

## The Deviousness of Pride Judges 7-8

### Notes

**Pride makes us think we are something when we are not and keeps us from seeing our need for the Lord**

#### INTRODUCTION

**A woman looked out of her window every morning and commented on the dirty laundry on her neighbor's line. One day she noticed it was sparkling clean. "Maybe she's using a new detergent," she said. "No," said her husband, "I got up early and cleaned our windows."**

When we allow pride to take root in our heart, we are planting the seeds of our destruction.

Pride is so dangerous to the life of the believer because it protects itself by making us think we are protecting ourselves.

Pride is mentioned over 3,000 times in the Bible.

Pride led to the downfall of Satan and his angels from the realm of heaven.

Pride led to Adam and Eve sinning against God in the garden.

Pride caused Abraham to lie about Sarah his wife to the Egyptians.

Pride caused Judas to betray Jesus and caused Peter to deny him.

Pride is something we do not often talk about because it is so specific and personal. When we begin to peel back the layers to our own hearts, we are terrified of what we will find, and that pride keeps us from growing.

Pride distorts our view of God, self, others, and ultimately our reality.

Medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas said of pride: "Inordinate self-love is the cause of every sin ... the root of pride is found to consist in man not being, in some way, subject to God and His rule."

Pride keeps us from seeing the holiness, glory, and beauty of God and it keeps us from living holy and compassionate toward others.

"A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you." --C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

As we dive in our message today, we will examine the effects of pride in Judges Chapters 7-8.

As we prepare our hearts for the word of the Lord may we consider a few questions.

How am I demonstrating pride in my life right now?

If something of material value was taken from me suddenly, how would I feel and why?

If I were to lose my status, position, or authority in my sphere of life, how would I feel?

When I am called to sacrifice for Christ and do not, why?

**I. The Lord makes us small so we can see his greatness (7:1-4;8;22)**

*Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. <sup>2</sup> The Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.' <sup>3</sup> Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained. <sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."*

*<sup>8</sup> So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.*

*<sup>22</sup> When they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.*

If we remember from last week, Israel was under pressure and suffering from the Midianites due to their sin.

God calls the lowest of the low, Gideon, a man of little faith, to rise and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian.

Gideon tears down the idols of his family and town and readies his own heart.

Gideon calls the men of Israel to arms and as they line up God tells them the 30,000 men are too many men.

What! Why on earth would God reduce the size of the army? Who does that?

God wanted Gideon and Israel to understand something. When victory was obtained it would not be Israel who attained it, but God.

God had to bring Israel low and reduce them to an inconceivably low number in order to show them just how much they needed him.

They had to get to a place in life where two things happened. They had to get to a place of complete desperation and immense faith.

We need to get to a place in our life where desperation meets faith.

God removed any hint of the ability of pride from Israel. He knew how sinful their hearts were and how tempted they would be to give themselves credit for the victory.

So, God removed all opportunity for pride in their life.

Many times in life we think God is disciplining us by bringing us low, but he is actually preparing us for future victory in our lives.

By bringing us low we learn dependence and we enact faith.

Instead of complaining when we are brought low, may we learn to instead, examine our heart for potential pitfalls.

We must learn to depend on God for our victory and then have faith that he will conquer our battles for his glory.

So, what does God do to reduce their numbers? He allows those who are fearful of battle to leave and 22,000 left!

God allowed those who were fearful to leave because fear is contagious.

Pride pretends fear is not there and instead of wrestling with fear and giving it to the Lord, pride tries to compensate for fear.

God wants to rid you of fear and instead lead you to trust in his provision and power for your life.

God then thins the army even further to ensure the glory goes to him.

God not only brings us low to see him. He also removes our strength, so we have to rely on him. (Phil. 4:13)

God absolutely brings us more than we can handle so we can get to a desperate faith.

Pride tells me I'm not as sinful as I really am, so I don't run to Jesus for redemption and renewal

You may be here and there are some things going on in your life that you don't really like right now. That's ok. You may be in a spot that hurts and is painful. That's ok.

Run to Jesus. Run to Jesus for comfort, strength, and renewal. But also run to Jesus and allow him to comb through your heart during this time.

## **II. Pride causes us to want recognition (8:1-3)**

- **Muhammad Ali was on an airplane and the stewardess looked at him and saw he didn't have his seatbelt fastened. She said to him, "Mr. Ali, you'll have to fasten your seatbelt." Ali responded, "Superman don't need no seatbelt." The hostess then replied, "Superman don't need an airplane either."**

*Then the men of Ephraim said to him, "What is this thing you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight against Midian?" And they contended with him vigorously. <sup>2</sup> But 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 vintage of Abiezer? <sup>3</sup> God has*

*given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.*

The tribe of Ephraim were upset that Gideon didn't invite them into the battle.

Ephraim did not care about the battle as much as they did the recognition that came with the victory.

They wanted to be included so they could get the spoils of war and the recognition that came with victory.

Pride caused them to want to be wanted and to want to be noticed.

When we want recognition, we will do sneaky things to get it.

Have you ever been guilty of the compliment set-up? You give someone a compliment, not because you were genuinely impressed by something, but because you know if you compliment them, social construct says they are very likely to compliment you back.

You make a vague social media post about something good or bad in your life, real passive-aggressive in the post and then you get really upset that more people have not commented or responded to your post of hardship or success.

You love telling people how "God has blessed me..." not because you want to brag on God, but because you want to be seen as having a special favor.

Often, when we want recognition, we don't want others to have it and get upset when they do.

When we seek recognition, we don't often give it to God. If God is to be the hero, that means we can't be, so we tell the story in such a way as to highlight our strength, patience, wisdom, insight, or skill.

Wanting to be recognized stems from a misunderstanding of who you are in Christ.

Have you struggled with recognition? Do you understand your position in Christ?

If we can understand (and we will need to remind ourselves of this) that we are recognized by God as loved, at our most sinful, we won't crave the recognition of others.

### **III. Pride causes us to hoard our resources (8:4-6; 8)**

*Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, weary yet pursuing.<sup>5</sup> He said to the men of Succoth, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."<sup>6</sup> The leaders of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?"*

*<sup>8</sup> He went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.*

These clans did not want to lend help when needed. They knew the need, saw the need, and even heard the plea, yet turned a blind eye to the need.

They were more concerned about keeping the status quo and avoiding risk than they were on giving away resources to expand the boundaries of the kingdom.

When we are more concerned about our status than the kingdom, we will hoard resources to protect ourselves instead of giving away resources to benefit others.

Churches do this when it comes to missions, ministry, and expansion.

Individuals do this when it comes to investing by faith in kingdom priorities.

When we hoard our resources, we are saying a few things.

1. We don't trust God with them
2. We think we can do a better job of using them than God
3. We don't have faith that God will provide when we use and/or give away our resources
4. We don't have Christlike compassion for others
5. We don't see ourselves as a part of the body of Christ but outside of the body.

When these attitudes are prevalent in an individual or a church that individual nor that church will bring glory to God.

That individual or church is more concerned about preservation than perseverance, more concerned about status quo than successful ministry.

What are some things we hoard?

1. **Hoard our ideas**- we don't want to share with others because we are afraid, they may "steal" our ideas and look smarter or more competent than us.

2. **Hoard our talents**- we don't want to share our talents with others because they may do it as good or better than us or we may lose the market on that skill set.

3. **Hoard our money**- we don't want to part with funds because it puts us at risk. We don't want to give it away because it is "ours."

4. **Hoard our time**- we spend so much time making money we don't want to get rid of the few free hours we have each week. We spend 30 - 40 years working so we want to use our retirement years for our enjoyment instead of investing in the next generation.

5. **Hoard credit**- we don't share credit but often share blame. When we fail to give credit we are demonstrating a person who is scared of losing influence and importance in the minds of others.

#### IV. **Pride leads to our eventual embarrassment and downfall (8:16-19)**

*<sup>16</sup> He took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them. <sup>17</sup> He tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.*

*<sup>18</sup> Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?" And they said, "They were like you, each one resembling the son of a*

*king.”<sup>19</sup> He said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.”*

Gideon came back to the people who pridefully spurned his plea for help and repaid them for their lack of assistance.

These groups’ pride cause them to suffer embarrassment in front of others and another group to actually lose their lives.

There is no scenario where unrepentant pride does not eventually lead to downfall.

Failure to recognize pride guarantees a person will have some sort of reckoning.

When we allow pride to run our lives we often fail.

We fail in several ways, which hinders our growth and hurts others.

1. **Failure to apologize**-robs us of humility and another of healing.
2. **Failure to forgive**-robs us of healing and another of grace.
3. **Failure to give credit**-robs us of sharing and another of what’s deserved.
4. **Failure to receive credit**- robs us of humility and others of blessing.
5. **Failure to realize we need help**- robs us of needed assistance and others of using their gifts.

Spiritually speaking pride leads to spiritual death as a prideful person will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:3)

For the believer pride keeps us from growing in Christ and begins to erode any righteousness within.

We often allow pride to run free in our hearts because we think pride will protect us and propel us in the game of life.

**John Ortberg tells the story in his book, "When the Game Is Over, It All Goes back in the Box." Armand Hammer was the President and CEO of Occidental Petroleum for many years. He was a giant of capitalism and a confidant of world leaders. He was a towering figure on the world scene.**

**But after his death, the true picture of this man became clear. He got his start laundering money for the Soviets. After he made his money, he paid authors to write fictitious autobiographies of his life to impress other people. When he was a young man almost ready to graduate from medical school, he performed an abortion and almost killed the woman. His father took the blame for this and spent two years in prison, and the son never spoke up and said he did it. He neglected his own son and never acknowledged the daughter he conceived out of wedlock. He had no friends in his company where he freely fired his executives. When his brother died, he sued his brother’s estate for \$667,000 of the \$700,000 estate, keeping the money from his brother’s wife who was in a nursing home and his brother’s children. When he died, his own son did not attend the funeral, and the only people who carried his casket were those who were paid to take care of him in his home.**

So, here’s the question, did he win or lose at the game of life?

Beloved, the Devil would rather nothing more than to cause disunity in the lives of believers and the church. We cannot allow this.

Let us commit to getting rid of any hint of pride from our hearts today.

**V. Pride veils our intentions from self and others (8:22-27)**

- Pride makes an idol of self and seeks to destroy and discredit all who would hinder worship of the idol.

*Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian."<sup>23</sup> But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."<sup>24</sup> Yet Gideon said to them, "I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil." (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)<sup>25</sup> They said, "We will surely give them." So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil.<sup>26</sup> The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that were on their camels' necks.<sup>27</sup> Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.*

Gideon said he did not want to rule but then put in place a system that led to his worship and power.

The ephod essentially made Gideon and his sons the rulers of Israel not just their clan.

The ephod was a symbol of the Lord's blessings and was the symbol of the priesthood, representing the people before God.

Gideon stepped outside his role and responsibility and took something upon himself that God did not tell him to do. The ephod was reserved specifically for the priest.

His pride led him to see himself as more important than he really was.

His pride led him to place himself in an unholy position which led to leading the whole nation to go worship a created item over the creator.

Pride causes us to justify many things to ourselves and others.

Gideon justified building the ephod as something that was needed, but God never told him it was needed.

Pride causes us to get angry at those who oppose our plans because who would dare disagree with me!

Pride puts up a wall around our hearts so no one can speak the words of life to us.

When the Holy Spirit begins to stir our hearts because of sin, pride comes in and justifies our actions and we quench the working of the Spirit.

When a brother or sister in Christ recognizes sin in our life and, in love and grace, confronts us, we get upset and pull out the ole “speck in my eye, but a log in your eye” argument.

Gideon may have seemed to Israel like he was wanting to help them worship God but what he was really doing was setting himself up as chief.

Pride distorts reality and keeps us from seeing the sinfulness of our heart and this keeps us from being healed by the Lord.

Pride robs us of the blessings of discipleship because we could never imagine others being able to give us advice or imagine ourselves as being in need.

The greatest danger inherent in pride is the effectiveness with which our own brilliance can blind our vision.

So how do we rid ourselves of pride? We continually, daily go before the Lord and take on the humility of Jesus. We ask God to clothe us in the humility of Christ.

And when pride raises its head, we humble ourselves in the power of Christ and repent of pride and ask once again for Jesus to be gentle with us and cover us with his humility.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

- **Is there an area of unrepentant pride in your heart today?**
- Jesus is our example, our mode for humility. (Phil. 2:5-11)
- Pride makes us think we are something when we are not.
- Pride keeps us from seeing our need for the Lord.
- Is pride keeping you from reconciliation with Christ? From others?
- Do you struggle with thinking you are something? With thinking you have “it?”
- That you built that life, business, success?
- Take heed and consider what we have learned from our story today.
- Unrepentant pride is much more costly than humble repentance.
- Would you repent today?
- Would you experience the freedom that comes from a humble heart?