

A FRIGHTENED HERO

Judges 4-5

Do you ever get the feeling that God's promises seem to work for everybody else,

But you aren't so sure they'll work for you?

Maybe God's off on vacation when WE need Him?

Maybe we don't have as much faith as some of those other people do?

Maybe we don't *DESERVE* any special favors from God?

How come it works for everybody else, but not for me?

If you've ever had those feelings, I want to introduce you to an O.T. character
who can identify with what you're feeling!

Walking with the Saints: Barak.

Very human people that God used– # 2 –Barak: A Frightened Hero

Heb. 11:32-34 *And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, **Barak**, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; **whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful** in battle and routed foreign armies.*

Writer goes through a list of people who trusted God in affliction.

They form a **“great cloud of witnesses”** who testify to God's faithfulness;
they tell us it's worth it to take the risk and pay the price for being faithful.

Each is very human.

Their weakness is turned to strength.

God uses ordinary people, like us, to accomplish extraordinary tasks.

He turns weakness into strength,

because His strength is made perfect in weakness.

That's what Gideon's story is all about.

That's also what Barak's story is about. (Like Gideon, Barak was afraid.)

DEBORAH'S LIBERATION FROM CANAAN 4-5:31

Cycle => Disobedience => Discipline => Dependence => Deliverance

Before Deborah's time, Israel has just been through 80 years of peace.

They again become careless and drift away from the Lord.

After Israel returned to rebellion, a Canaanite king afflicted Israel.

DEBORAH'S STORY 4

The affliction 4:1-3

The Canaanites came from the north and took control of the region.

They closed the highway and controlled trade route through the area
 900 iron chariots made them a formidable foe
 with frightening fighting power against their enemies.

They had the ability to control the region,
 unless some unusual occurrence should immobilize their chariots

The judge and the plan 4:4-10

Deborah was leading the people

She was one of few judges that actually “held court”

She summoned Barak, experienced general, to lead army

He knew how powerful Canaanite armies were.

He agreed to go, if she would go with him.

If SHE wouldn't go, HE wouldn't go!

Barak's insistence that she accompany him reveal his fear and the weakness of his faith.

Fear shouldn't surprise us.

It's a characteristic shared by **ALL** great leaders God calls.

Moses says he is incapable and tells God to send somebody else—*anybody* else!!!

Gideon tells God he's a *terrible* choice: he's from a tribe not known for fighting ability; he's from the weakest clan in that tribe; he's the weakest of his clan.

Jeremiah says he's too young.

US—we're slow to believe that God can use US too!

People God uses acknowledge their weakness,

so God can provide *HIS* strength.

“God's strength is made perfect in our weakness!”

That's still true today. **God STILL uses those who consider themselves weak,**
so HE gets the glory for giving us HIS strength!

Barak believes God is able to win the battle.

He believes that God is with Deborah; He will help *her*.

He believes God will give Deborah victory over the enemy.

What he isn't able to grasp is that God can use him.

That's why he won't face the enemy unless she goes along!

He knows himself too well! Why would God do anything for *HIM*?!!

Deborah's presence is no more vital to insure the Lord's defense than the presence of the ark was necessary to help Eli when they took it out on the battlefield.

They lost the battle and the enemy took the ark!

The battle doesn't depend on the ark; *it depends on the GOD of the ark.*

The ark ends up being an obstacle;

they put faith in it, when they aren't trusting GOD.

Victory doesn't depend on Deborah either,

Victory depends on her GOD!!

Now *Deborah* becomes an obstacle to doing what God wants.

Deborah's presence is more important than *God's* presence.

He says *to her* what Moses said *to God*: "***If YOU don't go, I don't go!***"

That's a good thing to say to *God*!

It's not a good thing to say to *God's messenger*!

It doesn't matter if messenger goes; GOD gives victory.

Barak should have grabbed hold of God

the way he grabbed hold of Deborah!

Since he clings to a woman, a woman gets credit for victory.

Barak assumes the woman he'll share glory with will be Deborah.

That's fine with him! She deserves the credit anyway. It all depends on *her*!

The victory 4:11-16

Nothing is said in ch. 4 about *how* God aids the Israelites

All it says: the Lord routed them, and Sisera escaped on foot.

Song of victory in ch. 5 tells how nature cooperated.

5:21 informs us the Kishon river "swept them away."

We suppose God sent rains and flood, chariots were bogged down in mud

so they abandoned them and escaped on foot..

This is similar to what God did for Moses against Pharaoh,

except Sisera had to escape so a woman could get the credit for his defeat.

Sisera's army fled with Barak's forces in hot pursuit.

The death of Sisera 4:17-24

Actually, Jael, a Kenite woman, goes down in history as "deliverer"—NOT Deborah! It's a Kenite!

Kenites were descendants of Caleb who made peace with Canaanites.

Sisera was confident he'd be safe there—they'd protect him.

Apparently Jael didn't agree with the coalition—a true daughter of Caleb!

Jael wins Sisera's confidence.

As he sleeps she drives a tent peg through his head

—not a bedtime story for small children!

Barak comes running up and finds him already dead

—glory of victory is lost to him and given to a woman. 5:24-27

4:23 makes clear:

It isn't Barak's military force that defeats Sisera,

It isn't Jael's trickery;

"GOD subdued Jabin, the Canaanite king, before the Israelites!"

GOD gives them the victory!

DEBORAH'S SONG 5

Deborah and Barak sing, as testimony of praise for God's victory 2-3

**They acknowledge God's care for His people,
in spite of their unfaithfulness.**

Begins with *past* deliverance, during Exodus and in wilderness 4-5

Describes recent affliction 6-19 6-8, 19

Describes how God intervened to deliver them. 20-23

After describing Sisera's death (23-27), it concludes with glimpse of warrior's mother, waiting at a window for his usual return with spoils of battle. (28-30)

She waits in vain, for he never returns.

Concludes with writer's desire 5:31:

That those who oppose God perish as Sisera perished, and that . . .

That those who love Him be like the sun when it rises in strength ...

. . . enlightened and empowered by God,

. . . revealing and glorifying Him.

Result: 5:31b The land enjoyed 40 years of peace.

LESSONS FOR US

1. Like many, **Barak knows the stories about what God has done** for His people.

He has seen God work for Deborah.

He isn't so sure that what God has done for others, He can do for Him

Anybody remember Stuart Hamblin's old song:

"It is no secret, what God can do.

What he's done for others, He'll do for you!"

Barak doesn't really believe God will do it for HIM

He misses out on the blessing God wants to give HIM.

Barak models a second lesson for us:

2. God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary tasks.

In spite of Barak's doubt and uncertainty,

God takes his weakness and uses it to demonstrate HIS strength.

God turns weakness into strength,

Because His strength is made perfect in weakness.

Barak obeys God;

God blesses him and gives him victory.

3. Our God is great enough to give us victory,

even when we face an enemy much greater than we are.

Our God is a great enough God that ***we don't need to give up.***

"Trust ME!" He tells us, "and I will give you the victory."

What enemies are YOU facing this week?

If we're on the Lord's side, we can trust Him, whatever we may face this week!