

Topic	Gideon's Failure
Reference	Judges 8
Date	28 October 2018
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The Book of Judges is a book which is violent. It shows you the underside, the senior underbelly of Christianity. The Bible is a book that is No Holds Bard, the good, bad and ugly is all seen out there and you are going to see a great deal of ugliness today.

Last week, Yee Dian had the good part, 300 men beat 135,000. Today, the same person is going to fail and it's frightening because there is a bit of Gideon in all of us. There is the good side when we are there with the Lord and we are victorious and we are going by faith and then the other side, which is our real self. The darker side that comes out. If it could happen to Gideon, it can happen to all of us.

- Noah was the only man who believed God, saved from the flood with his whole family. He ends his life drunk, naked in his tent.
- Moses sinned, couldn't go into the promise land. Moses was called the Friend of God.
- David was called the man after God's own heart, was chasing other people's wives and killed the husband.

So, there is a dark side to all of us, it is like a Jackal and Hyde and I don't want us today to say, "oh! that is not me", because if you look very carefully at all the seeds of destruction. They are all there and you can find it in all of us.

We are going to look at this roadmap to spiritual decline and hopefully if we can understand and we can see some of these signs in our own lives then maybe perhaps we will learn and we will not have to go to that kind of depth.

1. First of all, we understand that self-absorption is subtle, we don't see it, we don't feel it until it is there.
2. Pride, triggered in this case by success. So success is not necessary all laid out to be, it has got dangers.
3. Idolatry disguised as devotion.
4. A challenge to finish well.

A. SELF ABSORPTION WHICH IS SUBTLE

If we look at the map, we have got the battle, which is at the area called Taybor and after the big battle, the Midinettes run away and we are confronted with the big tribe of Ephraim and this is where it starts off.

Judges 8:1-3 (ESV) Then the men of Ephraim said to him, "What is this that you have done to us, not to call us when you went to fight against Midian?" And they accused him fiercely.

Why they want to be in? Because they were interested in money. We always want to join the winning side. So here Ephraim comes and accuses Gideon, why you didn't call us when you are on a fight and probably Gideon didn't dare call them because they were big tribe, rich tribe, powerful tribe. They probably wouldn't want to join him anyway and God doesn't want so many. He only wants 300 men. So, they accuse him, and this is what Gideon said,

2 And 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 grape harvest of Abiezer?"

Abiezer is Gideon's tribe. Gleaning is when you actually have a vineyard, you harvest the vineyard to make your chardonnay, but the edges of your field you leave it for poor people. What Gideon is saying is that, the tit bits that scrapes off the table of yours is better by whole harvest. Gideon is so humble.

3 God has given into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. What have I been able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger against him subsided when he said this.

Gideon is a humble nice man when he confronts this big tribe. Now see what happens next. How he treats Succoth and Penuel, these are two small towns.

Judges 8:4-9 (ESV) And Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over, he and the 300 men who were with him, exhausted yet pursuing. 5 So he said to the men of Succoth, "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?" 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." 8 And from there he went up to Penuel, and spoke to them in the same way, and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. 9 And he

said to the men of Penuel, "When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower."

The way he treats the people of Ephraim, it is okay, I am such a small man, small tribe, but then he treats the men of Penuel and Succoth, "I will whack you because you didn't help me". Two different responses from Gideon. So, to people who are more superior to you, you are very humble. To people who are below you, you show superiority. It sounds very familiar. All of us do that. That's what we are like. That's the sign of self-absorption, because he treats people according to who they are, so that he will get the best glory. Jesus calls this,

John 5:43-44 (ESV) I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

The whole problem is self-absorption. We only want glory, we are absorbed with the glory for ourselves and we are not interested in getting from God. We are interested in getting from each other. So, we want to look good in front of each other faces. There is clue from the past, if we look in chapter 7. When they were fighting. When the men were charging down, the 300 men.

Judges 7:20 (ESV) Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow. And they cried out, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

This subtle clue gives the fact that Gideon was in it for himself as well but is that the only thing. Look at the favored past time of everybody. 15 years ago, if you told me that you took 15 photos of yourself and then you post it to all your friends. Your friends will say that there is something wrong with you. But nowadays we do this all the time. We are taking pictures of ourselves everywhere, when we eat, sit inside toilet, do whatever you are doing, you are sharing with others. So, the whole world to see how ridiculous this is, because we are so self-absorbed. In fact, CNN reported 250 people have died taking selfies. The most popular online platforms for teenagers, number one is YouTube. Because if you have a following on YouTube, you will be rich.

So therefore, the use of social media to gain glory. The more likes you have you feel good about it. We all want likes. If your close relatives don't like it, we get angry. Everyday we look at our Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat, because we have got a following. You are famous. It feeds into this self-absorption. It is not healthy. It is a first sign of spiritual decline.

Recently there was a movie that came out called, 'A Star is Born', starring Lady Gaga and she has been in four different interviews and she is saying this cheesy line. It says,

There can be 100 people in a room and 99 of them don't believe in you but all it takes is one and that was him,"

You want the glory, all it takes is one, you want the glory, it doesn't matter about everybody else, if my boyfriend likes me a star is born as it were. Now the symptoms of self-absorption.

What are the symptoms of self-absorption?

- You view circumstance from your personal point of view. So, when the budget comes out tomorrow, the first thing you see is how does it affect me. You take a cam photo, first things your eye look it, where am I. Do we notice, we tend to view all our circumstances and interpret it as our own. Like, the fellow's house caught fire, thank goodness I wasn't there. That's all you can think about.
- Offended or hurt by others. When someone comes out and says, all Bible study leaders must not be fat and you look at yourself, I am not fat. It applies to you.
- You mistrust or dislike people.
- You are upset at negative comment.
- Conversations and thoughts on own issues.

This is all self-absorption; the sign of decline and you can see this in a classical situation in the parables where Peter is climbing out of the boat and he is walking on water.

Matthew 14:29-30 (ESV) So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

When his eyes were on Jesus, he was okay. The moment he took his eyes off Jesus, he looked at the wind and he looked at himself, he was about to die. That is spiritual decline. Spiritual decline begins when we take our eyes off him and we start to take it on ourselves. Before he has to keep his eyes on God, you know why, he has got 120,000 enemies and he has got 300 men, you better look to God. When the odds are down to 15,000, he looks to himself and that's what happens to us.

B. PRIDE TRIGGERED BY SUCCESS

Success is not necessarily a good thing. If you look here Gideon defeats the two Midianite kings

Judges 8:10-12 (ESV) 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 got a great victory and then what happens, and you read

Judges 8:13-17 (ESV) Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres. 14 And he captured a young man of Succoth and questioned him. And he wrote down for him the officials and elders of Succoth, seventy-seven men. 15 And he came to the men of Succoth and said, "**Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me,**

Here is a tribe, which is a small town that didn't help him. When his men needed food, they didn't give any food. Because you see, how do I know you are on the winning side, you don't even have anybody captured and now he captures these two kings. He parades in front of them, I told you so.

Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are exhausted?" 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 slashes them, some would have died.

17 And he broke down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

This is genocide. Our leader, our spiritual leader, our judge commits genocide, no different from Ratko Mladic. Why did he commit genocide against the Bosnian Muslims

Abuse of Serbs by the Ottoman Empire, which occupied the former Yugoslavia for centuries

Why did Gideon killed all the men of Penuel?

Because they looked down on him. That's absolutely frightening and his revenge.

Judges 8:18-19 (ESV) 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." 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."

So, the reason why he is chasing this army all the way down south was not because God told him to do so, it is because revenge, best serve cold isn't it. He wants to kill them, personal revenge and then not only that he passes the hatred down to his son. That is what people do, when they got a grudge, they pass it down to the son and the son passes to the son and the whole cycle of violence continue.

Judges 8:20-21 (ESV) So he said to Jether his firstborn, "**Rise and kill them!**" But the young man did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a young man. 21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise yourself and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength." And Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the crescent ornaments that were on the necks of their camels.

These are not just ordinary ornaments. They are symbols of royalty. Here we contrast the two Gideons. They are like two different people. On one hand in chapter 6, he said

Judges 6:15 (ESV) And he said to him, "**Please, Lord**, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

On this side it says,

Judges 8:21b And Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and he took the **crescent ornaments** that were on the necks of their camels.

It is like two different faces of Gideon. One is the least of a smallest tribe, insecure sniveling nobody. The other guy is full of hatred and revenge. Ian Robertson wrote about the signs of success. He says, when you actually win things happen, your testosterone goes up and that triggers a brain hormone called dopamine that makes you feel great and people who win constantly win

again because of this. If you lose another hormone comes out called cortisol and makes you want to lose again the next time. So, the whole thing is to win all the time and it actually affects your brain.

The psychological profile of pride is either authentic or hubristic. Authentic pride makes you confident, productive, agreeable, conscientious and emotionally stable. Hubristic pride which is what I think Gideon has; egotism, arrogance, disagreeable, aggressive, low self-esteem and shame.

Self-worth is actually the underlying problem. So, if you look at this, those with hubristic pride are more at risk for hypomania which is overconfidence and impaired judgement. When you have got hubristic pride, you will overestimate yourself, you will not see things clearly. That's what it says. UK Foreign Secretary, Lord David Owen describes hubristic syndrome as reckless disinhibition, risk-blindness and difficulty in seeing things from other's people perspective. It fits Gideon. David Owen thinks it fits Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and George Bush.

Pride is often driven by poor self-worth and shame. We feel so badly about ourselves that we compensate by feeling superior. We look for others' flaws as a way to conceal our own.

Hubristic pride, you lose all sense of proportion, you lose all sense of judgement. That's what it does to you. I was reading into the life of Henry Ford. One of the genius he was. He started marketing the most successful car in the world, the Model T Ford and everybody else made cars for rich people. This guy made cars for the poor people. Because there are more poor people than rich people. His last car sold for 285 US dollars and he made 15 million of them. As he grew older and he has got more successful, hubristic pride took over, he became an anti-Semite. In fact, he wrote in his newspaper, the international Jew, the world's problem.

When they had World War I, people were killing each other all over the place, he chartered a streamliner called Osca II and he got inside there with 170 intellectuals, to drive this all the way to Europe to talk to the waring parties to settle the war. I alone can end the war, sound familiar. In fact, the New York Tribune headline was, **Great War ends Christmas Day, Ford to stop it.**

This is what happens to man. A man that was so full of pride that he had a beautiful son. His son's name was Edsel Ford. He made Edsel Ford, the president of his company in name only but he ran the company from behind and Edsel Ford was a brilliant sensitive engineer and he created many new ideas. He

wanted to put hydraulic breaks inside, because they didn't have hydraulic brakes. He had all sorts of bells and whistles and I remember watching the Discovery documentary on it. Ford will come inside, see the new innovations, he will take up a stick and smash it, you know why, you can't make perfection better. I created the Model T Ford and there is no other more perfect car in the world. Now if you have an idea like that you lose business. So therefore Chevrolet, GM, all the rest beat him in end, because impaired judgment. Pride does that to you.

Biblical pride is different,

Romans 12:3 (ESV) 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

He is not saying that humility is, "oh everybody is better than me, you come to my clinic, my nurse will operate on you and I will stand and watch". No, you actually have gifts and you need to judge your gifts, it is sober judgement and use them for the glory of God,

Galatians 6:3-5 (ESV) 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. 5 For each will have to bear his own load.

See we don't glorify God by minimizing the good gifts he has given us. We need to think of ourselves honestly in light of God's Word and take a healthy pride in what God is doing in us and through our lives. That's what we need to do. Our

True focus should be God

Jeremiah 9:23-24 (ESV) Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

So, if you remember, after the big victory what did Deborah and Barak do, sang a song, glorify God, the victory was there. What did Gideon do after his victory? Genocide. Big difference. One guy does genocide, the other guy sings a song. Singing song is good, because it glorifies God and brings out memory, because otherwise hubristic pride will destroy your life. That's why if you look in Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 8:11-17 (ESV) 11 "Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, 12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14 **then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,**

Gideon is within us, we can all wind up like him. Because your heart will be filled up and you forget it is because we forget that's why we are coming back to church to Sunday, we sing, we remember, we sing the psalms, we sing to each other, we encourage each other because we always tend to forget. Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in the light of God's holiness and our sinfulness. If you think you are a big deal, you stand next to God and see, it makes you very-very small.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.

Kay Poe and Esther Kim were best friends. They were both fighting on the US team to go to Sydney for the Olympics in the year 2000. They both studied under a teacher who is Esther Kim's father. Kay Poe was the better taekwondo artist. In the qualifying rounds, Kay Poe beat Esther Kim and everybody thought she is the gold medalist hope for United States. They went on to the other batches, Kay Poe unfortunately dislocated her knee just before the final qualifying match. Esther Kim won every match and so therefore there was the last match where she would fight Kay Poe and Esther Kim together but one of them had a dislocated knee and Esther Kim was the one who was going to win because you can't fight with one knee. Esther Kim gave up her spot, she forfeited her match, so that her friend Kay Poe which is supposed to be the better taekwondo fighter to go to Sydney. She gave a very difficult decision, she gave it up and she said,

"It felt like the only right thing to do," Kim said yesterday. "It did hurt but winning a gold medal isn't everything. There are other ways to be a champion. If I don't have a gold medal around my neck, it's in my heart."

That's what true humility is, wearing the medal in heart. The world recognizes it. If we look in the history books, they gave her an award, it is called the Citizen's True Sports Award. They paid for her trip to go down to Sydney to watch her friend fight in the Olympics. That's what it is about, other people's centeredness.

In fact, if you look at this is a marketing professor from the University of Texas, McCombs Business School. He writes,

"This means that regardless of how wealthy, famous, powerful, or attractive you are compared with others, the more you strive for superiority, the less happy you will be," "the less attention you pay to how much better or worse you are than others, the happier you're likely to be".

We strive so much for the brass ring and in the end, you get there, you actually feel that there is no happiness. In fact, there was a famous circus performer, her name is Jennifer Cohen and she writes this testimony about reaching to the top. Her circus went all the way to Europe and did very well and she writes,

Once that moment [of confidence] passed, I realized it was at that moment that I had succeeded, and yet I still felt that I wasn't good enough. I thought, when I'm at the top of my career, I will feel loved. I will be in front of audiences and that will fill me. I will feel good enough, I can take it in. I can receive. Once I am successful, I can feel good about myself. That didn't happen. And in fact, that is a lesson that, even though I learned it very acutely at that point in my life, I continue to have to relearn. And I forget and remember and forget and remember that success isn't what brings me happiness That feeling of self-worth has to come from a place inside.

There is a place inside that will give you self-worth and that place inside comes from the fact that there is a person who fills you with that self-worth on the cross 2000 years ago. When God himself went on the cross for you and me and when he does that for me, I don't have to strive for anything else. That's what it is all about, not pride and hubris.

C. IDOLATRY DISGUISED AS DEVOTION

This is very-very insidious, this affects all of us. Here you have

Judges 8:22-23 (ESV) 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."

So the people recognized this victory not as a spiritual effort. They recognized this as a political effort. There is Gideon, come and be our ruler. We tend to idolize people isn't it. We don't see that there are many other people or forces behind it. Compare this to chapter 7:2

Judges 7:2 (ESV) The Lord said to Gideon, "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

Before God did that miracle, God already knew their hearts. That if I had many soldiers then you will boast that you beat them rather than I did, but then when the men of Israel came to Gideon, they see this. They only see the political aspect. Then Judges 8

Judges 8:22-23 (ESV) 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." 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.**"

This is such a beautiful-beautiful word. He doesn't want to be king, but he wants to set up a fund.

Judges 8:24-26 (ESV) 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.) 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, besides 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.

The Gideon Fund, like the Tabung Malaysia Fund. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord but in the end, you collect the money. The Lord can have the fame, but I can have the money.

Judges 8:27-28 (ESV) And Gideon made an ephod of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And all Israel whored after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family. 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.

Ephod is a priestly garment that the priest will wear. It is very valuable. It has all gold threads and all these jewels in front. The good thing about the Ephod is that you have got this device called the Urim and Thummim. It is like those of you who go to the Buddhist temple and say, should I marry this boy or that boy. So it tells you about God. So therefore, maybe he had good intention, but it turned out to be something that the whole of Israel whored after it and became a snare

for Gideon. The word whored is terrible, it is prostituted. Why do they whored after it? Gideon had 70 sons, one of the sons had a big fight after he died. One of the son's escape and went up to Shechem to try to get enough support to gather his army and what he told that army there betrayed what his father taught him. It is already picked up in the line in the next chapter. That's why Israel whored after it and it became a snare

Judges 9:7 (ESV) When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and cried aloud and said to them, "**Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, that God may listen to you.**"

You take the mantle of God, you listen to me then God will listen to you. So here we have the whole of Israel whored. When you go to the prostitute it is a transactional relationship. So, we are talking about kind of religion which is devotion, but you must pay for the devotion. In fact, it is so transactional that they are so used to it that when Gideon died the people of Israel turned again and whored after Baal. What's the difference between being prostitute and you whored after Jehovah and Baal, doesn't matter. Either one will do. As long as I give you something and you give me something back. It is transactional faith, which is the problem.

Transactional view of faith is found amongst churches. There was a study done by Lifeway who produces materials for the Baptist.

- To receive material blessings from God, I have to do something for God. One third of the church believes that to get material blessing from God, I have to do something. Isn't this prostitution. I give you something, you give me something back.
- My church teachers that if I give more money to my church and charities, God will bless me in return. 38% said yes.
- 69% said God wants me to prosper financially.

It looks like a transactional faith. God wants me to prosper financially. The people who go to church very often once a week believe this more than the people who go once a month. Why? Because the people who go every week deserve it. You grace God with your company, so therefore you deserve to get more money. It is a transactional view of Christianity.

Other examples of transactional view is that

- If I pray the sinner's prayer, I'm home free for all eternity.

- If I read the Bible dutifully and have regular “quiet times”, I can expect God to look after me.
- If I attend church regularly, I’ll feel like I’m right with God.
- You wonder if God is punishing you if something bad happens

If you have these kinds of feelings, it means you actually have a transactional view of God. You are just prostituting yourself. If God doesn’t do something for you then bye-bye God. That’s why when Gideon died, they worshipped Baal and did they care about Gideon’s family, couldn’t care less because why, you are no longer in power, so I lock you up. This is kind of transactional idea is in the whole country, whole societies, I give you something. If you are not useful to me anymore, I am going to flush you down the toilet and Gideon’s family got what they deserved.

New Springs Church South Carolina writes in their website,

We commit to you that if you tithe for three months and God doesn't hold true to His promises of blessings, we will refund you 100% of your tithe. No questions asked!

It is like a transactional faith and there is no faith at all. Here is Gideon, in his brain, thank you praise God. In his heart, he is king, all but king in name. Here is Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 17:17 And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

We look down in Judges

Judges 8:30 Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. 31 And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he called his name Abimelech.

Abimelech means ‘my father is king’. We have this schizophrenic idea in life. In public, we are very-very holy, we are devoted to God but actually underneath we are idolaters to our own purposes. Don’t laugh at Gideon because this all of us. Here you actually see when he took the crescent ornaments, these are symbols of royalty. On one hand he tells people, he don’t want to be king. On the other hand, he is king in all but name. This became a snare to Gideon and his family, it actually cost him his faith.

John MacArthur writes

"Idolatry is having any false god – any object, idea, philosophy, habit, occupation, sport, or whatever that has one's primary concern and loyalty or that to any degree decreases one's trust in and loyalty to the Lord."

That's what idolatry is and here you actually have a situation where Gideon's idolatry hidden as devotion. He didn't make a Baal statue, he made an ephod, very holy. He didn't buy a Lamborghini, he bought some church buildings. It is very holy, but it actually became a snare for him. John Piper writes this beautiful passage on what true devotion is

The inner essence of worship is to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ.

That my dear friends is true faith. That is not a transactional faith. That is our calling for the rest of our lives.

D. FINISHING WELL MATTERS

Moses started off well, finished badly. Gideon started off well, ended poorly. Look at what happened, when he died Israel whored after Baal, because they have a transactional faith. If you have a transactional faith, when you die your children will also have a transactional faith. How do you know? We only pray when you are sick. You only pray when you are going to airplane. You only pray when you want something. That's a transactional faith. That's not a faith that finds satisfaction in God. That's not a faith that finds its fulfilment in God. That's a faith which is transactional and sometimes all we do is pray before you fly on airplane, it is a transactional faith. So, then you wonder when you die your legacy doesn't go down to your family, because they have exchanged Jehovah for Baal. That is what happening

Judges 9:4-5 (ESV) And they gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him. 5 And he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone

This one fellow when his father dies, takes all 70 and chops their head off on the stone. Sounds like a Chinese three kingdom kind of movie. It is terrible when you

become a royalty, there is only one king. All the rest must die, sounds very much like a royalty.

Abimelech comes to a bad end

Judges 9:52-54 (ESV) And Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire. 53 And a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. 54 Then he called quickly to the young man his armor-bearer and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

The worst thing in the world is to be killed by a woman. You can be cheated by a woman, but you cannot be killed by a woman. This is a horrible-horrible story, but it is real. It sounds like some real three kingdom kind of history novel. People begin well, they often end badly. Here is King Hezekiah, the king on his knees. This guy is always on his knees. They had about 195,000 Assyrian troops surround Jerusalem and they go and take it over and he had hardly any troops to fight them off and he tried to negotiate, they refused and he got on his knees and he prayed and the next day all of them were struck blind or something and the angel came and he defeated 195,000 troops without one loss of life and then one day he had illness. Isaiah came to him and say, look, you are going to die, prepare yourself. He fell on his knees again and said God please give me chance, a little bit more time and God gave him that time. Did he use it well?

Everybody heard how this miraculous healing, he was healed by God. People heard about it all the way in Babylon, so they wanted to see. So, the guy in Babylon came.

2 Kings 20:12-13 (ESV) At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 And Hezekiah welcomed them, and he showed them all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.

He was very clever. What do you think will happen? They will come and take you and they did and Isaiah actually prophesized this will happen to your children

2 Kings 20:18-19 (ESV) And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." 19 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the

Lord that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?"

According to Hezekiah, as long as he is fine, it was okay. As his sons are concerned, it is okay to sacrifice them. He was a man always on his knees for himself. Isn't it frightening? John Maxwell is a famous leadership guru, goes around the world and tells people how to be leaders and he shared how his story began. One day when one of his friends brought him a book and the book was entitled in front, the greatest story ever told. Wow! Fantastic isn't it. You open up, it was blank. Then the assistant told him that, John your life is before you, fill these pages with kind acts, good thoughts and matters your heart. Write a great story with your life. So, all of us will have a book, the greatest story ever told and what we do matters, what we do will write inside. People will know about it, they can read your book, but actually maybe or maybe not, I don't know.

During World War I there was a great war, a lot of countries participate in it and at the end of World War I, they actually honored all those who participated in the great war in 1918. They had a huge painting. It is called the Pantheon of War, hung up there. It is so huge. It filled the whole football field and you also have to build a special building to house it. It has 5000 figures painted. Different heroes, presidents, all the faces were there, by 150 artist. Right at the corner of this painting, there was a picture of one lone China man. You know why, because China sent 90,000 Chinese to help in World War I, but the whites thought they are no good, you can only dig toilets and trenches. So, dig toilets and trenches they did. 20,000 of them died digging trenches, maybe accidentally got shot. There are 40,000 World War I memorials, not even one recognize the Chinese and the lone China man in this picture was rubbed out later in latest picture that is in Kansas. If we are Chinese, you don't get recognized.

This is very sad. You lose 20,000 man, 90,000 went for help and nobody bothers because you are a China man. Isaiah says, everyone who is called by my name whom I created for my glory, I form and I made. It doesn't matter whether they remember you or not, our story lies within His history. We find our significance in His story and the greatest story ever told was the story of Jesus Christ, God who dies on the cross for us and we become the story that he died for me and when they actually evaluate your life, you answer to him because I created you for my glory, whom I form and I made. We can't judge from the outside.

William H Leslie in 1912 went to the Democratic Republic of Congo and he started a mission called the Vanga Mission to the Yansi people across the Kwilu River and what he would do is take this boat that goes to the river and he would

minister to the children across there and he would tell bible stories. He would also share the gospel. He did this relentlessly for 17 years of his life. Not many converts at all. In the end of his lifetime there, his mission there, he didn't get along with the elders of the tribe. They fought. They had the superficial forgiveness and apology, but he left. He went back to the United States heartbroken, a failed missionary. He died 9 years later on, nobody remembers him.

In 2010, a team led by Eric Ramsey with Tom Cox World Ministries went to the same place across the Kwilu River looking at Yansi people. What he found was a vibrant network of gospel preaching churches, who have actually created their own hymn book, sung in their own language, gospel based on the word of Christ. They actually saw a stone cathedral with a capacity of 1000 people. It is vibrant faith.

William Leslie died like the China man, not recognized until 83 years later on. Some of what you will do, nobody will ever see, your life would have been deemed been there, done that and nobody remembers you, but the greatest story ever told will be in the eyes of your God. He made you, he formed you for his glory. When we leave this room, we must put in front of our face the determination to live well and finish well. If you are young, you got your whole life ahead of you to glorify the Lord, do not let the seeds of self-preoccupation, pride, idolatry come in and destroy that you have kept aside for him. Be faithful, so that one day God will usher you into his kingdom and say, well done good and faithful servant. If you are old, your time is nearly up but at the last minute you can trip, Gideon tripped, Moses tripped, David tripped. If they can trip, so can we, but we leave this hall today, you know why, because not I live but Christ lives in me. So we commit our souls, our lives into his hands.