

A Costly Victory - Part 2

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[0:00] What an amazing promise, right? Come to Jesus and rest in Him.

! Have you felt that at all this week?! Have you felt settled?! Have you felt at rest? Have you felt the sense of God's got this?

I can trust Him. Or are you like I tend to be? Where I want to be in a place of rest, but I keep finding myself in a place of striving, in a place of pursuing, in a place of working things out, trying to make things happen, and not a place of rest.

God wants, He invites us to that. We can find that in His Son, Jesus Christ. It's not that the troubles go away. It's not that the pressures are lifted.

It's that Jesus strengthens us to be able to move forward. He gives us that settled confidence that we can trust Him.

[1:08] That's where the rest comes. Not in removing the problems, but in presenting the solution in Christ. And what a joy that is that we can find rest in Him.

It's what we have found as we've been working our way through the book of Judges. And I would encourage you to please turn there. In the book of Judges, if you're using the Pew Bible, we're on page 211.

Judges chapter 10, 11, and 12 is where we're going to be this morning, kind of working our way through this book and reminding ourselves what it's supposed to look like when we follow the instructions that God has laid before us.

It looks like rest. And that's what the people experienced, at least through the first four Judges. God brought rest to the land.

It says the land had rest. The land had rest. The land had rest. Four times the land had rest. From this point on, there is no rest in the land. Partly because the people had abandoned the standard.

[2:17] The moral depravity of the nation had collapsed. And what we saw last week, we're going to turn to briefly again today. The accusation of God against the people, their apostasy, their rebellion.

And God says, I'm not going to drive the people out anymore. I'm just not going to do it. Because whatever token confession and repentance, whatever token revival there seems to be, I know the true heart of this.

I know the reality of what's true in your heart and life. And that's kind of what we have been tracing as we've been walking through this book. And we'll get there in just a moment.

But what I've just really appreciated through this study is seeing the faithfulness of the Lord. It's called the study of faithfulness and failure.

That in spite of our unfaithfulness, in spite of our failures, God remains faithful. Wow.

[3:25] Marvel at the faithfulness of God. The only way to really marvel at the faithfulness of God is to have a very clear picture of what we deserve. What we deserve.

And we're seeing that front and center in our study through the judges. We're seeing what we deserve. How our rebellion pushes us away from God and how that moral ruin leads to disaster within our families and in our communities and in the nation itself and the outward opposition that's experienced.

And that's what God warned the people about. He wanted them to enjoy rest. But it only comes one way. It only comes as we anchor faith in God Himself and we walk by His standard.

I'm going to have the privilege here in just a little under a month to be able to teach the entire Old Testament to a group of students, pastors and Christian leaders in Central Asia.

I'm going to be traveling with Daniel Cain. We heard about the Tri-M ministry, mobile modular ministry, and I'll have a chance to do that in just a few weeks from now.

[4:37] And I would just, will you pray for me? Trying to get my arms around the Old Testament and like, what does Leviticus have to offer?

You know, I can talk about sacrifices, but I mean, how does Leviticus encourage a group of pastors? And let me tell you, we know it does because we know that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

It's profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and righteousness. It is profitable for us. So help, please pray that God helps me to get my arms around the Old Testament and to be able to present it in a way that is not just informative, not just instructive, but is inspiring.

That they're inspired by the wonder of God's initiative among His people, drawing people to Himself, making a people that's fit for God.

What an opportunity that is. And pray for my family, as I'm going to be away for a couple of weeks and pray for Pastor David, who will be preaching in my place. It's a collaborative effort, and I am grateful for your help with that.

[5:47] And then at the end of this year, in December, I'm going to be teaching again next time in Central America. So first in Central Asia, now in Central America.

And that assignment is the New Testament. So I thought it was just going to be one book. It turns out to be the entire New Testament, except for the Gospels.

And I, you know, what a great opportunity. You'll see the whole framework, the whole storyline of the Scripture. And it's the same, by the way. Because the God of the Old Testament that makes a people for Himself is the same God of the New Testament who, guess what, makes a people for Himself.

He will build His church, right? And the gates of hell will not prevail against it. It is God's work. And so we trust in God's strategy to do God's work. And when we do, we can count on God's favor. And not that everything goes well. Not that our life is perfect, but that we can trust God to work even the hard things out for our good and for His glory. That's the joy.

[6:55] What a joy I will get to have because of your willingness to let me go and to let me be part of this and the investment that will happen in two different parts of the hemisphere because of the faithful ministry that you are having here at Maranatha and I get to be part of.

We also, at the end of the service, will have another baptism and just another visible picture of how God is bringing people into His family.

And they are coming to Christ and we get to demonstrate this visible picture of what it means to be part of Christ. In Christ, kind of this baptizing them into the Lord Jesus.

They are there, but this is kind of the visible portrayal of what God has already accomplished for them. So we get to do that at the end of this service today.

Well, we're continuing our study through the book of Judges and I want to just put this graphic back up on the screen for you. You have this on your outlines. We covered most of this last time we were together, but I just want to, for those of you who were not here or for the rest of you that kind of need a reminder, here's what we talked about.

[8:13] There were three patterns that we developed or that we saw kind of are working simultaneously in the book of Judges. The first, you see that kind of that downward slope and that's meant to indicate this moral decline that's taking place among the people.

It's summarized for us in Judges 2, verse 19, where it says, whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them.

They did not stop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. And this is the testimony. This is the cadence of these individuals, the moral collapse that's happening among the people.

That second pattern is that God, He's been raising up judges. He's been raising up deliverers. And you kind of see on the top left, I guess this is your left, right? The top left of that chart, you see the point of God raising up those deliverers.

We find in chapter 3, verse 9, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people. In chapter 3, verse 15, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gerah. In chapter 4, verses 6 and 7, Deborah is speaking to Barak.

[9:27] She says, Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded you, Go! Gather your men! And I will draw out Sisera, and I will give him into your hands, says the Lord.

Then God shows up to Gideon in chapter 6. The Lord appeared to Gideon and said to him, The Lord is with you, mighty man of valor. Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian.

Do I not send you? I will be with you. God raising up deliverers. And the third pattern is the pattern of this conflict that's getting closer and closer to Israel.

It starts far away. It starts in Mesopotamia, 700 miles away from Israel. And it gets progressively closer as the Moabites are neighbors in Ehud.

Then it makes its way into Israel as the Canaanites are now going to be opposed by Barak. And then it kind of crosses the boundary as it were as now it's part of the family.

[10 : 29] The Midianites who are actually sons of Abraham are now bringing the conflict right home to Israel. And then from Gideon on out there is this internal conflict, this internal struggle.

Now the nations, now Israel is fighting itself. It's tribal warfare that's taking place. We noticed last time we were together the trajectory where God-appointed deliverers have now become self-appointed saviors.

That God raised up deliverers at the beginning of this book. And now after Gideon, we find this new pattern of the judges are raising up themselves.

We see that in chapter 10, verse 1. We see that after Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola, the son of Puah. And we notice in chapter 10, verse 3, after him arose Jer, the Gileadite, who served Israel.

And we notice in chapter 12, we notice the same pattern. 12, verse 8, after him, Ibsen of Bethlehem judged Israel. And on and on it goes.

[11 : 45] Now self-appointed saviors have taken place. And God is nowhere a part of the picture. They assume the role of leadership.

They're their own self-appointed savior, as it were. And kind of coupled with all of this, we recognize this pattern that's also beginning to emerge.

Remember that Gideon had 70 sons. And that same pattern of empire building is showing up in these new judges as well. where Jer, in Judges chapter 10, verse 4, he has 30 sons who rode 30 donkeys.

They had 30 cities. This empire building, this gaining influence, this wanting to have prominence in the land. Ibsen, when we go to chapter 12, verse 9, it says, he had 30 sons and 30 daughters he gave in marriage outside his clan.

30 daughters he brought in from outside for his sons. So we've got a total of 60 individuals who've all been brought in to help empire build for this judge who wants to gain prominence.

[12 : 53] Then Abdon, in chapter 12, verse 14, he had 40 sons and 30 grandsons who rode 70 donkeys. That word, the number 70 should sound really familiar.

They might not have been formally kings, but they are acting like kings. We're meant to see this pattern both before Jephthah and after Jephthah to kind of provide this sandwich for us, these bookends that help to frame and understand the life of Jephthah himself.

How are we to understand his life? How are we to understand his leadership? Well, he's encapsulated within this empire building strategy of the judges and he serves as kind of this pattern for us to help us interpret what we see.

Last week, we also saw that the people have confused godly sorrow with worldly sorrow. These cycles of rebellion that have taken place and they have become, the people have become more concerned with removing consequences than they have with being consecrated.

They've been more concerned with getting rid of their problems instead of being truly pure. They're more fascinated with fixating on their situation than they were with being sanctified.

[14 : 22] They want to remove the challenges. They want to resist the problems. They want to move past all the difficulties that they're experiencing. Whatever they can do to remove those consequences to move on with their life to have some level of comfort again.

We noted the cycles of rebellion that marked this people in chapter 10 verses 6-16. We saw these six cycles of rebellion that kind of culminate in chapter 10 in this final seventh confrontation of the Lord against His people in chapter 10 verse 6.

It says, the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Ashtra, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines.

And they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him. At this point the pattern has become tragically clear. And what was true of the people of the nation at the beginning abandoning themselves to the foreign gods which are listed the Baals and the Ashtra there are only two that are present up until this point in chapter 10 and now we have the full list of all the deities of the nations that have polluted the people.

Seven deities that are listed here. It's meant to show the totality of the moral collapse that has taken place among His people. In chapter 10 we will see the last cry of the people to the Lord.

[16:01] In chapter 10 we will see the last time the people will confess their sin. We're going to see in chapter 10 the last time sin will be confronted by God. And while the response in chapter 10 seems sincere it might seem somewhat encouraging God knows the heart.

Look there in chapter 10 verse 10 it says and the people of Israel cried out to the Lord saying we have sinned against you because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals but God knows their true heart.

Verse 13 you have forsaken me and you have served other gods therefore I will save you no more. Now that might be a little confusing because we're going to see in Jephthah's story that God delivers the people from the oppression of the Ammonites.

We're going to see in Samson's story that God uses Samson to help drive out a portion of the Philistines so in that sense God is saving the people but what kind of salvation is God talking about?

I will save you no more? What kind of salvation are we talking about? Well God is not going to save them from themselves. Remember the warning going all the way back to the earlier parts of this book and the warning was this the nations will become a snare to you they're going to trip you up and Canaan is going to enter the land and that's exactly what we've seen.

[17:26] Canaan has gotten into the people has gotten into their theology has gotten into their practices has gotten into their thinking has now corrupted their behavior and so Canaan has gotten into them there is no driving them out at this point because they are totally immersed in the culture of the people.

There's no deliverance to be had until unless the people themselves will give themselves over to the Lord and will repent and be consecrated in the way that God really wants.

Not just to put off certain foreign practices but be totally cleansed as a people. So the people will not be delivered from the greatest oppression the oppression of the corruption within them.

See God has given them over to their cravings and that's what we'll continue to see as we move our way through that the people are set on desire their flesh is driving them and that's exactly by the way what we see in the book of Romans where God has made himself very clear to the nations to us through his revelation of his word but also through the revelation of himself in creation so that we are left without an excuse but what do we do even though we know who God is?

Well God demonstrates a three pronged progression that takes place in the life of culture who set themselves against God just like we find in the book of Judges.

[18:58] Romans 1:24 is the first step it says God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.

Then it moves on to verse 26 so then God gives them up. Chapter 1 verse 26 God gave them up to dishonorable passions for their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passions for one another.

It's now embedded in culture. It's now changing their natural desires. Natural things aren't natural anymore. And you might feel like that is the last step but it goes one step further in verse 28 and 29. So God gives them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

That's the end of moral decay. Does that sound familiar to the culture that we're living in? Reveling, glorying, magnifying, celebrating, baseness, ruthlessness, independence, resistance of authority, wanting to build our own comforts and materialism and consumerism and all of these manner of things that are so embedded in our culture and they seem so normal to us because it's what we see every single day of our life.

[20:50] This is the end of the slide. Disobedient to parents, what should be so natural becomes resistance, ruthlessness.

That's what we're going to see in the story of Jephthah, this coming through. And the way that we magnify and celebrate brutality in this day, the gladiator games have come close, haven't they? We celebrate all manner of brutality. We're going to see this first turn in chapter 12. I want to show you kind of the end of the story so we can kind of use this as a signpost to help us recognize what's taking place earlier in the story.

This is how it all plays out in Jephthah's life in Judges chapter 12 verses 1 to 7. We're going to see Jephthah's true heart is revealed. His true heart is revealed. It's what's coming through.

You see, to kind of catch you up to this story, we're going to come back to it, but bear with me. So God has allowed Jephthah to be a deliverer of sorts, this kind of self-appointed deliverer, and God mercifully uses him to drive out the Ammonites and to help rescue the nation.

[22:05] That is God's mercy. And the Ephraimites are not happy about it. They were afraid to enter the battle themselves, but once the battle has been won, and once Jephthah is being celebrated by the nation, and the Ephraimites had no part in it, now they're a little upset.

So we find in chapter 12 verses 1 and 4 this. The men of Ephraim were called to arms. Why? Well, they crossed over to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, why did you cross over to fight against the Ammonites and did not call us to go with you?

We will burn your house over your head with fire. And Jephthah said to them, I and my people have a great dispute with the Ammonites. And when I called you, you did not save me from their hand. And when I saw that you would not save me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the Ammonites, and the Lord gave them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me to fight against me?

Then Jephthah gathered all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim. And the men of Gilead struck Ephraim because they said, you are fugitives of Ephraim, you Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim of Manasseh.

[23:18] Okay, now, I know this is really unfamiliar. Let me help us get into this just for a moment. We're going to find in our story in chapter 11 that Jephthah is driven out of his home, he's driven out of his tribe, he's driven away from Israel, he has to go live in a distant land, okay, because of some family tension that's taking place, he's welcomed back.

So, he's a fugitive, as it were, he's a refugee, as it were, who's been pushed out of his own tribe, and that's how the Ephraimites are weaponizing this conflict against Jephthah.

You're a fugitive of Ephraim, Jephthah. You're worthless. You are homeless. You bring nothing to the table. And of course, that amplified Jephthah's heart and becomes the very motivation that Jephthah is this personal vendetta, he's going after the Ephraimites.

You are fugitives of Ephraim, this name calling. And Jephthah wants to demonstrate who's really in charge. So we get to verse 5 of chapter 12. The Gileonites captured the fords of the Jordan against the Ephraimites.

And when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, let me go over, the men of Gilead said, are you an Ephraimite? When he said no, they said to him, then say Shibboleth.

[24:45] And he said Sibboleth, for he could not pronounce it right. Then they seized him and slaughtered him at the fords of Jordan. At the time 42,000 of the Ephraimites fell.

Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah, the Gileadite, died and was buried in his city in Gilead. You see the brutality? You see the vendetta?

It's all about name calling. And Jephthah, instead of helping to tamp down the conflict, elevates the conflict and he's like, okay, you're going to call me a fugitive?

I'm going to make you a fugitive. He separates the army. He scatters them. And in the midst of him conquering the people, he sets up this little test.

Because the Ephraimites could not say Shibboleth, they said Sibboleth. And so what does he do? He slaughters 42,000 of his own people, the Ephraimites.

[25:48] All because of name calling. This is the heart. This is the Romans' one heart, I might say, of Jephthah coming through.

It's reached its climax. It's come right out into the open. It's as clear as can be. And so this is how we're meant to interpret the scene that we see in Judges chapter 11.

When we come to the story of Jephthah in Judges chapter 11, we need to see it in the framework of his life, the true nature of Jephthah coming through.

Jephthah is showing this heart of murder and strife and brutality and maliciousness that all calls back to Romans chapter 1. Every single one of those terms being used there to describe the baseness of humanity following after their own desires, doing what's right in our own eyes rather than following God's compass.

And throughout the entirety of the course of events of Jephthah's life, what stands through it all is that God is silent. Not once in the narrative of Judges, Judges 11 or Judges 12, will God ever speak.

[27 : 11] The silence is deafening. It helps us to know that God is present. He has an opinion, but he's silent. So now we turn to Judges chapter 11.

I need to work through this quickly for us. But I want you to see that Jephthah is a product of his own culture. He's a product of his culture.

This didn't happen out of the blue. This happened through conditioning. This happened because God had warned the people that the nations would be a snare. And so as we make our way to this time in the timeline of the Judges, that's exactly what we see.

They have been ensnared. They've been captured. They've been polluted. They've been corrupted by culture. And so everything they do is kind of embedded in and guided by that spirit of the culture. The crisis that we see in Judges chapter 10 has actually created the man. This crisis has created the man. In Judges chapter 10 verse 9 we see the Ammonites, they cross the Jordan to fight against Judah and against Benjamin and against the house of Ephraim so that Israel was severely distressed.

[28 : 29] So this conflict is now coming close. What is Israel going to do now that conflict has come? Are they going to turn to God like they did in Judges chapter 1? Are they going to look to God, raise up a leader?

No. They turn inward. We find that in verses 17 and 18 the Ammonites were called to arms and they encamped in Gilead. The people of Israel came together and they encamped in Mizpah.

And the people, the leaders of Gilead said to one another, who is the man who will begin to fight against the Ammonites? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Rather than look to God, they looked within. They looked to themselves. They looked to appoint a leader among them. And rather than recognizing leadership qualities like we're trying to do in this nomination process for deacons in our church right now, rather than look for qualified men, they're looking for volunteers.

And how are they going about it? Do you notice their strategy? They're using a certain collateral. They're using a certain compensation.

[29 : 44] They're using a certain incentive. If you're going to be head over us, we will then make you our leader. They're incentivizing headship because that is what's appealing to this crowd now.

Who wants to be a leader? We'll make you head. Just help fight our battles for us. And this Hebrew word for head, we only saw it once before Gideon.

And then in Gideon's story, we see it six times. In Abimelech's story, we see it nine times. And then from this point on, we're going to see the word head being used ten times in our text.

Because it's the new collateral. It's the new compensation. It's the new thing that's going to attract the kind of leadership that Israel is looking for.

And being the head is now this compensation, this incentive for this self-styled leadership. Then we can enter the story of Jephthah in Judges chapter 11 verses 1 to 3.

[30 : 50] It says, now Jephthah the Gilead was a mighty warrior. Now that's a fascinating word, mighty warrior. It is the exact same two Hebrew words that Gideon has called the mighty man of valor.

The same two Hebrew words used of Jephthah. And we're to be reminded of how God raised up that leader. We're to be reminded of what God did through that leader. And now Jephthah is following a whole new strategy.

So he was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. That was a problem. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah. Gilead's wife also bore him sons. And when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, you shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman.

Then Jephthah fled from his brothers, lived in the land of Tob, and worthless fellows collected around Jephthah and went out with him.

He's known as this mighty warrior. And because of his father's indiscretion, because of his father, his immoral practice, the brothers of Jephthah will then make Jephthah a fugitive.

[32:06] They will throw him out of the house. The inheritance that would have been his is now abandoned. So where does he have to go? He goes into this land of Tob, which is about a day's journey away from Gilead.

It's out in no man's land, as it were. And that's where he needs to now build his own credentials, his own reputation. He needs to exert himself and develop his man of valor reputation.

And that's what he does. Tob was to the north, east of Gilead. He's in no man's land. He attracts to himself worthless fellows, it says.

These are outcasts, homeless men. Of course, it's a reminder to the same kind of men that Abimelech gathered around himself, worthless fellows. They seem to find a common bond, a common status together.

And Jephthah has an enterprising spirit. He gains a reputation. He gathers men around him. He gains this reputation, this reputation of being a mighty warrior.

[33:18] Well, how do you get a reputation of being a mighty warrior? Well, you war, right? You raid, you battle, you threaten. Violence now becomes your tool to exert yourself over whoever is in your way.

And that's the reputation that Jephthah will then begin to have, not only in the land of Tob, but also in the expanses of the region of Gilead.

To the extent that we find in Judges chapter 11 verses 4 to 6, that after a time the Ammonites made war against Israel, and when the Ammonites made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead, they went to bring Jephthah from the land of Tob.

And they said to Jephthah, come and be our leader that we may fight against the Ammonites. Now there's a little nuance here in the text, it's hard to pick up on.

If you remember going back to chapter 10, they promised that the person who would conquer for them would be their head, and now they bring Jephthah close, and they take it a step down, not be our head, but why not just be our commander, our leader of this military campaign.

[34:32] Now this becomes an opportunity for Jephthah. Jephthah is going to capitalize on this opportunity to make sure that he gets what he has coming to him.

He says in verse 7, Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, did you not hate me and drive me out of my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?

And now this turn, and the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, well that's why we have turned to you now, that you may go and fight with us and be our head. Notice how that's changed.

The reader has learned this Abimelech style of negotiating. And Jephthah does what's natural for him. He begins to position himself. He's capitalizing on the opportunity.

He's taking advantage of the conditions and he's vying for power. So Jephthah will then negotiate terms.

[35:35] Terms of a treaty, a pact between he and these elders of Gilead. And then what we'll find in verses 9 to 11 is this pact, this treaty that has been established by Jephthah and these human leaders now become kind of a pact.

They're going to call God down to watch and to ensure that their agreement among one another is now something that God has to codify. Jephthah is a man of his culture.

Next we see that Jephthah seeks to secure what God has already promised. This is perhaps the most alarming of all. He seeks to secure what God has already promised.

And I want to move through this quickly. We begin to read Jephthah's story and what stands out as you read through this is the name Yahweh that shows up 14 times throughout this chapter.

14 times the name of the Lord is used. Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D. That's the name Yahweh, the covenant keeping God. And Jephthah and the people are free to use this divine name.

[36:52] But don't be mistaken. When they speak of the name of the Lord, they may invoke the name of the Lord, but their worship is entirely other than the name of the Lord.

Because their hearts are so bent, their hearts are so twisted away from God. The first three instances that we see of the divine name in verses 9 and then 10 and then 11 is this pact that's negotiated between people and then God has to be the one to validate it in their minds.

The next couple of times where the name of the Lord is used, Jephthah is talking and speaking with negotiating with the king of the Ammonites.

And what's telling about his negotiation process is what we find in verse 24. Judges 11, 23 and 24. See if you can pick up on the theological and doctrinal error in Jephthah's mind.

He says, speaking to the king of the Ammonites, so then the Lord, the God of Israel dispossessed the Ammonites from before his people, Israel. And are you to take possession of them?

[38:08] Will you not possess what Chemosh, your God, gives to you to possess? And although the Lord, our God, has dispossessed before us, we will possess. Can you see the theological trouble in verse 24?

Can you see the doctrinal error that Jephthah is exposing there? Who does he assign the territory of the Ammonites?

How did they get it? Who gave it to them? In Jephthah's discourse, the gods of Chemosh gave it to them. But we know better. Because Yahweh, the Lord, is the one who is sovereign over nations.

He is the one who dispossesses. He is the one who grants. And so the theological issues in Jephthah's heart and mind are even embedded in his own sentence, his own resistance to the kings of the Ammonites.

He demonstrates an awareness of Yahweh. But he also recognizes, we see through his discourse, the deep theological errors that are also there.

[39:27] Then we come to verse 29. And this is the most troubling of all. It says, Then the spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah. And he passed through Gilead and Manasseh.

And he passed on to Mizpah of Gilead. And from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites. And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, If you will give the Ammonites into my hands, then whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the Lord's and I will offer it for a burnt offering.

The Ammonite king would not listen to the discourse, the negotiating power of Jephthah. He would not listen. So Jephthah goes through Gilead and through Manasseh to recruit troops.

That's what we find. And we find that what enabled his success in verse 29 is the spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah. God graciously allowed Jephthah to enjoy success but I'm convinced that Jephthah was totally oblivious to God's work.

Why? Because Jephthah had operated this way from the beginning. Jephthah had recruited the troops in Tob. Jephthah had established his reputation.

[40:47] Jephthah had made a name for himself. Jephthah had exerted power. Jephthah had become the mighty man of valor in Tob. Jephthah was then negotiating terms with the elders of Gilead.

Jephthah is now placed as the head over the nation. And all of that was also by the spirit of the Lord. Just not named.

Because God is over all these things. And I believe Jephthah is totally oblivious to the success that God is granting him. But the one who's writing the story wants us not to forget.

This is not because Jephthah was particularly gifted in negotiation. It was because God graciously allowed him to enjoy success.

Jephthah was totally oblivious and that's why we find in verse 30 what Jephthah will do. Jephthah makes a vow to the Lord.

[41:50] A vow that was completely unnecessary. But a vow that we're going to find, we don't have time, a vow that as we look deeper into the scripture we find that it was laden with Baal logic.

It was the kind of negotiation that the nations would do with their deities. We will offer you the greatest token of our sacrifices, the greatest gifts that we have to give, the greatest tokens of our dedication to you and based upon that you need to pay me off.

Pay me off with success over this enemy. That's the Baal logic that now he's employing on a greater scale. And now it becomes very personal.

Very personal. Because now whatever will come out of his house to meet him, he will offer as a burnt offering. He's willing to lay down at least a member of his family.

You see, Jephthah is still negotiating. He's still securing. He's still manipulating God and seeking to wrest concessions and favors from God like he had from the Gileadites and from the Ammonites.

[43:06] He is still operating underneath the same pattern of life. I will do whatever sacrifice I need to do in order to get what I think I need to get. And if he was aware of the Spirit at all, he would never have to make this vow.

Because he was trying to secure what God had already graciously handed to him. The Spirit of the Lord was on him. And God was going to give them victory.
But Jephthah is totally oblivious. We find this three-linked chain through this discourse. We see that Jephthah is negotiating with the Gileadites and he gets all that he wants.
Then he negotiates with the Ammonites and at least he gets a response but their response is not favorable. Then he negotiates with God and God is utterly silent.
He's silent. And we find from Jephthah's story, God does graciously give him victory. But then in chapter 11 verse 34, then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah and behold his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances.
[44 : 25] And then this, she was his, what do you see? She was his only child. Because besides her he had neither son nor daughter.

And we've just learned from chapter 10 that the gods of the nations had embedded themselves in the culture and particularly the gods of Moab and the gods of Ammon which engaged in child sacrifice.
this narrative clue is not a coincidence. I'm convinced that Jephthah knew exactly what the conditions of his vow would lead to. It was going to lead to a sacrifice of his one and only daughter. But it was worth the cost in this Baal-like mindset, his logic. What do I need to do to barter with God to get what I need? How do I go about securing a victory?
If Jephthah had known the law, he would have known that there are ways not to get around the law but to work within the law to remove these rash vows.
[45 : 40] From Leviticus chapter 27 or maybe even in laying down his own life for the sake of his daughter. But what he ends up finding is this greatest victory becomes his greatest defeat.

I wonder how many times we do that the same thing to God. I wonder how many times we use God's name but it's only a facade for doing what we really want to do.
I wonder how many times we say, well, let me pray about this. Let me see what God has to say about this. I want to consult the Lord on this.
And then what we come back with is, well, I really feel like God wants me to do X, Y, or Z. We use the name of God but we have never consulted God.
We have never prayed to God. We have never run to his word. We've never consulted godly individuals. And so we do this little bartering that Jephthah is doing.
[46 : 48] How many times have we said, God, if you just do this for me, one more thing, then this is what I'll do for you. It's the same spirit.

It's not distant way back when, when people were corrupt, when judges ruled the nation of Israel. No, it is here. It's present.
It's in us. The same spirit is embedded in every one of our hearts. that we use the name of the Lord to actually do the very things we want to do and not the hard things that God calls us to.
What's the solution? The solution is the same every time. It's to recognize the problem in us, to confess that sin, but more than just giving lip service to confession and recognizing that there's a problem and wanting God to fix those problems so that we can move on with life.
No, it's coming to a place sincerely saying, God, I recognize this problem and I repent. I turn away from this issue in my life and I turn to you. Help the word of God to be central in my focus.
[47 : 59] Help it to be the stabilizing force guiding my future. And God, do a work in me to sanctify me, to cleanse me from all my unrighteousness so that my life is a figure of the wonder of God's forgiveness and God's work.

A trophy. A trophy to what God wants to really do. That instead of becoming glory robbers, we become glory presenters.
Look at the wonder of the glory of God. And so, that's one of the things that we're going to do right now in baptism.
Kind of setting the work of God. God is the hero of our stories. And one of the ways we get to see that is through baptism. How God has brought someone to repentance and the work of Christ in forgiveness and raising that individual up to newness of life.
That's already happened, but this is just kind of a picture of that work of Christ playing out. Let me pray for us. We'll sing a song, we'll do a baptism, and then we'll dismiss.
[49 : 13] Father, thank you. Thank you for your patience with us. Thank you that even when we find ourselves falling on our faces again, blowing it again, that you're patient and gracious, and that

if we confess our sins, that you are faithful and just to forgive our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The things we see and the things we don't. God, I pray that our lives would be a trophy of your grace, and a trophy of your power, and a testimony to your work in our lives.

In Jesus' name, amen.