

**Judges 8:1 ¶ And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.**

This is another place where the chapter break is unfortunate. It continues in the flow of events from the previous chapter.

The men of Ephraim had taken the heads of Oreb and Zeeb, two princes of Midian, as evidence of their victory in response to Gideon's call. They questioned Gideon as to why he had not asked for their help in the fight against Midian; they were not happy about it.

**Judges 8:2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?**

**Judges 8:3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.**

Gideon appeased them by appealing to their pride. He noted that what they had accomplished was far greater than what he had done. God had delivered the two princes of Midian into their hands. Gideon had no such trophy giving evidence of comparable action. His answer satisfied them.

**Judges 8:4 ¶ And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.**

**Judges 8:5 And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.**

**Judges 8:6 And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?**

**Judges 8:7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.**

Gideon and his 300 men reached the Jordan and crossed it; though they were quite weary, they continued their pursuit. When they reached Succoth (an area belonging to the tribe of Gad), Gideon asked for food for his men. He pointed out that they were in pursuit of Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian, but they needed sustenance.

The leaders of Succoth refused to help them because there was still a chance that they could suffer the consequences of revenge if Gideon and his men were unsuccessful and the kings learned that they had helped them. Gideon declared that "when" the LORD gave them the victory, he would return and torture them with thorns and thistles from the desert.

JFB provides this insight regarding the torture Gideon promised: It was "a cruel torture, to which captives were often subjected in ancient times, by having thorns

and briers placed on their naked bodies and pressed down by sledges, or heavy implements of husbandry being dragged over them.”

**Judges 8:8** And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*.  
**Judges 8:9** And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

Leaving Succoth, they came next to Penuel (also belonging to Gad), and Gideon made the same request for food of the men there. They refused to help as well. Gideon promised that “when” he returned having succeeded in bringing peace to the land, he would tear down their tower.

**Judges 8:10** Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

**Judges 8:11** And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

**Judges 8:12** And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

The two kings Gideon was after were in Karkor (east of the Dead Sea) with the 15,000 men remaining in their army. This was all that remained after the loss of 120,000 men. Finally, we see the seemingly insurmountable odds Gideon’s army had faced—300 vs. 135,000.

Gideon followed a route that was used by the nomad caravans and was east of Nobah and Jogbehah. The retreating army thought they were in a safe place, so Gideon’s troops caught them off guard. The kings fled, but their attempt was futile. Gideon captured them as their troops fled in fear.

**Judges 8:13** And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,

**Judges 8:14** And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.

**Judges 8:15** And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are* weary?

**Judges 8:16** And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

**Judges 8:17** And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

Before the sun rose the next day, Gideon returned to Succoth. He caught a young man from the town and asked him to identify the leaders of the city; he

identified 77 men.

Gideon then went into Succoth and showed them that he had captured the kings of Midian. He then followed through on his threat and tortured the 77 men that had been identified as the leaders of the city.

Gideon then proceeded on the Penuel and took down their tower and killed the men of that city.

**Judges 8:18 ¶ Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.**

**Judges 8:19 And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.**

**Judges 8:20 And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth.**

**Judges 8:21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks.**

Gideon next questioned the two kings regarding the people they had killed at Tabor; an event that happened some time previously. They answered that the men looked like Gideon, like king's sons. Maybe they were hoping to flatter him.

Gideon told them that they had killed his brothers; if they had not, they would have been allowed to live. It is noted that Gideon's firstborn son, Jether, had joined him. He told the boy to kill the kings, but he was too afraid to do it; he was still quite young. The kings asked that Gideon kill them—knowing that a strong man would be quick and lethal and they would suffer less. Gideon killed the kings and took possession of the valuable ornaments that were around the necks of their camels.

**Judges 8:22 ¶ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.**

**Judges 8:23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.**

In light of such success against Midian, the men of Israel came to Gideon and basically asked him to be their king since they implied that if he accepted the position, it would pass down to his son, his son's son, etc. Gideon boldly and rightly declared that they should be looking to the LORD as their king.

Gideon wasn't looking to increase his influence in light of what God had accomplished through him. This is a principle that every person whom the LORD blesses with a fruitful ministry should embrace. We have or accomplish nothing for the kingdom except through the LORD's provision.

*John 15:4–5 "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except*

*it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*

**Judges 8:24** And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

**Judges 8:25** And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

**Judges 8:26** And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

**Judges 8:27** And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

Gideon requested a gift in acknowledgement of his role in leading Israel to victory. He asked for the gold earrings that had been collected as plunder from the battle. They willingly complied. The plunder they gave him weighed 1700 shekels (about 50-70 lbs.) in gold in addition to the ornaments, collars and purple raiment that he took from the kings of Midian and the chains that were around the necks of their camels.

Gideon messed up, though I don't think he meant to. He made an ephod out of his plunder and placed it in his hometown, Ophrah. Only God knows why. Sadly, it became an idol to the people of Israel and a snare for Gideon and his family. It became the focal point of spiritual adultery.

I thought Spurgeon's comment was interesting: "He did not set up an idol, but he made an ephod, an imitation of that wonderful vestment worn by the high priest. Perhaps he made it of solid gold, not to be worn, but to be looked at, simply to remind the people of the worship of God, and not to be itself worshipped. But ah, dear friends, you see here that, if we go half an inch beyond what Gods Word warrants we always get into mischief!"

Chuck Smith offered a different perspective: "Now I don't think that Gideon had that in mind at all, that the people would make sort of an idol out of this golden ephod that he made from these earrings but nonetheless the people did. Now at that point, I think, was where Gideon did make a mistake. When he saw how the people were, you know, sort of revering this gold ephod he should have just tossed the thing in the fire, melted it down and made a gold brick or something. And so if he was guilty of any mistakes it was this: his allowing the ephod to remain after the people had made an idolatrous kind of a symbol of this ephod."

**Judges 8:28** Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

This ends the record of the defeat of Midian, and the country was at peace for 40 years during the life of Gideon.

**Judges 8:29 ¶ And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.**

**Judges 8:30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.**

**Judges 8:31 And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.**

Gideon went back home to live and produced 70 sons through his many wives—another huge terrible decision. He also had a concubine that lived in Shechem through whom he sired another son that he named Abimelech.

Adam Clarke notes that a concubine was a “lawful but secondary wife, whose children could not inherit.”

**Judges 8:32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.**

**Judges 8:33 And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god.**

**Judges 8:34 And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:**

**Judges 8:35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.**

Gideon eventually died at a “good old age” and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father in his hometown of Ophrah.

“As soon as” he died, the children of Israel once again turned to worship false gods, choosing to worship Baal. The Hebrew for “Baalberith” states, “Baal of the covenant.” This implies that they had rejected their covenant with the LORD God of Israel and chosen Baal as His replacement.

They forgot how the LORD “their God” had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. No matter how often or how long they rejected the LORD, He would remain “their God” in light of His covenant with Abraham.

They also forgot about all Gideon had done for them and showed no kindness to his family.

The devil wastes no time in taking advantage of a situation in which the spiritual influence of one who loves the LORD is removed. The influence of a godly leader is very powerful, and the absence of such influence is just as powerful a force for evil.