

God Loves His People in Spite of Them

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and turn to the book of Judges. Judges chapter 4. We're studying chapter 4 this morning.

If you're visiting with us, you need a Bible, you can go to the chair in front of you and pull that black Bible out. Starting in the book of Genesis, find page 182, page 182.

The book of Judges, chapter 4. Judges 4, page 182. It just so happens, it's kind of funny. Like I said earlier, it's Mother's Day.

And here in the passage, you have honor given to two specific women, Deborah and then Jael. So it's kind of cool. And the honor is given to Jael. She's the one who killed Sisera.

It's just rather ironic. So how fun. Thank you, ladies. Praise the Lord for females. I love one. It's a good thing she loves me back.

[1:04] Anyways. Let me read Judges chapter 4. Judges 4. Now Deborah, a prophetess, a wife of Lipodoth, was judging Israel at that time.

And she used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. And the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. Now she sent in some of Barak, the son of Abinoam, from Kedish Naphtali, and said to him, Behold, the Lord, the God of Israel, has commanded, Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you 10,000 men, excuse me, from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

I'll draw to Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots, his great troops, to the river at Kishon. I will give them, give him into your hand. And then Barak said to her, If you will go with me, then I will go.

If you will not go with me, I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you're about to take, for Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman.

And Deborah rose and went with Barak to Kedish. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedish. And 10,000 men went up with him. Deborah also went up with him.

[2:53] Now Heber, the Kenite, had separated himself from the Kenites, the sons of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zanoan, which is near Kedish.

Then they told Sisera that Barak, the son of Benoam, had gone up to Mount Tabor. And Sisera called together all his chariots, 900 iron chariots, and all the people were with him from Harosheth Hagoyim to the river Kishon.

And Deborah said to Barak, Arise, for this is the day in which Yahweh has given Sisera into your hands. Behold, Yahweh has gone out before you. So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him.

And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak. And Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim.

And all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword. Not even one was left. Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenites, for there was peace between Jabin, the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber, the Kenites.

[4:07] And Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, Turn aside, my master. Turn aside to me. Do not be afraid. And he turned aside to her into the tent and she covered him with a rug.

And he said to her, Please give me a little water to drink for I am thirsty. So she opened a skin container of milk and gave him a drink and then she covered him. And he said to her, Stand in the doorway of the tent and there shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you and says, Is there

anyone here that you shall say no?

But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple and it went through into the ground for he was sound asleep and exhausted so he died.

Ladies don't get any ideas. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, Come and I will show you the man whom you are synced. And he entered with her and behold, Sisera was lying dead with a tent peg in his temple.

So God subdued on that day Jabba and the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel. And the hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabba and the king of Canaan until they had destroyed Jabin, the king of Canaan.

[5:27] In Forbes magazine, an online article is titled like this, Falling College Academic Standards, New Evidence.

It's written by Richard Veder or Vetter. He was a distinguished professor of economics emeritus at Ohio University. He says this, quote, American students enter college less prepared than counterparts in other countries or in some respects, Americans of two generations ago.

From 1972 to 2016, the average verbal score on the SAT test fell about 35 points. And on the PISA international assessment in science and math given to 15-year-old secondary students, U.S. student performance is abysmal, well below Asian standards, China, Japan, Korea, and even relatively poor European nations like Poland.

He continues, to entice kids to go to college, the schools apply low grading standards and wink at excessively libertine lifestyles replete with lots of sex and booze, sometimes illicit drug use.

But then he says later in the article, this is key, in spite of all this, fewer kids will go to college this fall than a decade ago.

[7:05] Five reasons he gives. Number one, kids are often paying a lot of money to learn relatively little while not exercising fully their capacity to learn. Number two, colleges increasingly are intolerant of those not subscribing to a woke, progressive view of the world with which many Americans are uncomfortable.

Three, the cost of college has risen sharply and is a greater burden to finance it today than it was 25 or even 50 years ago. Four, many graduates become severely underemployed taking jobs traditionally filled by those with a high school education.

Why go to college to become a bartender? Five, birth rates are low and falling. Fewer babies were born in 2000, college age now, than 40 years ago and 10% fewer still were born in 2020.

They're lowering the grading standards. They're winking at these lifestyles and yet, in spite of that, kids still won't go to college.

In spite of. In spite of means without being affected by the particular factor mentioned. the kids just won't care.

[8:29] In spite of it means expressing contrast between two things. In spite of. Like this.

In spite of my flaws seen for 29 years, my wife still loves me. It'll be 29 years next Sunday. Here's something else too.

God has overwhelming, never-ending, relentless love for us, for his people, in spite of us. Here's a title for Judges chapter 4.

In spite of you, God still loves you. In spite of you, God still loves.

Not because of you. In spite of you. In spite of us. Here's a longer sentence for you.

[9:32] In spite of our weak faith, which you'll see. Lack of dependence, you'll see. And even our sin, which you'll see. God still faithfully loves us.

And faithfully orchestrates all things in his providence so that we would be a people who solely love and want him and so that he gets all the glory. It's all for him.

You want to know what this chapter's about? Right there. That's what the chapter's about. This sums up Judges chapter 4. In spite of your weak faith, in spite of the fact that you lack dependence on God.

Even in spite of your sin, God still faithfully loves us and he faithfully orchestrates all things in his providence so we'd be a people who solely love and want him and so that he gets all the glory.

The great part about it is God regards even the smallest bit of trust in him as small as a mustard seed as Jesus said in Matthew chapter 17 verse 19 to 20.

[10 : 48] He regards just that. And yet he will bring great pains to make that faith grow. He'll discipline you.

because as Paul says, the Lord knows those who are his 2 Timothy chapter 2. See, that's why the gospel and Christ's death is so vital.

He died because of your lack of trust. He died because of your sin. This is why he had to die. Don't lose sight of that.

Don't lose sight of that. There's such a great victory given here to the sons of Israel over Canaan. It's so great you actually have two accounts of it.

Chapter 4 and chapter 5. Chapter 5 is a song. The song of Deborah. She sings about it. We'll look at that next week. Yahweh saw this was so vital but even more important was her song.

[11 : 53] But what's interesting is that you get very little info about the people. just about what happened. You don't hear much about Barak. Like, who is he?

Where did he come from? Blah, blah, blah, blah. I mean, you get a little bit about where he comes from but that's it. I mean, no other details. Goes right into the story. And you see, really, the honor that's given to Deborah and to Jael.

A woman. And yet, I want to encourage you, I want to ask you to let this message encourage you, be an encouragement to you.

May it drive you to love your God, the only God in Jesus Christ and be sent even more but may it also encourage you that God's love for you is relentless, it's overwhelming, it's forever in spite of you.

It's not because of you. That's for sure. Keep that in mind as we work through the text. So you see, three different aspects.

[12 : 53] God loves us in spite of our sin. He loves us in spite of our weakness, our weak faith and then he orchestrates all things for his glory. We're going to see those three aspects here. So first, number one, God loves us in spite of our sin but he will discipline us.

He will. We read that in Hebrews chapter 12. God loves us in spite of our sin, verse one through three, verse 14 to 16 and 23 to 24.

Notice verse one, the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of Yahweh after Ehud died. Take away the restraint of the judge. They go right back. Right back to playing the harlot.

Right back to doing evil in Yahweh's sight. Right back to going after other gods. You know, it's scary when only outside pressures, outside influences or outside leadership forces fidelity.

Which shows our need for Christ and for him to change us, doesn't it? Notice how God responds.

[14 : 07] He loves his people so much he wants them to want him solely. Verse two, and Yahweh sold them into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan. This is his disciplining hand upon his people.

Interesting, he would sell Sisera into the hands of the woman. We'll see that in a moment. God does not take lightly though when oppressors oppress his people. He shows his grace by rescuing them because notice it says in verse three, and the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh.

They're groaning again he sells them to the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan who reigned in Hazor about 18 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee.

At one time the most powerful Canaanite city in North Palestine. So he does this, he sells them, they cry out to the Lord and then he's gonna rescue them.

He's gonna bring them salvation. The Lord is our salvation. Why are we singing that song? Look at verse 14. Deborah said to Barak, Arise, for this is the day in which Yahweh has given Sisera into your hands.

[15 : 15] Behold, the Lord has gone out before you. Yahweh's salvation of his people showing them his grace, showing them his love. So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him.

He went down with all his troops and notice verse 15. And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots, all his army with the edge of the sword. We find out later in chapter 5 verse 22 what had happened.

I'll bring this up a little bit more later too. The horses broke ranks because what happened was the Kishon was overwhelmed. It flooded. And if you have a flood with all this water, water and dirt make mud.

Mud does not work for chariots. It doesn't work. So the chariots got stuck in the mud. The horses broke ranks. They ran away from their drivers.

Then the foot soldiers became sidetracked. Total disarray. Yahweh brought a huge victory for Barak against the Canaanites.

[16 : 21] Interesting, showing his superiority to the false god of Baal who was the god, excuse me, the storm god. Verse 16.

But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harasheth Hagoyim and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword. Not even one was left. This was God's judgment. Remember the means God was using to judge the Canaanite people. It's his means to judge them for their evil. Now, jump over to verse 23.

Again, we're still under God loves us in spite of our sin. You see, his love for his people, he subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel. The hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan till they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

He was faithful to his word. He rescued the sons of Israel. He gave them victory. Notice, you see, in spite of the sin of Israel, they cried out to him and he delivered them.

[17 : 24] In spite of our sin, God will still show us his love but he'll discipline us. That's how much he loves his people. That's how much he loves you.

God loves us in spite of our sin. Number two, God loves us in spite of our weakness. You see that in verses 4 through 9.

He loves us in spite of our weakness. And some sub points to this, he still shows us his grace and mercy but it could have been different.

You'll see what I mean in a moment. He loves us in spite of our weakness. Notice, we start here in verse 4. Deborah, prophetess, the wife of Lipodeth, was judging Israel at that time.

She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel and the killed country of Ephraim. The sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. She had a prophetess like Miriam, the sister of Moses, like Huldah.

[18 : 33] God saw fit to speak revelation to her. Maybe this led to her becoming a judge. The people came to her looking for guidance and counsel. So she would give the information revealed to her by God to the people to judge them.

Now, given that this woman was already judging Israel prior to their deliverance from the Canaanites, it means that her work was different and unique. It definitely was not the norm because the rule of women is not normal.

It was abnormal. Something underlying was going on, but Samuel doesn't give us the details of that. And yet, interesting, she knew that the task of military leadership was not for her.

Verse 6, she sent a son of Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kadesh, Naphtali, and said, and behold, Yahweh, the God of Israel, has commanded, go and march to Mount Tabor. And with you 10,000 men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun, now draw out to Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army with his chariots, all his troops to the river Kishon, now give him into your hand.

That's why God chose this man Barak to lead the people. It also shows something, she centered herself upon Yahweh and his work. She sought to exalt the Lord, calling upon Israel to obey his word, she did that.

[20 : 05] Bless the women and the mothers who call their children to trust the Lord. Physical and spiritual children. And yet, it implies something.

This implies there was a lack of qualified men, qualified and willing men. It's sad when men do not rise up to God's call for them to lead his people.

And you're going to see a little bit of this here with Barak. But here we have to stop and ask ourselves a question.

If Deborah is a prophetess, as a judge in Israel, what does this mean? Does this mean women should have a place in leadership specifically within the church?

No. Just because Yahweh did something out of the norm doesn't mean that becomes the norm. Barak was a man, a man of faith.

[21 : 04] He's in Hebrews chapter 11 for crying out loud. He's in the hall of faith. But the text also shows his failure. We'll look at that in a moment. But we must be careful here.

This was a unique situation. Descriptive does not necessarily denote prescriptive. Just because something is described to you doesn't necessarily mean it's prescribed to you.

Be careful to linking those things together when you look at scripture. Plus, women being rulers in God's church contradicts what Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 14.

We even looked at something in 1 Timothy chapter 2 a few weeks ago. For some reason, God saw fit to do things this way. But you see Barak coming on the scene, lived at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee.

He was summoned by God through Deborah to be the deliverer of Israel against the Canaanites. And he'd obey on one condition. Go, march, I'm going to give it into your hand, she says.

[22 : 15] This is from the Lord. Yahweh's going to use you. She prophesied out of his salvation. You're the means by which salvation is going to come. And it says there in the river Kishon, I told you earlier, the Kishon river was going to, it was an esterlon plain.

It was probably going to flood, the Lord was going to have that flood and be overwhelmed by water and there's going to be mud and dirt and the chariots weren't going to be able to work. This showed actually Deborah and Barak would display great faith in Yahweh. He would still lead them to victory. But notice what happens in verse 8. Then Barak said to her, if you go with me then I will go, if you will not go with me I will not go.

Here's a condition. To obey the Lord was if Deborah would go with him. He wanted her support, he wanted her help. And Deborah agreed to go, but notice verse 9.

Nevertheless the honor shall not be yours on the journey. that you're about to take for the Lord will sell, sell, it's the same word that's used in verse 2, the Lord's soul, the nation of Israel, the sons of Israel.

[23 : 29] The Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman. She warned him, a consequence of him not fully depending on the Lord, God would use the means of a woman to honor her.

This tells us a few things. First of all, it's encouraging actually. God still uses weak faith individuals to fulfill and accomplish his purposes. If he used Barak, he can use me.

If he used Barak, he can use you. Though he had weak faith, he's still included in the hall of faith. His response though showed his lack of courage and the faith that he could have had in the Lord.

This is what I meant when I said earlier, it could have been different. I mean, think about it. What if he said, okay, I'm going to go? How would I have change things? Why did the Lord do this?

What was behind Barak's request? Why did he do this? We don't know. Salmon doesn't give us the details. All we see is that God ordained this to happen.

[24 : 47] The honor will be given to a woman because of his weak faith. In order for the Lord to accomplish his deliverance, he used this woman's act.

And this gives us encouragement. God still loves us in spite of our sin and God still loves us in spite of our weak faith. Praise God.

He still loves us though our faith in him is weak. You see that with Barak. And yet he still used him. He still was gracious to him. And he still delivered his people.

You see that? He loves us in spite of our sin. He loves us in spite of our weakness. And now number three, he orchestrates all things in his providence.

And the first thing he's in orchestrate in his providence is Jael. This is a very unusual way of dealing with things. And in that culture at that time, this would be embarrassing to Barak.

[25 : 57] Now I know in our culture we've got, we kind of, how can that be like that? But in that culture it was a big deal. normal expectation would be some awesome warrior.

Right? That would be the normal expectation. So the first means that he would use to save his people was a woman, Jael. A most unusual way.

And that culture is very embarrassing. And yet, God loves to use obscure ways and unexpected people to bring about his salvation to show his glory. Remember we looked at that last week?

He loves to do stuff like that. He orchestrates all things in his providence to throw you off. You're expecting this, he'll do that.

You're expecting that, he'll do this. Because it's not about you. It's not about me. It's about God because remember, he gets all the glory.

[27 : 01] Once again, God uses the unknown to show his grace and his own glory. He is sovereign using whom he wills for his plan. God took victory away from a man and gave it to a female, which in that culture would be discomfoting.

God does the unexpected. He loves to do that. So what's the point? Yahweh brings victory and salvation in the way that he wants to bring victory and salvation.

So this is good for us to remember. It is not up to us to try to figure out or even agree with the means used for him to do his will. He does all things so that he gets all the glory, not us.

The perfect example of this, the greatest example of this, is at the cross. He gets all the glory at the cross. You would think it would look like failure, but it was victory.

You would think it would be like horrible, horrible, horrible, and it was, and yet that's by which we are saved. Notice also, if you would, in verse 10, Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kadesh.

[28:19] 10,000 men went up with him. Deborah also went up with him. Look at verse 11. Now, Heber, the Kenite, had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses.

Why is this important? Why does he bring this up? Because in God's providence, it was the Kenites that settled south, but this guy headed north.

And it would be his wife that would put the nail in the coffin, pun intended, for Sisera. God providentially works all things for His own glory.

Now, I wanted to give you a definition of providence. I think it's most appropriate to give you a definition of providence. What is the providence of God? Wayne Grudem has a great definition, which I'll put up on the screen for you.

God's providence. God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that He keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them, cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do, and directs them to fulfill His purposes.

[29:37] And He directs it so that we would love Him. For us as His people, He's directing all things that we would reflect His Son and love Him and the Father first and foremost.

That's why He's doing all these things. That's God's providence. So you see that here just with Heber, he moves north, and it's his wife, which you'll see there in verses 17, what to, what, 22?

His wife is going to be one to drive the nail into Sisera's head. God. This is great, because God will use even the most mundane, minuscule event to bring about His perfect plan and purpose.

One writer wrote this about Heber, not even Heber's U-Haul truck was outside Yahweh's plan. He's actively involved in our salvation.

John 6, 44, no one is able to come to me unless the Father sent me and draws him, and I'll raise him up on the last day. You must repent and believe, but guess what? Only God must move for you to be able to repent and believe.

[30:50] He's involved in every little detail of your life. And He's working all these things, all these things that you would love Him most, foremost, that you would want Him everything in your life.

Notice what happens, verse 17 through 22. Sisera, he got stripped away from his chariot. He fled on foot. He went up to Heber, the tent of Jael.

She's like, come, come, turn aside, my master. He turned aside. Verse 19, give me a drink. She gave him some milk. Verse 20, she hides him, then verse 20, send the doorway, tell him, if anyone's asking about it, tell him, nobody's here.

Then verse 21, she took a tent peg, seized a hammer, drove him to his temple while he was sleeping. Oh, nice gal. He signed a peace treaty with Heber.

I guess it wasn't with his wife, though. He thought he'd be safe there, but Jael would drive that tent peg, kill this huge, important general.

[32:06] By the hand of a woman, he died. Again, in that culture, it would be disgraceful. Jael says, come, I will show you the man whom you're sinking. And here, Barak, he finds Sisera.

Jael's treachery and Sisera truly bother some people. thinking something like this shouldn't be in the Bible. Well, keep in mind, remember, the Canaanites were not fuzzy, warm, nice, cuddly people. Let's just cuddle with the Canaanites. Yeah. They severely oppressed Israel. Verse 3. They probably raped their women.

Chapter 5, verse 30. So keep that in mind. And the other thing to keep in mind, the Bible deals with real life issues.

It doesn't shy away from that. It tells things as they are because God is orchestrating everything for his own glory.

[33:17] But here's the bigger question. Are you going to learn from Israel and direct your heart to solely want Yahweh, Yahweh God, open to him doing whatever it takes so that you would love him first and foremost?

That's the real question. He will providentially work all things for his glory. In spite of your sin, in spite of your weakness.

All things for his glory, for your salvation, and for your love. That's what he wants. God regards even the smallest bit of trust in him, as small as a mustard seed, as Jesus said in Matthew chapter 17. Yet he will bring great pains to make it grow. That's why the gospel in Christ's death is so vital. Have you trusted Christ today? If you're here and you're not a Christian, have you trusted Christ? Just small mustard seed of trusting in Jesus? Where you say, God, you should judge me. I know I'm a sinner and I believe Jesus. You died for my sins.

[34:32] I repent. I put my trust in you. He'll save you. That's the gospel. Repent and trust Christ. It's so good to know that in spite of our weak faith though, and in spite of our lack of dependence, and even in spite of our sin, God still faithfully loves us and faithfully orchestrates all things in his providence so that we would be a people who solely love and want him and so that he gets all the glory.

It's all for him. That's what this chapter is about. Really, that's what the Bible's about, isn't it? So let this message drive you to love your God, the only God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent even more, but may I also encourage you that God's love for you is relentless, it's never-ending, it's overwhelming in spite of you.

I leave you with the words to this song by Tasha Cobbs Leonard.

It's called In Spite of Me. I don't cross every T, I don't dot every I. I've got more flaws than a little, and I messed up a thousand times.

I don't always commit, sometimes I give up way too quickly, and then I get tired of trying to run away from who I am to who I want to be. Some days are better than others, I can be up, then I'm down, but beyond my mistakes, I'm found in your grace, and this one thing will never change.

[36:12] You still love me in spite of me. You still chose me. How can it be? Every scar, every flaw, you see it all, you see it all.

You still love me, love me, in spite of me, in spite of me. I'm stubborn at heart, I'm quick to put up a guard, I do it all by myself, I won't ask for help, and sometimes my mouth is smart.

I can be insecure, counting other people's blessings, and never stop to notice what I got. Some days are better than others, I can be up, then I'm down, but beyond my mistakes, I'm found in your grace, and this one thing will never change.

You still love me in spite of me. You still chose me. How can it be? Every scar, every flaw, you see it all, you see it all. You still love me.

You still love me. And then the bridge, she says this, can I get a witness? You didn't give me what I deserve. Love so relentless got me singing hallelujah.

[37:17] God still loves you in spite of your sin, in spite of your weakness, and he's orchestrating all things, and he'll discipline you for it, so you'll love him.

Let's pray. Our Father, it can be almost scary when we hear these truths.

Scary because we're realizing that everything that's happening in our lives is for you. and it's directing us to love you and to want you.

And you bring out those false gods in our lives, in our hearts. You bring out our weak faith, faith, and you make it stronger by having us suffer and face your disciplining hand.

And yet, thank you. You're a gracious God. Thank you that you give us grace to be sustained in these times of discipline. Thank you that your love is overwhelming, it's never-ending, it's relentless.

[39:05] Oh, Father, drive us to love you. Jesus, drive us to love you. I want to encourage you at this time, we'll have a few moments of silence, where you can reflect upon the truth that we've seen in God's word.

Ponder it. Fill your mind with truth. May it encourage you, the gospel word, let this time be a time of silence between you and the Lord, where you can let his word be implanted even deeper into your heart.

And we'll sing, we'll pray, but if you would, take a few moments to do this.