

Series: God is the Hero of this Story: A Study Through Judges
Judges 8 – What Could Have Been... / Ryan Patty / 6.04.23

Scripture Reading:

Hebrews 12:1-2 – Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, 2 keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Do you ever think about the choices or decisions that led you to where you are today? Choices of college or no college, of who to marry, of where to live, of whether to move away from family or to be near family. OR about the choices you didn't make that could have taken you elsewhere? The options not chosen. Now as those who believe in the sovereign hand of God over our lives, we trust that where he has us now is where he wants us now, but nonetheless we make choices, we make decisions, that do affect things.

A simple example is that I am a Dallas Cowboys fan. I was born into it you might say, so maybe the original choice wasn't made by me, but year after year I suffer through keeping that choice. They are my team. They are the greatest team. And although we haven't won a Super Bowl in almost 30 years, this year is the year. It WILL happen. And that choice I make, to root for the Cowboys, has ramifications. I have to hear about every loss from some of you... Sometimes I wonder about me choosing another team... but alas it didn't happen.

But I'll keep sharing while I'm going down this road. I am a dreamer, I like excitement and adventure and sometimes can't shut my mind off from thinking about what is to come. And so my wife, who likes stability I might add, has often had to put up with me walking in and saying, I think we should move to Australia, or I hear there is a need for more churches in the Middle East, maybe we should go plant there? Or babe, why don't we just sell our house, live off the little bit of equity, and move overseas so I can do more school (trust me, that's her favorite one). She keeps me grounded... Nonetheless, I sometimes think what might have been if I had done things differently and then the Holy

Spirit gently reminds me that God is in control and day-by-day faithfulness is more important than any plans I might dream up.

And as we turn from Judges 7 to Judges 8, we are left in a way asking that same question: what could have been with Gideon? Because in Chapter 6, Gideon is called by God. He is the mighty warrior that the angel addresses. And he is called by God to deliver God's people. So he tears down the altar of Baal as a sign of trusting in Yahweh. And then last week Jeff showed from chapter 7 how God through Gideon and a few hundred men rout the Midianites and deliver God's people from their oppressive rule. **Saving faith, as Jeff said, is always tested.** Gideon experienced that and so do we. But then, comes chapter 8, and our question this morning of what could have been... And we are left asking that question, what could have been, because in many ways the tension throughout Scripture is a question of "who?" Who will be the one to crush the serpent's head from Genesis 3? Who will be the better Adam? And so as we read through the Scriptures that question of *who* is in the back of our minds and in the back of the Israelites minds. Is it Noah? Abraham? Moses? Joshua? Now Gideon? Now let me spoil the movie for you, it's not Gideon either. But as we will see from Chapter 8, what could have been is promising, but this last season of Gideon's life is not what you hope to see...and we need to learn from this in our Christian discipleship.

Because the old saying is true of life and it is true here, and it's true of the Christian faith, it's not how you start, it's how you finish.

So our main point this morning from Judges 8 is as follows: To finish well we must continually look to the God of our salvation.

When we look to something or someone else, or we fail in our continuous looking and become lazy with our discipline, we end up not finishing well. Now in saying this, let me provide the brief qualifier that just as our salvation is from God so is our sanctification. We are His from beginning to end. Nonetheless, we are still held responsible for the things we do, and our actions, choices, and decisions have consequences. Gideon, as Hebrews 11 tells us, was a man of faith. But here in this chapter we must learn from the negative, the things not to do.

Three scenes from the chapter help us to do this:

1. Division (8:1-17)
2. Downfall (8:18-27)
3. Death (8:28-35)

At the end of each scene I will provide some application for us today.

1. Division

Look with me at the end of Judges 7. Gideon and the men have routed the Midianites and are seeking to finish the job. It is clear that God's hand was upon them throughout chapter 7 as only 300 were allowed to fight in order that God might get the glory. Then Gideon calls out to the tribe of Ephraim to come and help them intercept the Midianites. Which they do. They kill the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and bring them to Gideon, except they are mad. They didn't get to be a part of the original gang. They feel left out. And so the division starts. In chapter 6, Gideon had to fight against Baal. In chapter 7, it was against Midian, and now in chapter 8, the fight is within Israel itself. Look with me at chapter 8, starting in verse 1.

The men of Ephraim said to him, "Why have you done this to us, not calling us when you went to fight against the Midianites?" And they argued with him violently. 2 So he said to them, "What have I done now compared to you? Is not the gleaning of Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abiezer? 3 God handed over to you Oreb and Zeeb, the two princes of Midian. What was I able to do compared to you?" When he said this, their anger against him subsided.

Ephraim is a bit of a prima-donna here. Their honor is slighted and they didn't get called out, they didn't get consulted about what to do. And here we see Gideon's diplomacy as a leader on full display. In verse 2 he quotes a proverb and shows humility as a leader. He says, "Is not the gleaning of Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abiezer?" Remember that Gideon comes from the clan of Abiezer, so he is in effect saying, the vintage of Abiezer is

insignificant compared to the gleaning of Ephraim. In even more straight-forward terms, he's saying "the best the Abiezerites can produce is less than the scraps off the Ephraimites table."

And then Gideon just makes the straight-forward observation, "Look you got to kill Oreb and Zeeb, what more honor could you want?" And you know what? It works! Gideon could have said a lot of other things, but the humility shown here is something to be commended. But then right away the division amongst Israel continues...

4 Gideon and the three hundred men came to the Jordan and crossed it. They were exhausted but still in pursuit. 5 He said to the men of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to the troops under my command,[a] because they are exhausted, for I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

6 But the princes of Succoth asked, "Are Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands that we should give bread to your army?"

7 Gideon replied, "Very well, when the Lord has handed Zebah and Zalmunna over to me, I will tear[b] your flesh with thorns and briers from the wilderness!" 8 He went from there to Penuel and asked the same thing from them. The men of Penuel answered just as the men of Succoth had answered. 9 He also told the men of Penuel, "When I return safely, I will tear down this tower!"

Gideon goes and captures the kings and then returns to Succoth, first getting the names of the elders who said no to him.

15 Then he went to the men of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. You taunted me about them, saying, 'Are Zebah and Zalmunna now in your power that we should give bread to your exhausted men?'" 16 So he took the elders of the city, and he took some thorns and briers from the wilderness, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them. 17 He also tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

The division continues as men of Succoth and Penuel, cities belonging to the tribes of Israel resist efforts to aid Gideon out of fear of retaliation. What if he doesn't win? What if they help and Zebah and Zalmunna come back and punish them? But the irony is that it was Gideon, the judge of their country, who came back to punish them.

Some things to note here. This is the first time that elders are mentioned in Judges, as the cities were spread out and the elders were providing governance for the individual cities. And what does he do to these older, respected men? He whips them with thorns and briers. He shames them in front of their clan and town. And even worse, he comes to Penuel and not only destroys their tower but kills all the men of the city. Now we have no idea if they were saying worse things or not, or even boasting in the strength of their tower, but this is his own kinsmen, his own people! What is happening here?

The insidious nature of sin is reaping division amongst God's people. You see, previously Gideon was fighting *with* the Lord. He was fighting *for* the Lord. But this, this is something else. Even in how he kills the captured Zebah and Zalmunna it shows that things have gotten personal. This is no longer for Yahweh's glory but in a way for Gideon's glory. He will not be slighted. He will not show forgiveness to these elders who clearly messed up. He will have his vengeance.

Multiple things can be simultaneously true here. The elders should have sided with and helped Gideon and his men. And Gideon should have forgiven their wrong-doing. The elders didn't lead their people well, and when they sided with Israel's enemies they were treated as Israel's enemies. In the same vein, Gideon's version of justice was too much. It only deepened the division that was happening in Israel. What can we learn from this? Two things

1) Never be afraid of the "what if"...

a) What do I mean by this? The elders in these towns were concerned about possible retaliation, well "what if" you don't capture them Gideon? Or "what if" they come back here after we supported you? But what is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. They should have supported Gideon and his men. If I can be so frank, it was stupid and wrong for them not to. Clearly, Yahweh was giving them support and victory, and ironically as they sought to avoid the wrath of Midian they received the wrath of Gideon. So don't be afraid of the what if. In your Christian walk, in your discipleship, God through His Word, through his natural law, through our conscience, and through His Holy Spirit, gives us clear indication of what we are

to do and not do. And as a Christian, you should never fear the reprisal or punishment that comes from following God. Ever.

- i) Sometimes we can crave safety and security, like these elders, so much that we venture into faithlessness. We are liked at work, we are liked by neighbors, isn't it easier to not speak up in the midst of what is wrong. We worry about what might happen to us if we evangelize, if we even talk about Jesus, if we boldly state that we are a Christian or we actually call sin, sin. **We fear the punishment of man more than we fear God.** This is what the great Christian martyrs singing hymns of praise as they were slain understood. Why should they fear those who can only kill the body?
- b) We are called to faithfulness to God and His Word. We do not go out seeking to be punished or be fired or be maligned, but if it's between that or siding against the things of God, (especially in this month that has been co-opted by the culture to celebrate sin) may it never be so that we were afraid of the "what if."
- c) I recently taught on Daniel 3 to the students, the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. My favorite OT story growing up. And I cannot think of a better example of not being scared of the "what if." I told the students then that if everyone else is bowing down to the idols of this world, I want you to be the ones who are still standing, refusing to do so. Those three young men were not scared of the "what if..." in fact the what if came true! But notice their bold statement in the face of the mightiest king at the time: Daniel 3:17-18 – 17 If the God we serve exists, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. 18 But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."
- d) Christian faithfulness means you fear God more than you fear what man can do to you. Come what may, you count the costs and you follow him. This world will hate you, Jesus told his disciples, because it hated him. Whether it's shame, scorn, pity, a lost job, or jail, those who know and love God never fear the "what if" because they know who they ultimately belong to. Their fear of God is greater than their fear of anything else.

2) Sometimes the people of God can be a great disappointment

a) If you have been in the church for any time, then you know this. And if you are a new believer or you are here and wondering what this Christianity thing is all about, then let me tell you. We are collectively a people who have trusted in Jesus Christ, and him alone for our salvation. We recognize that we have sinned, we have missed God's standards for us, we have sinned before God and we deserve his rightful punishment, we deserve hell. The lie of Satan is that in and of ourselves we are good enough. The common thought today is that if I just do enough good works, just a little more good than bad, then I'll be okay. I'll get to go to Heaven... But the Christian doesn't believe that because that's not what God has revealed through His Word. Our good works do nothing to change our standing before God in terms of salvation.

i) *The good news that these Scriptures tell us is that God did not leave us to ourselves, (did not let us keep deceiving ourselves) but that he is graciously redeeming sinners because of the sacrifice of His Son Jesus on the cross so that all who place their faith in him can be forgiven, can have eternal life with God, and can delight in knowing God and living for him. The amazing thing about the Gospel, about this good news of Christ, is that it is a gift to be received not earned. **It is the greatest news and the greatest reality anyone can ever know and experience.***

b) And so in light of that, what in the world do I mean by that the people of God can be a great disappointment. Well, these elders of the city were a part of Israel, they were a part of the people of God. And the truth about the people of God then and now is that we disappoint one another, we make mistakes, we fall short. We sin against one another in word, thought or deed. It is true that we are saved, yet we are still working out our sanctification, growing in Godliness, and seeking to be conformed to the image of Christ. So we must not allow these moments of disappointment to disillusion us in the faith. We expect that other sinners will let us down, and we learn and grow in what it means to practice forgiveness, to seek repentance, to seek out the brother or sister that has sinned against us and practice Matthew 18. More often than not, the people of God will be there with you thick or thin, they will be encouraging you and motivating you in your walk with God, seeking to build you up and also hold you accountable, but at times, they will disappoint you. Don't allow that to be a reason for you to turn from

God, or turn from the church, but rather understand what it means that we live in this in-between and resolve to not let those disappointments fester into greater things.

- i) Practically then, seek reconciliation in all things and fight diligently for the unity of the church. I guess I could have just said that statement...

2. Downfall

First we saw the division that began to creep into Israel, and now we see the downfall. After killing Zeebah and Zalmunah, Judges 8, starting in verse 22

22 Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you as well as your sons and your grandsons, for you delivered us from the power of Midian."

23 But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you."

24 Then he said to them, "Let me make a request of you: Everyone give me an earring from his plunder." Now the enemy had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites.

25 They said, "We agree to give them." So they spread out a cloak, and everyone threw an earring from his plunder on it. 26 The weight of the gold earrings he requested was forty-three pounds of gold, in addition to the crescent ornaments and ear pendants, the purple garments on the kings of Midian, and the chains on the necks of their camels. 27 Gideon made an ephod from all this and put it in Ophrah, his hometown. Then all Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

As we said earlier, in the story of Gideon we are left wondering, what could have been. Even with the punishing of the elders there is still hope! Yet here, the downfall is apparent. Look back at v. 23. Israel wants to make him king and his descendents to be kings. They are in effect saying, "assume the authority you are entitled to! Look at all that you have done! You must be king! You slayed the other kings, you are the king-slayer, become our king! Start a dynasty." Well, at least most of Israel was saying this. The elders of Succoth were probably too timid and the men of Penuel were all dead. But the rest! The rest want him as king.

But he says no! The Lord will rule over you.

And at this point, we are thinking yes! Good job Gideon. Don't say anything else... Isn't it always human nature though to not know when to stop. To say something good then to sour it with the next words out of our mouths? I'm particularly calling out myself here, not any of you... Gideon says no! And then there is more unfortunately.

He requests an earring from the plunder. And from these earrings the gold is melted and he makes an ephod, which is a special breastplate that the priest would have worn in the temple. Two ways to look at this, maybe he was seeking to point to God by making the breastplate of a priest. Maybe he was trying to remind the people of the priests in the tabernacle and how they should look to Yahweh. He was hoping to serve as God's spokesperson, as a judge, to continue to hear from the Lord and administer justice. It was simply Israel that loved the ephod with a godless passion. A few think that. But I'm not so sure.

I think this ephod served as an idol. In many ways, from taking spoil from Israel, to setting up shop in his hometown with the ephod, to taking the crescent ornaments of Zeebah and Zalmunnah, Gideon was setting himself up as a king of sorts even though he didn't want the specific title. Even what he names his son, which we will see in a moment, Abimilech, means my dad is king! I think there is more going on here than meets the eye. But the writer of Scripture right away says that the ephod was set up, and then Israel prostituted themselves before it. From tearing down the altar of Baal in chapter 6, to now, in some way, residing over a people who are once again prostituting themselves before an idol. This is a downfall of epic proportions.

Because notice that last verse, "it became a snare for both Gideon and his household." Rather than leading well, modeling continued faithfulness, pointing the people to the fear of God.

Two things to be mindful of here:

- 1) Guard against spiritual pride
 - a) Gideon was used by God. Clearly a man of faith as Hebrews 11 says. Yet, in this downfall we see his pride come through. Not wanting to be king, but subtly acting as king. Allowing idolatry in his hometown

and to affect his family. You see, apart from maybe Samson, none of the judges were given as much by Yahweh. Yet here this is the first time idolatry is sponsored by the leader of the nation and his family.

b) He was used mightily by God! Yet through the division with Succoth and Penuel and now this Ephod, he did not remain humble, did not keep giving Yahweh the credit. Pride crept in. **One writer says, “It is ever our danger that after being used of God in some way, we mouth humility but practice pride.”**

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c) We mouth humility, but practice pride. Such a striking statement. All of us struggle in various ways to make how we live (our practice) match our theology. What we know to be true to actually be lived out and applied in our lives. We struggle with the disconnect, as sin seeks to warp our affections and devotion to God all the time. We might know occasions of the Spirit’s power, but lack the Spirit’s wisdom.

d) It is all the more imperative, then, that we guard against spiritual pride. As we mature in the Christian walk, as we see God move in our lives and in our church, as we are even used by God in the lives of others, let us remember as Philippians 2:13 says, that 13 For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

e) He is the one at work and the one who deserves the glory in anything we accomplish. One of my favorite verses is Paul’s question to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 4, He asks, “What do you have that you did not receive?” This is a great verse to meditate on.

i) This church is puffed up with spiritual pride, they are bragging in ways about their spiritual gifts and abusing the uses of them. And that question so swiftly removes any pride from the equation. What do you have that you didn’t receive? Why can you be prideful at the things God is doing through you knowing that it is at his prerogative that he chooses to do so. He uses broken vessels for his purposes. Nothing in us should cause us to be spiritually prideful. Rather, as we grow in grace and mature in our understanding of the Gospel, and mature in our understanding of the depravity of sin, if anything *these things* drive us to our knees all the more in humble praise to God that he would condescend to save and redeem us. We must guard against it, for it only leads to more downfall as it did for Gideon.

2) Sometimes the servants of God can be a great disappointment

- a) I said earlier that sometimes God's people can be a great disappointment, but I also want to be more specific in saying so can the leaders that God uses. I recognize there are some here who have been hurt in various ways by leaders in the church, by pastors as well. They have disappointed you or possibly even worse. Gideon here in Judges 8 is the leader of Israel and in many ways he is a disappointment to those who look to him. So in light of this, we must recognize a few things. **James says that not all should become teachers, because you know that we will be judged with a greater strictness.** Pastor/elders are held to a higher standard. In the same vein they are to be above reproach, to model Godliness for God's people. Yet, they, we, are still fallen. Still being sanctified ourselves. Still fighting the sinful flesh. So in light of that, it is imperative that you know what to expect from your leaders within the church. What the qualifications are and how they should be leading. All of God's people should know this.
- b) But second, leaders in the church will at some point disappoint you. I'm by no means excusing the sins or errors of the leaders of God's people; hear me clearly here. But it should both temper our expectations and cause us to look *past* the leaders to the true Shepherd of God's elect, to the one in whom there is no sin, who never disappoints, and to whom no charges can be brought against. Jesus Christ our Lord. He alone is the one who can carry our burdens and he alone is the one who will never disappoint.
- i) **So please, once more, hear me here**, I am not excusing the sins of those leading the church. In my ordination service at our previous church I remember my pastor saying "Ryan, there is no sin that God can't forgive. But there are sins that will disqualify you from ministry." Sin has consequences and when pastor/elders or leaders in the church sin it can have lasting effects. Look to Christ, only put your hope in trust in Him. No one else.
 - ii) As the Israelites were crying out for Gideon to be their king, they should have been looking past Gideon to the Lord, Yahweh, who was their king.

Our last scene from Gideon's life, number 3

3. Death

Physical yes, but the implication for Israel once again is a spiritual death too.

28 So Midian was subdued before the Israelites, and they were no longer a threat. The land had peace for forty years during the days of Gideon. 29 Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) son of Joash went back to live at his house.

30 Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, since he had many wives. 31 His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech. 32 Then Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 When Gideon died, the Israelites turned and prostituted themselves by worshiping the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. 34 The Israelites did not remember the Lord their God who had rescued them from the hand of the enemies around them. 35 They did not show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) for all the good he had done for Israel.

Our main point this morning is that to finish well, we must continually look to the God of our salvation. And I want us to feel this tension with Gideon as well. I've said twice before that the author of Hebrews recounts him as a man of faith, he clearly had faith! But in the midst of this are failures and we need to see both sides.

This last section of the chapter really serves to round out and summarize the end of his life. Couple things to note: Notice in verse 28 that the land had peace for forty years. This is the last time such a claim will be made in Judges. The land and therefore Israel will no longer recover its rest. Israel forfeits this. Rather than just seeing the cycle repeating in judges we must realize that it is a downward spiral, even more so throughout the rest of the book, as sin is abounding more and more, **and Israel is reaping the consequences.**

And then the text says Gideon had many wives, contrary to God's intent. And not only wives but a concubine living in another city that he would go and visit. And it's this concubine who gives him another son and who he aptly names Abi-melek, my father is king. Wait until you hear about him next week...

And then Gideon dies. The land had peace and he dies, and like a glass window being shattered the peace will be gone. Look again verse 33, *When Gideon died, the Israelites turned and prostituted themselves by worshiping the Baals and made Baal-berith their god.*

They go from worshiping Yahweh, to the ephod, and now back to Baal. It's sad. But at this point things just keep getting worse. The downward spiral of sin and idolatry continue.

In closing, two things to be mindful of in light of this physical and spiritual death:

1. Never take sin lightly

- a. At this point in Judges it can be easy to not be surprised at sin anymore. We grow a bit callous to reading about it and just assume that's how it's supposed to be. But it's not. The book of Judges is shocking and in many ways it is meant to shock us, to wake us from our stupor and to see that this is not how things are supposed to be. They are not supposed to be forsaking the God who saves and redeems them, they are not supposed to be turning away from Yahweh time and time again, but they do. As I said a few weeks ago, they play the role of the harlot and give themselves to another.
- b. But what I want us to see is that sin deceives. It is insidious. It makes us think it's just one small thing, just a little lie, just a quick look at that website, just a quick break while we should be working, just that little word about someone else that we just don't really see as gossip...
 - i. Even look here at Gideon, **just a few earrings here, just a golden ephod there, and the whole country is turned away from God. When you think lightly of sin you will think lightly of God (2).** Why would you need Jesus to die for you? Your sins aren't that bad? Friends, the reality of the Scriptures is that sin is serious, it's deathly serious, it is not to be taken lightly, so if you find yourself even now thinking you're only doing something small, only sinning a little here and there when no one's watching, you are deceived more than you know. You are, in my understanding of Hebrews 6, holding Christ up to contempt, bringing reproach and shame upon His name. Taking sin lightly is a grave mistake.

- c. It is as C. S. Lewis famously wrote in the Screwtape letters,
“It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.” - C. S. Lewis, Screwtape Letters
- d. Notice there about the safe road to hell. It is the one where there is not a warning, is not a sign-post, it is the one where sin is taken lightly. So here is your warning: My friend, stop. Don't play with sin, don't take it lightly. It will tear your life apart, it will tear your family apart. Yes, God through Christ will forgive you, but the consequences are real. Very real.
- e. Those who have truly experienced the grace of God, the freedom of Christ, will come to hate all the more the sin that so easily entangles them. May we be a church that prays often that the Holy Spirit would show us areas of sin in our lives, and that we would by God's grace turn from those sins. Even more, a part of our membership covenant is that we would pray for one another, seek to hold one another accountable. One of the BEST things you can do for your Christian walk and maturity is to invite others into your life, warts and all, and allow some accountability into your life. Don't hide things, and don't take sin lightly.

2. Pursue a Godly legacy

- a. In this time between two worlds, death is real. More often than not we want to push it away, to not think about it, to have it at the back of our minds rather than at the forefront. But one of my favorite books of the Bible is Ecclesiastes and when you read that book it's hard to get away from the reality of death. I taught through it a couple years ago and one of my main points was this: You are going to die one day. Apart from Christ returning, that is 100 percent in your future. Therefore, allow that reality to shape how you live today. That's in part the message of that book. But death is coming. And with the death of Gideon here there are some things we should consider.
 - i. This past week my family and I were out of town in Tulsa, where I partially grew up, and then Springfield, Mo for my wife's brother's wedding. And while in Tulsa we visited with my grandma. She is my last remaining grandparent, and I'll be honest. It was hard. She's only 83, but she has

intense pain in her knees and back, it's causing her to hunch over, the pain medication doesn't do much for her, and she is burdened by it. With tears in her eyes she's asking me to pray for her, and I did. We couldn't really visit that much before she would have to go lay down again. But while we are visiting, you have my four young children, not understanding any of that, right next to her, playing at the table we are eating at, or looking at all the pictures in her living room, and pointing out that dad used to have hair.. And I was struck as I was thinking about the end of life and then the death that we see in this passage. Notice once more, the ending.

- ii. 34 The Israelites did not remember the Lord their God who had rescued them from the hand of the enemies around them. 35 They did not show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) for all the good he had done for Israel.
- iii. They did not remember God, and in essence they did not remember Gideon since they didn't show kindness to his house. In light of this passage, in light of my grandmother's health, I couldn't help but to think about what it means to be remembered, what it means to leave a legacy. My kids will have next to no memories of their great-grandma. My great-grandchildren will have little to no memory of me most likely. We are here and we are gone. This should humble us all in different ways, but also cause us to think about the legacy we want to leave.

So often we can be so distracted by the pursuits of the world we don't realize the type of legacy we are leaving. We don't realize that our time and attention can be so easily spent on other things rather than on the main and important things. Husbands, you are called to lovingly lead your wives, looking to Christ as your example. Leave a legacy of that. Wives, you are called to lovingly submit and respect your husbands, leave a Godly legacy of that. Fathers and mothers, leave a legacy of discipling your children, talking to them about the things of God, modeling a love for God yourself, so that they not only hear it but they see it in the day to day. Those who are single, what type of legacy are you leaving in the church and in your workplace. Those of you who are retired, are you wasting those years or leaving a legacy of Godliness in them. Leave a legacy, unlike Israel did here, of remembering God and honoring him throughout your time on this earth, for as long as God gives you breath to breathe.

Our great-grandchildren might not remember us, but our kids will, our other family members will, our coworkers and neighbors will. Pursue a Godly legacy.

The legacy I hope to leave in ministry is what the late German pastor Nikolaus Zinzendorf said, “Preach the Gospel, die, be forgotten.” And in many ways that is true for every Christian seeking to be faithful to the great commission. Preach the Gospel, disciple others, leave that legacy of faithfulness, die, be forgotten after another generation passes.

- iv. There is your encouraging and uplifting sermon for the day...
- v. But in reality, the Christian is never forgotten.

Part of the great hope we have is that while we might be forgotten here, we are not forgotten where it truly counts. I said earlier that the theme underlying the Scriptures is “who will be the one?” Who will crush the serpent's head, and while Gideon didn't crush the head, he was meant to point forward to one who would. Jesus Christ, through whom all the promises of God are yes and amen and through whom our names are written and remembered in the Lamb's book of life. In him we have a lasting legacy. Look to him.

So in light of the division, downfall, and death we see in Judges 8, to finish well we must continually look to the God of our salvation, who has supplied our salvation and blessed us with every spiritual blessing in His Son, Jesus Christ. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.