

Date: September 15, 2013

Title: Speaking about Jephthah and His Only Daughter

Main Text: Hebrews 11:32-33

Sermon by: Pastor Caleb

Greetings in peace. I hope this message finds you well. The scripture we will read together is Hebrews chapter 11, verses 32 to 33.

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets,

33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised: who shut the mouths of lions,

Today's topic is 'Speaking about Jephthah and His Only Daughter.'

Jephthah and his only daughter, whom I will speak about today, will give us an idea of what God's feelings were like when His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, bore the cross.

In Judges 11:30-31, Jephthah makes a vow, saying, "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering." God accepted Jephthah's vow and orchestrated events accordingly. Therefore, in the latter part of verse 33, it can be observed that the Ammonites were thoroughly defeated and surrendered before the Israelites.

Verse 34 records Jephthah's triumphant return as a conquering general. But when he arrives home, an unexpected event takes place. Ah, his only daughter comes out to greet him. She was Jephthah's only daughter, and he had no sons.

Now, let's examine the events that unfolded between Jephthah and his only

daughter. Despite the remarkable nature of their actions, we will explore the background that compelled them to act in this way.

In Judges Chapter 11, Judges Chapter 11 verse 1 states, "Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute." The first part of verse 2 states, "Gilead's wife also bore sons." In other words, Jephthah's father, Gilead, was renowned to the extent that the land was named after him, Gilead.

However, Jephthah was born to a prostitute, and due to this, as mentioned in the second part of verse 2, the sons born to Gilead's legal wife expelled Jephthah, saying, "You are not going to get any inheritance in our family because you are the son of another woman." Therefore, it is recorded in verse 3, "So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where a gang of scoundrels gathered around him and followed him."

However, in verse 4, it is mentioned, "Some time later, when the Ammonites were fighting against Israel." At that time, the Ammonites were the Israel's most formidable enemy. When Israel was facing the threat of the Ammonites, the elders of Gilead went to find Jephthah, who was dwelling in the land of Tob and said to him, "Come, be our commander, so we can fight the Ammonites." In response, Jephthah says in verse 7, "Didn't you hate me and drive me from my father's house? Why do you come to me now, when you're in trouble?"

Despite being born to a woman who was not Gilead's legal wife, Jephthah seems to have been a remarkable individual. Perhaps his extraordinary nature led his brothers to expel him. Therefore, when the elders of Gilead came to seek his help, Jephthah responded, "Why do you come to me now, when you're in trouble?" questioning their intentions in light of their previous mistreatment. In verse 9, Jephthah says to the elders, "Jephthah answered, 'Suppose you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the Lord gives them to me-will I really be your head?'"

To this, the elders respond in verse 10, "The Lord is our witness; we will

certainly do as you say.”

These people, having sworn in the name of the Lord, made a commitment that they would not break. They would indeed fulfill their promise. In verse 11, it is recorded, "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." This verse shows how desperate, fearful, and worried the people of Gilead were. They already knew who Jephthah was. Therefore, as soon as Jephthah arrived, the people of Gilead accepted him as their leader and head, following the intentions of their elders.

In this way, in Judges 11:29, we can see that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah. Therefore, Jephthah went to confront the Ammonites, who were a formidable force. Facing such a formidable enemy, Jephthah, considering his role as a military leader, may have been apprehensive. Consequently, he made a vow to God. In verse 30, it says, "And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: 'If you give the Ammonites into my hands.'" In verse 31, he adds, "whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

The situation in the war must have been dire for Jephthah to make such a vow or promise. His vow also indicates how important winning this war was to him. In verse 33, Jephthah engages in battle with the Ammonites and achieves a significant victory. The latter part of verse 33 indicates that God was with Jephthah, leading to a thorough surrender of the Ammonites before the Israelites.

Having achieved victory, Jephthah returns confidently to Gilead. His position as the leader of the Gileadites is perfectly secured. Jephthah is now fully acknowledged by the Israelites as their commander, and his return home is triumphant. Jephthah has become the head and commander of the people. He now holds a position of great authority, and no one takes him lightly anymore.

So, with a confident and pleasant feeling, Jephthah arrives at his own home, but there is an unexpected turn of events. The first person to greet him, the one he has vowed to sacrifice, is his only daughter. In verse 35, Jephthah expresses his sorrow, "When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, 'Oh no, my daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated. I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break.'" It's a truly challenging situation.

However, Jephthah's daughter, the daughter of the general Jephthah, was also remarkable. She responds in verse 36, saying, "My father, you have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites."

In essence, Jephthah's daughter is saying, "You made a vow to God, and God has already fulfilled His promise. Therefore, whether it is favorable or unfavorable, fulfill your vow as you promised, in accordance with the words that came out of your mouth before the Lord."

Due to Jephthah's vow, the people of Israel, God's chosen, were saved from the Ammonites. Jephthah became the perfect head and commander of the people of Israel. Therefore, since Jephthah had already received help from God, his vow was now irrevocable. However, the even more crucial reason Jephthah had to keep his vow was that God could not be deceived by him. God believed in Jephthah's promise, mobilized His army, and granted victory over the Ammonites. God also elevated Jephthah to a high position. Since God trusted Jephthah's vow and acted accordingly, if Jephthah failed to fulfill his vow, it would have been a great betrayal against God.

Furthermore, it would mean Jephthah would become a deceitful sinner before God. While Jephthah becoming a deceitful sinner might be of secondary importance, he still couldn't depict God as a deity who had been deceived. Therefore, Jephthah, along with his daughter, found themselves compelled to fulfill the vow as Jephthah had promised, even though it was very challenging for them.

As is often the case, if God had not answered Jephthah's prayer where he had made that vow, it might have been more favorable for him. If God had not been with Jephthah and the Ammonites had not surrendered, Jephthah might have been better off. If God had not responded to Jephthah's vow in prayer, Jephthah would not have deceived God by failing to keep his vow, and God would not have been deceived. How much better would it have been for Jephthah if that was the case? However, even God, considering the salvation of Israel, had no choice but to fulfill Jephthah's request, as it was tied to the deliverance of Israel. Ideally, for Jephthah, since he had faith, it might have been better if God hadn't granted his vow. Nevertheless, God also couldn't deny Jephthah's vow because He wanted to save the people of Israel.

Jephthah received recognition for subduing Moab. Additionally, if Jephthah had not kept his vow, he would have committed a sin against God, deceiving Him in the process. Because of the importance of this matter, Jephthah could not retract what he had vowed to God. However, what the Bible highlights as even more significant is the vow itself that came from Jephthah's mouth, which was crucial not only to Jephthah but also to his daughter. Due to the promise uttered by Jephthah, he expressed that he could not turn back from his spoken words. His daughter echoed this sentiment, saying, 'Father, do to me as you have promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies.' For both Jephthah and his daughter, the vow that came from Jephthah's mouth was of utmost importance.

The significance that Jephthah and his daughter placed on the vow reflects God's commitment to fulfill His promises through His Son for the salvation of His people. Throughout the Bible, God repeatedly assured the salvation of His people. The incident involving Jephthah and his daughter serves as a shadow, symbolizing God's unwavering commitment to keeping the promises spoken by Him. It aims to instill in us the belief in God's faithful fulfillment of His promises.

In verse 39, it is recorded, "After the two months, she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin." Jephthah's daughter died according to the vow made by her father. Jephthah, regarding

the death of his daughter, tore his clothes and lamented, as mentioned in verse 35, "When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, 'Oh no, my daughter! You have brought me down and I am devastated.'"

Similarly, when God's only begotten Son, Jesus, endured suffering and died on the cross, crying out, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' the curtain of the temple was torn in two. This temple curtain represents God's garment because the temple belongs to God. It was torn from top to bottom, and the sun and moon lost their light. Why did the sun and moon lose their light? Could it be anything other than the emotions of God? Why did the earth shake? It was undoubtedly due to the death of God's Son. God did not want His Son to die, but the salvation of God's people was at stake. Regarding this salvation, God had spoken repeatedly. God could not turn back from what He had already spoken, and He shook the heavens and the earth as He witnessed the death of His Son. It was God's shaking, tearing of His garment, and the breaking of His heart.

Nevertheless, God did not turn back from the promise He had made in the Scriptures. Why? Because we believe in God's Word and await it. It is because we desire eternal life.

Jephthah's daughter went to the mountains and returned after two months. As Jephthah's father, wouldn't he have preferred his daughter not to come down from the mountain? He probably had those thoughts. It is also possible that he thought to himself, "I wish God had ignored and not responded to my vow and promise."? Surely, he must have had such thoughts. However, despite all considerations, Jephthah could not turn back from the vow he had made. His daughter also returned from the mountain to fulfill her father's promise.

The only begotten Son of God came to Jerusalem in the third year of His public ministry to fulfill His mission to die. Wouldn't there have been a desire in the heart of God the Father, saying, "I wish my Son hadn't come to Jerusalem" in the third year, knowing that His Son would die? However, just as Jephthah's daughter returned from the mountain and died for her father, Jesus also came to Jerusalem to die for the glory of God the Father. When

Jesus died, in John 19:30, the latter part states, "It is finished," signifying that He had fulfilled all the words of His Father.

Jephthah's daughter and Jesus both knew about the impending death but willingly came and died for their fathers. In this way, God had to watch, with a heart-wrenching acknowledgment, and even as the earth trembled, the death of His Son for the salvation of His people. So, how could the people of Israel not establish a day to commemorate the death of Jephthah's daughter and mourn for her? It is recorded that a custom of mourning for four days was established (Judges 11:40).

So, how could we not commemorate the death of the Son of God until His coming? Don't we do this during the forty days of Lent, which is ten times the mourning period of four days? Therefore, how could God, after raising His Son to life, not seat Him at the right hand of the throne of God and give Him glory??

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we reflect on the events between Jephthah and his daughter today, we also contemplate the death of Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Just as Jephthah's daughter was offered as a burnt offering, Jesus Christ also died on the cross. Today, You have made us consider the significance of His death.

We reflect on the anguish that Jephthah experienced witnessing his daughter's death and imagine the pain You, Father God, felt as You watched Your Son die. May the Holy Spirit enlighten us to comprehend and receive this truth with an Amen.

We are grateful for our salvation. Our redemption was possible because of Your sacrifice and suffering. Oh, thank You. We give glory to our Lord who died for us. We will glorify You until the Lord comes. We praise You for Your love. Thank You.

Help us not to be proud, not to boast, and not to take lightly what we have

received. May we be thankful for the grace received and praise You eternally. Receive the glory. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen, amen.