

Lectures on the Book of Judges

Judges 8 — Faint Yet Pursuing

William Kelly

And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing." Here we have another lesson, bright as to the conquerors, but a painful one as to others. The Christian has a divine spring of power against weariness; but are we always thus "pursuing"? Paul was. "This one thing I do." How little it was valued in Gideon! He asked for refreshment for the three hundred; but he meets with taunt and reviling, and this Gideon remembers to their cost another hour; for it was heartless. The victory once secured, that which was needed to vindicate the outrage on Jehovah's people in the execution of His work has its grave place; for Israel was called to be the theatre for the display of God's earthly righteousness, which is the true explanation of all these things that are sometimes difficult to the Christian mind, if uninstructed in the difference of dispensations. The chapter does not conclude without another and a serious warning. The request of Gideon becomes a snare to himself and his house. How painful this is, my brethren! How often we see that the result of the victory of faith is too great for the faith that won it! Gideon refused for himself or for his son to reign. "Jehovah," as he said simply and strikingly, "shall rule over you." But he desired the earrings of the prey, and made an ephod of the gold, etc., "and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." Peace followed, and Gideon died in a good old age, leaving seventy sons, beside one born of a concubine. But "it came to pass as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not Jehovah their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel." Thus manifest and lamentable was the breakdown in the faith that had done such things. For it was an effort to preserve by a form what can only be sustained by grace from the same source. How blessed for the Christian, for the church, is the presence of the Holy Spirit with us for ever! How inexcusable for Christendom the attempt to perpetrate some apostolic ephod, a snare to all that bear the name of the Lord! Nothing can stand but the Spirit of God, nothing take its place; for He alone secures the glory of Christ in the church. This consequently is the

true article of the church that stands, however momentous justification by faith is to the individual believer. And a form, however well-intentioned even, is no preservation from the grossest idolatry, but rather paves the way for any or every idol, as we see here after Gideon's death among the children of Israel, quick to forget Jehovah and the vessel of His delivering grace. Alas! the beginning of the mischief was in Gideon's house, and even in himself. One is worthy, One alone.