

Man's Victories  
Never Last

## Judges 8:1-9

Then the men of Ephraim said to him, “What is this that you have done to us, not to call us when you went to fight against Midian?” And they accused him fiercely. And he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abiezer? God has given into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. What have I been able to do in

comparison with you?” Then their anger against him subsided when he said this. And Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the 300 men who were with him, exhausted yet pursuing. So 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 after Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.” And the officials of Succoth said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your

hand, that we should give bread to your army?” So Gideon said, “Well then, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will flail your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.” And from there he went up to Penuel, and spoke to them in the same way, and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. And he said to the men of Penuel, “When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.”

## Judges 8:2-3

And he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abiezer? God has given into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. What have I been able to do in comparison with you?” Then **their anger against him subsided** when he said this.

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath, but  
a harsh word stirs up anger.

Watch now, attentively, as Gideon continues to develop. Increasing experience is not necessarily in itself a good thing. There is a “maturity” which leaves behind the wise and humble attitudes of the early days of discipleship. Advancement can be a perilous thing.

- Michael Wilcock

## Judges 8:4-6

And Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the 300 men who were with him, exhausted yet pursuing. So he said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted... And the officials of Succoth said, **“Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?”**”

## Judges 8:7

So Gideon said, “Well then, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, **I will flail your flesh** with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.”

## Judges 8:16-17

And he took the elders of the city, and he took thorns of the wilderness and briers and with them taught the men of Succoth a lesson. And he broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

## Judges 8:18-19

Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “Where are the men whom you killed at Tabor?” They answered, “As you are, so were they. Every one of them resembled the son of a king.” And he said, **“They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not kill you.”**

Gideon's ruthless, remarkable pursuit has been motivated less by a desire to complete the deliverance of God's people than by a drive for personal vengeance—for the honor of his own family.

- Tim Keller

## Judges 8:20-21

So he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise and kill them!” But the young man did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a young man. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise yourself and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength.” And Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent ornaments that were on the necks of their camels.

## Judges 8:22

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.”

## Judges 8;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.**”

## Judges 8:24-25

And Gideon said to them, “Let me **make a request of you**: every one of you give me the earrings from his spoil...” And they answered, “**We will willingly give them.**” And they spread a cloak, and every man threw in it the earrings of his spoil.

## Judges 8:29-30

Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. Now Gideon had **seventy sons**, his own offspring, for he **had many wives.**

Judges 8:31

And his **concubine** who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he called his name **Abimelech**.

Abimelech = “My father is king.”

This passage makes it clear that Gideon was able to resist the obvious temptation to rule over the Israelites, at least in his initial reaction. But he fell prey to something more subtle, which eventually brought about the same damage.

Often it is not the obvious temptation that brings about our demise into sin, but the subtle, more nuanced, and more sophisticated temptation that is our undoing.

- K. Lawson Younger

Judges 8:27

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.

## Exodus 28:4

These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, **an ephod**, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests.

## Exodus 28:30

And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the **Urim** and the **Thummim**, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the LORD.

There is a terrible spiritual danger involved in the receiving of any blessing. Success can easily cause us to forget God's grace, because our hearts are desperate to believe that we can save ourselves. God-given victory can easily be used to confirm the belief that, in fact, we have earned blessing for ourselves, and should receive the praise and glory for that success.

- Tim Keller

Judges 8:33-35

As soon as **Gideon died**, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. And the people of **Israel did not remember the LORD their God**, who had delivered them from the hand of all their enemies on every side, and they did not show steadfast love to the family of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.

This shadow of inconsistency and of disappointment frequently hangs over God's servants. This is not to excuse the sins or errors of the leaders of God's people. But let it temper our expectations, let it cushion our despair, and let it lift our gaze to the Leader of God's elect, who does not disappoint, in whom is no sin, and against whom no charges can be brought. We will never find perfection of office except in our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Dale Ralph Davis