

**JUDGES AND RUTH: FACING GROUP APOSTASY AS INDIVIDUALS**  
**Part VI: Watching Our Spiritual Focus When Pressured By Carnal People**  
**(Judges 8:1-35)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. We believers in Christ are blessed when we look to the Lord to be our All-Sufficiency.
- B. However, a subtle temptation to depart from trusting the Lord arises when carnal or immature believers frustrate us: with all good intentions, we can drift from trusting God to react faithlessly to their sinfulness!
- C. Though Gideon first trusted God to conquer the Midianites, he let himself become *distracted* from the Lord so as to react errantly to the pressures of his godless colleagues. His distraction actually led Israel back into the idolatry that had created the initial Midianite problem, giving us a great lesson on our **focus**:

**II. Watching Our Spiritual Focus When Pressured By Carnal People, Judges 8:1-35.**

- A. God had carefully prepared Gideon to **trust in Him alone** for victory over the Midianites, Jud. 6:11-7:15.
- B. However, after that victory, ungodly countrymen pressured Gideon with their demands, viewing him as the cause for the deliverance and not as a God-empowered man who was victorious through faith, 8:1-23:
  - 1. First of all, some faithless people of the large, proud tribe of Ephraim did not believe God had helped him, and charged Gideon with pride for failing to invite them to the initial route of the Midianites, Jud. 8:1! Gideon placated their pride, reminding them they had captured the Midianite princes of Oreb and Zeeb, and humbly stated their tribe was superior to his own, Judges 8:2-3.
  - 2. Second, during the battle, men from two different cities on two different occasions had failed to accept Gideon's leadership, complaining they thought he would not overthrow the Midianites, Judg. 8:4-6, 8. In faith in God, Gideon promised to punish them after the victory, a promise he kept, Judges 8:10-17!
  - 3. Third, Gideon had to handle disrespect from godless captured rulers leveled at his personal abilities:
    - a. After the battle, Gideon charged his son to kill the Midianite generals they had captured, 8:18-20a.
    - b. His son's unbelief in God's enabling led to fail to try to execute them, an event that caused these godless generals to mock Gideon's own prowess to do the job, Judges 8:20b-21a.
    - c. In spite of his embarrassment at his son's failure, Gideon trusted God and slew the generals, 8:21b. He also took away the ornaments from their camel's necks as a sign of victory over them, 8:21c.
  - 4. Fourth, when Gideon destroyed these generals, his ungodly countrymen became overconfident in his human prowess, and desired he and his sons rule over them as a royal dynasty, Judges 8:22. Gideon responded in faith, claiming the Lord would rule Israel, not he nor his sons, Judges 8:23. In effect, he gave all the glory of the battle's victory to where it properly belonged -- to the Lord!
- C. Yet, with enough of this pressure directed his way, Gideon **reacted on his own** with all **good intentions**, and failed to keep heeding the Lord. This **reaction** led to syncretistic idolatry in Israel, Judges 8:24-35:
  - 1. Concerned over the relentless unbelief in his countrymen that God had been his cause for victory, and failing to focus on God's provision even to handle his godless countrymen, Gideon collected gold from the war's spoils and made a statue of a priest's garment to honor the Lord before the people, 8:24-27a.
  - 2. However, God had commanded Israel not to make any graven image, even with all good intentions, for people might be tempted to worship the item that was thus formed rather than God, cf. Exodus 20:4-5.
  - 3. As it happened, Gideon's faithless countrymen fell to worshipping this ephod he had formed rather than the Lord Himself, a form of syncretism of God's worship with sophisticated idolatry, Jud. 8:27b.
  - 4. Indeed, from there, things just went from bad to worse: (a) Gideon himself and his family started to worship the ephod (8:27c), and (b) Gideon became materialistic and sensual (8:29-30). (c) After his death, Israel worshipped Baal-berith, or "Baal-of-the-covenant," a syncretism between Canaanite Baal worship and the worship of Israel's God, the **true** God of the **Mosaic Covenant**, 8:33. (d) In the end, Israel completely forgot God and showed no kindness to Gideon's household, Judges 8:34-35.

***Lesson:*** *When Gideon shifted his gaze from trusting and obeying the Lord to offset the sinful pressures of his countrymen, even his well-intentioned reaction only backfired, opening the door for idolatry!*

***Application:*** *We believers must not let ourselves even in all good intentions so react to the sinful pressures of others that we try our OWN ideas in our OWN ways to diffuse that bad pressure! If thus pressured by others, we must focus all the more on God's Word and ways and NOT overreact to others!*