Judges: Straight Lines – **wk 7 Gideon 3 – The Fall**

**Judges relays the dark ages of Israel. Museum of mistakes & victories.**

**Background: They didn’t drive out inhabitants - troubled followed.**

**Today we see one of many judges who started off strong, a hero to emulate, and then tanked - badly. Gideon.**

**A reluctant fearful farmer with self-esteem issues working in a hole, who became a valiant faith filled man of courage.**

**In Judges 7 we see Gideon step out in wild faith and lead to victory a group of 300 men against 135,000 soldiers. It was amazing!**

**\*\* God uses the broken and humble to accomplish great things for His glory. (Watch online!)**

**It was inspiring, until it took a dark turn. A man of faith become a man of self-confidence and retribution. A tragic conclusion.**

**Different views on how to understand Chapter 8 (explain)**

**After stroking the ego of the Ephraim tribe and giving himself glory for the battle we pick up in Judges 8:4.**

**Gideon is in pursuit of the kings of Midian, but it seems he is moving on, without the LORD.**

**Gideon turns sour**

**Judge 8:4 And Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, (chased them out of Israel and still after them) he and the 300 men who were with him, exhausted yet pursuing. 5 So he said to the men of Succoth, (small town west of the Jordan) “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.”**

**6 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?” (Keep going lest they come back and kill us!) 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.” (How dare you? When we are done, I am coming back to cause you pain - dark)**

**8 And from there he went up to Penuel, (the next town – the place Jacob fought God, Gen 32) and spoke to them in the same way, (give us some food) and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. (Finish the job and come back) 9 And he said to the men of Penuel, “When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.” (How dare you? When I get back, I am tearing this place to the ground – spiteful)**

**10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army, about 15,000 men, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East, for there had fallen 120,000 men who drew the sword. 11 And Gideon went up by the way of the tent dwellers east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the army, for the army felt secure. 12 And Zebah and Zalmunna fled, and he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and he threw all the army into a panic. (Gideon on a roll - seems to be led by bloodlust at this point)**

**He captures the two kings of Midian and drags them back to the two towns who did not feed them.**

**13 Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres. 14 And he captured a young man of Succoth (first place that did not feed them) and questioned him. And he wrote down for him the officials and elders of Succoth, seventy-seven men. (I want names!) 15 And he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, (he throws them at their feet) saying, ‘Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are exhausted?’” (Mocking their statement) 16 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. (He beat 77 men bloody with throne bushes – brutal)**

**17 And he broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city. (He went to the other town, and as he said, and levels the town - killing people)**

**Both were in the Jewish territory of the Manasseh tribe. These were family tribes of his own people. Relatives of Jospeh.**

**(Turns to the Midianite Kings – you’re next) 18 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.” (They looked like you) 19 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.” (But… ) 20 So he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise and kill them!” (Kill em!) But the young man did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a young man. (a boy) 21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise yourself and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength.” (Do it yourself if you call yourself a man) And Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent ornaments that were on the necks of their camels. (Expensive gold)**

**Some commentators say this was all justified for their not helping and a justified end. But again, where is the voice of the LORD in all of this? God is not with Gideon at this point.**

**This is not the same guy hiding in the hole… and it was not the same guy who humbly obeyed God.**

**Arrogance, vindictive, violent - his son is confused over his lust for blood. Poor example. Who are you?**

**(But it gets darker) 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.” (Be our king!!) 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.” (Sounds noble and honorable… but his actions speak louder than his words)**

**24 And Gideon said to them, “Let me make a request of you: every one of you give me the earrings from his spoil.” (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) (This was basically a tax) 25 And they answered, “We will willingly give them.” And they spread a cloak, and every man threw in it the earrings of his spoil. 26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, (50 lbs of gold) besides (not including) the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars that were around the necks of their camels. (He was loaded with God, jewels and expensive garments)**

**27 And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. (His hometown where he lived) And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family. (Worshiped it and sacrificed to it) 28 So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel, and they raised their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon**

**What is an ephod? (pic) Religious garment worn by priests. Apron / chest seal that was a symbol of the 12 tribes and that they would not serve idols. Worn only by the Levite high priest in Shiloh (before Jerusalem it was the city of designated worship).**

**But Gideon made a solid gold ephod an icon of war, a memorial to himself to display in his village for people to come see. He made it about himself. He greatly dishonored God in doing this.**

**This was gross idolatry – and people began to idolize it and him.**

**The ephod was a source of sin & pride – people worshipped it.**

**Pic Gideon when following the LORD - Anakin Skywalker**

**Pic Gideon after anger set in, wearing the ephod - Darth Vader**

**(It gets even worse) Judges 8:29 Jerubbaal (Gideon) the son of Joash went and lived in his own house. (Where the ephod is) 30 Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives.**

**Polygamy is never condoned by God - Gen 2:24 - denounced in the NT. This was pointed out to show his wealth and lifestyle.**

**31 And his concubine who was in Shechem (a woman simply for pleasure) also bore him a son, and he called his name Abimelech.**

**The irony – he said, “I don’t want to be king”, but he names his son, Abimelech which means, “My father, is king.”**

**\*\*\* Actions often speak louder than words.**

**Shechem was the place God promised the land to Abraham and joseph is buried – a prominent city. This was a set up.**

**32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, at Ophrah of the Abiezrites. 33 As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. (In covenant with Baal)**

**They ended up worse than before. Their sin before Gideon was being afraid of the Midianites and not trusting God, but now, they made a vow (blood covenant) in service to Baal.**

**First judge that the people went astray while he was reigning. Usually after they died. But they feel away because of Gideon.**

**34 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, 35 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.**

**They used him, worshipped him and left him.**

**Abimelech (next story) is one of the most sinister in the Bible.**

**We can see the decline of his character and an escalation of his sin.**

**God talked with Gideon and gave him strength and hope to step out…**

* **Started with arrogance – look what I did**
* **Which led to entitlement – I deserve this, I work hard**
* **Which resulted pride – how dare you disrespect me**
* **Which resulted in revenge – aggressive retaliation**
* **Which fed an unhealthy self-worth – I am an amazing person**
* **Which resulted in idolatry – worship of self**
* **Which unleashed unbridled sin - I will get what I want (all pleasure)**

**He falls pray to all three – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. 1 John 2:16**

**How did he get there? What factors contributed to his spiral?**

**1. Lack of prayer**

**Chap 6-7 The LORD told Gideon… the LORD said to Gideon… The LORD said… but what is absent from this chap is the voice of God.**

**As Gideons accolades grew, there was a noticeable absence of communication with LORD.**

**\*\* The purest prayers are born out of desperation and pain. But when the good times came, Gideon did not look to God.**

**2. Lack of accountability**

**Not a single person in his life addressed him or confronted him.**

**3. Lack of mercy for others**

**He was eaten up with resentment against those who did not help him.**

**4. Lack of humility**

**Gideon got a big head. He believed in his own press. Enjoyed the glory and attention. Instead of a deliverer, he became a stumbling block.**

**5. Lack of restraint**

**Material and sexual excess. I want more and more. I deserve it.**

**What can we learn from Gideon? A Look in the Mirror**

**\*\* The tendency to replace God with our self – Gideon and himself.**

**Unhealthy self-affirming. So many posts, memes, and videos.**

**Prov 16:18 – Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. / Prov 8:13 - To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I (God) hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech. / Prov 11:2 - When pride comes, disgrace follows, but with humility comes wisdom. / Prov 18:12 - Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor.**

**Romans 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.**

**Dangers of self-reliance affirmations**

**- Self-reliance affirmations make the focus of our life - us**

**- Self-reliance affirmations reflect a root of insecurity**

**- Self-reliance affirmations assume the power is your words**

**- Self-reliance affirmations mislead us with untruths**

**- Self-reliance affirmations are based on eastern religions**

**We do not find worth in self – we find worth in Jesus. Our creator.**

**We are to speak the word of God to ourselves and affirm our position in Christ. That is our power – He is our confidence.**

**\*\* The tendency to replaced God with a person – the people w/ Gideon**

**They idolized him. This is a fearful and excellent example of a faith-filled, courageous leader, who did great things and ended up astray.**

**We see this still today with celebrity preachers and people who idolize their pastor, politician or leaders.**

**(Be our king!!) Judges 8:23 Gideon said, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you.” (His actions said otherwise)**

**Consider a leader’s actions not just their words**

**1 Tim 4:16 – watch their life and teaching. Both**

**They do one thing in front of the crowd and live a diff life.**

**\*\* They tendency to replace God with stuff – The ephod**

**They would rather have something shiny – than the real thing. We too.**

**The things of this world are cheap imitations of true worship.**

**Mark 8:36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? (Filled with stuff but still left empty)**

**\*\* The tendency to forget God in our victories**

**God brought a victory, and he started doing his own thing.**

**We do the same, we call out in trouble – ignore when it’s good.**

**Starts w/ Gideon in a hole and his story ends up in a new hole.**

**Dug with arrogant pride, revenge, rage, neglecting of God**

**Many pass the test of adversity, but fewer pass the test of prosperity.**

**When Gideon was weak and poor – he found his strength in the LORD, but when he was wealthy and strong – he found his strength in himself.**

**\*\* The tendency to use God for our selfish gain**

**That ephod and memorial to himself – made him rich and comfortable.**

**Know this - We are created for God’s glory – no other purpose.**

**Proclaiming his goodness gives him glory – BUT - Living a life by his design, enjoying his creation and each other in His design – gives Him glory. Finding joy in what he says is good – gives glory.**

**James 1:17 – Every good and perfect gift in life – comes from God almighty.**

**Romans 11:36 - For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.**

**We see Jesus clearly in Judges 6-7 - is Jesus in this chapter?**

**Yes – but his image is twisted.**

**The ephod? (pic) Worn by the High Priest - mediator, stood before God for the people. The ephod represented the majesty of God in his people covering our sin & heart. It was wrapped around them, or they die.**

**When the HP wore it – he had an audience with God.**

**A picture of the coming One, Jesus. Our mediator who gives us an audience w/ the Father. It points to the grace of grace.**

**Jesus is the way! John 14:6**

**Gideon made this picture of the savior Jesus about himself**

**He perverted the image of Jesus – that is all about himself.**

**Meant to point the LORD, it pointed to Gideon.**

**He used the ephod for his own gain. This is warning to those who use Jesus for their own gain. We do the same.**

**We pray for God’s help then want to be recognized for doing it. It was my will and tenacity – my commitment and ability.**

**BTW – to use God / Jesus to exalt yourself – is taking the LORD’s name in vain. To misuse the LORD. (Ex 20:7 – 3rd commandment)**

**The tragic story of Gideon – does not have to be ours.**

**James 4:10 - Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**

**A two-week break from Judges – next wk we have a special guest: Sam Olivarri**

**Give me something shiny - laser lights, smoke machines, expensive buildings. People who have left - love the preaching and the worship, but they have a professional band and an indoor play area.**