



- JUDGES 8:22-35 -

PASTOR TIM DODSON *at*
JESUS FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS
in **MENOMONIE, WI**
AUGUST 20TH, 2014

Even with merely a cursory look back, one would easily see that the road of history is littered with the bodies of those who “compromised.” And a closer look might reveal that such came often on the heels of spiritual success as much as trailing behind a meandering lethargic soul.

God had worked a great wonder in the life of Gideon...an outpouring of His power amongst His people. He had done with a small band of men, what would have seemed nearly impossible even with an army of thousands! If we could have stopped the movie at the end of the last section, Gideon would have went down in history with one of the greatest and most consistent life stories in all of scripture, maybe in history! But sadly that is not the way it ended. No, like so many of us, Gideon had yet another chapter in his biography, and it would not be his high point!

The people around him failed to help the situation for Gideon, that’s for sure. For while they did not take the glory for the victory upon themselves, they still tried to give it to a *man...Gideon*, instead of where it clearly lay...*Jehovah God*. It was one of the first cases of ‘mega-church cult-of-personality.’ They found it easier to follow a man than to follow God. There was no great worship and joyous sacrifice to God once the battle was over. Scripture is silent on that account. Instead, they were still blinded by the physical and the human. There was no spiritual gratitude and acknowledgement here. God had done the impossible right before their eyes and yet they failed to see it, and certainly failed to acknowledge it.

How often we can be guilty of the same. We can become so entrenched in the physical realm that we fail to realize the supernatural all around us. Our worship does not flow forth from the awareness of His glory and the awe of His miraculous hand. Instead we find ourselves stuck in our earthly routine and the life mode of self. Do you find it easy to worship outside of the church pews? Does it come natural and does it reside up close to your soul and your walk?

The path of error began by giving Gideon credit for what He did not earn. They looked at him as if he was some sort of superman instead of merely an instrument of God. The fact is, deep inside there was the same man that was back hiding in the winepress. He was still that guy. He was just now endued by the presence of God...what we would call being “filled with the Holy Spirit.” But make no mistake...he was still that same weak and discouraged guy!

The people had sought something that was not the plan of God for them or for Gideon. God wanted and had used Gideon, but He never intended for him to be a king. God wanted them to look to *Him* for that station! This often is the beginning of our fall. Seeking strenuously for

something that is not God's will. Soon the "I want this" becomes the greatest power and motivator in our world. Thus, "*I want this*" becomes more powerful than perhaps years previously of "*Does God want this?*" in my living.

Now, we should give Gideon a little credit herein: He did *not* allow them to make him king. He knew the right path, and at first he took that path. But it's how we finish this race that says who and what we really are. And while Gideon began it straight, he later allowed compromise to enter in and compromise to eventually destroy his legacy.

While Gideon would not be the people's king, he would however take a piece of the spoils. Perhaps even that was not any kind of crime, but what he did with it next would turn out to be one. Gideon would take the gold from the earrings of the conquered Midianites and would craft a gold "ephod." An ephod was the apron that the priests would wear when conducting their duties, and it essentially became a sign of the office of the priest and the power of the position.

So while Gideon knew enough not to try to circumvent the monarchy of God as king, he was not astute enough to stay out of trying to be the messenger of God...that which was reserved solely for the priestly Levitical tribe. Since God had spoken to him in the past, he must have assumed that God would continue to so in such a manner and that he could be 'the man' to speak now for God.

I would like to believe that Gideon had good intentions. There never seemed to be an overtly arrogant personality in Gideon...one that would have lusted for power. If he had, he would have taken the kingship! No doubt Gideon began with a righteous motive. But it takes more than good motives to be obedient, and more than good heart to be righteous.

David discovered this in his day. While moving the Ark of the Covenant one day, it began to tip and a man reached up to steady the ark...to keep it from falling over. And in doing so, that act cost him his life. God 'dropped him' where he stood. Right motives and a good heart? Yes. Correctly ordered and handled? No.

Later on, David was going to take another shot at moving the Ark but he had learned his lesson: (1 Chronicles 15:11-13) *And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites: for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. He said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. "For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order."*

God often has certain ways things are to be done. This community thing we are involved in called 'church'... 'body-life'... 'community'... even literally 'Christian living', had guidelines and directions. It's not meant to be a 'free-for-all' out there, despite the strenuous declarations from some that it is. Some just want to 'wing-it'...its a spiritual 'cage-match' out there. The 'gloves are off' and what they have is not order but chaos...and invariable their personal life reflects such! 1 Corinthians 14:33 tells us that God is not a God of confusion but of order.

That's does not mean there fails to be great *freedom* in the daily walk of our faith. But Christianity is never a 'make-it-up-as-we-go-along' kind of operation!

So even if Gideon had good intentions, the plan went bad. Such plans invariably go bad because we think that the means don't matter as long as we achieve the goal. But they do. And usually if you *do* 'achieve the goal', it is a temporary facsimile of the real thing. It lacks credibility and power, because it lacks *GOD*.

Today we see people 'doing church' or even 'doing Jesus' in various free-for-all methods...adopting models of faith that are beyond God's gracious freedom of expression and freedom of 'style.' We may wear our own colors, but it's still God's show. And there are many aspects of His design that can never be compromised and can never be reordered. Things like submission and accountability...church leadership...giving and serving...loving *like He loves*, and adherence to scripture. (all of it!), etc.

Gideon's actions led to Israel "playing the harlot." Such language always speaks of a spiritual infidelity. An unfaithfulness to God and His ways. Apparently they were 'religious', just not righteous. No matter how the Levitical priesthood may have fallen short, that still did not give him the freedom to take matters into his own hands and "reinvent" the way God worked. No matter how much God had used him in the past, he wasn't called to the priesthood..he wasn't called to be in that roll. You see, it is always a dangerous thing to start thinking that God needs our help with anything.

Sadly, a lot of folks today play the same game via internet blogs and para-church home churches. They are circumventing God's design, and at best such will prove to be worthless and at worst, it will distract and confuse people to hell. Just because you have uniform doesn't make you a cop. Just because you have an ephod doesn't make you a prophet or priest!

How often folks can be guilty...and maybe you are one of them, of altering the revealed will of God because you think that you can make it better, clearer, or more friendly to adhere to. We cannot ever improve God's plan, and its heresy to believe we can. Few of those so guilty will admit that this is the plan or even the outcome. But everyone on the outside can see it clearly. The result of their attempts cause division, carnality, selfish pride, and weak obedience. But once again, the path of history is full of these attempts and are today, and will no doubt be so tomorrow!

Such attempts come from our cultures overt tendency to be an authority unto themselves. We do what is "right in our own eyes" instead of ordering our lives according to God's design and God's plan. Such is an epidemic today...*even within the greater church!* The 'buck stops' with God's Word! No matter what anyone else comes up with. When we reject that premise in anyway, decline and disaster is inevitable.

What began with 'good intentions' but bad directions slowly began to reap it's harvest. Gideon went on to acquire a virtual 'harem' of women and a royal lifestyle even without the crown of

king! He started out being the “least” he claimed, but ended apparently living a life of ease and luxury that comes with those who are the “most.” Deut 17:17 *“Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.”* We can of course claim...for appearance sake...Oh! But he wasn’t the king! But that is merely word play...semantics. And a lot of folks want to play religious semantics today...arguing what something means when we all know very well what it means but to admit such would mean guilt on their part!

This I know, because Gideon named his son “Abimelech”...which means “my father is king.” So games can be played for appearance sake, but the truth is the truth just the same.

We cannot compromise the Word of God and dodge that bullet. It will get us every time. It may come slow motion, but come it will! And the ‘end of us’ is bad, and our reputation and legacy is lost forever. God’s Word is not a buffet line where we can choose the parts we want to then build a personal designed ‘meal’ for us to consume. 1 Corinthians 10:11-12 *“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

It is a fools folly to try to be a Christian without Jesus being Lord of your life. Sadly, a lot of people will spend a lifetime rejecting those words too, and attempting to ‘reinvent’ what a life in Christ looks like. Obedience is not a ‘good idea.’ It is the very heart of Christianity, and you can’t have one without the other. No matter how good your intentions may be....