

Standing for Truth

Judges 6,7

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Judges 6:1-7:23

When we have a physical problem, we tell the doctors what the symptoms are so that they can diagnosis the underlying problem. Today we are seeing God's people becoming more distressed with each passing day. The symptoms indicate a disease that grows worse every day. God's word tells us it is caused by God's people, believers, disregarding the truth and are being caught up in the things of the world.

So how can we stop this disease and change the course? The remedy is to change our direction, moving toward God. The passage we want to look at this morning gives us an example and principles on how to do this.

We need to consider some background to this passage before we move ahead. After Joshua had died Israel did evil in sight of the Lord. These are God's people. They had the truth. And even though they knew the truth, they were drawn into the practices of the surrounding peoples, who were godless people. They began to worship the gods of these people and do the things that are evil in the sight of the Lord. They played the harlot. This means that even though they belonged to God they were intimate with the world around them. This had been a pattern with God's people. Since Joshua's death, they had three other Judges before Gideon: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, which covered a period of 160 plus years.

We are oppressed because of sin

Judges 6:1-10; *Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.*

² *The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.*

³ *For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them.*

⁴ *So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey.*

⁵ *For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it.*

⁶ *So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.*

⁷ *Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD on account of Midian,*

⁸ *that the LORD sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery.*

⁹ *'I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land,¹⁰ and I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.'"*

¹ New American Standard Bible

Because of their sin against the LORD, they were oppressed in every way. They did evil in His sight by worshipping the Baals and Ashtorath. "Baal" can refer to any god and even to human officials. In some mythological texts it is used as a substitute for Hadad, a god of the sun, rain, thunder, fertility and agriculture, and the lord of Heaven. Baal is the usual designation of the great fertility god and weather god of the Western Semites.

The worship of Baal in Syria-Palestine was bound to the economy of the land, which depended on the regularity and adequacy of the rains. The lure of Baal worship seduced the Israelites even before they reached the Promised Land. At Shittim they attached themselves to Baal-Peor, ate sacrifices for the dead, and indulged in sacred sexual orgies (Num. 25:1-11; Ps. 106:28). The horrendous and repulsive aspects of the worship, sexual excesses and perversions are written about in the prophets. (Isa. 57:3-10)

Asherah or Ashtorath is the goddess of fertility. Different peoples referred to her by different names, such as Ishtar, and Aphrodite. The goddess of pleasure and sensuality.

As God's people today, we have allowed ourselves to be pulled into the same things and even jumping in with enthusiasm to the things of the world. As God's people, we do not appear much different than the world we live in.

Because of these things Israel was oppressed. The people of Midian would come and eat Israel's produce and take their sheep, ox, and donkeys. (verses 4, 5)

As God's people today, we are subject to the same things where the world takes our time, our money, and our talents leaving us nothing but weary worn out people. At this point in time, November 15, 2020, God's people and the world find themselves oppressed because we participate in the same things

In verses 7-10, Israel cried out to God because they were brought very low. They were ready to follow God again. God reminds them through a prophet that He was the One who delivered them from Egypt, and oppressors; and that they have not obeyed Him.

God's people today are suffering but I am not sure if they have reached the 'very low' point yet. However, the message is going out to Christians today. God is saying that He is the One who brought us out of slavery to sin, and He has delivered us from that which oppresses us and return to Me. We see God's people crying out "save us"! But, are we ready to confess to God that we have sinned against Him and want to be near Him again, to change our course of action or do we still blame it on other things, or say that the end is near the Lord is coming!

God Calls Us to Stand for Truth

Judges 6:11-24; ¹¹ *Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.*

¹² *The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."*

¹³ *Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."*

¹⁴ *The LORD looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"*

¹⁵ *He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."*

¹⁶ *But the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man."*

¹⁷ *So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me."*

¹⁸ *"Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." And He said, "I will remain until you return."*

¹⁹ *Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them.*

²⁰ *The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.*

²¹ *Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.*

²² *When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."*

²³ *The LORD said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die."*

²⁴ *Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.²*

God calls Gideon to deliver the people from the Midianites. Gideon was from an insignificant heritage and yet God calls him to deliver Israel. He is a little bit of a rebel, threshing out wheat in the wine press so that the Midianites will not find it. In verse 12, God calls him a valiant warrior. And in verse 13, Gideon asks where God has been and why has all this happened to us. It is interesting that in the middle of all the oppression and excess that was happening to Israel, that Gideon did not see that they were a product of their own making. God, in turn, tells Gideon that He has called him to make a stand for the truth! Gideon offers a sacrifice to God and God accepts it, confirming His word to Gideon.

God's people are also called to stand for truth. The word of the Lord has not changed. He says to follow Me and My word! The only way out of bondage to sin and sinful pleasures that rob us, is to follow Him. In John 14:23, *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."* It starts with us when we listen to the Spirit that He has given us and take a stand for truth. Then God will give you His peace and you will know His presence. The first step in taking a stand for truth is to recognize that God's people are being called to or back to truth.

We Need to Start in Your Own Life

Judges 6:25-32; ²⁵ *Now on the same night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;*

²⁶ *and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down."*

² NASB

²⁷ Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

²⁸ When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built.

²⁹ They said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing."

³⁰ Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it."

³¹ But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar."

³² Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he had torn down his altar.³

Gideon started with his family. God told him to take down the altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole. Then build Me an altar and offer your father's bull on it using the wood from the Asherah pole for the fire. Gideon did it, at night, because he was afraid of his father's household and the men of the city. When the men of the city found out that Gideon had done this, they confronted his father. His father's reply to the men was if Baal is god, let him punish him.

As Believers, we must start in our own lives and homes. Whatever keeps you from putting God first in your life, pull it down, and remove it. If your schedule is so full that you cannot find room for God, then cancel something. If your pursuit of money keeps you from the things of God, then pursue God instead of money. Order your life in such a way to exalt God. Your friends won't like it, and peer pressure will be great, but do it in spite of the opposition. The second step in standing for truth is to start with our own life, then we can take the third step by standing against the world remembering that God is with us.

Stand for Truth Against the World

Judges 6:33-7:14; ³³ Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel.

³⁴ So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him.

³⁵ He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, "If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken,

³⁷ behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken."

³⁸ And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.

³ NASB

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground."

⁴⁰ God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.

7:1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

² The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'

³ "Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

⁵ So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink."

⁶ Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water.

⁷ The LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home."

⁸ So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

⁹ Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands.

¹⁰ "But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp,

¹¹ and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp." So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.

¹² Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

¹³ When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat."

¹⁴ His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."⁴

⁴ NASB

Gideon sends a call for help. From that call 32,000 men respond. Certainly, Gideon thought that this was a good number of troops to defeat the enemy. Gideon confirms his direction with the sign of the fleece (vss 36-40).

God told Gideon that there were too many. He would need to send home those who are afraid and trembling. There were 22,000 that went home. At this point God said there are still too many so you will send home those who drink water like a dog. There were 9,700 that were sent home. God told Gideon that He would give them deliverance by these 300 men. This was less than 1% of the 32,000 who came. God wanted to show Gideon and Israel that it was His power that delivers them, not their own strength.

Gideon heard that God was already at work. The Midianites had already heard of Gideon's stand for God and His word and God gave them dreams that underscored this. (vs 7:9-14)

A call has also gone out to Believers. Often we think it takes huge numbers of God's people to make a stand for the truth. Often we think that only a few will never accomplish God's plan in a nation such as ours. God wants us to take a stand for truth no matter how many we are, so that He will be exalted, and we will recognize that He is our Deliverer! When we take a stand for the Lord, even if we are few in number, we can be assured that He will deliver us.

God Gives the Victory

Judges 7:15-23; ¹⁵ *When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hands."*

¹⁶ *He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.*

¹⁷ *He said to them, "Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do."*

¹⁸ *"When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.'"*

¹⁹ *So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.*

²⁰ *When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"*

²¹ *Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.*

²² *When they blew 300 trumpets, the LORD set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.*

²³ *The men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.*⁵

⁵ NASB

Gideon goes up against a huge enemy with 300 men and an enemy that is numerous as locusts (verse 12). Their weapons were a lamp, a pitcher, a trumpet, and their voices. This was not conventional warfare. The men blew the trumpets, broke the pitchers, held the lamps up, and shouted. This reminds me of Joshua at Jericho when they marched around the city and on the seventh day they shouted and the walls came down. The Midianites and Amalekites got up and started fighting one another and running for their lives. God gave the victory because Gideon took a stand for truth.

God will give us the victory even though the number of people who are against God is great in our community, our state or our nation, God is leading us to victory. Our weapons are the sword of the Spirit, our lives that are lived for Him, and our voices to spread the truth of His word.

God will give us victory if we return to Him and stand for truth!

The Conclusion of the Matter

Remember that judgment begins with us first. We must recognize the mess we are in because doing evil in God's sight has become acceptable. We must realize that God is saying that He is the One who brought us out of slavery to sin, and He has delivered us from that which oppresses us.

Then we must take the four steps He gives us here: 1. God calls us to stand for truth, 2. take a stand for truth by starting in our own life, in spite of what others may think, remembering that God is with us, 3. We then need to stand against the world with truth and, 4. When we take a stand for the Lord who is truth, even if we are few in number, we can be assured that He will deliver us

Take a stand for truth, God's truth, today!