

# Judges 8

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[ 0 : 00 ] Take your Bibles, go into the book of Judges, Judges chapter 8. Judges chapter 8 is where we are at this evening. Judges chapter 8. We will look at the chapter in its entirety.

We are completing the account of Gideon through the 8th chapter of Judges. If you remember as we're making our way through the Scripture, we're making our way through the Bible, in particular we're in the book of Judges, that more verses are dedicated to Gideon in the book of Judges than any other judge.

More verses are dedicated to Gideon than any other judge. But that doesn't imply or even mean that Gideon is the ideal judge.

He is far from it. We'll see that here in just a moment. The very first judge that we meet in the book of Judges is the ideal candidate.

He is the one that everyone else should be. Oathnil. Remember him? He is the son-in-law to Caleb. He is the ideal candidate for judge. And from that point on, we're just on this downward spiral as we continue to go around and around.

[ 1 : 16 ] And we are going further and further down. We have seen kind of at this midway point really in the account of the judges and really getting into some of the wickedness that we'll get into in particular in the 9th chapter.

But we have seen how the book of Judges is not a book that paints a grim picture in man getting better. Rather, it paints a picture of man degrading, getting worse and worse and worse.

It is so much more than just an Old Testament account of what took place in the nation of Israel. Really, the book of Judges, I believe, is a picture of man in his entirety.

That man is not progressing. Man is digressing. Man is not improving. He is downgrading. He is getting worse. That the further man moves away from his original purpose, that the lower he gets. Sure, he raises up to a higher level than he currently is at times. But over history, he goes further and further down.

[ 2 : 23 ] And we know this because of that phrase in the book of Judges, In those days there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes. We haven't got to that first repetition of that yet.

We will get to that when we finish the history of the Judges and we start getting into really a picture of what it looks like. Judges starts out by introducing the problem to us, how they got there.

Remember, they made compromises. They didn't do everything God commanded them to do. And then it shows us their temporary deliverances through individuals that God raises up, which are the judges.

And then it closes with an account of what it looks like when they got there. And that's when we get to this hideous acts at the end of the book of Judges. And we find that phrase repeated five times. Because when man lives without a king, and man does what is right in his own eyes, when man has his way, this is what we get. It doesn't take very long after they're delivered or redeemed.

[ 3 : 23 ] The same word judge elsewhere in the Old Testament is redeemer. Boaz is a judge. He's a kinsman redeemer. The story of Boaz is so familiar to us.

Because he's the kinsman redeemer of Ruth. He raises her up. We understand that these are people who redeem them temporarily. But they're pointing to a need of a redeemer.

That we find the ultimate redeemer who is Jesus Christ. So we'll finish the story of Gideon tonight in the eighth chapter. We started the story of Gideon with him in the wine vat, thresh and wheat, doubting God, casting out the fleece, literally.

Testing God. God confirming. God calling him. This is important. God had called him for a purpose. Remember that purpose. Because God calls us for a purpose.

Each one of us. When our time together, for those that will be at the retreat, and those of you that can't make it, I encourage you to get in it as well.

[ 4 : 34 ] Our time together is going to be focused on Ephesians chapter 4. Our key verse is Ephesians 4, 16. Our theme is connected. But that fourth chapter of the book of Ephesians speaks to a lot of what's going on in Gideon's life.

That God calls each person for a specific purpose and connects them to the grander body of his people. Gideon had a purpose. Go in the strength of yours and deliver my people from the hand of Midian.

And he did it. He did it in a very unlikely way with 300 men armed with nothing but torches, lanterns, and trumpets. And the cry of, for the Lord and for Gideon.

And the people turn on one another. And we're after that battle now. We're actually, the continuation of it flows into the eighth chapter. And we'll see that now he's progressing on a little further.

His call was very specific. Don't lose this. Go now in the strength of yours and deliver my people from the hand of Midian. And I'll put this history in there before we read it.

[ 5 : 42 ] The Midianites would come in on their camels. There were, as Warren Wearsby called them, some camel riding warriors who would come in on their camels swift as lightning and raid the land.

And when they came in, they came from the east. Right? And they would cross the Jordan River and they would come into the land of Canaan as natural. Because you're not coming from the west. You know what's on the western side of the land of Canaan, right?

That's the Mediterranean Sea, so you come in by ship there. So they came in from the east. And they would cross the Jordan River. And his command was to deliver my people from the hand of Midian.

So that is, when they're gone, his people are delivered. But Gideon doesn't stop there. He goes a little further. Goes a little further. And we'll see it in the eighth chapter. So Judges chapter 8 says this.

Then the men of Ephraim said to him, What is this thing that you have done to us, not calling us, when you went to fight against Midian? And they contended with him vigorously.

[ 6 : 38 ] But he said to them, What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abizar? God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb, and Zeb into your hands.

And what was I able to do in comparison with you? Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that. Then Gideon and the 300 men who were with him came to the Jordan and crossed over, weary yet pursuing.

He said to the men of Succoth, Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me, for they are weary, and I am pursuing Zeba and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. The leaders of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zeba and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?

Gideon said, All right, when the Lord has given Zeba and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will thrash your bodies with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars. He went up from there to Penuel and spoke similarly to them.

And the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered. So he spoke also to the men of Penuel, saying, When I return safely, I will tear down this tower. Now Zeba and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their armies with them, about 15,000 men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east, for the fallen were 120,000 swordsmen.

[ 7 : 56 ] Gideon went up by the way of those who lived in tents on the east of Noba and Jobeha, and attacked the camp when the camp was unsuspecting. When Zeba and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them, and captured the two kings of Midian, Zeba and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

Then Gideon, the son of Joash, returned from the battle by the ascent of Haris. And he captured the youth from Succoth and questioned him. Then the youth wrote down for him the princes of Succoth and its elders, 77 men.

He came to the men of Succoth and said, Behold, Zeba and Zalmunna, concerning whom you taunted me, saying, Are the hands of Zeba and Zalmunna already in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are weary?

He took the elders of the city and the thorns of the wilderness and briars, and he disciplined the men of Succoth with them. He tore down the tower of Phanul and killed the men of the city. Then he said to Zeba and Zalmunna, What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?

And they said, They were like you, each one resembling the son of a king. And he said, They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the Lord lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.

[ 9 : 02 ] So he said to Jether, his firstborn, Rise, kill them. But the youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a youth. Then Zeba and Zalmunna said, Rise up yourself and fall on us, for as the man so is his strength.

So Gideon arose and killed Zeba and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments which were on their camels' necks. Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.

But Gideon said to them, I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you. Yet Gideon said to them, I would request of you that each of you give me an earring from his spoil, for they had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites.

They said, We will surely give them. So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil. And the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 shekels of gold beside the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes, which were on the kings of Midian, and beside the neckbands that were on their camels' necks.

Gideon made it into an effort and placed it in his city, Orpherah. And all Israel played a harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household. So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore.

[ 10 : 16 ] And the land was undisturbed for 40 years in the days of Gideon. Then Jerubbabel, the son of Joash, went and lived in his own house. Now Gideon had 70 sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.

His concubine, who was in Shechem, also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech. And Gideon, the son of Joash, died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Orpherah of the Abizrites.

Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the bells and made Bell-Bearath their God. Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side.

Nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbabel, that is, Gideon, in accord with all the good that he had done to Israel. Judges chapter 8. I want you to see this evening the peril of not finishing well.

Pastor Andrew Boner once said that it is not so much the battle, but it is the peril after the victory that we have to beware of.

[ 11 : 24 ] It is the snares that remain after the victory has been won that often catches us off guard. Sometimes the greatest battles are followed by a much greater defeat.

We see the peril of not finishing well, though it shouldn't surprise us because this is a reoccurring account that happens in the book of Judges. Man looks in his sinfulness and is looking upon an individual as his deliverer rather than the Lord God his deliverer.

And when that individual fades away by death or moving on, then they very quickly return back to where they were prior to the coming of this individual.

But it is not just the nation of Israel that does not finish well. It is Gideon himself. While he knows that God has called him, God has empowered him, God has used him. He has fulfilled his calling. He has done exactly what it is that God commanded him to do. God has used him in a mighty way. Much like many of the accounts we read in Scripture, the end is not as great as the middle portion of his story.

[ 12 : 37 ] We see this over and over again. We know that Eli in the book of Samuel had two sons that were wicked and led to his death because he fell off of the stool. We would think that Samuel would do so much better, but yet we also know that Samuel's sons also behave unrighteously and do wickedness among the nation, which is what ultimately leads to the nation saying, Samuel, we don't need one of your sons to be a judge.

We need a king over us because your sons are not doing what is right. We know that David's household is marred by sin and failures, and the end does not always fit the title of man after God's

own heart.

Over and over and over and over again, we read of the perils of not finishing well. Yet we understand that in these tragedies and in these difficulties, this shows man's great need for a redeemer that will last.

Right? We don't need to trust in an individual who will fade away. We do not need to trust in someone that is like us. We need someone that is other than us. We need a redeemer and a deliverer who is eternal by nature, and we have that.

We have a great high priest who is our redeemer and our forerunner, who is eternal, according to the book of Hebrews, who is Jesus Christ. But yet we see the peril that comes from not finishing the task well in the book of Judges in the eighth chapter.

[14:04] Now the account of the first few verses more than likely did not happen at this point chronologically. It is just put there in connection with the falling of Oreb and Zeb at the end of the seventh chapter.

It probably happened after Gideon comes back from his capturing of the two kings, Zeb and Zalmunna. But yet they are put here in a successive order of accounts that kind of show the first peril.

And the first peril of not finishing well is a divided people. It is a divided people. Because one of the great tasks of spiritual leadership is to bring people to unity.

It is to bring people to being one. Paul himself wrestles with this. You find this in the writings of Paul. Paul speaks of the reality that he has suffered more than anyone else.

He said he's been imprisoned, he's been beaten, he's been shipwrecked three times, he's been stoned and left for dead, he's been beaten times unnumbered. And he goes, he said, I've been hungry, I've been in heat, and I've been in cold, and I've been in all these things.

[15:06] And he lists all these great, horrendous events, and he says, and after all these things, or on top of all these things, it is the daily concern for the churches. The daily concern for the churches.

And it is the peril of bringing the people together. Remember, one of the battles he is fighting when he's writing the book of 1 Corinthians. Some say they are of Apollos, some say they are of Paul, some of Peter.

He said, who is Peter, or who is Apollos, or who is Paul? We weren't crucified for you. There were divisions among God's people, and he's trying to bring them together. Because the reality is that as long as sin reigns in the life of individuals, division will always be present because the enemy loves to divide.

And we see this. Gideon had a grand army at the onset. He had enough people to go down and at least put up a formidable fight.

God himself winnowed his army and brought it down to 300 men. It's not like Gideon chose 300 Navy SEALs to go down and fight a battle, right? Gideon was told he had too many people and God kept cutting it down, kept cutting it down, kept cutting it down, and brought him to the place of desperation.

[16:23] That it could not be Gideon who won the battle. It had to be the Lord God alone who won the battle. And then after the battle, the men of Ephraim are mad. The men of Ephraim, because Gideon is from the tribe of Manasseh.

And there is a brother of Manasseh who is Ephraim. Ephraim and Manasseh. Remember that? And Ephraim's the big brother. He's the proud brother. He's the one who's strong. He's mighty. He has more people.

Go read the numbers. And he's mad. He said, why didn't you call us? We would go down to fight the battle. Now on the onset, it looks righteous, right? Well, Ephraim wanted to be part of the deliverance. No, not really. Ephraim wanted to be a part of the looting.

Because see, by not being at the battle, they missed out on all the spoils of the war. And it cost them by not being there. I mean, think of the loot that would have come from the camp of the Midianites when 300 people got to go into the camp and get the spoils of the battle.

We get a little bit of that here at the end with 1,700 shekels of gold in earrings alone. And Ephraim is upset because they say, you didn't include us.

[17:29] You wasn't there. You didn't call us. And by the way, we just need to go ahead and pump the brakes right here. Satan is always going to bring someone into your life that will be upset because God used you and not them.

It's just a reality. What makes you better than me that God could do this or that you can do that and I couldn't do that? And the answer is there's nothing. Gideon's not better than any man from Ephraim.

Gideon's not, the 300 men that were with him are not better than anyone from Ephraim. This is just who God chose. There's always going to be division.

There's always going to be opposition. And he's facing it internally, right? And they are divided. But he answers the first one righteously because he uses a soft word and he says, well, what have I done in comparison with you?

The Ephraimites are the ones who killed Oreb and Zeb. You killed the kings. All I did was smash the pitchers, right? Sounded the trumpet, blew the horn. That's all we did. And you've killed the kings. [18:31] What have we done? What are you? Yours is so much better. And they're, okay, you're right. You're right. So there's a little bit of pride there. But then we move on and now I have the phrase weary yet pursuing underlined in my Bible.

That's just what I do. I mean, there's things that speak to me. He crosses the Jordan River and he's going, Gideon and his 300 men, weary yet pursuing. And they're going after Zebans, Amunah. And they come to Succoth and they're tired. And he says, give us some food for our bodies so that we can keep going. And the men of Succoth said, I'm not going to do that because just because you think you've won the battle, we can't see that you've won the battle, right?

The hands of Zebans, Amunah are not in your hand yet. You have not captured them yet. We're not going to do that. So here we see kind of their short-sightedness, the men of Succoth and even Penuel because they don't trust that God could use Gideon and his 300 men to do such things. They are more afraid of the kings they are pursuing than their kinsmen that God is using. And they don't trust. See, there's division in the land because this is some of their tribesmen.

[19:48] Yet, they will not trust that God could do it. there's division. Now, he'll come back later and take the briars of the brush and the thorns and he'll chastise them and then he'll go to Penuel and he'll knock Tower down and someone will die.

That doesn't really bring restoration, right? That brings further divisions because one of the grand problems with not finishing well is a divided people. Anytime we fail to finish well and what God has called us to do, it leads to divided people.

We don't have to dig very far in church history before we see people, men, women, that God used that raised up a great multitude of people.

People that were on fire for the Lord but as soon as that individual has a fallacy or a falling or he doesn't finish well then there's division and it starts to crumble all around them.

We see a divided people. The second tragedy that we see that comes from not finishing well is a dysfunctional family.

[21:05] It's a dysfunctional family. Mark the word. the outcome of any individual's life will always be reflected in their family.

The outcome of their faith will be reflected. Not that necessarily just because children rebel or they go away or they turn that we have failed in that.

but it is seen clearly in scripture over and over and over again scripture shows us that the family is a picture of the faith.

Gideon sounds righteous. His theology and what he says is absolutely right because after this great battle he comes back and he's got the two kings of Midian there.

Now we need to stop and find out why he pursued them. God didn't say pursue them. He crossed the Jordan River. He went on the other side. They were out of the land of Israel. He followed them out of the land of Israel and he comes back with them. We find out later because he asked what kind of men were they that you killed at Tabor and we find out that these two kings had killed his brothers.

[22:21] So there's a personal vendetta there. At least his half brothers. He said they were the sons of my mother. So because they had killed his brothers he was going after them.

So what had originated as a God calling event had become a personal vendetta. Right? When he was on the roll he just kept going. Since he and his 300 men were succeeding so far we might as well go all the way.

So he goes and he captures these two and he comes back. He tells his youngest son to kill them. Now to us that seems kind of harsh but the easiest way to humiliate a man was to let him die in the

most humbling of circumstances.

This is why Saul does not want to die at the hands of the people who are coming after him and ends up falling on his own spear. This is why kings over and over again don't want to die in the hands of someone else.

This is why when Sisera is killed with a tent peg by a lady that's very humiliating. And for a child to rise up and kill two kings is just humiliating.

[ 23 : 24 ] His son wouldn't do it. His son was told in scripture youthful and so they look at Gideon and say what about you? Why don't you do it? And he does it. This is some of that real talk of scripture right?

He fulfills it. And as soon as he does that it says that the men of Israel rose up and said you rule over us. You be our king. You and your son and your son's son. So they're setting up a monarchy here and we want you to rule over us because you have done the impossible.

You have driven out the land of Midian. Now first of all they're ascribing to Gideon something that Gideon did not do. Now Gideon's theology is right because Gideon says no I'm not going to rule over you for the Lord your God is your king.

Now that's good theology. The reason that's good theology is because the nation of Israel was operating under a theophany. A theophany means God is king. He is the ruler.

By the way the people today we have a king over us right? We have a king. We operate under a theophany as well. We have a king. He is the king of kings and lord of lords.

[ 24 : 26 ] In case you've missed it for the last several months we've been looking at it in the book of Matthew. We operate under a theophany as well. He is Jesus Christ. But the nation of Israel in particular God says I'm going to be your king and Gideon says I'm not going to be king because the Lord your God is king.

Now that sounds good. That's good theology. The problem is is that what Gideon says and how Gideon lives contradicts one another. Because that's what he says.

But then he goes on and he has seventy sons and has a multitude of wives. Now he started out being a guy threshing wheat in a wine vat said that he was the smallest of the least family in the clan right?

Who am I? I'm just a little old Gideon. Well he didn't live the end of his life like little old Gideon. He lived the end of his life like Gideon the king. Says he had a multitude of wives. He had seventy sons.

He had at least one concubine. And the telltale sign is what he names the son from the concubine. It says that Gideon named him Abimelech. Abimelech is a weird name but Abimelech means son of the king.

[ 25 : 34 ] that's what it means. He named him son of the king. Because even though he said I will not be your king he had no problem living as king.

His theology was right. See to the end of our life we can say the right thing. It's only when we live out the truth do we finish well.

Now we see just how dysfunctional this family is or we will see if the Lord allows us to in a few pages over or one page over in the ninth chapter of the book of Judges.

Because the son of the king Abimelech decides since my name is son of the king I might as well be king. I'm not going to tell you all the ninth chapter but sixty nine of the seventy sons of Gideon are killed on one stone it tells us.

Because Abimelech hired some worthless men to go kill his half brothers. That's a messed up family. To say on one stone means he did it publicly and everybody knew it because you don't kill sixty nine.

[ 26 : 48 ] He said we thought there were seventy. He says yeah he killed all seventy of them but the youngest was hid away. You don't kill sixty nine people out in the open and nobody notice it right. You just don't do it. So the reason when it says on one stone it means he openly executed sixty nine of his seventy brothers and then took off leading the nation of Israel further and further and further and further down.

It's a dysfunctional family. Because when you say the right things but you teach your children something else it's going to be one of the perils of not finishing well.

The third and final thing we see is diminished worship. Not only did Gideon leave behind a divided family and a dysfunctional family a divided people a dysfunctional family he also left behind

diminished worship.

When the men of Israel look at him and say you be king over us he says I will not be king for the Lord your God is your king. And he says but I will make one request. I will make one request. Just give me an earring. Give me an earring. All of a sudden your mind should go back because we've seen this before in the Bible right? Where one individual requested earrings out of other people's ears.

[ 28 : 12 ] We've seen this once before. We've seen it in the Old Testament not too long ago. We saw it in the book of Exodus where Aaron said give me an earring out of your ear. And they gave him the earrings and then he put the earrings into the fire and out of the fire came a golden calf.

It's amazing. I mean it might have passed through the hands of a goldsmith or two and they might have fashioned and formed it a little bit. But Gideon says I'll make one request give me an earring. So they spread the garment out and everybody throws an earring in there. 1700 shekels of gold. That's a lot of gold by the way. That's a lot of gold. That enriches you. Right? Not to count the garments that he got off the kings and the bands around the camel's necks and all of this gold and all of this riches.

And he's not just going to get rich with it because it says then he takes it and he makes an ephod out of it. Now an ephod we know the high priest wears an ephod. Now we have some confusion here in Bible translation. We might as well just go ahead and admit it.

Because traditionally an ephod is the breastplate that the high priest wears. It's got chains up here that it hangs around. You remember all those priestly garments and you find them and you kind of scratch your head because it doesn't really make sense.

[ 29 : 17 ] But they've got gold chains on it that hook up here and they've got gold chains hooked down here and they have this breastplate and then there's these four rows of three stones. There's twelve stones on it. Each stone representing a tribe from the nation of Israel and he was to wear the ephod when he was to go in before the Lord in the tabernacle and he had these stones up here on his shoulders and literally what he was doing was bearing the weight of the nation into the presence of God.

He was going and this was his ephod. So we're like did Gideon make a vest? Did he make a gold vest? That's not we can't really say that he did that. Some things that they're wording there is that maybe he made a resemblance of an ephod and he put it on a statue of some sort or he fashioned it to an idol because he erects this ephod whatever it is and it becomes an idol.

It really doesn't matter what he made. We know that he took the gold and he fashioned it and he formed it and he made it into an idol because it says that all of Israel began to play the harlot with it. All of Israel began to play the harlot with it. All of a sudden it becomes the Bible tells us that it becomes a stumbling block for Gideon and the nation of Israel.

It says it became a snare to Gideon and his household because anytime we set something up in our house to worship it becomes a snare. Now we begin to understand how the family got so dysfunctional.

[ 30 : 43 ] Right? He set this up in his house. Now he had torn down the bell on his father's land. That's a good start. Tore down the bell and the Asherah and sacrificed a bull.

But at the end he makes something much smaller and sets it in his house. We'll run into that again in the book of Judges by the way. We'll run into someone else who takes some money that he stole from his mother that he gave back to his mother that his mother gave to a silversmith that turns it into an ephod and an idol.

And he does the same thing. We'll see this again. Cycle, cycle, cycle. And he begins to worship this thing and we don't know how but it becomes a snare and all of a sudden worship, true worship is diminished and the Lord God may be king but that thing over there is getting my admiration and my adoration and my worship and and that thing over there is what I'm giving all my attention and my focus to.

See what happened here is they failed to worship he who delivered them and began to worship what they received from their deliverance. The gold was the reward of their deliverance. What they gained from it. They weren't worshipping he who delivered them. They were worshipping what they got from deliverance.

[ 32 : 10 ] Much like when heaven becomes more important to us than the one who sits on the throne in heaven. I don't really know what I don't really know what heaven's going to be like.

I'll try to be as frank and honest as I can. It really doesn't matter because the only thing that matters is that he is going to be there. It's much like when the reward of the deliverance becomes much more important than the deliverer.

And we have to be careful there. We have to be careful because we get divided worship. And this divided worship continues on until Gideon dies.

And it shouldn't surprise us that they were free until Gideon died. But the scripture tells us then it came about as soon as Gideon was dead. As soon as he was dead.

That the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the bells and made bell bearers their God. See when worship of God is diminished even in freedom then it's eventually forsaken.

[ 33 : 34 ] And we're back to square one. Bondage of sin. Worshipping of false gods. And reminded that deliverance by man is vain.

It only lasts as long as the man lasts. But as soon as he's gone we're right back to where we were at. Just worse. Just worse.

And the peril of not finishing well. I mean think of all the good that Gideon did. But when Gideon died the nation was more divided. His family was dysfunctional.

And worship had been diminished. It was lower than it had ever been. For all the good. So the challenge. Is when God calls us. He equips us.

And he gives us a specific command. That we be people who finish well. Not people who just accomplish the task. That we be people who finish well.

[ 34 : 38 ] To the glory of God. Not. Finish the task. And move on how we long to. Judges chapter 8.

Thank you my brothers.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.