

## The Weekly Word

Feb 6-12, 2017

The book of Judges tells the story of a sad time in Israel's history. Their failures provide ample warning for people of any time. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

### Monday, February 6: Judges 3- Tests from God...

Speaking of various Canaanite tribes we read, *They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had given their ancestors through Moses* (4).

The word "test" drew my attention. God was testing Israel to see if they would be faithful. Israel did not pass the test, and still God sent them a judge as deliverer. And so the cycle, failure-oppression-salvation, repeats in this chapter and throughout the book of Judges. For that matter it repeats throughout the whole of the Old Testament.

Immediately as thoughts came to me I began to wonder what 'tests' the Lord was leaving to see if I will remain faithful? What tests does He use to see if we, His people, His church, will be faithful?

Is my affluence a test??? Do I use my income and resources to advance the cause of Jesus Christ and make disciples throughout the world?

Is my education a test??? Do I trust in myself and my 'smarts' rather than the Spirit of the Lord within me?

Are my hobbies a test??? Is God checking to see if I will be distracted by things and enjoyments I like rather than dedicated to serving Him?

And so on my questions went...

*Oh, God, give me strength when I am weak to pass Your tests so that the kingdom of God is advanced and Your name broadcast across the globe. I am Yours, use me to spread Your name and fame to all the world. Through Jesus, my Lord, I pray. Amen.*

### Tuesday, February 7: Judges 4- Wrestlings...

I was fascinated as I read the story of the Deborah. As the story begins Deborah is a prophet who is leading (some translations, 'judging' Israel). She is the strength of the people. She is the one who hears from the Lord and she is the one Israel comes to when ~~to have~~ disputes need to be decided (5). Deborah is an important person.

Deborah's story raises so many questions for me regarding the role of women. It seems to me that if God raised her up to be a prophet, then it was okay in God's eyes for a woman to be in leadership. It is not simply that Deborah was leading Israel; she was God's prophet among the people.

She was even willing that the military honor go to a man, Barak, but his lack of faith caused the military honor to go to a woman, Jael. ~~And~~ this part of the story enhances the possibility of women's roles in ancient Israelite history.

I don't have a strong sense of the Lord's voice this morning. It is as if God is allowing me to wrestle with things right now... Wrestle with culture and Scripture and how I maintain God's Word as the authority in my life...

*Lord, I cry to You modeling my words on the psalmist... May the words of my mouth, the thoughts and meditations of heart and mind be pleasing to You and guided by You, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, February 8: Judges 5- How am I recording God's marvelous deeds?...**

In a world where people don't read and books are not yet known, how do people remember? How do people mark special moments? How do people pass on history? They do it tThrough song and story.

Traveling minstrels, singers and storytellers were the memory cash of ancient days. Some writings and carvings exist, but day-to-day it was songs and stories passed on person-to-person, generation-to-generation that kept history alive. This is one reason why the Passover and the other feasts of Israel were so important; they carried the truths and history of Israel through the ages.

This morning as the sun rises I read Deborah's song, her way to memorialize Israel's great victory over Sisera. As the people learned the song it deposited history into them. The Lord was on the move in history protecting and watching over his people.

*When you, LORD, went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water. The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel (4-5).*

And through His people, particularly Deborah and Jael, God won a great victory for His people.

Remembering what the Lord has done and the people He has empowered to accomplish His will is good and wise.

How do I do this in my own life and among my own family? This question brands me as I sit. Am I singing of or recording in modern means the good things the Lord is doing for His people and for me?

Hmmm... a spark of inspiration to ponder...

*Lord, inspire me to tell Your story in effective ways so that my circle of influence knows the great works of the Lord I have seen. I pray in Jesus' name and for the sake of advancing His Gospel. Amen.*

### **Thursday, February 9: Judges 6—Unlikely hero...**

The book of Judges continues its parade of unlikely heroes. This time it is Gideon, a-A timid man with some but not much faith, ; Gideon was a pretty average person.

From the previous sentence I begin to draw strength from the Word. I don't think I could be a David or Moses... greats of the Scriptures. But maybe I could be a Gideon... open to the Lord and moderately available –not really eager or necessarily seeking to do great things for God –but open when God calls.

Gideon seems a little surprised when the angel of the Lord appears to him. I would be, ; too! And Gideon is a bit reluctant to do what God directs. He tears down the Baal altar at night, *but because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime (27b).*

As I sit this morning and consider Gideon, ; what rises to the top is that he did what the Lord asked of him. Doing God's will is, after all, what God desires from us.

Lord, spurred on by Gideon, I say, "Here I am. I am Yours." I place myself at Your disposal. Lord, I might need some convincing—I might, at times, be slow to respond. Please forgive small faith. Like the father in the NT, I pray, "I believe, help me with my unbelief."

Despite these lacks, I believe my deepest desire is to do Your will and to be Your man however You want me to be. Here I am, Lord. Use me...

Through Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

### Friday, February 10: Judges 7- Stop, look and listen...

One of the themes running through this chapter is the tendency for humans to take the credit due the Lord. When we do this we begin to believe we are in control and we can do things in our own strength without the Lord. The sin of Adam and Eve rises up again and again.

In verse 2 the issue blazes with all its heat, *The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, 'My own strength has saved me.'* This issue continues to burn through the end of the chapter.

So the chapter begs me to probe and ask the question, Am I relying on myself, my ingenuity, my smarts, my training, etc. or am I relying on the Lord?

As I ponder this I have to think situation by situation. I am a mixed bag, sometimes faithful, sometimes not. SAnd so sometimes I rely on the Lord and sometimes I plow ahead in my own strength.

One significant indicator is whether I pause to check in with the Lord... When I do I am much more likely to listen and then follow His lead. However ~~But when I jump in without checking in, more often than not, those are the times I go it my own way...~~

When I was growing up there were safety ads on TV: Stop, Look & Listen. There was And even a jingle about stopping and waiting until the light turned green before crossing the street. This is good advice for walking faithfully with the Lord.

Lord, help me to STOP, LOOK & LISTEN ... to pause and look to You and Histen for Your guidance rather than forge forward in my strength. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Saturday, February 11: Judges 8- ...

Half a right answer is still a wrong answer.

Israel so wanted a great warrior for a king. They would turn from the Lord and then follow a military leader who would lead them to victory. While this leader was alive they would keep up appearances. And then as soon as the leader dies they would turn to some other 'strong' leader and foreigner and the cycle of sin, oppression and rescue, would begin again.

It was a pretty sad existence for the people of God.

Gideon was one of the 'saviors'. And after saving Israel he wisely said 'no' to kingship. The people wanted him to rule over them (23). He deferred to the Lord's rule over the people. BT AND here is the problem. ~~But he accepted tribute, lots of tribute, and the gold became a snare. *Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family (27).*~~

We all have a weakness, I thought, a-A chink in our human makeup that is an easy entrance for sin and selfishness.

Gideon's weakness was money and wealth. What is mine? What is yours?

Think about it.

| *Lord, allow me a glimpse of my true self and my personal weaknesses. ~~...~~ Allow this, Lord, not so I can gloat in my strengths but so I can be on guard with my weaknesses. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

## **Sunday, February 12, 2017, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@pcogonline.org](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.