

Judges 08-05-30a

This is Friday the 30th of May 2008. We are in the book of Judges chapter 11 looking at the story of Jephthah. We always begin our time of fellowship in God's Word with a moment of prayer.

It gives each of us the opportunity to make sure that the time is well spent and that we are in a position to learn and to be used by God, to be a blessing to one another. As all of you well know, there's a lot more going on in our Bible class than just me talking and I'm very grateful for that. But the extent to which God can use us and bless others through us depends entirely on the extent to which we have the influence of His Spirit and the power of His Word in our souls and one of the fundamental ways to make sure that we have that opportunity is to make sure that there's no unconfessed sin or lingering bad attitudes that remain in our hearts and this is our opportunity to go before God, exercise our priesthood, and make sure that we are thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Shall we pray? Father, what a wonderful nation we live in where we are free to assemble. We have unlimited resources. We have access to so much information, so many different references and aids and different versions of your Word and in every way shape and form we are supported like no other generation in history for the study of your Word and even in this generation we are uniquely able in this nation to spend time and improve our understanding and our preparation for engaging in the work that you have for us in this life and in the ages to come.

We pray that you will bless us as we study this portion of your Word in the book of Judges. May each of us find in it those truths that will enable us to perceive more adequately and more fully your purpose and your will for our individual lives and that we together as a church and as members of the body of Christ will be fit vessels to contain and to reflect your glory. We ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. Well, this is one of the most talked about passages in the entire book of Judges, perhaps in the entire Old Testament. The story of Jephthah immediately calls to mind his daughter and visions of human sacrifice in Israel, which seems like a very shocking development and indeed it is.

I wanted to show you a book that I think is quite good. This is by Walt Kaiser, Walter C. Kaiser Jr. It's called Hard Sayings of the Old Testament and it basically tries to address many of the problem passages where believers are sometimes challenged and have a difficult time explaining what the Bible means by what it says. He's got chapters in here for Sacrifice your son as a burnt offering directed toward Abraham in Genesis chapter 22 or the Lord heart and Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 9. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth in Exodus 21.

Stone a stubborn and rebellious son in Deuteronomy 21. I'm just selecting randomly. There are 73 different sections, 73 different chapters in here dealing with what are considered to be some

of the hard sayings of the Old Testament.

It's a very fascinating read and Dr. Kaiser is a wonderful scholar and he has some great discussions of issues in that line as well as in many others. He's authored many many books and any of them are worth having on your shelf. Here's one on the two bears mauled 42 youths.

You remember that go up old bald head and the carnage that ensued. But I wanted to read you just a few lines from his discussion of Jephthah which is the 26th episode in here. He quotes the passage that is under our gaze this evening in Judges chapter 11 verses 30 through 39 and he introduces it this way.

The story of Jephthah and his famous vow has caused heated debates among interpreters. The question dividing interpreters is simply did Jephthah sacrifice his own daughter or did he not? If he did, did God condone such an unspeakable act? He rehearses the history of interpretation of this passage noting as any good commentary will that virtually all of the early commentary, rabbinical commentary, Josephus and the other early witnesses who record opinions about this text believed that he did in fact actually offer up his own daughter as a burnt offering. It was not until the Middle Ages commentators began to look for ways to soften this harsh truth so to speak.

So you have to look to just the last several hundred years to find people who adopt a different interpretation. It was understood easily for the first 2,000 or more years that it referred that Ola means what Ola means which is a whole burnt offering. He goes on to say the reader must remember the theme of Judges.

Everyone was doing what was right in his or her own eyes. Jephthah was no different. There are three main questions to answer here.

What did Jephthah mean by his vow? How did he carry it out and did God condone his actions? The conclusion that he draws is that Jephthah did indeed sacrifice his daughter. He voluntarily took her and made a whole burnt offering out of her and he gives his reasons in here. We're going to go through this discussion in some detail and give the pros and the cons and I think we will arrive at a very supportable interpretation of this passage by the time we're done.

But this is an example of a commentator who comes down on the side of the historic interpretation which is that he sacrificed her as a whole burnt offering. I have another book which I'll show you here if I can extract it from its hiding place without spilling my coffee. This is another one of my favorite books.

I have resorted to this many many times over the years. It's one of the first books I ever had in my theological library. This is the Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties by Gleason Archer.

It's another compendium much like Dr. Kaiser's work. Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, Gleason Archer, published by Zondervan. It's got the material organized by Book of the Bible and then

just has subsections within that.

Dr. Archer takes the opposite view and he says there's no way that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter as a whole burnt offering. It's just unthinkable and he gives his reasons. So you've got two very well-respected, authoritative, conservative, expository scholars degreed beyond anything I could ever hope or dream to even imagine.

And they are exactly opposite in their interpretation of this passage. So we are not going into virgin snow here. There's been a lot of tracks left by the great gray heads of the past.

And so we will assay to go forth and try to make sense of the conflicting interpretations. Let's begin by reading the text. It is important to start with what the Bible actually says and to ultimately end up with what the Bible actually says.

So we are here in Judges chapter 11 and we looked at the beginning of this last time. We know that Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior it says. Now this is an important phrase to note because it is used elsewhere in scripture.

And we generally try to let scripture interpret itself or to give us meaning from the context in which things are used. So first of all Jephthah is a Gileadite and it says Gilead was the father of Jephthah. We have two different Gileads here.

We have the original Gilead who is the progenitor of these individuals in the tribe of Manasseh. Manasseh had a son named Machir and Machir had a son which of course would be Manasseh's grandson named Gilead. And this region is named for Gilead.

The Gileadites are this clan within the tribe of Manasseh. Ruben Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh are over here on the east side of the Jordan as you recall. But this is another Gilead in the same way that you might have a Judah in the tribe of Judah.

You might have someone named Dan in the tribe of Dan. We have a man named Gilead in this clan of Gilead in the tribe of Manasseh and he is the father of Jephthah. Gilead's wife bore him sons.

This becomes clear in verse 2. This would not be harking all the way back to generations that were around in the days of the slavery in Egypt. So the wife's sons grew up. They drove Jephthah out.

You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house for you're the son of another woman. He's the son of a harlot. Very probably a Canaanite woman because this woman doesn't gain the standing even of a concubine much less of a wife.

She is a lady of the evening, a woman for hire. And so he has no legitimacy in the eyes of the other sons of his father and he is driven out. He fled from his brothers and he lives in the land of Tov.

As I pointed out last time this looks like the word for good in Hebrew. But this is probably more likely the area called Tovion in the book of Maccabees or Tuban. It's referred to by both those terms in 1st and 2nd Maccabees.

And these sort of sons of Belial gathered themselves to him. They are soldiers of fortune, soldiers for hire. They're sort of mercenary.

They are banditos. They are somewhat outlaws. The best you could construe this would be that he's sort of like Robin Hood to the band of merry men, robbing from the rich and giving to the poor.

But they are raiders. They are fugitives and vagabonds and they are out here in the area of being outcasts. So they engage in these expeditions where they will go out and basically take loot and that's how they live.

And it came about during this time of oppression that was noted in chapter 10. We saw that we're now in that 40 years of oppression by both the Philistines and the Ammonites. And this goes on for some 18 years.

The Ammonites come in and oppress Israel. They fight against Israel in verse 5. So the elders of Gilead say we need a guy who really knows his stuff when it comes to warfare. We need someone clever.

We need someone daring. We need someone imaginative. We need someone with a lot of experience.

And none of us have that. The best guy we can think of to do this is this sort of outlaw, renegade, buccaneer, sort of a pirate of the wilderness, Jephthah. So they go and we saw last time how they appealed to him.

And he says, well, you're asking me to be your captain. What's in it for me? And they say, well, we'll not only make you the captain, we'll make you the rosh, we'll make you the head. We will more or less give you standing.

This is a way for Jephthah to reenter society with legitimacy. He can essentially earn the respect and admiration of the people who formerly treated him as not worth consideration. So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead.

In verse 11, the people made him rosh. Over them, as well as chief, and the word there for chief we looked at, this means military captain. And this is a word that is used when Joshua tells the military captains in the army of Israel to come and put their feet on the necks of the kings that they have defeated in the land of Canaan.

He said to all the chiefs that these basically the word is the equivalent of what we might call a colonel, a colonel of militia. He's a military leader principally. Rosh has broader connotations.

This means political governance, civil authority, and that sort of thing. But the term that is used here is translated commander, but it is qatsin, q-a-t-s-i-n, qatsin. And it's very close to captain or colonel or something along that line.

So he's gotten two kinds of legitimacy that he's never had before in his life. He's the son of a prostitute. And now if he gains the victory, this is all conditional.

He has to win. But if he wins, he will be not reinstated, but instated. He will be accepted.

He will be granted status. This used to happen in the days of the knights when someone would do an act of great valor, and the king would say, kneel, swine, or swain, or whatever you are. And the guy would kneel, and he would tap him on each shoulder with his sword and say, I knight you.

I grant you a knighthood. And you could raise somebody of common birth into nobility. And this is Jephthah's big chance, and it appeals to him greatly on that basis.

So this seems to be like a win-win situation, but they have chosen well. Now there's no casting of lots. There's no appeal to the priest.

Nobody prays and says, oh God, show us your man. This is strictly a human, common sense sort of operation. There's no hint, no inkling that God is involved anywhere.

But Jephthah turns out to be a good choice. He doesn't go in like a bull in a china shop. He doesn't chop up an ox and send it to Israel and say, join me, and let's get on a big emotional binge and whip these scary bad Ammonites.

He first tries diplomacy. And after consulting with the elders of Gilead, and notice in verse 11, he's with the elders of Gilead, and I'm sure that there was discussion about the whole history of this thing, and any of the missing details in Jephthah's mind are filled in about the entire history of this conflict. What is its root? What is its foundation? Why is this war going on? And Jephthah reads himself into the picture, and he has a good grasp of the situation, and the first thing he tries, oddly enough, is diplomacy.

In verse 12, Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon saying, What is it between you and me that you have come to fight against my land? Now, Jephthah is obviously not a man with any history in this conflict, but he is speaking in the person of Israel. He is speaking as though he himself is the personification of the Israelites. He could almost say, I am Jacob, or I am Israel.

Why are you fighting against me? He is the voice, he is the mouthpiece for the nation, and he speaks in the first person on behalf of the nation. So, what is between you and me? What is it between Israel and Ammon that you have come to me to fight against my land? King of the sons of Ammon said to the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel, and see, he understands this kind of parlay. He says, Because Israel took away my land when they came up from Egypt

from the Arnon as far as the Jephthah.

We read through this last time, but I didn't really explain it. Let me just summarize this. We could go through in torturous detail the history that Jephthah rehearses when they send this reply.

They say, Hey, you are sitting on our land and we want it back. We are aggrieved. You have stolen our land unfairly.

We deserve it. We should have it. You need to get out of it, and if you don't, that is why we are fighting you.

Jephthah replies, and again, he has got his diplomatic channel open. He is trying to settle this thing through negotiation, and so he sends his messengers again to the king of the sons of Ammon. Now, before we get all dazed and our minds might tend to wander off and wait to come back at the denouement, why do we care about this as people living in the 21st century, in the church age? It seems like our situation is completely different.

Well, maybe not so much. Do we find ourselves suddenly inheriting problems that maybe weren't of our own making? Do we get called upon to solve conflicts that we're not necessarily to blame for? Do we enter into discussions, debates, arguments, where there are pre-existing circumstances over which we have no control? What should we do? Do we say, well, I can clearly see that this side is right, and I can clearly see that this side is wrong, so I'm going to take up all of my weapons, and I am going to eviscerate and cut down and chop up and destroy this opposition, because I am right, and they are wrong. I am an advocate for the side of goodness and rightness in the American way, so I will charge in, hacking and slashing.

Maybe we ought to look at the example of Jephthah and take a calmer and more reasoned approach. Did God come in with judgment as His leading note of communication when He spoke with His people? Does He not always plead with? Does He not send prophets when the Lord Jesus Christ came? Did He not spend over three years talking and discussing and explaining and pleading with the people of Israel to get with the plan and purpose of God that they had diverged from in a very significant way? There is always grace before judgment. There is an attempt by God, remember there is a great verse in the Old Testament which says, come, let us reason together.

Why should you die, O house of Israel? All day long I have held out my hands. Holding out the hands is body language that accompanies communication. You don't just walk up to, well, some people probably do.

People of Italian extraction can speak volumes with their hands. Some of the rest of us can as well, but typically when you hold out the hands, what are you doing? What is really funny is to watch people on the phone. This is just a relatively recent thing, the last 150 years or so where we have phones, but we haven't dropped our body language.

And people gesticulate and gesture and make all kinds of body language things that don't go over the phone. But that's just the way we communicate. But if you say, all day long I have held out my hands, that is a gesture, that is a body language that indicates pleading.

Look, I'm not attacking you. My hands are out, my hands are open. It's the origin of the handshake.

You reach out and indicate, look, I'm not Ehud, but I haven't got something strapped to my thigh. I'm not going to stab you from front to back. A wave, when you wave, why do we do that? It goes back to ancient times where as two potentially armed opponents approach each other and they want to talk rather than fight.

They say, look, I'm not holding, my hand is empty. I don't want to be seen as threatening you. And that's where our waving comes from.

So Jephthah does this and it is certainly praiseworthy. It is certainly notable that he does this because if you are forced to military conflict, nobody can say, well, why didn't you try something short of that? It's the Ammonites' fault that they end up getting whipped in this battle because they were approached. Jephthah tried to resolve it peaceably.

Jesus recommends this to his disciples in the New Testament. If you have ought against a brother, go to him and talk about it. And if he will not be reconciled, get a few more people and go back.

Make a second try. And if he still will not be reconciled, bring it before the entire assembly. It says ecclesia, but of course there is no church formal at that time.

That just means the entire assembly. This would be a clan assembly or an elder's assembly. And if he still will not be reconciled after three tries, treat him like a heathen and a tax collector.

You remember what that means. Heathens and tax collectors were not executed. They weren't stoned.

What should you do if you are a godly person towards someone who is a heathen? What did the Samaritan do for the Jewish man in the ditch? Do you impugn and excoriate and denigrate and abuse and scorn such people? Or do you pray for them and look for an opportunity to bring them into the fold? But you have to put a distance. Touch not the unclean thing. Hate the garment that's spotted by the flesh and so on.

Well, Jephthah makes an attempt to resolve this. He says, look, what's your side of this? I've heard from the elders of Gilead. You tell me what your beef is.

And they do. They say, look, you took our land. It doesn't belong to you.

We want it back. He says, look, let me explain how this is. And this is where we pick up in verse 15.

Thus says Jephthah, Israel did not take away the land of Moab nor the land of the sons of Ammon. Now notice the Moabites are not really involved in this. It's the Ammonites.

But it's tied up with the history of Moab. The land that we're talking about here, the land of Gilead, this land of Bashan, didn't belong to the Ammonites ever. It belonged to the Moabites.

The Ammonites are claiming it on the basis of their relationship to the Moabites. Israel never took this land from the Ammonites. In fact, Israel didn't take it from the Moabites.

And Jephthah explains this. He says, look, Israel didn't take away the land of Moab nor the land of the sons of Ammon. When they came up from Egypt and Israel went through the Red Sea, came to Kadesh, sent to the king of Edom, let us pass through, he would not let him.

He said to the king of Moab, he wouldn't consent. Israel remained at Kadesh. Then, verse 18, they went through the wilderness around the land of Edom and around the land of Moab, came to the east side of the land of Moab, and they camped beyond the Arnon.

That is the border of Moab. Israel did not go into the land of Moab. They're beyond the Arnon, which is the historic border.

They did not enter the territory of Moab. Arnon is the border. Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Ammonites.

The Ammonites are the people under the ban. They are under the curse of destruction from God for their iniquity. These are the Canaanites.

These are the heathens. They are not Moabites. They are not Ammonites.

They are Ammonites. Israel said, let us pass through. Sihon did not trust Israel.

Sihon gathered his people, camped in Jehozan, fought with Israel. The Lord God of Israel gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel. They defeated them and possessed all the land of the Ammonites, the inhabitants of that country.

And they possessed all the territory of the Ammonites from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok and from the wilderness as far as the Jordan. Now, Sihon had taken land from the Moabites long before. Israel didn't defeat Moab.

Moab had already been defeated and had half its land taken away by Sihon, king of Heshbon. Israel defeated Sihon and got the land that way. So they cannot be held at fault for holding Moabite land.

And there's no ancient mind rationale for saying, well, I know you got defeated in battle and somebody took this land away from you. And hundreds of years later, we have defeated that guy. And now we're just going to graciously give you back this land that you lost centuries ago.

They didn't think that way. They said, look, we defeated the guy. We took his land.

It's ours. You want some land? Go defeat somebody. That's the way they thought.

Since now the Lord God of Israel drove out the Amorites from before his people Israel, who are you then to possess it? Do you not possess what Chemosh, your God, gives you to possess? So whatever the Lord God has driven out before us, we will possess it. Are you any better than Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive with Israel? When Israel came in, you remember the whole thing, he tried to defeat the Israelites through Balaam and the curse. But Balak did not attack Israel, nor did he try to negotiate the return of any of his land from Israel when Israel takes it from Sihon, king of Heshbon, king of the Amorites.

Balak didn't say, hey, that land really belongs to us Moabites. And so if Balak didn't ask for his land back, why should the Amorites, who are even more distantly removed from a claim, why should they possess it if the Moabites themselves haven't asked for it back in all these centuries? That's the thrust of the argument. It's very sound.

It's very persuasive. It is virtually unanswerable. There is no reply to that.

They have no legal claim on the land at all. They just thought they would get it by bullying and by force. They knew the Israelites were disorganized.

They trumped up this claim that they had title to the land. And Jephthah says, you know, we're not fools over here. We know exactly what the history of this land is.

We've got the title deed here with the history going back. And guess what? You're not on it. So while Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages and in Aror and its villages, all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, 300 years, why did you not recover them within that time? And this is really fascinating because this confirms the chronology that we talked about last week.

Remember when we were figuring out the time between the Exodus down to the time of David and Solomon? It says when Solomon in his fourth year dedicates the temple, that's the 480-year mark. Well, 300 years from the time of Moses and their conquest of Sihon and Og, king of Bashan, it has been 300 years since then. And if you add on to that the 40 years, it's actually 38 years, but just round it off to 40, of the wandering from the Exodus, that gets you to 340 years.

There's going to be the 40 years that includes the Philistines with Samson, the Amorites here, this is the 18 years of Jephthah and all of that in. So you've got 40, that's 380. Then you've got another 40 with Eli and Samuel, and that's 420.

Then you've got another 40 years with David, and that's 460. And basically you piece this all in and you can see how close we are to the time of Samuel and to the time of Saul and David. I left out Saul's 15 years.

I think Saul has about 15 years in him. That gets you right up to the 480 years. It gets you to 475

plus the four years of Solomon reign is like 479.

So we're right on in our understanding of the overlap within the book of Judges here by Jephthah's reference to this 300-year period since that land was first occupied by Israel. I therefore have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me. May the Lord, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon.

I want to point out two things here. This is the second time that Jephthah has reflected a strong respect for the Lord God of Israel. The first is when he took his vow and made his pledge along with the elders of Gilead before the Lord, just a few verses earlier, and now he invokes the Lord God of Israel in opposition to Chemosh, the God of the Ammonites.

Chemosh is actually the God of the Moabites. You can see that the Ammonites have actually amalgamated themselves and tried to put on the mantle of their big brother, the Moabites. Moab was the elder and Ammon was the younger in that incestuous thing with Lot.

The Moabites seem to be off the scene and Ammon is trying to take over the big brother's stuff, including Chemosh, who was actually originally the God of the Moabites. So, may the Lord, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon. Notice, the king of the sons of Ammon disregarded the message which Jephthah sent him.

He didn't reply, he doesn't have a rebuttal, he doesn't have a counterclaim, he doesn't have an alternate view of history. He just says, I don't want to hear that. He can't refute it, he can't counter it, he can't gainsay it.

It's the truth and everybody knows it. The second thing I want to point out about Jephthah here, not only does he invoke God on these two very important occasions, but notice how well acquainted Jephthah is with the history of Israel, which is recorded in the Law of Moses. This history is recorded in the Book of Numbers, for example, and Jephthah is intimately acquainted with the details.

You remember that once a year the Law was to be read to all the people in Israel, and they evidently under Joshua kept up this tradition, and under the elders that followed Joshua, and in parts of Israel no doubt this continued to be practiced all the way down to the time of Jephthah. Otherwise, how would he know the specifics and the names and the details so well? But he seems to be a man who is well acquainted with the Law, and that's important for understanding the next part of the chapter. So the Antichrist disregarded, we saw this last time.

Now notice verse 29, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah. I would submit to you that God does not put his Spirit on just anybody. We don't see the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Pharaoh in Egypt.

We don't see the Spirit of the Lord coming upon anyone that we can't make a fair case for being a believer. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon King Saul when he's trying to go down and murder David. He's got murder in his heart, and he's in a great pattern of evil at that time, but

the Spirit comes on him.

He is the anointed of the Lord. God's prophet designated him to be king in Israel. He's the people's choice.

He had been victorious in battle. He did a few early things well, but he becomes disobedient. He becomes evil, and yet the Spirit of the Lord can still come upon him.

Why? He is a believer. At the end of his life, the night before he dies, Samuel comes back from the dead and says, today you will be with me. You will be with me.

Samuel is manifestly not an unbeliever, so wherever Samuel is, wherever the dead of the Old Testament saints go, that's where Samuel is, and that's where Saul is going to be. He's a believer. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him.

This is, of course, you are all familiar with my view on Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord. I think Judas was a believer. I don't think you can lose your salvation, and when Jesus sent the teams out, both the twelve and the seventy, Judas was a team member.

Jesus breathed on them, and they received the Spirit. They went out and they did mighty works through the power of the Holy Spirit. They cast out demons.

They healed the sick. Jesus says, I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. And He doesn't say, all of you except Judas.

Every time he tries it, nothing happens. Nobody gets healed. How embarrassing.

Demons don't leave. They say, well, hello friend, whenever Judas comes up and it doesn't work. Now, when Judas comes back, he is one with the other eleven disciples.

They all heal. They all cast out demons. They all operate in the power of the Spirit.

And I do not see any reason to think that Jesus Christ would send an unbeliever forth to do the work of ministry in Israel under the power of the Spirit. I just think it's impossible to conceive. It just goes to show you how way wrong you can go as a believer.

And you can die, as I think Judas did, the sin unto death. In that case, by his own hand. But why else was he so miserable? He hanged himself because he was miserable.

He was a godless unbeliever and thought Jesus was just a raggedy rabbi wandering the area. Why did he feel so bad? It's because he knew exactly what he had done. And he believed that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

And he came to the realization that he had made a horrifying, unprecedented mistake and committed a grievous sin. And he couldn't live with himself. He hanged himself.

Gave up his place amongst the disciples. Well, I say all of that to say, I don't think Jephthah is a

complete rascal. Else, why would God put his spirit upon him? Jephthah has shown signs that he honors God, that he knows the law.

And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he passes through Gilead and Manasseh. And of course, as he passes through, he's gathering a militia. He's gathering an army.

He's gaining troops. From Mizpah, where he made that oath before the Lord, he went on to the sons of Ammon. Now, here's where Jephthah gets in trouble.

If the Spirit of the Lord is on him, you would think, well, he can do no wrong now. The Spirit of the Lord is on him. The Spirit of the Lord being upon us does not keep us from sin.

Otherwise, at the point of salvation, the Spirit would come on us and we would never sin again, right? David had the Spirit of the Lord on him for pretty much his entire kingship, and yet he committed some grievous errors. The presence of the Spirit is not a guarantee against bad decisions. I've mentioned many times, I often think of it, I can picture the cover of this book in my mind.

Back in the late 60s, there was a book that came out by Tim LaHaye, the Left Behind guy, Spirit Controlled Temperaments. Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy, and Phlegmatic, I think everybody was trying to figure out what am I? It was a little game, kind of like a Christian version of your horoscope. Well, I'm a Pisces or I'm an Aquarius.

Well, I'm a Phlegmatic Sanguine or I'm a Melancholy Choleric or whatever. But it was very popular. It was the subject of endless discussions at the potlucks and so on.

But Spirit Controlled Temperament, and people would talk about being controlled by the Spirit. Listen, there is no such thing as a believer being controlled by the Spirit. If you and I were truly controlled by the Spirit, we would never sin, right? Get that word out of your vocabulary.

The Holy Spirit does not control anyone. Hence, the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. We are called to control ourselves and the Spirit can be present and you can know the Word of God and you can make the stupidest decisions known under God's heaven.

Knowing the Word of God, attending Bible class, having piles and pages of notes, having the Holy Spirit active and present in your life does not bulletproof us from error. Look at Jephthah. The Spirit of God just got through coming on him and it's almost as though he doesn't quite know what to do with it.

And he's all charged up and he says, boy, I really have a sense of the presence of the power of God here. And Jephthah defaults to his standard mode of behavior. He's been a fugitive buccaneer.

He's been an entrepreneur on the shady edges and beyond the edges of the law. He forms alliances. He manipulates people.

He gets things done. He knows how to do diplomacy. He knows how to do force.

He's a shaker and a mover. He is a graduate of the Dale Carnegie course on winning friends and influencing people. So, he suddenly, with a sense of the presence of the power of God, he decides that he will enlist God.

He will recruit Him. He'll bring Him over to his side. And he falls into a common pattern of thinking of God as a man.

What an ultimately blasphemous thing that is. To treat God as though He could be cajoled or bribed or influenced to do something that is not in accordance with His perfect will. But Jephthah figures, I'll hedge my bets here.

I'll make sure that I get the divine aid on my side. So, he makes this vow. Now, why would he make a vow if he didn't know the law? Because the law talks about vows.

And if you investigate, you find that there is precedent for this. Going back to Israel himself, to Jacob back in Genesis chapter 28. Remember when he's fleeing from the wrath of his brother after he's beat him out of his inheritance and fooled his dad with the hairy arms and so on and the mess of pottage and all? Jacob is bugging out.

He's heading north. He's going up to be with his mother's people. And he stops at Bethel and lays his head on the rock and sees the angels ascending and descending on the ladder to heaven, stairway to heaven.

And Jacob makes a vow in Genesis 28.20 and says, If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take and will give me food to eat and garments to wear and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. This stone which I set up as a pillar will be God's house, hence the name of the place, Bethel, house of God. And of all that you give me, I surely will give a tenth to you.

The original tithe. God didn't ask for it. God didn't mandate it.

Jacob voluntarily on his own, which is perfectly fine. Anybody that decides they want to do this, it's an arrangement between themselves and God. They say, Lord, I'm going to commit.

I'm going to give this much to you on a regular basis. That's great. There's not a thing in the world wrong with it.

Everyone needs to understand, though, that this is voluntary. A vow is a voluntary expression of gratitude and thankfulness for God's help, God's support, God's blessing. Jacob says, If you will indeed bless me in these ways, I will express my gratitude by revering you as my God, honoring this place as your house, and devoting a tenth of everything you give me to you.

That's his pledge. That's his vow. So we have precedent for this sort of thing.

Not only in Genesis 28, 20, but the book of Leviticus in chapter 23, verse 38, besides the Sabbaths of the Lord, and besides your gifts, and besides all of your votive and freewill offerings which you give to the Lord, offerings that are the fulfillment of a vow. Numbers chapter 30, vows were common in Israel. You remember, Hannah makes a vow in 1 Samuel 1, in verse 11.

In light of the fact that she is barren, she says, O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant, remember me and not forget your maidservant. Give your maidservant a son. I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life.

A razor shall never come on his head, i.e. he will be a Nazarite. She makes this vow, voluntary, as an expression of gratitude for a fulfilled request. This is what I will do.

So Jephthah is within the bounds of what is understood as a part of the law of God. And is built into the history of Israel and the law of Israel with regard to this vow that he makes. It is not that the vow is made.

It is the motivation for the vow and the kind of vow that gets Jephthah into trouble. And it's a reminder that we need to stop and reflect when we commit ourselves to anything because God expects us to honor our commitments, whatever they may be. We should not enter into a commitment lightly.

But our yea should be yea and our nay should be nay. And what we say ought to be as binding on us as if we put our hand on a stack of Bibles and sworn to the heavens, cross my heart and hope to die. That's how good our word should be.

If we say we're going to be somewhere or do a thing, we ought to treat it as binding, as an oath before the Lord. Well, this is a good place to stop and take our break. When we come back, we're going to analyze this vow and the fulfillment after God does in fact grant success in this battle.