

PP Unsung Heroes of the Bible: Greatness from Poor Beginnings
Judges 11

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Video Nick Vujicic (voy a chich)

What an amazing man and one of many that God is using in mighty ways
 The bible is full of mighty men and women and children, and a great deal of them are little
 known saints, content to be in the shadows, unsung heroes
 I invite you to turn to Judges 11 and meet Jephthah: the man, his mission and his mistake
 Pray

PP 1-The Man

As Judges 10 closes, the Ammonites had come against Israel in the region of Gilead
 Picture the Sea of Galilee, and 70 miles south the Dead Sea, Gilead was in the middle of the two
 but on the east side of the Jordan River, right next to the Ammonites
 So Israel meets this threat and gathers in the town of Gilead called Mizpah to decide who would
 ‘begin to fight against the Ammonites’ 10:18

In chapter 11, we are given an introduction to that man, but his life had been off to a poor start:
***“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. Gilead
 was the father of Jephthah.”*** **Judges 11:1**

Jephthah, from Gilead, a mountainous, rugged, beautiful area famous for its sheep and for a
 healing ointment called the Balm of Gilead

Gilead was where Elijah would be born, where both David and Jesus would one day for rest
 But Gilead was famous in a bad way as well, and Hosea would one day write, ***“Gilead is a city
 of evildoers, tracked with blood.”*** Hosea 6:8

Jephthah is from a rough area with rough people, but he ***“was a mighty warrior”***

When the bible describes a person, it often lists their most prominent traits first: *mighty warrior*
 Yet look what the bible says next: ***“but he was the son of a prostitute.”***

He was mighty, he was rugged, he was a warrior, but he was born an illegitimate child
 His father got a prostitute pregnant and the worlds of twitter and facebook lit up, which were the
 town well and gates of that day

It wasn't Jephthah's fault but he couldn't escape the shame, and his brothers would not let it go
 When dad died, his brothers ***“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.’”***

Jephthah did what so many people do when they experience profound rejection, he fled, going to
 the ***‘land of Tob’***, 80 miles away

Think about your own life for a moment, think about your past
 Is there something in your past that dogs your life right now?
 Perhaps you were born differently like Nick Vujicic (voy a chich), and it brought you a great
 deal of shame

Perhaps a learning disability, a stuttering problem, or blindness
 Maybe a regret that you didn't go to college and get that degree like others in your family?
 Maybe a failure early in life that you can't seem to move on from, a pregnancy out of wedlock
 That cloud of your past may be something you did, or something someone did to you

Fleeing from your past means you have kept it in your rearview mirror, and you will find that somehow it has stayed with you, and it is influencing your life in the present
 He had fled to Tob, yet ***‘worthless fellows collected around Jephthah and went out with him’***, meaning they went out on raids with him
 These ***‘worthless fellows’*** means empty men with no purpose in life, not like the men who gathered to David and became his mighty men
 Yet his leadership was already evident as they ***‘collected around [him] and went out with him.’***
 It was a poor beginning for Jephthah yet because of God’s grace, our past is never an obstacle to what God can do in and through us, and we are about to see that with Jephthah

PP 2-The Mission

War had come to Israel and the people of Gilead were oppressed for 18 years
 So the elders of Gilead went to Tob, and asked Jephthah to lead them against the Ammonites
 11:7 reveals that these elders were part of the group that drove him away, and they admit that they are in great distress and need him to come back and deliver them
 Jephthah agrees, and sends messengers to the Ammonites asking why they have come to war?
 The Ammonites were trying for a land grab, and Jephthah responds with a very logical defense
“But the king of the Ammonites did not listen to the words of Jephthah that he sent to him.”
Judges 11:28

And Jephthah learns what we must know: it is not possible to reason with the enemies of God!

And it is here that we need to look deeper and have our eyes opened to the gospel

PP The OT is the NT concealed, while the NT is the OT revealed!

And if I don’t direct our eyes to this then this sermon will fall short of what it should be

PP So back up with me to **Judges 2:16**, ***“Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.”***

Israel, like Christians, ebbed and flowed in their devotion to God, and when they fell away, God would discipline them to bring them back to Him, like He does us today

This cycle repeated again in chapter 10 with Israel worshiping several pagan gods, so God ***“sold them into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the Ammonites, and they crushed and oppressed the people of Israel that year. For eighteen years they oppressed all the people of Israel who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.”*** **Judges 10:7-8**

18 years of being crushed and oppressed, and Israel finally begins to turn back to God and cry out to be saved, but they miserable not broken, and God knew it

But finally they broke in **Judges 10:15**, crying out to be saved, and throwing their idols away, their confidences in other religions and other supposed gods

Friends, if you are under the discipline of the Lord, and it seems to be unrelenting, you may have cried out in misery, but not yet in brokenness, and God will maintain the discipline

Repentance is brokenness that produces godly change

Israel repented, and God raises up a deliver, it is our unsung hero, Jephthah

PP a-But Jephthah foreshadows The Deliverer, His name is Jesus Christ

Foreshadowing in a novel is literary device to tease the reader about a plot turn that will come
 It is a sign of what is to come in the future and Jephthah’s life clearly points to Christ’s

His birth was overshadowed by his unmarried mom's pregnancy just as Jesus would be
 His father took him into his family just as Joseph would
 His brothers rejected Him for a time as well as our Lord's
 The Spirit of God came upon Jephthah and it would on Christ at His baptism
 His countrymen rejected him as they would Jesus
 He spent his days with those who were considered worthless, as Jesus would with the rejected

But notice what Jephthah said to the elders: ***"If you bring me home again to fight against the Ammonites, and the LORD gives them over to me, I will be your head."*** 11:9

Gilead is in trouble, they come to Jephthah, but they must make him their head, their captain
 The same is true for us, who were once held in the power of a captor too strong for us...sin
 We turn to Christ for deliverance, and He gladly says yes, but He must be the Captain of our
 salvation, our head, our Lord

Thankfully His grace teaches us to learn to submit to His authority in our lives and obey

PP b-But we can see the gospel in their need to be delivered from their enemy...Ammonites

The Ammonites came from the youngest daughter of Lot, the nephew of Abraham
 She got her father drunk, and had him get her pregnant thinking it was the only way she would
 have children, and their illegitimate child became the father to Amon
 Cousins to the Israelites who came from Abraham, they had a language similar to Hebrew
 language, but worshiped the despicable god Molech, sacrificing their children to it
 Their region was right next to Israel's, and God banned them from worshiping in His presence

PP *The Ammonites-as we saw in Nehemiah-are a type of the flesh in each of us*

PP The 'flesh' is the desires, the affections in us that run contrary to God's heart

Pastor Mark Bubek explained it this way: *"The flesh is a compulsive inner force inherited from*

PP *man's fall, which expresses itself in general and specific rebellion against God and His righteousness. The flesh can never be reformed or improved. The only hope for escape from the law of the flesh is its total execution and replacement by a new life in Christ."*

Have you ever found yourself hyper-distractable when you begin to study God's Word?

Have you had some extra money and felt that growing urge, need to just buy something?

Have you had a rotten day, a stressful moment, and suddenly the urge and desire to have a drink
 begins to powerfully increase in you?

Or a difficulty that triggers a desire to look at pornography and afterwards you are so angry at
 yourself?

Our flesh has a virtually endless array of escape options called idols of the hearts!

Have you felt that incredible seduction of a piece of gossip, of the elixir of power you get when
 we climb up on that judges seat and self-righteously slander that person?

Susanna Wesley, mother to the great preachers and hymn writers John and Charles Wesley,

PP described the flesh this way: *"Whatever weakens your reasoning, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes away your relish for spiritual things, in short – if anything increases the authority and the power of the flesh over the Spirit, that to you becomes sin however good it is in itself."*

The *Ammonites of our flesh* have come against God's people and we each need a deliverer!

Our deliverer is Jesus Christ, and the moment we put our faith in Him, the old nature caught up
 in the bondage to sin is dead, nailed to that cross with Him!

PP “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:24

The Christian has a new nature, a heart alive to God, with power to battle these fleshly desires

PP c-And to give us victory, the Spirit of God lives inside us to give us the want to so we can do what we ought, and we are about to see this happen with our unsung hero as well

“Then the Spirit of the LORD was upon Jephthah” Judges 11:29

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon the people of God, while today the Holy Spirit comes into His people and lives as a guarantee of the inheritance of glory

The Spirit of God came upon Gideon in Judges 6, rushed upon Samson repeatedly!

Victory Christian is ours because the cross has killed our sin nature, and the Spirit battles with us against our fleshly desires

Jephthah, empowered by the Spirit, defeated the Ammonites in 20 cities (**11:33**)

The Ammonites were not exterminated by Jephthah, but subdued, and friends it is the same with our flesh, as we will battle these wrong desires and affections until glory, to teach us to rely on His strength, to teach us to be warriors!

PP “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

Galatians 5:16-17

But God’s Spirit will not prevent us from rash and wrong decisions, and it is here we see the impulsive heart of a warrior and the problems they often experience

PP 3-The Mistake

Are you a warrior, who, when you see a problem, you attack it, fearlessly?

Warriors are often strong, self-confident and capable men and women who struggle with faith

Watch this play out with Jephthah, who **“made a vow to the LORD and said, “If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, 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 up for a burnt offering.” 11:30-31**

It’s the classic, *God, if you get me out of this mess, I will go to Africa and be a missionary*
God will never accept that, yet he will hold Jephthah to it

Jephthah, if you are to save Israel, it will be by grace through faith, it always is!

It will not be your strategies, effort, or fighting skills

You cannot bargain for it, for that is trying to work for your salvation

We can’t offer a carrot before God to goad Him into doing what we want, for that is pagan religion: *you must make a big offering if you want a big miracle*

PP God will save the way He always has: **“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6**

And when you try to manipulate God, you will learn this the hard and painful way

God does give Jephthah victory but he is about to face the problem his mistake has made

“Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah. And behold, his daughter came out to meet him with tambourines and with dances. She was his only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter. And as soon as he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, “Alas, my daughter! You

have brought me very low, and you have become the cause of great trouble to me. For I have opened my mouth to the LORD, and I cannot take back my vow.” 11:34-35

Experts differ on whether or not Jephthah offered his daughter as a burnt sacrifice
 Several reasons for this, such as sacrifices to the LORD were exclusively of the male gender
 In verse 31 of his vow, the word ‘*and*’ can be ‘*or*’: “*whatever comes out from the doors...shall be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering*”

Whatever it is I will offer as a burnt offering, or I will dedicate it to you Lord

Another argument in favor is the fact that the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 includes Jephthah, which would seem unlikely if he sacrificed his daughter

Another is that sacrifices had to be ministered by a Priest of God and it is unlikely any priest would have allowed that

Any priest would have reminded Jephthah that Leviticus 27 taught how to be redeemed from a rash and foolish vow and that God did not approve of human sacrifices

Could this be a warning of what can happen when a Christian does not know God’s Word?

His daughter meets him, and he is forced to give her to the tabernacle to serve the rest of her life, unmarried, to die a virgin, and incredibly painful experience for an Israelite woman
 And for Jephthah, it effectively ended his family line, for she was his only child

PP Lessons for Unsung Heroes from the life of Jephthah?

PP 1-Your past does not determine your future! *We can have greatness from poor beginnings*

PP 2-The Holy Spirit can empower Christians to victory over the flesh! *He gives the want to so we can do the ought to*

PP 3-Be a warrior and fight! *But rely on God all the way to the end*

Amen!

Pray