

Hebrews 11:32 “Gideon and Barak’s faith”

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I. Introduction

Near the close of the 11th chapter of the “*Hall of Faith*” the writer begins his conclusion in verses 32-34 with six names of men (*and a host of others not named as only part of their exploits of faith is mentioned*) none of which are in chronological order but who all served as rulers or judges of some type. Several of them are quite well known in our Bibles and others are not. Some of them we know specifically the story of faith the writer is eluding too, others there are far too many illustrations to choose from. What is interesting to note is that none of the six are praised for their position instead they are famous because of their faith! This morning we will continue on our journey of faith exploring Gideon and Barak’s faith then next week we will continue with the rest of the six names given. The context the writer mentions with regards to these names is in his statement “*What more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of...*” This suggests that his illustrations are far more general and brief and so shall our examination be.

II. Vs. 32a Clothed in Gideon

Gideon: The story of Gideon’s faith is found in Judges chapters 6:11-8:35. More is devoted to Gideon in the book of Judges (100 verses) than to any other judge (Samson is a close 2nd with 96 verses). According to the last verse of chapter 5 of the book of Judges, Israel had 40 years of rest from their enemies after Deborah’s defeat of Sisera but in Israel’s prosperity came complacency as Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. ***The introduction of Gideon doesn’t make him out to be much of a man of faith*** as we are told in Judges 6:11 that the Angel of the Lord came to Gideon while he threshed wheat in the winepress which was both very difficult and humiliating. Wheat was threshed in open spaces, typically on a hill-top so the breeze could blow away the chaff. Wheat was not normally threshed in a sunken place like a winepress. Initially God needed to prepare Gideon, this country bumpkin named “***hacker***” which in the Hebrew describes a person who destroys his own stuff and Webster’s defines as “*one who is inexperienced and unqualified at what he does*”. Yet we are told that the Lord calls out to him saying, “*The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!*” Don’t you love how the Lord sees us? Gideon didn’t look much like the LORD was with him and he didn’t act like he was a mighty man of valor. ***He is in a hole with a stick beating wheat, defeated, discouraged, a man full of doubts, not the typical picture of a man of faith***. So many people look at what people aren’t, our flaws and failings, the Lord is not ignorant of those things He looks beyond them and says, “*Oh he is my mighty warrior because that is what I’ll transform him into.*” ***God is more than a visionary with regards towards us; He is also a God with infinite patience and sensitive love as He knows our frame as we shall God deal with Gideon***. The Lord tells Gideon “*Go in this might of yours!*” God never asks us to go in something that He hasn’t already provide and no matter how weak and inadequate it may be in God’s hands He will deliver a nation! ***Gideon had six things he was mighty in:***

- **Gideon had the might of humility**: *He was threshing wheat in a winepress*
- **Gideon had the might of compassion**: *He cared about the low place of Israel*
- **Gideon had the might of Word**: *He knew God did great things in the past*
- **Gideon had the might of the spiritual hunger**: *He wanted to see God do great*

works again

- **Gideon had the might of being teachable:** *He listened to what the Angel of the LORD said*
- **Gideon had the might of being weak:** *And God's strength is perfected in weakness*

In Judges 6:13-15 Gideon says, "I'm a nobody from nowhere how can I be the someone that you can use to do great things?" Saint's never forget that, God specializes in using "nobody's from nowhere"? God's response is NOT to boost Gideon's "self confidence" it's to build his FAITH in Him as He tells Him "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." ***It's great that we know that God sent us but its better still that we know that God is with us!*** I believe God allows Gideon to express his concerns as they uncovered **two truths about Gideon that he needed to realize:**

1. Vs. 13 They are found in the three words "***IF, WHY, WHERE***": These three words reveal that Gideon was a discouraged, defeated man. His discouragement was not that God COULDN'T work but rather that He WOULDN'T work. Most Christian's I know don't doubt the power of God they struggle with why He is not working on their behalf NOW. Gideon didn't realize that the problem was not with God but with Israel. It is far easier to blame God for our problems than to except the responsibility. Now in verse 14 the Lord answers that question by saying "Go in the strength you have". If we want to see the Lord work like you read about in the past then, "Go, right where you are at!" The Lord says, "The Lord is with you...Am I not sending you...I will be with you." God's antidote to discouragement is the promise that He is right beside us every step of the way. His power and presence only requires us to "Go with what we have which is, NOTHING but HIM!"
2. Vs. 15 The key here is to see that Gideon sees that this calling has to come from himself: **Gideon struggled with inadequacy because he still saw his adequacy as coming from himself and not from God.** Paul said in best in 2 Cor. 3:5 when he wrote "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*". **To answer this problem of sufficiency God says in verse 16, "I will be with you, and you will and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."**

Gideon's response is so much like mine, "*Uh, look Lord, you got the wrong guy, why I'm a nobody and my family is a bunch of nobody's.*" "*Who am I, Lord?*" But the Lord's response is to tell Gideon "***That's not the issue Gideon, the issue is "Who I Am!"***" Saint's the issue isn't who we are or aren't the Issue is who God is. It's not about us; it's about God and what He alone can do through you! I think Gideon was a lot like most of us: "***Don't want to move without God, but don't want God in charge just in case we don't like His plan!***" God was asking Gideon to fight the most difficult battle first the battle in his backyard! ***Faith is not obeying without fear; faith is obeying despite fear! Trust is not made visible by the observation that we are fearless but rather by the fact that we still obey even when we are afraid!*** The battle was fought not by the 32,000 men Gideon assembled to fight against the Midianites and Amalekites but instead with 300 men who were outfitted for the battle with trumpets, pitchers and torches. We are told that this transformation was accomplished Gideon in 6:34 as the "Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon"; the Hebrew reads that the "Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon". The Spirit of the Lord wore Gideon as a man would put on a suit! **God did not give Gideon guidance He reveals Himself as his Guide!** God loves to work in the realm of the impossible, it is for this reason that He puts us in situations where we can't see any way out, then He comes in and delivers us! Gideon's men were already over matched (32,000 against 135,000 Midianites) facing 4 to 1 odds when God says, "*Gideon the odds are still too good that you will think that you did this on your own!*" **Oh how different God looks at things then us, to Gideon his army was too small yet to God it was too big.** The first test whittled it down to 10,000 men. Having already reduced the army from 32,000 to 10,000 it now goes down from 10,000 to 300 as there were still too many for God's purpose. When 22,000 left then 9,700 the odds went from 4 to 1 to 14 to 1 at the

God's purpose. When 22,000 left them 9,700 the odds went from 4 to 1 to 14 to 1 at the first departure and by the time they were down to 300 the odds were 450 to 1 against! In 1 Samuel 14:6 Jonathan (Saul's son) told his armor bearer, "*Nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.*" The army was now less than 1% of its original size and the proportion was 400 Midianite soldiers to each Israeli soldier which meant that Gideon could now only trust in God. You see ***God eliminated the first 22,000 because their "heart" wasn't in it and the 2nd 9,700 because their "head" wasn't in it!*** So saint's as I see it this is where faith must bring us to ask ourselves: **Is your heart towards the Lord and not upon the size of the enemy? Are we teachable; is your head on straight not on your immediate circumstances but on the horizon and the victory?** Some say the 300 were chosen because they needed to drink but they never lost sight of the possibility of attack from the Midianites. Ah but it could be that these fellows were too broken down, too out of shape to get into the water, their backs were too bad their knees wouldn't bend and God was saying, "*I want the cast offs, the old fellas that can't bend over and give me 20, give me 300 the world's cast offs, the unqualified I'll take them!*" Why is this a possibility? Well because God does great things with those whose hearts are right and their heads are on straight. ***Based upon the promise of God in Deut. 32:30 where God says that one soldier would put to flight 10,000 all Gideon needed was 27 men to defeat the Midianite army of 135,000 but God gave him 11 times more than he needed.*** Far too many Christians measure effectiveness on statistics but such numbers mean nothing to the Lord!

III. Vs. 32b Pegging Barak's faith

Barak: His story chronologically proceeds Gideon's as you will read about him and Deborah in Judges chapters 4-5. We are told nothing of Barak's background and the chapters in Judges deal more with Deborah. It was Deborah the judge who God promised would deliver Israel from the Canaanite King Jabin and his military commander Sisera that had 900 chariots as Barak assembled only 10,000 men from only the two tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Deborah describes the situation in her song in chapter 5 of Judges where she says in verse 8 "*There was war in the gates; not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.*" Militarily Israel was in a hopeless situation as they had no weapons facing a nation armed to the teeth but that wasn't **their biggest problem, it was that they had left the true and living God.** They didn't need the weapons of the world they need the very present power of the Living God. Barak's faith is demonstrated in that he realized that God granted them grace but did so in a humbling way by raising up a woman to deliver them. A mother because they were acting like children! (Jud. 5:7) The actual battle was conducted by Barak in which the nation had three certainties going into the fight:

1. **They were out manned:** *Israel had 10,000 soldiers, Sisera had 900 Iron chariots plus foot soldiers.*
2. **They were out-supplied:** *Deborah wrote that Israel did not have a shield or spear among forty thousand in Israel.*
3. **They were out-positioned:** *Mount Tabor rises 1,300 above the valley floor and their backs were against it.*

Yet that is exactly what God had commanded them to do. **Ever notice that God does His best work when we can't do ours?** God wanted to teach the nation that it wasn't the things the world looked to it was faith in God that produced the victory. In verse 15 we are told that the Lord "*routed*" Sisera and the word there means to "*cause confusion*" how did this happen? The Canaanite god Baal was the god of storms and this must have added to the confusion in the mind of Sisera and his army. As we are told in chapter 5:4-5 and 5:21 we are told that "*The earth trembled and the heavens poured water and the torrent of Kishon swept them away, that ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.*" God brought about the victory by bringing a flash flood which caused muddy conditions making the chariots of iron a hindrance, not a help in the battle. There was only one thing left to happen and that was the fulfillment of Deborah's prophecy. Sisera left on foot and ran into a non Jewish tent and a lady whose name means "*mountain goat*". Sisera has

every reason to think he was safe as he and Heber had an agreement and Jael acted like she was there to protect him. Verse 11-12 suggests that it was Heber and Jael that warned Sisera that the Jews were about to revolt as they were gathering an army. It seems as though this family was playing both sides for their own benefit. Thus Barak was out done by a gentile woman using a household tool as it was the women's job to set up the tent. Jabin and Sisera controlled the Kenites so he was thinking that Heber and Jael would still be under their control as Sisera headed to the house for protection. Jael has a plan to take care of Sisera that involved the most unlikely weapons:

- *A blanket*
- *A warm glass of milk*
- *A tent peg*

As Sisera was ordering Jael around, "give me a drink of water" she was about to pin him by pegging him down. Now spiritually I like this as this is how you deal with the old nature that is ordering you around coming into you tent to tell you what to do:

1. **Put the "Blanket" of God grace over it!**
2. **Pour into it the "milk" of the word of God!**
3. **Pin it down by "pegging" it through the thought life!**
4. **Pound it down by "grounding" it in the love of God!**

This was the last thing that went through Sisera's mind, it is where we get the phrase walk softly and carry a big stake! The 5th chapter of Judges is where Deborah celebrates in the song the destruction of Sisera at the hand of Jael in the same way one might rejoice in Hitler's death! Jael didn't let Sisera live in her tent, she pegged him down. How about it are you allowing we allowing Sisera's of our life to live in our tents and he doesn't want anyone else to know that he is there? Deborah sings of Sisera having been finally nailed down, no longer oppressing the people. She is again thankful towards all who served to defeat these tyrants saying in verse "Let those who love Him be like sun when it comes out in full strength." Saint's that's faith enables us to do, Nail down the enemies in our life, "the flesh, the world system and satan."