

# Judges 8:18-32

**Introduction** – Gideon is a man of faith, and he has the kind of faith we are to imitate, the kind of faith that perseveres to the end. He is listed in the ‘hall of faith’ in Hebrews 11. We are to rejoice in the story of Gideon.

But there are other lessons to learn from Gideon. God does not give us stories like fairy tales, where the good prince goes off and lives happily ever after. In fact, one of the greatest lessons to learn from the end of Gideon’s life is that we must never rest on our laurels, nor think that we are no longer susceptible to temptation. We must learn the importance of finishing well, and as parents, the incredible covenantal connection from us to future generations.

**Shadows of Slipping in Gideon** (vv18-21) – Gideon, as Jerubaal, the servant of the Lord for the people of Israel, has the right and obligation to put these princes of Midian to death (Deut 20:13). Long afterwards, these executions are used in prayer for the ruin of other enemies of God (Psalm 83:11). But in this short discourse we see the beginnings of something dark taking place. Gideon is referred to as a “king” (v 18). He then begins to use his power for personal vengeance. He seeks to disgrace these kings by having his young son slay them (and, like his father was earlier, Jether is too afraid).

**Shadows of Slipping in Israel** (vv22-23) – The people now seek to establish a dynasty in Gideon, for he was their deliverer. But Gideon only judged as one appointed by God, and it was the Lord who delivered them. The people’s trust is moving away from the Lord and towards an earthly throne. O, if only the story ended here after Gideon’s faithful answer.

**Compromised Worship/Compromised Government** (vv24-27) – What happens next, though, is a small picture of the real problem. When men are faithful in their worship of God, then the Lord truly is the King, and human kings are no threat to God’s glory or to the liberty of the people (as with David). But Gideon starts changing the rules for worship and starts acting like one of the pagan kings.

**Ephod** – The original ephod is a long way off in the tabernacle. Gideon probably justifies making a new ephod because God had instructed him to sacrifice and had spoken to him specifically. The ephod was a golden tunic worn by the priests and had in it the Urim and Thummim, used by the high priest to determine the word and will of God. The people follow Gideon as a pseudo-king and priest. The seeking of God through unsanctioned means, and particularly apart from the atonement system of the tabernacle, does not please the Lord. In fact, it leads the people into spiritual harlotry.

**Gideon’s Death and Posterity** (vv28-32) – Verse 28, 29 and Verse 32 emphasize the fact that Gideon’s life was blessed by God, and that overall, his service to the Lord was faithful. Nevertheless, it is not all that black and white. Between these verses we see the fruit of God’s warnings regarding our sins (Ex 20:4-6).

**Jerubaal/Gideon** – Notice the name change between verse 29 and 30. In these regards, Gideon is not acting as a Baal-fighter. He is acting like a pagan king, influenced by Baal-like gods.

**Seventy Sons** – Many wives were often taken by kings in making foreign alliances, which was forbidden for any Israelite king (Deut 17:17).

**Abimelech** – This son of a concubine is named “my father is king.” Most of us know the struggle of making our practice as holy as our theology. Gideon had denied the throne, but in his dreams, and in some of his actions, he has been letting this temptation simmer, slowly and quietly permeating the aroma of his life.

**Applications** – Let’s consider two hard ones, and one hopeful.

**Tasting Sin** – Calvin warns that our minds are idol-factories, where we are constantly creating new gods to worship. We must discipline our bodies and our minds, so that we do not even play around with our lusts (Eph 5:3, Phil 4:8-9, James 1:14-15). Too often, we think we are being good because we are being better than the world. But the world is not our standard. Let each one of us, as God grants us various amounts and experiences of dominion, not lose, but rather cultivate, our servant hearts.

**Finishing Well** – You may not sit back, patting yourself on your back for past accomplishments. You have a race to run. How are you growing, serving, sacrificing, risking for the Lord, and trusting Him, today? The stories of Gideon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and Hezekiah, all warn us that men who have a track record of faithfulness can mar their record and cause horrible consequences to fall upon future generations. Do not add your name to that list (Phil 3:12-14, 2 Tim 4:6-8, Heb 12:1-2).

**The Author and Finisher of our Faith** – But even in these last verses of the story of Gideon, we catch a glimpse of Jesus Christ, like a negative of a photograph. Gideon clouds his calling in his battle with Midian, but Jesus came to do the will of the Father and He accomplished that will perfectly. Gideon was tempted and compromised, but Jesus being tempted, did not fall into sin. Gideon led his people into sin, but Jesus came and has the power to free all of His people from their sin. Gideon could not remain weak and perfectly dependant upon God, but Jesus poured out everything all the way to the cross. And God raised Him from the dead. While we may see pictures of Christ in Gideon, we are to follow Christ in the power of Christ by the Spirit of Christ given to us who call on His name.