

Deborah & Barak

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 July 2017

Preacher: Daniel Sladek

[0 : 00] Good evening. It's a pleasure to be with you tonight. This is the first time I've been in Brunfield Evangelical Church, so thank you very much for your welcome this evening. I also find it a little bit daunting being here. Jonathan Gemmell came on several occasions to speak at ETS, where I teach.

I know Graham Shanks fairly well from ETS as well, so I know the standard of preaching that you're used to, so it's daunting for me to be here. Also, Judges isn't an easy book, is it? We've already heard about J.L. and her tent peg, so it is daunting coming here.

But I trust that, as God's Word has preached to us, that He'll bless us through it. The account of Deborah and Barak is unique in Judges in that we get it two times.

There's a story and then a song, so the first part of it in Chapter 4 has already been read to us. As I begin tonight, I'd like to read the second part, which is the song. I'm not going to attempt to sing it. You'll be relieved.

It's Chapter 5. So as we begin, we'll read God's Word again. On that day, Deborah and Barak, son of Abinahim, sang this song.

[1 : 08] When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves, praise the Lord. Hear this, you kings. Listen, you rulers. I will sing to the Lord. I will sing.

I will make music to the Lord, the God of Israel. O Lord, when you went out from Zer, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook. The heavens poured, the clouds poured down water.

The mountains quaked before the Lord, the one of Sinai. Before the Lord, the God of Israel. In the days of Shamgar, son of Anat, in the days of Jael, the roads were abandoned.

Travelers took to winding paths. Village life in Israel ceased. Ceased until I, Deborah, arose. Arose as a mother in Israel. When they chose new gods, war came to the city gates.

Not a shield or spear was seen among the forty thousand in Israel. My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the Lord.

[2 : 15] You who ride on white donkeys sitting on your saddled blankets, and you who walk along the road, consider the voice of the singers at the watering places. They recite the righteous acts of the Lord, the righteous acts of his warriors in Israel.

Then the people of the Lord went down to the city gates. Wake up, wake up, Deborah. Wake up, wake up. Break out in song.

Arise, O Barak. Take captive your captives, O son of Abinoam. Then the men who were left came down to the nobles. The people of the Lord came to me with the mighty.

Some came from Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek. Benjamin was with the people who followed you. From Makar, captains came down. From Zebulun, those who bear a commander's staff.

The princes of Issachar were with Deborah. Yes, Issachar was with Barak, rushing after him into the valley. In the districts of Reuben, there was much searching of heart.

[3 : 15] Why did you stay among the campfires to hear the whistling for the flocks? In the districts of Reuben, there was much searching of heart. Gillian stayed beyond the Jordan. And Dan, why did he linger by the ships?

Asher remained on the coast and stayed in his coves. The people of Zebulun risked their very lives. So did Naphtali on the heights of the field. Kings came.

They fought. The kings of Canaan fought at Tanakh by the waters of Megiddo. But they carried off no silver and no plunder. From the heavens, the stars fought.

From their courses, they fought against Sisera. The river Kishon swept them away. The age-old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul, be strong.

Then thundered the horses' hooves. Galloping, galloping, go his mighty steeds. Curse Meroz, says the angel of the Lord. Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the Lord.

[4 : 17] To help the Lord against the mighty. Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite. Most blessed of tent-dwelling women. He asked for water and she gave him milk.

In a bowl fit for noble, she brought him curdled milk. Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer. She struck Sisera. She crushed his head.

She shattered and pierced his temple. At her feet he sank. He fell, there he lay. At her feet he sank, he fell. Where he sank, there he fell, dead.

Through the window peered Sisera's mother. Behind the lattice she cried out, Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed? The wisest of her ladies answered her.

Indeed, she keeps saying to herself, Are they not finding and dividing the spoils? A girl or two for each man. Colorful garments is plunder for Sisera. Colorful garments embroidered.

[5 : 22] Highly embroidered garments for my neck. All this is plunder. So may all your enemies perish, O Lord. But may they who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength.

Then the land had peace for forty years. May God bless his word. As we begin tonight, I'd like to begin with a question.

And it's a rhetorical question. I'm telling you that so you know that you're not expecting you to answer. It's quite a personal question. In the free church I don't need to explain that because if I ask a question nobody's going to answer.

But just in case you might feel that I'm expecting you to answer, I'm not. What's the biggest problem that you face? What's the biggest issue in your life?

To put it slightly differently, what's most important to you? To help us answer that kind of question, when you get up in the morning, what's the first thing that you think about? Maybe when you're going to bed at night, is you lying there in your bed?

[6 : 25] What is it that turns round and round in your mind? For each of us, that's quite a personal question. If we were to make it slightly less personal, if we keep that question in the back of our mind, but if we make it slightly less personal, in this passage, in Judges chapter 4, what's the biggest problem that the Israelites faced?

The narrator has an opinion about that as he tells the story, doesn't he? But if you were to actually ask the Israelites, what's your biggest problem? We get a sense of that in verse 3, don't we?

It's talking there about Sisera, this man who was the commander of their enemy's army, and tells us that because Sisera had 900 iron chariots and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years, they cried to the Lord for help.

There's a bit of irony in that, isn't there? It took 20 years for them to cry out to the Lord. But if you were to ask the Israelites, what's your biggest problem? What would they answer?

Sisera. Sisera and his 900 chariots and his 20 years of oppression. That's, I think, what they would say was their biggest problem. But as we look at the way this story is recorded for us in the Bible, we see that the author of it is wanting us to recognize that that's not their biggest problem.

[7 : 51] What's a problem? There's actually only a symptom. Their bigger problem was different than that, wasn't it? In verse 1, After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Their problem was not Jabin, or his commander Sisera.

Their problem was themselves. Their problem was the fact that they had rejected God. Now, often, in our day, if you saw people who were being oppressed like that, we would view them rightly as being innocent victims.

But in the narrative, we discovered that the Israelites were not innocent victims. The troubles that they were going through were troubles that they had made for themselves because of their rejection of God.

Their biggest problem was one of allegiance, or loyalty. Their biggest problem was a lack of allegiance to God, a lack of loyalty to God.

[9 : 02] Now, it's not just at the beginning of this account that that issue of allegiance arises, is it? We look at verse 11. The first time you read through the story, verse 11 stands out as being rather

strange, doesn't it?

It's as if the story is interrupted and we're given this seemingly superfluous detail. Now, Haber, the Kenite, had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law, and pitched his tent near the great tree in Za'ananim, near Kadesh.

What's the point of that? Why does the author bother telling us about Haber? Well, it's partly because of his wife, Jael, who becomes significant later on in the story.

But if you look at verse 17, we read what it meant that Haber had decided to leave his family and move. In verse 17, we're told that Cisera, however, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite.

This is why we're told about him now. Because there were friendly relations between Jabin, king of Hazor, and the clan of Heber the Kenite. Do you see what Heber was doing?

[10:16] Back in verse 11, when it says he left his relatives and he moved. Heber moved because he was changing sides. To be very simplistic, in the Old Testament, you could divide people into two groups.

There were those people who were for God and those people who were against God. And in the middle, we have the Kenites, Hobab and his descendants.

Now, Hobab, he was connected to Moses by marriage. He and his people had seen what God had done for the Israelites. And they had said to themselves, the God of the Israelites is the true God. And so they had cast their lot with the Israelites. They had recognized that the God of Israel was the true God. And so in chapter 1 of the book of Judges, in verse 16, we're told that the descendants of Moses' father-in-law, the Kenites went up from the city of Palms with the men of Judah to live among the people of the desert of Judah in the Negev.

They had made the right choice. They had sided with God. Now, if Heber is moving, if he's leaving his family and he's siding with Jabin and his wicked, violent regime, it's not merely that Heber is leaving his family, He's forsaking God.

[11:42] He's going in the wrong direction. And this issue of allegiance, we see it not just in the beginning, not just in the middle. If you look at the very end of the account, in chapter 5, if you want to know what a passage in the Bible is about, often it's instructive to look at the end of it.

And at the end of this account, in verse 31, chapter 5, 31, we read, So may all your enemies perish, O Lord, but may those who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength.

There's two groups of people there, aren't there? There are those who are God's enemies and those who have sided with God, those who love God.

Two different groups of people. And this issue of allegiance comes up, this issue of loyalty. So, if we can become personal again, I began by asking you, what's your greatest problem?

Perhaps it's not a problem, we could think more generally, what's the greatest issue in your life?

Well, through this passage, God is calling each one of us to recognize that He ought to be the most important, the most significant thing in our lives.

[13:01] And so the question for us is to ask ourselves, how important is God to me? Or if we think of Heber, which direction are you going?

Do you find that you're going towards God? Or do you find that you're going away from Him? Now, many of you here tonight, maybe you have taken a decision about that.

Maybe for some of you, these things are new to you, and you're still wrestling with that. But this is the point this passage is driving home. There is nothing more important for us to know than the God who created us.

Now, if this passage is seeking to convince us, if God is telling us through this passage, that He is the most important thing, or that He ought to be the most important thing in our lives, that allegiance to Him is the most important thing, we might ask, why?

Why? Why should Deborah and Barak and Jael, why should all of these people, on what grounds did God have to expect them to side with Him?

[14:08] Couldn't have been an easy decision for Jael to take a side with the God of Israel, could it? Why should they take this decision? I would suggest that as we look at this passage, that there are at least two reasons that are given here as to why they should have sided with the God of Israel.

Two reasons why you ought to side with God, why you ought to follow the Lord Jesus. First of all, God has made Himself known, and secondly, God is victorious.

So first of all, God makes Himself known. Now, if God were difficult to know, if God were hidden, it would have been unfair to expect Barak to side with Him, wouldn't it?

It would be unfair to expect Jael to side with the God of Israel. But the fact is that God isn't unknown to them. If you look with me at verse 6, in the NIV, now this is talking about Deborah, the Israelites are being oppressed.

In chapter 4, verse 6, Deborah sends for Barak, who's going to be their military leader. He's going to be their champion. In verse 6, Deborah sent for Barak, son of Abinuum, from Kadesh and Naphtali, and said to him, The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, go, take with you 10,000 men.

[15:31] Now, as we read that in the NIV, we would get the impression that this is the first time that Barak has heard anything about this. I don't know if any of you have different translations.

In the ESV, it translates it rather differently. She sent and summoned Barak, son of Abinuum, from Kadesh and Naphtali, and said to him, Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you, go and gather your men?

Now, in the language that it's originally written in, that is a more direct translation, Deborah does, in fact, present him with a question. Hasn't God commanded you to do that?

Now, some people suggest that that was just a way of emphasizing the truthfulness that the surely God has commanded you, and that's why the NIV translates it this way. I think it's more natural to take it as an actual question.

Now, a question like that is implying something. If you say, Hasn't God told you this? Well, that implies you're going to answer yes. But if Barak has to answer yes to this question, it implies that God had already told him to do this, and he hadn't done it.

[16:45] That means that Barak's problems start not in verse 7, sorry, in verse 8. As we read through the account, we get to verse 8, and Barak says to her, If you go with me, I'll go.

But if you don't go with me, I won't go. Barak's name in Hebrew actually means lightning. Barak doesn't respond with very lightning-like speed to God's directions to him, does he?

But if this is true, it means that his problems didn't start in verse 8, when he says that he won't go unless Deborah goes with him. Actually, his problems had already started before this, when God had told him to go, and he did nothing.

But for just now, our point in looking at this is that God had made himself known to Barak. Now, the good news for us is that God isn't hidden from us.

If God were hidden, if he were distant, if it were difficult to know God, we might think it was unfair of him to expect us to know him. But the fact is that God has spoken to us.

[17:53] God speaks to us in lots of different ways. Most clearly, God has spoken to us through Jesus. So, for example, in Hebrews, in the New Testament, we read that in the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. That's Jesus. If you want to know God, you can.

Because God is speaking to you. God spoke to Barak in various different ways, not least through Deborah. God is speaking to us through his Son, through Jesus.

And that's why the Bible is so important to us, isn't it? Because it is pre-eminently this book that tells us about Jesus. So this book is about, isn't it, what God has done for us through the Lord Jesus.

So first of all, the reason that we should side with God is because he is a God who has made himself known to us. He speaks to us.

[19:04] Secondly, as we look at this passage, we're confronted with the fact that the God of Israel is victorious. It's important that we know him. It's important that we side with him because he wins.

Now, as we look at this passage, we see God's victory in two different ways. We see that God is victorious in judgment. And then secondly, we see that God is victorious in salvation.

So first of all, God is victorious in judgment. Now, this takes us to Jael. In verse 22 of chapter 4, at the very end of that, we read that Barak went in with Jael, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple, dead.

On that day, God subdued Jabin, the Canaanite king, before the Israelites. And the hand of the Israelites grew stronger and stronger against Jabin, the Canaanite king, until they destroyed him.

And then if we turn over to chapter 5, having repeated again what Jael did, we read in verse 31, So may all your enemies perish, O Lord.

[20 : 19] What Jael did is presented to us as being God's victory over his enemies. Now, this is a troubling passage for us, isn't it?

I used to live in Skye. In Skye, there are lots of B&Bs; and things like that. People talk all the time about Highland hospitality. People talk similarly about Middle Eastern hospitality or ancient Near Eastern hospitality.

you're talking about the Bible. Well, this is the opposite of that, isn't it? What was Jael doing? She went out and met him and tricked him and lured him in. Cicero is presented as an almost pathetic figure.

Isn't he? Almost like a baby being put to bed and tucked up with a blanket and given milk until she takes a tent peg and drives it through his temple and nails him to the ground.

We think, my goodness, what do we do with this? We find this very troubling. It's important for us, I think, understanding this passage and what the Bible is doing with it.

[21 : 27] First of all, to consider what kind of man Cicero was. We're not told a lot about him, but if you look at chapter 5, do you notice at the end of that, Cicero hasn't come home and his mother is worried.

His household is worried. Where is Cicero? Why is he taking so long in coming back? And do you see what they tell themselves to try to comfort themselves? Well, he's only taking so long because he's so busy gathering plunder.

And in verse 30, are they not finding and dividing the spoils a girl or two for each man? The words that Cicero's mother there uses for a girl, it's literally womb.

Now, this isn't Cicero speaking. You understand, this is his mother speaking about him. Tells us something about Canaanite culture, doesn't it? This is what she hoped her son was doing.

He was someone who dehumanized other people, who dehumanized women, who treated them as nothing more than sexual objects. And this was the nature, this and other things.

[22 : 37] This was the nature of his 20-year oppression of the Israelites. Cicero was a wicked man. To try to think of it in modern terms in our own day, a different but similar example, in 2011, when U.S. Special Forces finally found where Osama bin Laden was.

And they engaged him and Osama bin Laden in the end of that encounter. He died. We didn't feel sorry for him, did we? Because he was a wicked person who was bent on destruction and created an organization that specialized in killing innocent people.

And when he died, we thought, well, he got what he deserved. When we read through this account, we need to recognize that we are not to feel sorry for Cicero. he got what he deserved.

I think there are two further considerations when we encounter this kind of thing in the Old Testament. First of all, we need to keep in mind that at this time, for God's people, there was the church, if you will, as an organization, and there was the state, and they were the same thing. For Israel, there was no distinction between the church and the state. So very often in the Old Testament, you see that those people who were leaders of God's people ended up being military leaders.

[24 : 08] The Bible itself is quite clear that that is no longer the case for us. There is a distinction between the church and the state. Those who are leaders in the church are not military leaders.

God's kingdom is not to be advanced through military might. There is a difference in that sense. We also need to keep in mind that as we read these kind of accounts in the Old Testament, very often, these pictures of judgment, the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, what happened to the Canaanites, for example, what happened to Sisera, typically, these are presented to us as foreshadows of a greater event.

One day, every single person will stand before God. we will give an account of our lives. We have consciences, that's testimony to the fact that we know that that's true.

And God will defeat his enemies. One day, God will be victorious. He will put to right all the wrongs of this world. And these things that we read, for example, with jail, they aren't examples for us of what we are to go out and do.

The Bible isn't here teaching us that we should go and do something like what jail has done. But this is a picture to us of God's final judgment over his enemies.

[25 : 30] Even though we are not to do these things ourselves, it doesn't mean that it has nothing to teach us. So, God will be victorious in judgment.

Now, that was true in Judges chapters 4 and 5. God could expect these people to side with him. He could expect Barak to side with him and Deborah and jail and the rest because he was victorious. And if that was true now, it's still true today. There's, I think it's a striking passage in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul has arrived in Greece and he is there making known his gospel, this message that he presents.

And he's speaking about what happened in the life of Jesus. Jesus came, he taught, he performed various miracles, he was betrayed by his enemies, he was handed over and crucified. But then Paul goes on to say that God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. Now, in the context, that man is Jesus.

[26 : 44] Now, do you see what Paul is saying? Paul is saying that there will be a day of judgment. There will be a day when God will be victorious over all of his enemies. Now, that's a big claim.

He says that this will happen when Jesus comes in judgment. That's the man that God has appointed. Now, as Paul proclaims this message, notice why he expects people to believe this. He doesn't say, well, just take my word for it. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead. Jesus did truly die, but three days later Jesus was raised from the dead.

And one of the points that the Bible makes with regards to that is that Jesus' resurrection is proof that he is judge. It's proof that he wins. He will come victorious.

Now, that's good news, isn't it? The hymn that we began with tonight is rather striking hymn, isn't it, the way I've never heard it before, speaking about the darkness and the way the darkness is heavy upon this world.

[27 : 54] But that's true, isn't it? We're told, for example, that there's more slavery and people trafficking now than there has ever been.

There is much darkness in this world, and sometimes we experience that in our own lives. If God will one day come, if he will be victorious over his enemies, that's good news, isn't it?

But perhaps not by itself. Because if God were only victorious in judgment, we might wonder, well, what about us? Who among us could stand in the presence of this God?

God. But the good news is that not only does God call you to turn to him in light of his victory in judgment, he also emphasizes in his passage that he is victorious in salvation.

If you turn with me back to chapter 4. After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

[29 : 07] Again, if we render that slightly more literally, the passage says, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and Ehud was dead. Chapter 4 is echoing a statement which you will have seen over and over again, haunt you.

Back in chapter 3, verse 7, the Israelites did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. In chapter 3, verse 12, once again the Israelites did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord.

And in chapter 4, we read the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord. But Ehud was dead. They had messed up before, but God had sent Ehud.

God had sent this man who delivered them from the mess that they had created. And as a result of that, back in verse 30, we see that the land had peace for 80 years.

Such was the impact of what God did through Ehud that it lasted for 80 years, more than one person's lifetime. But he's dead, and they've messed up again.

[30 : 15] hope for hope. And he might be tempted to think, well, what hope is there now, honestly? Maybe you've gotten to that point in your own life. Maybe you've messed up again and again and again, and you start to think, well, what hope is there for me?

Well, that's what we get to at the point of this passage. And in verse 4, in verse 3, we see that the Israelites cried to the Lord for help.

It's at this point, in the pattern that's been established in the book of Judges, it's at this point that you expect to be told that God raised up a deliverer for them. And what, in fact, we read is that of Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

Now, at the risk of sounding sexist, in their culture, if you're facing military oppression, and you want a military leader, what you want is not a woman.

And yet, that's who we read about. And so, you're still left wondering, what's going to happen? How are these people going to be delivered? Well, then we encounter Barak, but Barak is less than impressive, isn't he?

[31 : 31] And still you're wondering, is there really any hope for them? These people really don't seem to measure up. Barak doesn't measure up to the standard of Othniel, or Ehud, for example, the judges that we read about earlier in the book, and yet, the point is that God responded to his people, and even though the situation seemed hopeless, and even though at first you couldn't even see how God was going to do anything, there's a lesson there, isn't there, in terms of how we interpret providence.

Often we're perplexed by the situation that we find ourselves in, and we think it's somehow wrong, and we forget what God is able to do, and he can do beyond what we would ever imagine. But through these people, as unlikely as they seemed, through Deborah, and through Barak, and through Jael, God did save his people.

God was not only victorious over his enemies, he also saved his people. And that is so important for us, because it is not merely true that God is a God of judgment.

It is not merely the case that every person will give an account of their lives to God, to Jesus. That is true, but if I could quote again from the Apostle Paul, in another passage, Paul is again speaking about the resurrection of Jesus, he says, the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

That is a reference to the fact of Jesus' resurrection. And notice the result of that in Paul's thinking. Therefore, my brothers, that is because Jesus has been raised from the dead, I want you to know that through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

[33 : 24] Through him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. There is hope for us because God is victorious in salvation.

Jesus was raised from the dead, and that's proof not merely that he will come in judgment, but it is also proof that Jesus is the one who is able to forgive you, even when you have once again done evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Again and again and again, we find that in the book of Judges, these people messed up over and over again, but God didn't write them off. And you can know that God won't write you off, that you can turn to him through Jesus, and he will forgive you all of your sins.

So, God calls you to allegiance to himself. Through his word, he's telling you tonight that he should be the most important thing in your life.

He's calling you to know him. He's given you reason to do that because he is victorious. In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has demonstrated that he will be victorious in judgment and also victorious in salvation.

[34 : 48] And so he calls you to know him. Now, my time has gone, I think, really. I would like to say very briefly that as we look at this passage, that it is a very challenging passage, because going beyond that, it's not merely enough to profess to be on God's side, is it?

That's a point that's repeatedly made in this passage. We look at Barak. Barak isn't really held up as a positive role model for us, is he? We read of Deborah and Jael, they're profoundly different.

They are. They respond immediately to God. They take the initiative. This theme carries on into chapter five. Do you notice that on the one hand, there is praise for those who follow God.

In chapter five, verse two, note how it speaks about those who willingly offer themselves. In verse nine, my heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers, among the people of God.

In verses 13 to 15, it wasn't actually just those two tribes. We read in chapter five that there were other tribes that went out with Barak, with Deborah.

[36 : 04] Then the men who were left came down to the nobles, people of God. Some came from Ephraim, Benjamin was with the people who followed you, and so forth.

even in verse 20, even the elements sided with God. The heavens, from the heavens the stars fought.

So you have that on the one hand. On the other hand, notice in verse 15, partway through the verse, in the districts of Reuben, there's much searching of heart.

Why did you stay among the campfires to hear the whistling for the flocks? Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan, and Dan, why did he linger by the ships? The tribe of Dan had their allotment by the sea, this telling passage of people frittering away with their boats, other people out literally whistling after sheep, trying to ignore the fact that anything was going on.

Afterwards, there was much searching of heart as they realized that they hadn't done anything. Do you see that there's a challenge here, not merely to side with God, but to live a life that's consistent

with that?

[37 : 21] The passage is teaching us that it's not enough merely to say that we're Christians, it's not merely enough to go to church, that's important, it's not enough merely to know the Bible.

God calls us to live a life that's consistent with that. Now, I want to conclude very briefly with one practical point as to how we do that. We all know it's very difficult to do that.

It's easy to be like Barak. It's easy to know what God wants us to do and not to do it. We need to remember that Jesus has come in forgiveness.

We experience forgiveness not merely when we first become Christians. We constantly need to be reminded that Jesus is our Savior. But if we take the example of Barak to conclude with, Barak wasn't everything he ought to have been, was he?

But at the same time, he wasn't a complete disaster, to be fair to Barak. He did ultimately do what he was meant to do. In chapter five, he's commended.

[38 : 28] Verse one, on that day, Deborah and Barak, son of Abinuum, sang this song. Why is it that Barak turned out better than he might have done? That's because of Deborah.

I think there's a profound point here. We are not to lead the Christian life on our own. Because on our own, we would typically, I would typically make a mess of my life.

But God hasn't left us on her own. He has made you part of a congregation here in Brunnsfield. And as Christians, if you are Christians, if you have decided to follow Jesus, you have responsibilities not merely towards God, but you have responsibilities towards one another.

To challenge one another, to comfort one another, to encourage one another. So what is it that you think about when you wake up in the morning? And what is it that you think about as you're lying there on your bed at night?

God. This passage is telling us that that thing, that person, ought to be our creator. The God who has revealed himself to us through Jesus.

[39 : 42] The God who is victorious in judgment, but also the God who is victorious in salvation. You bow your heads with me as we close in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you have given us your word. We pray that as we leave here that we would do so knowing that you have spoken to us and we ask that your word would remain with us.

We pray that we would not be people who merely know your word, but we pray that your word would touch our hearts, be at work within us by your Holy Spirit.

God, we ask that you would make Jesus to be precious to us. May we marvel that not only did he die and give his life in our place, but that on the third day he was raised from the dead and that because of his resurrection we have hope.

And so we pray, Father, that through him you would be at work within us by your Holy Spirit. We ask that you would bless us as your people, bless this congregation here in Brunnsfield. We ask that you would be with those whom you have raised up as leaders in this congregation and bless everyone here connected with it in all of their various different roles.

[40 : 59] We pray that you would enable them individually and as a people to live a life that honors you, to live a life that is a witness to you and that through this congregation that many more people would come to know you.

We ask, Father, that you would watch over us, that you would forgive us all our sins, for we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.