
THE PERILS OF AMBITION WITHOUT GOD

JUDGES 9:1-57

ADEOYE EMMANUEL (EVANG.)

Abimelech was the son of Gideon by a slave woman who lived with her father's family in Shechem (8:30-31; 9:18). His name means "my father is a king." Although Gideon had certainly lived like a king, he had still refused to establish a dynasty in Israel, but Abimelech felt that his father had made a mistake. After his father's death, Abimelech decided that he should be king, thus he moved from Ophrah to Shechem, where he started his campaign, in what he did, Abimelech broke several of God's laws and as a result brought destruction to himself and trouble to the people.

Abimelech had another plank in his political platform: The Canaanites in Shechem had no indebtedness to Gideon's sons, while Abimelech was definitely one of their own. Furthermore, which of Gideon's seventy sons should be chosen king and how would he be selected? Or would all seventy try to rule the land together? With this kind of logic, Abimelech enlisted the support of both his relatives and the men of the city; and now he was ready to move into action.

But Abimelech had another god beside ambition and Baal, and that was *might*. With the tainted money from the heathen temple, he hired a group of no-account mercenaries who helped him gain and keep control over the people. These vile terrorists also assisted him in his evil plot to murder his seventy half brothers and remove every rival to the throne.

Judges 9 offers several key lessons, primarily centered around the dangers of unchecked ambition, the consequences of choosing self-serving leaders, and the importance of God's guidance in leadership. The chapter highlights how Abimelech's selfish desire for power led to violence, treachery, and ultimately, destruction for himself and the people of Shechem.

THE PERILS OF AMBITION WITHOUT GOD:

Abimelech's story demonstrates the destructive nature of ambition when it's not aligned with God's will. He seized power through manipulation and violence, showing that seeking power for its own sake can lead to harmful outcomes.

The chapter emphasizes that true success and leadership should be rooted in seeking God's guidance and purpose.

In essence, Judges 9 serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked ambition, the importance of seeking God's will in leadership, and the consequences of rejecting His guidance. It emphasizes that true leadership should be based on righteousness, discernment, and a desire to serve God and others, not on personal gain and selfish ambition.

LESSON'S FROM ABIMELECH STORY

1. THE DANGERS OF AMBITION WITHOUT GOD

In Judges 9, Abimelech's ambition leads him to seize power through treachery and violence. He convinces the people of Shechem to support him, saying, **Remember that I am your own flesh and blood** (*Judges 9:2*). This reminds us that ambition, when not aligned with God's will, can lead to destructive paths. True success comes from seeking God's guidance and aligning our desires with His purpose.

2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF BETRAYAL

Abimelech's betrayal of his brothers, whom he kills to secure his rule, is a stark reminder of the destructive power of betrayal. *"He went to his father's house in Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone"* (*Judges 9:5*). **Betrayal not only harms others but ultimately leads to one's downfall,**

as seen in Abimelech's eventual demise.

3. THE POWER OF A SINGLE VOICE

Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, escapes Abimelech's massacre and courageously speaks out against the injustice. His parable of the trees (*Judges 9:7-15*) serves as a powerful reminder that one voice, when speaking truth, can challenge corruption and inspire change. Never underestimate the impact of standing up for righteousness.

4. THE FOLLY OF CHOOSING LEADERS FOR THE WRONG REASONS

The people of Shechem choose Abimelech as their leader based on familial ties rather than godly character. This decision leads to chaos and destruction. *"But if you have acted in truth and integrity in making Abimelech king... rejoice in him"* (*Judges 9:19*). This teaches us to seek leaders who embody godly virtues and wisdom.

5. THE INEVITABLE JUSTICE OF GOD

Despite Abimelech's initial success, God's justice prevails. *"God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers"* (*Judges 9:56*). This reassures us that, in time, God will bring justice to those who act wickedly, and we can trust in His righteous judgment.

6. THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF DIVISION

The alliance between Abimelech and the people of Shechem eventually crumbles, leading to mutual destruction. "God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem" (Judges 9:23). Division weakens communities and relationships, highlighting the importance of unity and peace under God's guidance.

7. THE ROLE OF DIVINE INTERVENTION

Throughout Judges 9, we see God's hand at work, even amidst human folly. **The downfall of Abimelech and the Shechemites is orchestrated by God to fulfill His justice.** This reminds us that God is sovereign and actively involved in the affairs of the world, working all things for His purposes.

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Abimelech's unchecked power leads to tyranny and destruction. This underscores the need for accountability in leadership. Leaders

should be held to high standards and guided by godly principles to prevent abuse of power and ensure justice.

9. THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF EARTHLY POWER

Abimelech's reign is short-lived, illustrating the fleeting nature of earthly power. "Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech" (Judges 9:57). **True and lasting power comes from God, and we should focus on building treasures in heaven rather than seeking temporary earthly authority.**

10. THE CALL TO TRUST IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Ultimately, Judges 9 teaches us to trust in God's sovereignty. **Despite human schemes and failures, God's plan prevails.** By placing our trust in Him and seeking His will, we can navigate life's challenges with confidence and hope, knowing that He is in control.

CONCLUSION

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