

## Lesson for December 7, 2008

### Old Testament Survey

#### The Book of Judges

After the death of Joshua, the nation of Israel did not have a man of God to take his place, so leadership was given to thirteen judges. These judges ruled the thirteen tribes. And, these judges were to act as God's representatives to the nation. As a nation, Israel shortly forgot the deliverance and grace of God and "did that which was right in their own eyes." (Judges 17:6)

This attitude of self-will translated into the corruption of the nation. The men of Israel began courting the pagan women and eventually began worshipping false gods. Each time God allowed the nation to be opposed by their enemies and each time Israel cried out for deliverance from the Lord. They never learned the lesson that Joshua and the judges attempted to impart to them; if they simply obeyed the commandments of God they would prosper both spiritually and materially.

There are a few who stand out in this book, such as Deborah, Barak, Gideon, and Samson. All of these, except Deborah, are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as men of great faith. However, we do know that Deborah was a woman of great faith and an excellent ruler in Israel. Her story is found in Judges 4:4 - 5:31.

Deborah stands out in the Old Testament as a person of valor and a judge of Israel. She was married, she was a ruler, she was a prophetess and she was a warrior. Barak, who was the leader of the army, followed Deborah's lead into war with their enemies. It was Deborah's faith in God and His deliverance that inspired Barak and the army to defeat their enemies.

Gideon was also a judge of Israel and judged for forty years. He too was a person of valor and a great warrior and leader. Gideon is famous for putting forth a "fleece" to God twice. Gideon could not accept God's word that He would deliver the Midianites into the hands of Israel, so he asked God for a sign that it would really happen. God honored Gideon's request despite his doubt and granted his "fleece."

Samson is a well-known character in the Old Testament. He was the thirteenth judge of Israel who fell in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. Delilah was bribed by the Philistines to find out the source of Samson's great physical strength. After being deceived by Samson, Delilah was able to find out that his strength was in his long hair, which was a sign of "the vow of the Nazarite" that he had taken as a youth. His vow set him apart to God's service and was taken seriously by Samson. The result was that God used Samson to defeat the

enemies of Israel on several occasions. With the help of Delilah, the Philistines cut Samson's hair and captured him. After blinding him and putting him in prison, Samson was brought into the pagan temple so they could "make sport" of him. He managed to get his hands on two support pillars and God returned his strength to him so he could push the pillars down and bring the temple down killing hundreds of Philistines.

All these heroes of the Old Testament, though not perfect, were people of great faith. They were able to drive fear from their lives by exhibiting faith in God and His promises. It is this same kind of faith that should be exhibited in the life of every Christian. We have studied this principle as the Faith-Rest Technique.

### Fear vs. Faith

Everyone is susceptible to fear, even the mature believer. Fear is a mental attitude sin that shuts down thinking and makes application of Bible doctrine impossible. When fear catches us off guard, it is important to know the correct recovery procedure. We have studied this procedure in the past as the Faith-Rest Technique.

This technique involves *claiming a Bible promise, applying a doctrinal rationale and reaching a doctrinal conclusion*. This is the reason that it is so important that we all learn theology. The nice stories and "Christian principles" preached in most churches will not sustain us in time of extreme difficulty or disaster. We need Bible Doctrine!

We cannot apply what we do not know. Therefore, we need to be consistent in our intake of God's Word for the purpose of growth. Growth means learning to use the Word of God resident in our souls to combat and control our sin nature and the influences of the World System. Since fear is a sin, the first step to recovery from fear is the utilization of I John 1:9. By naming "fear" as our sin, we are forgiven and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Now we are in a position to use the Faith-Rest Technique.

The best illustration of the Faith-Rest Technique is Romans 8:28-32. We can easily follow the progression from claiming a promise, to application, to reaching a conclusion.

Romans 8:28 says "We know that God works all things together for good for those that love Him, for those that are the called ones according to a predetermined plan." This is the Biblical promise to those who are maturing in their faith (executing God's plan for their life). This promise is guaranteed by God and when a believer claims this promise, it can reduce a very complicated

situation into a very simple one. When we claim this promise that God is working all things for our good, fear is brought under control because we are now thinking, not emoting. Fear is an emotion.

Once thinking is resumed, we can move on to step two, application. A doctrinal rationale can be any doctrinal truth that you have learned and stored in your memory. In our passage the doctrinal rationale is a series of five related doctrines.

1. *Foreknowledge* - God's awareness of all the assets that He prepared for the believer in eternity-past. This assures us that God was thinking about each of us in eternity-past.
2. *Predestination* - God predestined a plan for us in eternity-past. That plan calls for us to be set apart unto God in time and eternity.
3. *Election* - God chose each Church Age believer to be spiritual royalty. Since Jesus Christ was elected, we share in His election because of our union with Him.
4. *Justification* - God declares the believer to be righteous. God actually imputes His righteousness to each believer, setting up the potential for divine blessing in time and eternity.
5. *Glorification* - God gives the believer a glorified body and eternal rewards (based on execution of His plan in time).

These five doctrines in Romans 8:29-30 outline God's plan for every believer of this age. By recalling these doctrines, the believer can remember his place in God's overall plan, which is another step in driving out fear.

Finally, in Romans 8:31-32, the believer is able to reach a doctrinal conclusion. This passage says, "To what conclusion are we forced? If God be for us, who shall be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up in behalf of us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?"

Reaching the doctrinal conclusion "that God is for us," allows us to retake control of our situation and restores confidence in God, and in our ability to make good decisions. If the problem is too overwhelming, and beyond our ability to solve, we are still able to cope by placing ourselves in the mighty hand of God and trusting Him for the solution. (Exodus 14:13)

Utilization of this technique restores the most important ability God has given us: *thinking*. This technique does not need to be a mechanical, "step one, two, three," but can be if the situation demands it. The key is to stop fear in its tracks and restore the thinking process.

There is another way to stop fear in its tracks according to I John 4:18. This way is called "virtue-love" ("perfect love" in the King James Version of the Bible). The Greek word for "perfect" is "teleios," which means complete or mature. It has also been used in connection with the Greek word "arête," which means virtue. Therefore, virtue-love is mature love. The love spoken of here is "agape love," which is unconditional love. Virtue is strength of character. In the believer, virtue is the character of Jesus Christ being produced in him. When we put it all together, virtue-love is Christ's character of unconditional love exhibited in the life of the maturing believer.

This is the love that drives out fear and replaces it with faith. The reason this is true, is that what you love the most, is what you think about the most. If our love for God has matured into unconditional love based on our virtue and our integrity from God, we will not fear anything or anyone, because we have Divine Viewpoint Thinking. This virtue-love brings with it confidence and courage: confidence towards God and courage towards man and circumstances. Courage is being able to think clearly under pressure.

Uncontrolled fear is the opposite of courage. Fear causes self-induced misery and often carries with it a punishment of its own. For example, a believer who succumbs to fear has placed himself in a position of weakness. This weakness causes him to make poor decisions, which often bring with them poor results. He has become the product of his own decisions to disobey God by failing to name his sin and to resume his spiritual life.

So to what conclusion are we drawn? Fear can be controlled! It can be controlled by an advancing believer utilizing the Faith-Rest Technique and exhibiting virtue-love.

A companion sin to fear is *worry*. Worry is a result of fear. Worry causes all kind of problems: spiritual, emotional and physical. Worry keeps the believer from experiencing all that God has designed for him to enjoy. God did not place us on this earth to be miserable and worry about every detail of life. The Word of God says in John 10:10, that God has given us life and given it more abundantly. God wants us to be free of worry and anxiety by having a *relaxed mental attitude*. A relaxed mental attitude is possible only when we are executing God's plan for us under the control of the Holy Spirit. This means staying in fellowship with God a maximum amount of time. It also means using the Faith-Rest Technique, having a personal sense of destiny and being oriented to God's grace policy. An understanding of who we are and what we have as a result of our relationship with Jesus Christ should cause us to relax and stop worrying. Stop worrying about things over which we have no control, about what others think of us and about the future. (Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 6:25-33; Philippians 4:6-9)

