

**JUDGES 11:29-40**  
**A FOOLISH VOW!**

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

And I think you will agree with me on this, it has been an interesting ride as we have been traveling through this book.

Through it all, God has given to us some amazing lessons to learn from. And that is what we do as we go through the Old Testament Scriptures; we are learning from the mistakes the children of Israel made and from their victories that they had as well.

For the last few weeks we have been looking at the Judge, Jephthah. He was a Judge in the eastern region of Israel, in the area of Gilead.

But Jephthah did not start out as a Judge or even someone that was welcomed in their community.

What was the problem?

The problem was simple. We are told in Judges 11:1-2, **“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. Gilead’s wife bore sons; and when his wife’s sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, ‘You shall have no inheritance in our father’s house, for you are the son of another woman.’”**

So his half-brothers, as Jephthah grew up, they kicked him out of the family, out of the house because he was a son of a harlot and they did not want him to share in their inheritance!

And as bad as that was, not only did his half-brothers throw him out of the house, but the elders of the city of Gilead threw him out of the city!

Listen to what we are told in Judges 11:7, **“So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, ‘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?’”**

And thus, Jephthah was on the run you might say. And he joined up with some **“worthless men”** and they went around stealing to provide for themselves instead of working.

Keep in mind that the children of Israel had turned from the Lord and now they were being oppressed by the Ammonites and others for eighteen years.

Finally, they had enough, and they cried out to the Lord to deliver them from this bondage that they were in.

And God wanted them to think about what they were doing, who they were worshiping, and He told them, **“Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.”** Judges 10:14.

Now that might sound pretty cruel, how can God respond like that when they cried out to Him?

The answer is simple. God knows the heart and He wants them to make sure that they are willing to turn back to Him and away from these false gods that can’t do anything for them, can’t help them. In fact, these gods can’t even help themselves because they are not gods!

And the children of Israel admitted that they had sinned before the Lord, they repented and asked the Lord to deliver them from this bondage by the hands of the Ammonites, the main oppressors.

But there was this problem, there were no leaders in Israel to lead them against Ammon, except one, and that was Jephthah, the one that they kicked out of their city.

But he was the only one and they humbled themselves and asked Jephthah to come and deliver them from this bondage that they were in and they would serve him, they would make him their leader.

And Jephthah agrees and he tries diplomacy first with the Ammonites, but that didn't work, and thus, war was the next step! In fact, we are told in Judges 11:28, after Jephthah spoke with the Ammonites, **“However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him.”**

I have called our study this morning – *A FOOLISH VOW!* And as we go through our study this morning you will see how this all plays out.

I have broken down these verses here in Judges chapter 11 as follows,

***EMPOWERED BY GOD – JUDGES 11:29***

***THE FOOLISH VOW – JUDGES 11:30-31***

***THE VICTORY – JUDGES 11:32-33***

***CONSEQUENCES – JUDGES 11:34-35***

***A LIFE SURRENDERED – JUDGES 11:36-40***

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 11, starting in verse 29 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we look at the topic – *A FOOLISH VOW!*

**JUDGES 11****VERSE 29**

Now keep in mind that Jephthah warned the Ammonites not to get involved in this war, the land was Israel's and if they do fight against Israel, God will see the children of Israel through this battle, they will end up being the losers.

But, as I have said, the Ammonites did not heed the warning of Jephthah and they will go to war with Israel!

And that is what Jephthah is preparing for right now, a war against the Ammonites as he gathers his men together for this battle.

What is interesting to me through this is we have not seen the Lord speak to Jephthah, like we do with Gideon, Barak and some of the others.

All we are told, back in Judges 11:1, was that he “**. . . was a mighty man of valor . . .**”

That is until we come to this verse here in Judges 11:29, where we are told, “**Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah . . .**”

You see, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, empowering him for this work, and thus, the title of this verse – ***EMPOWERED BY GOD!***

I think that is one of the problems that many Christians have today. They go out to serve the Lord, but they don't have that empowerment to do the work. And thus, they use worldly ideas, worldly wisdom, worldly actions to accomplish their task.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. I typed into my search engine on my computer, “***How to grow your church***” and I got 265,000,000 results back. Wow! This must be a hot topic.

Here is the problem that I have with most of this stuff, it is not Biblical.

The focus tends to be on you drawing the people in by the speakers you have, the worship team with smoke and lights, the message not too convicting, a message that is not too long which is about the length of my introduction, and-so-on.

Here is the problem. You are doing the work. You are drawing the people with different things and then, when the excitement is gone, so are they and thus, you have to come up with new things.

And what I find interesting is that we mimic the world with what we do. The problem is we are usually a few years behind the world, and we are always trying to catch up.

Several years back I was constantly getting e-mails focusing on how to grow your church, and they can be tempting. But the one thing I did notice in all of this is it was the effort of man, making a church into a business and running campaigns to increase the size of your business.

The one thing that was missing, and really the most important thing is that they were not ***EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD!***

I want you to see what the early church was about, the power it had, not in programs but they were empowered by the Spirit of God!

In Acts 2:42 we are told, “**And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**”

This was the early church; this is what they were about and look at how God used them!

They continued steadfastly in the *apostles' doctrine*. In other words, they were taught the Word of God. Keep in mind there were not the Gospels, or the letters of the New Testament written yet. So what the apostles were teaching was what the early church was studying as well as the Old Testament! No fluff, just teaching doctrine, the truths of God!

They were in *fellowship* with each other. Life was not easy, the other Jews were against them, and thus, this time together, this KONANIA was so important to them. They had a oneness in Christ and a oneness with each other and they were comforted, corrected, and they learned from each other!

They *broke bread* together, which I believe was more than just sharing a meal. I think this is speaking of communion, that they remembered all that the Lord had done for them as they came to share in communion together.

And they were men and women of *prayer*. Prayer was important to them. Not some program, but prayer for God to work, for God to heal, for God to open doors and the list goes on to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Now many today might think that is something that worked back then, but we need to have programs, we need to draw in the lost by not offending them by teaching on some Bible topics, we need to do this and we need to do that, and again, they lost the power to go forward.

Listen to what happened as they early church studied the Word of God, fellowshiped together, shared in communion and meals, and prayed. We are told, **“Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. . . . So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”** Acts 2:43, 46-47.

How does the church grow? **“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”** Acts 2:47b.

God will take care of His church and He will grow it as He sees fit! We just need to be obedient to Him!

And I want you to see how they were empowered by the Spirit of God and the results of that. Fear came upon people; they saw the hand of God and conviction came upon them for their sin.

And the result is that as the power of God was working in and through these believers, working in such a way that within 30 years the Gospel message went throughout the whole known world!

They lived what they believed, and others noticed it, they saw the power of God in them!

It was not a program, but a **PERSON**, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God working in the man or woman of God in a powerful way!

And I think we need that same power today to move the Gospel message forward.

You see, as with Jephthah, the Spirit of God comes upon our lives and helps us to advance, to move forward with the Gospel message as we confront the enemy of God and this is all done not in our might or strength but in His!

I don't know where you are at this morning. Maybe you are fearful regarding what the Lord wants you to do. Maybe you are anxious and worried that you can't do it.

I will let you in on a little secret. ***YOU CAN'T DO IT!***

Okay, I know, that did not help, it only made you more anxious!

But that is the reality, and if you can do it on your own, then you don't need God!

We need that empowerment by the Spirit of God in our lives, not doing things in the power of our might or our strength, but in the power of God's Spirit working in us and through us for the Lord's glory!

As you look at Judges 11:29 we see that the Spirit of the ***LORD*** came upon Jephthah and after that we see him advance, go forward to fight against the people of Ammon.

I think that is true in our lives as well. As the Spirit of God comes upon us, He gives us the power to advance, to go forward and do those things that God has called us to do!

I can't imagine what would have happened if Jephthah went into battle without the empowerment of the Spirit of God. It would not have been good.

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

An old man once said, that it took him forty years to learn three simple things.

The first was that he could not do anything to save himself; the second was that God did not expect him to; and the third was, that Christ had done it all, and all he had to do was to accept the accomplished fact.

When it comes to Holy-Spirit filled living and the grace of God, always keep this little saying in your hearts and minds:

You can't.

God never said you could.

He can; He always said he would!

- Practical Bible Illustrations from Yesterday and Today

That means when God calls us to walk by faith, to do something we really could never do on our own, nor does He expect us to, He can and He will work through us as He empowers us by His Spirit to go forward.

It is as the Lord said in Zechariah 4:6, “**... This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.**”

***EMPOWERED BY GOD!***

### VERSES 30-31

Now wait a minute. First, we see that Jephthah is a Spirit empowered man and now we see that he made this foolish vow. What is up with that?

Make no mistake about it, even Spirit empowered people can make foolish decisions, foolish vows, as we see here with Jephthah.

But how can that be? If the person is Spirit filled, Spirit empowered, how can they make such a major mistake, like we see here with Jephthah?

Because the Holy Spirit does not control us like some kind of robots. But the Holy Spirit guides us. Thus, it is that guidance that we can resist or ignore and that can get us in trouble.

Remember the story of Peter? I know, you are thinking which one, there are so many!

It is the story in Matthew chapter 16 where Jesus and His men had come to Caesarea Philippi and Jesus asked His men, “... ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’”  
Matthew 16:13.

And they had all kinds of answers, from John the Baptist, to Elijah, Jeremiah or some of the other prophets as well, that is what the people were saying about Jesus, who He is.

And then Jesus makes this very specific, and He asks His men, “... ‘But who do you say that I am?’” Matthew 16:15.

And that is important. It doesn't matter what others think of Jesus, who He is to you, what do you think of Him?

And we know the response that Peter gave as he said, “... ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” Matthew 16:16.

And then the response of Jesus to what Peter proclaimed, “... ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in Heaven.’”

Can you imagine the smile on Peter's face? It must have gone from ear to ear! “*Did you hear that boys! I just had a spiritual revelation!*”

Now that did not last very long, that Spirit empowered life.

You see, after this Jesus started telling His men that He was going to Jerusalem and there in Jerusalem He was going to suffer at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the scribes and they will ultimately kill Him. And on the third day He would be raised from the dead. They did not hear that part, but they did hear about Him being put to death!

And Peter, this man who is in tune with God the Father, this Spiritual man, speaks up and not only says to Jesus that He is wrong, but he rebukes Him for His misguided words, and he tells Jesus, “**... ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’**” Matthew 16:22.

And I am sure Peter is still smiling, “*Did you see that boys? That was another revelation from God!*”

Well, not exactly.

Listen to what Jesus tells Peter, “**... ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense [stumbling block] to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’**” Matthew 16:23.

Look at how fast we can go from hearing from God to hearing from Satan!

We need to be careful because pride can bring us down and I think that is what happened with Peter. He had his ideas; his plans and they were in opposition to the plans of God. In fact, the plans of Peter were in line with the Devil because Peter was eliminating the cross, the payment for our sins!

So we too need to be careful, not be prideful in thinking we know everything, and bring everything into the light of God’s Word and not our feelings or ideas.

Now I am not going to deal with this vow that Jephthah made here, but we will deal with it at the end of this chapter as we see it come to pass.

Listen again to this foolish vow that Jephthah made. We are told, “**And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, ‘If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.’**” Judges 11:30-31.

Now the big question here is this. Did this vow mean that whatever or whoever came out of his home was going to be offered as a burnt offering to God?

A very interesting question and again, a very controversial section that I hope I can shed some light on for you.

And I do think it is clear what took place, but you search the Scriptures; see what the Lord shows you. And again, we will deal with this more in a few minutes.

Now what about vows, should we make them?

Let me say this, according to a survey by Statista, only four percent of people who made New Year's resolutions in 2018 said they kept them.

They made a vow, a resolution for instance, to eat better and lose weight, and that lasted until New Year's Day when all the College football games came on and you ate and ate and ate some more!

But let me also say this, if we make a vow, we need to keep them. I am not saying all vows are bad or we should never make a vow.

Think about a marriage vow. A marriage vow is something that is important. We make a vow before God that we will remain together until death do we part. And let me be clear on this. It doesn't mean you kill your spouse to get out of the marriage!

Let me share with you this poem from the late 1600's by John Dryden, because it does sum up the feelings of people today regarding marriage and the vow that they have made. The poem goes like this,

*Why should a foolish marriage vow,  
Which long ago was made,  
Oblige us to each other now  
When passion is decay'd?  
We loved, and we loved, as long as we could,  
Till our love was loved out in us both:  
But our marriage is dead, when the pleasure is fled:  
'Twas pleasure first made it an oath.*

*If I have pleasures for a friend,  
And farther love in store,  
What wrong has he whose joys did end,  
And who could give no more?  
'Tis a madness that he should be jealous of me,  
Or that I should bar him of another:  
For all we can gain is to give ourselves pain,  
When neither can hinder the other.*

- John Dryden – 1631-1700

I am not sure what happened in John Dryden's life, but it doesn't sound good if this poem is a picture of what took place.

Now here's the thing and make no mistake about it, a vow is a serious thing. It is a promise, an oath, a contract or covenant between you and God.

And let's think about this for a minute. Have we really considered the vows we have made before God?

How many, usually with the New Year coming, will make vows something like this,

I will read 5 chapters of the Bible a day!

I will pray for 30 minutes a day!

I will treat my spouse as God desires!

I will go to church instead of sleeping in and watching Livestream!

I will take a step of faith and do what God has called me to do!

I won't watch movies like that anymore!

And that list can go on. Some of these are foolish and what are we really doing? I think of Jephthah, did he need to make that vow to God?

Absolutely not.

God was going to give them this victory, and yet, kind of an insurance policy, ***“Lord, whoever or whatever comes out of that door of my house when I return from battle, if you give me this victory, it is yours as a sacrifice!”***

He was trying to barter with God to get this victory and how often we do that!

Lord, if you let me have this job, I will serve you the rest of my life!

You mean that if you don't then you won't serve God?

And, again, the list can go on and on in our bargaining with God to get something. We make a vow, we seek to be blessed, and then, how often we break that vow, that foolish vow many times that we have made!

We see this in the life of Jacob. In Genesis chapter 28, as he is on the run from his brother Esau, Jacob makes this vow, again, a foolish vow.

We are told in Genesis 28:20-22, **“Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.’”**

In other words, ***“If you do this for me God, then I will serve You, You will be my God!”***

God is really lucky to have a guy like Jacob, right? Not!

God doesn’t need any of us and yet He loves us dearly and we don’t barter with God, we surrender to Him!

And let me share with you what God has said in Genesis 28:15 to Jacob before Jacob made this vow. He said, **“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”**

Let’s compare what God has said to what Jacob vowed.

God said, ***I am always with you!***  
Jacob said, ***If God will be with me!***

God said, ***I will keep you wherever you go!***  
Jacob said, ***If God will keep me!***

God said, ***I will bring you back to this land!***  
Jacob said, ***If I can come back to my father’s house!***

God said, ***I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you!***  
Jacob said, ***If He will guide me in the way I am going!***

God already promised him those things and yet, for Jacob, it was *“If”* God will do this then he would serve Him! He is challenging God, making a deal with God.

Look, God promised Jacob and he was to believe what God has spoken to him and walk by faith, not make a vow!

And if we make a vow to God, we need to keep it. That should just seem obvious. The key is don't make a foolish vow.

And even in marriage, before you vow before God that you will take this person for the rest of your life, make sure that this is what God desires and if not, then don't get married.

And, if you are married, and you have made that vow, you need to keep it, honor it because again, you made it before God.

We will see that Jephthah, even though he made a foolish vow, he will honor God by fulfilling it!

It is as this story goes,

As the wealthy oil tycoon lay on his deathbed, his pastor talked of God's healing power.

“Pastor,” he gasped, “if God heals me, I'll give the church a million dollars.”

Miraculously, the man revived and within a few short weeks was out of the hospital.

One day, several months later, he and the pastor chatted on the sidewalk in front of a hardware store. “You know,” the pastor said, “when you were in the hospital dying, you promised to give the church a million dollars if you got well. We haven't got it yet.”

“Did I say that?” the tycoon asked. “I guess that goes to show how sick I really was!”

- Today in the Word, July 1990, p. 34

Don't make foolish vows, let your yes be **"yes"** and your no be **"no"** and honor the Lord in all that you do!

VERSES 32-33

Here we see ***THE VICTORY!***

God gave Jephthah and his men a great victory against the Ammonites.

I think that is something that we always need to remember in the victories we have, that it is not because of how great we are, or how great our plan was, or this or that, it was all God!

Let me share some Scriptures with you regarding our victory in the Lord.

First of all, in Deuteronomy 20:3-4 we are told, **"And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'"**

Is this not true every day for us as Christians, that we are on the verge of battle with our enemies and it becomes a reality when we get up and get out of bed, the battle begins!

And yes, we know that we can't do it on our own. We know we don't have the strength or the resources to win these battles. We just can't do it.

But that is the wonderful thing, God never tells us to go and do it on your own.

What He does tell us is that we are not to have a heart attack over the situation, or a **"heart faint."** We are not to be afraid of what is ahead of us. We are not to tremble or be terrified because of them!

But why?

We don't have to guess. We don't have to wonder if it will happen. And the reason we can be so confident in obtaining victory in these battles is because the Bible tells us, "**... for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.**"

There should be some "*Amens!*" or "*Hallelujahs!*" in hearing that!

Think about that one for a minute.

Have you ever faced a difficult situation, a battle you might say, and felt all alone, like no one was with you?

I am sure we all have, but the reality is, as a Christian, we are never alone for the Lord is always with us. What a precious promise that is.

Remember in II Timothy 4:16-18, as Paul was on death row in a Roman prison for his faith in Christ. Nero is going to put Paul to death. And listen to what Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith. He wrote, "**At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!**"

We don't know if fear kept the church in Rome away from Paul, no one coming to his defense as he was on trial for his faith. He says, "**... all forsook me.**" That is harsh, that is something that can be so discouraging.

And here is the wonderful thing that Paul knew without a doubt, "**But the Lord stood with me ...**"

And the reason I can say that Paul did not doubt this is because of what this faith, what this truth that the Lord was with Paul, was manifested in his life. He was strengthened by this and it caused his faith to grow strong so, in spite of being in prison for his faith, he continued to preach the Gospel.

And he also looks to the past to give him strength in the present situation he was in, there in the Mamertine prison in Rome, a whole in the ground you might say. It was cold, it was dark, and it stunk!

But the Lord was in control and he rested in that and through it all he gave glory to God!

Do you see how the correct perspective can change everything! It truly does, God is with us no matter how difficult the situation may be, no matter how dark it may seem, He is by our side!

Also, Paul tells us in Romans 8:37, “**Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**”

When Paul says that we are, “**more than conquerors**” what does he mean? First of all, this comes from the Greek word, HUPERNIKAO, (hoop-er-nik-ah'-o). And it is made up of two Greek words, HUPER, which means “more than, super.” And, NIKAO, which means “victors, conquerors.”

Paul is not speaking of us overcoming these things in our lives but that in these trials, in these tribulations that we face, we see the hand of God at work using these things to shape and build and strengthen our lives!

The trials are making us stronger in our faith and relationship with God so that in Christ we can be *more than conquerors!*

How important that is for us to understand?

It is very important and there are a few verses that we see this played out.

In Romans 5:3-5 Paul tells us, “**And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**”

In II Corinthians 12:9-10 Paul tells us, “**And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**”

In James 1:2-4 James tells us, “**My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**”

And in I Peter 5:8-11 Peter tells us, “**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**”

What does that mean? It means that, “**. . . we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**” Romans 8:28. So we are in a battle, it is like being sheep led to slaughter and yet, God is with us, and He will see us through these things as He is working to shape our lives, build us up, strengthen us in the faith!

And lastly, in I Corinthians 15:57 we are told, “**But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

Here in I Corinthians Paul just spoke of how Jesus has removed the sting of death in our lives as Christians.

Now that does not mean we won't die, but when we do die, we go home to be with the Lord, so the sting of death is removed, we are no longer separated from God because of sin.

Thus, we are so thankful to God who has given us the victory over death and that victory in life and in death is found in Jesus Christ!

Now think about Jephthah once again. Think about his life and all the difficulty he faced as he was growing up, as he was an adult, how he was kicked out of his family and his community.

And yet, for Jephthah, he let go of the rejection that his family had towards him, he let go of any bitterness that he might have had towards them, he let go of the difficult life he had because of what they did to him and thus, God was able to use him mightily.

I wonder how many times God is not able to use us because we let bitterness, anger, past difficulties, family struggles get in the way?

And then we wonder why we don't have that victory!

That victory is found as we are empowered by the Spirit of God and obedience to Him.

Thus, those things that are holding us back, those things that are quenching the work of the Spirit in our lives, we need to give them to God for the fruit of the Spirit is not bitterness, but **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”** Galatians 5:22-25.

May we let love flow from our lives and see what God can do – ***THE VICTORY!***

#### VERSES 34-35

We need to remember that there are ***CONSEQUENCES*** to our actions and that is what we see here with Jephthah.

He made a vow to the Lord, “**. . . ‘If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.’**” Judges 11:30-31.

Now that he has been victorious against the people of Ammon, now that the Lord has given him and his men this great victory, it was time for him to honor his vow.

And we see here that is exactly what he did. Thus, this victory was bitter/sweet. Yes, they obtain the victory, but now he was giving his daughter, his only child to the Lord.

And the big question is, “***Will he offer her as a burnt sacrifice? It seems like that is what his vow was all about!***”

Before I explain this vow, I want to take a few minutes and focus on not keeping our vows, and what consequences there can be.

For instance, not keeping the marriage vow that was made. Again, that was a vow between you and God.

And thus, when you don't keep it, there are always consequences.

We see that there can be anger, bitterness between the family and friends when this vow is not kept.

We see hardships with children.

And the reality is, if we were not serious about this vow, why did we make it in the first place? You see, love is more than a feeling, it is an act of your will. And now you are saying your will supersedes God's and thus, you are going to break this vow. Not a good idea.

And yes, Jephthah was going to go through with this vow that he made to God, but again, there are *CONSEQUENCES* in keeping this vow, as we will see.

#### VERSES 36-40

So here is the question that you probably are struggling with and I will hopefully answer for you.

*Did Jephthah actually offer his daughter as a human sacrifice to the Lord, a burnt offering?*

Now we need to understand where he grew up, this kind of sacrifice was common.

Or did something else take place here?

First of all you can make a good argument for both cases, but I feel that after looking at the character of this man, his understanding of the Law, that he did not offer his daughter as a human sacrifice to the Lord.

You may disagree, and that is okay. But listen carefully to the text and see what the Lord shows you.

First of all, as I said Jephthah knew the Word of God, he knew the history of his people as we have seen.

Thus, Leviticus 18:21 tells us, **“And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.”**

Also, in Deuteronomy 12:31 we are told, **“You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”**

You see, God does not want human sacrifice, He has not called for human sacrifice, He does not want them to practice that which the pagan nations practiced, human sacrifice!

I know, that does not prove it, but I do want to show you what God’s Word says and that I believe from the text we have read, that Jephthah knew God’s Word.

Now here is Jephthah’s vow, **“Whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’S, and (or) I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”** Judges 11:31.

Again, make no mistake about it, Jephthah knew the Scriptures, and he knew that God forbade human sacrifice as I have said.

He knew the history of Israel and what God required of them.

He speaks freely of the Lord and he was Spirit-filled.

Now again, all that does not mean he couldn’t stumble and fall into this sin, but I don’t think that he did.

The word **“and”** in verse 31, WAW in the Hebrew, can be translated ***“or.”***

And if that is the case, it does change the meaning of this vow.

It would read, **“Whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me . . . Shall surely be the LORD’S, or I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”**

Jephthah is saying that if a person comes out, they are to be dedicated unto the Lord, to serve Him.

If an animal comes out, it would be offered as a burnt offering to the Lord.

Commentator Adam Clarke agreed that according to the most accurate Hebrew scholars, the best translation is *“I will consecrate it to the LORD”* or *“I will offer it for a burnt offering.”*

As he wrote, *“If it be a thing fit for a burnt-offering, it shall be made one; if fit for the service of God, it shall be consecrated to him.”*

You see, if he were going to offer his daughter as a burnt offering, he would have to take her to Shiloh, and have a priest do it.

Obviously no priest would do that at the Tabernacle and if the people got wind of it, they most likely would stop him, but even if they didn’t, I can’t believe that a priest would sacrifice this girl as I have said.

Could he have sacrificed her at one of the high places of the pagans?

I guess so, but I don’t see that in this man, who is listed in the hall of faith in Hebrews chapter 11! I don’t think God would have listed him there if he offered his daughter as a burnt offering to Him!

Now as he saw his daughter come out, he recognized what this would cost him, for his daughter was now going to spend the rest of her life in service to the Lord.

What does that mean?

It means that she would not marry, nor have any children, which was a great sacrifice, not only depriving her of children but also Jephthah of having grandchildren.

And if she were going to be killed, why would she bewail her virginity instead of her death?

You see, she was willing to serve the Lord day and night, a life of sacrifice unto Him. She, in a sense, was married to the Lord.

And we do see women serving in this capacity in Exodus 38:8, **“He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”**

And in I Samuel 2:22 we are told, **“Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”**

And in the New Testament we are told in Luke 2:36-38, **“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”**

And thus, we do see that there were women who were set apart for the Tabernacle service and even in the New Testament in the Temple.

That is what might be taking place here with Jephthah’s daughter I believe.

You see, most likely the women who assembled at the Tabernacle and later the Temple were older women, widows, but not Jephthah’s daughter, she was young and a virgin.

In verse 38 it says that for two months she “**bewailed her virginity.**” If she was going to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, I don’t think she would be bewailing her virginity but her death, as I have said, don’t you?

And in verse 39 we read that, “**He carried out his vow with her which he had vowed.**”

You see, it never says that he killed her and if he did the daughters of Israel would not “**celebrate**” this time but would lament.

But they celebrate the dedication and faithfulness of this woman as she sacrifices everything to serve the Lord.

So I don’t believe that Jephthah had human sacrifice in mind but that his daughter, who came out of his home first, was dedicated to the Lord!

And that really is our last point here. ***A LIFE SURRENDERED TO THE LORD!***

That should be the heart of each and every one of us, surrendering our lives as servants of the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Let me leave you with this to think about. Words from Oswald Chambers. He wrote,

To become one with Jesus Christ, a person must be willing not only to give up sin, but also to surrender his whole way of looking at things. Being born again by the Spirit of God means that we must first be willing to let go before we can grasp something else.

The first thing we must surrender is all of our pretense or deceit. What our Lord wants us to present to Him is not our goodness, honesty, or our efforts to do better, but real solid sin.

Actually, that is all He can take from us. And what He gives us in exchange for our sin is real solid righteousness. But we must surrender all pretense that we are anything, and give up all our claims of even being worthy of God’s consideration.

Once we have done that, the Spirit of God will show us what we need to surrender next. Along each step of this process, we will have to give up our claims to our rights to ourselves. Are we willing to surrender our grasp on all that we possess, our desires, and everything else in our lives? Are we ready to be identified with the death of Jesus Christ?

We will suffer a sharp painful disillusionment before we fully surrender. When people really see themselves as the Lord sees them, it is not the terribly offensive sins of the flesh that shock them, but the awful nature of the pride of their own hearts opposing Jesus Christ. When they see themselves in the light of the Lord, the shame, horror, and desperate conviction hit home for them.

If you are faced with the question of whether or not to surrender, make a determination to go on through the crisis, surrendering all that you have and all that you are to Him. And God will then equip you to do all that He requires of you.

- <https://bit.ly/2Br5YGQ>

That is what Jephthah's daughter did and I truly believe it is what we must do – ***A LIFE SURRENDERED!***