

**JUDGES 11:1-11**  
**LOVE SHINES THROUGH!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 11 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Judges.

As we have seen in our study of Judges, the children of Israel were caught in this cycle of sin, servitude, supplication and salvation.

And what I mean by that is this. During times of peace and prosperity the children of Israel moved away from the Lord and they began to worship the pagan gods of the nation's that were around them. It was a time of apostasy.

Now at first it did not affect the entire nation at one time. Various areas were affected by this apostasy.

We saw that in Judges 3:5-31 where the southern region of Israel was affected by this apostasy.

Then, in Judges 4:1-5:31 we see the northern of Israel affected by this apostasy.

In Judges 6:1-10:5 the central region of Israel was affected by this apostasy.

And in Judges 10:6-12:15 it is the eastern region of Israel that was affected by this apostasy.

And finally, in Judges 13:1-16:31 we see the western region of Israel affected by this apostasy.

As they turned from the Lord God brought them into bondage by the hands of other nations who would oppress them.

And, after some time they would come to their senses, they would repent, and God would raise up a Judge to deliver them from this oppression.

And that brought them into another time of peace and prosperity and from that they turn from the Lord and the cycle begins all over again – sin, servitude, supplication and salvation!

In our study this morning we are going to look at the ninth Judge in Israel who ministered in the eastern region of Israel, and his name is Jephthah.

And I don't know if you have noticed this, but as you look at these various Judges, many are very unlikely to be called a leader and yet God uses them in a mighty way.

That gives me great encouragement and I hope it does the same for you.

You see, God is looking for those who love Him and are available for Him to use and He will equip them for the work He has for them. He is not looking for perfect people because there are none!

Now as we concluded last time the children of Israel turned from the Lord and now for eighteen years the Ammonites were oppressing them. And they gathered together at Mizpah in response to this threat of the Ammonites.

The problem they had was they had no leader, no one was willing to lead them in battle. There was no one to deliver them.

I have called our study this morning – ***LOVE SHINES THROUGH!***

And the Lord put this upon my heart because of the things we have seen over the last several months, the turmoil that has taken place in this country and some of the responses we see by Christians.

And let me say this. What we see happening, the persecution against Christians, is going to continue to grow and grow in this country.

Let me show you what I mean. This is from the very conservative newspaper, The New York Times! Okay, sarcasm.

But it is a very interesting and telling article. And what I want you to see is that as they speak of the persecution of Christians, they end up persecuting us. Very strange but listen to what they have to say because they will blame us for why we are being persecuted.

We are told,

Perhaps for the first time since the United States was established, a majority of young adults here do not identify as Christian.

Only 49 percent of millennials consider themselves Christian, compared with 84 percent of Americans in their mid-70s or older, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center.

We don't have good historical data, and the historians I consulted are wary of definitive historical comparisons. But something significant seems to be happening. The share of American adults who regard themselves as Christian has fallen by 12 percentage points in just the last decade.

"The U.S. is steadily becoming less Christian and less religiously observant," the Pew study concluded.

Some on the religious right will thunder that this is a result of a secular "war on Christianity."

"Christians and Christianity are mocked, belittled, smeared and attacked," declared an essay on Fox News's website, plaintively titled, "How Long Will I Be Allowed to Remain a Christian?"

[So far so good. Just explaining how Christianity seems to be on the decline here in America as well as some persecution against Christians. But then the real story or maybe agenda, to move us away from Biblical faith and to secular reasoning.]

*This mockery of Christians is, as I've written many times, both real and wrong. But a far bigger threat to the "brand" of Christianity comes, I think, from religious blowhards who have entangled faith with bigotry, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia. For some young people, Christianity is associated less with love than with hate.*

*"Pompous right-wing political chest-thumping, and an unwillingness to listen on matters like climate change or racism, has contributed to a perception by millions that Christianity is irrelevant, or worse yet, a threat to progress,"* the Rev. Richard Cizik, the leader of a group of self-described "new evangelicals" with moderate views, told me. "That's a real burden to carry going into the 21st century."

Cizik, who was fired from the National Association of Evangelicals in 2008 after he expressed support for civil unions for gay people, added that Christianity's reputation suffers from backward views on women's issues and from the unwavering support among evangelical hard-liners for President Trump.

"Trump has played them like a fiddle," he said.

It would be difficult to imagine a president more at odds with Jesus' message than Trump, a serial philanderer and liar who has persecuted refugees, divided families, exploited the poor and allegedly committed sexual assaults. When Trump in 2016 was asked to name a favorite part of the Bible, he muttered "an eye for an eye" - a reference to an Old Testament passage that Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, specifically renounced.

That is the opposite of the Christianity whose heroic side I've often praised: A Catholic doctor in Sudan's Nuba mountains . . . a missionary doctor in Angola . . . nuns everywhere.

If they were the face of Christianity, its reputation would be golden. Likewise, Christian organizations like International Justice Mission, Mercy Ships, Catholic Relief Services and World Vision labor to make the world a better place. Across America, a crucial safety net comes from churches organizing food pantries and emergency shelters. . . .

There's nothing about faith that necessarily makes it a bastion of conservatives. Martin Luther King Jr. and many other liberal civil rights leaders were shaped by their Christian beliefs, Jim Wallis is a liberal evangelical writer with a large following, and Jimmy Carter is truly the unTrump, at age 95 still building houses for the needy. But today's prominent evangelical leaders are mostly conservatives.

Pew's latest report found that nonbelievers are gaining ground fast. "Nones" - those with no particular religion - now account for more than one-quarter of the American population. There are substantially more nones than Catholics. . . .

"Adults coming of age today are far less religious than their parents and grandparents before them," said Gregory Smith of the Pew Research Center.

Smith noted that the data seem consistent with the argument made by leading scholars that young adults have turned away from organized religion because they are repulsed by its entanglements with conservative politics. "Nones," for example, are solidly Democratic.

The upshot is that a majority of white adults now attend church just a few times a year at most. Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to attend, although their attendance is dropping, too.

The central issue is that faith is supposed to provide moral guidance - and many moralizing figures on the evangelical right don't impress young people as moral at all. Senator Jesse Helms said in 1995 that AIDS funding should be cut because gay men get the disease. The Rev. Jerry Falwell and the Rev. Pat Robertson initially suggested that God organized the 9/11 terror attacks to punish feminists, gays and lesbians.

God should have sued Falwell and Robertson for defamation. But, in some sign of karma, a survey found that gays and lesbians have higher public approval than evangelicals do.

- <https://nyti.ms/3d4cobF>

Notice what is being said. If you are a Bible believing, conservative Christian, you are wrong, and you need to change your ways! And in reality, it is your fault that you are being persecuted. If you did not hold onto your outdated views, everything would be okay.

Do you understand the point he is making? He is saying that if you compromise your faith, let go of those things that are in the Bible that we don't like, and just love, you will be fine. But if you don't, you will be persecuted, it is your fault!

How does that make you feel?

I would guess that it makes you mad. And I can understand that. It makes me mad too. And what is even worse is that we have so-called Christians even mocking us. And in mocking us, they are mocking God!

Let me show you what I mean. We have Christians, and Christian leaders that are involved with Black Lives Matter and sorry, they are a hate group. They truly hate the things of God.

Now before you start sending me letters, listen to what they believe, what they stand for and you tell me why, in God's name, that you would, as a Christian support an organization like this.

This is from their website, so if you don't believe me, check it out for yourselves. This is what they believe,

We see ourselves as part of the global Black family, and we are aware of the different ways we are impacted or privileged as Black people who exist in different parts of the world.

We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or location.

We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead.

We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege [that word, cisgender means the denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.] and uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be disproportionately impacted by trans-antagonistic violence.

We build a space that affirms Black women and is free from sexism, misogyny [the hatred of women], and environments in which men are centered. . . .

We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and "villages" that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents, and children are comfortable.

We foster a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking, or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual (unless s/he or they disclose otherwise).

- <https://bit.ly/2YLvo9J>

How in the world can any Christian support an organization that is so against the things of God? I don't understand it, I don't get it and it does make me mad!

And I don't think there is anything wrong with being mad at what is going on, but how we respond is truly the issue! How we respond is so important.

And for many, they will compromise what they believe in so that they don't offend anyone and in doing that, you will have to compromise and compromise and it won't end because you will never be able to please everyone!

Think about it. You have to accept homosexual, transgender roles. You have to dismantle the family unit that God has established so you can be part of the global village. If you are white and a male, you are evil. And it goes on, but where is Christ in any of that? He is not there because this is not of God, these are the doctrines, the teachings of the Devil!

And here is the reality of all this. We are to honor God and thus, what He has said we need to live by and not give in, not compromise what we believe! And, in saying that, we must make sure that our actions are a reflection of Jesus, that we would respond as He would respond to the situations that we are facing in this country and this world!



Again, I have called this study here in Judges chapter 11, *LOVE SHINES THROUGH!*

And I have broken these verses down into four main points. They are,

*PERSECUTION AGAINST JEPHTHAH – JUDGES 11:1-2*

*JEPHTHAH’S FALTERING FAITH – JUDGES 11:3*

*THE CONFLICT – JUDGES 11:4-5*

*THE CALL OF JEPHTHAH – JUDGES 11:6-11*

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 11, beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at the topic of - *LOVE SHINES THROUGH!*

## JUDGES 11

### VERSES 1-2

Talk about a hard life for Jephthah. He did not ask for this. This was not a result of something that he did. But this is what life dealt him or I guess I should say, this is what God had given to him and through it all, God will use this man Jephthah in a powerful way.

Let’s look at this background of Jephthah.

He lived in the area of Manasseh, where Gilead was located, on the east side of the Jordan River. And like Gideon, he was a “**mighty man of valor.**”

Everything seems great so far and then that word, “**but**”.

Jephthah was the son of a harlot. Thus, she was not only a harlot but also most likely a Canaanite, that was his mom. And Jephthah’s dad, he was a Hebrew, he was a Jew!

Now, because of that his half-brothers did not want anything to do with him.

Yes, Gilead his father raised him as his son but at some point, his half-brothers threw him out, they cut him out of the family.

Obviously he was not a young child, but he was still tossed out of the home he lived in and it would seem that the main reason is that his half-brothers did not want to share the family inheritance with this half-breed!

And again, as we read this, as we see his story, it truly doesn't look good right now for God to use a man like this.

Folk's, what this world sees as useless, worthless, as nothing, God sees as an instrument that He can use, that He can work through. Don't forget that because He still does that today!

Don't we see that in the Bible, how God uses imperfect people for His glory and to touch the lives of others? Of course we do.

We see Abraham, after he was called by God, lie twice in order to save his own skin. And yet God used him.

Jonah was called by God and went in the opposite direction, at first, from where God had called him to go. And yet God used him.

Peter, spending three years with Jesus, as he was by the enemy's camp, denied the Lord three times! And yet God used him.

Look at Paul, he was on a crusade to destroy Christianity. And yet God used him.

Even John Mark, who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey and then, before it was done, went back home. And yet God used him.

In fact, just look at the imperfect people that Jesus chose to carry on the work after His death and Resurrection. You would never pick a group of guys like that to work together. Think about it. Matthew was a tax collector, hated by the Jews. And then we have Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were a Jewish sect who were bent on revolution and looking for a Messiah to violently overthrow Rome.

So here you have Matthew who was working with Rome collecting taxes and next to him you have Simon who wanted to overthrow Rome. I bet those gatherings were interesting.

And yet we see God use these men in a powerful way! Nobodies that turned this world upside down for Jesus!

Today, if we were looking for men to turn the world upside down, we would look for the rich, the influential, the powerful, the successful and so on.

There is no way you would look for the poor, the uneducated, the unsuccessful, the broken, the outcasts.

But the wonderful thing is that is exactly who God uses, He uses us all! With all our imperfections, and we all have them, He will use us, and we see that over and over again in the Bible!

Remember what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:25-31 we are told, **“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’”**

And, again, we see this with the disciples of Jesus. Look at how confused the Jewish religious leaders were regarding these men. They were a bunch of misfits and yet God used them mightily.

Remember when Peter and John are arrested by the Jewish religious leaders for preaching about Jesus and the healing of the lame man. And as they spoke to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious supreme court you might say, they were bewildered by Peter and John.

This is the conclusion they came to in Acts 4:13, **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”**

Yes, according to their standards, they were uneducated and untrained men. They were fishermen. They did not go to any religious school. They had no credentials. And all that they could say is this, **“they realized that they had been with Jesus.”**

There is the key, they were with Jesus and the reality was, Jesus was with these men and the religious leaders saw it.

That means they could not glory in themselves. We cannot glory in ourselves. All glory and honor goes to the Lord who uses people like us!

Let me share this with you. We are told,

Our culture puts a lot of stock in credentials. If we hire someone for a job, we want to know they're capable of doing the work. If we ask someone for advice, we want to know they're familiar with the subject matter.

The more titles, diplomas, and achievements a person has to their name, the more we're inclined to trust them. Generally, this is a prudent attitude for approaching the world, but God has a way of turning our preconceptions upside-down, especially when we try to apply them to Him.

Just ask Kyle Idleman. In an excerpt from his latest book on Relevant Magazine, Idleman reflected on how many Christians avoid taking an active hand in ministry because they feel unqualified. However, Idleman argues that God doesn't need us to be qualified, He needs us to be willing. He writes,

***“What’s the past burden you’re still carrying? Adultery? Go talk to David the king. Lying? Deception? Abraham and Isaac knew a little about that. A sordid past? God chose Rahab, a prostitute. Anger and temper issues? James and John fit into God’s plan anyhow.”***

***“Maybe today it’s your turn. Jesus has a message for you. It has nothing to do with your qualifications. It has to do with coming to the end of yourself, because that’s when God can use you in the very best way. By His grace, and by nothing you can offer, He chooses you.”***

***“In fact, you may feel held back by one particular issue, and that issue is precisely what God wants to use. It’s actually one of favorite strategies. Your ‘disqualifier’ becomes God’s qualifier.”***

For my part, one of my biggest heroes growing up was a Christian woman who was initially deemed “unqualified”. Her name was Gladys Alward, and she served as a missionary to China in the 1930’s. Alyward was a London-born woman from a working-class family, and while that may not sound particularly significant to us, back then it meant she was living at the bottom of the social ladder. When Alyward first applied to be a missionary, she was rejected because of her background and lack of education. Not to be deterred, Aylward traveled to China alone.

What happened next can be read in an old article of mine, ironically named Unqualified, ***“As the years passed, the people of the city gave Alyward the name Ai-weh-deh, meaning ‘Virtuous One.’ Her inn expanded to become an orphanage where she cared for over 100 children, and when the Japanese threatened to invade in WWII, it was she who led the children over the mountains to safety. Alyward continued to preach the message of Christ all her life until she died in 1970.”***

God loves unqualified Christians. Look at Paul – a zealot who was actively persecuting believers for their faith. Look at Mary - a young woman with no experience beyond her own faith. Look at Matthew - who was a tax collector and pariah in his own community. God can take one unqualified believer and use them to change the world.

It’s time we let go of our fears, our guilt, and our pride. Christ is calling us to the Great Commission, will you answer?

This is the situation that Jephthah was in. He was persecuted by his family. His family saw him as an outcast. They kicked him out of the house. He had nowhere to go. And how was he going to handle the situation?

We will see that as we move from the *PERSECUTION AGAINST JEPHTHAH* to *JEPHTHAH'S FALTERING FAITH!*

### VERSE 3

Since his half-brothers kicked him out of the house, out of the family, we see Jephthah flee.

And Jephthah heads to Tob, which was north of Gilead, toward Damascus in Syria.

And we are told that he gathers other men and they pillage, looted others to provide for themselves.

I am not sure why, but some try to put a positive spin on what Jephthah is doing here. They feel he is operating much like David and his men did when they were fleeing from King Saul.

According to Adam Clarke, this word, "**worthless**" doesn't necessarily mean that they were bandits. He wrote, "*The word may, however, mean in this place poor person, without property and without employment.*"

That may be true, it can be speaking of a poor person but think about that. Were they out looking for employment? Not exactly. What they did was go and steal from others because they did not have anything and they did not want to work for it, get a job.

Now keep in mind that Jephthah had a father who was Jewish, and I am sure, in that culture, he was brought up in the faith of his father.

But now, persecution had caused him to flee and we see ***JEPHTHAH'S FALTERING FAITH!***

Now, as much as Jephthah was on the run, doing things that were not what God desired, I think God used this time to instill in Jephthah the tools he will need to Judge Israel by.

And please understand that at this point, Jephthah has no clue that is what God is doing, he does not even see this as a possibility. It is the farthest thing from his mind.

Now let's think about this for a minute.

And we may not be on the run from God, we may not be doing things that are wrong, but we may find ourselves in situations that we are doing and we don't even realize that down the road, God is going to use those skills in our lives to serve Him and to minister to others.

Think about some of the times you have been through, tough times, and you may have thought to yourself, ***"What is the purpose of this? What good can come from this?"***

And the reality is, just like with Jephthah, even though he was on the run from God, his faith was faltering because of the situations that he found himself in, God was teaching him lessons he needed to learn before he could deliver Israel from the hands of the Ammonites.

We have to be careful that we don't negate the work that God is doing in our lives because we see no purpose in it. God is very good at using all that we go through to mold and shape us into the men and women He wants us to be.

Let me give you a for instance. Look at the life of Joseph in the Old Testament. He was the son of Jacob and Jacob loved him more than his other sons. I think the reason was that he could trust Joseph and his other sons, not so much.

And Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colors or a long-sleeved robe. That tells me he must have been in charge of his brothers and we do see that played out for us.



After Joseph has a couple of dreams that spoke of how his brothers would bow down to him, and, of course they were not happy with that, they hated him even more, Jacob sends Joseph to see how his sons are doing in caring for his flock. I think Jacob was concerned that they were not doing what they were supposed to be doing.

And when he finds his brothers, they throw him into a pit and then they sell him to Midianite slave traders.

Talk about unfair. How can God use something like this for good? This is horrible!

These slave traders head to Egypt and Joseph is sold to Potiphar, the captain of the guard for Pharaoh. Now he is serving Potiphar. Talk about unfair. How can God use something like this for good? This is horrible!

But Joseph does well, God blesses him, and Potiphar puts him in charge of everything in his house. And then Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph and he flees. And when she tells her husband what happened, she lies. She tells him that Joseph tried to rape her. And Potiphar throws Joseph in prison. Talk about unfair. How can God use something like this for good? This is horrible!

In prison Joseph once again is doing well and the butler and the baker for Pharaoh are in prison. Pharaoh got word that someone was trying to kill him, and he did not know who, so he put both these servants of his in prison. And in prison they both have dreams. And Joseph interprets them for both these men.

For the butler, he was told that he would be restored to Pharaoh, he had done nothing wrong.

The baker wanted to hear what his dream meant, and Joseph told him that in three days he would be put to death for plotting to murder Pharaoh.

And that is exactly what happened. And Joseph told the butler to remember him when he is restored and maybe Pharaoh would let him go, he did nothing wrong.

And the butler was released and forget about what he promised Joseph for two full years! Talk about unfair. How can God use something like this for good? This is horrible!

Then, Pharaoh had a dream, and no one could interpret it. And the butler remembered Joseph, told Pharaoh and Joseph was called to interpret the dream for Pharaoh!

And Joseph comes and gives the interpretation. He tells Pharaoh that there will be seven years of great harvest followed by seven years of severe famine. Thus, they needed to prepare for those seven years of famine now, when there was plenty of food.

And Pharaoh, upon hearing the wisdom of Joseph and that God was with him, put him second in charge over all of Egypt!

That is pretty amazing, but that is not the end of the story.

After the seven years of plenty, then the famine hit, and it affected Jacob and his sons. So Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to buy food, for they heard that there was food in Egypt.

And they did not know that it was their brother who was the one who was giving the food out.

And through a series of circumstances, Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers and they bring their father, Jacob to Egypt to live and to be cared for.

And as much as we might look at how unfair this was for Joseph, he did nothing wrong, listen to what Joseph told his brothers about all of this.

In Genesis 50:20 we are told, **“But as you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”**

Instead of being angry, upset with them or even with God, Joseph saw the hand of God upon his life and the reason for all that he went through.

God was teaching him lessons so that when he was placed second in charge over all of Egypt, he would be ready.

And God is doing the same with us. Now we might not be placed second in charge of anything, but understand all that you have gone through, all that you are going through, all that you will go through have happened or are happening or will happen for a reason. God is working in you so that He can work through you.

And instead of being angry, upset with people or even with God, even when people may do things to you to hurt you, God will use it for good in your life! There is good that will come out of the situations you face and that good may not be what you were thinking, but it is exactly what God wanted and what you needed!

That is what we see here with Jephthah! Even though ***JEPHTHAH'S FAITH WAS FALTERING***, God was working in him so he could work through him.

As we read on, the next point we are going to be looking at is ***THE CONFLICT!***

And if you think about it, what Jephthah was going through was to prepare for this battle that was coming so that he could deliver the children of Israel from their bondage at the hands of the Ammonites.

VERSES 4-5

Jephthah has been gone for a while now, we don't know how long, and trouble hits the land by the hands of the Ammonites, a group of people who were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew.

The nation of Ammon, the Ammonites, lived to the south of Israel. They were a semi-nomadic group of people.

And here we see that there is still no leader in Israel!

Remember what we read in Judges 10:17-18, **“Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, ‘Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.’”**

And here we are once again and there is still no leader in Israel and this enemy must have been turning up the heat because they are looking for a leader to help them against these Ammonites!

And these leaders in Manasseh are hearing about this man named Jephthah and what he was able to do. Thus, they swallowed their pride, they ask the one that they threw out to come back and lead them in their battle against the Ammonites.

Now let's make the application to our own lives.

If we have done something wrong, if we have hurt someone, if we have done something that discredits our testimony of Jesus Christ, especially in front of unbelievers or to unbelievers, but not exclusively, then we need to humble ourselves and apologize so we can make right what we did wrong. I think we all understand that. It is then humbling ourselves and righting the wrong that is more difficult for us to do!

We do see that here with the people of Gilead. They humbled themselves and they are going to go and ask Jephthah to lead them into battle!

C. S. Lewis wrote this, ***“Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.”***

How true that is. But why?

Because you refuse to say you are sorry. Because you refuse to admit you are wrong. Because you refuse to let it go. And because of that it destroys love, it destroys our contentment and it makes no sense!

Let me show you what I mean. This is what we should do and what an example this is for us. We are told,

In the 1998-1999 NBA basketball season, David Robinson, frequent all-star and veteran center for the San Antonio Spurs, learned to share the limelight with the new dominant player of the league: his teammate Tim Duncan.

San Antonio won the NBA playoffs in 1999 with Tim Duncan as their star player. In Sports Illustrated, Robinson reflects on what that was like for him:

I can't overstate how important my faith has been to me as an athlete and as a person. It's helped me deal with so many things, including matters of ego and pride. For instance, I can't deny that it felt weird to see Tim standing on the podium with the Finals MVP trophy. I was thinking, man, never have I come to the end of a tournament and not been the one holding up that trophy. It was hard.

But I thought about the Bible story of David and Goliath. David helped King Saul win a battle, but the king wasn't happy because he had killed thousands of men while David had killed tens of thousands. So King Saul couldn't enjoy the victory because he was thinking about David getting more credit than he was.

I'm blessed that God has given me the ability to just enjoy the victory. So Tim killed the tens of thousands. That's great. I'm happy for him.

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That is what we were talking about. Can we humble ourselves when we are wrong and right the wrong that we have done? We need to.

Can we humble ourselves and admit that someone can do something better than we can? We need to.

Can we have the heart of Jesus who looked for the good in people and be excited about that, not trying to lord over them? We need to.

These men of Gilead were able to do that. ***THE CONFLICT WAS REAL***, and these men did what they needed to do, and now we see ***THE CALL OF JEPHTHAH!***

VERSES 6-11

As we see here, the leaders of Gilead come to Jephthah and they ask him to command the army and lead them in this battle against the Ammonites.

They had no leader and we are told in Judges 11:1 that “**... Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor ...**”

So Jephthah had a reputation of being a warrior!

And, as we read, the response of Jephthah is very understandable. He said, “**... ‘Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father’s house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?’**” Judges 11:7.

And he basically told them, “*You’ve got to be kidding me. You threw me out of my home and left me with absolutely nothing and now when you are in trouble, when you are in distress you come to me for help!*”

Why did Jephthah do that? Why did he throw this request for him to lead back in the face of the elders of Gilead?

Maybe to make sure that this is truly what they wanted. He did not want to help them and then have them throw him out again!

Keep in mind that he is putting his life on the line for them and if they were not going to fight with him, then there is no sense in getting involved here.

And the elders of Gilead plead with Jephthah that this is what they want. In fact, they tell Jephthah that he is the one who will lead them into this battle and after this battle!

Again, I think that is what he was trying to find out. If they would not only fight with him but after this battle is over, are they still going to be with him! And the answer was yes, they said that they would fight with him and then serve under him, he would be their leader!

And Jephthah is still not sure, so he asks them again, “... **‘If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the Lord delivers them to me, shall I be your head?’**” Judges 11:9.

And the elders of Gilead once again said that he would be their leader, even after the battle is over.

Now some may wonder how I know that the Lord is guiding Jephthah in all of this, and I believe the Lord is, as well as the people of Gilead are being led by the Lord.

Let me show you what I mean. First, I will show you what the elders of Gilead said in Judges 11:10. Look at how this plays out for us. We are told, “**And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, ‘The LORD will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words.’**”

And now listen to what Jephthah said in Judges 11:11, “**Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.**”

Now I do understand that some feel that because he lived in Tob, which was in Syria, that their gods influenced him. And thus, he was heavily involved in idolatry.

I seriously doubt that because when both the elders of Gilead and Jephthah speak about the *LORD* it is all in capitols and thus, it is speaking of *YAHWEH!*

Also, when he recounts the history of the children of Israel, and we will see that as we read on here in Judges chapter 11, he does a great job without any notes.

How did he know *YAHWEH?*

How did he know the history of his people?



I believe it was because his father taught him, trained him up in the things of God and thus, when he was old, he did not depart from them.

What a great lesson for us as parents or even grandparents, to train up our children or grandchild in the things of God.

We should instruct them to have a biblical worldview. To teach them the things of God because what they learn they will not forget.

They may not always agree, but they will not forget what we have taught them about God in our words and our deeds!

It is as Solomon tells us in Proverbs 22:6, “**Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.**”

The Living Bible puts it like this, “**Teach a child to choose the right path, and when he is older, he will remain upon it.**”

May we do that; train them up in the things of God!

Now let me also share this with you. Where is this taking place? We are told it was in Mizpah.

That may not be too familiar to you, but it is the same place where we see the agreement between Jacob and Laban was made in Genesis 31:43-50. And the idea here is that God is watching you and if you cross me, God will get you. And we saw that with Jacob and Laban and maybe the same idea Jephthah is making with the elders of Gilead.

***“I am trusting your promise to me and if you cross me, I won’t have to come after you, God will take care of it because He is watching!”***

What I would like to focus on now is this calling of God upon the life of Jephthah. You see, this was not an ideal situation. It was not the best of circumstances. There was not a love relationship between Jephthah and the elders of Gilead. And that is putting it mildly.

And yet, there was the call and Jephthah humbled himself and took on the position that not only the elders of Gilead asked of him, but I truly believe it is what the Lord called him to be, the Judge in Israel and defeat the Ammonites!

What about us?

When God calls us to do something, do we hesitate because it may not be an ideal situation? Do we not go forward because of how they treated us in the past? What about being called to do something that makes us uncomfortable, we don't want to get our hands dirty, it is difficult, and the list can go on?

Think about this calling of Jephthah. It was not an ideal situation. These are the people that help throw him out of his home. The enemy was strong, they were powerful, and Jephthah only had the promise of these men of Gilead that they would help him in this battle.

And yet he took that step of faith! Again, what about us?

You see, it is in those tough times, those difficult situations, as we humble ourselves before God, that He gives us that victory and He gets the glory, we just need to step out and walk by faith and see the salvation that He will bring to the situation.

The key, for me, is that the **LORD** is the one doing the calling, the **LORD** is directing me into this battle or this situation. This is not something that I am jumping into on my own, because that will never work out for good in the end!

Let me share this story with you. We are told,

Some people thought he was a nut. He was just a shoemaker, after all, and an average one at that. But in the evenings, after work, he studied Greek, Hebrew, and a variety of modern languages. He devoured Captain Cook's Voyages to expand his horizons, which, because of his poverty, kept him bound to a small, forgotten English village. Some people said his time would have been better spent getting a second job to support his growing family.

But the young man's passion wasn't a curious, self-satisfying hobby. Early in life he had become concerned about the millions of unbelievers outside of Europe, and he was trying to figure out what could be done to bring them the gospel.

With God's help, he slowly figured it out. He ended up going to India to serve as the first Protestant missionary in the modern era. His passion inspired a generation of men and women - the likes of Adoniram Judson, Hudson Taylor, and David Livingstone (among others) - to take up the cause of missions as well.

Because one impoverished shoemaker named William Carey followed his God-given passion, large parts of the world that had little or no access to the gospel have large populations of people today who confess Christ as Lord.

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When God places His call upon your life, are you willing to take those steps of faith, like Jephthah did, and see what God will not only do in you but through you for His glory?

I hope you are, and I think all of you are ready to take those steps. May we heed His call and press on!

As we live out our faith may people see that – ***LOVE SHINES THROUGH!***