

## DEBORAH from JUDGES 4-5

I'm glad you're all back from last week's holiday weekend.  
I trust you had either a good and great time or you didn't.

Did anybody drive to, through, or back from Montana?  
Do you remember what the speed limit was?

I know at one time there use to be no specific speed limit in Montana.  
You could drive a "reasonable and prudent" speed.

Ok, so what is a reasonable and prudent speed?  
I'm so glad you asked.

Well, twenty years ago to Tom Gross that meant pedal to the medal  
on those long endless stretches of Montana highway.

And to the guy that passed Tom like he was standing still,  
it was probably 30-40 miles an hour more.

Maybe to others a "reasonable and prudent" driving speed  
is determined by the circumstances and driving conditions;  
where you are going and what you have to do,  
whether or not it is day or night,  
whether the sun is high in the sky or ducking behind the horizon,  
whether or not the roads are bumpy or lumpy, curved or straight,  
or any other number or variety of variables.

Some of you, which might just include me,  
use the speed limit as a good suggestion, a good gauge, a good guideline,  
to help determine what is, "reasonable and prudent."

That may mean we drive three to five miles above the limit, maybe five to ten,  
maybe even a few more depending in that moment how we define "reasonable and prudent."

Well, today, we want to continue our series, "On life in the Promised Land"  
and talk about some people who were "reasonable and prudent,"  
"they did what they thought was right in their own eyes."

And it wasn't just going over the speed limit.  
It just so happens in the eyes of God they went way over the limit,  
"they did evil in the sight of the Lord."

A couple of weeks ago we talked about the Fall of Jericho, gateway into the Promised Land.  
Their strategy to conquer the land, to divide and conquer.

They dealt with Achan and finally defeat Ai.  
Then they march to the center of the country and begin operation Sun Stand Still.

Joshua told the sun to stand still because they need the extra day to defeat and destroy the central kings of the Promised Land.

Then they turned their troops south, soundly defeating the Southern cities. Then they headed North continue their campaign conquering the Northern kings and their tribes.

With a few remaining tribes still to overcome they divided up the land, swore their loyalty to God , and vowed never to forsake Him, Joshua 24.16, **“Then the people answered, ‘Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve others gods!’”**

I guess it wasn’t “far enough” for after Joshua and his generation dies, there is a great vacuum and Judges 2. 10 tells us, **“...another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt...”**

Isn’t that sad, they didn’t teach their children about the things of God. They obviously forgot the first thing Joshua had learned, that God is the object of their faith.

Note that. It is so easy to forget and when we forget we being to define what is reasonable and prudent until it become unreasonable and definitely not prudent.

As parents we must not leave the teaching and training of our children of the things of God, to the church only. Our personal relationship and responsibility with Christ must be mentored and modeled, taught and talked about in our lives.

In the book of Judges we read about the people of God , becoming more and more “unreasonable and imprudent.”

Thus they slide down that slippery slope of sin in to decadence and disobedience. The Bible records their great grief and great greed, their sexual immorality and power struggles, as well as some of the rapes, murders, and assassination of their time. All the violence, viciousness and vulgarity is disturbing.

The air is full of deception and political intrigue and the people slip into blatant idolatry. Thus there emerges a high correlation between their decreasing faithfulness to God and their increasing failure to successfully conquer the Promised Land.

That gives us something to think about too, doesn’t it? There were consequence for their sins, as there are for ours.

God uses hostile tribes for a number of years to discipline and punish his people. And finally the people cry out to God for deliverance.

God hears their cry and God raises up a judge, a ruler to save them.

Then the people, as long as they have that leader,  
they behave and are obedient, and live happily ever after.

Not, there is peace in the land for a number of years  
but then the judge dies and the people, in this vacuum of moral leadership,  
lacking a moral compass, lose and lack loyalty and love for God,  
and begin to define for themselves what is reasonable and prudent,  
which becomes unreasonable, immoral, and imprudent,  
and they do evil in the sight of God.

The cycle continues-the people sin.  
hostile tribes oppress them.

They endure the oppression for a period of time and cry out for help.  
God sends a judge, there is a time of peace, the judge dies, the people sin,  
they return to doing evil in the eyes of the Lord...

Our passage today fits that cycle, verses 4.1-3,  
**“After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the sight of the Lord.  
So the Lord sold them into the hands Jabin, a king of Canaan, who reined in Hazor.  
The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Hyggoyim.  
Because he had 900 chariots and cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years  
they cried out to the Lord for help.”**

I love it when the Bible mentions chariots.  
I think of the chariot race in the movie Ben Hur.  
I remember jumping up and down in the theater,  
shouting words of encouragement to Charles Heston  
as he raced around the track fending off the attacks of his evil foe.

My mom had to tell me to quiet down and sit still.  
Anyway, whatever I said must of worked. Charles won the race.

Or I think of the movie Gladiators.  
In a mock reenactment of some famous battle  
the great general, now gladiator Maximus and his friends  
are huddled together in the center of Roman Coliseum and the announcer says,  
“the Emperor is pleased to bring you the Legionnaires of Scipio Africanus.”  
And the war chariots come flying out into the arena striking fear into the hearts of the gladiators.

The chariots always struck fear into the hearts of their opponents  
They provided a superior advantage in an attack  
and easily ran down their opponents during their retreat.

The Israelites were terrorized for twenty years by King Jabin, General Sisera,  
and his 900 chariots because of their sin.  
In their misery they finally have a change of heart, and they cry out for help.

And what does God do?

Well, God raises up a woman to lead.

The logical choice would be a man with military backgrounds and the military genius but surprise, surprise, God chooses a woman, unheard of at that time.

This woman was more than able.

She was a prophetess, a judge, a wife and she was wise.

More importantly she was a woman of character and courage, with great confidence in God.

(Some of the judges God chooses in the future will be characters all right but won't have the character, courage, or confidence in God that Deborah had.)

She is assertive and decisive as well.

She hears from God, gets a hold of General Barak, and gives him his orders,

Judges 4.6, **"The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you;**

**Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor.**

**I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army,**

**with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands."**

Did you catch these lines,

**"The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you..."**

**"I'll take care of Sisera..."**

**"I will lure him... and give him into your hands."**

I'll bet they hadn't by this time invented chariots that could drive through the mud.

As we've talked about the Israelite's claiming and conquering the Promised Land, we hear this reoccurring theme, "Their battle is the Lord's battle."

We hear it again.

Sisera and his 900 chariots are at the river ready to roll.

The 40,000 Israelite troops, with just sticks and stones are ready to rock,

And Deborah is ready to talk.

She gives Barak a little pep talk, Judges 4.14,

**"Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands.**

**Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?"**

Verse 15, **"...At Barak's advance,**

**the Lord routed Sisera and his chariots and army by the sword..."**

And at the end of the day, verse 23-24,

**"On that day God subdued Jabin..."**

The Israelites are inspired, grow stronger, and eventually destroy Jabin.

It feels like we're being hit over the head again and again with this message.

It's like when mom and dad say the same stuff over and over again,

If not once, 100,000 times, or so it seemed.

Maybe it's important to God that we remember to surrender our struggles to God.  
 We hear it in the New Testament many times as well.  
 Like the reminder in I Peter," to cast our burdens,( to throw our burdens) on him,  
 and he promises to maintain and sustain us.

Anyway, this passage invites me to ask one more question.  
 Before I do I want to finish the fourth chapter.

After the rout of Sisera, his army, and his chariots.  
 Sisera leaves his chariot and on foot finds sanctuary, or at least he thinks so.  
 He find the tent of Heber who is friends with his King Jabin.

Heber's wife Jael invites the weary Sisera into her tent to rest.  
 Childlike he lays down.  
 Mother like she covers him up and slips him a mickie...I mean gives him a glass of warm milk.  
 He dives into a nice sleep and she drives a nasty nail into his temple.

Ah, justice is done.  
 God has used a charismatic, courageous, and competent woman, Deborah;  
 a rough and tough military commander, Barak;  
 and an unlikely assassin, Jael  
 to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of the Canaanite rule,  
 and deliver them back under his rightful reign and rule, at least until the next time.

Now here is the question I want to ask,  
 Why did it take them 20 years to cry out to God?  
 Did it take them that long to figure out why all the misery?  
 Did it take them 20 years to figure out they were miserable  
 because they had forgotten and forsaken God?

It usually takes me about twenty seconds to twenty minutes to figure out  
 I've said or done something wrong.

But maybe like me, or maybe even you, they forgot,  
 or they rationalize their behavior, saying it's reasonable and prudent,  
 or like Adam and Eve, they tried to hide it and suffered in silence.

I like what David, the " man after God's own heart," did.  
 He knew God's heart,  
 he understood that all God simply wanted was a broken and contrite,  
 a humble and repentant heart, and he acted on that knowledge.

Friends, God has already acted on our behalf, trust that.  
 He has raised up a leader, a ruler, a savior for us, trust that.  
 And while we were yet sinners, that savior died for us, trust that.

Don't walk out of here today without talking another step of faith.  
 God is faithful, trust that. Now let's stand and sing about it, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

