

"The Walk of Faith"

Part 25

11:1-40

Introduction: In our study of the book of Hebrews we are currently looking at 4 men whom the writer points to in Hebrews 11:32.

Hebrews 11:32

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:

These are average men who struggled with weaknesses and they struggled with exercising faith. But in each of their lives God honored the faith which they had and through them God performed many mighty works. Last week in our study we looked at Gideon and how he too struggled with faith as God called him to stand against the Midianites. Tonight in our study we shall look at Barak. Now we need to keep in mind that these men are listed here in Hebrews 11 as an encouragement to the Hebrew believers. They too were struggling with their faith as they faced the persecution of their day. Their lack of living faith had hindered their spiritual walk and their spiritual growth. They needed a boost of encouragement and so the writer points to these 4 ordinary men whom God used during the darkest days in the history of the Nation of Israel.

I. Barak

A. The Background

Notice Judges 4:1-2

Israel had been sold into the hand of Jabin who was the king of Canaan. At the end of verse 2 we find a very interesting word which helps us to understand a little more about what was happening. It is the word "Harosheth" and it means "arsenal" or "workmanship" or "cutting and carving". The area which is referred to here was a great timber district. It was an area which had an abundance of cedar and fir trees. The idea here is that Jabin had under the authority of Sisera, the captain of his host, many of the people of Israel whom he oppressed in hard labor as they were used to cut and hew the timber which were then shipped out.

Notice Judges 4:3

Here is more insight into what Israel was facing. Sisera's army consisted of 900 chariots of iron. Humanly speaking Israel had no chance against this army. They had no weapons of war and so to defeat the army of Jabin looked to be impossible. They were held captive to by Jabin and they were under great oppression. We are told here in this verse that they were MIGHTILY OPPRESSED. The word "mightily" here means "to oppress with a crushing force". This is the same kind of oppression which Israel faced while in Egypt. The oppression under Jabin and Sisera had been happening for 20 years.

Application:

Israel here can be seen as a believer who has fallen under the power of a sin or a strong hold. They refused to take God's warnings seriously and they believed they could dabble with sin. This is exactly what Israel had done. They neglected to listen to the warnings which God had given when He had warned them of what would happen if they allowed the Canaanites to live. Israel believed they could keep the people of Canaan in check but that was far from the Truth. Here was the command and the warning;

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

¹⁶ But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

¹⁷ But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

¹⁸ That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

There are many believers who refuse to believe they cannot control sin in their lives. So they play with sin and eventually what happens is they open their eyes one day and realize the sin is now controlling them. They have become enslaved to the sin. They are held captive by a strong hold all because of a lack of faith. They try time after time to shake the chains of the sin but each time they fail. It becomes a very frustrating life and in the strength of the flesh they are unable to break the strong hold. This is exactly where Israel was under the oppression of Jabin and Sisera.

B. The Call of Barak

Notice Judges 4:4, 5

Here we are introduced to Deborah who was a Judge and a prophetess in Israel. These 2 verses help us to see a little deeper into the spiritual conditions of Israel at this time. Deborah was the spokesperson for God and the children of Israel came to her for wisdom and judgment. There are 2 questions which come to my mind when I read this.

1. Where were the men?
2. Why did the people not seek out the priests for spiritual guidance?

It seems as though the men of Deborah's day had grown very complacent. Deborah's name means "bee". This tells us she was a very active and concerned woman. I believe she was chosen by God to be the Judge and the Deliverer so as to wake up the men of Israel. It seems as though there was no men who were burdened with the current conditions in Israel. As far as the conditions of the priesthood at this time I believe we can see what it was like when we look at Samuel's life. Samuel judged Israel much later but we can still see how corrupt the priesthood had become. Eli and his sons were the priests when Samuel was born.

1 Samuel 2:12, 17

¹² Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

¹⁷ Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

So we can see that Israel was walking in darkness. Their leadership was weak (the men were complacent) and the spiritual leaders were far from God. I need to just remind us all that if we grow complacent and there is no concern for spiritual Truth this then is a picture of what will happen within our lives.

Notice Judges 4:6-7

When I read these verses and I see that it is a question which is presented to Barak it makes me wonder if God had called him earlier and he had not moved because of fear and therefore God made it known to Deborah and she was used by God to urge Barak to step up.

Notice Judges 4:8

Barak stated that he would go to battle but only if Deborah would go with him. Let me show you the words of F. B. Meyer on this verse.

"It is the mark of the carnal Christian that he has no direct dealings with God for himself, but must needs deal with Him through the medium of another's prayers, and words, and leadership. Barak must have Deborah."

Notice Judges 4:9

Deborah would go with Barak but Barak would not receive the honor for God would deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman and her name would be Jael.

Application:

We need to pause here to see some very important lessons. We can see in Barak what complacency does in a believer's life. It starts when a believer grows cold toward his or her Savior. Remember the Words of Jesus to the church at Ephesus?

Revelation 2:4, 5

⁴ *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

⁵ *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

The coldness comes as a DISTANCE develops between us and God. This then leads to a lack of faith in our lives and we know that without faith it is impossible to please Him. So with this lack of faith and this coldness we are now hesitant to step through any open doors which God sets before us. It is then that we tend to lean upon others who are further along in their spiritual walk. This translates into the fact that we then have more faith in the spiritual person than we do in God. Barak had faith in God but it seems as though he had more faith in Deborah. He had more faith in Deborah whom he could see than in God Almighty whom he could not see. Therefore Barak was walking by sight mixed with a little faith. But none of this would hinder God's plan.

2 Timothy 2:13

¹³ *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

Let me also remind you that even the small faith of Barak would be used by God in a tremendous way.

C. The Battle

Notice Judges 4:12-24

Barak gathered the faith which he did have and he waded into the battle. When Sisera fled Barak began a personal pursuit of him and chased him to the tent of Jael where she drove the tent spike through his head.

Application:

We need to notice the how the faith of Barak became stronger as the battle progressed. The lesson here is that when our faith is small we need to step through the open doors for it is when we see the hand of God at work that our faith begins to grow.

Now we need to see who went with Barak into the battle.

D. The Soldiers

To see who joined with Barak in the battle we need to look at Judges 5 which contains the Song of Deborah and Barak.

Notice Judges 5:14

Here we see some came from Ephraim and these would have been farmers who came from the fertile valleys. Then there were those who came out of Machir and they were governors. These were political leaders. We also see that out of Zebulun came those who handled the pen of the writer. These were writers and record keepers. None of these men were warriors but yet when Barak stepped up and called the people to join him the Spirit of God began to move in the hearts of these men.

Notice Judges 5:15a

The princes of Issachar surrounded and protected Deborah.

Notice Judges 5:15b-17

Here is a rebuke for those who did not fight. Those of the tribe of Reuben were undecided about entering into the battle. Deborah tells us they stayed among the sheepfolds searching their hearts. These were people who had no vision. They would have been the very first to say, "I told you so" if Israel had lost the battle. They just would not get involved. Many times it is people like this who can actually keep God's people from moving forward. This was not the case here but they just would not step out in faith. Let me just remind you of what they had missed.

Then there were the people of Dan and Asher who would not step away from their work. To them work was far more important than escaping the oppression. So they refused to get involved.

Notice Judges 5:18

These 2 tribes on the other hand risk everything they had to defeat the Canaanites.

Conclusion:

Israel fought the battle with farmers, office workers and political leaders. This is not the group we would desire to be surrounded by in the middle of a war. But these were the men whom God used.

Let me tell you what they faced. They faced the 900 chariots of iron. These chariots would have been equipped with sharp bladed axles. They would place on the hooves of the horses sharp knives. Behind the chariots they attacked logs up to 12 feet long and they covered them in a pitch and set them on fire. So in the battle the axles would often cut the opponent down and they would be trampled by the knife clad horse hooves and they the flaming logs were dragged over them. This is what Israel faced.

This was a miraculous victory!

Let me give you 1 lesson in closing. No matter what battle we face in our lives let us never forget that God is greater than any enemy we face.

2 Corinthians 9:8

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: