**What May Not Appear as Sin Can Really Displease God**

A long time ago, when my daughter was quite young, she was helping me wash the dishes. After rinsing the soapy plates, she would hand them to me so that I could dry them. So what did I do? Right before her eyes, I rewashed the dishes to make sure that they were really clean. Obviously, my daughter was displeased since she could see that I did not have too much faith in her work! Not wanting to dishearten her, I made up some bogus excuse to assure her that I wasn’t rewashing them because her work was not good enough. Looking back, I am not too sure whether she bought that. Today’s study is about why our lack of faith in God displeases Him, and how that can result in missed opportunities and blessings in life.

**Q:** Share about the time when someone’s lack of confidence in you (e.g., parent, coach, friend, teacher or pastor) really affected you.

**A. What is faith?** Before examining the faith of Barak & Jephthah, a preliminary work on faith needs to be established in order to correctly gauge their faith.

1. There are three types of faith presented in the Bible. Anyone care to guess?

2. Defining faith: Heb. 11:1: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain what do not see.” What does this mean?

3. The New Atheist author Sam Harris (*The End of Faith* 2003) interpreted this passage in the following manner: “Read in the right way, this passage seems to render faith entirely self-justifying: perhaps the very fact that one believes in something which has not yet come to pass or for which one has no evidence constitutes evidence for its actuality.”

**Q:** This isn’t entirely wrong but 3 key components to biblical faith are missing. What are they?

4. Then Harris offered this parody: “I feel a certain, rather thrilling ‘conviction’ that Nicole Kidman is in love with me. As we have never met, my feeling is my only evidence of her infatuation. I reason thus, my feelings suggest that Nicole and I must

have a special, even metaphysical, connection—otherwise, how could I have this feeling in the first place? I decide to set up

camp outside her house to make the necessary introductions” (p. 64).

**Q:** His analogy falls short, for it doesn’t correlate with our relationship with God. What’s wrong?

**B. Relationship between pleasing God and the lack of faith in Him**

Hebrews 11:6 reads: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

1. This is a hard-hitting statement: Impossible or not able (from a compound Greek word, *a*+*dunatos*: not+able) to please God due

to the lack of faith in His existence as well as fairness.

2. One event that underscores the displeasure of God over our lack of faith in Him: What happened to the father of John the Baptist who couldn’t quite believe what he was told by an angel, that his wife was going to have a son in her old age (Lk 1:20).

**Q:** God takes our lack of faith in Him is so *personally*; what does this say about God? Ps. 8:4; Mat. 13:58; 2 Chron. 25:14-15.

**C. Analyzing the living faith exercised by the two judges: Barak & Jephthah**

1. Barak: Read 4:4-10, 14-22. In order for us to better understand the circumstances, imagine his statute as that of a NFL lineman & Deborah as a petite cheerleader (with more clothes on, of course).

**Q1:** Was Deborah pleased with his response upon being summoned to lead the troop into battle? Notice that God had informed Barak the specific way in which He was going to defeat the enemy (4:7, 5:21: “The river Kishon swept them away”).

**Q2**: Why the insecurity? What difference would the presence of a woman make in a war?

2. Judge Jephthah did a similar thing. Read 11:28-48 and focus on 29-30.

**Q1**: In what way is “If you give me the Ammonites into my hands, I will sacrifice the first thing that comes out of my house when I return home” similar to Barak’s “If you don’t go with me, I won’t go”? Notice what God did (29) to secure the victory for him.

**Q2:** Ultimately, why was his vow such an affront to God?

3. Final point: Despite their imperfect faith, God used these two men to deliver Israel from her oppressors. Moreover, their names are found in Hebrew 11:32 as examples of certain OT people who demonstrated faith in God, as Barak finally did, later.

**Q:** What does this say about God?

4. The good news: His grace and mercy do change us. Barak wasn’t rejected at his refusal to go into battle without Debora (implying that the Lord’s presence alone was inadequate for victory), but He was shown mercy!

In 4:14-16, we already see the change in Barak.

**Q1**: What change do you see in Barak when told by Deborah, “Go” (without her)?

**Q2**: How should this make us feel, especially when we are in a poor spiritual condition?

**D. Application**: Share your experience of either giving into fear or overcoming it to obey what you believed was God’s will for your life

at that moment. It could be in any area of our lives.