Murray Baptist Church – 11/10/20 – Bible Study Outline – Judges 8

**Judges 8 (vs. 1-33)**

Success often brings unwelcome friends – tension and jealousy

Today’s study picks up after the success of God overthrowing the Midianites and their allies. No matter what happens in life. No one is truly satisfied when everything goes right. We know that when you follow God through Jesus Christ you are following the shepherd and according to the 23rd Psalm as we follow the shepherd, he has two other friends that follow us: goodness and mercy. (Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.)

Those two friends were goodness and mercy. And just like grace as two friends, success has two friends but they aren’t as nice. The two friends that often come along with success are: tension and jealousy.

Helpful Background – 12 Tribes of Israel/Jacob (Deuteronomy 27:12-13)

* Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (sons of Leah)
* Joseph and Benjamin (sons of Rachel)
  + Joseph later split into the half tribes of
    - Ephraim
    - Manasseh
* Dan, Naphtali (sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid)
* Gad, Asher (sons of Zilpah, Leah’s handmaid)

Dissension Diffused

V1. Here’s where that success brings unwelcome friends. But there is also some prophetic history here as well (Isaiah 9:21). Do you see where tension and jealousy come out of hiding within this verse.

Vs. 2-3 – Although tension and jealousy rear their heads among relatives, Gideon shows how diplomacy is a valuable tool to hold. While Gideon knows God used him to stand up to and challenge the Midianites and their allies, he doesn’t take himself too seriously. (Cross reference Judges 6:15)

Self-Preservation Vs. God’s Preservation (Vs. 4-21)

V4 – God’s provision (God kept all 300 of the men he selected from the 32,000 who volunteered to fight. Just like God kept the Israelites through 40 years of wondering through the desert without their shoes wearing out, God is able to preserve the 300 men against seemingly unrealistic odds.

Vs. 5-7. The concept of Self-Preservation from two different viewpoints – Gideon’s men and their needs versus the self-preservation of the men of Sukkoth.

* Gideon’s men have been in battle and they are exhausted and still trying to chase down two kings.
* Gideon asks for food for he and his men
* The people of Sukkoth were afraid that the Midianites would retaliate against them until the kings were caught.
* If the kings of Midian weren’t caught they wanted to play it safe

Vs. 8-9

* Gideon has a similar interaction with the men of Peniel
* They also refused to provide Gideon and his men with food

Pause for reflection

In the case of Sukkoth and Peniel, Gideon made a request for food based on his desire for self-preservation and maintenance of his men. The men of Sukkoth and Peniel denied Gideons request because the feared retaliation by the two kings of Midian in case Gideon didn’t find them.

* Gideon warned the men that there would be consequences for the men if they didn’t help him.
* In our Christian lives we will sometimes have to make tough decisions that will have serious consequences regardless which way we decide to go. One advantage we have is to ask God for guidance through the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 10 – reminds us what the total odds were that Gideon and his men were facing. 300 men against 135,000 men (But this point the Midianites are down to 11% of their armed forces).

Vs. 11-12 – Gideon captures Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian and routed them

Vs. 13-17 – Gideon fulfills his promise to the people of Sukkoth and Peniel

Vs. 18-21 – Gideon kills Zebah and Zalmunna

Vs. 22-32 - Denying the title of “king” but acting and being treated like the King

* The people ask Gideon to rule over them
* Gideon says he will not – because God rules over them
* Gideon asks for earrings from the plunder
* Gideon in once sense doesn’t want to be in idol that deflects focus from God but at the same time creates and ephod – that became an idol to the people and it blocked their view of God
* Ephod
  + Garment usually worn by the high priest
  + Sleeveless tunic, with a breastplate that had 12 precious stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel
  + Had a pouch that contained the Urim and Thummin (instruments used to receive revelation from God)
  + Notice we have stopped hearing about God’s interactions with Gideon now, that may have been a motivation to make the ephod. Note: God doesn’t dwell in the things we make to represent him but now God dwells with us through his Holy Spirit.
* Like Gideon, we are most vulnerable to spiritual setbacks when we have experienced blessing and success.

Questions for further study

1. How does the way in which Gideon responds to the Ephraimites’ complaint demonstrate the principles set out in Proverbs 15:1 and Colossians 3:12-14?
2. The story of Gideon ends on a tragic note with the Israelites being drawn back into idolatry by an object he had created. How could this have been avoided if he had been able to read the warnings contained in 1 Corinthians 10:12 and Proverbs 16:18?

Think about and discuss

1. Think about areas of tension and conflict you may be caught up in at church, home or work. In what ways would you be able to take the same approach Gideon took with the Ephraimites?
2. The New Testament urges us to “be self-controlled and alert’ because our enemy, Satan, ‘prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour’ (1 Peter 5:8). Which areas in your life are most prone to his attack and how can you ‘resist him, standing firm in the faith’ (1 Peter 5:9)? Think about weaknesses you have and how you could be placing yourself in spiritual danger.