

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



## J U D G E S

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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# Judges

1. **Bring Back the Glory** | *Judges 1:1–2*
2. **Bring Back the Glory** | *Judges 1:1–2*
3. **Sin Cannot Win and Faith Cannot Fail** | *Judges 4:1–15*
4. **Star Wars** | *Judges 4:1–21*
5. **Four Principles of Victory** | *Judges 6, 7*
6. **The Principles of Victory** | *Judges 6, 7*
7. **The Moral Minority** | *Judges 6:1–10*
8. **The Principles of Conquest** | *Judges 7:1–21*
9. **Thorns in a Nation's Side** | *Judges 8, 9*
10. **Men of Strength** | *Judges 11:1–40*
11. **The High Cost of Low Living** | *Judges 13:24*
12. **The Sad Case of Vanishing Values** | *Judges 17:1–6*
13. **The Authority Crisis in America** | *Judges 19–21*

*(Click on any sermon title to go directly to that sermon.)*

# Bring Back the Glory

*By Adrian Rogers*

## Main Scripture Text: Judges 1:1–2

*“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.”*

JUDGES 1:1–2

## Outline

### Introduction

- I. There Were Days of Glorious Conquest
- II. There Were Days of Gradual Compromise
  - A. There Were Canaanites That They Feared
  - B. There Were Canaanites That They Favored
  - C. There Were Canaanites That They Fellowshiped
- III. There Were Days of Grim Consequences
  - A. Militarily, We Are in Trouble
  - B. Culturally, We Are in Trouble
  - C. We Are in Trouble with the Elements

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, please, and be finding the Book of Judges chapter 1? And when you’ve found it, look up here, and let me tell you something: The Book of Judges is not a happy book; it’s a sad book; and yet, it’s a book that holds out hope. It’s a book that tells us how God had blessed the nation Israel and how Israel then lost her glory.

Israel had a glorious heritage. God had done a miracle for Israel. By the power of God, she had broken the gnawing and tormenting bonds of slavery. She had come out of Egypt, and God had given to her a Promised Land—the land that flowed with milk and honey. And God had given to them liberty and freedom like God had given to the United States of America. But the people of Israel did not appreciate their miracle—their heritage, the blessings of God.

God had given to them Himself—they had a Lord. God had given to them Canaan—they had a land. God had given to them His commandments—they had a law. But they denied the Lord; they defied the law; they defiled the land. And God had to bring judgment to these people who had been blessed so very much.

That reminds me so much of America, because there is such a striking parallel. God has so blessed this nation. We told you recently, no nation ever had such a Christian

beginning as America; and yet, America must admit that the crown has fallen. America—I say it with a broken heart—has forgotten God. Yes, we still have religion. Yes, we still have culture. But all of that is the formaldehyde, the sickening perfume, that disguises the deadliness and the decay that is in our land today. And unless something happens, some historian may someday write *The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*.

Look in the Book of Judges, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2: “*Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up...*”—and, the word *Judah* means, “praise”—“*Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand*” (Judges 1:1–2). God blessed these people. And under Joshua, and with the leadership of Judah, they went out and took the land of Canaan. It was a gift of God, and God delivered the land into their hands.

Three things I want you to see today:

## **I. There Were Days of Glorious Conquest**

First of all, their past: There were days of glorious conquest. God gave to Israel a land. May I make the parallel today? God has given to us a land. Now I know that we have some revisionist historians today who want to rewrite the whole thing and take away our Christian heritage, but they cannot do it.

I think many of us remember Patrick Henry. He was that golden-tongued orator. Patrick Henry was the one who lit the flame that began the American Revolution when he gave an impassioned speech, March 23, 1775, in the Virginia Assembly. He gave that never-to-be-forgotten speech, when he said, “Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased with the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God.” And then, that Virginian stood tall and said, “I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!”

Now we remember that, but I want to remind you of something else that Patrick Henry said—one of the founders of this nation. He said this: “It cannot be emphasized too much or repeated too strongly that America was founded not by religionists, but by Christians; not upon religions, but upon the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Now there are people who don’t want us to remember that, today.

George Washington, the first father of our country, or the first president of our country—the father of America—when he was inaugurated, read from the Bible. He took his oath of office with his hand upon the Bible; and then, he leaned down and kissed the pages of God’s Word. Do you know what his first official act was? He took the entire Senate and the House of Representatives to church—I mean, all of them. And they stayed there for a two-hour worship service.

Then, George Washington said this: “It would be peculiarly improper to admit, in this

first official act, my fervent supplication to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States.” And then, George Washington said, “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.” Plain English: “God did it. God established America.”

And so I want you to see, first of all, as we look at the nation of Israel and compare it to America... I’m not saying that America is like Israel—not at all. But I’m saying there are striking parallels. First of all, there were days of glorious conquest. As we look back and see how God has blessed this nation, we must say that God did it.

## **II. There Were Days of Gradual Compromise**

But now, let’s move on, secondly, and think not only of the glorious conquest, but I want you to see what happened to Israel: There were days of gradual compromise.

Look, if you will now, in chapter 2 and verses 1 through 4: *“And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars:”—now, watch verse 2—“but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up there voice, and wept”* (Judges 2:1–4).

Now what happened is this: that God gave them a victory, and God gave them a wonderful, glorious heritage; but they forgot that heritage. How did they do it? Well, look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 7—the Bible says, *“And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua,”—now, underscore this in your Bible—“who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel”* (Judges 2:7). That is, when God was moving in glorious ways, there was a generation under Joshua that saw God move in might, and power, and glory. They had seen miracle after miracle, and the people served God during those times.

But now, look in verse 10—chapter 2, verse 10: *“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers:”—that is, “those old-timers died”—“and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel”* (Judges 2:10)—*“there arose another generation.”* Friend, we’re living in that

generation today. We have a generation of baby boomers today who do not understand the history of this nation. They don't understand the miracles that God has worked for America. "There arose another generation that knew not God, nor the works that He had done for Israel." We have gone through a cultural revolution. It started in the 60s; and now, we're reaping the bitter fruit of that revolution.

Let me tell you what the key verse in the Book of Judges is. You might find it in Judges chapter 17 and verse 6: *"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6). That's Judges 17:6: *"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."* Now what does that mean? It means there was no fixed standard of right and wrong. Those days have come to us in America—being aided and abetted by our educators.

In 1960, the Gallup Organization took a poll, and, in 1960, they found out that 65% of the American public believed that the Bible was the authentic, inerrant Word of God. That is, you could look at the Bible and literally believe the truth that was taught in the Bible. In 1992, they took a poll again—this is less than 30 years. In 1992, only 32% of the American public believed that—that the Bible was objectively, literal truth. Again, I want to say, in 1960, it was 65%, roughly 2/3; now, in this day, less than 1/3. There has arisen a generation that knows not God. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes.

The Gallup Organization took a poll in 1992, and they asked this question: "Do you believe that there are moral absolutes?" That is, "Do you believe that there are things that are right and wrong intrinsically—some things that are absolutely right, some things that are absolutely wrong?" Did you know that 70% of the American people that responded to that survey said, "There are no moral absolutes"—70%? That's in 1992. Americans today will say, "Well, what is right for you may not be right for me."

Children have been taught in school a thing called *values clarification*. And they're being put in social situations. And they will say, "Now Johnny, Susie, Mary, Billy, what would you do in this situation? Think it out. Remember, Johnny, there are no right or wrong answers." That is values clarification. We have come to a place, in 1992, where 70% of the American people say, according to the Gallup Survey, "There are no fixed standards of right and wrong."

"Well," you say, "but at least we have the church." Now let me tell you something that will chill you and frighten you: The Gallup people surveyed evangelical Christians—these are the Bible-believing people; these are the ones that go to church and Sunday School—and they found out, when they asked them this question—the same question, "Do you believe there are fixed standards of right and wrong? Do you believe there are moral absolutes?"—only 57% of them said, "Yes." I'm talking about the church people;

I'm talking about the evangelical crowd. More than half of them said, "There is not an absolute standard of right and wrong." "There arose a generation that knew not God, and every man did that," the Bible says, "which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 2:10; Judges 17:6).

Now that's where we are today, and that's the reason that I have decided to preach from this Book of Judges. We are in a situation that is a very serious situation, because there's no fixed standard of right and wrong. Isaiah described a day very much like our day, in Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20, where he says, "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isaiah 5:20). That is, we live in a day of moral ambivalence. And so first of all, there was a glorious conquest; but then, there came to Israel a gradual compromise.

#### A. **There Were Canaanites That They Feared**

Now God had told the Israelites to drive out the Canaanites. The Canaanites were unspeakably immoral. I don't have time to deal with that, but let me tell you what they did, rather than driving out the Canaanites. Go back to Judges chapter 1, and look, if you will, in verse 19—Judges 1, verse 19: "*And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron*" (Judges 1:19). I wrote down, "The Canaanites that they feared."

There were certain Canaanites in the land. They said, "They're too strong for us. They have chariots of iron. We can't drive them out." What's that like in America today? Well, there are certain Canaanites that we don't seem to be able to deal with: drugs, crime, immorality, sexual perversion.

So what do you do when you come up against a Canaanite that you're not able to deal with? Well, somehow you just adjust yourself to it. For example, the United States Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, has said, "Maybe we just need to decriminalize drugs; maybe we need to legalize drugs." That's the Surgeon General of the United States of America. I guess, also, she supposes that you put out a fire with gasoline.

And here, let me give you a quote from her—I'm talking about leadership now: She said—and I quote, "It is clear that the sexual orientation of parents has nothing to do with the sexual orientation or outlook of their children." By the way, I want to say that is sheer stupidity—sheer stupidity. She goes on to say, "Many children in this society are born unwanted; and, I feel that if gay or lesbian couples feel that they want children enough to adopt, well then, they are probably just as capable of being good parents as heterosexual parents who choose to adopt." Now that would be shocking, if somebody from off the wall said this—that's the Surgeon General of the United States of America.

“There arose a generation that knew not God” (Judges 2:10). There is a day when everybody does “that which is right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6).

This is the same Surgeon General who advises little 13-year-old girls to put a condom in their purse before they go out on a date. Now what does that say to a child? What does that say about the expectation that we have? You see, children are going to live up to the expectations that we have for them. We ought to say to them, “Susie, Mary, Billy, be pure; be right; be righteous. You don’t want to marry someone who’s been passed around like a bottle of Gatorade in a football huddle.”

Who’s holding up the standards today? They say, “Well, we’ve got to do something to help these kids today.” Do you know all that we’re doing today? Here’s a cliff, and the kids are falling off; and, we’re running ambulances to the bottom of the cliff. We need some people today who will build some fences at the top to help these kids—to tell them what is right and to tell them what is wrong. There are the Canaanites that they feared. Then, they just say, “Well, we can’t do anything about them. They have chariots of iron”—“Everybody knows what the kids are going to do, so let’s just help them to do it safely.”

#### **B. There Were Canaanites That They Favored**

Then, I want you to look, if you will, in verses 28 through 30—chapter 1: “*And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanite dwelt in Gezer among them. Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries*” (Judges 1:28–30)—that means, “forced laborers.”

There were Canaanites that they feared; and then, there were Canaanites that they favored. They said, “These people with chariots of iron—we can’t do anything about them. So we’re just going to accommodate ourselves to them.” Then, there were other Canaanites—they said, “Hey, we can put these Canaanites to work. No need to drive these Canaanites out. These are the Canaanites that we favor.”

What kind of Canaanites do Americans favor? One of them is gambling—gambling, legalized gambling. They say, “Why drive that vice out? Well, that’s a good way to make money.” And again, let me say to the leaders of this city, and the leaders of this state, and the people in the Mid-South, gambling is a bad bet.

Now let me tell you why: It is antithetical to true business. In real business, you have a win-win situation. I make a gizmo; it’s worth a dollar. I sell it to you; you give me a dollar. You get the gizmo; I get the dollar. You get the gizmo. It’s a *win-win* situation. The way to have your needs met is to meet somebody else’s needs. What is wrong with gambling? It is rotten at the core, because gambling is based not on *win-win*, but *win-*



lose. Nobody can win in gambling unless somebody else loses. It's just as plain. People say, "You're taking a risk." The risk is not the factor; the factor is that it is profited gain at somebody else's sorrow and loss. And we don't need to be telling our kids that the way to make a living is to gamble. We need to be talking about the virtues of work, not the vice of wagering. We need to be taking teaching boys and girls, men and women, how to invest.

Do you know what happens when a government gets into the lottery to make money? They have to encourage—they have to encourage—the citizens to take a chance. I mean, they talk about some person who wins millions of dollars. Why don't they talk about the millions of losers that helped that person to win those millions of dollars? I mean, it's, really, it's quite ridiculous.

Now a pimp will stand on the street corner, and he knows the weaknesses of certain men—the vices of certain women, and the vices of those men. And so what he does is he encourages something that panders to the lower instincts. And what does he do? He just takes the money by pandering to vice. That's what we're trying to get our government to do today—to do the counterpart of a pimp standing on the street corner to make money, to profit from the vices of people. It's an incredible thing.

You say, "Well huh, Pastor Rogers, it'll bring in restaurants; it'll bring in recreation—all of that. It'll help build us." Yes, it will—yes, it will. It's an ill wind that blows no one any good. But when you let all of the air out of it—get to the bottom line—friend, it is trafficking in human misery.

It's the same thing as the liquor business. They told us, "Oh, America needs to sell liquor. And look at all of the tax money we can get, if we'll just put that Canaanite out to forced labor. Why, there are certain Canaanites that we don't need to drive out; we need to favor those Canaanites."

Billy Sunday told of the man over here in the Blue Ridge Mountains who caught rattlesnakes for a living. One day, he caught a huge rattler, a rattlesnake that had 14 rattlers. He put it in a box, and put a glass top on the box, was out in the fields plowing, when his little boy slid the top off of that box where that rattler was coiled. And that rattlesnake sprung out of that box and planted his fangs in the cheek of that little boy. The little boy ran out of the house into the yard to tell his father what had happened. The father came in, saw that snake, and hewed it to pieces. Then, he took his pocket knife and cut a big chunk out of that little boy's cheek—that's all he knew to do—and put his mouth up there to try to suck the poison out of the face of that little boy. He watched that little boy's face begin to swell and swell. It looked like several times its normal size, and the little boy stiffened and died. That man lifted up his voice in anguish and said, "Oh, I would not trade my son for all the rattlesnakes in the Blue Ridge Mountains." You see, we have people today who are playing with vices that are destroying our children.

I read this—somebody sent me this the other day from over here in Arkansas: “Sulfur Springs: A 16-year-old boy died in a head-on collision with a truck driven by his father early Thursday on a rural road southwest of Pine Bluff. The boy was driving a dirt bike without a headlight and did not wear a helmet.” He said, “The truck carried the motorcycle 45 to 50 feet. The boy landed on his back on the truck’s hood, and the force sent his body through the windshield.” Now I want you to listen to this next paragraph: “Officers arrested the elder”—and I’m not going to give his name—“on suspicion of driving while intoxicated, driving on the left of the center line, and having no proof of insurance.” There’s something about us, where we have certain Canaanites that we feel are a service.

So there are Canaanites that we fear. We just accommodate ourselves to them. There are Canaanites that we favor. We think, in America today, if we can just turn these vices into servants, that somehow they will help us and serve us.

### C. **There Were Canaanites That They Fellowshiped**

And then, thirdly, there were Canaanites that they fellowshiped. Look, if you will, in Judges 1, verse 32—and look at it: *“But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out”* (Judges 1:32). That is, before long, they became accustomed to the sinful ways of the Canaanites. They didn’t seem so sinful any more. They became interested in the way that the Canaanites worshiped. And rather than seeing them as enemies, they saw them as friends; and, they became a friend to the world.

And I suppose in this congregation that we have more of those who are fellowshiping Canaanites than fearing Canaanites or favoring Canaanites. You’re just becoming like them. The Bible says that, “Friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). Do you know what the average Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian thinks about sin, in my estimation? “It’s really not that bad; and really, we don’t need to do what we sang this morning: ‘Surrender all to the Lord Jesus.’”

You may have read, seven or eight years ago, about a man named Mr. Waters. He lived out in Los Angeles, about six miles from the airport. His name was Larry Waters. Now he was a very nominal guy—lived in a little section of row houses there. All the houses looked alike; they all had little fenced backyards. And every day, Larry Waters, who was 33-years-old—at least, every weekend—he would get a six-pack; he’d get his lawn chair; and he’d go out in his backyard and drink that six-pack. That’s every Saturday.

After a while, Larry Waters got tired of that, and he thought he’d do something exciting. So he had an idea of tying some balloons to his lawn chair—this is a true story—that would lift him up so he could just kind of float over the neighborhood. So he

went down and bought him some weather balloons. He bought him 44 of these weather balloons—I mean, huge things—had them filled with helium. The idea was that he was going to float about 100 feet over his neighbor’s backyards with his six-pack and look down on them.

And so he brought all these things home, and he fastened them to his lawn chair. He got his friends to hold it down ...and, actually, 45 of them. And there he is—he goes in the house now, gets him a six-pack, and he gets him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and he sits down in this chair, and he tells his friends, “All right, let go.” Got 45 helium balloons—this happened out there. And it went up—not 100 feet; it went up 11,000 feet. Vooooom! Larry had taken along a BB gun. His idea, Brother Wayne, was, if it started going too high, he’d just shoot out a few balloons. But the problem was he could never let go, he was going up so fast. And he’s up there at 11,000 feet.

Now he’s afraid to shoot anything. He doesn’t know what to do. Now this is history. A Continental DC-10 airliner went past. The pilot saw this guy up there in this balloon, and he radios to the tower, tells about a guy in a lawn chair floating along, up... I don’t know whether he said, “Now ladies and gentlemen, if you’ll look out the right-hand side of your window, you’ll see a man in a lawn chair.” They didn’t know what to do. They sent a helicopter up. They rerouted the traffic around Los Angeles airport. This guy Larry Waters stayed up there for four hours at 11,000 feet. He was just going to drift along 100 feet over the back yards, you know, look down on his people, drinking a six-pack.

Finally, the helium in those balloons oozed out, and it settled down. And finally, he came back down to the earth. And the people were there; the reporters were there—ambulances and everything else. And a reporter shoved a boom mike in this man’s face and said, “Were you scared?” He said, “Yep!” He said, “Are you going to do it again?” He said, “Nope!” He said, “Well, why did you do it?” He said, “Well, you just can’t sit there. You gotta do something!”

You know, I heard that story. I thought, “You know, that’s so much like Americans today.” They think, you know, “A little sin’s not so bad. I’m just going to float 100 feet over my neighbor’s backyard. And after all, if it gets too bad, I’ve got my trusty BB gun. You know, I can handle this thing.” We have the idea that we can just keep company with Canaanites, and it’s quite all right—I mean, that that we can control the situation.

A long time ago, an old preacher told me this: He said, “Adrian, sin will take you further than you want to go; it’ll take you longer than you want to stay; and it will cost you more than you want to pay.” Now what had happened to these people in this time, in Joshua’s time—so much like our time—there were the Canaanites they feared; there were the Canaanites they favored, and the Canaanites they fellowshiped, rather than driving them out.

### III. There Were Days of Grim Consequences

Now here's the third thing that I want you to see. First of all, there was glorious conquest. Secondly, there was gradual compromise. And thirdly, there were grim consequences.

Look again, in chapter 2; and look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4—God, now, who had been going before them, who had been protecting them, said, *“Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept”* (Judges 2:3–4). Now God said, “I’m not going to protect you anymore.”

You see, God had protected America. In the past, America has been protected. And we have sung,

*Long may our land be bright  
With freedom's holy light,  
Protect us by Thy might,  
Great God our King. (Samuel Francis Smith)*

But America has lost her protection, and these Canaanites have become a snare to us.

#### A. Militarily, We Are in Trouble

Militarily, we are weakened now. We look at Bosnia, Haiti, and North Korea—we don't know what to do. None of us has any confidence in our foreign policy, or few do. And the scream of the great American eagle has become the twitter of a frightened sparrow.

#### B. Culturally, We Are in Trouble

And culturally, I mean, we're in a battle today—not of bullets and bombs, but ideas and morals. We don't know what's going to happen next. In the past 30 years, our divorce rate has quadrupled, teen suicides have doubled, and violent crime has increased more than 500%. That's in 30 years. Did you hear that? Violent crime—more than 500%. More than 1/3 of all births in this nation are to women without husbands. In the inner city, the rate of illegitimacy is as high as 80%. Did you know what violent crime in America costs us? The bill is in excess of 100 billion dollars a year.

And we have diseases that are running rampant. Fifty-six million Americans are suffering from some sort of venereal disease. Every AIDS patient costs taxpayers from \$140,000 to \$170,000—each one. Yet, in America, we're spending \$160 million dollars—the government is, every year—to teach kids how to use condoms. And that same money is used to attack abstinence-based education. They call that *fear and shame-based curriculum*. They say that distorts the facts and hides the truth. The truth is that sex outside marriage is dangerous and often deadly. Promiscuity leads to

divorce, disease, abortion, broken families, and lives of misery and despair.

We've taken the Bible out of the schools. In 1980, we said, "You can't even post the Ten Commandments on classroom walls." And yet, James Madison said, "We've staked the entire future of the American civilization on the right, the ability, of each of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God." Do you know why they've taken the Ten Commandments out? They say that, "That might be dangerous to some child who would read it."

Let's talk about danger. Let's suppose that you're driving through the inner city at two in the morning, and your car stops running. You're by yourself. And you get out to walk for help, and you see a gang of young men coming down the street; and, they're headed right to you. You're all alone. It's two in the morning. I want to ask you a question: Would it be any comfort to you if you knew those boys had just come from a Bible study, where they were studying the Ten Commandments? I guarantee you it would. Don't tell me that the study of the Word of God is dangerous.

### **C. We Are in Trouble with the Elements**

What has happened is this, friend: that there are dire consequences that have happened in America today. We are in trouble—I mean, militarily, culturally, even the elements. Think what's happening in Georgia—the floods. Think of the fires in Colorado. Think of the earthquakes and the fires on the West Coast. Think of the ice storm in the Mid-South. Think of the hurricane that obliterated South Miami and Homestead. Think of the earthquakes that are continuing to shake the West Coast and may be precursors of even worse things that are coming. Think of all of these things. Think of the AIDS epidemic.

Think of all of these things; then, ask yourself this question: "Is God causing all of those things?" What if you say, "God causes them"? Then, you have a serious problem. You say, "Why would God send a hurricane to one part of the country that is no more wicked than another part, and why would that hurricane decimate righteous and unrighteous at the same time? Or, why do some little babies, for example, because of the sins and follies of their parents, contract AIDS? Or, why, for example, would a perfectly innocent hemophiliac, through contaminated blood, get AIDS? Would that make AIDS the judgment of God?" No, of course not.

"Well then, what about all these things, Pastor? Why are we seeing all of this?" One simple reason: The God who has protected us has just withdrawn His protection—just withdrawn His protection: "You say you want to do it without Me. Just go ahead. It's yours."

You see, the reason that we have been so blessed is that God has protected this nation. Don't you understand that? I mean, God doesn't have to judge us. God just has

to let us have our own way. We judge ourselves. God says, “You want to do it without Me? You say there’s no fixed standard of right and wrong? You’re smarter than I am? Every man does that which is right in his own eyes. You don’t want Me? All right, you’ve got it.” You see, when God judges, He’s going to do it with precision. That’s coming at the Great White Throne Judgment. He’ll do it with precision. But what has happened in America today is that we have forgotten God. You see, we need to bring back the glory.

## Conclusion

Well, my time is gone; but look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 16. Let me give you the good news—chapter 2 and verse 16—I love the first word, and it is *nevertheless*:

*“Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them”* (Judges 2:16). Nevertheless—God had rather forgive than judge; God had rather save than condemn. Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world (John 3:17). The word *judge* literally comes from a root word which means, “to save,” or, “to rescue.”

And there’s hope for America. We as Bible-believers must disabuse ourselves of the idea that there’s no hope for America. There is hope for America. And the Book of Judges—as we’re going to see, as we begin to study this book—the Book of Judges is going to show how, in the history of God’s ancient people, God sent deliverers—men of God—to rally the people to the Word of God to repentance in faith and God brought restoration and forgiveness. And the God that did that for Israel so long ago can do that for America today. And God has sent revival in times past, in dark days.

Abraham Lincoln hated slavery, and thank God that he did. We owe a great tribute and respect to Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln, one day, was in the slave market—this was before the abolition of slavery—and he saw a beautiful young black woman being auctioned on the slave block. She had already been used and abused and now was being humiliated further. He saw her there. He saw lecherous men who were bidding on her, and Abe Lincoln began to bid on her. One man would bid, and he would bid a higher price. Another would bid, and he would bid a higher price.

Finally, Abe Lincoln bought this young slave girl. Her eyes looked at him. She burned with fear, and anger, humiliation, confusion. She looked at him, and she said, “All right, now that you’ve bought me, what are you going to do with me?” He said, “I’m going to set you free.” She said, “Free from what?” He said, “Free from tyranny.” She said, “Free to be what I want to be?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Free to do what I want to do?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Free to say what I want to say?” He said, “Yes.” A smile began to play across her face. She said, “Free to go where I want to go?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Then I’m going with you—I’m going with you. I want to be with the one who set me free.” You know, that’s what Americans need to say to Jesus—“Lord, You’re

the One who gave us liberty; and Lord, we're going with You.”

Father, I pray that You'll bring back the glory to America. Lord, forgive us for keeping company with Canaanites—Canaanites, Lord, that we fear, and favor, and fellowship. And Lord, help us, as the people of God, to love You and to hold up the standard. In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.



# Bring Back the Glory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 1:1–2**

*“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.”*

JUDGES 1:1–2

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Generation: Days of Glorious Conquest
- II. Speculation: Days of Gradual Compromise
  - A. There Were Canaanites That They Feared
  - B. There Were Canaanites That They Favored
  - C. There Were Canaanites That They Fellowshiped
- III. Dissipation: Days of Grim Consequences
  - A. We Are Losing the War Militarily
  - B. We Are Losing the War Culturally
  - C. We Are Losing the War Against Nature

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now brothers and sisters, today, we begin a brand new study in the Book of Judges. So find the Book of Judges, if you will, and open to chapter 1. We’re studying under this theme: “Bring Back the Glory.” A nation can lose its glory; a family can lose its glory; a church may lose its glory; and you, as a Christian, may lose your glory. And sometimes a Christian born in the fires of revival finds himself or herself living in the smoke. And we need to get the glory of God back in our lives.

Now the Book of Judges is the story of how Israel gained and then lost the glory that was hers; and yet, it’s the story of God bringing back the glory to a land—it’s the story of revival after failure. And I think of the glorious history of the nation Israel. Under the leadership of God, the Jews had broken the tormenting and gnawing pains and chains of slavery, and had come out of Egypt into the land that flowed with milk and honey, and God gave them that land.

Look in verses 1 and 2: *“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand”* (Judges 1:1–2). Judah means, “praise.” It was the



dominant tribe. And God says, “*Praise* is going to lead you into this land, and I have given you this land.” And God gave them the land. It was a land—a glorious land. It flowed with milk and honey; grapes, and pomegranates, and figs; hills and valleys. It was the gift of God to them. God gave them Himself—they had a Lord. God gave them the Ten Commandments—they had a law. And God gave them Canaan—they had a land. But they denied the Lord; they defied the law; they defiled the land. And God sent judgment upon them.

Now there’s a striking parallel between what happened to Israel so long ago and what has happened and is happening to America today, because just as God gave Israel a land so long ago, many of us have in our hearts that God gave us this land. No nation—we’ve said it before—ever had such a Christian beginning and birth as America. And I believe that the American dream was placed into the bosom of the Founding Fathers by God Himself. And God gave to us a Lord, a law, and a land. And we’re doing the same thing that Israel did so long ago. And as the glory departed from Israel, the glory that belongs to America is now receding over the horizon. And we need today—and oh, pray God we’ll have it—a moral and spiritual awakening. And that’s what this series is all about.

You see, they say that, in family fortunes, there are three stages: The first generation generates; the second generation speculates; the third generation dissipates, and the family fortune is gone. That’s the way it is with nations, also: One generation generates; another generation speculates; a third generation then simply degenerates and dissipates, and the nation is gone.

## **I. Generation: Days of Glorious Conquest**

Now God gave Israel a wonderful and glorious beginning. So I want you to put down point number one: generation—days of glorious conquest. And from victory unto victory, the armies of Israel, under Joshua, marched. And walls fell; kings were subdued; land was taken. And so it was with America. Our nation went from victory unto victory. No nation—I say—ever had such a beginning as the United States of America.

You remember that Virginian, Patrick Henry? Patrick Henry was the one who, in the Virginia Assembly, gave a speech—a wonderful speech—that was the spark that united the Revolution. This is what he said—he was talking about slavery, and, in 1775, Patrick Henry said, “Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God.” And then, he said, “I know not what course others may take. But as for me, give me”—give me—“liberty, or give me death!” That was the spark of the Revolution. The Revolutionary War was won, and we too came from chains and tyranny to be a freeborn people.

And the first President of the United States—we called him *the Father of our*

*Country*—George Washington, took his oath of office by putting his hand on the Holy Bible. And after George Washington took his oath of office with his hand on the Holy Bible, he kissed the Bible. I wonder what the ACLU would say about that? He kissed the Bible. And in his inaugural address... Oh, by the way, do you know the first thing he did—his first official act? Do you know what the first official act of the first president was? He took the entire Congress—the Senate and the House—to church—every one of them. For two hours, they went to church and worshiped. That was the first official act of government.

And then, George Washington, in his inaugural address, said it would be “peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act, my fervent supplication to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the counsel of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction”—God’s benediction—“may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States.” And then, the Father of our Country said, “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.” Plain English—“God brought us thus far.” I mean, he said, “You cannot fail to see the hand of God in America.”

So point number one—just put down, “Days of Glorious Conquest.” That is generation; that’s the first step in a fortune.

## **II. Speculation: Days of Gradual Compromise**

Now here’s the second thing I want you to write down: days of gradual compromise—that’s speculation.

Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verses 1 and 2: “*And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt,*”—that is, “I gave you liberty—“*and have brought you unto the land*”—“I gave you victory”—“*which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?*” (Judges 2:1–2)—“*why have ye done this?*” God said, “I gave you everything. I brought you out of Egypt. I went with you to give you victory. I said, ‘Don’t make any league with the people who live in this land.’ And yet, you’ve disobeyed Me.” And with the voice of stern inquiry, God says, “Why have you done this?”

Well, let me tell you why they did it. God Himself answers the question, in the Book of Judges. Look, if you will, in Judges chapter 2, verse 7: “*And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the [leaders] that outlived Joshua, who*

*had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel*" (Judges 2:7). Now just underscore that; that's key. As long as they saw God working—they've seen the great works—they served God. Joshua—the days of Joshua—and then Joshua's descendents, you see, they served the Lord.

But now, look in verse 10: *"And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers:"*—that is, "Joshua and his descendents, see, died." "They were gathered to their fathers"—that's a euphemism for "going to Heaven." And now look—*"and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel"* (Judges 2:10). A new generation. One generation generates; another generation speculates. There's another generation of Americans living today—not the generation that suffered, fought, bled, and died for this country; not the generation that believed the Word of God; but a new generation.

Here's a key verse to understand the Book of Judges—it's Judges chapter 17 and verse 6. Put it in your margin. And this is what it says: *"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6). May I submit to you, that is exactly what is happening in America today. There's a generation today that is speculating. They have no fixed standard of right and of wrong. They do not understand the moral foundations of this nation. And every man is doing that which is right in his own eyes—not that they were doing what was wrong; they were doing what was right in their own eyes. But you know, the Bible says, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

This thing has come down to our educational system, where the boys and girls are put through courses called "Values Clarification." Billy, and Susie, and Mary, and Johnny, and Jimmy, and the others are put in a classroom; and, they are asked a moral situation, or are given a moral situation—and told, "Now Jimmy, what would you do in this class, if you knew that Billy had to make a passing grade in order to get a scholarship in order to go to college, and Billy cheated, and you knew that Billy was cheating? What would you do? Think it through." And so he writes out his answer. And then, they say, "Now remember—remember, Jimmy—there are no right or wrong answers." I mean, that's... You figure it out. You do that which is right in your own eyes.

You say, "Is that happening?" Friend, we have gone through a revolution in less than 30 years in America; and, I want to prove it statistically, right now. In 1960—in 1960—the Gallup Organization took a poll, and they found out that 65% of Americans believed that the Bible was literally the Word of God—65%. That's 1960; that's not that long ago. In 1992, just 29 years later, they took the same poll, and they found out that, rather than 65% of Americans believing, now 32% believe that the Bible is the Word of God—just 32%. That same group said, "There are no moral absolutes." I'm talking about in 1992—only 32% believed that there were moral absolutes.

George Barna took a poll recently. He found out that 67% of Americans say there's no absolute truth—that is, that “truth for you may not be truth for me; what's true for me may not be truth for you.” Well, you say, “Yes, that's the world, but what about the church? We have the church.” Now let me tell you something that will frighten you: George Barna took the poll with evangelical Christians—I'm talking about the Sunday morning churchgoers—and he found out that 52%—more than half of those who attend church (and evangelical Bible-believing churches)—said, “There is no absolute truth—no absolute truth.” *“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:6).

#### A. **There Were Canaanites That They Feared**

Now God said, “I'm going to judge you, because I said not to make any league with the Canaanites.” They did make league with the Canaanites. Go back to chapter 1, and look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron”* (Judges 1:19).

Now God said, “I'll drive out all the inhabitants.” It wasn't God's failure; it was their failure. But they said to those people who lived in the valley, “We're not going to fight you. You're too strong for us.” And so rather than fighting them, they accommodated themselves to them, because they said, “We will never be able to remove you; so, therefore, we're going to have to do something—we're going to have to make some sort of league, some sort of peace, with you.” Write down, “The Canaanites that They Feared,” by that verse—“The Canaanites that They Feared”—those who are in chariots of iron, those that we can't do anything about.

What are the Canaanites that we fear in this land today? Drugs. You know what we're saying today? “Hey, we've lost the war. We can't do anything about the drug culture.” And so the Surgeon General of the United States, Joycelyn Elders, has said, “Then, we need to decriminalize drugs.” That's just lifting your hands and saying, “I surrender. They've got chariots of iron. We cannot do anything about it.” She said, “If we decriminalize it, then we can control it.” Yeah, I say the same thing—ha! That's like putting out a fire with gasoline.

This same U.S. Surgeon General said—and I want you to listen to this quotation: “It's clear that the sexual orientation of parents has nothing to do with the sexual orientation or outlook of their children.” I want to tell you, that is sheer stupidity. She goes on to say, “Many children in this country are born unwanted; and, I feel that if gay or lesbian couples feel that they want children enough to adopt, well then, they are probably just as capable of being good parents as heterosexual parents who choose to adopt.” Now if that came off the wall somewhere, you'd say, “Well, so what?” But this is a presidential appointee in the United States of America. What they're saying is, “Look,

we've got problems we can't do anything about, so let's just accommodate ourselves to these problems."

It is the same U.S. Surgeon General who tells a little 13-year-old girl to put a condom in her purse before she goes out on a date. I'm embarrassed to even have to speak about things like this in public, but somebody has to sound the alarm. What does that say to a child? What does that say about the expectations to a child, when a United States government official says, "This is what you ought to do"? Do you know the excuse? "Well," you say, "we can't do anything about it. There's no way that we can stop it, so let's accommodate ourselves to it."

What they are doing is building ambulances and putting them at the bottom of the cliff. What we need to be doing is building fences at the top of the cliff, and holding up the standard for boys and girls, and teaching them that we do have higher expectations.

And what does that say about America's kids? What does it say about the young people? It says that we have lost the war. Now we're just trying to somehow accommodate to these Canaanites in chariots of iron. Kids ought to know that God's plan is one man for one woman, and monogamous marriage "until death do them part." That's God's plan. Nobody is smarter than God. Nobody's going to outwit God. They ought to tell a little 13-year-old girl that, "When you get married, you ought to be marrying a virgin, and you ought to be a virgin, when you get married. You ought not to marry somebody that's been passed around like a bottle of Gatorade in a football huddle. You ought to be pure." Where are the people who are saying this?

"There arose a generation that knew not God"—people doing that which is right in their own eyes, telling little kids that these prophylactics are going to keep them safe. Won't be long before somebody's going to bring a lawsuit against the schools that gave them out and say, "You said I'd be safe, and I wasn't safe," because there's a failure rate there. Condoms will fail, and character will not fail. We need to be teaching character.

## **B. There Were Canaanites That They Favored**

But there were the Canaanites that they feared; and then, look at this: There were the Canaanites that they favored. Look, if you will, in verse 28: "*And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out*" (Judges 1:28).

Now there were some Canaanites—they said, "We can't whip them"; there were other Canaanites—they said, "We can make servants out of them." The word *tribute* means, "slave labor." They said, "We can use these Canaanites. Why drive them out? They will be useful for us. We will make them our servants." And so we have certain Canaanites that we believe are really beneficial to us—that, they can serve us. Oh yes,

they may be wicked; they may be immoral; but we can make use of them.

Can you think of one? I can think of one that's infecting this area, and it's legalized gambling. They say, "Well, what we can do—we can legalize that. We can put it to tribute. Think of what we will gain through legalized gambling!" You need to think about what we can lose. Let me tell you the difference between gambling and regular business: Regular business is *win-win*. I make a product. I sell it to you. I get the profit. You get the product. I win, and you win. Gambling is *win-lose*. That's what it's all based on. Nobody can win in gambling unless somebody else loses. The papers ballyhoo one man who wins millions. Why don't they ballyhoo millions who've lost everything? It's so stupid.

And when they get a state lottery, then the government has to boost the lottery, because it is the government that's getting the proceeds from the lottery. And so they have to encourage the citizens to participate in gambling. Do you know what a pimp does? He stands on a street corner and encourages a man to consort with a prostitute, and he takes the profit from their vices. We're trying to get the United States government to do something very similar—or the state government, or the local government: to encourage its citizens to participate in a vice, so that we, as the government, can somehow get the profit.

Somebody handed me a news clipping last week. Over here in Arkansas, near Pine Bluff, Arkansas, there was a horrible accident. A man driving his automobile on the wrong side of the road at nighttime, going over a hill, hit a motorcycle. And the boy on the motorcycle rolled up on the hood of the vehicle, and then, on through the windshield, and on to the person driving the car. The article went on to say that it was the man's son that he hit—bloody, in his arms. They arrested the father for drunken driving—driving on the wrong side of the road. His own son! Friend, these things come back to haunt us.

You say, "Well, you know, by liquor, and by gambling, we get certain resources." I pity you—I pity you—if you're so low that you would traffic in human misery for economic gain. But we think that, somehow, we can take these Canaanites, and we can put them to forced labor—"to tribute." There are certain Canaanites that we fear—chariots of iron. So we just give in to them. There are certain Canaanites that we favor. So we say, "Hey, we'll put them to work for us. We'll just make virtues out of vices."

### C. **There Were Canaanites That They Fellowshiped**

And then, there are Canaanites that they fellowshiped. Look, if you will here, in chapter 1, verse 32: "*But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land*" (Judges 1:32). Actually, they just moved in. They said, "These Canaanites are really not bad neighbors." And they began to fellowship with them; they lived among them.



And as you begin to read, you're going to find out that they learned their religions; they learned their nefarious practices; they learned their morals. They were keeping company with Canaanites. The Bible says that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). The Bible says, "*Love not the world*" (1 John 3:1). "Be not conformed to this world, or you will be condemned with this world" (Romans 12:2).

The great problem in Memphis, Tennessee, in this church, and in churches across the land, is that we're keeping company with Canaanites. And you know, the average Christian thinks that he can handle that quite well. I mean, he's really not all that concerned about these Canaanites.

Did you read in the paper, well, seven or eight years ago—I was reminded about this story the other day—that a man named Larry Waters... Larry lived out in Los Angeles. He lived about six or seven miles from the airport out there. He lived in a little subdivision that had a little row of houses. They were all just about the same: same sod on the front; same little backyard in the back, fenced around. Every Saturday, this boy—33-years-old—every Saturday afternoon, he'd get a six-pack, go out and sit in his lawn chair, and drink that six-pack, every Saturday afternoon.

After a while, he got bored with it and decided he would do something different. So he decided he would get some balloons and tie them to his lawn chair so he could float up about 100 feet over his neighbor's backyards, while he's floating along, drinking his six-pack. This is a true story. So he went down and bought him some weather balloons. He bought 45 weather balloons, and had them filled with helium, and got them home by some contrivance, and tied them all to his lawn chair. He had his friend to hold it down.

Then, Larry went into the house. He got his six-pack and made him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and he has this scheme. He's got a BB gun, so if he goes too high, or when he gets ready to come down, he's going to begin to shoot out those balloons and come back down. I mean, this is a wonderful scheme he's got! He gets his six-pack; he gets his peanut butter and jelly sandwich; he gets in his lawn chair; and, he tells his friends to let go.

And they let go, and he shot up—not 100 feet, but 11,000 feet—straight up! The guy—he can't shoot out a balloon; he's holding on for dear life. And before he knows it, he doesn't want to shoot anything. He can't let go; he's frozen, immobilized. Eleven thousand feet—he's up there.

A continental pilot in a DC-10—true story—sees him and radios to the tower, "There's a guy up here in a lawn chair." Can you imagine? "Now ladies and gentlemen, if you look out on the right-hand side, you'll see a man..." And there he is, out there. They didn't know what to do. I mean, he's over the airport. They are having to reroute the traffic. They send up helicopters. They can't get him down. Larry Waters stayed up there at 11,000 feet for four hours; and finally, the helium began to ooze out of those

balloons, and he settled back to the earth.

When he got back down, there was a crowd there—ambulances, and police, and everybody else. And a reporter with a boom microphone stuck that microphone in his face—said, “I want to ask you a question: Were you scared?” It was a foolish question. His eyes were as big as saucers. He said, “Yep.” That’s all he could say—“Yep.” Said, “Are you going to do it again?” He said, “Nope.” That was it.

Oh, friend, when I heard that story, I thought, you know, that’s so much like us. We say, you know, “I’m just going 100 feet. I’m just going to kind of do something my neighbors are not doing. It’s going to elevate me just a little bit. And I’m just going to skim over this neighborhood.”

I remember what an old preacher told me a long time ago about sin, and I want you kids to listen to it: “Sin will take you further than you want to go. It’ll keep you longer than you want to stay. And it will cost you more than you want to pay.” “Sin will take you further than you want to go. It will keep you longer than you want to stay. And it’ll cost you more than you want to pay.” Here’s a man with his little BB gun, saying, “You know, I can just handle this thing.”

We have so many in America like that—so many who say, “Well, you know, just a little worldliness here. I’ll just keep company with Canaanites.” There were the Canaanites that they fellowshiped.

That’s what’s happening in America today. God said, “I told you to drive them out.” Look in verse 2—chapter 2, verse 2: “*And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?*” (Judges 2:2). Canaanites you fear; Canaanites you favored; Canaanites you fellowshiped, when God says, “*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...and I will receive you*” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

### **III. Dissipation: Days of Grim Consequences**

Now what did we say? The first generation generates—that’s glorious conquest. The second generation speculates—that’s gradual compromise. And then, the third generation dissipates—that’s grim consequences.

Look in chapter 2, verses 3 and 4, now—God says, “*Wherefore...*”—you want to know what’s wrong in America? Just put a circle around that word *wherefore*—“*Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.*” Now America has thorns in its side and snares around its feet. And why? Why? “*And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept*” (Judges 2:3–4). Why? Because the protection of the Almighty had gone from them.



And that's what's happened to America: God has led us; God has guided us; God has guarded us; God has gladdened us. No nation has ever had the victories that America's had—economically, militarily, socially—as this nation's had.

#### **A. We Are Losing the War Militarily**

But now, today, we've lost the respect of other nations. We have ambivalence in our foreign policy. We don't know what to do in Bosnia, Haiti, North Korea, or the Middle East. How can we help other people with their problems? We can't even solve our own at home. And the scream of the great American eagle has become the twitter of a frightened sparrow.

#### **B. We Are Losing the War Culturally**

But not only militarily—we're losing the battle culturally here at home. We're in a war, but not a war of bullets and bombs, but of ideas. And on these God-blessed shores of America, 1.1 million teenagers became pregnant in America. They tell us now that teenagers in growing numbers are experimenting with bisexuality. And Madison Avenue, they tell us, is getting ready for major advertising suggesting bisexuality. They say it's going to be the coming thing among young people.

In the past 30 years that we were talking about, our divorce rate has quadrupled. Teen suicides have doubled, and violent crime has increased 500%. God says, "Thorns and snares will be yours" (Judges 2:3). One-third of all births in this nation are born to unwed people. And in the inner city, the rate of illegitimacy is as high, in some places, as 80%. Our streets are filled with violence and rage. Crime costs us in excess of 100 billion dollars a year. That's the crime bill. And the government is spending 250 billion dollars a year on welfare to do something about poverty, and the poverty rate is rising year by year. God... More than a million homeless on our streets—thorns and snares.

Fifty-six million Americans have venereal disease. One case of AIDS will cost the United States government 140 to 170,000 dollars. And yet, we won't teach our children abstinence, but we're spending 160 million dollars each year, by the government, to teach them how to use condoms. What's happened in America? We've taken the Bible and the Ten Commandments out of the schools. "There arose a generation that knew not God" (Judges 2:10). If that's wrong, why has it been suddenly wrong? What has been the difference from the nation that we once knew? You know what they said, when they put the Ten Commandments on the walls of some schools and then took them down? They said, "That may be harmful to some child reading."

I want to ask you a question: Imagine yourself, in the middle of the night, driving through the inner city of one of our great cities in America. You're by yourself. It's two in the morning. You're going through the heart of that city. Your automobile stops running; it just stops. You don't have a phone in the car. You can't sit there. You've got to get out

and walk for help in the middle of one of these major cities at two in the morning.

As you get out and begin to walk, you see a group of about eight boys—teenagers—coming toward you. I want to ask you a question: Wouldn't you feel just a little better if you knew they were coming from a Bible study? You know, these are kids that have been studying the Word of God: "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:13–15).

Yet we, as Americans, are so smart that we don't have room for God. We're losing the war culturally.

### **C. We Are Losing the War Against Nature**

We're just even losing the war against nature: Albany, Georgia, this morning—floods; Colorado—fires; California—earthquakes; the Mid South—ice storm; Miami—devastating hurricane; Texas—tornados; medically, AIDS and pestilence. "Say, Pastor Rogers, are these things the judgment of God?" Oh no, not in the true sense, because when God judges, God will judge with a whole lot more precision than that.

Do you know what's wrong in America? God has just taken away His protection—He's just taken away His protection. I mean, all these things have been out there, and the devil is not an equal-opportunity employer. And nature, or ravishes of nature, apart from the protecting hand of God, can do many weird and horrible things.

## **Conclusion**

We have sung this song:

*Long may our land be bright  
With freedom's holy light,  
Protect us by Thy might,  
Great God our King. (Samuel Francis Smith)*

But the Bible says, "*There was no king in Israel, [and] every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 17:6). And God says, "All right, why have you done this? No longer will you have My protection. These things will be thorns in your side. They'll be snares unto you." And that's where we are today, folks. One generation generates; another generation speculates; a third generation dissipates, and it's over.

You say, "Pastor Rogers, is there any hope?" Yes, thank God—chapter 2, verse 16. I love this verse, because it begins with the word *nevertheless*: "*Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them*" (Judges 2:16). Thank God for that. God raised up judges. The word *judge* means, "to save, to deliver." God sent them saviors; God sent them deliverers; God sent them a way out. Sometimes they would take the way, and sometimes they would not. But it's never too late with God. God had much rather forgive than He had to judge.

God still loves this country, and God still loves you. And God still has a way for your home and your family. *Nevertheless* is still in the Word of God. I have a plaque that just has this word on it: “Nevertheless”—“Nevertheless.” I love it—just that one word, “Nevertheless.” We must disabuse ourselves of the idea that there is no hope, because, as long as there is God, there is hope.

Abraham Lincoln was dead set against slavery—and thank God for Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln went to the slave market, one time, and he saw a young black girl—a beautiful girl—being auctioned. She had been used and abused, and there were lecherous people who were bidding on her to use her for only God knows what. Abraham Lincoln began to bid on this black girl. One man would bid this; he would raise the bid. Another bid—he would raise he bid. Another bid—he outdid them all. She looked at him with suspicion, her eyes burning with fear and hatred, wondering what this man had in his mind. Finally, the gavel fell, and the auctioneer said, “She’s yours; you’ve bought her.”

Abraham Lincoln paid the price. And this girl said to him, “Now what are you going to do with me?” He said, “I’m going to set you free.” She said, “What?” He said, “I’m going to set you free.” She said, “Free from what?” He said, “Free.” She said, “Free to say what I want to say?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Free to do what I want to do?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Free to be what I want to be?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Free to go where I want to go?” He said, “Yes.” A big smile came across her face, and she said, “Then I’m going with you”—“I’m going with you.”

That’s what we need to say to Jesus: “Lord, You’re the One that set us free—You’re the One that set us free. Lord, why would we follow anyone else, when You’re the One who gave us moral freedom, spiritual freedom, eternal freedom, political freedom?” It comes from Jesus. And I’m calling this congregation, as I call myself, to say anew and afresh, “Lord Jesus, we’re going with You—with You. No one paid a greater price than You paid for us.”

One generation generates; another generation speculates; another generation dissipates, and it’s all over. But it needn’t be. Nevertheless—nevertheless, nevertheless—God raises up deliverers. I want Him to do it again, don’t you? Father, seal the message to our hearts. In Jesus’ wonderful name. Amen.

# Sin Cannot Win and Faith Cannot Fail

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 17, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 4:1–15**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Woman God Chose: Deborah

II. The Warrior God Called: Barak

A. Where Did Barak Get His Faith?

1. The Origin of His Faith: The Word of God

2. The Object of His Faith: The Lord God of Israel

3. The Operation of His Faith: Hearing from God, Trusting in God, and Obeying God

III. The Wonder God Caused

Conclusion

## Introduction

**B**e finding, in the Book of Judges, Judges chapter 4. And when you've found it, look up here. I want every boy and girl, every man and woman, within the sound of my voice, to learn one thing if you learn nothing else—and here it is; listen to it: Sin can't win, and faith can't fail. Did that get in? I pray God it will, because that is the burden and the title of this message—"Sin Can't Win and Faith Cannot Fail."

Judges 4, verse 1: *"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he"—that is, the king of Canaan—"had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel"* (Judges 4:1–3). It seemed that the children of Israel could never learn, and they went through a cycle of rebellion—and then there was retribution; and then there was repentance; and then there was restoration; and then, one more time, back into rebellion.

I heard of a little boy in school—he opened his lunch pail, unwrapped the first sandwich, and he said to his little friend, "Would you look at that? Peanut butter sandwiches. Peanut butter again." He ate his sandwich. The next day, eagerly, he

unwrapped his sandwich. He told his little friend, “Look—peanut butter again.” But he ate it. The third day, he said to his little friend, “Would you look at that? Three days in a row, peanut butter sandwiches.” His little friend said to him, “Why don’t you tell your mother to stop making those old peanut butter sandwiches?” He said, “Now don’t talk about my mother that way. I make these sandwiches myself.” And that’s exactly what Israel was doing—making their own sandwiches and then complaining about it.

What they were doing was simply eating the fruit of their own deeds, and they would get into trouble. Look at verse 1: “*And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD*” (Judges 4:1). And then, look in verse 3: “*And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD*” (Judges 4:3). Now the Bible says that God had raised up an enemy—God raised him up. God raised up a man called the king of Canaan. Now God had given Canaan to the children of Israel; and yet, here comes a wicked king—the king of Canaan.

And the king of Canaan had an army. He had a general. The general’s name was Sisera. And in the army he had 900 chariots of iron. It was kind of like Saddam Hussein with all of his tanks—900 chariots of iron. And the children of Israel were saying, “Alas and alack! What shall we do? O God, help us.” And do you know what? Because they cried unto the Lord, God did help. God had rather forgive than judge, and God wants to bless America. And I want you to see how God blessed His people in this day and this age who were so much like America today. We sin against God. Then we get into trouble; and then, we say, “O God, help.” But thank God, He is a God of mercy.

Begin in verse 4: “*And Deborah...*”—her name means “bee,” like a honeybee—“*And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth,*”—Lapidoth—“*she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand*” (Judges 4:4–7).

## **I. The Woman God Chose: Deborah**

The first thing that I want you to see is the woman God chose. God chose a woman to help deliver Israel. Her name was Deborah, and the Bible says here plainly that she was a prophetess. Did you know that there were women prophets in the Bible?

*Prophetesses*, they were called. Miriam, sister of Moses, was a prophetess. Huldah was a prophetess. In the New Testament, we learn that Anna was a prophetess, who held the baby Jesus in her arms. We read in the Book of Acts there was a man named Philip

who had four daughters, and all of them were prophetesses.

Now what does that mean? It means that God had given to these women supernatural wisdom. Now that did not mean that they had taken over the government of the country. That did not mean that they were pastors in churches, or whatever; but they were what the Bible calls, in chapter 5, verse 7, “*a mother in Israel*.” That’s what Deborah called herself. She said, “*I arose a mother in Israel*” (Judges 5:7)—that is, that God had given her wisdom. I got to thinking about this, and I got to thinking about some prophetesses that I believe that I’ve known—women who had the Spirit of God—and some that I know about:

Henrietta Mears—get Henrietta Mears’ book sometime, *What the Bible is All About*. What a great, great woman Henrietta Mears was! And many of you may not realize, but Henrietta Mears was the prophetess who spoke to and led a man named Bill Bright, who founded Campus Crusade for Christ. She was to Bill Bright what Deborah was to Barak. She enthused his life with power. I think of a woman today who’s having a great influence on America—Beverly LaHaye. I thank God for her. I believe that God has given Beverly the courage and wisdom, and I believe that God is using this woman to speak to her generation. I think of Corrie ten Boom, and how God gave Corrie ten Boom incredible wisdom, and courage, and insight, and how many lives have been blessed by Corrie ten Boom.

I think of one of Southern Baptists’ finest missionaries—premier missionaries. Her name was Miss Bertha Smith. Miss Bertha Smith, who’s now in Heaven—she lived to be almost 100 hundred years of age—had a great influence on my life. When the Southern Baptist Convention was looking for someone to elect as President—or, when some were looking for someone to elect as President—back in 1979, when we were in a crisis in our convention, Bertha Smith called me on the telephone, and she said to me, “Brother Adrian, I have been with God, and God wants you to allow your name to be placed in nomination as the President of the Southern Baptist Convention.” There was no stutter about it—no stammer. She was a woman “who had been with God, and this is what I believe God wants.” And I thank God for the influence that that woman had upon my own life.

I thank God for the influence of a woman like Fanny Crosby. We sing her songs every Sunday, as we meet here. And God reached down and called a woman—thank God for her.

Thank God for the women in this church who are so filled with wisdom, who love the Lord Jesus Christ—a fulfillment of Acts chapter 2, verses 17 and 18: “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, [that] I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions,*

*and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy*" (Acts 2:17–18). Of course, the Bible says, in 1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 11 and 12, that a woman is not *"to usurp authority over the man"* (1 Timothy 2:12). But thank God—thank God—for the ministry of godly women. Thank God for the Deborahs in the land. Thank God for the ladies in this church who love and serve God with incredible power. So the first thing I want you to see is the woman God chose.

## **II. The Warrior God Called: Barak**

The second thing I want you to see is the warrior that God called. Look in verse 8—and the Bible says in verse 8: *"And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh"* (Judges 4:8–9). Here's an interesting thing. She says—this woman filled with wisdom—she says, "Barak, there's a man's job. It's not a woman's job—it's a man's job to lead an army. I can't do it, but God wants it done. And I want you to go and lead the armies of Israel against this king of Canaan." And he said, "I will do it."

Now let me tell you why he did it; I don't have to guess about why he did it: The man that God used was a man full of faith. Put in your margin, Hebrews 11—Hebrews 11, verses 32 and 33. And the writer of the Book of Hebrews is calling the roll of the faithful, God's Hall of Fame, those who were great heroes of the faith. And this is what he says, as he gets towards the end of that notable passage: *"And what shall I more say?"*—What shall I more say?—*"for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak..."*—verse 33—*"who through faith subdued kingdoms"* (Hebrews 11:32–33).

How did he do it? By faith! What happened here in this chapter was so notable that the writer of Hebrews said that Barak was a mighty man of faith. Here's a woman of wisdom, and here is a man of faith. The woman got chosen; the man got called—the warrior, God called. And what a mighty team they were!

### **A. Where Did Barak Get His Faith?**

Now where did Barak get this faith? I want us to learn a lesson of faith before we move on to the heart of the message. Where did he get his faith?

#### **1. The Origin of His Faith: The Word of God**

The origin of his faith was the Word of God. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *"And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded..."* (Judges 4:6). Now where does faith



come from? Romans 10, verse 17 says, *“Faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). Faith is hearing God and believing God. That’s the origin of his faith.

## **2. The Object of His Faith: The Lord God of Israel**

And I want you to see the object of his faith. His faith was in the Lord God of Israel. Verse 6: *“Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded...”* (Judges 4:6). People say, “Well, just have faith.” I say, “Faith in what?” “Just believe.” I say, “Believe what?” Friend, you can’t have faith unless it is faith in God. The origin of your faith is the Word of God. The object of your faith is the God of that Word. The Bible says, in Mark 11, verse 22, *“Have faith in God”* (Mark 11:22). What is faith? It’s not positive thinking—that’s faith in faith. It’s not believing you can do it—that’s faith in yourself. Have faith in God.

## **3. The Operation of His Faith: Hearing from God, Trusting in God, and Obeying God**

And then, the operation of his faith—look, if you will, in verse 8, here, in this same chapter: *“And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go”* (Judges 4:8). What is faith? Faith is hearing from God, trusting in God, and obeying God. Faith is hearing from God, trusting in God, and obeying God. Faith is hearing from God, trusting in God, and obeying God. I said it three times. Did it sink in? Deborah, a prophetess, said, “This is what God said.” Barak heard it. The Lord God said it. Barak believed it. Then, in verse 8, he said, *“I will go”* (Judges 4:8). Do you know the difference between belief and faith? Faith *is* belief *with* legs *on it*. I mean it. It is a verb more than a noun. It is believing God, and trusting God, and obeying God.

## **III. The Wonder God Caused**

But I must pass on from those two things, and I want to get really to the heart of the message. You see the woman God chose. You see the warrior God called. But I want you to see the wonder God caused. Now here’s the thing.

Now remember what I told you? Listen. Sin can’t win; faith can’t fail. O God, put that in our hearts today. O God, rivet that in our souls today. Some of you—some of you—are thinking about caving in. Some of you are thinking about going over to the enemy. Some of you are thinking about giving it up. There’s doubt in your mind.

Doubt sees the obstacles, but faith sees the way.

Doubt sees the darkest night, but faith sees the day.

Doubt dreads to take a step, but faith soars on high.

Doubt says, “Who believes?” Faith answers, “I!” (Author Unknown)

That’s what I want you to do—I want you to see the wonder that God caused.

Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and*



*he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him” (Judges 4:10). Skip to verse 14: “And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet” (Judges 4:14–15).*

Now here’s an army of 10,000. You say, “Well, Pastor, that seems like a good army that Israel had.” Had you been there that day, you would never have chosen sides with Israel had you not believed God. It would be like a division of infantry going up against a division of armored tanks. Here are 10,000 men, but here’s an army with 900 chariots of iron. And Sisera, the general of the king of Canaan, doubtless was sure of the outcome. He knew that his chariots were superior. He knew that his army was better, and he knew that his record was untarnished. The king of Canaan was having his way, and Sisera was riding high, wide, and handsome.

But here’s where Sisera failed: His trust was in the wrong place. Put this verse in your margin—Psalm 20, verse 7: *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God” (Psalm 20:7).*

Now here was a man who had 900 chariots he thought would give him the victory. But what happened that day is this: that God moved in. Look, if you will, in chapter 5; and look, if you will, in verse 4. Here’s a song—it’s a poem—that tells about the victory. And Deborah is singing this song: *“LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel” (Judges 5:4–5). Skip over to chapter 5, verse 20: “They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength” (Judges 5:20–21).*

What happened is this: There they are at the foot of Mount Tabor, not far from the meadow where the Battle of Armageddon is going to be fought. And here comes Sisera, the general of the king of Canaan. He’s got 900 chariots. They’re getting ready to do war. It’s going to be a piece of cake. And then, something happens. The bottom fell out. Chapter 5 and verse 4—the Bible says, *“The earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water” (Judges 5:4).* What they had there that day was something like they are experiencing over in South Georgia. They had a stump-floating, frog-strangling rain. It began to rain, and the Bible says that the bottom just fell out. Look: *“The heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water” (Judges 5:4).* And what

happened was a mudslide. Look in verse 5: *“The mountains melted”* (Judges 5:5). And there was a river there that looked like a small river. It was the Brook Kishon, and it began to overflow. And that entire battlefield turned to mud.

Josephus the historian tells about it. I read the account that Josephus had. He said, “There came a blinding rainstorm, and it was moving in the direction from which the army Sisera”—Sisera’s army—“was coming. And the rain was right in the face of his charioteers. And,” he said, “it was a cold rain. And their clothes got soaked, and their arms got numb. And the chariot wheels bogged down, and God gave the victory.” And then, chapter 5, verse 20, explains it from a bigger perspective. I love this; it’s one of my favorite verses in all of the Bible. The Bible says this—that *“the stars in their courses fought against Sisera”* (Judges 5:20). That’s an incredible verse: *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”* Now what does that mean? It means, friend, that the fight was fixed. Sisera did not have a chance, because God gave the victory.

Now look up here. Don’t forget what I told you: Sin can’t win, and faith cannot fail. *“The stars”—the stars—“in their courses fought against Sisera.”* Mister, let me give you a truth: The whole universe is against the man who is against God—the whole universe is against the man who’s against God. God has programmed every molecule to the highest heavens against sin. Don’t ever get the idea that you can sin successfully. Don’t ever get the idea that you can trust in God in vain. Sin can’t win, and faith can’t fail.

Do you now what God did? God lined the stars up behind Barak. God lined the whole universe behind him. The whole universe is against the man who is against God. The whole universe is behind the man who’s for God. Never forget it. Satan sails a sinking ship; Satan rules a doomed domain. Say it: “Sin can’t win.” Say it: “Sin can’t win. Faith can’t fail.” Say it again: “Sin can’t win. Faith can’t fail.” I want you to get that in your mind. *“The stars in their courses”—the stars in their courses—“fought against Sisera.”* Nine hundred chariots—*“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will trust in the name of the LORD our God”* (Psalm 20:7). Do you know what success is, friend? Success is finding out which way God is moving and joining Him. If you don’t do it, you’re going to have a head-on collision with the stars; you’re going to stumble over the stars.

Now Rome—Rome, that proud mistress of land and sea—she thought that she had conquered everything, but there was a man named Pilate who judged Jesus guilty, worthy of death, and crucified Jesus. When Pilate did that, Rome had a collision with the stars, and Rome has become just a piece of refuse in history’s garbage can.

Pharaoh—when God called Moses out of Egypt, and God said, “Lead My people out,” and Pharaoh said, “I’m not going to let You do it”—Pharaoh made a mistake. You know what Pharaoh should have done? Pharaoh should have found out which way God was moving and joined Him. Pharaoh should have called out his chariots and escorted

Israel out of Egypt, out there into the Promised Land. But he didn't do that, and God drowned Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea and left those bleached bones there by the shores of the Red Sea as a tribute to this: that sin can't win, and faith cannot fail.

Napoleon—what an arrogant man was Napoleon! Napoleon marched on Russia—on Moscow. He had 500,000—half a million—handpicked soldiers. Soon he would have Moscow—and, in his mind, he would have the world. And a snowflake fell and kissed his cheek, and he brushed it off with a laugh—and then another snowflake, and then another snowflake, and then handfuls, and then avalanches of snowflakes, and then mountains of snow. And Napoleon's horses reared, and floundered, and sank in the snow. And a half million handpicked soldiers were frozen on the plains of Russia. Do you know what the little Corsican general had boasted? They said, "Napoleon, be careful. You're too arrogant." Do you know what Napoleon said? Napoleon said, "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions." He was right, but he forgot that God stations His battalions in the skies. And the course of history was changed there, because here was a man who had a collision with the stars.

What I'm trying to say is, "*The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.*" Sin can't win; faith cannot fail. Do you know what it is? It is Romans 8:28 in reverse. Do you know what Romans 8:28 says? "*And we know that all things work together for good to [those who] love God...who are called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28). That is, the things that may seemingly be bad—you may not be able to see it, you may not understand it, but back there behind it all there is a God who is working all things after the purpose of His will; and there's a God who is a sovereign God of the universe. And not a snowflake falls without His permission; not a blade of grass moves without His acquiescence. "*And...all things work together for good to [those] that love God*" (Romans 8:28).

Listen, listen, listen. All things work together for bad to those who don't. What you may think is good... I'm sure that ole' Sisera—he was saying, "What a mighty army I've got! Look at all these chariots. Boy, everything is coming out good." But his good was bad. Sin can't win; faith can't fail. It may look to you—it may look to you—like sometimes you're failing—sometimes you're falling—that sometimes God had forgotten, that the devil is on his throne. That Right is on the throne, and Wrong is on the scaffold. This chapter tells us that sin can't win and faith can't fail. Get it in your mind.

Have faith in God...

He cannot fail, He must prevail,

Have faith in God. [I say,] have faith in God. (B.B. McKinney)

Sin can't win. "*The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.*"

I love the ocean. I love to watch the tide come in. That's the reason why I love this

piece from an unknown poet. He said:

On the far reef the breakers  
Recoil in shattered foam,  
While still the sea behind them  
Urges its forces home;  
Its [chant] of triumph surges  
[Through] all the thunderous din,  
The wave may break in failure;  
But the tide is sure to win!

Oh mighty sea! thy message  
in clanging spray is cast;  
Within God's plans of progress  
It matters not at last  
How wide the shores of evil,  
How strong the reefs of sin,  
The wave may be defeated,  
But the tide is sure to win! (Priscilla Leonard)

Don't you love that? "The tide is sure to win." And the same God who has programmed the planets to produce that undefeatable tide is the God that has programmed your life. When you get in league with the stars, when you say, "O God, I'll do what Barak did: I will hear the Word of God; I will believe the God of that Word; and I will live by it; and, whether I see it now, or whether I see it later, I know that I know that I know..." Listen. Sin can't win, and faith cannot fail. Have faith in God. God lines up the universe behind the man who lines up with God. And all things work together for bad to those who refuse God. Say it with me: "Sin can't win; faith can't fail. Sin can't win"—say it—"faith can't fail." Believe it, friend—believe it.

## Conclusion

Father God, help us in America to learn that sin can't win and faith cannot fail. And God, help us to hear Your Word, believe in You, and obey You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Star Wars

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 19, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 4:1–21; 5:4–5, 20**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Women May Prophecy

II. Women May Serve

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn with me, please to the book of Judges, chapter 4, for our Bible study tonight, before we have our Lord's Supper.

When I recently visited Moscow, I had the opportunity to be in a briefing with a Russian general, and a Russian sea captain, and some other dignitaries and leaders there. It was a very top-level briefing. I was grateful to be there. A United States general was there, and some others were there. And, in the question and answer period, someone asked that Russian general this question: "What effect did SDI have on the implosion of communism?" Now, you know that SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative, commonly known as "Star Wars." "What effect did that have?" And, he said, "It had a devastating effect on us." He said, "We were not able to keep up." He said, "We'd been putting 40% of our gross national product into defense, our infrastructure was being weakened. And then, you came along with SDI; and so, we said to you, 'You don't need that because our weapons are not offensive weapons; our weapons are defensive weapons. Therefore, you don't need to defend against us. You don't need SDI.'" But then, here's what he said: he said, "Of course, we were lying"—it's all over now, so you can tell the truth. He said—"Of course, we were lying when we said, 'You don't need that.' We were lying when we said that our weapons were only weapons of defense." He said, "We were cheating you." He could say it then because it was all over (and no need to perpetuate a lie at that time).

I thought about that, and I thought about what the Bible has to say about "star wars." Judges chapter 4 is where we are, but just fast-forward to verse 20 and look at it. And then, we'll back up to chapter 4. Judges chapter 4 is our text, but Judges 5:20 is the theme: *"They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."* Now, my dear friend, we told you this morning that James knew about the theory of

relativity long before Einstein ever thought about it. And, the writer of the book of Judges knew about “star wars” a long time before the Pentagon ever thought of Star Wars. *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera”* (Judges 5:20).

Now, what is all of this about? Well, go back to chapter 4, and let’s begin to read. And, here’s a story of some dark days in the land of Israel. The Bible says, *“And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD”*—and oh, would to God that the people of America would cry unto the Lord!—*“And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he”*—that is, Sisera—*“had nine hundred chariots of iron”*—and, my dear friend, that is an unbelievable number of chariots in that day—*“nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her”*—to Deborah—*“for judgment. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh”* (Judges 4:1–9). And, I’m going to stop reading there, and we’re going to take up the story in just a moment. But, I want to show you how God used a woman to deliver Israel, and I want to show you how God used faith to delivered His people.

Now, we’re honoring all this day a woman. Her name is Velma Rhea Torbett. And, I want you to see how God mightily uses women. And, God used a woman to inspire faith in a heart of a man. The man’s name was Barak, and he was a warrior. But, God took a woman who was a prophetess. Her name was Deborah. And, God spoke through her to this recalcitrant and fearful man. And, God encouraged him through her, and God bolstered his faith through her.

Now, there’s a lot of talk today about women: what women can do and what women cannot do, whether women ought to be ordained into the ministry, and whether women ought to preach, and whether women ought to be pastors, and so forth. And, I’m afraid

we have negativized the whole thing 'til we have failed to understand what the Bible says that women can do. And, I want to say here, as one man who says with all of his heart and soul—as much as in him is—thank God for the ministry of women. I want you to understand this: I believe in the ministry of women. And, I say that this church is a testimony in many ways to the ministry of many great, good, and godly women.

Now, what can women do? Well, this woman was a judge. I want you to see that women may prophesy. Turn with me to Acts chapter 2 here for just a moment. And, and, just keep one hand back over there in the book of Judges, and turn to Acts chapter 2; and let's just look a little bit and see what women have done. Acts chapter 2, verse 17—here's a prophecy from the book of Joel: *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh”—now, watch it—“and your sons and your”—what?—“daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy”* (Acts 2:17–18).

Now, turn, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Just keep on going right on; just turn right to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And, here the Bible speaks of women prophesying in the church. First Corinthians 11, verse 5: *“But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven”* (1 Corinthians 11:5). Now, Paul is saying that a woman can prophesy in the church, but she's not to prophesy with her head uncovered. And, verse 13: *“Judge in yourselves: is it comely”—or, “fitting”—“that a woman pray unto God uncovered?”* (1 Corinthians 11:13). Some women—and I respect them for it—believe that this means that they should wear a hat when they come into church. And, there are ladies—and very godly and good ladies, and I do not criticize them at all—who, when they come into the worship service, put on their head some hat, some covering, as a symbol of their submission, their humility, before God. I personally believe that what God is talking about here is her long hair is a covering. Look in verse 15: *“But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering”* (1 Corinthians 11:15). And, I believe that, in this day, that when this was written, that the temple prostitutes and so forth would shave their heads. It was an act, a sign, of shame, a sign of rebellion. And, what Paul is saying is that a woman should show that submission, that reverence, and she should have that long hair as a symbol of her humility and her submission before God.

Now, that's not the point of the message tonight, and please, don't any lady come up here and ask me, “How long is long, and how short is short?” I'm not going to talk to you about that. I'm just gonna tell you one thing: a woman ought to look like a woman, and a man ought to look like a man. When you look, you ought not to have to look twice to find

out who's...what's what. She ought to look like a she, and he ought to look like a he. Today, we don't have shes and hims; we have "shims." And, but that's not what I'm talking about at all. I am simply saying that this verse lays down principles and policies that a woman may prophesy and a woman may pray in public.

Now, what is prophecy? Well, if you'll look over here in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, you're going to find out what prophecy is. First Corinthians 14 and verse 3: "*He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort*" (1 Corinthians 14:3). That's what a prophet does, whether it's a male prophet or a female prophet: they edify; they exhort; they comfort. And, I thank God for women who have been given the gift of edification, exhortation, and comfort. To edify means to build up. To exhort means to fire up. To comfort means to hold up, and shore up, and lift up. And, that's a wonderful, wonderful ministry.

And, of course, the Bible speaks of these who are prophetesses. Look, if you will—go back to the book of Exodus, for example—and look with me in Exodus chapter 15 and verse 20: "*And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye [unto] the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea*" (Exodus 15:20–21). What's she doing? She's edifying. She's exhorting. She's comforting. She is using that gift of prophecy that God gave her. And, we read over here in Judges chapter 4 where this dear lady had the gift of God—the hand of God upon her. If you'll go back to the book of Judges here with me for just a moment... Well, let's just leave Judges for a moment. We'll come back to it in a moment.

But, what may women do—well, women may share encouragement, exhortation. They may lift up people in the Lord. Thank God for women who do that. They may pray. The Apostle Paul spoke of them praying, and he said they're to pray, again, with their head covered (1 Corinthians 11:5). Some people will not allow women to utter a word in a public service. Well, that's contrary to the Word of God. Of course they may. We just had Jackie up here. She sang. It would be all right for her to sing but not to speak? No, she could—she could—exhort in music, and that's what she was doing. Or, she could exhort with words, and I thank God for that ministry.

And, not only this, but they serve, and I thank God for the servants in our church. Now, does that mean that women are to serve as a pastor, an authoritative leader, a setter of doctrine in the church? No, not at all. They are not to do that. The Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 12—God says—that the women are not to take a place or to usurp authority over the man, but they are to serve in places of leadership that is fitting before the Lord (1 Timothy 2:12). And, I am just so grateful for the women in our church.



First Timothy 2, verse 11: *“Let the woman learn in silence”*—now, the word *silence* does not mean that she cannot speak. The word here for silence is a word that means “to be demure” or “not to be boisterous”—*“[but] with all subjection. [For] I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in [deference]”* (1 Timothy 2:11–12)—or, to be there in silence. And so, we thank God for the ministry of women. I thank God for the ministry of this incredible lady who’s been with us so long, Velma Rhea Torbett.

And, by the way, a couple of other verses I just want to share with you before we get back to Deborah... Turn to Isaiah chapter 40 with me for just a moment. I was so blessed as I looked at this verse recently that just speaks of how God uses His glorious, wonderful ladies—Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 9: *“O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah”*—and, literally, “say unto the daughters of Judah”—*“Behold your God!”* (Isaiah 40:9). Now, God is the One who uses these wonderful, wonderful ladies. Again, just one more verse I want to show you here in Psalm 68 and verse 11—Psalm 68 and verse 11. I’ll show you what all this has to do with Star Wars in just a moment, but I’m just saying that God used a lady in an incredible way here in the Old Testament. Psalm 68 and verse 11: *“The Lord gave the word: [and] great was the company of those that published it”* (Psalm 68:11). Again, he’s speaking here, I believe, of men and women who publish the Word of God.

And so, we are blessed in this church to have the servants—the Bible teachers who teach ladies, the Bible teachers who teach children, our wonderful ladies who serve on committees. We have incredible intelligence. Our ladies are smarter in many areas than some of we men are. I know my wife, in school, made far better grades than I made. I know that she handles things in a far greater way than I handle them and a better way with the wisdom and the intelligence that God has given her.

And, I just wanted to say tonight, as we’re retiring a beautiful, lovely, gracious, very feminine lady who has served God—I think has prophesied to all of us, encouraged us; a woman who has prayed for us; a woman who has encouraged us in so many ways—I just want to say to her, “Thank you so very much.” And, her faith was contagious—this woman in the Old Testament that we’re talking about.

Go back to Judges now for just a moment and look again at the scripture that we’re studying tonight and see how her faith was contagious to Barak. In chapter 4 and verse 10, the Bible says here, *“And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him”* (Judges 4:10). And then, there was a battle, and look, if you will, in verse 13: *“And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people*

*that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river Kishon. And Deborah said [to] Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee?*”—I want you to see how she’s encouraging him—*“So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him”* (Judges 4:13–14). Now, you say, “Well, he must have had quite an army.” Well, friend, ten thousand men is nothing against nine hundred chariots of iron. It would be like a division of infantry had gone out after a division of armed tanks. Sisera had the forces on his side, and he was sure of his outcome as he went with his nine hundred chariots of iron. But, Sisera’s trust was in the wrong place. You know, the Bible says in Psalm 20, verse 7: *“Some trust in chariots, and some [trust] in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God”* (Psalm 20:7).

Now, what happened is this—and I’ve been to the very place where this battle took place, or at least I’ve been to the vicinity of it—when the battle was in array, when these 900 chariots of iron came against Barak and his ten thousand soldiers, a storm came up. It’s what we would call a “stump-floating storm,” what we would call a “frog-strangling storm”; it’s what we would call a “gulley-washing storm.” And, if you’ll look in chapter 5, you’re going to find out what happened. Look in verse 4: *“LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel”* (Judges 5:4–5). And, he goes on to talk about the rainstorm. It was like no other rainstorm that they had seen. And, what happened is this: it’s right near the river Kishon, and that river became swollen. That entire battlefield became a swamp. And, what good are iron chariots in a swamp?

There was a Jewish historian. And, if you’ve been to seminary, you’ve read of...after this Jewish historian. His name was Josephus, and he wrote about the antiquities of the Jews and the history of the Jews. And, Josephus records this battle that we’re reading about right now, or under this thing that we’re calling “star wars,” when the Bible says, *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera”* (Judges 5:20). And, this is what it says; here’s what Josephus said: he said, “They joined battle. And, as the ranks closed, a violent storm came on, and much rain and hail. The wind drove the rain against the faces of the Canaanites, darkening their outlook so that their archeries and their slings were rendered useless and their heavy-armed soldiers, because of the cold, were unable to use their swords.” So, it got incredibly cold. It began to hail, and the rain, according to Josephus, was blowing right in their face. They couldn’t see how to drive the chariots. “But since the storm was behind the Israelites,” Josephus said, “it caused them less harm, and they further took courage from their belief in God’s assistance so

that driving into the midst of the enemy, they killed many of them.”

Now, old Sisera, who was the commander of the Canaanites, he met a very untimely end. I want you to look in chapter 4, verse 17. You’re going to find out what happened to Sisera. It’s not a pretty sight. *“Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite”*—now, this is another woman. Her name is Jael—*“for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned...unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle”*—that is, he’s tired from the battle now. He’s running for his life. She says, “Come on into my tent. I’ll take care of you. Lie down. Here’s a cover.” So, she covers him—*“And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk”*—not water—*“and gave him drink, and covered him”*—now, you know what warm milk will do when you’re tired? She gave him some milk to drink—*“Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here...thou shalt say, No”*—he says, “All right.” He said, “I’m getting tired. You go stand at the door of the tent and watch”—*“Then Jael Heber’s wife took a nail of the tent”*—that is, a tent peg—*“and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. [And] so he died”* (Judges 4:17–21). Friend, she nailed him good. She nailed him right to the ground. These are two women—one a prophetess, another a nail driver. And, that’s the way that God gave the victory.

Now, I just thank God for the ministry of women. Folks, listen, you take the ministry of women out of this church—we’re sunk. I thank God for ladies—again, like Velma Rhea Torbett. But, Velma Rhea, don’t do that to any of us, please.

Now, I want you to see here that here was a woman who was greatly, greatly, significantly used to encourage the people of God in a great battle. Now, let’s go back again to this matter of “star wars,” and I’ll be finished. In verse 20—chapter 5, verse 20—when they’re singing a song about this—and chapter 5 is really an epic poem; it’s a song—and when they’re singing this song, they say, *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera”* (Judges 5:20). Now, what does that mean? Well, friend, I want you to understand this. I was thinking about this, well, for a long time—two or three weeks now. Actually, I thought about it over in Moscow. *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera”* (Judges 5:20). What does that mean? It means, my dear friend, the opposite of what I preached about this morning. What I preached about this morning was that *“every good gift and every perfect gift [comes down] from above...from the Father of lights, [in] whom [there] is no variableness, [nor] shadow of turning”* (James

1:17)—that nothing but good comes from God, and all good comes from God. But now, here's the flip side of it; here's the other side of it: *"The stars in their courses fought against Sisera"* (Judges 5:20). What does that mean? Well, let me give it to you in a sentence: the whole universe is against the man who's against God. That's all it means. The whole universe—all things—fight against the man who fights against God.

Have you ever thought of Romans 8:28 in reverse? Romans 8:28 says, *"All things work together for good to [those who] love God...who are the called according to his purpose."* May I tell you that all things work for bad to those who don't love God? You see, if you're saved, even bad things, as the world calls "bad things," work out ultimately for your good. But, if you're not saved and you fight against God, even good things, like chariots of iron or anything else, work out for bad if you don't love God. The whole meaning of Judges chapter 5 is *sin can't win, and faith can't fail*—just can't! You see, if you would be wise, the wisdom of the ages is just simply to find out what way God is moving and just move with Him. Just find out what God is up to and just get in on it; just join it. If you don't do it, you're going to stumble over the stars; you're going to have a collision with the stars. *"The stars in their courses fought against Sisera"* (Judges 5:20). And so, good things are bad if you don't love the Lord Jesus.

For example, the resurrection of Jesus Christ—is that good or is that bad? Well, it's wonderful, but not if you don't know the Lord Jesus. It's bad. You see, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is what guarantees your doom. As I've said before, you can't crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. You read in Acts chapter 17: the Bible says, *"[God] hath appointed a day, in...which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he...raised him from the dead"* (Acts 17:31). What does that mean? You can't hold court if the judge is dead. You can't hold court if the defendant is dead. What he says is that God, who raised up Jesus Christ, the Judge, is going to raise you up out of the grave, and you're going to stand there to be judged before God. So, if you're not saved—if you're not saved—well, my dear friend, the resurrection of Jesus Christ seals your doom. I've never really been able to understand why unsaved people, who don't intent to be saved, come—put on their glad rags and come to church—at Easter. Have you? They're celebrating their doom. You see, all things work together for bad to those who don't love God. Even good things work together for bad.

The Word of God—is that good or is that bad? Well, the Word of God is wonderful. But, my dear friend, the Word of God is a two-edged sword. You get hold of that blessed blade—it'll cut you to heal you or hurt you. But, the Word of God is not neutral. You see, Jesus teaches that we're sanctified by His Word. He said, *"Sanctify them [by] thy truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). You want to be sanctified? The Word of God

will sanctify it. But, not only will it sanctify you, friend; it'll judge you. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they will judge you in that day" (John 12:48). And so, God is going to bless you through the Word of God tonight. But, if you come and hear the Word of God tonight and don't obey the Word of God tonight, friend, the stars are fighting against you. You see, the gospel is a saver of life unto life or death unto death. The Bible is a two-edged sword.

Is it good for people to witness? Of course it's good for people to witness. Is that a good thing? Fine. That's a good thing. But, suppose somebody witnesses to you and you don't get saved? Then it would have been better for you that they never witnessed to you. Did you know that? Jesus said, "If you go to a house, and you go to that house and tell somebody about me, and they won't hear you," Jesus said, "shake the dust off your feet. Just shake it off" (Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5). Why? He said, "That dust will be used against you in the day of judgment" (Luke 9:5). The dust off the servant's feet will be used against you in the day of judgment. You'll come and stand before the great white throne, and you'll say, "O God, O God, have mercy. Please, God, have mercy. I didn't have a chance to be saved." "Bailliff, go get Exhibit A." "Well, what is that, Lord?" "That's dust—that's dust off the feet of my servant that I sent by your house to get you saved." Was that good that that servant came? It was very good. But, things—all things—work together for bad to those who don't love God.

I'm talking about, whether it's the resurrection of Jesus Christ, whether it's the gospel of Jesus Christ... Dear friend, if Jesus Christ dies for you, and you don't accept what Jesus Christ did for you, that increases your judgment. It would be better that He'd never died for you than that you would trample under feet, as the book of Hebrews says, the blood of the covenant and count it an unholy thing (Hebrews 10:29). Good things work together for bad to those who don't love God, and bad things work together for good to those who do love God. I want you just to get it down straight, friend: "*all things work together for good to [those who] love God*" (Romans 8:28), but the whole universe is programmed against the man who does not love God; the entire universe is against the man who is against God. *Sin can't win, and faith cannot fail.*

One of my favorite pieces of poetry was written by Priscilla Leonard. I hope I can meet her in heaven, because sometimes it looks like we're failing—sometimes you listen to things and hear things, and you say, "Oh, it looks like all is lost"—but I want you to listen to this:

On the far reef the breakers recoil in shattered foam,  
[And yet,] the sea behind them urges its forces home.  
Its [chant] of triumph surges [through] all the thunderous din:  
The wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win

And, she's not talking about Alabama, either. Listen, friend, the wave—the wave—may break in failure, but that tide just keeps coming in. Isn't that true? Listen to the next stanza:

Oh! Mighty sea, thy message in [changing] spray is cast.  
Within God's plan of progress it matters not at last  
How wide the shores of evil, how strong the reefs of sin.  
The wave may be defeated, but the tide is sure to win  
—Priscilla Leonard

I just thank God for this story in the Old Testament, because it just pointed out to me two things: one, how God used a woman to encourage a man whose faith was weak; and two, how God used this story to encourage my faith when sometimes it looks like things are going wrong. We sing that song, Tommy:

Have faith in God; He cannot fail;  
Have faith in God; He must prevail;  
Have faith in God; have faith in God (Baylus Benjamin McKinney).

You see,

Doubt sees the obstacles; faith sees the way.  
Doubt sees the darkest night; faith sees the day.  
Doubt dreads to take a step; faith soars on high.  
Doubt says, "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I"—["I believe"] (author unknown).

I don't know what your problem is, dear friend. I don't know what your sorrow is. I don't know what your heartache is. But, I'll tell you, Romans 8:28 is in the Bible and Judges 5:20 is in the Bible. Romans 8:28 teaches that "*all things work together for good to [those who] love God.*" Judges 5:20 teaches that everything is against the man who's against God.

## Conclusion

Let's pray together. Father, as we prepare now for our Lord's Supper and...just, Lord, speak to our hearts and encourage us. Help us to trust you in spite of what appearances may be. And, when the forces of hell come with nine hundred chariots of iron, help us to understand, dear Lord, that you rule in the heavens and you cannot fail. In Jesus's name. Amen.

# Four Principles of Victory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text:** Judges 6:1–24; 7:1–21

*“And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”*

JUDGES 6:14

## Outline

### Introduction

1. We Have Gone from Authority to Relativism
2. We Have Gone from Truth to Pragmatism
3. We Have Gone from Reason to Feeling
4. We Have Gone from Convictions to Opinions

### I. The Principle of Vision

### II. The Principle of Valor

### III. The Principle of Vigilance

A. The People Who Put Their Mouths in the Stream

A. The People Who Lapped up the Water Like Dogs

### IV. The Principle of Vitality

1. Boldness
2. Brokenness
3. Brightness

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding, please, Judges chapter 6. When you have found it, look up here.

A popular writer is Max Lucado, and Max Lucado told a story that is taken from the proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute. A man is telling what happened one day in the maneuvers. And two battleships were maneuvering; they were in a training process. They were at sea, and the seas were heavy; and the visibility was not good. And the captain was there on the bridge, on the watch, out to take care of the ship. And a message came; the message came from the man on the lookout, and this is what he said—he said, “There’s a light bearing on the starboard bow.”

And so the captain said, “Is the light steady, or is the light moving astern?” The answer came back from the wing: “It is steady, sir.” And so the captain said, “Signal that ship that we are on a collision course, and tell them that they are advised to alter their course 20 degrees.” And so they flashed that signal to the other light. And a signal came back, and it said, “No, you alter your course 20 degrees.” And the captain was infuriated, and he said, “Send the message back, ‘I am a captain. You alter your course



20 degrees.” And the message came back, “I am a seamen, second class. I advise that you alter your course 20 degrees.” The captain was furious. He said, “I’m in a battleship. Alter your course 20 degrees” The message was flashed back, “I am a lighthouse. You alter your course 20 degrees.” And then, according to these proceedings, the man said, “We altered our course.”

Now God is the lighthouse of the universe. And we find ourselves, sometimes, on a collision course, and the wise thing to do is to alter our course, because God will not alter His. That’s what Israel found out.

Look, if you will, in Judges chapter 6, verse 1: *“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years...”*—now, notice it was God that turned them over to their enemies—*“and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.”* That is, they were intimidated by the enemy. They were in hiding. And now verse three: *“And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD”* (Judges 6:1–6).

They were intimidated by the enemy; they were impoverished by the enemy—and this happened for seven years. And the Midianites could come and go. They oppressed the people of God, and God’s people were put to ignominious shame by an enemy. And it was severe, and it was continuous. And it reminds us what is beginning to happen in America today. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is becoming intimidated and becoming impoverished because of an enemy, and it is getting worse. And yet, we find here, in the Book of Judges, the principles of victory, because, as I said before, God had rather forgive and restore than to judge.

Now what happened is simply this: The Bible teaches they had taken strange gods and different gods. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 7: *“And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, that the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel...”*—and would to God that He would raise up prophets in America—*“the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of*

*the Egyptians, and out of hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice” (Judges 6:7–10).*

Very clearly, God gave them the victory, but they forgot God. Do you see the parallel here in America? Americans have forgotten the Lord God of Israel. We have forsaken our Judeo-Christian ethic. We have forgotten God, and God is turning us over to our enemies.

Now you know the prevailing rhetoric in America is, “Well, all religion is essentially the same. It’s only superficially different.” You’ve got it backward, dear friend. Christianity is essentially different, and only superficially the same—our faith is different. And the thing today is not that people don’t believe; that’s not the problem today. The problem today is what people will believe. It’s not the agnostics. I mean, friend, people will believe almost anything.

Let me give you the four steps that have taken place in America today:

### **1. We Have Gone from Authority to Relativism**

Number one: We have gone from authority to relativism. There is no fixed standard of right and wrong. And the theme in the Book of Judges is found in chapter 17, verse 6: *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:6). That’s America, folks. *“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* We have gone from authority to relativism. There is no fixed standard of right and wrong. A man just simply becomes his own sense of what is right and what is wrong.

When we built these marvelous buildings—and I thank God for them—I used to come out here before there was a congregation and preach. I would just stand around and preach. There wouldn’t be anyone to listen, but I’d just say, “God is love. Jesus is wonderful. Hallelujah! Praise God!” But right here, somewhere on this platform, I found a poured piece of concrete, and in there was a nail. And in that nail, on that nail, and around that nail was written some inscription that led me to believe this was the benchmark for this entire building. I’m glad it was put right here where this platform is. And this was the point that they took all the rest of the measurements from. This was the point that showed what was up and what was down. When you say “up,” you have to say “up from what?”—or “down,” you have to say, “down from what?” If you say “east,” you have “east of what?”—or “left,” “left of what?” You see, you have to have a fixed point—a starting point; and so it is with morality. There has to be a fixed standard.

But we have gone from authority to relativism, and every man does that which is right in his own eyes. We just pick and choose our morals like it is a cafeteria line.

## **2. We Have Gone from Truth to Pragmatism**

And number two: Not only have we gone from authority to relativism, but we have gone, therefore, from truth to pragmatism. No longer do we ask, “Is it true?” We just simply ask, “Does it work?” And people are looking for religion to serve them. They’re making the whole thing man-centered rather than God-centered. And people are looking for religion that brings them health, and wealth, and happiness, rather than asking, “What is right?” And by the way, God is not here to make you happy or healthy. He’s here to make you hope. But we’ve gone from authority to relativism, from truth to pragmatism.

## **3. We Have Gone from Reason to Feeling**

We’ve gone from reason to feeling. And in our world today, psychology has replaced theology. And sin is no longer the enemy—sadness is. And the great thing in America is to feel good about yourself.

## **4. We Have Gone from Convictions to Opinions**

And as a result of that, we’ve gone from convictions to opinions. And people say, “Well, I feel this...” or, “What is truth for you may not be truth for me.” Every man just simply does that which is right in his own eyes. And our kids are being told in college, “You can’t be certain about anything.”

One professor stood up in a class, I’m told, and said, “We can know nothing for certain.” A student said, “Professor, are you sure about that?” He said, “I’m absolutely certain.”

You think about it. You see, the result of all of this—the result of all of this—is moral confusion—moral confusion. Our kids don’t know how to play the game. They don’t know where the sidelines are. They don’t know where the end zone is, and they don’t know what the rules of the game are.

They took a poll of teenagers recently and asked teenagers, “Who is your most respected male role model?” Who do you think it was—most respected male role model? And I’m going to list six of them. Here are the top six: Number one, Magic Johnson; number two, my dad; number three, Michael Jordan; number four, Martin Luther King; number five, President—former President—George Bush; number six, the present President—President Clinton. Number one on the list—now listen—the most respected male role model was a man who has confessed to having hundreds of immoral relationships with women and a man who has even bragged about having a sexual encounter with six women at one time. That, in America, is the most respected male role model, according to this survey.

You see, the kids today don’t know what’s what. Every man does which is right in his own eyes.

As a matter of fact, in a recent interview in *The New York Times*, a 17-year-old

Lakewood, California high school student was arrested for rape. And here is what he told the reporter—he said, “They pass out condoms. They teach sex education, and pregnancy this and pregnancy that; but they don’t teach us any rules.” That’s a 17-year-old.

The word *sin* is a forgotten word in America. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes. In America, the enemy is not sin; it is guilt.

Here are some recent magazine articles: One, “How to Stop Being So Tough on Yourself”; two, “Guilt Can Drive You Crazy”; another, “Guilt Mongering”; another, “Getting Rid of the Guilt”; another, “Stop Pleading Guilty.” Here is another article: “Guilt—Letting Go.” Here is another one: “Don’t Feed the Guilt Monster.” What we’re saying is, today, we want to live in a no-fault society. Nobody is guilty anymore; nobody is sinful. We may be sick, but nobody is wicked. We may be weak.

Let me give you some illustrations. A man was shot and paralyzed while committing a burglary in New York, and he recovered damages from the storeowner who shot him. Now here’s what the jury was told, and here’s what the lawyer argued. Now here’s the man in New York. He commits a robbery. The owner of the store shoots the man who’s robbing him, and they said, “Now well, wait a minute. This man who was doing this robbery was a victim of society, and he was driven to crime by economic disadvantage. And therefore, the man who shot him was guilty of insensitivity, because he had a callous disregard for the thief’s plight. I mean, this man, after all, society had done this to him. And so this poor criminal is going to be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.” And the jury agreed, and they made the storeowner pay a settlement to the man who robbed him. And several months later, the same man who had done the robbery was arrested in another robbery—this time in a wheelchair, holding up another institution.

There was a Bernard McCummings. He mugged and brutally beat an elderly man in the subway in New York. And he was shot when he was fleeing the scene, and he was permanently paralyzed. And the man—now, the mugger—who was shot and paralyzed—he sued the New York Transit Authority. And the reason he sued them: that he really shouldn’t have been shot for just mugging this poor old man. And so the man that was mugged, who’s a cancer patient, is still paying his doctor bills, but the man who did the mugging was awarded 4.8 million dollars. He mugged and beat up this old fellow; and so, he’s a greater victim than the man that got mugged, who’s still paying his doctor bills, while the other man is a multimillionaire.

Let me tell you this: A drug dealer, and a cocaine addict, from the Bronx was acquitted of murder after he killed eight children and two women. He shot them in the head at point blank range—largest mass killing since 1949, in New York. Do you know what the jury decided? They said. “Well, drugs and stress were a reasonable explanation for his actions.” They said, “The man acted under extreme emotional

distress and the influence of drugs”; and so, they gave him a light sentence, and that’s it. I mean, here is a man who killed eight children and two women.

It gets worse. An FBI agent was fired after he embezzled 2,000 dollars. He took the 2,000 dollars to a casino, gambled it away in one afternoon. Later, he sued the man who fired him. Now he’s embezzled 2,000 dollars; he sues his employer for firing him, and here is what he argued: that his gambling addiction was a disability. And so his firing was an act of illegal discrimination. The owner of the business had discriminated against a man who had a disability. And moreover, he won the suit. And he was put in therapy for gambling addiction, and that had to be paid under his employer’s health care insurance. That’s the America we’re living in.

Judges 17, verse 6: “[And] in those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). And so we’re not worshiping the God of the Bible. We don’t have a fixed standard of right and wrong. Everything is relative. We’re living in a pragmatic society, and victimization is the code word of the day. Nobody’s sinful; everybody’s sick. Nobody’s evil; everybody’s ill. Nobody’s wicked; everybody’s weak. And guilt is out-of-date, and sin is an old-fashioned word. We are in a battle today between light and darkness, good and evil, Heaven and Hell, God and Satan. And the Book of Judges gives us the principles of victory. I want to give you four principles—four principles—beginning right here in Judges chapter 6, verse 7. They center on a man named Gideon.

## **I. The Principle of Vision**

The principle number one is the principle of vision—vision. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 11: *“And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”* Verse 14: *“And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have I not sent thee?”* (Judges 6:11–14).

Now God appeared to Gideon and said, “Gideon, I want to give victory, and I want to give it through you.” Fast-forward down to verse 22: *“And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O LORD God! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and*

*called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day*" (Judges 6:22–24). That means, "Jehovah, our peace."

Now here is the point: Gideon was threshing wheat, hunkered down, hiding away in a wine press, afraid of the Midianites, and God appeared to him. And he had a vision of the Almighty. And here is Gideon living in defeat and fear, until he took his eyes from the enemy, and put his eyes, one more time, on God.

The Bible says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish"* (Proverbs 29:18). We need to see, if God appears to us in the form of an angel, as He did to Gideon so long ago, or whether God speaks to us in another form. And by the way, you say, "I wish God would speak to me, as He spoke to Gideon, through the angel of the Lord." Look at me. You have something better than Gideon ever had: You have the Word of God—you have the Word of God. And you have something more than Gideon ever had: You have the Holy Spirit of God living in you. And don't you go whining and complaining about God not speaking. God wants to speak. Do you want to hear? Are you ready to listen to what God is saying?

But I'm saying that you will never have victory in your life, at home, in school, in the business, in your neighborhood, in the church, or in society until, first of all, we get a vision of Almighty God. There is the principle of vision. And God needs—you need—to see God, big, and strong, and mighty. There is the principle of vision. I'm going to leave that, and rush right on, lest I not get finished.

## **II. The Principle of Valor**

Second principle: not only the principle of vision, but the principle of valor. We need to be courageous. Look in chapter 7, beginning in verse 1. Now God has spoken to Gideon, and God has said to Gideon, "I am your strength. I am your peace. I am your victory. Trust in Me." Now when Gideon has his eyes upon the Lord, he gathers an army. He gathers an army of 32,000 men, but God doesn't seem to be interested in numbers.

Look, if you will, in chapter 7, verse 1: *"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand"* (Judges 7:1–3).

Here's Gideon—he's got an army of 32,000 soldiers, and he says, "Everybody listen



to me. God has said that I'm to tell you that anybody who is afraid can go home." Gideon thought a couple of dozen would leave, and there's a stampede. And after the dust settles, 22,000 have left. Now what's the principle here? The first principle is the principle of vision. The second principle is the principle of valor. God cannot—and God will not—use cowards. And God says, "Everybody who's afraid, go home. Fear suits you for failure and not for fighting."

And why did God want the cowards to go home? I'll tell you why: because fear is infectious. Put this verse in your margin—Deuteronomy chapter 20, verse 8: *"And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart"* (Deuteronomy 20:8).

You know, there is something about fear—fearful people that infect other people. When Joshua sent the 12 spies out, 10 came back and gave a fearful report, and nobody wanted to go into the land. In churches today, we are always faced with people who are fearful, who don't believe God can do what God wants to do. And the Bible tells us, "God has not given us the spirit of fear. God has given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

One pastor was talking to another pastor, and he said, "Do you have any standing committees in your church?" "Oh," he said, "we've got some standing committees, some sitting committees, and we have some just plain lying down. We've got all kinds of committees in our church." He said, "Well, what's the most powerful committee in your church?" He said, "It's the Bucket Committee." He said, "What's the Bucket Committee?" He said, "Well, we've got a committee that, anytime any of us get an idea about doing anything good, and holy, and great for God, the Bucket Committee just comes and pours cold water on me." He said, "You've got a committee like that in your church?" He said, "Yeah, and I can tell you who the chairman is." These are the kinds of committees for people in churches who don't want to believe God; and because of fear, they're not fitted for victory.

Listen to me. The Bible says we are *"in nothing [to be] terrified by [our] adversaries"* (Philippians 1:28). *"Greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). I'm speaking to some people today who could teach, but you don't teach because you're afraid. I'm speaking of people who ought to tithe, but you don't tithe because you're afraid. I'm speaking to some people who ought to witness, but you don't witness because you're afraid. Some of you could sing, but the icy fingers of fear would grip your throat; and you cannot sing as you have been gifted to sing. Second Timothy 1, verse 7: *"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear and faith don't live in the same heart. Fear will conquer faith, or faith will conquer fear; but one will conquer the other.



Now here's the principle—look: First of all, there is a principle of vision. You need what Gideon did: to see the Lord. I mean, look at God. See who God is; and after you've seen God, see if anything else seems truly big to you. See God. There's the principle of vision. Then, there is the principle of valor. God says, "If you're afraid, if you're fearful, I can't use you."

### III. The Principle of Vigilance

Now here's the third principle, and it balances the principle of valor: It's the principle of vigilance. Look, if you will, in chapter 7, verse 4 now: *"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place"* (Judges 7:4–7).

Now first of all, everybody who is afraid, go. They all went home, with 10,000 left. God says, "Gideon, we're going to have a test. Bring them down here to the stream, and let everybody refresh themselves. Tell every man to drink." Now here, 10,000 people lined up among the stream, and the monitors are there to watch. The people did not know that they were being tested. And by the way, you know, many times, God is testing us, and we don't know we are being tested. The Bible says, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much"* (Luke 16:10). And the Bible says, "If you haven't be faithful in that which is least, God will not commit to you that which is much" (Luke 16:11).

Now you don't know when God is testing you. I was reading about a man—when he would hire people, he would take them for a ride in their automobile. He'd say, "Would you take me somewhere?" And when he got in the automobile, he'd look around to see how messy the car was. And if it was a messy car, he wouldn't hire the person. The man had no idea he was being tested. Isn't that amazing?

Who was it? They said Henry Ford would take a prospective executive out for lunch, and he would watch; and if a man would salt his food without first tasting it, he wouldn't hire him. He said, "Man, the man doesn't have any sense. He's got to taste his food to see whether it needs salt or not." I mean, who is thinking, now, that he's being tested by

the way he puts salt on his vegetables? And God is watching in the small things.

And these fellows are saying, “Go out here, and get a drink of water.” And two categories.

#### **A. The People Who Put Their Mouths in the Stream**

There—first of all—there were those people who got down on all fours, put their mouths in the stream, and began to drink down in the mud. Well, you talk about being vulnerable to the enemy. You’ll be vulnerable to the enemy down there on all fours, your belly in the slime, and your snout in the water, sucking up the water. That’s the way some were drinking—9,700 of them drank that way.

#### **A. The People Who Lapped up the Water Like Dogs**

But there was another group there that got down on their knees like this, and they took the water to their mouths and just kind of lapped it up like a dog—not putting their mouths in the water, not down on their bellies drinking up the water, but vigilance—watching for the enemy—300 of them. And God said, “Those are the 300 of them I want.” They were not cowards, and they weren’t careless. That’s the balance: Don’t be a coward, and don’t be careless. God is looking for people of valor, and God is looking for people of vigilance.

Now when I tell you that we’re not to be terrified by our adversaries, when I tell you that God has not given us the spirit of fear, does that mean, therefore, we’re to be casual and happy-go-lucky? Absolutely not. First Peter chapter 5, verse 8: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). And there is the wonderful balance between these two things.

### **IV. The Principle of Vitality**

And so what kind of people does God use? Number one: people of vision, people who’ve seen God; number two, people of valor, people who are not afraid; number three, people of vigilance, people who know to watch and be sober and vigilant; but here’s the wonderful thing—number four, people of vitality, people who have the life of God in them.

Now go to chapter 7, and look, if you will, at verse 9 here: *“And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, and get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host”* (Judges 7:9–11).

Now they go down to reconnoiter there, going down at nighttime. They’re sneaking

down to the camp of the enemy. Now notice in verse 12: *“And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow...”*—now, Gideon—he sneaks up here, and he’s listening, perhaps, by the campfire. He is eavesdropping, and this man says, “Let me tell you what I dreamed last night”—*“Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian”* (Judges 7:12–15).

Gideon and his servant go down there. They sneak closer and closer. There’s a campfire, a couple of fellows talking. One of them said, “Man, I had a dream. It was a nightmare. It’s the awfulest thing.” He said, “I saw a piece of barley bread.” Now folks, barley is the cheapest, the coarsest, the poorest bread; it’s what the absolutely impoverished people would eat—is barley bread. This man saw—“I saw a piece of barley bread, a loaf of barley bread. It’s rolling along the ground. And here’s one of our tents, and inside are our warriors. And this piece of barley bread hits the tent, and it all caves in.” The other man said, “Boy, that’s Gideon—that’s Gideon. That barley bread—that’s Gideon.”

When Gideon heard that, he said, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” What is the principle? Gideon was that piece of barley bread. Gideon, in himself, was nothing—nothing. When the Lord said unto him, “Hail, thou man of valor,” he looked behind to see who God was talking to. “He couldn’t be talking to me,” he said. “I’m the least in my father’s house. My family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I’m the least in my father’s house.” He said, “Of all the tribes, Manasseh is the poorest of all the families; my family’s the worst. And of all the kids, I’m the runt of the litter. I mean, I’m the least in my father’s house.” And God called him a man of valor. He’s just a piece of barley bread, but God said, “You go down there, and I will show you what the enemy thinks.”

You listen to me. The devil knows more about you than you know about you. And the dread of Hell is that you’ll wake up to the power that God has given you. That is the dread in Hell—I mean, that we will understand just who we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the army of Gideon. Let me tell you, friend: God wants to put His life into you. Let me give you a verse that’ll thrill you. Look—go back, if you will—in chapter 6 and verse 34—the Bible says, *“But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon”* (Judges 6:34). Do you see that—*“The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon”*? May I tell you what the

literal translation of that is? “The Lord clothed Himself with Gideon.”

I brought my special coat today. I want you to see it. I don’t want you to miss it—wore this one on purpose. See that coat? You’ve never seen a coat just like that. That is an incredible coat. It can do magnificent things. I want you to look at that. Now watch this. Don’t take your eyes from that. I want you to see what this coat can do. Are you ready? Coat, stand erect. It’s awful when you have a disobedient coat. Coat, wave your arms. Coat, hold up my Bible. You say, “Wait a minute, Pastor. You’re being silly.” No, no. This is a great coat. I’m just not doing it right. Watch. *(Pastor puts on his coat.)* Coat, stand erect. Did you see that? Coat, wave your arms. That’s pretty neat, huh? Watch this. Coat, hold up my Bible. Say, “Pastor, that’s dumb. That’s not the coat. That’s you in the coat.” That’s exactly what I’m trying to tell you. It’s not the man; it’s God in the man. The Bible says in this verse—verse 34—that “God clothed Himself with Gideon”—“God wore Gideon like a suit of clothes.” Gideon’s just that barley bread.

Friend, *it’s not your* scholarship; *it’s your* relationship. *It’s not your* ability; *it’s your* availability. *It’s not your* fame; *it’s your* faith. *It’s not* who *you are*; *it’s* whose *you are*. Listen to this verse—1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26: “*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*” (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). I want you to see how this battle was won, and we have just a few moments.

But look, if you will now, in chapter 7, verse 15 and following: “*And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers,*”—like you pour water out of a pitcher—“*and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hand to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon*” (Judges 7:15–20).

## **1. Boldness**

Now look up here. We’re almost finished. He’s got 300 people. God doesn’t have to

have a lot of people. God doesn't win with numbers. He doesn't have to have a lot. He's got people of vision. He has people of valor. He has people of vigilance, and He has people of vitality. They understand they have the anointing—the life of God—upon them. These were ordinary men, but they were obedient men. He says—Gideon says, “All right now, listen. You get this trumpet. You get these pitchers. Take a torch, and light it, and put it under the clay pot; and then 300 of you get over there, and 100 of you get over there—100 of you over here, and 100 of you over here. And get ready; watch what I do. When I blow the trumpet, when I break the pitcher, when I hold up the torch, and when I shout, you do the same thing.” They hear the Midianites, They're all there. And Gideon says, “All right.” He blows the trumpet. They break all that pottery. There is the sound of the breaking of pottery. A light shines all around the camp of the Midianites, and they shout, *“The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”* When they did that, friend, there was incredible confusion in the camp of the enemy.

Now what's all of that about? It's all in verse 20—it's all in verse 20. Listen. Here's what it's all about: When they blew the trumpets, that's boldness. *“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who [will] prepare himself [for] the battle?”* (1 Corinthians 14:8). The Bible says that's boldness.

## **2. Brokenness**

When they broke those vessels, that's brokenness. What does that vessel represent? That's us. The Bible says, “We have a treasure in an earthen vessel” (2 Corinthians 4:7). We are that earthen vessel. That's brokenness. Men throw broken things away; God only uses broken things. We sit in our churches so heady, headstrong, high-strung, high-minded; but we're to be broken before God. *“A broken and a contrite [spirit]...thou wilt not despise”* (Psalm 51:17), O God.

## **3. Brightness**

But what about the light? *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works”* (Matthew 5:16). That's brightness—that's brightness: to let the light shine. The Bible says, *“They stood every man in [their] place”* (Judges 7:21)—boldness, but brokenness and brightness: *“The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon”* (Judges 7:20). And God gave the victory.

Just look at yourselves today. Just look around. See who's here today. What would happen—what would happen—if everybody stood in their place—everybody, ordinary people, barley bread? What would happen if with no uncertain sound we blew the trumpet, bold for the Lord Jesus? What would happen if we laid our pride in the dust with brokenness? And what would happen if we let our light shine with brightness? Folks, this book is not only an old book; it's as fresh as tomorrow's newspaper. These are people of victory, people of vision, people of valor, people of vigilance, and people of vitality. If God wants to wear us like I wear this coat, then with boldness, and

brokenness, and brightness, we'll give God the glory. I'm going tell you something, folks: When God's people begin to do that, we don't have to fight the enemy; they'll turn on themselves. It's a biblical principle: God sends fear into the camp of the enemy.

## **Conclusion**

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, I pray today that You would help us to understand Your Word and to live by it. And Lord, we pray that we might learn these principles of victory. In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.

# Principles of Victory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 6, 7**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Principle of Vision

II. The Principle of Valor

III. The Principle of Vigilance

IV. The Principle of Vitality

A. Boldness

B. Brokenness

C. Brightness

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you take the Word of God and find, please, the Book of Judges. It's easy to find—you start in the Old Testament, begin with Genesis, and move forward till you come to Judges. And when you come to the book of Judges, find chapter 6. I want to speak to you tonight on the principles of victory. Now as we read in the book of Judges, we're going to find that the history of Israel was one of failure and the failure was the result of their compromise and, as a result of their failure and compromise, they were taunted and terrorized by an ungodly enemy. Notice chapter 6, verse 1: *"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years"* (Judges 6:1). God did that.

There's been a lot of controversy today about what has happened in America. Some have said, "Did God do that?" Well, the least we could say is, "If there's a God, He certainly allowed it, did He not?" And America so many times thinks that we are beyond evil coming upon us, but certainly if we take our eyes from God, God can allow such things to happen.

But notice the result of that. Go down to verse 6: *"And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD"* (Judges 6:6). Now underscore that, if you don't mind writing in your Bible. Their predicament, their trouble, their heartache, the terror that was upon them, caused them to cry unto the Lord. They were living in fear. They had a spirit of terror, and they cried unto the Lord. And the spirit of defeat was overwhelming. They'd given up; they had



turned their backs to the enemy. Now America's not in that place, and God forbid that we should ever come to the place where we would give up, give in, turn our back to the enemy, but it's altogether possible if we forget God.

Now in America something very un-American has happened. We have forgotten who God is and what God has done for us, and in our endeavor to get along, many of us have been willing to jettison what we truly believe, and we're looked upon as un-American if we don't put our arms around everybody else and say, "Well, your faith and your religion is just as good as ours." Let me tell you what a wise man said, and I want you to listen to these words. He said that some people, unthinking people, think that all religions are essentially the same and only superficially different. The opposite is true. They are superficially the same; they are essentially different. And we need to get hold of this, because if you don't know who the true God is, then you lose your moral anchor.

Let me tell you what has happened in America, before we get to the main body of the message. Because we have taken our eyes from the one true God, we have ceased to believe in His Word, then we come to a place where they came to in the land of Israel, and the book of Judges tells about it in Judges chapter 17, verse 6, and other places in the book of Judges. And it says this, *"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6). Now what has happened in America is we have gone, therefore, from authority to relativism. That is, nothing is intrinsically right or wrong; there's no fixed reference point for what is right or wrong. We hear people, politicians, who will prate about values, but if you want to get them stumbling, just say, "Whose values?" And unless they can say there is a fixed standard of right and wrong, all that is just words going across the terrain looking for an idea.

When this building was being built, there was a stake put in the ground beneath where I'm standing right here, just about in this spot. I used to come out and visit this building when it was being built. That stake was put in the ground, and it had a nail in it, and it is what was called a benchmark. And when the contractor wanted to measure something, or reference something, whether it was up or down, east or west, north or south, it had to be up or down, east or west, north or south from that point. And if somebody says, "Higher or lower," you have to say, "Higher or lower than what? East of what? West of what? North of what? South of what?" There has to be a fixed point or else you just have relativism, and you're very much like the sailors in Plato's Republic who, having lost their compass and lost their chart and map, put a lantern on the bow and steered by that.

And that's the way we are in America today. We have gone from authority to relativism, and as a result we have moved from truth to pragmatism. *No longer do we*

ask, *“Is it true?”* Americans *ask, “Does it work?”* And religion in many churches today is supposed to produce health and wealth and happiness, and *we’ve become* man-centered *rather than* God-centered, *and* me-ology *has taken the place of* theology.

And then we’ve moved from reason and revelation to feeling and psychology, as well as *me-ology* has replaced theology. And everybody’s supposed to be made to feel good, and the one great enemy is sadness. And so we’re all supposed to feel good about one’s self. That’s the number one priority.

And then we’ve gone from convictions to opinions. Few believe in anything with real conviction except they believe in the right to their own happiness. And the result is great moral confusion, and if you want to get the hackles of today’s society up, talk about sin, talk about guilt. The word *sin* is either a forgotten word or a hated word. Let me give you the list of some magazine articles that were ferreted out. Listen to these recent magazine articles: “How to Stop Being so Tough on Yourself.” Good article. Here’s another one: “Guilt Can Drive You Crazy.” Here’s another article: “Guilt-Mongering.” “Getting Rid of the Guilt”; “Stop Pleading Guilty”; “Guilt: Letting It Go”—all of these are articles. Another: “Don’t Feed the Guilt Monster.” Nobody wants to be guilty anymore. We may be sick, not sinful. We may be ill, but not evil. And the idea of sin is passé. We live in a no-fault society.

I read where an FBI agent embezzled \$2,000, went to the casino, and lost it all. When his superiors found out about his embezzlement, they fired him. You know what he did? He took them to court, and here’s what he said. He said that he had a gambling addiction; therefore they fired him for a situation over which he had no control. They persecuted him because of his sickness, which was a gambling addiction, and so this FBI agent who had embezzled \$2,000, they had to give his job back, and furthermore, the FBI had to pay his hospital bills so he could be treated for his addiction, like he’d had an ingrown toenail, or appendicitis, or something like that.

*“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* Now I’m praying that tonight we’ll come back to some moral sensibility in America. We’ll find out that there is a battle. It’s being fought on American soil. Not only a battle with some terrorists, but it’s a battle between heaven and hell, light and darkness, evil and righteousness. Now here’s the good news. God in mercy delivered Israel. They cried out unto the Lord, and the Lord heard them. God had rather forgive than judge. God had rather show mercy than punishment. And so in the story tonight we’re going to find some principles of conquest and some principles of victory. Are you ready for them?

## **I. The Principle of Vision**

Number one: I want to call this the principle of vision—vision. Would you write it down,

and look in Judges chapter 6, and begin in verse 11, if you will: *“And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.”* Now here’s Gideon, he’s taken a winepress and made it a threshing floor because he’s so terrified. *“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”* Gideon must have looked over his shoulder to see whom the Lord was speaking to, because he was terrified. *“And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have I not sent thee?”* (Judges 6:11–14).

Gideon had a vision. He saw the Lord, and with that vision came a commission, and then look, skip on down to Judges chapter 6, verse 21: *“Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O LORD God! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.”* Now notice he’s having a vision of a mighty God, a God that consumes with fire. *“And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: for thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites”* (Judges 6:21–24).

Jehovah Shalom—he built an altar and he named it Jehovah Shalom. That literally means God, our peace; Jehovah, our peace. You know what America needs? We need an alliance with the Almighty. We need a league with the Lord. We need to catch a fresh vision of Jehovah, our peace. And I’ll tell you why. Because Jehovah Shalom is the only one big enough, strong enough, wise enough to deliver America.

Now because we’ve failed in the past as a nation does not mean there’s no hope. Because we have sinned does not mean there is no forgiveness. It does not mean that there can be no mercy. What we need—what I need and what you need—number one, is a vision of Jehovah Shalom—the principle of vision. Now if we attempt ever as a church, or as a nation, or as an individual, to do anything without first of all catching a vision of who God is, in my estimation, we will fail miserably.

Second principle: not only the principle of vision—Gideon saw the Lord; he had an encounter with God. You say, “Well, Adrian, I’ve never seen the Lord.” Friend, let me tell

you something. We have something in this day and in this age better than the kind of vision that Gideon had. We have the Word of God, and we have the Holy Spirit. Never discount that. I'm not looking for an easy way out and excusing the fact that we don't have a face-to-face, eye-to-eye encounter with the angel of the Lord. I'm telling you that God has given to us a super abundance of revelation, and you can open this book and let the Holy Spirit of God bring you face to face with the God who wrote this book. Do you believe that? I hope you do. The principle of vision.

## II. The Principle of Valor

Number two: the principle of valor—v-a-l-o-r. Judges chapter 6, verse 12: *"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour"* (Judges 6:12). The word *valor* simply means "courage." And then go to chapter 7. Look in the first three verses: *"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."* That's an unusual thing. We think we have to have more. God said, "Gideon, you've got too many." *"Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand"* (Judges 7:1–3).

So 32,000 people there, and Gideon looks out there at this army and he thinks, "Boy, am I General Gideon," or, "Look what I've got. What a mighty army!" God says, "No, Gideon, you've got too many people. I can't use these people. I know that they're cowards, and I can't use a coward, because in order for me to have victory, there is a principle of valor. I've called you a man of valor. I'm looking for valor. So Gideon, make an announcement to the people. Tell them that if anybody is afraid to go home." After the stampede, Gideon got up and brushed himself off. Twenty-two thousand went home because they were afraid.

Now friend, in a spiritual battle you must have courage. There is a principle, not only a vision, but when you see the vision, the valor will follow. Now God does not use fearful people. Fear and faith cannot dwell long in the same heart, and fear is an infectious thing. Put this verse down—Deuteronomy 20, verse 8—in another occasion, but here's what God said to His people: *"And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart"* (Deuteronomy 20:8).

God says, “Look. If you’re afraid, I can’t use you; go back home.”

When we came out here to build these buildings, we affectionately called this land our Canaan, and we said that we were claiming our Canaan, and we reminded ourselves of the fact that, when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land, Moses sent out 12 spies to reconnoiter. Of those 12 spies, 10 came back and they brought a report saying, “We can’t do it! There are giants in the land.” And because of the report of these 10, the people of Israel became faint-hearted. Thank God for Caleb and Joshua, who said, “If God be with us, we are well able to do it” (Numbers 14:6–8). I’ve pastored churches long enough to know that in every congregation there are always those people who are fearful, don’t think anything can be done.

Two pastors were talking and one said to the other, “How many committees do you have?” He said, “Oh, we’ve got a committee on this and this and this and this.” He said, “Well, do you have a blanket committee?” He said, “What’s a blanket committee?” “Oh,” he said, “anytime anything good begins to happen, they throw a blanket over it and smother the fire.” He said, “Yeah, we’ve got a blanket committee.” He said, “We’ve got a bucket committee.” He said, “What’s that?” He said, “That’s the bucket brigade. They come and pour cold water on it. Do you have one of those?” He said, “Yeah, I can tell you who the chairman is.”

Friend, friend, listen. *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7). There are people in this congregation today who have been paralyzed by fear and that’s the reason God is not using them. There are some of you who can teach, but you don’t teach. Some of you who could sing, like this wonderful couple, the Applings, who just sang, but if you were to stand up here and sing, no matter how good your voice is, the icy fingers of fear would grip your throat and you would not be able to sing. There are some of you who ought to tithe and give far beyond the tithe because God has blessed you with monumental resources, but you’re holding and hoarding because you’re afraid—afraid of what might happen; afraid of the future; afraid to simply let go. Friend, listen. God has not given us the spirit of fear. Second Timothy 1, verse 7: *“God [has] not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

### **III. The Principle of Vigilance**

What are the principles of victory? The principle of victory. The principle of valor. There’s a third principle, and it’s the principle of vigilance. Now you’re in chapter 7—begin reading in verse 4: *“And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too*

*many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there.”—the word try means literally, “I will test them”—“and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all of the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals”—that’s food—“in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley” (Judges 7:4–8).*

Now I want you to notice what happens. Here’s a test. God says, “Now Gideon, you still have too many people. I want you to take these people that you have, and I want you to take the 10,000 that you have left, and I want you to go down to the spring of Harod”—I’ve been there, that same place. He said, “Tell everybody it’s time to get a drink of water.” You know, it’s a hot and arid land. And so the soldiers go down there to get a drink of water. Now remember, the host of Midian is out there all around, and there are some of these men who get a drink of water, just put their mouth in the spring, and began to suck up the water like that. God noticed what they did. There were other men who got down like this and began to pick up the water with their hands, looking around for the enemy. God said, “You tell those men that put their nose in the water to suck up the water, ‘Go home; I can’t use them.’” You see, God can’t use the cowards, and God can’t use the careless. What is the principle? There is also a principle of vigilance.

Now when I tell you not to be afraid of the enemy, and in nothing be terrified by the enemy, I’m not telling you not to be vigilant, because the Bible says, in 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 8, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). Now these people were more concerned about sucking up water than they were about being in the battle. You and I have needs; they’re legitimate needs. We need rest. We need food. We need even recreation. We need friendship. We need all of these things. But none of these can come first!

Many years ago, I read of a soldier who was court-martialed and shot for picking violets. Why should a soldier be court-martialed and shot for picking violets? For this



reason: he was on guard duty, and he left his post to go pick some violets for his sweetheart to give to her after he got off guard duty, and the enemy came through, and while he was picking violets, the enemy did terrible things.

Friend, I know that it's fine to be able to give some violets to your girlfriend. As a matter of fact, my wife reminded me the other day where I could get some roses. And that's fine—that's fine. There are certain things that are legitimate, but there are certain things that are not legitimate for the child of God when we are in danger.

There is a principle of vision—we must see Jehovah Shalom. There is a principle of valor—God cannot use cowards. There is a principle of vigilance—God cannot use careless people who let down their guard.

#### **IV. The Principle of Vitality**

Now here's the fourth principle, and it's the principle of vitality. Now in Judges chapter 7, begin to read in verse 9: *"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him,"*—that is to Gideon—*"Arise, get thee down to the host"*—now the word host is the word used in the Bible for an army. So *"you go down and get to the army; not your army, but their army, the Midianites"*—*"for I have delivered it into thine hand."* Now the battle's not even been fought, but God says, "Gideon, it's already won." *"But if thou fear to go down, go down with Phurah thy servant down to the host: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow"* (Judges 7:9–13).

Now here's Gideon, he's sneaking down there to reconnoiter, he's doing as God says: "Now Gideon, I want you to go down there, and I want you to see what you see and hear what you hear. Gideon is standing outside the tent where some soldiers are, and he's eavesdropping. Now here's what happens: *"And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian"* (Judges 7:13–15).



Now get the idea. Here's Gideon; he's going down here, and there's this incredible army. Here are the Midianites; here are the Amalekites. Here they are stretched as far as you can see like the sand of the seashore; their camels, which would be the counterpart of armored vehicles, were without number. And here he is with a little nobody army of 300 people, and he goes to this tent and he hears one man say, "Man, did I have a nightmare last night. I had a terrible dream!" They said, "Well, buddy, what was your dream?" He said, "There was a cake of barley bread"—now barley is the coarsest, cheapest bread that the Israelites would eat. It's barley—"I saw this barley biscuit. It came rolling down. Man, it hit the tent, and the whole tent came down; just a biscuit of barley, and it brought it all down."

What is the picture here? The picture here is very obvious. God takes something very weak, something very insignificant, something like a cake of barley bread, and God infuses it with divine power. Now what God was saying is, "Gideon, the battle is not yours; the battle is mine."

Go back to chapter 6 and verse 34—there's an interesting verse there. The Bible says, "*But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon*" (Judges 6:34). The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. You know what that literally means? It literally means that God clothed Himself with Gideon. God clothed Himself with Gideon. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. Literally, God clothed Himself with Gideon.

Now I brought this special coat tonight because I want you to see it. I want you to see what it can do. Coat, would you stand erect? Did you see that? Coat, would you wave your arms around? Pretty good, huh? Watch this. Coat, hold up my Bible. You say, "Now Pastor, that's really stupid. That's not the coat; that's you in the coat." Obviously. It's not the man; it is God in the man—it is God in the man.

The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with a barley biscuit. What God is saying is that, "The battle is not yours, Gideon; it is mine."

You know, many times we think that we don't have what it takes, but we have exactly what it takes, if we'll present ourselves to Him. Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 1, beginning in verse 26: "*For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty*" (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). God wants to use ordinary people. As a matter of fact, God chooses ordinary people.

Let's have a little examination tonight. I want to know who's here. How many of you have been listed in Who's Who? Now don't be modest—been listed in Who's Who, let me see your hand. Pretty good. How many of you were class president, let me see your hand. How many of you were voted Most Likely to Succeed? Let me see your hand.

How many of you were captain of the team? Let me see your hand. How many of you are Phi Beta Kappa's? Let me see your hand. How many in the Honor Society? Let me see your hand. How many PhDs? Let me see your hand. A few. How many of you have got mega millions? Let me see your hand. If you raised your hand for any of these things, or all of these things, I've got good news for you. God can use you too, but He's going to have to work a little harder to do it. Seriously.

*"You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."* He doesn't say, "not any." Thank God for the PhDs who love the Lord Jesus. Thank God for the All-Americans who love the Lord Jesus. Thank God for the up-and-up that love the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for people that have wealth that is dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for people who have a high I.Q. and they give that I.Q. to the Lord Jesus Christ. But don't you for a moment insult God by saying He can't use you. That's what this story's all about: that God takes ordinary people, infuses barley bread with vitality, and uses people such as we for His glory, and God gets the glory.

You see, when God began to whittle this army down, to begin with, God said, "There are too many. If you go out there with 32,000 people, you're going to say, 'Hey, look what we did. We overwhelmed the enemy because our army was bigger than their army.'" But what God did, God took a nobody general, and a nothing army with insignificant weapons; as we're going to see, God got the victory, and God got the glory. Now don't you say God can't use you. That's an insult. God takes ordinary people. You see your calling, brethren—you see your calling. That's the reason Gideon was so impressed when God called him a mighty man of valor because at that time that was what he was not. But he had a vision of God, and God wore him like a suit of clothes.

Now when I say that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things, I'm not putting a premium on mediocrity or half-heartedness. You may have an ordinary voice and you're a singer, but your ambition ought to be to make that voice sing the sweetest note it can sing for Jesus Christ. You may not have the highest I.Q., but that's no excuse for not studying, is it? You ought to use every point in that I.Q. for God. You may not have mountains of muscles and bulging biceps, but every inch, every nerve, every fiber, every sinew ought to be given to Jesus Christ, amen? Somebody said, "It doesn't take much of a man to be a Christian; it just takes all there is of him—all there is of him." Have you given Him everything?

There's the principle of vitality—God takes our nothingness and He wins the battle. Now how does this vitality work? Well, begin in verse 15 of this same chapter, chapter 7, and look in verse 15: *"And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and*

*said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies,”—a hundred here, a hundred here, and a hundred here—“and he put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers,”—not a picture; a pitcher, something that holds liquid—“and lamps within the pitchers.” These pitchers had no liquid. They’re upside down, and there’s a torch underneath them. “And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled” (Judges 7:15–21).*

When he said, “all the host,” he was talking about the Amalekites and Midianites. Over here is a flash of light, a trumpet sound, a shout; over here is a flash of light, a trumpet sound, a shout; over here is a flash of fire, a trumpet sound, a shout—mass confusion in the army of the Midianites—and they began to flee.

Now if you’d have seen them before this, had you been a Midianite, from Midian, you’d have laughed them to scorn. I mean, here they go: a trumpet, a clay pot, and a torch. And only 300 of them—a meager group with foolish weapons. What does this tell us? Put this scripture down—2 Corinthians 10, verse 4: *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”* (2 Corinthians 10:4).

You see, there is a battle that’s being fought right now, and God knows I pray regularly and every day for those boys who are in Afghanistan, but they’re fighting with carnal weapons. But you know, the ultimate war that we’re in is not with flesh and blood. Now we walk in the flesh, but we do not war in the flesh. You know, the battle is right here and now; we are in the flesh, folks. I mean, no way we get out of it. In the morning, you know what Joyce is going to say to me? Adrian, take out the garbage. Here goes the Reverend Dr. Rogers taking out the garbage. We are in the flesh. We all have toilets that back up. We all have things that we just have to do. I mean, that’s just the life that we’re in. But friend, our war is not in the flesh. And *“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,”—fleshly—“but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”*

Now why did God say take a pitcher, a clay pot? Why did God say take a torch?

Why did God say take a trumpet? Do you see the symbolism there? I hope you do. How does this vitality work? How does God take our nothingness, and infuse it with His greatness, and give us the victory? And I'm not talking merely about a victory over Osama Bin Laden; I'm talking about a victory in your office tomorrow when you're supposed to be living the Christian life—in your school, in your neighborhood.

#### A. **Boldness**

There are three elements that are symbolized here, and the very first is boldness. Look in verse 20. He says you're to blow the trumpet. Now what does that mean? There's to be a trumpet blast of certainty and clarity. Here's the verse I've put down in the New Testament—1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 8: *"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?"* (1 Corinthians 14:8). Blow the trumpet. The Bible says, "Lift up your voice like a trumpet" (Isaiah 58:1). Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to let it be known that you're a child of God? Boldness.

#### B. **Brokenness**

But not only boldness—look in verse 20: brokenness. They broke the pitchers. What does that pitcher stand for? It stands for me, for you. Let me give you a New Testament verse—2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts,"*—that's the torch inside the pitcher—*"to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure"*—what treasure? the light—*"in earthen vessels"* (2 Corinthians 4:6–7). You're looking at a clay pot. There's a light inside of me, but that light will not shine until I am broken. We have this treasure in earthen pots. You know what's missing in much of modern Christianity? Brokenness. Men throw broken things away. God never really ever even uses anything until He first breaks it. *"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"* (Psalm 51:17).

We sit in church, high-minded, unbent, unbowed, unbroken. When's the last time you've truly—and I'm asking myself this same question—humbled yourself before God? We say, "Lord, make us humble." Friend, I don't pray that prayer; I just don't do it. I had much rather say, "O my God, I humble myself before you. God, forgive my pride and my arrogance."

#### C. **Brightness**

Boldness—sound the trumpet. Brokenness—break the pitcher. And then, brightness—let the light shine. Let the light shine. You see, he says that, *"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels."* The light will not shine until the vessel is broken.

## Conclusion

As I thought about this passage of Scripture, my heart swelled within me, as I thought about this passage where it said, “*And they stood every man in his place*” (Judges 7:21)—every man in his place, 300. Many times more than 300 here tonight. What would happen? I stand here on this platform on Sunday morning and see this great house filled twice, and then I see this crowd here on Sunday night. I ask myself this question: What would happen if we had a vision of Almighty God, Jehovah Shalom, the Lord, our Peace? What would happen if we allowed the Lord to give us courage and valor rather than cowardice? What would happen if we became vigilant, not indolent, watched and prayed against the enemy? What would happen if we would let His almightiness come into our nothingness, and take the barley bread, such as we are, and infuse us with divine power—ordinary as we are? What would happen if we stood every man in his place and every woman in her place? What would happen if we were to sound the trumpet, break the pitcher, hold forth the light in this city? People, do you realize the potentiality that’s in this room tonight?

“Well,” you say, “we don’t have enough.” No, sometimes we have too many. We can’t reach the goal for stumbling over our own players. The Lord doesn’t save by many. Don’t get the idea that we have to have everybody on our side and that we have to move in convoy. We don’t. We need to believe God. We need to give the shout of victory. And out of the shout of triumph Satan’s host doth flee. On, then, Christian soldiers—on to victory! We don’t need to back up, let up. And I want to say again that God’s plan for you is victory.

# The Moral Minority

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 1, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 6:1–10; 7:1–6, 9–22**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. You Must Forget Your Failures
- II. You Must Forsake Your Fear
- III. You Must Face Your Foe
- IV. You Must Fortify Your Faith
- V. You Must Fulfill Your Function
  - A. There Must Be a Sure Testimony
  - B. There Must Be a Selfless Testimony
  - C. There Must Be a Steadfast Testimony
- VI. You Must Finish the Fight

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Bible and open, please, to Judges chapter 6? And, when you've found it, would you look up here for just a moment? Ladies and gentlemen, there is a war that is being fought on American soil. It is a fight to the death, no holds barred. It is not with a foreign country. We're not wrestling against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12). It is a fight, a battle, between life and death, between light and darkness, between Christ and antichrist, between heaven and hell, and it involves you. And, there's no way possible under God's sun that you can escape the confrontation or that you can come away victorious apart from the principles of God's Word. Yet, on the other hand, God has deigned and planned that you be victorious. God never engineered His people for defeat. The Bible says, *"Thanks be unto God, [who] causeth us [always]"*—always—*"to triumph in Christ [Jesus]"* (2 Corinthians 2:14). In Christ we have the victory, but the victory is not automatic. There are principles of victory, and God gives victory to what I want to call "the moral minority." And, I want you to think about it today—that God's people who have victory are not the majority but the minority, plus God, who then become the majority. I want you to see six principles today. Look, if you will, in Judges 6:1.

## I. You Must Forget Your Failures

And, the very first principle I want to give you before I read this chapter is this: that if you would have victory, you must forget your failures. Not a one of us but what has failed, but the problem is so many times we make peace with failure, and we have the idea that because we've failed, we cannot succeed. We get the idea that failure is final.

God's people failed miserably, ignominiously. Notice: *"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years"*—now, who brought enemies against them? God did. It wasn't what the devil did. God did it. I've said before that God is America's only hope, but not only is God America's only hope; God is America's biggest threat. God is America's biggest threat, not what the communists are going to do to us; what God is going to do to us if we don't get right with God. God brought the Midianites against Israel—*"And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel...because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which [were] in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds"*—that is, God's people were driven underground—*"And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. [And] they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land [and destroyed] it"* (Judges 6:1–5). Here's an enemy that is causing famine in the land. God's people cannot produce. God's people are not fruitful. Everything they tried to do—they meet with defeat. And, the enemy is out there. Everywhere they turn the Midianites, the Amalekites, are encamped, ruining them, spoiling them, badgering them, discouraging them.

Notice verse 6: *"And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD"*—now, what kind of a testimony was that about Jehovah's might that we just heard about? "Staid upon Jehovah." What kind of a testimony was that for "Fairest Lord Jesus" that we sang about today, for God's people to be living that way? Do you think that's God's plan for God's people? Absolutely not! Now, notice in verse 7—*"And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the [land] of bondage"*—that is, "You are a redeemed people. I redeemed you with my hand"—*"And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you"*—notice that. God gave victory out of all that oppressed them—*"and [drove] them out from before you, and gave*



*you their land; And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice” (Judges 6:6–10).*

Now, what did God say? God said, “You failed, but it was not because I did not give you provision to succeed. You failed, but it was not because I wanted you to fail.” Now, ladies and gentlemen, failure is not God’s plan for His people, and it is time that you forget your failures. So many of us have failed so many times that we’ve made peace with failure. And, you keep sitting around, saying, “What a fool I was! What a fool I was!” Why don’t you say, “What a fool I am for keep saying what a fool I was”? I mean, forget those things that are behind: past glory, past guilt, past grudges. Forget it! Bury it in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. You cannot bring the past back, but you can commit the past to the Lord. And, if you fail, the Bible says, *“If we confess our [sin], [He’s] faithful and just to forgive us our [sin], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). And, if you’re sitting here today in failure, I want to tell you to put that failure behind you by the grace of God. The blood of Jesus Christ—it cleanses. God will forgive you.

## **II. You Must Forsake Your Fear**

Second thing—second principle: not only forget your failure, but, secondly, you must forsake your fear—you must forsake your fear. You’ll never have victory if you live in fear. Fast-forward to chapter 7, and I begin reading in verse 1: *“Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands”* (Judges 7:1–2). Now, that’s an interesting thing. God didn’t say, “You don’t have enough.” God said, “You have too many.” God is not as interested in numbers as we are. God is not always on the side of the majority. Generally, if you want to find out what side God is on, you’re going to find out that God is on the side of the minority. As a matter of fact, sometimes we can’t reach the goal because we’re stumbling over our own players.

God is not interested in numbers for numbers’ sake. Somebody says, “Well, God is blessing our church because our church is growing.” Well, a cemetery may be growing. Just because we have been getting more numbers, that doesn’t necessarily mean that God is with us. Here Gideon had a great host of an army of thirty-two thousand, and God said, “You’ve got too many people. If you win the victory with this many people, you’re going to say, ‘Look what we did.’” So, God said to Gideon, “Listen, Gideon, you tell everybody who is afraid that he can go home.” Look in verse 3: *“Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead”* (Judges 7:3). And, when He said that, a

stampede began. About twenty minutes later, he dusted himself off, and he looked around; and twenty-two thousand had gone home, and only ten thousand remained. God trimmed his army down in drastic numbers. Twenty-two thousand who were fearful went home. What does that tell us? That victory suits you for failure—excuse me—fear suits you for failure but not for fighting. The Bible teaches very clearly in 2 Timothy 1:7 that *“God hath not given us [a] spirit of fear.”* You will never be victorious in your life until you get rid of that spirit of fear. There’s no room for cowards.

Not only is fear going to cause you to fail, but your fear will cause others to fail. Did you know that God said in the book of Deuteronomy that He wouldn’t allow a fearful man to fight in His army? Deuteronomy 20:8—listen to it: *“And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house”*—get rid of him; and then, here’s why God said to do it—*“lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart.”* Fear is infectious. Now, in a church, or in a Sunday School class, or in a family, if you have a spirit of fear, not only are you going to harm yourself; you’re going to harm all of those around you.

Now friend, fear is a paralyzing force in your life. *Have you ever had a pain in your body? For example, you get a pulled muscle in your leg. And, your leg sends a message to your mind, and it says, “I hurt.” Your mind sends a message back to that leg and says, “Well, don’t use that leg.” And so, you limp around, and that pain paralyzes the muscle. But, I want to tell you, there’s also a message that can begin in your mind and go to your muscles, and it is the message of fear that also paralyzes you.* And, the icy fingers of fear may grip your throat, and you can’t preach, or you can’t sing, or you can’t teach. Fear paralyzes so that you don’t give and live as you ought to for the Lord Jesus Christ. That man who hid his talent in the ground gave this as an excuse: “I was afraid.” Now, God had said, “Don’t be afraid.” Don’t let the devil intimidate you. I say, do not let Satan intimidate you. Over, and over, and over, and over, and over again in God’s Word, God tells His people, “Fear them not.” *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7). Forget your failure. Forsake your fear.

### **III. You Must Face Your Foe**

Third principle: Face your foe. When I say, “Forget your fear; forsake your fear,” some people think I’m talking about a happy-go-lucky, careless, lackadaisical life. I am not! Look in chapter 7:4—continue to read: *“And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them [there]”*—*“try them for thee there”*—*“and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with*

*thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees...And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water” (Judges 7:4–6).*

Now, the noonday sun is blazing hot. There are ten thousand men there. God says, “Let’s go to the brook and get a drink of water. Stand back, Gideon, and watch them.” Nine thousand seven hundred of those men got on their knees, put their hands down in the mud, stuck their noses in the water, and sucked up the water, making themselves extremely vulnerable to any enemy that was around. These were not the cowards—oh, no. These were the careless. On the one hand, they were not those who were afraid. They were those who did not have any sense of vigilance about them.

Now, my friend, God gives you two legs. God gives you a balance. On the one hand, God has told us we are not to fear Satan. On the other hand, God tells us in 1 Peter: *“Be sober, be vigilant...your adversary the devil [goeth about] as a roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). There were three hundred men there that day who sat down by the riverside and took the water up with their hands and put it to their mouth, watching always for the enemy. God said, “I can use those. I can use those men. I can use those men who face the foe, those men who realize that our battle is not against a make-believe enemy.” The Bible says, *“Take [on] the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to [stand against the wiles of the devil]”* (Ephesians 6:13). We’re not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12).

Ladies and gentlemen, the devil has let loose with all of the artillery of hell on America, and on your family, and on your personal life. In 1961, the Supreme Court said that the philosophy of secular humanism was a religion. In 1963, however, public prayer was outlawed in our public schools—I’m talking about vocal prayer. One religion is in; another is out. And so, the Sunday School rooms in America have become the classrooms. The religion is secular humanism. In 1973, we said that a preborn baby—the Supreme Court said that a preborn baby—is not a human being and, therefore, that is a little blob of protoplasm that can be wasted and slaughtered. And, we have killed preborn babies by the millions. And, I want to tell you, dear friend, the stench of that crime rises in the nostrils of Almighty God. God is angry with the wicked every day, and God is especially the protector and the avenger of the innocent babes. In America, one million—one million—girls this year will be affected by teen pregnancy. And, of those who will graduate in a few months—or in a few days now—from high school, two-thirds

of them will have experimented with illegal drugs—two-thirds. Take all the high school seniors—one, two will have experimented with illegal drugs. There's an enemy, and he is real. And friend, we're fools if we let down our guard—we're fools. Don't you think that he's not out there, and don't you think, friend, that he is not real and that he's not doing damage. You can stick your nose in the mud if you want to, but you're going to go down. God can't use you; He won't use you. Forget your failure: you may have failed in the past; you don't have to keep on failing. Forsake your fear: God is with you. But, face your foe and realize that our enemy is real. First Peter 5:8: *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil [goeth about] as a roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8).

#### **IV. You Must Fortify Your Faith**

Principle number four: Fortify your faith—fortify your faith. Now, Gideon was a normal human being just like you are, but God wanted to fortify his faith. So, notice here in chapter 7, now, and verse 9: *"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him"*—now, Gideon just has his little moral minority of three hundred men, and notice—*"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, [and] get thee down unto the host"*—that is, to the enemy's camp—*"for I have delivered it into thine hand"* (Judges 7:9). If you don't mind underscoring in your Bible, please underscore that phrase, *"I have delivered it"* (Judges 7:9)—not "I will deliver it." We need to learn over, and over, and over, and over, and over again this principle: we do not fight for victory; we fight from victory. The victory is already ours. Do you believe that? God says, *"I have delivered it"* (Judges 7:9).

Now, the battle hadn't even begun, but, you see, God had already given victory. God's plan for His people is victory. The victory is inherent in the Lord. We have the Victor. So, God says, *"I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down"*—*"if you're afraid to go by yourself"*—*"go thou with Phurah thy servant [and go] down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host"*—that is, "I want to fortify your faith"—*"Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of [Israel]"*—*"all of the children, rather, of the east"*—*"lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude"*—sounds pretty strong to me. Sounds pretty invincible to me. Sounds like there's nothing that little old Gideon and 300 men can go, right? Wrong! Verse 13—*"[Then] when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow"*—now Gideon is standing off there in the shadows, and there are a couple of soldiers out

there. And, they're talking at nighttime, and one of them is saying, "Hey, I had a nightmare last night. I want to tell you about it." He said—"*Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, [and] the tent lay along*"—that is, the tent just crumbled—"*And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else [except] the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for [unto] his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all [of] the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian*" (Judges 7:9–15).

God says to Gideon, "Gideon, go down there and reconnoiter. I want you to hear. I want to give you an insight into the mindset of your enemy. I want you to have a penetrating viewpoint of what your enemy thinks. I want you to know what your enemy is feeling." And so, he's going down there and eavesdropping on hell. That's what we need to do: we need to understand what is going on in the regions of the other world, the netherworld, the dark world. We need to understand the mindset of Satan.

One of these soldiers said to the other one—he said, "I had a dream, a nightmare." He said, "I dreamed a cake of barley bread..." Do you know what barley bread was? It's not whole wheat. It's not—it's not—white bread. It's not French pastry. It's the roughest, coarsest, purest, cheapest bread—insignificant. That's what he's saying—barley bread: "Just a little cake of barley bread came into this tent, and the whole thing just caved in over a cake of barley bread." The other one said, "Yeah, I know what that is. That's that man Gideon. The power of God is on him."

Well, friend, there is a dread in the minions of hell today, and do you know what it is? That you people are going to understand the authority you have. The devil hopes that you never, ever understand the principles of this book. The devil trembles at the thought of God's people taking authority. There is a dread in hell over you, hoping you never awaken to your authority; hoping you never do understand that Jesus said, "*Behold, I [have given] you [authority]...over all the power of the enemy*" (Luke 10:19); hoping that you never do understand what Jesus said—what James said, "*Draw nigh [unto] God, and [God] will draw nigh [unto] you*" (James 4:8). "*Resist the devil...he will flee from you*" (James 4:7). That's the mindset in hell. You may not know it, but they know it. They know, as Jesus sent the 70 out, "*even the [demons were] subject [to] us [in] thy name*" (Luke 10:17). A barley bread. First Corinthians 1:26: "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world*"—barley bread—"to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of [this] world"—barley bread—"to confound the [strong]" (1 Corinthians 1:26–27)—to set at naught the strong.

See, many times the reason we don't think we can have victory... You know why we don't think we can have victory? We look at ourselves and say, "I'm not worthy of victory." That's exactly what Gideon thought. And, God is fortifying his faith and saying, "Gideon, it is not your ability; it is your availability. It is not your scholarship; it's your relationship. It's not your fame; it's your faith. It is not who you are; it is whose you are." In the sixth chapter of this book of Judges, the Bible says, *"The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon"* (Judges 6:34). The import of that language is, though, that the Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon. God wore Gideon like a suit of clothes. How would you like for God to wear you like a suit of clothes? And, it's not the man; it is God in the man.

We need to fortify our faith today. Folks, we need to understand what our birthright is. We need to understand, as God reminded Joshua of old, "I redeemed you. I gave you power over all of your enemies when you came into this land. There was no one who could stand against you." Do you believe that? You see, we have gotten such a mindset of failure we don't understand just who we are and what our authority is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I'm telling you, there is a dread in hell that one day you will understand it—who you are. God said to Gideon, "Get down and listen to what the enemy thinks" (Judges 7:10–11). When Gideon heard that, it fortified his faith.

## **V. You Must Fulfill Your Function**

I want to give you another step: not only do you need to fortify your faith, but, my dear friend, you need to fulfill your function. It's not enough just to believe it can be done. It's not enough even to believe that the battle is the Lord's. God has something for you to do.

Now look, if you will, here in chapter 7:15: *"And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do"* (Judges 7:15–17). Now, what an arsenal this was—trumpets, lamps (or torches, literally), and pitchers. How the Midianites would have laughed them to scorn! These thousands of Midianites—all of their camels, all of their horses, all of their weapons of war, and here come three hundred men! What do they have? Torches, pitchers, and trumpets. What a laughing stock! And, you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, *"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"* (2

Corinthians 10:4).

Now, each of these implements of warfare spoke very clearly and very plainly of a principle. Now, surely you're not going to go against the devil tomorrow with a clay pot, and a torch, and a trumpet unless God specifically tells you to, but you are going to go against him with the same principles that are here. But, let me say that, first of all, there's just this matter of obedience. There are some of you who will give great sums of money to this church, but you won't obey. To obey is better than to sacrifice. There are some of you who will work hard for any program, just like this ladies' thing. You do all kinds of things—building displays and all that. Fine, well, and good—but that won't give you victory unless you obey God. To obey... Gideon said in verse 17: "You do what you are commanded to do" (Judges 7:17).

Now, the Bible says in Psalm 75:6: *"For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge"* (Psalm 75:6–7). That's an interesting verse. Promotion comes from the north. That's interesting. "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor the south, nor west. But God is the judge" (Psalm 75:6–7). What's significant about the north? Where... In Leviticus 1:11, the Bible says that when a sacrifice was to be made, it was to be made on the north side of the altar. The north side of the altar is where the blood was poured out. It is the north side of the altar that is the place of sacrifice. And, God is saying that promotion comes through sacrifice. You want God to promote you? It was the Lord Jesus Christ who went out of the city of Jerusalem on the north side to be... Calvary—to be crucified. He went out through the north gate of crucifixion. And that, my friend, is the reason He's coming through the eastern gate of coronation—because He was *"obedient unto death"* (Philippians 2:8). *"God...hath highly exalted him, and given him a name [that] is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"* (Philippians 2:9–10). Christ knew victory because He knew obedience. Trust and obey.

#### **A. There Must Be a Sure Testimony**

Now, what were they told to do? First of all, He said, "You take a trumpet, and then take a clay pitcher. And then," He said, "Take a torch." And then, this is what He told them to do—I want you to see this; notice in verse 18: *"When I blow [the] trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of...the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came [out] unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to*



*blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred [men] blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host"* (Judges 7:18–22).

What is that talking about? Well, let me tell you, dear friend, that trumpet and that torch speak of testimony. You know, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14: *"if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to...battle?"* (1 Corinthians 14:8). There needs to be a sure testimony. We need to speak the word of testimony. We need to lift up our voice like a trumpet. We need to clearly, and soundly, and plainly articulate that the battle is the Lord's. We need to sound the battle cry openly, boldly; put the silver-throated trumpet to our lips; and give no uncertain sound—a sure testimony.

### **B. There Must Be a Selfless Testimony**

And, my dear friend, not only was it a sure testimony; it was a selfless testimony, because there was something else they needed to do. There was a torch up inside an earthen vessel, a pitcher, and God said, "Break it and hold high the torch." You say, "What does that talk about?" Well, let me give you a verse of Scripture I think will make it very clear. Look in 2 Corinthians 4:6–7. Rather, just let me read to you right now. Second Corinthians 4—put it in your margin—verses 6 and 7—listen to it: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"*—the God, who in the stygian darkness of this prehistoric world, said, *"Let there be light"* (Genesis 1:3), that same God has sent a shaft of gospel sunlight into our hearts and set our hearts ablaze with the glory of God. And, the light of God is in every child of God, but the world can't see it until something happens, because the next verse says—*"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels"*—pitchers, clay pots—*"that the excellency of the power...of God [may] not [be] of us"* (2 Corinthians 4:6–7).

Now folks, there is in me, in this clay pot, the Shekinah glory of God, but it'll never be seen until this vessel is broken. Do you understand that? Do you understand that there might—must—not only be a sure testimony (the trumpet), but there must be a selfless testimony (the broken vessel)? We throw broken things away, but God only uses broken things. He broke a little lad's lunch and fed the multitudes. He took a broken alabaster box of ointment, and the sweet perfume of that has filled the world. He took some bread in His hands, and broke it, and said, *"Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you"* (1 Corinthians 11:24). He said, in the Old Testament, *"Sow not among thorns"*—*"break up your fallow ground"* (Jeremiah 4:3). You'll never have a harvest until the ground is broken. David said, *"A broken and a contrite [spirit]...thou [will] not despise [O God]"*

(Psalm 51:17).

We're not going to strut our way to victory, folks. Victory comes with our face on the floor before God in brokenness. We sit in churches haughty, heady, unbroken, unbent and wonder why we don't have the victory. I'll tell you why we don't have the victory. God says, "I'll not share my glory with another" (Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 48:11). God, in this entire episode, is saying, "Gideon, it's going to be done in such a way that when it is done, it'll be so patently obvious that I've done it—that I've done it." There must be a sure testimony (the trumpet). There must be a selfless testimony (the broken pitcher).

### C. There Must Be a Steadfast Testimony

And, there must be a steadfast testimony. Verse 21 says, "*And they stood every [one] in his place*" (Judges 7:21). They stood there—I mean, they stood, every man in his place. That's what Paul meant in Ephesians chapter 6 when he said, "*[Take] the whole armour of God [and] stand against the wiles of the devil*" (Ephesians 6:11). That's what he meant in 1 Corinthians 15:58: "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*"

Are you serious-minded? Would you stand in your place? I mean, would you follow your function? Would you fulfill your function and say, "I am going to have a sure testimony—no uncertain sound. I'm going to have a selfless testimony. It won't be me. It won't be the vessel; it'll be the light in the vessel. I'm going to have a steadfast testimony. Pastor, you can count on me. If I'm a deacon, I'll be there. If I'm a Sunday School teacher, I'll be there. If I'm a mother, I'm going to be doing what a mother ought to do. I'm going to be in my place standing."

I was... I heard of a soldier who was court-martialed and shot. Do you know what he was court-martialed and shot for? Picking violets. You say, "That's ridiculous." No, he was on guard duty, and he forsook his post to pick a bouquet for his girlfriend; and the enemy came through. He was shot for picking violets. Now, a lot of things that you're doing are not all that bad, except you're just not standing where you ought to stand. I mean, you're just not doing what you ought to do. I mean, we're in a war—we're in a war; we're in a war. A sure testimony, a selfless testimony, a steadfast testimony—"they stood every [one] in his [own] place" (Judges 7:21).

## VI. You Must Finish the Fight

One last thing—principle number six: not only must you fulfill your function, but you must finish the fight—finish your fight. I mean, it's not enough to come this far. We get so close to victory so many times, and we back off. But, look now in verse 22—chapter 7:22: "*and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the*

*host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zeretherath*" (Judges 7:22). But now, watch this—verse 24: *"And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan"* (Judges 7:24). And, the Bible says that they *"pursued after the Midianites"* (Judges 7:23)—the last part of verse 23.

Now, you know what most of us want? We don't want victory; we want ease. Isn't that right? I mean, all we're saying is, "Devil, would you leave me alone? I'll leave you alone." All we want is a standoff. General Douglas MacArthur said, "In war, there is no substitute for victory." Have you ever read that verse of Scripture where Jesus—where the Bible—says, *"Draw nigh [unto] God, and [God] will draw nigh [unto] you"* (James 4:8)? And then, it says, *"Resist the devil...he will flee from you"* (James 4:7). Have you ever thought of Satan fleeing from you? Have you ever thought of your being on the offensive? You know the reason why so many of us will never win? We don't want to get on the offensive. All we want is to sing, "Hold the fort, for I am coming" (Philip P. Bliss), when we ought to sing, "Onward, Christian Soldiers": "At the [shout] of triumph Satan's [hosts] doth flee; / On then, Christian soldiers, on to victory!" (Sabine Baring-Gould). I mean, once we have the momentum, once we begin to pray and God bless us, don't stop praying; keep praying. Once we become a soul winner and we win a soul, don't say, "That's done"; go after another one. Once you learn a truth in the Bible, don't sit back and be smug and say, "Look what I know." That's only to encourage you more and more and more to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). Finish the fight. Press the battle to the gates.

## Conclusion

I'm telling you, my friend, there's a dread in hell that you'll understand what I'm saying today. God has programmed you for victory, and it's going to be not with great numbers, but with a moral minority who understand the principles of God's Word.

Let's pray. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. These principles of victory are only for God's children—not for the unsaved; for God's children. Do you know Jesus? If you died right now, are you absolutely certain that you would go to heaven? Do you know that your sin is forgiven? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your your spirit that you're a child of God? If not, let me tell you how to be saved. You're not saved by joining anybody's church. You're not saved by simply believing a list of theological facts. You're saved by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. The Bible says, *"As many as received him, to them gave he [the] power to become the sons of God"* (John 1:12). And, how do you receive Him? By faith. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). And, that word *believe* means "commit and trust."

Trust Jesus, and He will save you.

Father, I pray today, O dear God, that you, Lord, would open hearts and that you, Lord, would draw precious people to Jesus—that no one would go away without at least being convicted and drawn. I know, Lord, you're not going to force anyone, but how I pray, dear God, that your Holy Spirit would move and speak through us today, that every one might see clearly and be drawn to Jesus. In His name I pray. Amen.

# The Principles of Conquest: A Life That Can Win

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 7:1–21**

*“When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.”*

15 MAIN VERSE REFERENCE

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Life of Valor
- II. A Life of Vigilance
- III. A Life of Vitality
- IV. A Life of Victory
  - A. A Sound Confession
  - B. A Selfless Confession
  - C. A Steadfast Confession

Conclusion

## Introduction

God has called His people to victory. That’s what I want to talk to you about tonight. I enjoy preaching on victory because I want to be victorious, and I believe the way to learn something is to preach about it. I don’t have all the victory that I ought to have and all the victory that I’m going to have, but I have known the victories of the Lord in my own life. And, I know that anything good and victorious in my life is, indeed, a victory from Him.

I want you to turn with me, please, to Judges 7, as we speak tonight on “The Principles of Conquest: A Life That Can Win.” Now, when you were born again, you were born to win. Our Lord does not sponsor born losers. We are born winners by the grace of God. And, I want to tell you that there is a battle that is going on tonight—a real battle. It is an unseen battle, a battle between light and darkness, a battle between good and evil, a battle between heaven and hell. And, because we’re living in the last days, and because Satan is like a cornered animal—wounded and vicious—he’s letting loose with all of the artillery of hell. And, God’s people need to learn the principles of conquest, not only that they might be defended, not only that they might be safe from the onslaught of the enemy, but that they might know the thrill of victory.

Now, there are several principles of conquest that I want to share with you. And, this

is the story those of you who are familiar with the Bible already know. It is the story of Gideon's victory over the Midianites, and this Bible story is recorded for us not simply as a matter of ancient history, but as we see God give a victory, and we study that victory and analyze that victory, then we can find the principles of victory that can be transferred from that story into our own lives. Many times I've told you that when you look at a passage of Scripture, you ask three questions: What did it mean then? What does it mean now? And then, thirdly, what does it mean to me personally?

I want you to look in chapter 7, and let's begin reading in verse 1: *"[And] then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand"* (Judges 7:1–3).

## **I. A Life of Valor**

Now, the Lord had come to Gideon, and Gideon was on the threshing floor threshing wheat for fear of the Midianites. And, the Lord had said to him, "Hail thou, man of valor" (Judges 6:12) in Judges 6:12 God called him a man of valor. "I want you to deliver my people from the hand of the Midianites" (Judges 6:14). And so, Gideon is made a general. Gideon goes out and gets all of his army, and the Lord says to him, "Gideon, you have too many people. You're going to have to weed your army out" (Judges 7:2–3).

Now, you see, God is not nearly as interested in numbers as we're interested in numbers. God knows that you can have many and still not have much. And so, the Lord says, "First of all, Gideon, if you would know victory, the first principle of victory is that there must be a life of valor—a life of valor." You see, God called Gideon a *"mighty man of valour"* (Judges 6:12). And then, the Lord says that, "Gideon, because I'm looking for valor—that is, because I'm looking for people who are courageous and people who are valiant—I want you to tell all of those who are afraid to go home" (Judges 7:3). And, 22,000 left immediately. Now, it must have been a tremendous army, because it's like a herd of buffalo. They stampeded him. And, Gideon gets up and dusts himself off. And, a great host have come now. We, today, think that the more the merrier, but that is not necessarily so. Fear does not suit one for fighting; fear suits one for failure and not for victory. The worst thing about fear is this: that not only does fear ill equip you to get the job done, but friend, fear is infectious. There ought to be some place that we could take all the fearful people and all the worrying people and lock them up and let them infect

one another and leave the rest of us alone.

Now really, that's a biblical principle. You might think I'm being a little lighthearted about that, but you might check out Deuteronomy 20:8. In Deuteronomy 20:8, God's principle for conquest is this: *"And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and shall say, What man is there [who] is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart."* Do you see that? "If there's a man that's afraid, if there's a man who is fainthearted, a man who lacks courage," God says, "separate him; send him home. He's going to infect the whole army."

I've been in this work long enough to know that God can be leading a church to do something marvelous and something wonderful, and the fearful and the unbelieving can say, "It can't be done," and other people will start to believe them. One pastor was talking to another pastor about all of the committees he had in his church. And, he said, "We have this committee and that committee," and he named all of the committees. And, he said, "We also have a committee in charge of the bucket brigade." And, this pastor said, "Well, what is the bucket brigade? I don't believe we have a committee like that. What do they do?" "Oh," he said, "well, we really don't appoint them. They are a self-appointed committee. And, whenever we get ready to do anything great for God, and when we get ready to believe the Bible, that says, *'The people [who] know their God shall...do exploits'* (Daniel 11:32), these people on this self-appointed committee, the bucket brigade—they get a bucket of cold water, and they pour it on our plans and smother the fire." "Oh," the pastor said, "I know what you're talking about now. I didn't know what to call it, but we've got that committee. As a matter of fact," he said, "I even know who the chairman is." Now, I want to tell you that every church has its self-appointed committee of people who say that it can't be done. And, if we listen to the fearful and the fainthearted, they would tell us, "It can't be done," and we would not do it.

You remember when God brought Joshua and the children of Israel to Kadeshbarnea? And, Joshua sent out 12 spies to spy out the land, and ten came back with a majority report and said, "It cannot be done. The land is full of giants, and we were like grasshoppers in their sight" (Numbers 13:33). And, the people believed them and wandered around in the desert waste and became sand farmers rather than dwelling in a land that flows with milk, and corn, and wine, and oil. They did not believe God. I want to tell you, dear friend, that the devil is a sinister minister of fear, and the devil cannot use you if you're infected with the infectious malady of fear. The Bible says, *"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of [love], and of [power], and of a sound mind"* (2 Timothy 1:7). And, if you find yourself afraid in this battle, if you find yourself afraid of the forces of hell and afraid of the devil, the devil has intimidated you. He has



no real authority over you. But, the life of victory is to be a life of valor.

Now, secondly... Oh, by the way, let me just show you something here. Look, if you will, in Judges 6:7–10. Let me just read this for you—just a moment: *“And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD”—*now, the Midianites were demonized Canaanite people—*“And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; And I said unto you”—*now, listen to this—*“I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice”* (Judges 6:6–10). Now, God said, “Don’t be afraid.” As a matter of fact, ladies and gentlemen, 365 times in the Bible—one time for every day in the year—God has said the equivalent of “fear not” or “be not afraid.” Over and over and over again, God is commanding us not to be afraid, but we quake at the gods of the enemy. We somehow think that the devil is so firmly entrenched that God’s people cannot know victory. The devil wants you to believe that.

## **II. A Life of Vigilance**

But, not only must there be a life of valor; there also must be a life of vigilance. I want you to go again to chapter 7 and begin to read where we left off. Now, in chapter 7:3, we see where twenty and two thousand left, and there was still now 10,000. And now, notice beginning in verse 4: *“And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down [to] the water, and [we] will try them for thee there”—“and I will try them for thee there”—*that is, “Bring them down to the water, and I’m going to put them to a test and see if they can pass muster”—*“and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. [And] he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lapped of the water with his tongue, as a dog lapped, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped...I [will] save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand...let all the other people go every man [to] his [own] place”* (Judges 7:4–7).

Now, there were some who left because of a lack of valor; and now, there are some who leave because of a lack of vigilance, because, dear friend, the life of victory is, on

the one hand, a life of valor, but to balance off that valor is vigilance. Now, when I tell people not to be afraid of the enemy, do you think I mean, therefore, there's nothing to fear? Of course not. There's much to fear. And, the devil is powerful. The devil is cruel. The devil is sinister. The devil is wicked. And so, therefore, the Bible is a wonderful book, a wonderful balance. First Peter 5:8—that we're going to get to in a while as we're preaching through 1 Peter—says, *“Be sober”*—that means “be serious-minded”—*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, [goeth] about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). And, sometimes people have the idea that, when we talk about the victory, that Jesus Christ has given us over the enemy, that we can let down our guard. That's exactly what the men in Gideon's army did—9,700 of them went out to drink. And, rather than getting down on one knee, looking around vigilantly and soberly, they put their snouts in the water and sucked up the water without watching for the enemy. They lapped the water up as a dog would. The other men, who were vigilant, got down on one knee, and took the water in their hand, and brought it to their mouths, looking this way and that way always for the enemy.

Now, we've heard the expression that “fools rush in where angels sometimes fear to tread”—and that is so true. When a preacher like myself will preach that God has given us victory over the enemy, then some people let down their guard. They talk lightly, laughingly, of the enemy. But, I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that there is a real enemy. And, and, I would not speak lightly of the devil; I would not minimize his power. Martin Luther said, “His power and craft are great, and, armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal.” And so, on the one hand, there must be a life of valor. God cannot use a coward. But, on the other hand, there must be a life of vigilance. And, God cannot use the careless. And, there are so many that I'm speaking to who let their guard down; they leave the door open for the enemy. They are not vigilant because of their enemy the devil.

### **III. A Life of Vitality**

Now, the third thing I want you to notice, if you would know victory and the life of victory... And, the third principle that I see—not only a life of valor, and not only a life of vigilance, but a life of vitality. You see, there must be a supernatural strength within you, the life of God within you, to give you that victory.

Let's continue to read now where we left off. We left off with verse 8, or verse 7, so let's look in verse 8: *“So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand”*—now, notice the past tense: not “I will,” but “I have.” That is,

the victory is already there—*“But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host”*—that is, “I’m going to vitalize you. I am going to give you strength. I am going to give you energy”—*“Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all [of] the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said”*—now, Gideon is out there eavesdropping, and a couple of these Midianites are talking—*“and [he] said...I dreamed”*—*“Behold, I dreamed”*—*“a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came [into] a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, [and] the tent lay along. And his fellow answered”*—that is, “his friend”—*“This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian”* (Judges 7:8–15).

Now, here’s the third principle: there is a life of vitality. God said to Gideon, “I know how weak you are, but I’m going to strengthen you, and I’m going to show you exactly what I’m going to do with you.” He said, “I want you to go down there and listen to what these people are saying.” So, Gideon does a little snooping. He reconnoiters down there by the camp of the Midianites, and there they are, like grasshoppers up and down the valley. And, he hears two of them. I don’t know where he was standing—perhaps behind a tree. And, he hears two of them talking. One of them says, “I had a terrible dream.” “What was it?” “Well,” he said, “I saw a cake of barley bread.” Now, do you know what barley bread is? Barley bread is the cheapest, the roughest, the coarsest bread. That is, it’s next to nothing. It’s a picture of weakness and lack of strength. And, this man said, “I saw a loaf of barley bread tumble into a tent, and it just destroyed everything. The tent fell down, and the people inside the tent were set at disarray.” And, his friend said, “I’ll tell you what that means: that loaf of barley bread is a picture of the host of Gideon and the army of Gideon.”

Now, what was God teaching Gideon? He was teaching Gideon something that you need to know. Friend, the devil understands your power more than you do. Did you know that? Did you know that the hosts of hell hope that you never really learn the victory and the vitality that God has given you? God says to Gideon, “I’m going to strengthen you. I’m going to show you what divine greatness can do when it is infused with human weakness.” All through the Bible we see God taking ordinary people and

doing extraordinary things through them. When I talked to you sometimes about a life of valor and a life of vigilance, you think that's all there is to it—that if you'll just be brave and watchful, that you can defeat the enemy. Not so. You need to be infused with supernatural strength. It's not a matter of scholarship; it is relationship. It is not a matter of fame; it is a matter of faith. It is not a matter of ability; it is a matter of availability. It is not who you are; it is whose you are that counts with God. *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many [mighty] men, not many [wise men]...are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise”* (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). And, what God was showing Gideon is what I pray God that He'll show you tonight: that God can take your life, though you be like a cake of barley bread, though you be the poorest of the poor and the weakest of the weak, and God can infuse you with supernatural strength. And, there is already a dread in hell of you. The demons already are cringing with the idea that one day you just might learn what authority and power that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. A Life of Victory**

Now, the fourth thing—not only valor; not only vigilance; not only vitality, as you receive that divine strengthening, as God takes that loaf of barley bread and makes it a mighty instrument in His hand; but these three things and, fourthly and finally, to victory. There is valor, and vigilance, and vitality; there must be victory.

So, continue to read now, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 15: *“And it was so, [that] when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host”—that is, “all the enemy army”—“ran, and cried, and fled”* (Judges 7:15–21). I must stop reading there, but it was, indeed, a life of victory.

Now, can you imagine the victory? Do you know what the arsenal of weapons was?

First of all, he takes a nobody general, and He takes a nothing army; and then, He gives them the silliest of weapons. Here's what the arsenal of weapons was: they had trumpets, and they had pitchers (like a water pitcher), a clay pot, and they had lamps. Now, they're going out against an armed camp, a mighty host, and all they have—trumpets, pitchers, and lamps. What is God showing us? Listen, friend, it's so obvious. He's saying exactly what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:4: that *"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."* And, each of these things—the lamp, the pitcher, and the trumpet—each of them has a vital lesson for us today, as we take these things and transform them into our own lives.

#### A. **A Sound Confession**

What does the trumpet speak of? The trumpet, dear friend, speaks of your confession, your testimony. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14:8: *"if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?"* We are to speak clearly. We are to confess the victory. We are to proclaim the victory. We are to give a sound confession. That's what the trumpet speaks of. A trumpet blasts of certainty. Gideon said, "You watch me. Get all around the camp, and when I blow my trumpet, you blow your trumpet, every one with a clear note, a blast of the bugle—not sounding brass, not tinkling cymbals, but a silver-throated trumpet; no uncertain sound." We must not stammer. We must not stutter. We must not apologize. We must not let up. We must not back up. We must not shut up. We must not be intimidated. We must learn to sound the trumpet, for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, no one will prepare himself for battle (1 Corinthians 14:8).

Today, there are those who do not like preachers who preach with authority. They tell us that we're supposed to say, "I suppose..." or, "I think..." or, "It may be..." or, "Rabbi Smellfungus says so and so," and we are not to be able to say, "Thus saith the Lord." But, I want to tell you, dear friend, that the God that I know says that we're not to give an uncertain sound. We are to preach the Word of God without apology—I don't mean arrogantly. But, dear friend, this is God's Word, and there needs to be a sound confession. And so, the trumpet speaks of a sound confession.

#### B. **A Selfless Confession**

But, notice again in verse 20 that not only was the trumpet to be sounded, but the pitcher was to be broken: *"And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers"* (Judges 7:20). Now, if the trumpets' sounds stand for a sound confession, the breaking of the pitchers stands for a selfless confession. You see, inside that pitcher was a lamp, and the pitcher was over the lamp. And so, they blow the trumpet, and then they break the pitcher. And, when the pitcher is broken, then the light shines. It's dark,

and suddenly it's light. Sadly, the host of the Midianites hear this sound—all of these trumpets—and out of nowhere comes this blazing, shining light. The light did not shine, however, though it was inside and though it was burning, until the pitcher was broken.

Now, what does that symbolize? Why did God say to Gideon, "Take an earthen pitcher and break it at a certain time"? I believe God's teaching us one of the mighty lessons of conquest and victory. You might want to put in your margin "2 Corinthians 4:6–7": the Bible says, "*For God, who [hath] commanded the light to shine out of darkness*"—now remember, that's what happened on that night. The light began to shine out of darkness—"*For God, who hath commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath [shone] in our hearts*"—that is, the light is burning on the inside of us, and every one of us has a light on the inside of him. That same God who created the world and spoke and there was light has put that light in our hearts. Why? Why did He do it?—"to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"—there is within me the glory of God because Jesus is in me. And, God has shined into my old darkened heart, and God has put that light there. But, how is that light going to shine out? For Paul goes on to say—" [*For*] we have this treasure in earthen vessels"—that this body of mine is like that pitcher. I have the light, the treasure. The glory of God is in me, and what a treasure it is! But, it is in an earthen vessel. And friend, that light will not shine until this vessel is broken.

There is no blessedness without brokenness. The thing that is missing in the average Christian's life is brokenness. We throw broken things away, but God never uses anything until, first of all, it's broken. He took a broken lunch and fed 5,000. He took a broken alabaster box of ointment, and the sweet perfume of that ointment has pervaded the world ever since when it was broken at the feet of Jesus. Friend, He took a broken pitcher and let the light shine all around. Jesus said of His body, "*This is my body, which is broken for you*" (1 Corinthians 11:24). David said in Psalm 51: "*a broken and a contrite [spirit]...thou wilt not despise*" (Psalm 51:17).

God has broken me. I don't say that I'm completely broken, but I'll tell you what I do believe: I believe that God can break you one of several ways: God can break you through sorrow, tragedy, heartache, or God can just simply break you through the Word, if you'll let Him. You know, there's a sense in which the Bible says if we'll judge ourselves, we'll not be judged (1 Corinthians 11:31). That is, we can let the Word of God come to us and give us that broken spirit. I'm not talking, dear friend, about a crushed spirit. Things could be crushed without being broken. But, no man can be used of God until, first of all, he's broken. The word *meekness* literally means "brokenness." You can't learn; you can't testify...the light that is in you. And, you may be—you may be—full of Jesus, but it won't show until there's that brokenness in your heart and in your life. I'm not talking about going over always weepy around the lashes. I'm not talking about

going around with your head all bent over. But, I'm telling you, friend, that if your light is to shine, your vessel must be broken. God uses broken things. *"We have this treasure in [an] earthen [vessel]"* (2 Corinthians 4:7).

There was a sound confession: the trumpet blew. There was a selfless confession: the vessel was broken, and the light shined forth.

### C. **A Steadfast Confession**

And, there was a steadfast confession. Notice in verse 21: *"And they stood every man in his place round about the camp"* (Judges 7:21). Thank God for that. Thank God. Here's the trumpet in one hand, and here's the lamp in the other hand (the lamp representing our good works and Christ in us, the trumpet representing the Word of God and the gospel of Christ giving no uncertain sound). And, here we stand, and we're not to be moved. *"They stood every man in his place"* (Judges 7:21).

Now, look around you. Just look—just look. What do you think would happen if God would take—not 300 that were here, but approximately 3,000 that are here tonight? What do you think would happen if each one of us were to go out tomorrow in our place, wherever we are—that doctor's office, that law office, that school, that home, that neighborhood, that drugstore—every one of us, in one hand, a silver trumpet, giving the testimony of Jesus Christ; in the other hand, a light that's shining because the vessel is broken; and we stand there in our place? I'll tell you what would happen: *"At the [shout] of triumph Satan's [hosts] doth flee; / On then, Christian soldiers, on to victory!"* (Sabine Baring-Gould).

You know what Paul ended up his great dissertation on the resurrection of the body with in 1 Corinthians 15? He says in verse 58: *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, [unshakeable], always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). *A little boy had a horse, and he wasn't much of a horse—kind of a flee-bitten old nag. And, a man thought he'd make fun of the little boy's horse, and he said, "Son, your horse there—is he any good?" He said, "Yes, sir. He's real good." He said, "Well, he doesn't look so good." He said, "Can he run fast?" He said, "No, sir, but he can stand fast." Amen. That's what God's looking for. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

## **Conclusion**

The devil hopes that you'll never learn the principles of conquest. What are they? A life of valor—tell everybody who's afraid to go home. A life of vigilance—tell everyone who's careless to go home. A life of vitality—learn that God will take your ordinariness, though you be a loaf of barley bread, and God will infuse you with supernatural strength and a



life of victory by having a testimony that is a sound testimony, by having a testimony that is a selfless testimony, by having a testimony that is a steadfast testimony. I want to challenge you, and charge you, and admonish you in the name of Jesus to live this week victorious in His mighty name.

Let's pray. Father, I just thank you tonight for the victory that is ours in and through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And Lord, I pray tonight that you will speak to my own heart, for Lord, you know that I'm like that loaf of barley bread. *"In me...in my flesh [is] no good thing"* (Romans 7:18). But Lord, I thank you that you take your almightiness and blend it with my nothingness. And Lord, make me victorious, and I praise you for this in Jesus's name. Amen.

# Thorns in a Nation's Side

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 7, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 8:33–34; 9:1–15**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Apostasy of an Unthankful People
  - A. The Four Changes in America
    - 1. We Have Moved From Authority to Relativism
    - 2. We Have Moved From Truth to Pragmatism
    - 3. We Have Moved From Revelation to Feeling
    - 4. We Have Moved From Convictions to Opinions
  - B. What the Media is Doing
    - 1. They Have Normalized
    - 2. They Have Desensitized
    - 3. They Have Legitimized
    - 4. They Have Stigmatized
- II. The Arrogance of an Ungodly Leader
  - A. The Leader Built a Coalition
  - B. The Leader Bought His Constituents
  - C. The Leader Brutalized His Competition
  - D. The Leader was Inaugurated with a Show of Religion
- III. The Apathy of Uncommitted Bystanders

Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word, and find, if you would, please, the Book of Judges. I want you to look in chapter 9, if you will. I begin in verse 8—this is the first parable ever given in the Bible; it's the parable of the trees, who wanted a king—verse 8:

*"The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the tree said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over*

*us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and [rule] over us. And the bramble said unto the trees. If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon” (Judges 9:8–15).*

It’s an interesting story, isn’t it? The title of our message: “Thorns in a Nation’s Side.” I want to tell you today that America is in a crisis, and the crisis concerns leadership. We need in America today—desperately need—leadership. Somebody has given us this line a long time ago, talking about leadership: “If the gold rusts, what shall the iron do?” That is, if those who are supposed to be in areas of leadership don’t lead, then what’s going to happen?

What we have here in the Word of God is the story of a pitiful politician and a nation in disarray. Now we’ve just come through elections; and in the elections, we’ve seen some pitiful politicians, and we’ve seen some statesmen. And I’m not going to tell you who’s who, but I hope you know. We’ve seen some pitiful politicians, and we’ve seen some statesmen. By and large, we get the kind of leadership that we deserve. I hear people quote it like it comes from the Bible: that wicked rulers are God’s reward for wicked people. That’s not a quote from the Bible, but I believe it is a Bible truth.

Now what’s the difference between a statesman and a politician? Well, a statesman works for the next generation; a politician works for the next election. And we have, on every hand, statesmen; and I thank God for statesmen. I believe that we have seen some statesmen elected and some politicians elected, and there are all kinds. And you know, in the last election, there were some dirty antics where somebody sneaked into the campaign headquarters of one of the candidates and let all the air out of his speech. It’s a terrible thing—it’s a terrible thing.

Now what we have here in these passages are three steps in the decline of a nation, and I want you to look at them.

## **I. The Apostasy of an Unthankful People**

First of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call the apostasy—the apostasy—of an unthankful people. Now go back to chapter 8, and look in verse 33. Last week, we talked about the victory that Gideon won—remember? When they shouted, they blew the trumpets, they broke the pitchers, they held up the lantern, and they said, “*The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon*” (Judges 7:20). And God put the enemy camp in disarray, and there was a mighty, mighty victory. Boy, you would think that the people would be so grateful and praise God so much that they would never ever again go back on God! But what we have here is the apostasy of an unthankful people.

Judges chapter 8 and verse 33: *“And 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 Baalberith their god.”* That is, a fertility god. That is, they turned to immorality. *“And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side”* (Judges 8:33–34). Isn’t that pitiful? Is that not pitiful? God had given them a wonderful, wonderful victory, and verse 34 says they forgot it—they remembered it not. And they had gotten off into a fertility cult.

You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, that could never happen in America.” Well, you know, we prayed to God in Desert Storm, and we said, “O God, help us. We don’t want to get into a war with our boys over there in the sands of Arabia. We don’t want that. O God, have mercy.” I can remember when the war that we now call *Desert Storm* began the next Sunday. I said to myself when I stood here, “Where did all these people come from?” I mean the place—the attendance—was up. It looked like 25%—people coming to the house of God to seek the face of God. And as soon as that was over, do you know what has happened? Rather than giving God the praise and the glory, it seems like the very loose gates of Hell have been opened on us, and the floodgates of filth have been poured out on this land; and we have become blatantly immoral.

I have in my hand an example of what I’m talking about. I’m talking about not only immorality, but apostasy. This is an article taken from *Christianity Today*, and it’s just a few weeks old. But it talks about a conference called the *Re-imagining Conference*. It was a conference sponsored by churches. Let me read. I’m going to break in here: “Nowhere was this influence more evident than at the *Re-imagining*, a widely-publicized, feminist conference that attracted 2,200 participants from 49 states and 27 countries last November”—that’s this past November. “Re-imagining was sponsored”—now, here are the sponsors—“by the Greater Minneapolis–Saint Paul Area and Minnesota Council of Churches, underwritten by a 65,000-dollar grant from the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., and other mainline denominations, including the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. And the American Baptist Church also provided funds.”

Now here’s a conference, and here are these mainline denominations sponsoring this conference. Now I am skipping, but I want I want to quote here: “The central task of the conference participants was to re-imagine God. There was little room for the triune God of Christianity. In fact, Lutheran Pastor Barbara Lundblad drew whoops and applause when she noted with satisfaction that,”—quote—“We have done nothing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”—that drew whoops and applause. “Like several other speakers, ‘womanist’ theologian Delores Williams scoffed at the idea of Christ’s atonement: ‘I don’t think we need folks hanging on crosses, and

blood dripping, and weird stuff. We just need to listen to the God within.” “Weird stuff”—that’s the cross of Jesus Christ. And then, it goes on.

Now look, folks, I’m not talking about something that took place on Mars or sponsored by NOW. I’m talking about something sponsored by mainline churches—“The deity of reimagining was Sophia, namely, the biblical spirit of wisdom. Sophia, conference participants were told, is the suppressed part of the biblical tradition and clearly the female face of the human psyche. Prayers to Sophia named her as ‘our maker, creator, god, mother, and guide.’ At the conference grand finale—the ‘Struggle for Transformation’ ritual—participants worshiped Sophia, an arousing service complete with milk and honey.” That was their communion—milk and honey.

“Re-imagining was not about women seeking better understanding of the Christian God. It was about women seeking self-affirmation and searching for an authentic identity. Participants sought to coax out their hidden spontaneous selves in many ways: scribble writing, belly dancing, and anointing themselves with red dots, and bowing to the divine in each other. The aim of the conference, after all, was ‘to create that wonderful space where we are truly free to be ourselves.’ In the ritual of making holy time, attendees were urged to dream wildly about who we intend to be through the power and guidance of the spirit of wisdom, whom we name *Sophia*. Not surprisingly, many Re-imagining participants seemed to conclude that the illusive self for which they hungered was, in fact, divine—what Delores Williams called ‘the god within.’ The conference program left little doubt on the matter: ‘Sophia is the place in you where the entire universe resides.’ Whether they knew it or not, conference participants were worshipping themselves.”

You say, “Pastor, why all of that?” Well, could you believe that could happen in America? I mean, would you believe that that could happen at a church-sponsored event, funded by mainline denominations? I mean, all of this—it’s a—guys—fertility ritual. It is sheer apostasy, happening in America. You see, the Book of Judges is not just what God has said; it is what God is saying. Look again in verse 33: “*And 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 Baalberith their god*” (Judges 8:33).

Now as we told you, the Book of Judges has an underlying theme, and it’s Judges 17, verse 6: “*In those days there was no king in Israel, [and] every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6). That is, there was no fixed standard of morality. Now every politician today will stand up and talk about values. But when you ask him, “Whose values?” he shuts up. He doesn’t know how to get a standard for values. In other words, it’s morality by majority.

## A. The Four Changes in America

Remember the four steps that we gave you?

### 1. We Have Moved From Authority to Relativism

First of all, we've gone from authority to relativism. Everything is relative. There's no fixed standard. We have a government today that's run by polls. "Find out what people want, and then give it back to them." Can you imagine Moses taking a poll in Egypt? Can you imagine Martin Luther taking a poll at the Reformation? That's not leadership. We've gone from authority to relativism.

### 2. We Have Moved From Truth to Pragmatism

We have moved from truth to pragmatism. No longer do we ask, "Is it true?" We ask, "Does it work?" And people choose religion to produce health, wealth, and happiness. It's man-centered rather than God-centered.

### 3. We Have Moved From Revelation to Feeling

We have gone, thirdly, from revelation to feeling, and psychology has been substituted for theology. It's not theology; it's me-ology. It's man-centered. Sin is no longer the enemy—sorrow is; sadness is. To feel good about yourself is the number one priority.

### 4. We Have Moved From Convictions to Opinions

Fourthly, we've gone from convictions to opinions. Few people really have convictions about anything except their right to be happy.

Now the sad thing is that this is being played out in government today. This nation has had some great national treasures in our Constitution and in the things that our Founding Fathers died for. But I want to give you some rulings now that have come down. I want you to listen to these:

In the case of *Reed vs. Van Hoven*, in 1965, the court ruled that if a student in a public school prays over his lunch, it is unconstitutional for him to pray out loud. Can you imagine that? In the case of *DeSpain vs. DeKalb County Community School District*, in 1967, the court ruled that for kindergarten students to recite the non-sectarian prayer

We thank You for the flowers sweet.

We thank You for the food we eat.

We thank You for the birds that sing.

We thank You for everything.

friend, they said that is unconstitutional. Why, they even left the word *God* out of it. We just say, "Thank You." "But," they said, "somebody might think of God—they might think of God. So you can't have little children just bow their head and say, 'Thank You.'" Why,

they have ruled that it's unconstitutional for students to arrive at school early to hear a student volunteer read prayers.

Now both the House and the Senate have a chaplain that opens with prayers, and those prayers are recorded in the Congressional Record. But students and teachers in America's schools are prohibited from openly professing allegiance to their God. They can't even have a moment of silence. In some places, they've ruled that you can't even bring a Bible in a plain brown wrapper. This is America. It's unconstitutional, they've said, for a school graduation ceremony to contain an opening or closing prayer.

And in Alaska, the students were told that they could not use the word *Christmas* at school, because it had *Christ* in it. They were told they could not even put the word *Christmas* on their notebooks. They could not exchange Christmas cards or Christmas presents, or participate in any activity which acknowledged Christmas as the most sacred holiday of our Western tradition.

When are we going to wake up? I mean, the First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof." Every bite that the lip takes, takes another bite out of our religious liberties. Is anybody paying attention? You know, people always talk about the First Amendment. They need to understand what the First Amendment says. Listen to it again: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion." That is, we're going to have no national religion, no government-sponsored church. But the other side says, "nor the free exercise thereof."

You need to remember this: When the first United States Congress was passing the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights, at the same time, they also passed the Northwest Ordinance. Historians have told us that the four most important documents in our national history are these: the Northwest Ordinance, the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution.

Do you know what the Northwest Ordinance said? Now I want you to understand how the framers must have looked on the First Amendment. Here's what the Northwest Ordinance said, among other things: "Religion, morality, and knowledge be necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind. Schools and means of education shall forever be encouraged. Why shall we have schools? Why shall we have means of education? Because religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government." That's what... These are the ones—the same ones—who wrote the First Amendment. I'm telling you, folks, it's time that we wake up.

## **B. What the Media is Doing**

And not only has the religion become apostate and the revisionists remodeled our



Constitution, but the media moguls are systematically seducing our children.

### **1. They Have Normalized**

They have normalized that which is abnormal and subnormal—they have normalized... Kids watch entertainment today, and they see people slipping in and out of bed—unmarried people—as normally, as naturally, as people would shake hands. Profanity and filth are known as polite conversation.

### **2. They Have Desensitized**

And after they've normalized, then they have desensitized. We've come to the place where things don't shock us anymore. What used to amaze us now amuses us. And we have a generation today that doesn't know how to blush or flinch. And it gets filthier and filthier to keep the audience coming back.

### **3. They Have Legitimized**

And after they've normalized and desensitized, then, they legitimized. They have legitimized the illegitimate. Sexual perversion has gone from a sin to a sickness to a socially accepted practice. They have legitimized things that God calls sin.

### **4. They Have Stigmatized**

And after they've done that, they still have not finished. They have then stigmatized that which is good, and decent, and godly. The word *virgin* is a word to be laughed at. Monogamous marriage is a joke. And for you to stand up for Bible truth—or, for me to preach what I'm preaching today—I'll tell you, beyond a shadow of any doubt, I will be called a part of the radical religious Right, just for simply saying that there's a right and there's a wrong. I mean, those who stand up for what is right are now no longer tolerated; they are stigmatized. We're looked upon as a threat to society. No wonder the prophet Isaiah said, in Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20: "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil*" (Isaiah 5:20).

In the last Southern Baptist Convention, former Congressman Jack Kemp spoke, and what he said was significant. I quote: "When gradeschoolers are encouraged to learn and to read about condoms but forbidden to see the Ten Commandments on a classroom wall, something is mightily wrong with education in America. This is a double standard that undermines all standards. Our children need to learn less about the mechanics of sex and more about the meaning of character. When children grow up in homes without a father's discipline and love, and without a mother's nurture and comfort, we consign a young generation to problems they have not created and do not deserve. And America, without a foundation of stable families, is an America built on shifting sand. When we accept the denigration of religious freedom, we compromise the means of our deliverance. Today, where two or three are gathered in His name, there

also, it seems, is the ACLU in their midst. We believe in a free church and a free state, but that freedom of religion does not mean freedom from religion. We, as a nation, were conceived in faith, founded on faith, and prospered through faith.” I think that’s well said.

Now folks, the very first thing I want you to see is the apostasy of an unthankful people. Look again in chapter 8, verse 33: *“And 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 Baalberith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies on every side”* (Judges 8:33–34).

## **II. The Arrogance of an Ungodly Leader**

Now here’s the second thing I want you to see: not only the apostasy of an unthankful people, but I want you to see the arrogance of an ungodly leader. In this situation, there arose an ungodly leader. His name was Abimelech. Begin to read now in chapter 9, verse 1: *“And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother’s brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother’s father, saying, Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh”* (Judges 9:1–2).

### **A. The Leader Built a Coalition**

I want to pause here to say there was a man—he was a bramble; he was a thorn bush—but he had an unholy ambition to lead the country. So the very first thing he did, in verses 1 and 2, was to build a coalition. He went to his friends back where he was raised, and he said, “Listen. I want you to know that I am one of you. I am a part of this generation.”

Twenty-five years ago we had Woodstock. A bunch of kids with beads, and bottles, and pills, and syringes, and guitars, and tie-dyed shirts, faded jeans, long hair, rock music went to a place called Woodstock to jive, to drink, to smoke dope, to fornicate, to have a big time—25 years ago. You know what’s happened today? That same generation has shaved, cut their hair, taken off their beads, put on some shoes, and have gone to Washington. It’s the same crowd.

### **B. The Leader Bought His Constituents**

Here’s a politician. He built a coalition. Second thing he did: He bought his constituents. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“And his mother’s brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow*

*Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith,*”—that is, out of the god of sexual immorality; that’s where he got his money—“*wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him*” (Judges 9:3–4). That is, he bought his constituents. This was a slap in the face of the God of Israel because of where the money came from.

You know, you can sometimes buy an election. Somebody talked about a man who spent 20 million dollars to get elected. They said, “Isn’t that an awful lot?” They said, “Only works out to be about two dollars a promise.” You know, you can promise a lot, and you can buy a lot. I heard about one man—had a plan to balance the budget by tilting the country. He bought his constituents.

### **C. The Leader Brutalized His Competition**

And look—he brutalized his competition. Look, if you will, in verse 5: “*And he went unto his father’s house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone*” (Judges 9:5). He was a bloody man. I say, we don’t see that happening today. No, they’ll put you in jail for that. You can’t do that today—not openly. You can’t do that, but you can still have a government built on blood—blood of little babies, innocent children. You know what the Bible says in Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 12: “*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!*” (Habakkuk 2:12).

Visit the Vietnam War Memorial. It’s there, and I’m glad it’s there. That memorial has 68,000 names on it. It stretches for 500 feet. But if we were to build a memorial for the little babies who’ve died since *Roe vs. Wade*, it wouldn’t have on it 68,000 names—it would have only 30 million names, and it would stretch for 60 miles. Built on blood—built on blood.

If you’ve had an abortion, I’m not here to make you feel guilty. Many people have done things unknowingly, unwittingly, out of fear or ignorance. And there’s a God of grace and a God of forgiveness, and God does forgive. But oh, somebody has to speak up for the unborn! Somebody has to say something. I know there are people in this congregation who don’t like it when we speak about these things; but am I, therefore, your enemy because I tell you the truth? You know?

### **D. The Leader was Inaugurated with a Show of Religion**

And what do you have here? You have a man who built a coalition, who bought his constituents, who brutalized his competition. And then, he had himself inaugurated with a show of religion. Look in verse 6: “*And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem*” (Judges 9:6). Now what is this? Some translations give it “by the great

tree.” That’s in Shechem. Most believe that’s where God spoke to Abraham and gave Abraham the Covenant. And there in that place, to try to associate himself with things that were good and holy, with a covenant, he made a farce of the whole thing.

### **III. The Apathy of Uncommitted Bystanders**

Now you have the apostasy of an unthankful people. You have the arrogance of an ungodly leader. But here’s the third thing I want you to see: the apathy of uncommitted bystanders.

Now go back to the parable that I read to you. Beginning in verse 7, there was a man there. He was a prophet; his name was Jotham. And he stood up, and he had something to say. Look in verse 7: *“And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice,”*—and would to God there would be people today who would—*“and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you”* (Judges 9:7).

Listen to God’s Word, if you want God to listen to your word. “He that turns away his ear from the hearing of the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9). And so he told about this parable of the trees that said, “We need a king.” They went to the olive tree, and they said to the olive tree, “Will you reign over us?” And the olive tree said, “No I can’t reign over you. I’m too busy producing fatness. After all, that’s national necessity.” And so they went to the fig tree, and they said to the fig tree, “Will you rule over us?” And the fig tree said, “Oh, I can’t do that. I’m too busy producing figs with their sweetness. That may not be a necessity, but that’s a nicety. I’m too busy doing that.” So they went to the vine, and they said the vine, “Will you rule over us?” And the vine said, “I can’t do that. I’m too busy producing wine to cheer the heart of man and God.” Now that’s a luxury.

And so here they were with their necessities, and their niceties, and their luxuries. They are all so busy doing good things, and they went to the bramble. They asked the bramble—the briar—“Will you rule over us?” He said, “I’ll be glad to—I’ll be glad to.” Said, “As a matter of fact, you can rest in my shade. I’ll be a shadow for you.” Can you imagine a bramble being a shadow—a shade tree? The bramble has no fruit; the bramble has no shade. It has no timber; it has no lumber. But it rips; it shreds; it chokes; it clings; it grows. And it’s very hard to root out. But all of these people fled their responsibilities and let the bramble rule.

Do you know what Edmund Burke said? A classic statement—Edmund Burke said, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” You say, “Pastor Rogers, why are you preaching about thus-and-such a person?” I haven’t called any

names. The names have been hidden to protect the guilty. I haven't called any names. All I'm doing is just telling you what has happened in Israel's past before. And I'm telling you, friend, that it was a serious situation.

## Conclusion

I must close this message, but I don't close it in despair, because let me tell you what the Book of Judges shows: God had rather forgive than judge. He is a God of mercy, and we must disabuse ourselves of the idea that there can be no renaissance, no revival, no restoration. There can be, and we dare not lose hope.

Let me share something good with you, and then we're going to have prayer. I take, among other news magazines, *U.S. News and World Report*. A few days ago, I ripped out this article. It's the August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994—a special report: “America's New Crusade.” Now listen to this: “Politicians of all stripes are painting themselves as guardians of old-fashioned values as Americans seek a way out of a cultural recession. Consider these cultural markers. The White House will host a conference this week on ways to teach character. Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala says—now says—that Dan Quayle was right to condemn Murphy Brown's out-of-wedlock child.

“Dozens of television stations are downplaying violence on their news broadcasts and emphasizing family sensitive coverage. Next week, about 50,000 members of a male Christian group called Promise Keepers will fill a Colorado football stadium to renew their commitment to family and parenthood”—and, by the way, that happened. And they had thousands and thousands who wanted to come and who could not get in, and this is happening all over America. “Public support is growing for teenage curfews and school prayers. William J. Bennett's *Book of Virtues*, a collection of morality tales, is a national bestseller.” Now listen to this—this is *U.S. News and World Report*: “All these signs point to a broad, powerful trend. Many Americans feel mired in a deep cultural recession and are struggling to escape by restoring old-fashioned values to a central place in their lives. It is Woodstock turned on its head, 25 years later; a counterrevolution that esteems prayer over pot, self-discipline over self-indulgence, family-love over free love.

“At a time when the economy is performing well, political analysts are stunned to recover after a cascading sense of public pessimism. After Bill Clinton's inauguration in 1993, an NBC News, Wall Street Journal poll found that—by almost 2 to 1—Americans said the country was headed in the right direction. ‘Today, their numbers are reversed,’ said David Blankenhorn, President of the Institute for American Values. ‘It ain't the economy, stupid, anymore.’” I like that. You know what that tells me? It tells me there's hope.

And people have been staining Heaven with their prayers. And across this land, preachers have been preaching, and God's alarm clock is going off. And let's now just press the battle to the gates, and let's take this country back for Jesus Christ.

Father, amen. Praise God. O Father, help us to be wise as serpents, harmless as doves, bold as lions. May we, dear God, shine as lights in a dark place. Send, O God, a mighty revival, and let it begin in me. We pray that for ourselves, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

# Men of Strength

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 11:1–40**

*“Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.”*

JUDGES 11:11

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Jephthah’s Character in the Face of Great Difficulties
- II. Jephthah’s Confidence in the Face of Danger
  - A. He Was Not Bound by the Past
  - B. He Was Not Bound by the Foe
- III. Jephthah’s Commitment in the Face of Disappointment

Conclusion

## Introduction

Judges chapter 11—and when you’ve found it, look up here. That’s Judges chapter 11. It’s not hard to find; it comes right after chapter 10, if you’re able to find that. The title of our message: “Men of Strength.” The great need today is for men—real men: men of character, men of integrity, men that will stand, men of strength. America’s *in* trouble *because America’s homes are in trouble, and America’s homes are in trouble because men have failed to be the men of God that they ought to be.*

One man was not behaving like a man, and someone said, “What are you—a man or a mouse?” He said, “Well, I must be a man. My wife’s afraid of a mouse.” We need some men today.

We’re going to study about a man today who was a real man, and he was a man of faith. His name was Jephthah. Now most of us have not heard of Jephthah, but God has heard of him. And when God wrote, in Hebrews chapter 11, of the great heroes of the faith, he listed this man’s name in verse 32 (Hebrews 11:32). He didn’t tell anything about him but just says Jephthah was one of these mighty men. And now we’re going to look at him today, and we’re going to find out the marks of his character. What made him such a mighty man—a man of steel, a man of strength? What was his character like? He was one of a handful of men that God put in the Hall of Fame there, in Hebrews chapter 11.

Well, we’re in Judges chapter 11, and I begin reading verses 1 through 3: “Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour...”—right away, we know something



about him: He was a man of strength—*“a mighty man of valour, and he was the son”—*oh, watch—*“of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead’s wife bare him sons; and his wife’s sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father’s house; for thou art the son of a strange woman. [And] Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him”* (Judges 11:1–3).

## I. Jephthah’s Character in the Face of Great Difficulties

Now here’s a man—if anybody ever had a background that he could use for an excuse, it was Jephthah. First point: I want you to see his character—his character—in the face of great difficulties. Listen. You need to learn today to be unshackled by the past. You need to quit making excuses for your background. Stop blaming your circumstances, and forget all this psychobabble about, “What’s wrong with you now is somebody else’s fault and something that happened to you some time ago.”

Jephthah was the son of a harlot; he was an illegitimate child. Let me say this: There are no illegitimate children in the truest sense of the world—only illegitimate parents. Every child has a right to live, and I’m glad he wasn’t aborted. But in today’s lingo, he was an illegitimate child; and, as a result, he was looked down on by his half brothers, who disowned him. They said, “You’re not going to share in the inheritance.” Actually he was exiled; he was driven out. And the Bible tells us that he was in a consort of vain fellows (Judges 11:3). That is, he had a bad environment; he’s known failure, and rejection, and poverty.

Now today, everybody would say, “We don’t expect much of Jephthah. He has an excuse, if he turns out bad.” I mean, the psychologist and the sociologist would say, “He’s not to blame. It’s all somebody else’s fault. He is the creature of his environment.” Today, we do that, don’t we? We use our background as an excuse.

It is an amazing thing today that there is, in our world today, a war on guilt. Nobody is to be responsible anymore for what they do wrong; it’s somebody else’s fault. To feel guilty is considered unproductive; and so, the word *guilt* is obsolete. It’s an affront to our dignity and our self-esteem in this day where *me-ology* has taken over from theology.

Here’s what one advice column said—do you read these advice columns in the newspapers from these imminent theologians?—here’s one that says, “It’s not your fault. The first step you must take is to stop blaming yourself. Your compulsive behavior is not your fault. Refuse to accept blame, and, above all, do not blame yourself for what you cannot control. Heaping guilt on yourself only adds to your stress, low self-esteem, worry, depression, feelings of inadequacy, and dependence upon others. Let go of your guilt feelings.”

Ann Landers has helped us to want to live in this no-fault society. Here’s what she

wrote: “One of the most painful, self-mutilating, time-and-energy-consuming exercises in the human experience is guilt. It can ruin your day, or your week, or your life, if you let it. It turns up like a bad penny when you do something dishonest, hurtful, tacky, selfish, or rotten.” What she’s saying is, “If you do something dishonest, hurtful, tacky, selfish, or rotten, don’t feel bad about it. Never mind that it was the result of ignorance, stupidity, laziness, thoughtlessness, weak flesh, or clay feet. You did wrong, and the guilt is killing you—too bad. But be assured, the agony you feel is normal. Remember that guilt is a pollutant, and we don’t need any more of it in the world. Get rid of guilt—get rid of guilt. It’s somebody else’s fault.”

That’s exactly what this man Jephthah could have said: “Hey, don’t blame me. If anybody ever had a bad background... I am not a perpetrator; I am a victim.” We have a generation today of victims. I mean, nobody’s responsible; we’re just casualties. And our sin is not sin. It’s sickness; it’s disease; it’s a dependency. We’re not an alcoholic or a druggie; we have a chemical dependency. We’re not a glutton; we have an eating disorder. We’re not a sex fiend; we are sexually challenged—somebody else’s fault. Guilt’s out of date.

We were sitting around, this past week, and I said to Joyce, “I want a root beer float.” And so I began to rummage around there, and we did have some root beer. And I opened the freezer, and I looked in there; and there was a big thing *like this* of frozen yogurt, and I loved what it said on the label: It said, “Guilt-free.” Boy, I got that out! Man, I could eat that! No guilt—do what you want.

That’s the reason today the therapy industry is booming. People are spending millions for people to tell them that they’re not sinful—they’re sick; they’re not responsible: “Don’t think of yourself as a sinner. You come, and you can be my patient. What your problem is—you’re an addict.” You know, we’ve got sex addicts, and gambling addicts, and nicotine addicts, and anger addicts, and wife-beating addicts, and child-molesting addicts, and debt addicts, and self-abuse addicts, and envy addicts, and failure addicts, and over-eating addicts, or whatever. The problem with all of this is just simply this: If you make a wrong diagnosis, you’ll never get the cure. Jesus did not die for mistakes; He died for sin. Stop blaming your past. Stop saying you’re somebody else’s fault. You’ll never rise to be what you ought to be.

The Bible teaches that guilt is real, that we are responsible; but the Bible teaches that grace is wonderful and forgiveness is free and full. Here was a man—he had a bad birth and a bad background. But the Bible teaches that, if we were born wrong the first time, we can be born again—that we can be a royal blueblood, a child of the King. And if you’ve had a rough background, just remember that just may be the black velvet on which the diamond of God’s grace is displayed.

I think of those who came out of great difficulty to great power. Think of Joseph. He

also was disowned by his brothers, and sold as a slave, and lied about, and slandered, and rotted in prison; but his abasement was God's plan for his advancement. And the Lord, many times, will humble a man before He exalts him. If the devil has been against you, remember this: that God often used the sword that Satan has sharpened to cut off Satan's own head—just like David cut Goliath's head off with Goliath's own sword. So look up here, and let me tell you something: The power of God is greater than all the odds that are stacked against you, and the grace of God is greater than all of your sins. Stop making alibis and stop making excuses.

Here was a man that had a bad background, but he's listed in the Hall of Fame—he's listed in the Hall of Fame. See his character in the face of difficulties. And disentangle yourself from the past. All right? Quit living in the past. Quit trying to say, "Well, I'm just a victim. I'm just a bundle of bad genes or a victim of psychological muddles," and say, "I can be what I ought to be by the grace of God today."

## **II. Jephthah's Confidence in the Face of Danger**

Now here's something else about this man that I want you to notice: not only his character in the face of difficulties, but I want you to see his confidence in the face of danger—his confidence in the face of danger.

### **A. He Was Not Bound by the Past**

Now look in verse 4: "*And it came to pass in the process of time...*"—by the way, a man used to keep this part of this text on his desk. It said, "It came to pass." That's all he had. He said, "I look up there. And if I'm having too good of a time, I know it's going to pass; but when the trouble comes, it'll pass too"—"*it [just] came to pass in the process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob*" (Judges 11:4–5).

Now he must have already had a reputation, now, for being a good, and honorable, and a strong man, because they said, "Send for this man that we've cast out." "*And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?*"—"I mean, if you bring me back to battle and I win the battle for you, will you follow me? Will I be your leader?"—"And the elders of Gilead said unto

*Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh*” (Judges 11:6–11).

## B. **He Was Not Bound by the Foe**

You can tell right now—here was a man who had great confidence in God. He was a man of faith. I don’t have to worry about it. I don’t have to think about it or apologize about it; stutter, stammer or wonder about it—I know that I know that I know that I know he was a man of great faith, because he’s listed in Hebrews chapter 11. These are the men of faith. Here was a man that, somehow, out of a bleak background, out of people hating him and despising him—even his own flesh and blood—had somehow seen God. I mean, he somehow had an insight into the things of God. And he had character in spite of difficulties, and he had confidence in spite of danger. The foe did not faze him. He’s not fettered by his fear. Fear *is a* dark room *where* negatives *are* developed. But this man had faith—incredible faith.

Read it some time; put it in your margin—Hebrews chapter 11, verse 32: “*And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets*” (Hebrews 11:32). I’d say he’s in a pretty good list of names, isn’t he? Now we don’t read much about him in the New Testament, except for this one statement. But you know, it’s kind of interesting to me—they cast him out; and then, when they’re in trouble, they run to him.

Just like America—this proud nation of ours—we live high, wide, and handsome; then we get in trouble, and we turn to God, don’t we?

*Can’t pray in schools, but somebody said, in one school, in case of an atomic attack—there’s a poster up—in case of an atomic attack, the rules against public prayer are immediately suspended.*

I mean, we come to God in times of trouble. This man’s confidence was not in himself; it was in God.

But I like what he said: “All right, you’ve sent for me. Now you need me, and I know it’s not me that you need—it’s God that you need.” But he said, “I want to ask you a question: If I give you the victory, if I deliver you, will you then follow me? Will I be your head? Will I be your leader?” You know, I see, right here, a glimmer of the Lord Jesus Christ—Jesus, despised and rejected. And yet, when we are convinced of our sin and our difficulty, we say, “Lord God, come and help me.” But Jesus will ask you the same question: “If I deliver you, will I rule over you? Will I be your head?” He is the head of the Church. And friend, I want to tell you very clearly and plainly that unless He is your

Sovereign, He'll never be your Savior—unless you say, “Lord Jesus, deliver me, and You will be my head.”

How much like our Lord was Jephthah! Those who despised him, and rejected him, and hurt him, and cast him out—those were the ones that he came to save. And so in verse 11, we see that he goes to God in prayer before he ever begins the battle. Before the battle ever begins, he goes to God in prayer, and he asks God for strength: *“Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD”* (Judges 11:11). He does this before he goes to battle—not afterward. Prayer was not his last resort; it was his first thought. He enters into battle in prayer. Don't ever claim to be a man of strength, if you're not a man of faith; and never claim to be a man of faith, if you're not a man of prayer.

Two things I want you to see about Jephthah—already, we've seen: Number one, he was not bound by the past; and number two, he was not bound by the foe—not bound by his enemies, not bound by danger. There's something about this man. He could unshackle himself from the past and refuse to let present dangers intimidate him. I wonder what dangers are facing you, right now. I wonder if you can know to get on your face before God, and tell God all about it, and remember that, *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). That's what a man of strength is.

### **III. Jephthah's Commitment in the Face of Disappointment**

But here's the third thing, and I want us to focus even more tightly on the third thing: I want you to see not only his character in the face of difficulty, his confidence in the face of danger, but I want you to see—and listen carefully—his commitment in the face of disappointment—his commitment in the face of disappointment.

I'm going to read an extended passage, but I want you to listen to it carefully. I'm going to begin in verse 29: *“Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.”* Now watch this: *“And Jephthah vowed a vow”—that is, he made a promise—“unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children...into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering”* (Judges 11:29–31). “God, these Ammonites are wicked; and they're cruel; and they're fierce. And Lord, I need Your help, and I'm going to make You a solemn promise: Lord, if You will give me the victory, if You will allow me to come home victoriously, the first thing that comes out of my house to meet me when I come back—whatever it is—that's Yours, Lord, and it will be offered up to You.”

Then, verse 32: *“So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come unto Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards”*—and so forth. And then, verse 34: *“And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold...”*—are you watching?—*“and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou has brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon”* (Judges 11:32–36).

Have you got the picture? “Lord, I need You. O God, I’m in a battle against my enemies. God, I want to make a promise to You—a vow, Lord: if You will give me the victory, I will sacrifice the first thing that meets me, that comes out of my house when I get home.” God gives him the victory; and then, when he gets home, out of the house, dancing and leaping with joy, is his beautiful daughter. Can you imagine the situation? What would you have done?

Well, what is all of this about? I know your mind is going 10,000 miles an hour, if this is the first time you’ve ever really noticed this passage of Scripture. Well, let me relieve your mind and tell you that this is not human sacrifice, and Jephthah, from study of the Word of God, did not kill his daughter. No man would have made a vow concerning human sacrifice, if he had been a man of God.

Now look at it in context. And we’re slowing down here a little bit. It’s important that you see this. Look, if you will, in verse 29: *“Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah”* (Judges 11:29). Now whatever he’s saying, he’s saying with the anointing of Almighty God upon him. Remember this: that he was a man of faith, and he was led of the Spirit.

Now the Bible expressly condemns human sacrifice. Now had this man been an ungodly man, and had this been a thoughtless promise and not a promise impelled and led by the Holy Spirit, then we could say, “Well, perhaps, he carelessly and thoughtlessly promised to sacrifice for a burnt offering; and now, he had to kill his daughter.” Put in your margin, Deuteronomy chapter 12 and verse 31—that’s one of the verses in the Bible that deals with human sacrifice and shows that God has strictly forbidden it: *“Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods;”*—talking about the Canaanites—*“for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their*

*gods*" (Deuteronomy 12:31). God said, "Don't do that." So we know that Jephthah was led of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God would never lead Jephthah to contradict the Word of God.

Well, what's the answer to this? Look, if you will, in verse 31. And here's the clue; here's what Jephthah said: *"Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering"* (Judges 11:31). Now look at the word *and*—a-n-d. That same word may be translated—*and* is translated...or, let's read it this way: *"When I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."* That is, "It's going to be consecrated to You, Lord, for Your service, or it'll be a burnt offering," because he didn't know what was going to come out of the door. So he's just simply saying, "Lord, the choice is Yours, and I can trust You. What comes out of the door, it'll be consecrated to You, or it'll be a burnt offering. And God, I can trust You to do the right thing." The Spirit of God was upon him. So his beautiful daughter came out of the door, and he kept his vow: he consecrated her to the Lord.

Well, you say, "Pastor, why, then, was that such a great disappointment to him?" Here was a man—a family man—who'd not really known the joys of a family when he was a child. Here was a man who had hoped, like every Hebrew, that he would be a part of the line of Messiah—that the Savior would be in his descendency. And what girl in Bible times did not have the true value of being a wife and a mother? But he gave his daughter over to being a perpetual virgin. That is, her life was to be separated—never to get married, but to serve the Lord. And Jephthah knew that he would have no grandchildren.

Look in verse 37: *"And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: [and] let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows."* That is, "I'll never know the joys of a home and a baby." *"And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,"*—that is, that someone would be set aside to perpetual virginity to serve the Lord. I guess the counterpart of that today we would look on as some that we call *nuns*. Verse 40 says—*"that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah"* (Judges 11:37–40). They don't speak of her as dead but as living. And the word *lament* here may be translated, "to talk with." They went yearly to see her—to talk with her.

Here was a man—a man of strength, a man of steel, a man who refused to be shackled by the past, a man who refused to be bound by his enemies, but a man who



was bound by his word—by his word. Now here it is: character in the face of difficulty, confidence in the face of danger—confidence in the face of danger—and, friend, commitment in the face of disappointment.

## Conclusion

Now if there's anything that the men of this generation need to learn, it is to keep your word—keep your word. Listen to the Scripture—Numbers chapter 30, verse 2: *“If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth”* (Numbers 30:2). That's why he was a strong man.

Listen to Deuteronomy 23, verses 21 through 23: *“When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.”* God says, “You don't have to make the promise; but if you make it, you'd better keep it. You keep your word. Verse 23: *“That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth”* (Deuteronomy 23:21–23).

You say, “Pastor, what if a man does make a wicked vow or a wrong vow—should he keep a wrong vow?” Absolutely not. If you make a wrong vow—wicked vow—it was wrong for you to do it, and you need to repent of it. But if you make a righteous and a holy vow, you need to keep that vow.

What we need today are some men of strength who will keep their word—men of their word. Think of the promises that people make. Think of people who join churches and promise to be faithful to their church, and they're not. Think of men who stand at the altar and promise to be faithful to their bride until death; they break their word. Think of men who break their word to their family, and their friends, and their children. Think of politicians who stand up and take an oath of office with their hand upon the Word of God and then become dishonest liars. Think of people who've made a commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ, and they don't keep their word.

One of the most exciting things that's happening in America today is a movement for men called Promise Keepers. You haven't heard of it? You will hear about it. It was started by a football coach at the University of Colorado; his name's Bill McCartney. God has used this individual to begin a movement that is sweeping America. And thank God—it's about time. In 1990, he got 70 of his friends together to pray—to be men of God. In 1991, they met again; 4,200 men showed up. In 1992, 22,000 men came to say, “I want to be a Promise Keeper.” In 1993, in Boulder, Colorado, more than 50,000 men filled the university football stadium. Just recently, some of our men were there. In 1994,

52,000 came—with 15,000 who could not get in. These stadiums are now being filled around America. Already this year, 230,000 men have gathered with other men to say, “I will be a Promise Keeper.” And these are men that are making seven promises. You want to hear what they are? Listen to them:

One: A Promise Keeper is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to God’s Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Two: A Promise Keeper is committed to pursuing vital relationships with other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.

Three: A Promise Keeper is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.

Four: A Promise Keeper is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection, and biblical values.

Five: A Promise Keeper is committed to supporting the mission of the church by honoring and praying for his pastor and by actively giving his time and resources.

Six: A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.

Seven: A Promise Keeper is committed to influencing his world—being obedient to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

Men—thousands of men—are saying, “I will make a promise to my God. I will keep my word.” That’s one of the most exciting things that I know anything about. Next year, a great number of the men of this church, I trust, will be attending one of these rallies.

On top of that, just recently, 22,000 young people went to Washington, D.C., in a Youth for Christ Rally—20,000. You may not think that is a big number, but that’s only representative of thousands, and thousands, and thousands of young men and women who say, “We will be Promise Keepers.” And on the mall there in Washington, D.C., are little wooden stakes they put the cards on—some of the names of our teenagers were on those cards, I believe—200,000 cards of young people who’ve signed a commitment to keep themselves sexually pure until marriage. True love waits.

I was listening to CNN yesterday, and they were talking about Woodstock ’94 that turned out 50,000 people out here. And the commentator that I listened to said the smell of marijuana, and pot, and naked bodies were there. Why don’t they say something about these 200,000 young people, who say, “We’ll keep ourselves pure”? Why don’t they say something about a quarter of a million men, who say, “I will be a man of my word; I’ll keep the Word—God’s Word—and my word; I’ll be a Promise Keeper”?

I’m telling you, sirs, that what we need today are some men—men not shackled by the past, men not fettered by the enemy, but men who are bound to their word. Oh, there’s so much more that I want to say, but you didn’t listen very fast today.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Lord, I thank You. I thank You, Lord, for Your Word.

Thank You for this man Jephthah, who, because he believed Your Word, kept his word. God, give us men who will stop making excuses. Give us men who are not intimidated by the enemy. And give us men who will stand by their word and their promise to their church, to their family, to their children, and yes, Lord, to You. And help them to do it as Jephthah did when the Spirit of God came upon him by Your might. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# The High Cost of Low Living

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 21, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 13:24; 14–16**

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Samson Had Spiritual Strength
  - B. Samson Had Physical Strength
  - C. Samson Had Mental Strength
  - I. He Dishonored His Parents
    - A. If You Marry an Unsaved Person, You're Headed for Trouble
      - 1. Trouble with In-Laws
      - 2. Trouble with Your Mate
        - a. Spiritual Disagreement
        - b. Spiritual Division
        - c. Descendancy
  - II. He Deserted His Promise
  - III. He Distorted His Purpose
  - IV. He Defiled His Purity
  - V. He Diluted His Power
  - VI. He Disgraced His Profession
  - VII. He Diminished His Potential
- ### Conclusion

## Introduction

**T**ake God's Word and find now, please, if you will, the Book of Judges, chapter 13—Judges chapter 13. And look with me, if you will, in verse 24. It speaks of a mother, and it says this: *"And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him"* (Judges 13:24). She held in her arms the baby for which she had prayed. As a matter of fact, it was a baby that God had promised. They were so excited about this child, because they knew that this child was to be a special child. And she gave him a special name; she called him Samson. Do you know what the name Samson means? It means, "sunshine"—"sunshine." That's what the name means. I have little doubt that she called him Sunny. And maybe when she held him in her arms and rocked him, she sang to him. Maybe she sang the counterpart of

“You are My Sunshine.” What a blessing this little boy was!

#### **A. Samson Had Spiritual Strength**

What a heritage he had! As a matter of fact, he was to be a Nazarite. Look, if you will, as to what God said about him in verse 5: *“For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines”* (Judges 13:5). What did it mean to be a Nazarite? Well, the word *Nazarite* means, “different, separated.” This child was to be set aside for God. And as the sign that he was to be set aside for God, he was not to drink wine or anything intoxicating. Number two: He was not to touch any dead thing. Number three: He was to let his hair grow. No razor was to ever come upon his head, because his long hair was the sign that he was to be different; he was to be set aside.

#### **B. Samson Had Physical Strength**

He was a man anointed with the Spirit of God, and he had tremendous strength. Entire armies would tremble at his presence. One day, this man slew 1,000 of God’s enemies, the Philistines, with a whittled bone from the field. On another occasion, he took the city gates of Gaza—posts, and gates, and all—put them on his back, and carried them up a hill, and left them there. On another occasion, a lion roared against young Samson. Samson, with the power of God on him, put his arm around that lion’s neck, reached his hand down that lion’s throat, grabbed the lion by the tail, and jerked him inside out—something like that, not exactly like that. But actually, the Bible says this: that he took that mighty lion as though he were a young goat, and with his bare hands he destroyed that lion (Judges 14:5–6). This man was strong.

What was the secret of his strength? I mean, when you think of Samson, what do you think of? The Incredible Hulk? He wasn’t that way. I mean, had you seen Samson, you would not have known that he was that strong. He didn’t have mountains of muscles and bulging biceps. “Say, Pastor, how do you know?” Well, why did Delilah keep asking for the secret of his strength? If he’d been like this, it would have been obvious. No, there was something supernatural about his strength. His strength was in the power of God. The Bible says the Holy Spirit of God would come upon him (Judges 14:6, 19). Don’t ever make the mistake that his strength was in his hair, either. His hair was only a symbol of that strength—his separation before God. The Spirit of God came upon him; and because of that, and because of his physical strength, he is an illustration and a lesson to those of us who need the spiritual strength of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

### C. Samson Had Mental Strength

But not only was Samson spiritually strong and physically strong as a result of it, but he was mentally strong. I mean, when you read this book, as we're going to see, you're going to find out that Samson had a quick mind. He was very witty. He loved a joke. He loved to turn a phrase. He had a way with words. He loved little riddles, and conundrums, and ideas. He had a keen sense of humor. And I have an idea that he was really a nice guy to be around. And I think his name, Sunshine, was a good name. Samson would just brighten up any room when he entered it. Now I know some people who can brighten up a room by leaving it, don't you? But this man—just sunshine.

But here's the sad thing: as we read this story, it's not a happy story; it's a tragedy. It's the story of a man who went from hero to zero—a man who went from victor to victim. And you see the story of Samson's disobedience; his defeat; his disgrace, yes; and finally, his destruction, one has pointed out that Samson is a bundle of contradictions. He was bold before men and yet weak before women. The Spirit of God was upon him; and yet, he gave way to the appetites of the flesh. He was called upon to declare war upon the enemies of God; and yet, he fraternized and fellowshiped with the enemies of God. He fought the Lord's battles by day and broke the Lord's commandments by night. His name, Sunny—sunrise—speaks of light; but he ended his life in darkness, having his eyes put out. It's amazing how a man could soar so high and yet go so low. And I dare say that, at the beginning of his life, you would not have been able to tell him that he would sink to such depths.

And that reminds me to remind you of something that I've told you before. *There are three persons occupying your chair this morning: the person you are now, the person you could be for God, and the person you may be if you take your eyes off of God.* And the Bible says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). This brings up something very interesting, because Samson was a man of God. I expect to meet Samson in Heaven. The Bible lists Samson, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 32, as one of the heroes of the faith (Hebrews 11:32). And I'm glad that God remembered his faith and not his failure.

"Pastor, once someone becomes a child of God are they forever a child of God?" Yes. I'm not talking about someone who's merely a church member, someone who's been baptized, somebody who had repeated little phrases; but somebody who has been twice-born, has been possessed by the Spirit of God. That person can never ever again be a lost soul. I believe that. Well, you say, "If that's true, then it makes no difference how I live." Friend, there's no blacker lie that could come out of Hell than that lie. The book of Samson is going to teach that. And while a child of God may not lose his salvation, he has so much to lose, if he sins. And the Book of Judges and the story of

Samson is a grand illustration of that fact. Samson paid for his sin, and he paid dearly. And he paid in seven installments. I want you to notice them:

## **I. He Dishonored His Parents**

What was the cost of Samson's sin? Number one: He dishonored his parents. Look in chapter 14, verse 1: *"And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines."* Now the Philistines were the pagans, the ungodly, those who knew not God, the idol worshippers. *"And he came up, and told his father and his mothers, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well"* (Judges 14:1–3).

Here's the first step in his downward journey. Remember, he had godly parents. His parents have prayed for him. His parents were filled with the wisdom of Almighty God. But Samson, upon a day, wandered four miles from home. He started with the wrong company. He met a girl who did not know the Lord. She was beautiful. He saw her, and what he saw pleased him. He fell in love with her and decided to marry her. His parents said, "Samson, don't do this thing."

### **A. If You Marry an Unsaved Person, You're Headed for Trouble**

Now why did they not want him to marry this Philistine girl? For the same reason that the Apostle Paul has said, in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 14—and I want every unmarried boy and girl who's saved to listen to this: *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"* (2 Corinthians 6:14). The Bible commands—commands—that, if you are a child of God, you are not—hear me: you are not—to marry an unsaved person. If you do, you're headed for trouble.

#### **1. Trouble with In-Laws**

Remember that a marriage is not simply between a boy and a girl; it's between two families. If you marry an unsaved boy, if you marry an unsaved girl, you're going to have in-law problems. In fact, you're going to have the devil for a father-in-law—you're going to have the devil for a father-in-law. These people are children of the devil. Jesus said, *"[You] are of your father the devil"* (John 8:44). And you talk about in-law problems! You're going to have them.

#### **2. Trouble with Your Mate**

##### **a. Spiritual Disagreement**

And you're going to have problems with your mate. You're going to have the



problem of spiritual disagreement. For the Bible says, in Amos chapter 3 and verse 3: “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3:3). How could you, a child of God, marry an unsaved person? What disagreements you’re going to have! You’re going to want to worship on Sunday. The pagan you’re married to is going to want to sleep in. You’re going to want to give to the work of God. The pagan that you’re married to says, “We can’t afford it.” You’re going to want to make Sunday a holy day, but the pagan that you’re married to is going to want to make it a holiday. You’re going to want to pray when your family comes to a time of crisis, but the pagan that you’re married to is going to discount, perhaps ridicule, prayer. You’re going to want to raise the children for God and teach them the things of God, but the pagan that you’re married to is going to work against it.

Did you know it’s hard to get to church on Sunday morning? Say “amen.” It is—it’s harder to get to church on Sunday morning than it is to get to work on Monday morning. Why is that? Number one: The devil fights against it. I mean, when our children were little, folks, we had to start on Saturday night to get here. I’m serious. And then, sometimes, when we get here, we need to get here, because we lost our religion getting here. Yeah, you’ve been there. Why? It’s difficult; it’s hard. And I mean, I love God, and Joyce loves God. What would it be like if I were a pagan or she were a pagan—one of us wanting to and the other not?

### **b. Spiritual Division**

I’m telling you, there will be spiritual disagreement, and there will be spiritual division. The Bible says, “*A threefold cord is not [easily] broken*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). What is the threefold cord that hold us together? When we get married in the Lord, we are not only one physically, and one psychologically, but we are one spiritually. We are one in the bond of love. But when there’s no spiritual cord there, the other two cords quickly unravel. “*A threefold chord is not [easily] broken*” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Those who do not know the Lord Jesus have a greater opportunity—and statistically, a greater likelihood—of divorce. Divorce between people of no faith or differing faith happens three times as often as those who are one in the Lord.

### **c. Descendancy**

You’re going to have a problem not only with disagreement and division, but you’re going to have a problem with your descendancy. Have you ever thought about what it means to a child when Mom loves God and Daddy doesn’t—or Daddy loves God and Mama doesn’t? The children get this sense of ambivalence; they’re confused. It doesn’t make sense to them. And the children, sometimes, of these marriages are the biggest losers.

And here was Samson—fell in love with an unbeliever, and his parents warned him.

His parents said, “Sunny, you can do better than that.” Well, they might as well have been talking to a forest fire. You know, Samson ought to have known the Word of God that says, in the Book of Exodus, chapter 20, and verse 12: *“Honour thy father and thy mother:”—*now listen to it—*“that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”* (Exodus 20:12). You put it down in your book right now big, plain, and straight: Samson died young because he wouldn’t listen to his parents. Samson died young. He died when he should have been at the very zenith of his career. And the reason why was that he failed to honor his father and his mother. He dishonored his parents—number one.

## **II. He Deserted His Promise**

Number two: He deserted his promise. Look now in chapter 14, verse 5: *“Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him”* (Judges 14:5). Now what’s he doing in the vineyard? The Bible says he’s not to drink anything that comes from the grape; he’s not even to touch it (Deuteronomy 28:39). And yet, there he is in the vineyard. He has no business there. At this point, he is away from his parents. He’s taken a little bypass. Who knows what he was going to do there.

Now you may say this is a very small thing. That’s true. Sin always starts small. Nobody goes roaring into sin.

Who is it knocks so loud?

A lonely little sin slips through.

I answered, and soon all Hell was in. (Author unknown)

Here’s Samson, now. I want you to see that he’s flirting with sin. He’s playing with sin. There in the vineyard he kills the lion that we talked about.

And then, he goes down to Philistia. He goes down there for the wedding party. He begins to have fun with this girl’s relatives—her brothers and her brother’s friends. You know, the Bible says, *“A companion of fools [will] be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20). You see Samson down there—he’s laughing, and joking, and gambling, and fighting. I feel like saying, “Samson, wake up, son. Samson, you’re a good boy. Samson, God has blessed you. What are you doing? Why don’t you stop now?” But Samson is slowly and surely being hardened by sin. He may not even realize what is happening to him. Someone has written these words:

Vice is a monster of such horrible mien,

As to be hated needs but to be seen.

But seen too often, familiar with her face

We first endure, then pity, and then embrace. (Author unknown)

And Samson now seems to be blind. He is deserting his purpose. What was his purpose? To deliver Israel. But now, rather than delivering Israel, he is consorting with the people of Philistia. He deserted his promise, I mean.

### III. He Distorted His Purpose

And then, he distorted his purpose. Look, if you will, in Judges 14, now, and verse 15. Well, let me back up and tell you what happened. Samson gets down there in Timnath. And they're having a wedding party, and the Bible calls it a feast (Judges 14:10). And the word for *feast*, they tell me, is a word which means "a wine banquet." Remember, he's not to touch wine, but he's down there. You know, you have to have that at the reception. Isn't it amazing that people want to have that kind of stuff at a reception, when that's one of the major things that will break up the marriage that they are celebrating? An amazing thing.

So he's down there, and he says, "Hey, I've got a riddle for you guys." Now remember that Samson had a way with words. He said, "I want to make a bet. If I can tell you a riddle that you can't answer, then you owe me 30 changes of garments and 30 sheets. But if you answer my riddle, I'll pay you that way." So they said, "All right, what's the riddle?"

Now remember that Samson had just gone down there and killed a lion with his bare hands. Later on, when Samson passed that place, a swarm of bees had entered into the carcass of that lion, and there was honey there. Samson said, "What about that?" And he reached into that lion that was going to destroy him, so the lion thought he was going to have a Samson-burger steak. He just had a mistake. And here's the lion; he's lying there. The carcass is there, and the bees have made a hive there. Samson reaches in, gets a handful of honey out of the carcass of that lion, eats the honey—gave some to his mom and dad. He didn't tell them where he got it. He knew he wasn't supposed to be in that vineyard. He said to these brothers-in-law and these Philistine friends that he found it.

Here's the riddle: "*Out of the eater*"—that's the lion—"came forth meat,"—or, "food"—that's the honey—"and out of the strong"—that was the lion—"came forth sweetness" (Judges 14:14)—but, that was the honey. But he didn't give the explanation like I did. He just said, "*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.*" Figure that out.

Well, they tried to figure it out, and they couldn't figure it out. And they knew that they were in serious trouble; and so, they came to Samson's wife and said, "You'd better tell us what this Israelite is doing to us, or we're going to get you." So she went to Samson—she said, "Sweetheart, would you tell me the answer to the riddle?" Samson

made a big mistake. He said, “I haven’t told my father and mother, and you expect me to tell you? No.” Fellows, that was a big mistake. Number one: I mean, to talk to your bride that way; and then, she began to cry. Now she turned on the waterworks, and she began to cry. And when she began to cry... Now here’s this man who can stand against a lion, but a woman’s tears he could not stand against. And the Bible says, “And he told her all his heart” (Judges 14:17).

And she went and told her brothers and her brothers’ friends, and they went and told Samson, “We know the riddle.” And when they told him, Samson said, “If you hadn’t plowed with my heifer, you wouldn’t have found the answer” (Judges 14:18). Now he called his wife a heifer. I wouldn’t advise that either. “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you wouldn’t have known the answer.” Now what he was saying is, “You broke the rules.” No man plows with a heifer—that’s a milk cow. He plows with an ox. That is, “You weren’t playing according to the rules.” Samson was so infuriated that he went out and found a group of Philistines, killed 30 of them, took their clothes, took their garments, came and paid off the debt.

Now something strange is working here. I mean, Samson was supposed to deliver Israel from the Philistines. But as you look at this thing, you wonder for just a moment, whose battles is he really fighting—his or God’s? Have you ever seen a so-called man of God—sometimes, Brother Mike, they don’t know who they are really fighting? I mean, it gets into personal battles; no longer are they fighting the battles of the Lord. He’s here, now, in his service to God for his own reward and for his own vengeance. And he’s distorting his purpose. He’s forgetting the thing that God has called him to do, and it’s a sad, sad thing.

Well, his own brothers say, “Samson, you’re getting us into trouble now. You’ve thrown a rock in a hornet’s nest with these Philistines. We wish you’d quit. Now we’re going to ask you to turn yourself in to the Philistines,” because there was a Philistine army against them. And so Samson said, “I don’t want you boys to get in trouble. I’ll just turn myself in. So he surrendered to the Philistines. The Philistines came to get him, to carry him away. And when they got in a narrow place there in a mountainside somewhere, the Spirit of God came upon Samson. He reached down in the field and got the jawbone of a jackass, and he took that jawbone in his hand. And he turned to those Philistines... I don’t know how the logistics of the things is. I believe he must have been backed up against a rock. And they started coming at him, and he began to whack and to slash with the jawbone of that animal. And before it was over, he had slain a thousand of them.

Now he had a way with words. And the word for *donkey* and the word for *heap* sound so much alike in Hebrew; and so, it’s *hamar* and *hamartim*. And so he’s just

playing with words. And he says, “With a with a jawbone of a donkey have I piled them in a heap.” And he’s just—I mean, right in the middle of this battle—he’s still jesting; he’s still laughing. He can’t take himself seriously. He doesn’t understand the ramifications of life. What I am saying is this: He dishonored his parents. He deserted his promise. He distorted his purpose. Samson is on the way down.

#### IV. He Defiled His Purity

Then, number four, he defiled his purity. Look in chapter 16 now: *“Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and sent in unto her. And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him. And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron. And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah”* (Judges 16:1–4). He defiled his purity.

This man—the once mighty man of God—is now playing with trashy harlots: an unnamed harlot and later another one named Delilah. Remember what I told you: *The sin that starts small doesn’t end that way.* The devil is a liar. He never says to a young woman, “Hey, you see that girl with venereal disease? You see that woman with the sunken eyes and the faded look? Do you see that woman with the child out of wedlock? Do you see that woman destitute and broken? I’m going to make you that like that woman.” He doesn’t say that to a pure girl who wants to sacrifice her purity on the altar of some man’s lust. He just says to her, “Hey, honey, it’s not so bad. Everybody is doing that today. I mean, even the government tells you how to do it.” The devil never says to a boy, “You see that old drunkard in the gutter covered with his own vomit and flies—can’t hold his hands steady, can’t keep a job? Do you see that man? I’m going to make you like him.” The devil never says that. He says, “Hey man, men of distinction, drink this. Why, everybody at a party does this.” Sin *starts small, but it doesn’t end small.*

And here’s old Samson, now. His mother had prayed for him. His daddy had given him to God. He was a Nazarite, separated to God. Now he’s sleeping around with trash. Samson, can’t you see? No, he was blind a long time before they cut out his eyes. The deeper people go into sin, the less they know about it. While he’s with the harlots, the Philistines set a trap for him. They say, “We’ll fence him in. We’ll wait here at the gate.” Well, Samson gets to the gate, he sees the gate locked and barred, and he says, “Well, what about this?” So he rips up the gate, and the doorposts, and the bar, carried them up a hill, and leaves them there. Rather than fighting, he’s always playing games. He

defiled his purity.

Listen to these verses, young people. Proverbs chapter 5, verses 3 through 6: *“For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:”—old honey lips. Now you listen to what God says about honey lips here—“but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. Lest thou shall ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them”* (Proverbs 5:3–6). Or, listen to this—Proverbs 6, verses 32 and 33—and I want every man in this building to listen to God’s Word: *“But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away”* (Proverbs 6:32–33). Even if he gets forgiveness, the reproach is there. This is a sin like no other sin. And here is man of God who defiled his purity.

## V. He Diluted His Power

But wait a minute—we’re not finished yet. Number five: He diluted his power.

He’s there with Delilah now; and Delilah’s family comes to her, and they say, “Delilah, if you will find out from Samson what makes him so strong, Delilah, we will pay you.” And they offered to her between three and five thousand dollars to get the secret. And so she says to him, “Hey Sunny, I’ve got a question. What makes you so strong, big boy? Where did you get all that strength?” She begins to stroke his hair. But while she’s stroking his hair, she’s after his scalp. “What makes you so strong?” And Samson is now just playing the game. He says, “Well,” he said, “you know, if you were to take and bind me with seven green vines, then I wouldn’t be able to get loose.” So she, while he was asleep, ties him with seven vines, and says, “Samson, the Philistines are here.” He wakes up and breaks those vines asunder. They fall off—little tendrils.

She says, “Sammy, Sunny, you lied to me. Well, how could you really be bound?” “Oh,” he said, “well, if you were to bind me with new ropes, then I’d be bound.” Again, he’s asleep, she binds him, and he breaks those ropes like they were flax burned in the fire. She again says, “Sammy, Sunny Boy, you lied to me. How could you be bound?” He says, “Well, if you were to take the seven locks of my hair and weave them in the weaver’s shuttle—in the weave, the loom—then I couldn’t get loose; I’d be pinned to the floor.” He’s getting closer, isn’t he? He’s getting to the hair. She tries the same story. And finally, she says to him, “Samson, I’m sick of this. Tell me.” Samson says “Well, if you were to cut off my hair, I’d be weak like other men.” And you see, his hair was about the only thing now that he has left of his Nazarite vow. And we see the patience of God.

Look, if you will, in chapter 16, verse 19: *“And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head;*

*and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.*” She begins to taunt him, and stick at him, and poke him, and to see what he would do. His strength is gone. *“And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at others times before, and shake myself.”* And here, I believe, is the saddest part of this whole story: *“And he wist not”*—that is, “he knew not”—*“that the LORD was departed from him”* (Judges 16:19–20).

Here’s a man who defiled his purity, and then diluted his power. His strength was not in his hair, but in the Holy Spirit of God, and the Spirit is gone. “Samson, here come the Philistines.” Samson says, “Man, let me at them.” But he’s just like other men. He has no strength. But he didn’t know it.

I’ll tell you, that challenges me. I wonder if there are not some of you here today—you’re so far away from God. You were once a mighty power for God. You were once a faithful deacon, a wonderful Sunday School teacher, a soul-winner, and you have so compromised and played in sin, and the power of God is gone from you, and you don’t even know it. But a blower’s still going, but the furnace is out. You don’t know it—you don’t know it. I don’t ever want that to happen to me, and I pray God it never will happen to me—that I will simply come, and stand, and preach or minister, without that anointing, that power of God.

Jim, don’t you ever let it happen to you. Don’t you ever get up here and say, “I know how to direct a choir. I’ll go out as I’ve done before,” without that anointing, without that power of God in you. Bob—and you, Bob—don’t ever let it happen to you. And you, deacon, sir, don’t ever let it happen to you. The lion will roar against you; and you’ll go to battle, and you’ll go down. A thousand Philistines will come at you; and you’ll go to fight, and you’ll go down. And the gates will close upon you, or you’ll try to get out; but the gates won’t give. The Philistines will come, and there’ll be no power. And you might be so stupid and ignorant that you don’t even know it. How many there are who have begun in the Spirit and ended in the flesh!

## **VI. He Disgraced His Profession**

Quickly, not only did he dilute his power; he disgraced his profession. Look now, if you will, in verse 21—chapter 16, verse 21: *“But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god,”*—their foolish, wicked, idol god—*“and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our*



*enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us” (Judges 16:21–24).* Samson disgraced his profession.

They took the mighty man of God down while the Spirit of God is gone from him. He’s in the depth of sin and depravity. They put him in chains. They put a hot poker in a fire—a searing hot poker—and I can hear his eyes. *Sssssttt*—they burn out that eye; *ssssssssttt*—they burn out that eye. And Sunshine will never see the sun shine. His eyes are gone. He’s blind. And then, they take him like an animal, and they tie him to a post there at the mill. They take a whip, and crack it over his back, and say, “Grind for us, Samson. Grind for us.” And there’s Samson—grinding, grinding at the mill, just like an animal—like an animal. And what’s he doing? He’s grinding grain. What kind of grain? Grain for the Philistines to eat to give them strength. And the whole time they’re laughing and ridiculing, saying, “Ha, where is his God?” He disgraced his profession before God.

I’d rather die five minutes before I disgraced the ministry. But oh, how many have done it! They have begun in sin—small, yes—but down, down they go, and they give the enemy the opportunity to blaspheme. And they become a shame and a reproach to the people of God.

## **VII. He Diminished His Potential**

I wish I had more time to talk to you about that. But last of all, he diminished his potential. Look, if you will, in chapter 16, verse 28: *“And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life”* (Judges 16:28–30).

Samson said, “God, I’ve been such a fool.” A little old phrase that I read back there—his hair began to grow again—that’s an artistic device. Really, his head—head—did begin to grow. But what the writing is saying is Samson begins to *think*. He begins to pray to God. He begins to repent. God had brought him so low. Finally, now—finally, now—his eyes that are already blind begin to open spiritually. Now he comes back to God in remorse and repentance, and says, “O God, O God, give me one more chance.”

I don’t care how low you’ve gone; I don’t care what you may have done—our God is a God of mercy; our God is a God of forgiveness; our God is a God of the second chance. And don’t you ever let anybody ever tell you that you’ve gone too far. What

balance I pray that God will give me as I preach this sermon. Do you think when I tell you that God will forgive you that I'm encouraging you to sin? No! I've told you the high cost of low living, and it's not finished yet for Samson. But oh, what a fool I would be, if I were to stand here and tell you there's no hope for you. Do you see the balance in the message today? Do you see what the story is telling us?

And so Samson says, "O God, give me one more chance this one time, O God." He finds a little boy. He says, "Son, do you remember that place in the temple? Would you lead me over there?" Here's old, blind Samson. They're laughing at him. You know, they're having sport—"Hah, look at him—look at him." He says, "Put me right here, son, where those two big main supporting pillars are. That's right. Now son, back off. O God, give me strength." He begins to push. They're laughing, but a rumbling is heard. What was that noise? And those pillars begin to collapse. Then, there's silence. Then, there's the sound of cascading marble. Then, there's pandemonium, and Samson is dead, and the Philistines are dead. And he died young, and he died needlessly; he died pathetically. He's in Heaven, but I think of what he could have been—what he should have been. He diminished his potential. And when he gets to the Judgment Seat of Christ, rather than having gold, and silver, and precious stones, there'll be a pile of wood, hay, and stubble (1 Corinthians 3:12).

## Conclusion

Two things I'd put in your heart: Number one, the high cost of low living. Don't play lightly with sin. Young people, you listen to me. You treat sin like sin would treat you. Sin will have no mercy on you, and don't you have mercy on your sin. And if you've begun to move away from God, move back now. Sin *that starts* small *goes* big. And you're going to get in an vortex and downward spiral, where it may be almost impossible to get out. But I'm going to say something else: It is not impossible. And whoever you are, and wherever you are, if you need a fresh start, there is mercy with our God. Isn't that a wonderful message? Thank God—thank God.

Let's pray. Father God, seal the message to our hearts today. In and through Jesus we pray. Amen.

# The Sad Case of Vanishing Values

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 28, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 17; 18:1–4**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. What Happens When Values Vanish?
- II. What Was the Result of That?
  - A. Families Without Foundation
  - B. Pastors Without Principles
  - C. Government Without God
- III. What Caused This?
  - A. Foolish Speculation
  - B. The Death of Common Sense
  - C. The Corruption of Religion
  - D. Uncontrolled Lusts
  - E. Sexual Perversion
  - F. The Death of Conscience
- IV. What is Our Response?
  - A. Build Your Home on the Word of God
  - B. Get Under the Ministry of a God-Anointed Minister
  - C. Pray for America

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be turning to the Book of Judges chapter 17? And actually, we're coming today to the last message in this series, "Bring Back the Glory." And I pray God that we've learned some things and we'll learn some things today that will help us, as God's people, to bring back the glory to this nation. Today, we're going to be talking about the battle for values. We have had in America today, in this generation, an erosion of the values that made this nation a great nation. The title of the message: "The Sad Case of Vanishing Values."

### I. What Happens When Values Vanish?

Now what happens when values vanish? I'm reading here in Judges chapter 17, verse

1: *“And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.”* And by the way, the name Micah itself means, “Who is like the Lord?” A man named Micah. *“And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest”* (Judges 17:1–5).

Now all of that may not make a lot of sense to you right now; it will in a moment, I trust. But now, we come to verse 6, and look at verse 6, which is key and pivotal: *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:6). No authority—except every man being his own authority, doing whatever he wished, and saying, “What is right for me is right, and what is right for you is right.” Notice it doesn’t say, “Every man did that which was wrong in his own eyes.” But *“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:6). And that is precisely the condition in America today.

Among other news magazines, I take *U.S. News and World Report*. Several weeks ago, here was the editorial—now, this is a secular magazine; this is not a Sunday School quarterly—but, here’s the editorial; I have a page here: “Where have our values gone? The fraying of America’s social fabric is fast becoming a national obsession. Three out of every four Americans think we are in moral and spiritual decline.” Did you hear that? Three out of 4 say we’re on the way down. “Two out of three think the country is seriously off track. Doubts about the President’s character have driven his standing in the polls down about 15 points. Social dysfunction haunts the land: crime and drug abuse, the break-up of the family, the slump in academic performance, the disfigurement of public places by druggies, thugs, and exhibitionists.

“We certainly seem to have lost the balance between societal rights and individual freedoms. There are daily confrontations with almost everyone in authority: blacks against the white power structure, women against patriarchy, feminists against feminism, gays against homophobes, children against parents, mothers against matrimony, fathers against child support, churchgoers against the Church, students against the universities. Instead of a culture of common good, we have culture of

constant complaint. Everyone is a victim. They have claimed victimization at the hands of the successful. Crime is sanctioned by the fact—real or imagined—that the criminal had an unhappy childhood. Gone are the habits that America once admired: industriousness, thrift, self-discipline, commitment. The combined effects of these sicknesses, rooted in phony doctrines of liberalism, have been to tax the nation's optimism and sap its confidence of the future.

“And it is the young who are strikingly vulnerable. They're being deprived, like the previous generation, of the emotional comfort and moral nurturing provided by the traditional family. Instant gratification is the new order of the day. Personal impulses—especially sexual—are constantly stimulated by popular music and television, with other mass media not far behind. TV and music often seem to honor everything that the true American ethic abhors—violence, infidelity, drugs, drinking—and to despise everything it embraces: religions, marriage, respect for authority. No wonder it is difficult to sustain parental values and parental continuity.”

Now that's about half of this editorial. Now folks, I want to remind you, that's not a Baptist preacher writing. That's a national news magazine saying that we, as a nation, are in serious trouble. Now if you don't believe what I've just read to you was true, get this morning's newspaper, or any newspaper in any major city, and consult that. America is sick, and unless we have a moral and spiritual revival, we are gone as a nation. Do you understand that? We need to bring back the glory to America. And what happened so long ago in Israel and was recorded in the Book of Judges gives inspiration and information for today. In that day, as in this day, *“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:6).

## **II. What was the Result of That?**

Now number one—what was the result of that? Let's look.

### **A. Families Without Foundation**

First of all, families without foundation. Now I just read to you a story that took place in a family. And this man Micah, whose name means, “Who is like Jehovah?”, had taken eleven hundred shekels of silver from his mother. His mother evidently was wealthy. He went in—maybe like the Menendez boys—and stole from his mother. Now she did not know who the thief was; and so, she pronounced a curse on whoever the thief was. Well, when little Micah found out that curse had been pronounced on the thief, he got frightened and brought the money back—not out of conviction, but he brought it back out of fear. He said, “Mama, I took the eleven hundred shekels of silver.”

Now rather than scolding the naughty lad, she blessed him. She was so glad to get

her money back. She said, “Well, son, I’m glad that you brought the money back. I tell you, I have dedicated that money to the Lord.” Well, that sounds pretty good—that she was going to give it to the Lord. But she said, “I wanted to make some idols out of that money, and that’s the way I had dedicated the silver to the Lord. So we’re going to make some idols.” And so she took the money now that’s given to the Lord, and takes it over to the foundry, and they make an idol. And Micah takes the idol, and he puts it in his god collection. He has a shelf full of idols there in his house, and he just adds this new silver idol to that; and then, he says, “I need a priest. I’m going to make my son the priest in our house.” And so he just appoints his own priest.

Now folks, whatever all of this is, it is absolute unmitigated moral confusion. And these people are thinking they are serving God. I mean, they have an aura of godliness about the family. It is weird. Here’s a family with coveting, stealing, cursing, blessing, dishonoring parents, and idolatry, and all of the rest of it. And they say, “Well, this is the way that we want to do it.” They were morally and spiritually bankrupt idolaters thinking they were serving the Lord. Now this is what is happening in America today. It’s not that we don’t have religion in America. We’re drowning in religion; we’re up to our ears in religion—but not Bible truth, not Bible morality. This family was morally and spiritual bankrupt.

Today, we think we have been liberated. Let me read you a passage from Cal Thomas: “Americans today think they have been liberated from the traditional family. Women were liberated from the home, from their husbands, and from their children, and from having to bear children at all. Fathers were liberated from their authority and responsibility. Children were liberated from limits and from rules. The entire population was liberated from moral and ethical standards. Yet it turns out that these were precisely what held society together. Family values have been so scorned that we’re left with neither families nor values. What do we have? Rampant illegitimacy and sexual disease, widespread divorce and a generation of unloved, undisciplined, and uncared for kids.” Now the sad thing is that this lack of discipline, this lack of values, this lack of standards, goes right down into the very best families in our churches.

In a small town in Missouri, a little dog wandered up where two boys were playing. They were preacher’s boys. And they liked the little dog. The little dog was very friendly. It was solid black with a few white streaks on the tail. They took the dog to their preacher daddy and said, “Can we keep him? We really like him.” The preacher himself liked the dog, and said, “Well yes, we can keep him.” Then, they found out that a new family had moved into the community, and the family had lost a dog—a black dog with a few white streaks on the tail. It was obvious whose dog it was. They came looking for the dog. The boys thought that they might lose the dog, so they took some shoe polish

and turned those white hairs on that dog's tail black. When the family that had moved in said, "We believe that's our dog," the preacher daddy said, "How can that be your dog? You said your dog had some white streaks on the tail. This dog's tail is black." And the family went away, and said, "Well, that must be your dog then—not our dog."

Let me tell you the names of those two boys: Frank and Jesse James. You ever heard of the Jesse James gang? You ever heard of the two most notorious criminals, perhaps, in America? Frank and Jesse James—preacher's kids—had a dad who kept a dog and lost his boys.

There are fuzz buster dads today who are teaching their boys how to break the speed limit. There are moms and dads sneaking kids into movies...and with prices. They will tell the boy, "Tell them that you're only 12, when you're 13. We can get a lower price." Folks, I'm telling you that we have a generation that has lost its values today—families without foundation.

## **B. Pastors Without Principles**

And then, to make it worse, here's the second thing that was taking place in this chapter: not only families without foundation, but pastors without principles. Look now in verse 7, if you will, of this same chapter: *"And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there."* Now who were the Levites? These were the priestly people. These were the clerics of their day. These were the counterpart to today's pastors and ministers. *"And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed"* (Judges 17:7–8).

Now you know Micah. We've already met old Micah—the thief and the idolater. *"And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may go to find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest"* (Judges 17:9–13).

This is amazing. Here's a preacher out of a job. He's trying to find some food. He's trying to find a place to stay. Now remember, the Levites were to help in the Aaronic priesthood. The Levites, according to the law of God, were to assist the priest. They were to teach the law. They were to lead in praise. And here's a young Levite without a



place. He needs food; he needs clothing. And Micah says, “Hey, I’ve got a deal for you. You can come and live in my house. You can be my personal priest; and, if you will be my priest, I will feed you, I will pay you, and I will dress you well. And so he hired him, according to verse 10, to be his own priest. Now here’s a man of God who, for money, is going in to be the appointed priest of an idolater and a wicked man, purely for money. Here was a man who was hired. There’s no doubt about it. He was a hireling.

If you want even further reference, go to chapter 18, and look in verse 4. And here are the words of this Levite: *“And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and he hath hired me, and I am his priest”* (Judges 18:4). He was a hireling—not a man of God, a hireling. And what does Jesus say about a hireling? Look in John 10—put this in your margin—John 10, beginning in verse 12: *“But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep”* (John 10:12–13).

Do you know what is wrong in America today? We have prophets whose title is p-r-o-f-i-t—profit. They’re hirelings. They have not been called of God. “Are you saying, Pastor, you don’t think the pastor ought to be paid?” Of course he ought to be paid. The Bible says, *“They [that] preach the gospel [shall] live of the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:14). The Bible says, *“The elder that rules well is worthy of double honor”* (1 Timothy 5:17). But no man has a right to be a hireling—a professional in the ministry.

Here was a man who forsook, if he ever had it, God’s calling and God’s authority. Being a hireling, he told the people what they wanted to hear. Look in Judges chapter 18, verse 5. There were some people who wanted to go about something that was very wrong. God was not in it at all, as we’re going to see. And so they went to this priest. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *“And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them,”*—now remember, this is the hireling—*“Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go. Then the five men departed, and came to Laish”* (Judges 18:5–7). And we could tell you more about that later on. But they said, “Is God with us?” And he said, “Surely God is with you. Peace, peace, go on in your wicked ways. It is fine.”

*I am convinced that there’s not much in America that could not be radically, dramatically, and quickly changed, if we just had a generation of preachers who would stand in their pulpit and, without fear or favor, preach the Word of God with the anointing of the Holy Ghost of God on them.* I believe that with all of my heart. Preachers need to stop trying to win popularity contests. They need to stop being hirelings.

Now what’s the difference in a hireling? A hireling is committed to the one who pays his salary. I want to say this very carefully, because you pay me and I’m grateful that

you pay me. But in the truest sense, you don't pay me. And I am not responsible to you. Now if that makes you angry, just come up and apologize to me afterwards, and I'll forgive you. You give your money to God. God pays me. Do you see the difference? Now I'm not ungrateful for what you do. And you're very loving and very generous. But I am telling you, folks, that I am not committed to you; I am committed to Jesus Christ. And you have not hired me to be a Christian on your behalf.

You can't hire anybody to serve God on your behalf. You're going to serve God. And I'm not a surrogate; I'm not a paid mercenary to serve God for you. "The hireling flees. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" (John 10:13–14). Today we have a generation of man-called preachers, rather than God-called preachers. And because of that, they will not preach the Word of God. Preachers, you ought—and you probably won't—be elected clergyman of the year. As a matter of fact, you'll be seen as a troublemaker. But the Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 27, verse 5, as we read in our morning devotions this morning: "*Open rebuke is better than secret love. [And] faithful are the wounds of a friend*" (Proverbs 27:5–6).

Dr. R. G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, said, "I'd rather be called cruel for being kind than to be called kind for being cruel." The Apostle Paul said to the Galatians, in Galatians chapter 4, verse 16: "*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*" (Galatians 4:16). Ecclesiastes chapter 7, verse 5 says, "*It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools*" (Ecclesiastes 7:5). People are trudging to churches today, hearing the song of fools by men who are hirelings, whose responsibility is to those who pay their salary rather than to Almighty God. Like this priest, they say, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

I want to quote to you what a well known—one of the best-known ministers in America said. He is from California, and I'm not talking about him. This is what he said and wrote in a letter to the editor in *Christianity Today*. Listen to it—quote: "I don't know of anything that has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and hence counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition." If I were to call his name, you would recognize it instantly. This same preacher said—quote: "My number one role is that I don't want to do anything that would turn somebody off so they're not open to listening to my invitation to accept Jesus Christ"—now listen to this—"as their best friend."

Friend, we're sinners, and we need a Savior before we ever find a friend. And oh, the idea that somehow we're going to offend people—the idea that somehow that we need to make it palatable! Friend, our duty is not to make it palatable; our duty is to

make it profitable. *My* responsibility *is not to* fill *this* auditorium, *but to fill this* pulpit. And I hope you'll like it; but whether you like it or not, the hireling flees. And what is wrong in America today? We have families without foundations, because our principles have gone. And we have pastors without principles, because our values are gone.

### C. Government Without God

Here's a third thing: government without God, when we have no values. Look in chapter 18: *"In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest"* (Judges 18:1–4).

Now what on Earth is all of this about? Well, the people from Dan—the fathers of the tribe of Dan—said, "We don't like what we have. Now God has given us an inheritance, but we weren't able to possess our possessions. We weren't able to claim our inheritance." And the only reason they did not claim their inheritance and possess their possessions was their own sin, their own indolence, their own cowardice, and their own unbelief. But then, they cast their eyes over somewhere else. They said, "We need a place to live. We need some possessions." And so they became dissatisfied, and they became covetous. And rather than having what God had given them, they wanted what belonged to somebody else. And we're going to see that they came against some people who lived in the town of Laish, and they plundered that city.

Now what is wrong in America today is this: We have a generation today who wants what belongs to somebody else, and they think that they have a right to take what belongs to other people. And it's because we have a loss of value. The Bible says, "if a man won't work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). I'm not talking about those who cannot work. The Bible tells us over and over again that we're to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. But the Bible is against misappropriation of other people's goods through covetousness and dissatisfaction.

And when you so lose your values that one-half of the nation gets the idea that it doesn't have to work because somebody else will work for them, and the other half gets the idea it does no good to work because somebody else gets what they work for, and

then everybody's out of work except the government—that's about where we are today. And you look around today—look in America today. What motivates our government, and what motivates business? Greed, materialism, and selfishness—and, especially in the area of drugs, pornography, and gambling.

While I'm on the area of gambling, let me just say this: that Memphis, Tennessee, needs gambling like a duck needs a bathing suit. What is that all based on? Getting what belongs to somebody else in my possession. True business is *win-win*. A good business is when one individual is blessed, and the other is blessed; and they mutually help one another. That's the way business is built. Gambling is based on *win-lose*, and you cannot have winners without having losers. And it is antithetical to the law of God and the law of good business. But here we are in this godless set of values that we hold here in our nation, trying to get what belongs to somebody else and failing to give when we ought to give.

Now these people got a false prophet to front for them, also, as I've said. This hireling told them, "Hey, what you're doing is just fine." And I'll tell you, we're all of this about *the religious right, the religious right, the religious right*. What about *the religious left*? Who is going to say something about *the religious left* that says that abortion is all right, that says that gambling is good, that says that this governmental greed is good?

Oh, my friend, there's a passage I want you to put in your margin—2 Timothy chapter 3. Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, looked down through the corridors of time, and he saw our day. And this is what he wrote in 2 Timothy 3, verses 1 through 5: "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*" (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

"*Lovers of their own selves*"—living for self and self alone; *me-ology* rather than theology. "*Covetous*"—living for what they can get and grab, not for what they can give. The Bible teaches we're to love God. *The Bible teaches that we are to worship God, love people, and use things. What we do is worship things, use people, and forget God.* "*Boasters*" and "*proud*," this verse says—we're boasting about civilization, while we're marching down to hedonism. "*Blasphemers*"—you cannot even turn on the television today without hearing the name of Jesus Christ, and the God we serve, dragged through the muck, and filth, and slime of the sewer. We amuse ourselves today with profanity and pornography.

"*Disobedient to parents*"—we've raised a generation that does not respect authority

inside or outside the home. *“Unholy, without natural affection”*—this means, “perverted love, without family love,” a generation up to its ears in filth and perversion.

*“Trucebreakers”*—a man’s word means nothing, whether it’s a treaty between nations, a political promise, a marriage contract, or a business contract. *“Incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good”*—in our city, there are drive-by shootings, rapes, muggings, right here, and we have run out of space to warehouse the criminals. And our politicians say we can solve it with midnight basketball. As good or bad as that may be—and that may do some help—but friend, it’s like throwing a snowball at the rock of Gibraltar, hoping to remove it.

We are in serious trouble, and the trouble is that we have lost our moorings. Friend, we have families without foundations, pastors without principles, and government without God. And we wonder why we’re in the trouble that we’re in? Sad case of vanishing values.

### **III. What Caused This?**

Now what caused this? Look again in verse 6—chapter 17, verse 6: *“[And] in those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:6). Now God had blessed them, and God had blessed them incredibly. But they forgot God—like America has forgotten God. Why is America the great nation that she is? Because America has been blessed of Almighty God.

Now I want you to leave the Book of Judges for a moment, and I want you to open your Bibles—and we’ll finish with this—to the Book of Romans and Romans chapter 1, because in Romans chapter 1, we see how the people of that day and the people of this day got in trouble, because in Romans chapter 1, Paul goes back even before the day of the judges and gives a history—a sad history—of mankind.

Now how does a nation—how do people—lose their values? Well, look at it here. It begins with foolish speculations. Romans 1, verse 18: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”—that word hold means, “to smother, to repress, to hold down the truth”—“because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened”* (Romans 1:18–21).

### A. Foolish Speculation

First of all, rather than God, they turned to science. And there's plenty of evidence that God existed, according to these verses—His power and creation, His order, and the inward witness in the heart, clearly seen. But these people stuck to truth. They said, "We don't want God—no God." And they were willingly ignorant. And when you reject the light, you're left in darkness.

### B. The Death of Common Sense

Now first of all, foolish speculation. Then, the death of common sense. Look in verse 22: "*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*" (Romans 1:22). Our generation is a foolish generation. We think we're so smart, but we don't even have a way of discerning between truth and error, right and wrong. Any politician will talk about values until you say, "Whose values?" And then he shuts up. In our public schools, we cannot teach the Bible or even morality, but we instruct children on sex techniques and birth control devices. In the student clinics, in the schools, you cannot dispense an aspirin without parental permission; and yet, little teenage girls are led off to abortion clinics, and nobody knows anything about it. "*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.*" Baby seals and baby whales have more rights than the unborn infant in America. And the courts today are more concerned about protecting the criminal's rights than the victim's rights. "Professing themselves to become wise, they're fools."

### C. The Corruption of Religion

And then, religion becomes so corrupted. Look in verse 23: "*And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things*" (Romans 1:23). Now what is all of that about? My friend, man, by nature, is going to worship. And so when he refuses the truth—God, he gets a god of his own making. He creates his idols. And what are the idols in America today? Material idols of money, and prestige, and success, and philosophy, and health, and pleasure, and sports, and entertainment, and possessions. You say, "These are not idols to me." Anything *you* fear more, love *more*, serve *more*, value *more than* God *is an* idol *to you*. That's a god. Whatever you put in first place in your life is your god.

"But now, wait a minute," you say, "this talks about people worshiping things, though, like animals and all. We don't do this." Look in verse 23: "*And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things*" (Romans 1:23). Friend, America is saturated with this kind of religion. Hinduism has come from the East to the West; and now, we're



wrapped up in astrology, and spiritism, and occult religions, and voodoo, and Santeria, and druidism, and devil worship. People are worshipping, today, the creation rather than the Creator. We're worshipping, today, spotted owls, and dolphins, and whales. We have Earth and creature worship. And your boys and girls in school are taught to worship Mother Earth rather than Father God. It's happening suddenly but surely.

#### **D. Uncontrolled Lusts**

And then, what happens? Uncontrolled lusts. Look in verse 24: *"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves"* (Romans 1:24). Greed, and gluttony, and sexual perversion—lust is big business in America.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn—that brilliant Russian dissident who has now left our shores and gone back to Russia—listen to this; this is a Russian talking to Americans: "Your judgment is only as good as your information. If they are controlling your information, they are controlling you. If you want a nation of hot heads, sex maniacs, alcoholics, psychos, and maddening mobs, then, just you and the rest of your American population, keep on laughing at things like dirty movies, filthy books, and crude, cheap and profane language. In keeping silent about evil and burying it deep without us so that it appears nowhere on the surface, we are implanting it. And it will rise up a thousand-fold in the future." That's what Solzhenitsyn said. We don't realize this. What is happening to us? Verse 24: *"[And] God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own [bodies]"* (Romans 1:24).

#### **E. Sexual Perversion**

And then, it goes on to sexual perversion. Look in verse 26: *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet"* (Romans 1:26–27)—sexual perversion.

And the perverts are becoming bold, even arrogant, saying that America must approve this lifestyle. And unless you believe the Word of God, you have no authority to stand against it, because you have no set standard for what is right and what is wrong. Is a man free to choose his own lifestyle? Is he free to choose bestiality and cohabit with animals? Is he free to choose brutality? Is he free to choose child molestation? Is he free to choose incest? Are you going to say that your sexual orientation is nobody else's business?



## F. The Death of Conscience

Then, what happens? Let's move on. Then, there comes a values vacuum and a death of conscience. Look in verse 28: *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient"* (Romans 1:28). And in verse 24, it said God gave them over to impurity. In verse 26, God gave them over to degrading passions; and now, God gives them over to a depraved, reprobate mind. The mind is morally useless. "Every man does that which is right in his own mind" (Judges 17:6).

And he goes on to say here, in this passage, that they are *"without natural affection"* (Romans 1:31), in verse 31. Do you know where we have come to in America today? We have mothers who abandon their children and sometimes kill the children in the womb. We have husbands who beat their wives. We have children who despise their parents. We have fathers who molest their own children. All of that is wrapped up in this word, *"without natural affection."* It's not finished yet. Now look in verse 32. It speaks of a generation *"who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them"* (Romans 1:32).

In the supermarket, when you check out, look at the tabloids. Don't buy them; just look at the headlines. What is it that sells? Crime, rape, bestiality, incest, immorality, drunkenness, fraud, deceit, murder, violence—that's where we get our jollies. We have pleasure in them that do the same. We have a generation of people who cannot blush. They will get on talk shows—on talk shows before the whole nation—and talk about their values. And they could not get on those talk shows and talk about their values if there were not a lot of silly men and women glued to their set watching it, because they do what sells. And not only do they do these things. You say, "Well, I don't do these things." No, you just have pleasure in them that do them. And all Hollywood has to do to fill up a movie theater is to advertise sinful, sexy, lewd, X-rated material, and the people will flock in.

## IV. What is Our Response?

I've talked to you about the result of vanishing values. I've talked to you about the reasons for it. Let me talk to you, dear friend, about our response. I wish I had time. The time is gone. Listen to your pastor today. We need to find out what the Bible has to say about family values. That's the reason we've said that Bellevue Baptist Church is a family of friends, and a friend to the family. And we are going to treasure family values.

### **A. Build Your Home on the Word of God**

And you, as mom and dad, had better begin to build your home on the Word of God, or you'll be building on shifting sands and the storms are going to sweep it away.

### **B. Get Under the Ministry of a God-Anointed Minister**

Number two: You need to get under the ministry of a God-called, God-appointed, and God-anointed man of God, where the Word of God is preached without fear or favor. And I'm not simply talking about myself, but I'm talking about whoever you are, and wherever you are, and those of you who may be listening or watching on television. We have families without foundations, and pastors and preachers without principles.

### **C. Pray for America**

Number three: We need to pray for America. We need to stand up, and speak up, and understand they're not going to like us when we do. And don't get intimidated, and don't get bullied. We have a right to. We are American, and we have a right to put our ideas in the marketplace. And don't let these people tell you that, because we love God, that we ought to be silenced. Now folks, it's time—it is time—to wake up in America. Amen?

## **Conclusion**

Bow in prayer. Father God, I pray that You will seal the message to every heart. Lord, I thank You that, while the message seems dark, we know, dear God, that with You and because of You there is hope.

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you have never given your heart to Jesus Christ and you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this? "Dear God, I'm sinner. I cannot save myself. I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, right now." Tell Him that: "I do trust You, Jesus. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and save me, Lord Jesus." Pray it and mean it, and He'll save you. For the Bible says, "*For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Acts 2:21).

To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. To be saved means that Jesus lives in your heart. And to be saved means that, when you die, you'll go to Heaven. Say, "Save me, Lord Jesus"; and then, pray this: "Lord Jesus, help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# The Authority Crisis in America

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 26, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Judges 19; 20; 21**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Time of Sexual Immorality
- II. A Time of Sensual Indulgence
- III. A Time of Sickening Indecency
- IV. A Time of Selfish Indifference
- V. A Time of Shocking Inhumanity
- VI. A Time of Stubborn Insolence
- VII. A Time of Spiritual Ignorance
  - A. We Have Substituted Tolerance for Truth
  - B. We Have Substituted Values for Virtues
  - C. We Have Substituted Competency for Character
  - D. We Have Substituted Compromise for Courage

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to be finding now in the Bible the Book of Judges, please, chapter 19—the Book of Judges. This message tonight is somewhat difficult for me to bring. I have preached a series of Bible studies on the Book of Judges, and they're being put into an album; and those who have put these Bible studies in an album to be distributed said, "You left out three chapters." And I said, "Well, they were three chapters"—or, at least, I thought in my heart—"they're really three chapters that are very unattractive chapters—chapters that I don't enjoy reading; chapters, very frankly, that are depressing." And yet, they are part of the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, and all Scripture is profitable.

So I had to look at these chapters, and I had to ask myself, "How can I take chapters 19, 20, and 21, and comprise them, and make an application that will fit where we are now?" And as I looked at these chapters and prayed over them, I realized that they're so very, very pertinent to the United States of America and to the place we find

ourselves in at this very moment. The title of our study is “The Authority Crisis.”

Now the last verse is basically the verse that is the theme of the thing. Look at the last verse. As matter of fact, just turn over, if you will please, to Judges chapter 21. And verse 25 is the key to it all: *“In those days there was no”*—“there was no”—*“king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 21:25). Therefore, I’m calling this, “The Authority Crisis in America.” You know, America is in serious trouble. We are in the midst of what I call a *moral freefall*. And unless something happens, we are facing greater crisis and maybe the disintegration of America as we once knew her.

Now we’re in the closing chapters of the Book of Judges, and these closing chapters have a warning. I say they’re depressing; but, they’re also alarming. And as I looked at these chapters, I felt like perhaps I was reading today’s newspaper, because of the episodes that are here in these chapters. Now I want to mention seven things—seven episodes—and then I want to make some application. I want you to see seven vignettes—seven things—that are in these three chapters that so parallel America.

## **I. A Time of Sexual Immorality**

Number one: It was a time of sexual immorality. You may write that down: It was a time of sexual immorality. Look, if you will please, in Judges 19, verses 1 and 2: *“And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah. And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father’s house to Bethlehemjudah, and was there four whole months”* (Judges 19:1–2).

Now there was a Levite. Levites were the custodians of the law; they were to be servants of Jehovah God. But this Levite, as we’re going to see, was a very wicked man. He took for a wife a concubine. Now a concubine was not a wife who had all of the privileges of another wife; and, while God allowed this, God never encouraged it—God never approved it. But there was a relationship that was recognized there by law. Now this concubine became a harlot. She began to live an immoral life. She was committing adultery. And finally, I suppose to escape from her husband’s vengeance and wrath, she fled back to her father’s house there in Bethlehem to be under her father’s protection.

And when I read this, I said, “Well, that’s America all over again,” because our country now is sick with the sin of immorality and adultery. And I want to say one more time, as clearly and plainly as I can say it, adultery is not some small peccadillo; it is a heinous sin against Almighty God. In the Old Testament, it was a sin worthy of death.

And if, tonight, you're living in adultery, may I tell you that, *unless you repent and get right with God, if you can live in adultery and feel no compunction and no conviction, God sent me here to tell you that you need to get saved; and if you don't get saved, the sweet warm flames of lust will turn into the fiery flames of Hell*. I don't know how to say it any plainer than that. But the Bible says that adulterers shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9). It was a time, number one, of sexual immorality.

## **II. A Time of Sensual Indulgence**

Number two: It was a time of sensual indulgence. This man—this Levite—decided he would go back to Bethlehem to reclaim his concubine. When he got back to Bethlehem, he took up a friendship with her father. Now here is a man who has an unfaithful wife, and here is a man who has a fallen daughter—so what are they doing? Are they on their face praying? Are they weeping? Are they seeking the face of God? No, they're eating, and drinking, and having a party.

Let me give you some typical verses. Look in chapter 19, verse 4: *"And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there"* (Judges 19:4). It's as if they're having a party. And then, skip on down, if you will, to verse 6: *"And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry"* (Judges 19:6). Now here they are with a wife and a daughter playing the harlot, and they're having a party. Go again to verse 8: *"And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart; and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them"* (Judges 19:8).

Now here's this man who ought to be on his face before God, and he's eating, and drinking, and having a party. Does that remind you of America? It's party time in America. Judgment was just around the corner for this Levite, as we're going to see, but he's seemingly unaware—so much like those in the days of Noah—*"eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage...and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away"* (Matthew 24:38–39). It's party time in America. The bars are crammed. The stadiums are crammed. The theaters are filled. The pleasure palaces are overrunning; and yet, it's hard to get a small crowd for Prayer Meeting, to call out to Almighty God. It was a time of sensual indulgence—that's the second episode.

## **III. A Time of Sickening Indecency**

Here's the third episode: It was a time of sickening indecency. Now this Levite, who had this concubine, who became a harlot, who had sated himself with eating, and drinking,

and partying, finally decides he'll take his concubine home. So he takes her from Bethlehem. He doesn't want to stay in Jerusalem, which is only a few miles away, because in those days, the Jebusites had retaken Jerusalem; the streets of Jerusalem were unsafe, like the streets of many of our American cities. So he decided that he would go a little further to a place called Gibeah. And he's looking—now, he has his concubine; he has his entourage with him—he's looking for a place, however, to spend the night. And none of the citizens of Gibeah seem to welcome this Levite, and bring him in, and give him a place to stay. Finally, he meets an old man, and the old man says, "Yes, you can come and stay with me." Now one of the most sickening acts of indecency I've ever read takes place right here.

Look, if you will, in Judges 19, and begin in verse 20 of this same chapter: *"And the old man said..."*—now, he's talking now to the Levite and his concubine—*"And the old man said, Peace be with thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the streets. So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink. Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him"* (Judges 19:20–22).

This is very much like the days of Lot. These were Sodomites, who were beating on the door, saying, "Bring that Levite out. We want to have sexual relations with him; we want to sodomize him." Verse 23: *"And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly."* And he was right when he called it wickedness; he was right when he called it folly. But oh, notice the wrong thing that he did in verse 24. He says to these Sodomites—these sexual perverts: *"Behold, here is my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing. But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go. Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord was, till it was light. And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold"* (Judges 19:23–27). And we're going to see in a moment that she was dead.

Now here's the situation, folks: This city in the land of God, in the Promised Land, had learned the ways of Sodom, even though God had left Sodom with its smoking

ruins as a warning against this sin. Yet the men of this city were so emboldened with the sin of sexual perversion that they wanted to take this man, this Levite, and sodomize him. But then, they took his concubine and abused her all night long—all of them—and left her for dead.

“Pastor Rogers, what does God have to say about that?” I want to say without stutter, without stammer, without apology—not arrogantly, but with a broken heart—I want to sound a word of warning: All sexual immorality is a sin against God, but there is a special heinous sin called homosexuality that the Bible clearly warns against. I want you to listen to these scriptures; and again, I want to say that, if you do not agree with these scriptures, please don’t come to argue with me, because I will not argue with you. Take it up with God. Read these scriptures yourself; jot them down:

Romans 1, verses 24–27: *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet”* (Romans 1:24–27)—or, “which was fitting.”

Now the Bible talks of this sin as a vile passion. God had already warned, over in the Book of Leviticus—Leviticus chapter 18, verse 22: *“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination”* (Leviticus 18:22). Now friend, that’s black print on white paper. You don’t have to be a Ph.D. or a theologian to understand that. Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 13: *“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them”* (Leviticus 20:13).

In the Old Testament, under theocracy, God required the death penalty for this sin. Those who lived this way, as well as those who live in adultery—unless they repent, unless they get right with God—are going to Hell. First Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 and 10: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived...”*—now, don’t let anybody deceive you—*“Be not deceived: neither fornicators,”*—that speaks of sexual immorality before marriage—*“nor idolaters, nor adulterers,”*—that speaks of sexual immorality of married people—*“nor effeminate,”*—that word *effeminate* speaks of homosexuality—*“nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–10). Let me say that there are more sins



listed there than the mere sins of sexual immorality, but I'm saying that God makes it clear that those who live this way—if this is your lifestyle; if this is your practice; if there's no conviction, no compunction, no repentance; if this is your lifestyle, again—God says, "Don't be deceived."

Now like Lot in the Book of Genesis, this old man offered his daughter to sate the wicked and hellish inclinations of these people. Did you know that rampant homosexuality is the sign—the mark—of a nation on its last legs? Let me give you one more verse—then I'm going to move to another episode. Isaiah chapter 3, verses 8 and 9—the prophet Isaiah is lamenting over Jerusalem, the holy city, and he's lamenting over Judah, where friends from Bethlehem have come; and, he says: *"For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves"* (Isaiah 3:8–9). *We have seen this practice that was once called sin, then called sickness; now it's called a socially accepted practice. And now if you call it sin, you're the one that's called sick.* That's where America is today.

#### **IV. A Time of Selfish Indifference**

Number four: Not only was it a time, friend, of sickening indecency; it was a time of selfish indifference. Now let me show you what else happened here in chapter 19 and verse 27—the Bible says, *"And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold"* (Judges 19:27). What has this man been doing while his wife has become the plaything of these dirty men, while his wife is being sexually abused? What is he doing? He's asleep; he's sleeping through it all. He rises up in the morning to go his way. How can the man be down asleep like this? He is.

How does that remind me of America? Well folks, I'm telling you that Americans today are selfishly indifferent, just as this man was. America seems to be so indifferent as to what is going on.

*In June of 1997, in New Jersey, a teenager gave birth to her baby in a bathroom stall at the high school prom. She took her newborn baby, stuffed that baby in the trash, and then went out again to dance with her boyfriend and asked the band to play her favorite song, "The Unforgiven," while she had just stuffed her baby in the trash.*

Well, we're horrified by that—and well we ought to be—but may I say that we, as Americans, are dancing the dance of death. And what do we say about some 36 million

pre-born babies who are slaughtered? Stalin and Hitler have to stand in the background, and Herod has to stand in the background. The blood of these babies has stained America.

Now we have something in America called *partial-birth abortion*, where a little baby, full-term, ready to be delivered, is manipulated upside down in the birth canal and born feet first—partially born—until only about four inches of the child remains in the birth canal—just the head. And then, a doctor, for pay, will insert scissors in the base of that skull, and then put a catheter there, and suck out the brains of that little child until the head collapses; and then, the rest of the child is delivered. And somehow, my friend, that's legal—that is legal in America. I want to tell you, it is barbaric—it is barbaric. How can this be? How can we allow such a thing? James Dobson said that is not a partial-birth abortion; it is murder during delivery—that's what it is.

But here was a man who was asleep while his concubine is being abused, and the Church sleeps the sleep of indifference while this sin is going on in America.

## **V. A Time of Shocking Inhumanity**

Then, it was a time, not only of selfish indifference, but, number five, it was a time of shocking inhumanity. Notice what this Levite did now. Evidently, he is really partially to blame—mostly to blame—for what has happened, because he was the one who turned her out and gave her over to these lascivious men. But now, in a fit of rage, notice what he does. Look, if you will, in chapter 19, beginning in verses 29 and 30: *“And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds”* (Judges 19:29–30).

Now what is it saying? This man takes the corpse of this concubine, who has been abused all the night long, who dies with her hand on the threshold, and he mutilates and desecrates her body. He cuts her body into 12 pieces, and sends a piece to each of the 12 tribes of Israel. You say, “Pastor, this is sickening. Why is this in the Word of God?” I'll tell you, you won't find much in these chapters that you'll not find in modern America today somewhere. It is indeed sickening; it is heartbreaking. You can understand why I wanted to pass over this passage of Scripture as I preached. And what this man was trying to do was to mobilize support from all the tribes of Israel to get his own sweet revenge for what had happened to his concubine, and he was the one who participated in it happening.

## VI. A Time of Stubborn Insolence

I want to pass on, because I want to get to the climax of this thing. Not only was it a time of shocking inhumanity; it was a time of stubborn insolence. Go now to chapter 20, and look, if you will, in verse 12, and let's read through verse 14: *"And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you?"* Now Gibeah was one of the cities of Benjamin; and so, the men of Israel said to Benjamin, "You need to see—you need to see—that justice is done. What wickedness is this that is done among you?" Verse 13: *"Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel"* (Judges 20:12–13).

Now what happened is this: they knew that they had a miscreant in their midst; they knew that they had ungodly, wicked people. You know what they did for them? They covered for them. They would not admit the wrong that was being done. These men had committed high crimes, but the men of Benjamin tried to cover it up! Does that remind you of anything? I mean, they knew—they knew—the evil that was done, but what are they doing? They are covering. They will not admit. They are stubborn in their insolence.

And not only that, but look in verse 14—they counterattack: *"But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities into Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel. And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew the sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men"* (Judges 20:14–15). Rather than repenting, they tried to cover their sin. They stonewalled. They get arrogant, and they declare battle upon those who say that "You've done wrong!"

Well, folks, that's just America all over again—the spin doctors. *You know what a spin doctor is? These are those who take truth, and twist it, and turn it upside down, and call evil good and good evil.* That's going on in America today. I'm telling you, these chapters read like today's newspapers. You say, "Pastor, I'm not enjoying this sermon." Oh, I'm not either. But I want you to know, folks, that these are dark days in America, just as they were dark days in the Book of Judges.

## VII. A Time of Spiritual Ignorance

Now last of all, of these seven things, it was a time of spiritual ignorance. This encapsulates it all. There were wars, decimations. I mean, rivers of blood and oceans of tears were spilled over this thing. And I can't take time to delineate the whole story, but you go home and read it for yourself. There was war and blood spilled, and terrible

things happened. As a matter of fact, of the tribe of Benjamin, after it was all over, there were only 600 men left standing upon a narrow, rocky crag of land. And it was all caused by this last thing that I want to call *spiritual ignorance*.

Go back now to chapter 21, the last verse: *“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 21:25). And this verse sums it up. It doesn’t say that every man did that which was wrong in his own eyes—oh, no: *“Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”* The Bible says, *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12; Proverbs 16:25). What has happened in America today, friend, is this: that we live in a country—we call it *freedom*; we call it *democracy*; we call it *separation of church and state*—but it is a replay of the Book of Judges. Every man is simply doing that which is right in his own eyes.

I want to mention four things, and I’ll be finished—four things that have happened in America that make us a replay of these three chapters of the Book of Judges. And I want you to listen very carefully to these four things, because, if I were to mention to you *tolerance*, and ask you if that’s a virtue, you would say, “Yes.” If I were to mention *values* and say, “Is that needed?” you would say, “Yes.” If I were to mention to you *competency* and say, “Is that something worth striving after?” you would agree. If I were to say, *“Compromise—is that good? Negotiation?”* you would say, “Yes, it is.” But these things are bad things when they become substitutes for other things.

#### **A. We Have Substituted Tolerance for Truth**

Now let me tell you what has happened in America. We have substituted tolerance for truth. Now listen. We have substituted tolerance for truth. Now tolerance, in many ways, is a beautiful quality. But what has happened in America is this: that we have jettisoned the idea that there is absolute truth. George Barna, who is a sociologist, has said one of the most shocking things that I know. He said, if I’m quoting correctly, that “in America today, 62% of evangelical Christians believe there is no such thing as fixed, absolute truth.”

Now we have made it, in schools, illegal to post the Ten Commandments. It’s becoming increasingly difficult and dangerous for students even now to pray in their campuses. *It is easier today, in America, to get a divorce than it is to escape from an automobile* lease agreement. We’re in serious trouble. Federal authorities in America today decline to prosecute hardcore pornographers. But the government spends billions to promote safe sex in our schools, and officials hand out condoms and pills to kids. These kids assume they’re expected to use them. Laws to prevent children from being exposed to indecent material on the Internet are struck down by Supreme Court justices

who suppose that they somehow must protect the rights of adults to market pornography. Now they may be Supreme Court justices; but in my estimation, they have two brains: one is out to lunch, and the other's gone out to look for it. And we're told—we're told—that we must be tolerant.

You would have to be a Baptist preacher to understand what I'm about to say, right now. *About the only sin left standing in America today is to call sin sin*—just to call sin *sin*. We are told today that we must tolerate everything. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes, and we have substituted tolerance for truth. That's the first thing.

## **B. We Have Substituted Values for Virtues**

Number two: We have substituted values for virtues. Now we hear a lot about values today. Everybody says we need to get back to values. If you get a politician today, there's not a politician standing who will not somewhere, somehow, in his political rhetoric, say something about values: "We need values." If you want to make him stutter and stammer, look him straight in the eye and ask him this question: "Whose values?"

You see, what he really means is, "Each one of us needs to determine what is right in our own eyes." He will not say, "the fixed values of Almighty God"; he will believe in the values of the particular society today. You see, we have divided society up into the Right and the Left. And we are the Religious Right extremists; and so, you read so much about the Religious Right...the Religious Right...Religious Right.

I want to ask you a question: When have you ever read anything about the "Secular Left"? You don't read that—just the Religious Right, because we say there is a fixed standard of truth. They say, "No, it is not truth; it is tolerance. You have no right to say that there's something that is absolutely right." And then, they say that we, as a society, have to determine our values.

Well, the Bible speaks of virtue—not autonomous values, where we decide our own values. You see, you can make a sundial say anything you want, if you look at it with a flashlight; and that's what we're doing in America. We think that we can establish our own values. We are living in what the sociologists call *the postmodern society*. Now you'll hear that term more and more. But in the modern society, you had a battle between truth and no truth, and we battled over things that, in this society, we're not even battling over.

I heard James Dobson say in Utah recently, "We have a magazine called *Brio* that we send to teenage girls, and so many times the teenage girls would write back and say, 'Why can I not sleep with my boyfriend? Why can I not live this way?' and would want to argue with the magazine. But in the last six or more years, they've stopped arguing. They just simply write and say, 'Well, that's all right for you, if that is your value. That's all right

for you; that's just not all right for me." That, my friend, is more dangerous, in my estimation, than sheer rebellion—when we have substituted value for virtue.

You say, "Well Pastor, I don't understand the difference between value and virtue." I'm talking about godly virtue. You see, what we have in America today is a thing called *values clarification*.

Recently, in our own Deep South Bible-Belt area, fifth graders—fifth graders, now—were divided into small groups to consider this problem. Here's the problem—now, this is to fifth graders: "You are 18-years-old, unmarried, and pregnant. What do you do?" Only one rule was given to these little fifth graders, as they're writing their essay, and that is, "Whatever solutions you propose, nothing should be considered right or wrong, good or bad." That is, "You just clarify in your own mind—you set autonomously—your own values." But the Bible does not teach man considering his own values; the Bible teaches eternal godly virtues that are fixed from the Word of God.

### **C. We Have Substituted Competency for Character**

Now we have substituted tolerance for truth. We have substituted values for virtue. And here's the third thing we've substituted of these four, and I'll be finished: We have substituted competency for character. Now we don't ask in America today anymore, "Is it right or wrong?" We ask, "Does it work?" That's one of the reasons we're in the difficulty we are right now. People are not concerned about scandals in Washington. What are they concerned about? The Dow Jones. As one wag said, "People are concerned about Dow Jones, not Paula Jones."<sup>1</sup> Friend, we're not concerned about that. All we think about is, "Is the economy running smoothly? Is the individual doing a good job?" That, my friend, is a nation on its last legs—when you have character taking second place to competency. I don't want to say anymore about that, because our time is gone.

### **D. We Have Substituted Compromise for Courage**

Here's the fourth and the final thing: Friend, we have substituted compromise for courage—compromise for courage. Nobody wants to get in trouble anymore. And the way to stay out of trouble—I'll tell you how to stay out of trouble: just be tolerant. I'll tell you how to stay out of trouble: just let everybody have their own values. I will tell you how to stay out of trouble: just don't ask for character; just say, "Do a good job." And we have substituted compromise for courage.

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<sup>1</sup> Paula Jones was in the news when this sermon was preached in 1998. She was a former Arkansas state employee who sued President Bill Clinton for sexual harassment and eschewal. President Clinton entered into an out-of-court settlement by agreeing to pay Jones \$850,000.

The impeachment trial of President Clinton on perjury and obstruction of justice charges was based on statements he made during the depositions for the Paula Jones lawsuit. The specific statements were about the nature of his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, with whom he denied having a sexual relationship.



## Conclusion

It's time—it's past time—for the people in America to wake up. Friend, we live in a day, as it was in the days of Judges, when *"every man did that which is right in his own eyes"* (Judges 21:25). We, as a nation, and we, as a church, need to call people back to this book, God's Word. The days are desolate. You know the problem? The saints are not desperate. We draw breath, draw our salaries, go out to eat, and no sooner has the sound of the preacher's message died out in the ears of those that hear that we go about as they were in the days of Noah, *"eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage"* (Matthew 24:38). Perhaps we would give all that we would own ten years from now to bring this day back, where we still have time to do what we need to do.

Now that may seem like a downer of a message. But I want to tell you, there was no king in Israel; but God gave them a king, and his name was David. And God sent a mighty revival in Israel, and that same God is alive and well in America today. And we have to disabuse ourselves of the idea that it is too late for America. And God had rather—God had rather—forgive than judge. And the Bible still says, *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Let's pray together. Would you just—while your head is bowed and your eyes are closed—would you just humble your heart before God and not pray for America, not pray for Bellevue, just pray for you? And don't look around to wonder if somebody else is going to get right with God, but would you just simply say, "Lord, search me and know my heart, try me, and see if there be some wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23–24)? Would you do that? If it's a sin of omission, a sin of commission, a sin of pride, selfishness, arrogance, there's no reason tonight that you should not be absolutely, totally pure, and clean, and right with God. If the Holy Spirit of God mentions a sin to your heart—that sin is un-confessed and un-repentant of—would you confess it to the Lord, silently but fervently? Repent of it. Turn from it. Ask God to forgive you, and thank Him for doing it.

Now would you pray for our beloved church? Would you say, "God bless Bellevue. Send a sweeping revival our way; melt the heart of our pastor, our staff, our deacons, our teachers; and, melt my heart, dear God"? Would you pray for America? Would you say, "God, give us space to repent; have mercy; *"in wrath remember mercy"* (Habakkuk 3:2); stay Your hand of judgment, God; stir Your Church, O God; send revival to America from the church house to the school house to the White House"? Thank You, Lord, for hearing our prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.