

Judges 8:2-9 - Thursday, November 8th, 2012

(2) So 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? (3) God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?" Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.

- Gideon's response to the men of Ephraim is so fascinating for a number of reasons not the least of which is he completely disarms them.
- By that I mean, he totally turns around what could have arguably been an all out slugfest with those who had so unfairly come against him.
- This is clearly wisdom from the Lord in the way he turns away their wrath, and holds his tongue in taking the posture of defending himself.

Proverbs 15:1-2 NKJV A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. (2) The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.

Charles Spurgeon – "A soft answer turneth away wrath. It showed a noble spirit in Gideon, that though the sole conqueror by right, he covets no monopoly of the praise, but even magnifies the exploits of others beyond his own. Better yield to absurd people, than engender strife among brethren."

- Not only is this good leadership, its supernatural discernment on Gideon's part. The reason I say that is because Gideon knew his place.
- In other words, he had supernaturally discerned that he was not the vessel with which God would use to put the Ephraimites in their place.
- I'm of the belief that the Holy Spirit spoke this to Gideon, and what's interesting is that it would come vis-à-vis Jephthah in Judges twelve.

- To me, this speaks to how that those who will complain, criticize, and even falsely accuse won't get away with it. God will deal with them!
- Absent a godly sorrow that leads to repentance, there will come a day when the heavy hand of the Lord will come down on complainers.
- It may not come in the way we think, by whom we think, or at the time we think, but God will do it in His time, His way, and for His glory.

- One more thought before we move on to verse four, and it has to do with another practical point as to the "why" behind Gideon's "what."
- More specifically, the reason why Gideon was so tactful in what his response was to the Ephraimites was that he knew to stay on message.
- Had he engaged in a battle against them, and not picked his battles wisely, it would have derailed Gideon from what God called him to do.

(4) When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who *were* with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. (5) Then 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 Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian." (6) And the leaders of Succoth said, "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?"

- I must confess these verses are so difficult to get my mind around without experiencing a righteous anger toward the Israelites of Succoth.
- I can't imagine how it is that they would refuse to help out these three hundred men who are their brethren in battle, exhausted no less.
- Even the way they refuse to offer bread to them is unbelievable in that they mock Gideon suggesting that the jury is still out on their victory.

- Here's what I'm thinking, it's as if they are telling Gideon, don't be so sure that you can finish this battle against the remaining Midianites.
- They are, in effect, saying to Gideon, "who do you think you are? Just because you defeated them thus far doesn't mean you're victorious.
- Then to add insult to injury, they sort of tell Gideon the jury is still out, and that they're unwilling to help out, until the verdict of victory is in.

- In other words what they're saying is that they don't want to help out their fellow Israelites, only to have them be defeated by the Midianites.
- Perhaps better said, they're afraid if they take God's side by standing with God's people, it may bring about retaliation if they're defeated.
- This sends shivers up and down my spine because it speaks to how we as Christians are prone to fear reprisal in taking a righteous stand.

- I would venture to say this is the number one reason Christians will not take a righteous stand in confronting sin, or Midianite evil, if you will.
- This type of Christian has no spiritual spine, and is only concerned for themselves in their carnal fear of retaliation were they to confront.
- It's the reason why Christians will keep their mouth shut, saying nothing to someone in sin. Simply put, they fear the repercussion from it.

(7) So Gideon said, "For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers!" (8) Then he went up from there 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) So he also spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!"

- If anyone had any doubt about Gideon's spiritual spine, using the prior metaphor, these verses certainly put that to bed once and for all.
- This is what I call a righteous anger, and a sanctified strength on Gideon's part in how he responds to both the men of Succoth and Penuel.
- Notice he says "when" and not "if" the Lord has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna, and I come back in peace." He knew that God would do it.

- I just can't get over that Gideon isn't even asking them to fight with him on the front lines, all he is asking for is some bread for support.
- The reason I point this out is that often times, those to whom we look to for support may not be there for us, nor come through to help us.
- It's in those times that God, in spite of them, will give us the victory without them, if for no other reason than to bring judgment on them.