “**my father is king**”!!
 - Open declaration that his answer to their offer is YES!
- **Gideon failed his second test of faith**
 - He was not content with what God had provided – he gets his
- **How ironic:** when life was hard, Gideon passed; when it was easy, he failed
 - We often do worse when life is pleasant than when it is painful
 - Pain forces us to lean on God
 - Prosperity woos us into believing that we don’t need Him
- When times were easy, Gideon failed...And the results were catastrophic!

RESULT: A legacy of sin and suffering

- **The nation lapses into idolatry - READ 8:33-34**
 - They “**did not remember**” the Lord – not “**forgot**” → chose to ignore
 - **Instead worshipped “Baal-berith” = Baal of the covenant**
 - God had actually given covenants... but Baal much more fun to worship!
 - He was the popular god and his worship involved sex
 - So for the sake of pleasure & popularity, Israel chose Baal over God
 - **Tragedy: that was EXACTLY what they were doing when the story began**
 - Why did God allow Midianites to oppress Israel? Because worshipped Baal
 - And now they’re doing it again!
 - Gideon’s unfaithfulness led to national unfaithfulness
 - Destroyed the nation... destroyed his own family, too!
- **Gideon’s family self-destructs**
 - Had **71** sons
 - You met one: “Abimelech” = “my father is king”
 - assumed it meant he would be king, too!
 - After dad dies, takes an army and goes after his brothers...**READ 9:5**
 - slaughters all but one of his brothers and crowns himself king
 - But God pays him back for his wickedness
 - The people who crown him rebel
 - Abimelech slaughters lots of them
 - But then... **READ 9:52-53**
 - last we ever hear of a member of Gideon’s household.
 - History of Gideon’s family reads like a **Quentin Terrantino** film!! Everyone dies!
 - **His family was a complete disaster... because he chose not to trust God**
- **Gideon was only a hero for a day - for the rest of his life, he played the villain**
 - Gideon’s story is a tragedy - 1 step forward, 3 steps back!
 - The nation is in worse spiritual shape after Gideon than before

Here’s the lesson from Gideon’s second test of faith:

Your legacy is not complete until this life is over

- There is no retirement when it comes to walking with God
- You either keep rowing upstream towards God or drift backward in to sin

- Keep fighting for faithfulness day after day
 - o Keep choosing to trust God – that what He’s given is enough; that He is good
- Keep building your legacy of faith till the day you die

To help myself do that, I keep reminding myself what my legacy looks like – my children

- I say I love them - but do I, really?
- I wonder how many times Gideon told his 70 sons that he loved them?
 - o Doesn’t matter - because he didn’t!
 - o He chose selfishness & sin - cursed his family - that’s his legacy!
- What will mine be? What will yours be?

Our legacies determined by the choices we make each day either to trust God or not

- That’s the heart of the matter – will we trust God today
- If you haven’t been creating a legacy of faith - good news: there’s still hope!
 - o God can rewrite your legacy - if you’ll begin to walk in faith
 - o Ask Him to grow your faith and heal you and your family
- On the other hand, if you’ve done well - ask God to help you “excel still more”
 - o There’s always room to grow in faith
 - o Let’s ask God to stretch and deepen our faith now and for the rest of our lives