



“A Step of Faith”  
Judges 4-5

**Idea:** Faith is the glorious combination of a humble confession of one’s own inadequacy and a sure confidence in the grace of God.

**Intro:** FAITH...What is faith?

It has been said that faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see (William Newton Clark). Manley Beasley defined faith as “believing something is so when it is not so in order for it be so.” Augustine said, “Seek not to understand that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.” He also said, “Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.” William Barclay said, “It is of the very essence of faith that we should believe that what Jesus says is true. So often we have a kind of vague, wistful longing that the promises of Jesus should be true. The only way really to enter into them is to believe them with the clutching intensity of a drowning man.”

Oswald Chambers said, “Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading.”

Is faith a blind step into the unknown? Or is faith a settled and confident step with God into the seemingly unknown?

Maurice Irvin answers this question for us. He said, “Biblical faith is trusting God, and the power of faith is putting the matter in God’s hands so that He is able to do what He wants to do in that situation.”

This morning, I call us to this most crucial aspect of our spiritual lives... “A Step of Faith.”

Read Judges 4:1-24, 5:31b.

**Inquiry:** We are again confronted with the same old problem in Israel. They had relapsed back into idolatry. This beginning highlights the fundamental unresolved spiritual issue in Israel. By the end of Judges, it will become clear to us that the disobedience of Israel is a chronic disease endemic to God’s people.

Israel’s idolatry resulted in God selling them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan. His army commander, Sisera, had 900 chariots of iron, which he used to terrorize and oppress God’s people for twenty years. Like Israel did when oppressed by Cushan-rishathaim and Eglon, they cried out to God for help. God heard their cry and delivered them from Jabin and Sisera.

The narrative of chapter 4 telling of the victory and death of Sisera is followed in chapter 5 by a triumph-song, which recounts the same events in poetic form. The content of the two chapters could be retold as a traditional fairytale. “Once upon a time there was a wicked king, with had a fierce general, who had 900 iron chariots. Life was hard for the poor folk who had come to live in that land. But three people were going to rescue them. The first was a judge who sat under a tree. The second was a soldier who won a battle in a thunderstorm. And the third was a woman with a mallet and a tent-peg.” It

wouldn't be quite the kind of tale that appears in most storybooks because God comes into it, but all the same it would be a riveting read.

The chapters could also be told as a mirror of real history. The Middle East was a political melting pot back then just as it is today. Judges, however, is not a fairytale, and it is more than a history book. It is Scripture, and although it presents to us a historical record, its purpose is to teach theology, to teach about God.

The stories of the first three judges (Othniel, Ehud, & Shamgar) have focused our attention on God himself and His methods as Judge and Savior. The story of Deborah and Barak sheds more light on God's people. It highlights a fundamental aspect of one's spiritual life...faith. Israel continued to prove that they were an unfaithful people. In the face of unfaithfulness, though, we are confronted with a man who took a step of faith.

“Faith is kind of like jumping out of an airplane at 10,000 feet. If God doesn't catch you, you splatter. But how do you know whether or not He is going to catch you unless you jump out?”  
– Ann Kiemel

So is faith a blind step into the unknown? Or is faith a settled and confident step with God into the seemingly unknown? Faith is the glorious combination of a humble confession of one's own inadequacy and a sure confidence in the grace of God. This confidence in God is what we find in Barak as he took a step of faith.

God is calling every one of us to step out in faith and trust Him in our lives. Perhaps He is calling some of you to take a step of faith in your career. He may be calling others to take a step of faith in your finances, service within the church, sharing the gospel, going on a mission trip, or working through a problem.

God is the hero in this story, but Barak is the faithful example we are called to emulate as he took a step of faith. What does a step of faith involve?

## 1. Complete Confidence in the Word of God

The Bible describes Deborah as a prophetess. She served as spokesperson for God to the people. The designation here deliberately places Deborah in the succession of Moses (Deut 18:15-22) and in the company of other female bearers of this title. She is also described as a judge. Her leadership was much different than the “judges” of this book. As a prophetess, she revealed God’s decision on matters but was not a military commander like Othniel, Ehud, Barak, and Gideon.

As the spokesperson for God, Deborah summoned Barak and commissioned him as the one God had chosen to deliver Israel from Jabin and Sisera (4:6). Through Deborah, God commands Barak to go and to deploy 10,000 troops from Naphtali and Zebulun at Mt. Tabor. The command signals that God is not only calling the general; He also determines the strategy.

Appl: When the Lord calls you to take a new step of faith and to follow Him, He does not just summon you; He also gives you His strategy.

Deborah’s words also promised the Lord’s personal support. He would draw out Sisera and deliver them into Barak’s hand (4:7).

Barak was able to step out in faith because He had heard from God. This plan of deliverance for Israel wasn’t something he devised, and it wasn’t the plan and wishes of the leadership of Israel. It was a word from God. Today, it is no different for us.

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. – Rom 10:17*

Appl: A faith that is not grounded in God's Word is not a faith in God. It may be faith in ourselves or something else, but it is not biblical faith. When God is calling us to step out in faith and follow Him, we can be confident when we have a word from His Word.

## **2. Complete Reliance upon the Presence of God**

Illust: When I played football years ago, every week we would install new plays as part of the preparation for the upcoming game. We would run those plays over and over again until we got them right. We would run them over and over again until we got the *feel* for the play...until we relied and trusted one another to do the right thing.

Have you ever wondered why God places you in certain roles...why He allows certain circumstances to affect your life? Have you ever wondered why it seems you go through many of the same difficulties over and over again?

I believe the ultimate reason God assigns you to any position or allows any circumstance to affect you is because He can best use that position and hardship, at that time, to accomplish His purpose of shaping you into the image of Jesus.

Barak had a spiritual deficiency. Like most people he was reluctant to completely follow God. When confronted with Deborah's commissioning to march against Sisera, his immediate response was, "Yes, if you go with me." Many view Barak's response as reluctant and cowardly faith, and maybe there was some legitimate apprehension. I have even preached the text this way before. As I have studied this passage

over the past few weeks, however, I have come to a different conclusion. What we see in Barak was not cowardice but faith. We see the glorious combination of a humble confession of one's own inadequacy and a sure confidence in the grace of God. Deborah was God's spokesperson. Her words are identified with God's words. Therefore, at a deeper level, Barak's objection reflects a recognition of her status. The request to be accompanied by the prophetess is a plea for the presence of God. It is similar to Moses' request of God in Exodus 33:12-17. Barak was presented with another opportunity to completely rely upon God. Perhaps what the Lord was seeking to develop in both Barak and Israel was a greater reliance upon His presence and power.

Appl: God's calling upon our lives is never a calling that can be accomplished in our own strength and abilities. He always calls us to something greater than our resources can handle. His calling for us to take a step of faith is a call to rely on His presence in your life.

Jesus said, "*Apart from me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5)

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*  
– Phil 4:13

What's the difference between the two statements?...The presence of God. This leads us to a third aspect.

### **3. Complete Devotion to the Glory of God**

Many have interpreted Deborah's response that the glory of defeating Sisera would go to a woman as a judgment for his reluctance. I don't believe Barak's missing the honor of killing Sisera is necessarily a rebuke. It could just as easily be a plain statement of

fact. The Scriptures give us no indication that Deborah's statement troubled Barak. Why wouldn't Barak be upset that the privilege would go to someone else, especially a woman? The answer is simple; Barak was completely devoted to God's glory.

Jael was given the opportunity to kill Israel's enemy, but she really didn't do much. She lured Sisera with safety, sustenance, and sleep. Then she drove a stake through his head. But if God hadn't brought a storm to the plains and rendered Sisera's chariots inoperable. If He hadn't given Israel the upper hand, then Sisera would never have fled to her tent. God is the hero and the deliver.

Barak was satisfied to do what God told Him to do. He was satisfied to play his role because it wasn't about His glory but God's glory. He wasn't concerned about whether or not songs would be sung about his great victory. He was only concerned about the glory of God. Barak knew that the hero was God anyway. Barak understood that his army was outgunned from the beginning. In their own power, Israel was no match for Sisera. For there to be an Israelite victory, God would have to fight for them.

Appl: A step of faith is a step taken with your eyes upon Jesus. It is not a step taken with your eyes upon yourself. You see, when you have a Word from God, you lose sight of yourself and focus on the Lord and the task that will bring glory to Him and blessings to others. When God calls you to start a discipleship group with 4 other men, you don't focus on your lack of experience or knowledge of the Bible. Instead, you say yes and trust in the Holy Spirit's leadership and equipping power. When God tells you to start a small group in your home for ladies in your neighborhood, you don't focus on your inabilities. You focus on God's ability and step out. You set your eyes on Jesus

the Author and Perfecter of your faith (Heb 12:2). You step out in faith in confidence of God's calling and because you understand that the Lord delights in using your weakness to bring Himself glory (2 Cor 12:9).

**Conclusion:** Are you walking in faith today? Are you walking with a sure confidence in God's Word? Are you walking in absolute reliance upon God's presence in your life? Are you unashamedly devoted to God's glory in your life?

Whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23). Israel needed to learn to walk by faith with God. They needed to learn to trust Him. That lesson they never learned well, and that is why they continued to cycle through the same things in their lives. Today, you might be struggling with trusting God. Because you don't believe God's Word, you can see a pattern of consequences in your life. Like Israel you have said no to God's Word. Thus, your disobedience has brought a set of consequences that God is using to get your attention. So when the struggle becomes too difficult, you cry out to God for help. Your cry, though, isn't a cry of repentance. It's only a cry for momentary deliverance. Thus, you haven't learned to walk in faithful dependence, so you continue to walk in your own power.

Why don't put that behavior to death today? Why don't you lay faithlessness down and pick up faithfulness today? Why don't you stop relying in your abilities and begin trusting in God's ability today? Trusting in God starts with salvation. Put your trust in Christ for the forgiveness for your sins today.