

JUDGES 4:1-5
RESTING IN THE LORD!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 4 as we continue our in-depth study through the book of Judges.

As we have seen, Joshua and that generation who knew the Lord has died and now, another generation arose, and they did not know the Lord nor the work that He had done for Israel.

And thus, **“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.”** Judges 2:11-13.

And we saw that as they repented before the Lord, the Lord raised up a Judge to deliver them from the bondage that they were in because of their sin. We looked at the Judge, Othniel and Ehud and Shamgar.

And as we open up Judges chapter 4 this morning, we will see the death of the Judge Ehud and what the children of Israel did after he was gone.

Also, keep in mind that in Judges 3:5-31 we see the southern region of Israel affected by sin. This was not the entire nation at one time here. But individual tribes or areas being affected and finally, it is much of the nation that has succumbed to doing evil before the Lord and moving away from Him!

And now, as we get into Judges chapters 4 and 5 the focus is now the northern region of the nation and the Judge that God raises up to deliver them from this oppression, an oppression that God brought upon them for their idolatry, and that Judge was Deborah.

And here's the thing. You can't make a covenant with the enemy; you can't compromise your faith because when you do, you are on a slippery slope away from God. Sin is sin and we are not to give it a place to grow in our lives.

And we see this pattern of sin, servitude, supplication and salvation over and over in the book of Judges, and we will see it once again here in Judges chapter 4.

We are going to break these verses down here in Judges chapter 4 like this.

THE SIN OF ISRAEL – JUDGES 4:1

THE BONDAGE OF ISRAEL – JUDGES 4:2

THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL – JUDGES 4:3

THE PEACE OF GOD – JUDGES 4:4-5

And our focus is going to be on that last point, the peace of God because, if we are all honest with ourselves, this is an area we tend to lack in. We miss out on that peace that God has for us in the midst of the storms of life, not apart from them. And thus, we are anxious, we are worried, we find no peace!

Think about it. Your mind is racing all over the place. You try to refocus yourself or distract yourself by watching television, but as you realize, the show is half over and you have no idea of what is going on because you are still focused on all the things going through your mind!

Let's face it, during times of stress, during times of difficulty, during times of turmoil, it is hard to relax, to find that peace.

And we may even start the day by saying to ourselves, ***“It is a new day. I am going to let those things that were overwhelming me go.”***

And for the first 5 seconds, things are going great. And then, well, you know what happens. Our minds are filled with all those things that were troubling us yesterday and they will trouble us today!

We keep hoping for rest, but it seems to elude us or evade us.

Rest is so important in our lives and I truly believe we can enjoy that rest in the midst of turmoil if our rest is based in the Lord and His Word.

That is what we will be looking at in our study this morning. A study that I have called, ***“Resting in the Lord!”***

So with that as our background, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 4, beginning in verse 1, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JUDGES 4

VERSE 1

Remember our study of this Judge, Ehud. God raised him up as the children of Israel were in bondage to Eglon, the King of Moab for eighteen years because of their sin.

And when they finally cried out to God, we see God raise up Ehud to deliver them and he did!

And the land had rest for eighty years, and then these tragic words, **“When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.”** Judges 4:1.

With the death of Ehud, once he passes off the scene, the people fall away from the Lord.

Now we may wonder how that can happen! We may wonder how they could be free for these eighty years and now that this Judge is dead, they fall back to their wicked ways!

It is simple. You see, what I see here is that they never cultivated their own relationship with the Lord, it was only influenced by Ehud, the Judge.

Thus, once this Judge was gone, so too was their relationship with the Lord and they went back to their old ways.

And that is an important lesson for us to learn.

You see, our walk with the Lord can't be based upon someone else's walk. We need to cultivate it; we need to draw close to Him.

Trapp put it like this, "The sedentary life is most subject to diseases: standing waters soon putrefy. It is hard and happy not to grow worse with liberty."

If you are having a hard time listening to the Word of God, reading the Word of God, then there is a problem and the problem is not with God or His Word. I am sorry to say, the problem is you!

We need to cultivate that relationship with God on our own. We can't depend on others. Yes, we can learn from others, from teachers, but if that is all we are getting, then something is missing.

We should have a hunger and thirst to know God! And the way to do that is simple.

First of all, ***MAKE THE BIBLE A PRIORITY IN YOUR LIFE!***

We will talk more about that as we get to our last point in this study, ***THE PEACE OF GOD!*** But I think we need to understand that if we want to know God the way we do that is we are in His Word, the Bible!

And please understand that I am not just talking about information, doctrine, healthy teaching, but taking what God has said in His Word and applying that to our lives! We need to be doers of the Word and not just hearers, as James reminds us. (James 1:21)

And I know that as you get to know the Lord more, the more you will love Him and the more you will be cultivating that relationship with Him.

You see, Jesus did not just die to save us from Hell. Yes, that is truly a benefit. But the problem for us is that our sin separated us from God and thus, Jesus came to bring us to the Father by paying in full the penalty for our sins.

Thus, we can have fellowship with God through Jesus and one day we will be with Him for eternity! Prioritize the studying of the Bible in your life!

SPEND TIME IN PRAYER!

And keep in mind that prayer is not just asking God for things. It is spending time listening to Him as He speaks to our hearts. Jesus died so we can have fellowship with the Father, and many miss out on that because they don't think it is important, or they don't take the time to listen.

GET INVOLVED!

And what I mean by that is use the gifts that God has given to you to bless people by. Don't just sit around and do nothing. Each of us have been given a gift and we can use it to help people and show the love of Christ to them.

Now some of you may feel that your health is preventing you from doing this. I disagree.

Some of you remember Doug Totten, he went home to be with the Lord several months back.

But Doug had some physical problems that prevented him from labor in the sense of physical labor.

And that did not stop Doug. Doug was a prayer warrior. He had a prayer room he would go to and up on the wall were the people he was praying for. He used the phone book to write to people and share the love of Christ with, people he did not even know!

What a blessing to be able to serve the Lord and bless people. You know your gift, you know your talent, use it for the Lord!

And here is the warning if we don't cultivate that deep relationship with the Lord. We will fall away, just as we see here with the children of Israel.

BE IN THE WORD, BE IN PRAYER AND GET INVOLVED!

And like I said, the children of Israel depended upon others for their relationship with God and in the end, we see ***THE SIN OF ISRAEL!***

VERSE 2

As we read this, and we will see this a lot in the book Judges, Israel sins and God puts them in bondage.

I realize that you might not think that is fair, that this was the right thing to do. God gave them a chance, He was longsuffering, He was patient with them, but they refused to turn back to Him, they just rebelled against the Lord, and bondage came into their lives.

And please understand that God is not responding out of hate. Not at all!

You see, God loved Israel, He loved the Jewish people so much that He was not going to let them go their own way!

God shows us His love for us by what He does!

But we also need to understand that Satan does not love us, and yet, so many think that he does!

Now we may not think about it this way, but if we are not following the Lord, then we are following Satan. And what we think is great, what we think is fun, what we are compelled to do, is the hook that will take us captive.

I think I can safely say that no one says, ***“I want to be addicted to drugs!”***

No, what Satan does is he dangles the lure in front of us, and as he gets us to take a bite, we become hooked!

And then he lets us go and lets us destroy ourselves. And you can put any sin in there.

For some it is sexual immorality. For others, it is cheating, lying, and-so-on. And there is that lure and it is so attractive, and you take a bite of it, and you are hooked!

Again, a good example is pornography. I think again I can safely say that no one says, ***“I am going to this porn website and I am going to be addicted to pornography!”***

No, everyone thinks that they can control it. But they can't.

And today, it is a multibillion-dollar industry in American and they know, if they can get you to go to their website just once, they know they will have you for life. And what may have satisfied you at one time, is not going to do it anymore and you will have to get deeper and deeper into it before it consumes your life, before it will end up destroying you.

You see, Jesus wants to set us free from that bondage and Satan wants to destroy our lives with it.

But remember, if you start to venture down a path that will lead to destruction, God loves you too much to let you go and destroy yourself. And sometimes it will take that point where we are so low that all we can do is look up and God is waiting to extend His arms of forgiveness, as we see here with the children of Israel.

The enemy that God was going to use to oppress these northern tribes in Israel came at the hands of the King of Hazor, Jabin!

This city of Hazor was located in the northern part of the land, about 10 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee and it was a stronghold in the northern Galilee area, in the tribe of Naphtali.

And keep in mind that if the children of Israel had driven out these enemies when they entered the land, this would have not been a problem for them now.

You see, during the time of Joshua this area was taken but the enemy was not completely destroyed. Thus, this compromise, along with time, let the enemy grow to the point that they are now oppressing the tribes in this area, primarily Naphtali and Zebulun.

But, like I have said, if they would have obeyed the Lord, walked with the Lord, drove out this enemy in the first place, then they would not have allowed this provision of the flesh you might say, to overtake them now!

Also, as we are going to see, the central figure of this story is not King Jabin but the commander of his army, Sisera. He was obviously the muscle behind the throne. And this commander, Sisera, lived to the south of Hazor in Harosheth Hagoyim.

So the bad guy of this story is Sisera and we will see who the good guy or gal is in a minute!

Before we move on, I want to speak a little more regarding this battle of sin and the bondage it puts us in if we succumb to it! We are told,

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2.

Do you ever feel yourself being torn between what you know is the *right thing* to do and what you really *want* to do? If you answer, “no,” either you’re not telling the truth, or the battery of your conscience has gone dead. The struggle is an old one. Even Paul experienced the conflict. He candidly told of the battle which waged in his heart. He said, “When I want to do good, I don’t; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway” (Romans 7:19, *Living Bible*).

God’s Word is very clear. When you are born again, God accepts what Christ did and applies it to your account. Paul wrote, “For he has rescued us out of the darkness and gloom of Satan’s kingdom and brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13, *Living Bible*). That in itself is pretty awesome. It means you have been transplanted spiritually.

Does that mean that you will automatically do the right thing? Not for a moment. In a sense it means that you begin the most ferocious battle of your life. Yes, you are God’s child. Yes, the Holy Spirit has come to indwell your life. Yes, you belong to Jesus Christ. But you are still in the world, and your old or sinful nature wars with your new spiritual nature.

Paul told the Romans that we should consider our old natures to be dead. In other words, you don’t feed your flesh. You don’t make it easy to do wrong. You avoid the areas of weakness which you know can easily entrap you. Like what? Every person has to answer that for himself.

Simply put, you have a will of your own, and God won't take that away from you. Yes, God's Holy Spirit can and does give you strength and help, but you are the one who has to decide the path you will take.

If you are fighting this old battle of the two natures, take to heart the following three guidelines:

Guideline #1: Keep your relationship with the Lord warm and personal. It's right here that you often win or lose the fight. This means you must take time to fellowship with other Christians, you must take time to read His Word and to spend time in prayer. When you fall spiritually, you must quickly admit your failure, confess it before God and . . . and ask for God's strength and help. [Things I have shared with you already and I guess God wants to reinforce that]

Guideline #2: Keep the right company. No, I'm not suggesting that you break off friendships with everyone who is not a Christian. To the contrary, God wants you to be salt and light, and the salt has to get out of the shaker to make a difference, and the light has to go beyond the door of the church. But I'm saying that if you are involved in a relationship which you know is wrong, break it off once and for all. . . .

Guideline #3: Form the right habits. "The chains of habit are too weak to be felt," said someone, "until they are too strong to be broken." Replace wrong habits with right ones.

A final thought. No, Paul didn't give up on the battle between right and wrong. Romans 7, where Paul talked about the struggle, is followed by Romans 8, which begins, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). God is still in the business of breaking the bondage of ourselves and setting us free through the power of His Spirit. This is the real answer.

- <http://bit.ly/2t2lPHt>

Here, for the children of Israel, we see what sin did in their life as they took the bait and were hooked – ***THE BONDAGE OF ISRAEL!***

VERSE 3

Sometimes, as we are reading the Scriptures, we read through them and we don't think much about what is going on here.

But let's examine this a little closer because there are some important points that we need to gather from this.

First of all, I want to deal with Jabin and his military leader, Sisera. I will get back to ***THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL*** in a minute, as that is our next point.

We are told that Jabin, the King of Hazor, had 900 chariots of iron. These were impressive war machines.

Let me share this with you to show you what these chariots were like and I think you will see why these iron chariots were a game changer.

You see, these chariots had a platform for a driver; a javelin thrower, an archer, and the wheels on the chariot had blades on them so that when you got too close, your legs would be cut in two.

In knowing that, from a human standpoint, there was no way that the children were going to be able to rebel, to rise up and fight against Jabin and the military strength of Sisera.

And because of their might, they oppressed the children of Israel. Again, what could they do?

I will tell you what they could do, and it is interesting because for us, many times, it is our last resort. They could pray, they could repent and come before God, but that idea alludes them for a long time before they come to their senses.

You see, for Israel, it did not take them 8 years to repent before the Lord, or 18 years, but now it takes them 20 years of oppression before they come to their senses and turn back to the Lord!

Now here's the thing. God did not need 20 years; He was standing with His arms of forgiveness opened wide if they would have only turned to Him sooner!

And we do this many times. We look at prayer as some kind of last resort, "I guess all we can do is pray!" No, the reality is, ***ALL YOU CAN DO IS PRAY!***

And keep in mind that this bondage for Israel was a result of their sin and they were willing to be oppressed for some 20 years before they repent before God!

And we see this happen in the Bible, even with men that had a heart for God.

A perfect example of this is illustrated for us with King David. For a whole year he covered up his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah.

And then, in Psalm 32:5 we are told, **“I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord [continually unfolding the past till all is told] - then You [instantly] forgave me the guilt and iniquity of my sin. Selah [pause, and calmly think of that]!”**

As David confessed his sin before God, God forgave him. In fact, as soon as David confessed his sin, God was standing there with His arms of forgiveness extended to David.

The same is true for us as John reminds us, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

I John 1:9.

Our sin will hinder our fellowship with God. And for many, they feel so distant from God but let me say this, God has not moved, but maybe you have. I am not saying that our sin causes us to lose our salvation, but it does hinder our fellowship with God. I want to be clear on that.

You can't live in sin and draw close to God because you are moving in opposite directions.

And because we have lost that intimacy with God, we try to find it through religious experiences.

Some feel that by causing affliction in their life, they are paying for their sin and thus, that relationship is restored. Not at all, the price for your sin has already been paid by Jesus.

Again, this is a fellowship issue.

And anytime a person loses the presence of God in their lives, they will try to replace it with something. It may be some kind of religious experience, or even a secular experience to fill that void in your life, but it will not help!

Again, with David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, listen to what happened to David. We are told in Psalm 32:3-4, "**When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.**"

Look at all the pain and sorrow that David brought into his life by his sin and then trying to cover his sin from not only the people in his kingdom but from God!

And God did not let David get away with it, not because God hated David, not at all. God loved David so much He did not want David to continue down that path of death and destruction.

And as he tried to cover his sin, David was physically affected. His whole being ached as he was living in sin, trying to hide his sin from God. But you can't hide anything from God, as Hebrews 4:13 says, "**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**"

Not only was David physically sick, physically hurting but he also was hurting spiritually speaking. In a sense his spirit was sick! How was that manifested? His spiritual life was dry; it was like being in a desert.

Why does God do this? The reason God does this is because He does not want us to prosper in our sin. He wants us to get back on track. God wants us to deal with our sin, and if we don't, He will get our attention. It is the chastening of God to restore us, not to destroy us!

Paul put it this way in I Corinthians 11:31-32, as he said, **“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”** We are not judged as Christians for punishment, but we are judged for correction as the Lord chastens us.

Not only was David physically affected by his sin and trying to cover it. Not only was David spiritually affected by his sin and trying to cover it. But he was also affected emotionally as he tried to cover his sin! He could not rest; he knew he was wrong but refused to repent and get right with God.

And like we saw, as soon as David repented of his sins, God was ready to forgive him, to restore that fellowship that David had with the Lord and his sin had broken that intimate fellowship!

God wants us to walk in holiness or another way to put it is that God wants us to follow Him and He will lead us in paths of righteousness, not wickedness. Never forget that because if you find yourself going down a wicked path, it is not God who is leading you!

So we see here ***THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL!***

VERSES 4-5

Let me give you some information that is needed from these verses and then we will focus on the issue – ***THE PEACE OF GOD!*** And again, we will see this peace of God upon Deborah as we look at these verses more closely.

Israel was in bondage to Jabin, the King of Hazor. And the reason for their bondage was that they **“... did evil in the sight of the LORD.”**

This was not some random chance happening, God used Jabin to bring judgment upon His people, to chasten them so that they would return to Him.

And you would think that after a year, two years, even five years in bondage they would have come to their senses and repented before God.

But it took them 20 years before they repented before God.

And as they repent, we see God raise up Deborah. She was a prophetess and a Judge.

Now I don't have a problem with her role as a prophetess because we see women in that role in the Old Testament.

For instance, we see Miriam in that role in Exodus 15:20 and Huldah is also spoken of as a prophetess in II Kings 22:14.

And in the New Testament there is Anna in this role in Luke 2:36 and also the four daughters of Phillip in Acts 21:8-9.

Now let me also say this. Some don't have a problem with the role that Deborah has taken in Israel, but I do. Not with her role of prophetess, but there is a problem.

You see, here is where I do have a problem. Deborah was also a Judge, and yes, I believe God allowed this because there was no man who was willing to take a stand for God, to lead the people.

Again, some don't see this, but when we see what Barak does, he really is not the leader, Deborah is.

One writer put it like this,

Often it is assumed that Deborah's was allowed leadership because unspecified men failed to take the position. While later we will see that Barak doesn't seem to be all he should be, we have no indication that he failed to do something God told him to do in taking leadership.

Wolf notes, “Her prominence implies a lack of qualified and willing men.” Yet this can be regarded as no more than an implication, not specifically stated in the text.

- <http://bit.ly/358kEV7>

I don't think it is just an implication, I think it is pretty clear. When Deborah speaks to the military leader, Barak and she tells him what he is to do, we are told in Judges 4:8, “**And Barak said to her, ‘If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.’**”

In other words, if Deborah will not go into battle with him, he is not going to fight. I think something is missing here. It is not that Deborah is going to give them this victory over the enemy, the Lord will. In fact, He has promised them this victory and yet, Barak is not going to go unless Deborah goes with.

Again, some may not see this as a big deal, but when you hear what Deborah says to him, you know that something is seriously wrong here.

Look at Judges 4:9 where we are told, “**So she said, ‘I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.’ Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.**”

I think you can see as you read that, that Barak is going to lose out on some of the blessing because of his lack of faith, his unwillingness to walk by faith without Deborah by his side!

So I do see the role of Deborah being a leader in Israel at this time.

And the problem I have with Deborah being a Judge and leading the people is that I don't believe the Scriptures teach that a woman is to rule over a man, especially as a spiritual leader.

For us, I don't believe women should be pastors, not because I said so, God did.

And please understand it is not that women aren't smart enough or qualified, it is just the role that God has established.

And I know that some of you may not agree with that. You may even be mad at me for even stating that.

But show me where God ordains women in the role of a pastor, you won't find any!

Again, let me be clear on this because this is not putting women down or making them second-class citizens you might say.

And the reason I want to be clear on that is because in God's eyes we are all equal but just as God the Son was subject to God the Father in the Incarnation, so a woman is to be in subjection to her husband.

I didn't say that a woman is to be a slave for her husband, or the man is to lord over his wife, not at all.

In fact, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave His life for it. Ladies, that is a great place to be and men, don't forget your role!

The problem here is that now in Israel we see a woman ruling over them, judging them, which shows me the condition of Israel.

There were no men who would stand up and take charge in Israel. And like I have said, even Barak, as we will see, was not a strong leader, he was feeble in many ways!

In Isaiah 3:12 listen to what God says of them, and this is not a good thing. We are told, **“As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.”**

Thus, what we see here is that since there is no man found to take a stand, God raises up a woman who is bold and strong!

You also have to understand that in this male dominated society, this had to be humiliating to the Jews.

But again, no man rose to the occasion to lead the children of Israel.

And tragically, many times we see this in the church where the women are involved in all kinds of ministries, doing all kinds of work and the men are sitting back and not doing anything.

Or that the wife runs the house, is the spiritual leader in the home and basically tells her husband what to do and what not to do.

I am not saying we can't learn things from our wives, not at all. But as spiritual leaders in the family it is our responsibility to lead the family in the things of God.

Now for some women, they feel that their husband is not smart enough to handle it, not spiritual enough to handle it. Maybe the reason is that you have not given him a chance!

Let me give you an example. My wife was a Christian long before I became a Christian. She knew the Bible and I knew nothing about the Bible.

And then I got saved. But again, I knew nothing about the Bible or how to be a spiritual leader in the family.

Yes, I was learning as I was studying the Bible and going to Bible studies, but I was very young in the Lord.

And the Lord spoke to my wife and basically told her that she needed to let me be the spiritual leader in the family now.

“But he knows nothing!” I think she thought I was Sargent Shultz from Hogan's Heroes.

But she knew what the Lord told her, and she stepped back and allowed me to be that spiritual leader in the family.

Did I make mistakes? Of course I did, and I am still learning, but what is happening many times is that men sit back and they are not the leaders in the family.

That is wrong! Learn the lesson here and don't miss out in the blessings that God has for you!

Interestingly enough the name Deborah means, "*honeybee.*"

I know, how sweet.

In regard to this little honeybee, listen to what one writer wrote. We are told,

The wax with which beehives are constructed is the most heat-resistant wax known to man and can withstand temperatures up to 140 degrees.

However, at 141 degrees, the wax begins to melt.

So when the hive nears the 141-degree mark, the bees begin to cluster around their hive and fan it by fluttering their wings 190 times per second, or 11,400 times per minute.

No wonder bees are called industrious!

They are also very discerning, with antennae containing between 2,000 and 3,000 plates through which they identify the proper flower from which to draw their nectar.

Finally, bees are known for the sweetness of the honey they produce.

In Deborah, I see these same three characteristics: She was very industrious, very discerning, and very sweet. But she also packed a wallop of a sting, as we will see.

- Jon Courson, Application Commentary, Old Testament, Volume 1, p. 736

And what a story this is, as we will see as we go through Judges chapters 4 and 5 over the next several weeks!

Now I want to focus on *THE PEACE OF GOD!* And you may be wondering how in the world do I see the peace of God here in these verses?

Listen again to Judges 4:5, where we are told about Deborah, **“And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.”**

Where do I see the peace of God?

Keep in mind that they were under bondage to Jabin, the King of Hazor for 20 years. That is not a comfortable time. They were being persecuted, life was not easy, and yet, Deborah was relaxing under a palm tree!

How could she be at such peace during this turmoil?

Because her peace was found in the Lord as she sat under this palm tree in the midst of the storms of persecution that were around her.

Notice that she did not sit under the palm tree in the absence of the storms, but in the midst of the storm she could rest in the Lord.

This was not a peace that the world was giving to Deborah, because the world was giving her bondage, persecution. This was a peace in the midst of the storm!

Let's face it, many of us struggle in this area, finding peace, finding rest in all that is happening in our lives. And in that turmoil, we become anxious, we become worried, and things get worse and worse for us as we are not resting at all.

This rest or peace is so important in our lives. Why?

First of all, it shows us that we can trust in the Lord!

What do I mean by that?

Think about it for a minute. If God is in control of our life, if He is going to allow things to happen for a reason because He knows what is best for us, then why are we anxious, why can't we find that rest or peace in our lives?

The reason is simple, and I am not picking on anyone here this morning, well, maybe myself because the reason is very simple, I am not trusting the Lord but I am allowing the outward circumstances to drive me instead of resting in the Lord as He guides me!

It is as Solomon said in Proverbs 3:5-6, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”**

There is the challenge for all of us. Can we trust in the Lord, place our full weight upon Him?

Maybe the reason that we can't is that we don't know Him as well as we thought we did.

Let me explain it like this.

My father was a great dad and I trusted him totally when I was growing up. I never worried about what we were going to eat, if I was going to have clothes to wear. I trusted that he would protect me from the dangers that were out there, especially as a little kid.

How can I trust my dad with all of my heart?

Because I knew my dad, I saw all that he did for me, how he cared for me and thus, I could trust him with all of my heart!

That is how we should feel about the Lord. That He will take care of us, provide for us, see us through any difficulty that we might be going through. And the only way you are going to be able to trust in the Lord with all of your heart is as you get to know Him more and more.

You see, as you read the Word of God, as you spend time in prayer, as you see God working in your life and how He brought you through some very difficult times, you know He will see you through whatever you are going through now because you have seen His faithfulness and thus, you can trust Him!

And as we trust in the Lord with all of our heart, not what we see but we trust in Him, then that anxiety, that peacelessness will be replaced with His rest, His peace and He will direct our steps!

But what happens many times, as we don't trust in the Lord, but we are leaning on our own understanding of things, is we can't find that rest, we can't find that peace in our lives.

First of all, the Hebrew word for "**rest**" is NUACH, and it basically means to rest or be quiet. It is synonymous to the Hebrew word SHABAT or to cease or to rest!

The Greek word for "**rest**" is ANAPAUSIS, and it speaks of cessation or refreshment.

And the idea here is that it is not a cessation from work, it is not a cessation from problems, but in the work, we have that rest, that peace. In the midst of the problems we have that rest, we have that peace!

Why do we struggle so much with this rest, with this peace? Why is it so difficult to find this rest, this peace many times?

Let me share with you a few reasons why we struggle in this area.

- ***Lack of faith in God's Word, rejection and unbelief in His Word*** – We saw what we are to do when we looked at Proverbs 3:5-6. We are not to lean on our own understanding of things, but we are to put our full weight upon the Lord, trust in Him with all of our heart and the idea here is that we are to trust what His Word is telling us. God's Word will comfort the afflicted and it will also afflict the comfortable in that God meets us where we are at. He gives to us just what we need. Can we trust what His Word is telling us? Can we trust in the promises of God to us? If we refuse, and it is not that we can't, we choose not to, then we will be anxious, fearful. But if we can trust in the Word of God, His promises to us, then we can experience that rest, that peace that surpasses all understanding!

- *Lack of knowledge to God's Word* – Remember when I was sharing how I could put my trust in my dad when I was a kid because I knew him, I saw his faithfulness to my mom and my family. There is no way you are going to be able to rest in the Lord if you don't know Him or you are not growing in Him. And the way we know God is by studying God's Word and then applying it to our lives. If you don't know the Lord or you lack the knowledge of who He is, then you are not going to be able to trust in Him and you won't find that peace, that rest because it is only found in Him!
- *Hardening of heart through the deceitfulness of sin* – Make no mistake about it, as we harden our heart to sin, it will cause us to not find that rest, that peace that God has for us. We saw that with King David and his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. David was physically sick. He was spiritually dry. And he was emotionally unsettled! And that is what unrepented sin will do in our lives.

And we can go on, but I think you get the point here. Trust in God's Word and know God's Word so that you can know God, and don't let sin cause you to miss out on that rest and peace that God has for your life!

I am sure we know these verses in Philippians, but they are so important to find that peace in the midst of turmoil and thus, we need to be reminded often of them. Again, here is what the Lord tells us through Paul, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

Paul says, **“Be anxious for nothing . . .”**

Now please understand that this is not a suggestion or an option but a command by Paul not to worry about anything.

That does not seem so easy does it? How in the world can we accomplish something like that?

I think for many of us if not all of us we struggle with this from time to time.

In fact, what Paul is saying may even seem cold when you consider the situation you are in now.

Let's try and put this into perspective.

First of all, is worrying going to help you or hurt you?

It will hurt you and it will eat away at you; it will strangle the life out of you!

Remember that our English word "**worry**" comes from an Anglo-Saxon word that means, "**to strangle.**"

How fitting that is as worry tends to strangle people physically, emotionally, and yes, even spiritually.

Worrying about things will solve nothing in our lives, and, like I have said, it will hurt us in the long run! We need to have a correct perspective and keep our eyes on the Lord and live for today and not worry about tomorrow.

Then what should we do when we find ourselves in difficult situations?

Give it to God in prayer, which is a general request; and in supplications, which is more of a specific request.

God wants to hear from us and when we do come before Him may we do so with an attitude of gratitude or thankfulness.

Don't come before God complaining but thanking Him for who He is, for His love for us and-so-on.

Now here's the thing. As we bring our concerns before the Lord, He fills us with His peace.

What if you don't feel His peace right now?

Maybe it is because your mind is not focused upon Him but upon the situation or situations you are in right now.

In Isaiah 26:3 we are told, **“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”**

This is not a peace from the storms of life but a peace through the storms of life. It is a peace that is from God, not based upon our efforts, it is beyond our understanding that we can be at peace in the midst of a storm and yet God has given that to us if we would only receive it by faith.

Jesus put it like this in John 16:33, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

Jesus is saying that in this life we will endure storms, tribulation because the world is against us as it is against God. But don't focus on what the world is doing to you, focus on the Lord and understand, He has overcome the world and one day He will rule and reign over it! In Him we have peace!

And in John 14:27 Jesus said, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

This peace that Jesus gives to us causes us not to be afraid, not to be troubled, but we are able to rest in Him!

And that is what Paul says here in Philippians 4:7, that as we give these things to the Lord, as we lay them at His feet, with thanksgiving we let Him know what is on our heart, that **“... the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

First of all, Paul says that this peace that is from God will guard our hearts or our emotions.

We are not anxious, fearful and-so-on because His peace is guarding our hearts.

Think about our emotions, we can get them racing and they can be all over the place depending upon the situations we are facing.

But Paul wants us to focus on the Lord and not the situation, because we will have tribulation in this world. Thus, let the Lord guard your emotions and you can rest, your heart will not be racing.

Not only that. Paul also tells us that His peace guards our mind or our thoughts.

In other words, the enemy can't mess us up because our thoughts are upon the Lord and based in the truth of His Word!

But, if we start to focus on everything that we are going through, it is going to be tough!

One survey I read showed that only 8% of what people are worried about is legitimate, which means that 92% was not!

But what can we do about it? What can we do to curb all these worries, all these anxieties and find this peace that God has for us?

Listen to what Paul goes on to say here in Philippians chapter 4, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”** Philippians 4:8-9.

In other words, what are you filling your mind with because that is what will come flowing out from your life?

If you are filling your life constantly with the things of this world, you will be anxious, you will not find that peace.

But Paul tells us that instead of filling your mind with the garbage of this world, “**meditate**” or take an inventory of these things in your life – things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, things that are of good report, things that are proper, and things that are praiseworthy!

In other words, focus on the Lord, fill your mind with the things of God and that peace of God, which does surpass any understanding, will guard your heart or emotions and your mind, or your thoughts. You will be at peace in the Lord because your mind is focused upon Him. In this world, yes there is tribulation, but in Jesus there is **PEACE!**

Here in Judges we see Deborah at peace, sitting under a palm tree in the midst of all this tribulation – **THE PEACE OF GOD!**

And our minds can be filled with that peace and rest of God because we trust in Him. May we not forget that, especially when we are going through difficult times.