

## *Gideon's Army*

by *F. Sanders, S.P.*

*And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; and let all the other people go every man to his place.*

—Judges 7:7

[This article is reprinted from the May, 1992 edition of Franklin Sanders' newsletter, *The Moneychanger*, P.O. Box 341753, Memphis TN 38184 USA. We can recommend this excellent publication offering financial, economic, and other advice from a uniquely Christian perspective. Mr Franklin is willing to extend a special introductory offer to F.A.C.S. subscribers: a one-year subscription for just \$US65 (not \$95). This is a special rate, and you should mention you're a subscriber to **F.A.C.S. REPORT** when you send in your subscription. It will be money well spent.

Mr Sanders, however, is not an armchair Christian. Recently, he and a group of friends were found not-guilty in a trial over the practice of their Christian faith. They had taken steps to maintain their Christian freedoms, granted by the Bible and by the US Constitution. Mr Sanders and 16 other people, including the Pastor from the local Grace Presbyterian Church, of which Mr Sanders is a member, were taken to court by the IRS. The result was a non-guilty verdict on all 31 counts . . . after a trial lasting 4-1/2 months. Ask for a copy of the July 1991 edition of *The Moneychanger* and read a fascinating account of government tyranny.

The battle for the faith, however, is not over, neither for Mr Franklin or any other person who really understands what it means to be a Christian in the 20th Century.

This essay is reprinted because of its challenge to think carefully about how far we might be willing to go to defend our faith in an age of increasing hostility. Please read it carefully, and pray that you too might find that place where you're willing to make a firm and fast stand for the faith.]

About once a week I get an embarrassing telephone call from some stranger who has heard about our long travails under government persecution. Invariably this stranger will praise my courage for standing up to the government's attack, while in reddening silence I try to piece together a fittingly contradictory response. I am embarrassed because I know too well my own native timidity, and that without God's grace moment by moment, I would not have stood at all.

### **Something is Wrong**

There is an ill-defined malaise brooding over our land, a sense of great problems facing America, great danger, crisis and looming catastrophe. When questioned, however, those who express these fears are strangely incoherent. They point to every source but the genuine. The problem is neither financial nor educational nor economic nor political, nor even philosophical: it is spiritual. America is rebelling against the rule of God. And while the nation steadily repudiates God, even most Christians won't stand for the Gospel.

For some, it is a problem of knowledge and understanding. Misled by over a century of withdrawing, sentimental, world-denying pietistic theology, most evangelical Christians don't yet see that ungodly civil government is a threat to the church and the gospel. They don't yet understand that the messianic state's claim to godhood must inevitably bring it into conflict with the followers of Jesus Christ, who claims for Himself sole sovereignty over all men. For others, it is simply a problem of cowardice. They wilfully shut their eyes to events in the hope of preserving what Francis Schaeffer called their "personal peace and prosperity."

### **The Definition?**

What are these problems? All are rooted in rebellion against the law of God. They include abortion, euthanasia, feminism and the degradation of womanhood, insane sexual immorality, AIDS, homosexuality, blood-lust and violence, government-sanctioned rooting-out of Christianity, a government which claims to be above any law except the law of its own will, destruction of the family, corrupt courts, annihilation of basic freedoms, including the right to travel, to own and bear arms, to contract freely, to earn a living, to worship, the right to raise your own children, as well as the right to privacy, to justice and a fair trial, the right to honest money, the right to own and use property, the right to be secure against unreasonable searches and seizures, and even the right to preach the Gospel. These are only the accidental battle-grounds of the eternal warfare of rebellious man against the sovereign God, but those which touch upon civil government are the battle-ground upon which this country was founded.

### **The Dilemma**

My dilemma is not that I am embarrassed when anyone ascribes to me a courage and perseverance which I own by God's grace alone, but also that I have been notoriously unwilling to demand that others join the fight. The best face I can put on this is that I recognize the difference of gifts and circumstances which God gives to His people. We are to view fellow believers with compassion, forbidden to judge hearts we cannot see. In many cases, the lines are not sufficiently clear to say to people, Join this battle or that, or you sin.

We live in an Age of Ambiguity in which most men believe in no principle but this, that no principle is worth suffering for, let alone dying for. This is of course true of men at all times, yet our age is particularly cursed by a virulent, infectious relativism that has diseased even the devotion of Christians to their Lord.

More than all that, my experience uniquely enables me to urge others to "count the cost." The cost, for my wife, my family, and myself, has been having my reputation and integrity slandered, my character publicly vilified, my business ruined, my career disrupted, my life threatened, my peace of mind nearly destroyed, my local church attacked, my wife, friends, and associates indicted, jail, and the crucifying ordeal of a four-and-a-half month criminal trial on top of a four-and-a-half year criminal investigation. Through all this I had to face not only my own hardship, but the pain and damage to wives and families of brothers and friends whose happiness is dear to me as my own — friends who suffered directly because they believed in my integrity and would not abandon me, but more, because we serve the same Lord. I count the cost and ask, Was it worth it? To that question I must answer yes. It was worth all this and more, and God grant me grace to stand longer. I could have done nothing else without yielding up that Christian honor and obedience to God which must mean more than life if life has any meaning.

There is also a measure of selfishness in my refusal to encourage others to join the fight for Christian liberty. I don't want draftees beside me in the trenches. I don't want those "summer soldiers and sunshine patriots" who will shoot me in the back as soon as the battle heats up. I have no stomach for those who turn back in the day of battle. For myself I make no claim to courage, but they sicken my soul.

I have heard these brave words, "There is a line the government cannot cross. When they come into my church and tell me what I can or can't preach, then I'll fight." No, you won't, because by that time your integrity will have been gnawed to a rotten shell by the uncounted daily compromises to which your cowardice seduces you. Besides, the enemies of God will never offer you such a direct and honest challenge. Their attack will not come as an edict not to preach this passage or that, one doctrine or another, but as a *zoning ordinance* which says you may not hold Bible studies in residential areas, or a *court ruling* that says religious services in a public park are against public policy, or an *IRS ruling* that threatens the tax exemption without which you fear none of the faithful will contribute to your livelihood. You will never draw that line in the dirt, because in your heart you do not yet believe that God can and will deliver you, or give you the grace to bear the pain. But you do believe that the God of the State can deliver the pain — by the truckloads, Monday through Saturday.

### Sub Solem Nihil Novum

None of this is new; the church has faced this same dilemma many times in the past. In the first 300 years of their existence, Roman persecution was easily avoided by saying two simple words: *Kaesar kyrios* — Caesar is lord. Only two words, but impossible to pronounce for Christians who knew that only Christ is Lord. After each wave of persecution the church was faced with the problem of receiving back the recanters. Many of those who had suffered for their confession, and seen others die for it, would not have taken them back, but mercifully and compassionately, the church forgave them.

In our century the church has suffered a persecution hardly matched since the Reformation. Once again, the church must daily wrestle with the riddle of "valor or discretion," conflict or compromise, the fine line between co-existence with a persecuting government and faithful obedience to God. Only the *wilfully* blind refuse to see what the apostle promised us, that "all those who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Absent a revival of Pentecostal proportions, even the smug church in America will, I fear, soon learn firsthand the truth of Peter's words.

### Theological Thistles

The American church — and I don't mean just liberal Protestants and liberation theology types — has embraced a low-cost, spineless theology. The Great Commission has been reduced to "go therefore and teach all nations" — flying there

in First Class seats, no doubt. The rest has been forgotten: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This false theology teaches that the good news of the Gospel — that God redeems sinners — does not apply *outside* the walls of the church. But what God has eternally shown is that the Gospel *will* and *must* work itself out by redeeming *through the redeemed* all of society: family, business, government, and every other social institution and human activity.

Nevertheless these clean and principled bystanders wipe their lips and say to me, Fighting the government over the money issue (or abortion or unlawful taxes or zoning ordinances or wicked courts or lawless government agents or almost anything else) is not an "issue of the Gospel" — You are only a troubler of the church. To which I can only answer, if the Lordship of Jesus Christ does not apply to all men in every activity, then it applies to none. He is either a king or a clown. We cannot both be right.

### The Duty

What poor words of mine can persuade those who will not see their own Christian honor and their duty to God, their country, and their children? How do you move those who refuse to trust the God of heaven and earth? They not only dishonor themselves, their betrayal means everyone who does fight must fight against more desperate odds. Still, God obliges me to be a faithful witness. If I don't warn them of their duty, then I am judged to fail in my own. What Christian love is that?

### The Promise

There is no neutrality, now or ever: we either fight for the Sovereign God or against Him. Once He has chosen us, we have no choice but to look not to ourselves and our own lack of courage, ability, strength, and resources, but to God. We must feed on what He tells us of himself and His faithfulness. He is the God who punishes injustice *daily*, who provides for His people, who never suffers the children of the righteous to beg for bread, who trains our fingers for battle and our hands for war, who goes before us in might and fights for us, and who has already won the victory even over our last enemy, death.

### The Spurs

Every Christian has two powerful spurs to fight for his Lord: gratitude and fear. When we ponder what mercy God daily shows us through His providence, what *depth* of friendship He has freely given us in Christ, what faithfulness He has upheld for His people throughout history, then gratitude alone should move us to uphold His honor and rule. However, when we remember His record and His character — His perfect justice, His wrath, His hatred of wickedness, His sinless purity — then simple fear should warn us that our laziness and fat indifference cry out for avenging judgment.

Accommodation with the world is fruitless anyway. If we fail to discipline ourselves to do our duty, God will discipline us. God *stirs up* warfare between his people and the world. If need be, he will remove everything we own, our closest treasures, whatever distracts us from his service, until we learn that we only own them at his pleasure and for his use. We only save our lives by losing them.

It is far past my power to prescribe for any man that line where he must stand or lose forever his integrity. I cannot know his circumstances or his heart or faith or what Providence demands in his own place and station. But each man knows his own heart, and must with godly fear discern his duty. I do know that if we fail to stand for the righteousness of the Gospel as the people of God in America, the smothering darkness of pagan night will close on us in slavery for ourselves and our children. At this late hour, I cannot promise that God will crown our efforts with success, but fall back on Stonewall Jackson's words: "Duty is ours, consequences are God's."

## Fight

So I tell you, *fight*. Fight will all, fight with part, but fight. Fight with picket signs on the streets or in the courts or in the legislature or in your prayers or with your money, but *fight*. If you cannot find within you the faith to fight yourself, then support those who do. And at the last, when we seem defeated and far past fighting, may God give us such grace as He gave those victorious Cuban prisoners who died before Castro's fighting squads shouting, "Long live Christ the King!"

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Say with Jonathan, "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few." And there will be a *very great trembling in the host*, and the multitude will melt away, and go on beating down one another before the Christ of God. ■

# Weight Lifting

by Ian Hodge

*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

— Luke 12:48

When I first read the article by Franklin Sanders reprinted above, I was prompted to think of a passage of Scripture upon which I have often thought of commenting. Now seems a good time to do it, for the point made by Mr Sanders needs careful reflection by all those who take seriously the call to be obedient to the Gospel.

Everyone knows the purpose of weight lifting. Many people lift weights as a means of building physical strength and stamina.

But there is another kind of weight lifting which we need to practice if we wish to ensure that we win the race spoken of by the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 9:24: "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."

The Christian life is here described as a race. It is a spiritual race. That is, it is a race built on spiritual values — and spiritual values are ultimately ethical values. The Christian life is made up of choices: choosing to do right when we have the alternative to do that which is wrong. It is making decisions in favour of what God wants us to do, rather than what we want to do or what someone else wants us to do. In short, the race that we run as Christians is one of obedience to God.

Not surprisingly, we need to develop strength and endurance in this spiritual race. How do we do that? We do it just the same way that a small child learns to become a mature and responsible adult. This process is epitomized in the joke: How do you eat an elephant? Answer: One bite at a time. When a child wishes to learn the piano and play Brahms's First Piano Concerto, he begins this "one bite at a time." First he learns his scales, then the arpeggios, then he learns how to play double notes, all the time practicing to develop agility and suppleness into his fingers and wrists. Without these ingredients he will never reach his ultimate goal.

What is not recognised so readily, is that these processes take time — in some cases much time. In the case of the piano students, it will take several years to develop the ability to perform the Brahms's Concerto, just as it takes several years of weight lifting for a sportsman or sportswoman to qualify for the Olympic team.

Notice that in all these processes there are various steps that must be undertaken. They are, however, consecutive steps, and one stage often cannot be left out without making it impossible to progress to the next level.

It is surprising, however, to find so many people who think that the Christian life is built on a different process. Yet, this

would be a mistaken view of how we build our strength to win the race that the great apostle tells us we're in.

This is the point made so well by Mr Franklin in his article. He has learned, as many of us learn by sometimes bitter experience, that if we put off the small issues, pretending that we will make a stand on the big issues, when those larger matters arise we can still compromise. I am reminded of so many instances where I've heard pastors, church leaders, and other Christians claim that they won't submit their church to state licensing, to mention one example. But, when the crunch came, nearly every one of them took the state licence for their church ministries rather than make a stand on the issue.

There's an explanation for this behaviour, and it's found in the fact that too many Christians put off developing their spiritual strength on the small things. The result is they never build the strength of character necessary to make a stand on the bigger issues. Some of the small issues might be learning how to ask the proprietor of the local newsagency not to display and sell pornographic literature. It might be refusing to accept illegally copied computer software, or it might come down to a simple matter like leading bible reading, prayer, and singing in the home . . . daily. It might only be a matter of learning to hold our tongue so that we are not so outspoken and offensive in our language and attitude to others, or it could be learning how to control and teach young children so that they learn obedience to parents as a pattern for obedience to Christ. All these are exercises guaranteed to build strength of character necessary to win the race. At the same time, however, our human propensity to sin ensures that there are some issues upon which we do not make a stand, to our shame.

Our text says that "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." How can we expect God to give us the big issues of life to handle when we display, by our continued immaturity, an unwillingness to handle the small chores that come our way each day.

We miss the point of our existence completely if we fail to see that life is a series of opportunities for us to build our spiritual strength by facing the situations of life that come our way and learning how to handle them according to the way that God wants us to handle them. Too often we address matters in our own way, in our own time, and according to our own ambitions. But this is almost certainly not the way that God would have us handle these situations.

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13). We are to gird our waist with truth, not forgetting to put on the breastplate of righteousness. The basic ingredients of spiritual warfare are truth and righteousness. When truth is at such a low premium in the world around us we have a remarkable opportunity to become known as the people who display honesty and integrity in all our dealings with our fellow man. When morality is at such a low ebb, and so many people accept that right and wrong are just matters of opinion, what a wonderful occasion we have to display God's righteous standards as being a better and wholesome way of living.

If we were to look for a single explanation as to why wickedness and sin are on the increase, we probably wouldn't need to look much further than this as a suitable explanation. We are far too lax in our attitudes to right and wrong. Too easily we stand by when there are injustices and wrongdoing waiting for someone to speak and act against. It may require no more than a word here or there to someone who is clearly wrong in their actions; at other times it might mean putting our job on the line; and ultimately, it could also mean putting our present life on this earth in jeopardy in order for us to stand in the name of the King of kings.

But stand we must, if we wish to win the race at hand. Unfaithfulness is not a character trait that will give us confidence that we will inherit eternal life and God's blessings, both in this life and the life hereafter. If we continue in this vein, we thereby show how spiritually lifeless we really are, and how much we are truly in need of the regenerating power of God to make us alive to our duties and obligations, as well

as awaken us to our need of a Saviour who can save us from the punishment we so very much deserve.

In a world that is falling apart economically, politically, legally, educationally, and in so many other ways, God's people have a remarkable opportunity to show strength of character day by day in so many small ways. Then, by God's grace, and when He believes we have obtained the strength necessary to the task, He might, in His providence, give us the responsibility that comes with being a John Knox or a Martin Luther.

If we wonder why there is no Reformation today, then perhaps we need to look no further than ourselves. Would we, like Luther, put our career, and ultimately our life, in jeopardy by making an immovable stand against the immoral practices we see in church and state? This is the challenge that must come to each of us, and it calls for a decision one way or another. We cannot escape these issues: we will either handle them faithfully and win the race, or we handle them poorly or not at all.

This is why we must learn to make a stand on issues: any issue is better than no issue, for in standing we develop the strength of character so very necessary if we are to make a stand on the larger issues that surround us. Where we make that stand will very much depend on the circumstances that God brings our way, so there are no rules other than one: stand! Fight for the King of kings who has called us to be His people in this day and age.

May God grant each one of us grace, wisdom and courage to know how to stand in His name.

Enclosed is a brochure on the Bankstown International we did not include with our last newsletters. This fine quality Hotel is the location for our 1992 10th Anniversary conference with international guests R.J. Rushdoony and Otto Scott. The room rate we have obtained makes it some of the cheapest accommodation of its class, with extra savings for families of those who can share a room.

Even if you're not contemplating using the accommodation facilities at the Bankstown International, we hope you can make it to this special event, not only to help us celebrate 10 years of activities, but to hear some of the finest Christian speakers in the world today.

The work of reconstructing society from a Christian perspective has hardly begun in our age. Yet, it would not have been possible, humanly speaking, without the work of R.J. Rushdoony. Consequently, his work is having a growing impact around the world as increasingly Christians are seeking for a faith that has meaning, that offers an alternative to a decaying culture that men have tried to build without God. Surely, "Unless the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

With the other events, such as the NSW Parliament luncheon organised by Rev. Fred Nile, we believe Dr. Rushdoony's visit will be an important contribution to the ongoing task of Christian Reconstruction in Australia. Your prayers and financial support for this venture will be appreciated, since we have priced all events below cost in order that pricing might not be a hindrance to those who might wish to hear our guests while they are in Australia.

**F.A.C.S. REPORT** is published monthly by the **FOUNDATION for the ADVANCEMENT of CHRISTIAN STUDIES**, a non-denominational educational organization. A free six month subscription is available upon request. Donations are invited, and those who send a donation of \$15 or more will receive a full year's subscription. Foreign subscriptions: a minimum donation of \$30, payable in Australian currency, is required for a year's subscription. Cheques should be made payable to **F.A.C.S.**, P.O. Box 241, Engadine, NSW 2233. Permission to reprint is granted where the name and address of **F.A.C.S. REPORT** is given.