“Victory, but…” (Joshua 7:15-8:28)
1. Victory but strife (7:15-8:3)
 a) The Lord promised victory to Gideon over the Midianites even though his army was outnumbered
 135,000 to 300. Gideon relied on deception. He divided his 300 men into 3 groups. Each one had a
 trumpet, a torch, an empty pitcher & a sword (v16). They waited until the Midianite guard change in
 the middle watch of the night. Then the 300 men who were surrounding the enemy camp blew their
 trumpets (the leader of a fighting force would have a trumpet), they smashed the pitchers which were
 covering their torches (creating a sudden burst of light all around the sleeping camp), and cried, “A
 sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” The startled enemy was confused & the Lord set the sword on
 one against another (v22). They slew one another thinking Gideon’s forces invaded their camp.
 Gideon summoned forces from the tribes sent away to pursue Midian (v23).
 b) Gideon also sent for help from the mighty tribe of Ephraim. They took and could attack from the
 waters the southeasterly fleeing Midianites would have to cross, including the Jordan. They killed the
 two leaders/ generals of Midian, Oreb & Zeeb (v24-25).
 c) Ephraim confronted Gideon contending (6:32) vigorously (4:3, ESV “accused him fiercely”) with him
 for not calling him to fight Midian earlier. Gideon’s humbly, gentle response (Prov. 15:1) eased the
 tension (v2-3). Such selfish discord hurts the body of Christ & limits its impact.
2. Lack of cooperation but victory (8:4-21)
 a) Gideon 300 weary pursued the Midianites across the Jordan. The Israelite city of Succoth, fearing the
 Midianites would regroup, defeat Gideon small force & bring reprisal upon them refused to give
 Gideon’s men food. Gideon threatened them with thrashing with thorns & briars after he finished his
 campaign against Midian. Similarly, the Israelite city of Penuel further east refused to support Gideon
 as well, whereupon Gideon threatened to tear down their tower. These cities could have been a
 refreshing support to their fellow compatriots, but selfish fear held them back. Such lack of
 cooperation continues to hinder God’s work through His church.
 b) Gideon resorted to a surprise attack on the remaining Midianite army (“routed”/trembling- 7:3), who
 probably thought they were in safe territory. He routed their army and captured their two kings, Zebah
 & Zalmunna. Then he brought his threatened judgment upon the 2 Israelite cities who did not support
 him. Then he killed the 2 kings because they murdered his brothers at Tabor. There was much plunder
 from the Midianite rulers & army. One cannot remain neutral with the battles God’s people face.
3. Right stand but wrong step (8:22-28)
 a) “the men of Israel” (especially the northern tribes) called for Gideon to establish a dynasty since he
 delivered them from the oppressive hand of the Midianites. Gideon’s response touches on the
 underlying cause of the struggles of God’s people during that time. The people wanted a visible ruler
 without God’s rule. “The Lord shall rule over you.” This was to be true without or through a king. We
 look for people to be the answer, where only God can be the answer.
 b) Gideon made a foolish move. The priesthood was probably corrupt. The Lord spoke to Gideon and he
 made an altar. He took gold spoils from the Israelites to make an ephod seemingly to inquire of God.
 Gideon took a role not assigned to him by the Lord. This became a snare/trap that turned Israel from
 the Lord & led to more idolatrous worship in Ophrah (v27). Be careful about taking the right stand, but
 then taking authority God has not assigned to you.

This great victory could have been greater if God’s people worked together under His directing rule.