

SERMON NOTES:

A Journey Through Judges and the Cost of Compromise

Part 7: The King No One Asked For

BIG Idea: When God's people forget God's rule, they become vulnerable to destructive leaders who reflect their compromise.

Application: Measure leadership by faithfulness and character, not charisma, confidence, or ambition.

Join us as we read the Bible together in 2026.

<https://bit.ly/ReadwithMe26>

What we tolerate in seed form, we may one day suffer in full bloom.

1. Compromise creates the conditions for corrupt leadership.

Judges 9:1-6 (NLT) *Abimelech Rules over Shechem*

¹ One day Gideon's son Abimelech went to Shechem to visit his uncles—his mother's brothers. He said to them and to the rest of his mother's family, ²“Ask the leading citizens of Shechem whether they want to be ruled by all seventy of Gideon's sons or by one man. And remember that I am your own flesh and blood!”

³ So Abimelech's uncles gave his message to all the citizens of Shechem on his behalf. And after listening to this proposal, the people of Shechem decided in favor of Abimelech because he was their relative. ⁴ They gave him seventy silver coins from the temple of Baal-berith, which he used to hire some reckless troublemakers who agreed to follow him. ⁵ He went to his father's home at Ophrah, and there, on one stone, they killed all seventy of his half brothers, the sons of Gideon. But the youngest brother, Jotham, escaped and hid.

⁶ Then all the leading citizens of Shechem and Beth-millo called a meeting under the oak beside the pillar at Shechem and made Abimelech their king.

Not everyone who wants authority is called to lead.

A people who lose gratitude eventually lose discernment.

2. Godly warning is mercy before judgment.

Judges 9:7-21 (NLT)

⁷ When Jotham heard about this, he climbed to the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted,

“Listen to me, citizens of Shechem!

Listen to me if you want God to listen to you!

⁸ Once upon a time the trees decided to choose a king.

First they said to the olive tree,

'Be our king!'

⁹ But the olive tree refused, saying,
'Should I quit producing the olive oil
that blesses both God and people,
just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

¹⁰ "Then they said to the fig tree,
'You be our king!'

¹¹ But the fig tree also refused, saying,
'Should I quit producing my sweet fruit
just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

¹² "Then they said to the grapevine,
'You be our king!'

¹³ But the grapevine also refused, saying,
'Should I quit producing the wine
that cheers both God and people,
just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

¹⁴ "Then all the trees finally turned to the thornbush and said,
'Come, you be our king!'

¹⁵ And the thornbush replied to the trees,
'If you truly want to make me your king,
come and take shelter in my shade.

If not, let fire come out from me
and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'"

¹⁶ Jotham continued, "Now make sure you have acted honorably and in good faith by making Abimelech your king, and that you have done right by Gideon and all of his descendants. Have you treated him with the honor he deserves for all he accomplished? ¹⁷ For he fought for you and risked his life when he rescued you from the Midianites. ¹⁸ But today you have revolted against my father and his descendants, killing his seventy sons on one stone. And you have chosen his slave woman's son, Abimelech, to be your king just because he is your relative.

¹⁹ "If you have acted honorably and in good faith toward Gideon and his descendants today, then may you find joy in Abimelech, and may he find joy in you. ²⁰ But if you have not acted in good faith, then may fire come out from Abimelech and devour the leading citizens of Shechem and Beth-millo; and may fire come out from the citizens of Shechem and Beth-millo and devour Abimelech!"

²¹ Then Jotham escaped and lived in Beer because he was afraid of his brother Abimelech.

The things one generation tolerates, the next generation may normalize.

Ignored warnings become fulfilled consequences.

3. Sin eventually collapses under its own weight.

Judges 9:22-57 (NLT) *Shechem Rebels against Abimelech*

²² After Abimelech had ruled over Israel for three years, ²³ God sent a spirit that stirred up trouble between Abimelech and the leading citizens of Shechem, and they revolted. ²⁴ God was punishing Abimelech for murdering Gideon's seventy sons, and the citizens of Shechem for supporting him in this treachery of murdering his brothers. ²⁵ The citizens of Shechem set an ambush for Abimelech on the hilltops and robbed everyone who passed that way. But someone warned Abimelech about their plot.

²⁶ One day Gaal son of Ebed moved to Shechem with his brothers and gained the confidence of the leading citizens of Shechem. ²⁷ During the annual harvest festival at Shechem, held in the temple of the local god, the wine flowed freely, and everyone began cursing Abimelech. ²⁸ "Who is Abimelech?" Gaal shouted. "He's not a true son of Shechem, so why should we be his servants? He's merely the son of Gideon, and this Zebul is merely his deputy. Serve the true sons of Hamor, the founder of Shechem. Why should we serve Abimelech?" ²⁹ If I were in charge here, I would get rid of Abimelech. I would say to him, 'Get some soldiers, and come out and fight!'"

³⁰ But when Zebul, the leader of the city, heard what Gaal was saying, he was furious. ³¹ He sent messengers to Abimelech in Arumah, telling him, "Gaal son of Ebed and his brothers have come to live in Shechem, and now they are inciting the city to rebel against you. ³² Come by night with an army and hide out in the fields. ³³ In the morning, as soon as it is daylight, attack the city. When Gaal and those who are with him come out against you, you can do with them as you wish."

³⁴ So Abimelech and all his men went by night and split into four groups, stationing themselves around Shechem. ³⁵ Gaal was standing at the city gates when Abimelech and his army came out of hiding. ³⁶ When Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, "Look, there are people coming down from the hilltops!"

Zebul replied, "It's just the shadows on the hills that look like men."

³⁷ But again Gaal said, "No, people are coming down from the hills. And another group is coming down the road past the Diviners' Oak."

³⁸ Then Zebul turned on him and asked, "Now where is that big mouth of yours? Wasn't it you that said, 'Who is Abimelech, and why should we be his servants?' The men you mocked are right outside the city! Go out and fight them!"

³⁹ So Gaal led the leading citizens of Shechem into battle against Abimelech. ⁴⁰ But Abimelech chased him, and many of Shechem's men were wounded and fell along the road as they retreated to the city gate. ⁴¹ Abimelech returned to Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his brothers out of Shechem.

⁴² The next day the people of Shechem went out into the fields to battle. When Abimelech heard about it, ⁴³ he divided his men into three groups and set an ambush in the fields. When Abimelech saw the people coming out of the city, he and his men jumped up from their hiding places and attacked them. ⁴⁴ Abimelech and his group stormed the city gate to keep the men of Shechem from getting back in, while Abimelech's other two groups cut them down in the fields. ⁴⁵ The battle went on all day before Abimelech finally captured the city. He killed the people, leveled the city, and scattered salt all over the ground.

⁴⁶ When the leading citizens who lived in the tower of Shechem heard what had happened, they ran and hid in the temple of Baal-berith. ⁴⁷ Someone reported to Abimelech that the citizens had gathered in the

temple, ⁴⁸ so he led his forces to Mount Zalmon. He took an ax and chopped some branches from a tree, then put them on his shoulder. “Quick, do as I have done!” he told his men. ⁴⁹ So each of them cut down some branches, following Abimelech’s example. They piled the branches against the walls of the temple and set them on fire. So all the people who had lived in the tower of Shechem died—about 1,000 men and women.

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech attacked the town of Thebez and captured it. ⁵¹ But there was a strong tower inside the town, and all the men and women—the entire population—fled to it. They barricaded themselves in and climbed up to the roof of the tower. ⁵² Abimelech followed them to attack the tower. But as he prepared to set fire to the entrance, ⁵³ a woman on the roof dropped a millstone that landed on Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull.

⁵⁴ He quickly said to his young armor bearer, “Draw your sword and kill me! Don’t let it be said that a woman killed Abimelech!” So the young man ran him through with his sword, and he died. ⁵⁵ When Abimelech’s men saw that he was dead, they disbanded and returned to their homes.

⁵⁶ In this way, God punished Abimelech for the evil he had done against his father by murdering his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ God also punished the men of Shechem for all their evil. So the curse of Jotham son of Gideon was fulfilled.

When image matters more than repentance, destruction can be at the door, and pride will still pose for a picture.

Galatians 6:7-8a (NLT)

⁷ Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature.