

Series: Lessons From the Lives of the Judges

FAINT YET PURSUING THEM

JUDGE 8:1-4

Text: Judges 8:4

Judges 8:4

⁴ *And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, **faint, yet pursuing them.***

Introduction:

One of the hazards of being in the Lord's work is that of becoming weary in the work. Sadly its becoming a common thing among those who are involved in the Lord's work, partly because many who are involved and much of what is being done is being done out of a sense of obligation instead of out of a love for the Lord.

That is certainly something to consider, but today I want to focus on the matter of growing faint.

When we examine scripture some of God's choicest servants have suffered from fainting.

As we begin to consider this I think it's important that we remember:

Galatians 6:9

⁹ And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

2 Thessalonians 3:13

¹³ But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

Note:

1. THE CAUSE OF FAINTING

There are no doubt numerous reasons why some grow faint but I want to consider some reasons that are clearly seen in the passage.

Note:

A. Size and Scope of the Work

If we do our homework and a little math we find that the Midianites and the Amalekites were a intimidating force. There were 135,000 warriors mounted upon camels who had terrorized Israel for years.

Judges 6:5

⁵ For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

The work that we are involved in is a great work, a large work and a dangerous work!

Today there are many who look at the size and the scope of the work today – and because of a lack of supplies, or substance grow weary and some even cease or cause the work to cease.

Illustration:

Disciples reply to feeding the 5000. We don't have what's needed therefore it can't be done.

Notice not only "Size and Scope of the Work" but also:

B. Scarcity of Consecrated Workers

Notice that when Gideon started he began with an army of 30,000 men.

In chapter 7:3 we learn that 22,000 left because they were afraid.

Judges 7:3

³ *Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. **And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand;** and there remained ten thousand.*

In chapter 7:4-7 we learn that an additional 9,700 left because they were clueless! What I mean is that they were not alert, lacking in discernment and therefore more of a hindrance than a help.

Again today there are many who grow faint because of what they think is a lack of those who are serving the Lord.

Notice not only “Size and Scope of the Work” and a “Scarcity of Consecrated Workers” but also:

C. Sheepish Ways

As you read through the text there is one thing that stands out. We see fear and insecurity in Gideon over and over again. The Lord had to constantly reassure him and Gideon called on God to provide confirmation of his calling time and again.

Quote:

“Our work, when earnestly undertaken, lays us open to attacks in the direction of depression. Who can bear the weight of souls without sometimes sinking to the dust? Passionate longings after men's conversion, if not fully satisfied (and when are they?), consume the soul with anxiety and disappointment. To see the hopeful turn aside, the godly grow cold, professors abusing their privileges, and sinners waxing more bold in sin—

are not these sights enough to crush us to the earth? The kingdom comes not as we would, the reverend name is not hallowed as we desire, and for this we must weep. How can we be otherwise than sorrowful, while men believe not our report, and the divine arm is not revealed? All mental work tends to weary and to depress, for much study is a weariness of the flesh; but ours is more than mental work—it is heart work, the labour of our inmost soul. How often, on Lord's-day evenings, do we feel as if life were completely washed out of us! After pouring out our souls over our congregations, we feel like empty earthen pitchers which a child might break. Probably, if we were more like Paul, and watched for souls at a nobler rate, we should know more of what it is to be eaten up by the zeal of the Lord's house. It is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus. We are not to be living specimens of men in fine preservation, but living sacrifices, whose lot is to be consumed; we are to spend and to be spent, not to lay ourselves up in lavender, and nurse our flesh. Such soul-travail as that of a faithful minister will bring on occasional seasons of exhaustion, when heart and flesh will fail. Moses' hands grew heavy in intercession, and Paul cried out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Even John the Baptist is thought to have had his fainting fits, and the apostles were once amazed, and were sore afraid." C. H. Spurgeon

Notice Not Only Some Causes of Fainting but also:

2. THE CURE OF FAINTING

Note:

A. The Necessity of Perseverance in Trials

Don't quit! Gideon kept on pursuing the enemy until victory had been won. We learn in chapter 8:10 that 15,000 of the enemy had survived the first battle. They were tired and hungry but they kept on keeping on.

Judges 8:10

¹⁰ Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

God's Way Isn't Always Easy

We make a terrible error when we think that God makes life easy just because we're in His will or that the easy way is God's way. We don't follow the Lord or God's will for our lives because it's the EASY thing to do--we do it because it's the RIGHT thing to do!

When we follow God's way, it's the BEST way, but it may be a DIFFICULT way:

- MOSES chose a path that got him criticism and ungratefulness his whole ministry
- DANIEL chose a path that took him to the lion's den
- The THREE HEBREW MEN chose paths that took them into the fiery furnace
- STEPHEN chose a path that led to martyrdom
- PAUL chose a path that led to imprisonment and execution

All these chose paths that were God's plan for them-- but their paths were not easy. God doesn't promise us an easy trip, but He does promise to be with us as we follow it!

Remember:

Isaiah 43:2

² When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Notice not only “The Necessity of Perseverance in Trials” but also:

B. The Necessity of Patience in Testing

Romans 2:7

⁷ *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:*

Psalm 27:14

¹⁴ *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

We've all heard the expression Make Lemonade Out Of the Lemons We Handed.

Examples:

- Charles Goodyear went to jail for a contempt of court citation. Imprisoned, he went to work in the kitchen and worked on an idea in which he developed the method for vulcanizing rubber.
- Martin Luther was forced to stay in Wartburg Castle and his lemonade was his translation of the Bible into the German language
- Charles Kettering broke his arm on the starting crank of his automobile – his lemonade was the development of the self-starter for engines.
- Jacob Schick could not shave at -40 degrees and invented the electric razor

It is easy to talk about making the most of bad situations, it is another to do it.

Notice not only “The Necessity of Perseverance in Trials” and “The Necessity of Patience in Testing” but also:

C. The Prospects in Triumph

Galatians 6:9

⁹ And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Illustration:

Winston Churchill is remembered as perhaps the greatest prime minister in the history of Great Britain. By the steel of his will, he led his island nation to stand against Hitler and eventually triumph in World War II. But years before that victorious moment for the ages, Churchill found himself plunging through a succession of devastating trapdoors—each one worse than the one before.

In August 1929, Churchill had managed to bring in approximately \$70,000 into the family coffers. That’s a lot of money even today. In 1929, that was an unimaginable amount of money for a single month’s work. He invested nearly all of it into the American stock market. He then jotted a note to his wife saying

how pleased he was to finally reach a place of financial independence. Less than ninety days later the stock market fell through it's own trapdoor and Churchill lost virtually everything.

It was a major blow. Churchill had experienced ninety days of financial security--and then the bottom fell out. For the first time in his adult life he had been on easy street enjoying the prospects of a comfortable future and then the trapdoor fell open beneath his feet and down he went.

That setback alone would be enough to send most any man into the dungeon of depression. But there were two more difficulties that waited quietly and patiently for Churchill to arrive. In 1931, after serving his entire adult life as a central figure in the British government, he was not invited to serve in the cabinet. This was another staggering blow to Churchill. He had been banished to the political wilderness. While Hitler was working full-time to build his war machine, Churchill, virtually the only British politician who saw the reality of Hitler's threat, was put out to pasture. When he should have been center stage, he was banished to his country home where he wrote, painted, and built brick walls and cleaned out the ponds to stay busy. This defeat was even more bitter than the financial loss. It was heating up in the British steel furnace.

And then in the same year, while he was trying to hold

things together financially and fight off depression of political defeat, he decided to take a tour of Canada and the United States. In New York City he looked the wrong way while crossing a street and was hit by a taxi traveling at thirty-five miles per hour. The accident sent him to the hospital, clinging to life by a thread.

In less than three years he had suffered three shattering transitions that had devastated him financially, then politically, and then in an accident that nearly cost him his life. In a letter to their son from the hospital, his wife wrote: "Last night he was very sad and said he had now in the last two years had three very heavy blows. First the loss of all that money in the crash, then loss of political position in the Conservative Party and now this terrible injury. He said he did not think he would ever recover completely from the three events."

At that point, as he recovered in that New York hospital room, Churchill was fifty-seven years old. Nine years later, at the right moment in history, the government that had ignored him would turn to him in desperation. But he could not see the future from the hospital bed. In fact, his prospects looked so bad that at that moment one of his enemies was emboldened enough to pronounce a political eulogy: "Churchill is finished!" Famous last words! History proved that statement to be just a bit premature.

Close:

Maybe you are like Churchill and have experienced some devastating events, losses, and reversals. You feel like the heat and stress from a dozen pressing circumstances and are slowly pressing you and bending you out of shape.

Don't quit.

You may be faint – don't stop pursuing.