

BIBLE CHARACTERS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

BEZALEL (bets-al-ALE)

A Life of Spirit-Filling

Preview

In this series, we will look at somewhat obscure Bible passages that I doubt you will have ever heard a Sunday school lesson (or sermon, for that manner) about before. You probably have never been assigned these verses as memory verses, heard them expounded upon in any type of systematic theology, and to be honest, they have little impact on any of the major Bible doctrines.

Each of us has probably had the thought that, should the Lord tarry in His return, our names will be forgotten in a few generations. Minor players on the stage are quickly forgotten. These Bible characters are often overlooked (unless you have read the Bible all the way through—and even then, you may have moved quickly through their stories). Now, however, we will slow down and look a little closer at some Bible Characters You've (probably) Never Heard Of.

Past

In **Exodus 20** (approximately 1500 BC), God gives Moses the 10 Commandments. By the time we get to **Exodus 24**, God calls up Moses to be with Him on the mountain again and God tells Moses about the tabernacle. Moses is on the mountain with God for 40 days, so there is ample time for the chapters of instructions that follow.

In **Exodus 25**, God tells Moses about the offerings from the people that will be used as the raw materials for the tabernacle. God gives Moses the details required to build the Ark of the Covenant, the table for the showbread, and the golden lampstand.

SCHEDULE

September 5: Bezalel (Exodus 31-39), A Life of Spirit-Filling

September 12: Micaiah (1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18), A Life of Subjection

September 19: Joseph Barsabas Justus (Acts 1), A Life of Second Place

September 26: Jephthah (Judges 11), A Life of Swearing

In **Exodus 26**, God gives Moses the dimensions for the tabernacle itself and goes into detail to describe the curtains outside it and the veil that separates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the tabernacle.

In **Exodus 27**, God instructs Moses on the construction of the altar where burnt offerings will take place, the court of the tabernacle, and how to take care of the lampstand.

In **Exodus 28**, God details the clothes the priests will wear when serving in the tabernacle, including the ephod, the breastplate, and the intricacies of the stones and the weavings found on them.

In **Exodus 29**, God describes the process for setting aside Aaron and his sons for the priesthood and the daily offerings that they will oversee.

In **Exodus 30**, God lays out the altar of incense and its usage, yearly offerings, the bronze laver, and the oil and incense to be used in the offerings.

Finally, in **Exodus 31**, God switches gears from the things and people that will be used in operating the tabernacle to those that will be used to construct it. Keep in mind that this building and its contents never existed before and had to be built so that they were portable.

The name of the man that God picks for the job of overseeing the architectural design of the tabernacle as well as all of the woodwork, jewel work, metalwork, tapestry, embroidery, fragrances, and oil used in the tabernacle is Bezalel. His name means, "In the **shadow** of God."

Passages ("What does the text mean?")

Exodus 31:1-11: The **filling** of God: **1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "See, I have called** [called, proclaimed, invited, commissioned, appointed, endowed] **by name Bezalel** [in the shadow of God] **the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 3 And I have filled** [the

piel stem of this Hebrew word is used to imply an **intentional** filling, completing, and satisfying] **him with the Spirit of God** [this is the **first** time in the Bible that a person is spirit-filled—side note: when you see the word, 'spiritual,' in the New Testament, it simply means spirit-filled], **in wisdom** [specific word for administratively shrewd skill], **in understanding** [specific word for

AND I HAVE FILLED HIM WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD, IN WISDOM, IN UNDERSTANDING, IN KNOWLEDGE, AND IN ALL MANNER OF WORKMANSHIP. EXODUS 31:3

understanding and intelligence], **in knowledge** [general word covering knowledge, perception, skill, discernment, understanding, wisdom], **and in all manner of workmanship** [specific word communicating the workmanship, service, business (the job)], **4 to design** [plan, design, invent] **artistic works** [thoughts, plans, purposes], **to work in gold, in silver, in bronze** [these are three vastly differing metals that behave differently—this would have required great skill to master all three], **5 in cutting** [carving] **jewels** [gems or stones] **for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. 6 "And I, indeed I, have appointed with him**

Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan [notice the different tribe—God will use others that are not like us to do His work]; **and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you: 7 the tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle—8 the table and its utensils, the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, 9 the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base—10 the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy place. According to all that I have commanded you they shall do.”**



Exodus 35:30-39:41: Bezalel and his associates **do** the work. Take a moment to read this.

Exodus 39:42-43: The **inspection** by Moses: **42 According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. 43 Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them** [a wonderful way to be remembered—no more, no less, just what God wanted].

Rabbinical Tradition

Wikipedia: The rabbinical tradition relates that when God determined to appoint Bezalel architect of the desert Tabernacle, He asked Moses whether the choice were agreeable to him, and received the reply: “Lord, if he is acceptable to Thee, surely he must be so to me!”

The candlestick of the sanctuary was of so complicated a nature that Moses could not comprehend it . . . but when [God] described it to Bezalel, [he] made it at once; whereupon Moses expressed his admiration for the quick wisdom of Bezalel, saying again that he must have been "in the shadow of God" (Hebrew, "bezel El").

As late as **2 Chronicles 1**, Bezalel is still cited as the craftsman behind the bronze altar. Much later, in **Ezra 10**, Bezalel's name is used again showing he had an honorable name that a thousand years later. Even today, there is a Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem.

Points (“So what is the point?”)

1. God's **work** will be accomplished.
2. God **fills** everyday people to do His work.
3. God knows **exactly** what He wants.
4. God's work is done with **others**.
5. God's workers are **blessed**.

Application (“Now what do I do with that?”)

1. **Accept** God's assignments
2. Do God's work with **excellence**

POINT TO PONDER: WHAT HAS GOD'S SPIRIT FILLED ME TO DO?

Passage (Terry Bolden)

Benhadad, the wicked king of Syria, along with 32 other kings, aligned and attacked Israel. They besieged Samaria, the capital, which the wicked King Ahab ruled with Jezebel. God, in His great mercy and grace, opted to show Himself again to Ahab offering His intervention to save Ahab. God told Ahab to go out to fight and He (Jehovah) would give Ahab the victory. Ahab obeyed and won the victory. God further sent a message to Ahab to seek out Benhadad and his army, because of Benhadad's wickedness and his refusal to give Jehovah any credit. Ahab was told to kill Benhadad, but upon Israel's victory, Ahab spared the King of Syria in exchange for the lands taken by former Syrian kings. Ahab, against the will of God, spared Benhadad and made a covenant for the returned lands. An unnamed prophet came to Ahab and said because Ahab disobeyed God, Ahab's life was forfeit in exchange for Benhadad's and the people of Israel's lives were also forfeited in the place of the Syrians. According to Jewish tradition, this unnamed prophet was Micaiah.

Although wars had been frequent and numerous between Syria and Israel, three years had passed without war. This brings us to [1 Kings 22:1](#). Judah and Israel had made peace via a union of King Jehoshaphat's son and Ahab's daughter. During a visit by the king of Judah, Ahab (probably bored) asks King Jehoshaphat to join with him in a campaign against Syria. It seems that not all of the cities/regions were returned to Ahab. For whatever reason, King Jehoshaphat agrees, but wants a word from God about the matter. Ahab seeks council from his own 400 prophets. We do not know who these were. Some time has passed since Elijah slew Ahab's prophets of Baal. These could have been replenished, or they could be prophets from the "state religion" set up when Jeroboam first split the country from Judah, or they could be the professional "prophets of Jehovah" that had been corrupted and/or swayed over the years through association with Ahab. Most commentators disagree on this, but they all prophesied favorably for Ahab claiming victory. Their prophecy, as was the custom, was vague and did not specifically list who would be victorious, but Ahab heard what he wanted. Jehoshaphat, knowing the word of God, asks, "Don't you have anyone who speaks for Jehovah?" This is a comical and insulting statement in that all Ahab's prophets had spoken (including Zedekiah, whose name means, "right hand of Jehovah"). Ahab says there is one, but, "He doesn't like me! He never has nice things to say about me." Ahab sends for Micaiah from prison (compare [1 Kings 22:26](#)), during which time they wait and Ahab's prophets continue to prophesy more fervently. Zedekiah even goes far as to be specific about Ahab's victory (a no-no among the prophets in case they are wrong).

Micaiah ("who is like Yahweh") comes (probably bound) before the kings and has been told what all the others have said and what he should say. When asked about their excursion, Micaiah repeats the story of the false prophets. Whether sarcasm, tone of voice, or something else entirely, even Ahab (who would not know the truth if it slapped him in the face) knows Micaiah is not telling what he believes to be true and orders Micaiah to tell the truth. Micaiah responds, "You are going to lose, you are going to lose big, and Ahab is going to die." Ahab responds with a very infantile temper-tantrum to King Jehoshaphat, "See! I told you Micaiah doesn't like me!" Micaiah then shares his vision of God planning to encourage Ahab to go by sending a lying spirit into all of Ahab's prophets. This was a common middle-eastern response that means, "Your prophets are liars and the devil, the father of lies, dwells in them!"

The false prophet Z reacts violently by hitting Micaiah and hurling insults. Ahab sentences Micaiah to life in prison on bread and water—a death sentence. Micaiah could have saved his own skin and lived in luxury with a change in his stand. Micaiah's name really becomes known here as you can picture him standing before his accusers in chains, humbly accepting the verbal and physical abuse. What a picture of our Savior! Josephus, in his writings during and past the time of Christ said this was a common expression inquiring if, “the Spirit of God left me and entered into you instead,” by indicating the place (ear) of entry into Micaiah. Micaiah does nothing for his defense, but quotes the obvious, “If I am wrong (about the army's loss and Ahab's death), then I am not a prophet of God.” What restraint, self-control and humility! Micaiah also prophesies that Z will, “run and hide,” like the coward that he is. This would probably be because he alone gave a specific prophecy of Ahab's victory and Jezebel probably would not be too pleased with the outcome.

The outcome of the story is that Micaiah's prophecy comes true. Israel's army loses big. Ahab dies, in spite of his precautions, by a “random” arrow, and Micaiah is never mentioned or heard of again.

Points (Keith Chrisman)

How does Micaiah live out a life of subjection?

Definition of subjection: being in a position or in circumstances that place one under the power or authority of another or others

What are some examples of a life of subjection in today's times?

Are any of you ex-military? You become government property once you sign the paperwork. Once the new recruits walk off that bus, they soon realize that they now fall under the authority of their drill sergeants. When I think about my experience in basic training, some people did not do well with living in subjection. I remember people trying to run away at night and some others were trying to be kicked out.

The main characters in the 1 Kings 22

1. The Posse (400 prophets of Ahab believed to be the priests left alive by Elijah when the 450 prophets of Baal were killed, **1 Kings 18:19-20**). These prophets were not killed by Elijah then which tells me that they might still had a smidgen of good in them. They were under Ahab and Jezebel's (one of the most evil people in **1 Kings**) influence too much that now were no longer living under the subjection of God.
2. King Ahab (one of the vilest kings of Israel, **1 Kings 16:30-33**). Why was this city Ramoth Gilead so important to him when he had the chance to be victorious over Benhadad (**1 Kings 20:34**)? Instead of killing him and retaking the city, he made a peace treaty that angered the Lord. Ahab was constantly against the will of God and never really wanted to hear the truth. He did not receive the messages from God well from Micaiah (**1 Kings 22:8, 18**). Even after Ahab demanded the truth (**1 Kings 22:16**) from Micaiah and got it what did he do? He sent Micaiah to prison.
3. King Jehoshaphat (a good king, **1 Kings 22:43**). Why is it that he did not remove the high places? Was he just trying to make sure that a place of worship was available even if it was pagan? He let his daughter marry Ahab's son. What was the deal with that? Why would he let that happen? His daughter

to marry into one of the most wicked families in the Bible. One of the mistakes he made in **1 Kings 22** is that he already committed to Ahab to join him in battle and then he wanted to seek the counsel of the Lord. Maybe that is why he still had to join Ahab in battle even after he heard God's message from Micaiah.

4. Micaiah (the prophet of the Lord). Micaiah was called a prophet of God even by the King who hated him (**1 Kings 22:8**). In **1 Kings 22:8**, Ahab hates Micaiah because Micaiah does not prophesy good things about him. Micaiah was not concerned about what Ahab thought because his orders came from a higher king. That really bothered Ahab. In **1 Kings 22:13-14**, the officer went to get Micaiah and spoke to him. He asked Micaiah to speak encouraging words to the king the same as the 400 prophets of Ahab spoke. Micaiah replies, "as surely as the Lord lives, I can only tell him what the Lord tells me." That speaks volumes of the kind of man that Micaiah was. I think if I were in his shoes (or sandals), I would have taken this advantage to get out of the doghouse and into Ahab's penthouse. In **1 Kings 22:17-23**, we find Micaiah to be the kind man that lives under the subjection of the Lord. Micaiah did not waver or bend from the message that came from God. Micaiah was not concerned with the consequences that were going to come from this. He did not care if it was politically correct or if it was going to offend the king or any of his prophets. He did not care if his answer was not going to be liked by both sides. The only side that Micaiah was concerned about it was the Lord's side. After the message was delivered by Micaiah, some folks were offended by it and Micaiah is slapped around and then sent back to prison (**1 Kings 22:26**).

What is the point of the study? I wonder what Micaiah was thinking as he was traveling to go deliver God's message? Was he sweating it out because he was going to have to face Ahab again and deliver a message that was not going to please him? Was he thinking that God was going to bless him? Did Micaiah realize that he was probably going to back to prison after he delivers the message? Whatever the outcome was going to be Micaiah knew that he only had one option and that was to trust in the Lord no matter what.

Application (David Bandy)

Would you have been able to do the same as Micaiah? Think about your present day life. We are blessed to live in a country with freedom of religion, but given the circumstances that Micaiah was in, would we have answered the same as Micaiah? Could we have answered the same as he did knowing that we would probably die in prison? I challenge you to stand for God—even when it is not convenient.

BIBLE CHARACTERS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

JOSEPH BARSABAS JUSTUS A Life of Second Place

Preview

Do you remember picking teams in school? Where were you picked? First? Last? In the middle? Was it different for different sports or was it the same place no matter what the sport?

Not being chosen can hurt. There is a story about this in [Acts 1](#).

Past (Acts 1:1-11)

Prologue
(vv. 1-3)

The Holy Spirit Promised
(vv. 4-8)

Jesus Ascends to Heaven
(vv. 9-11)

Passage ("What does Acts 1:12-26 mean?")

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. **13** And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying [count them]: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. **14** These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, **16** "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; **17** for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one

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live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' [Peter's theological basis for replacing Judas.]

21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us [about three years], 22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness [Greek is *martus*] with us of His resurrection." [Apostles had one job: Be a **witness** of Jesus Christ's resurrection. There are no apostles now: **Coffman: There was never . . . a witness becoming a successor to a witness.**]

23 And they proposed [or, nominated, stood up] **two: Joseph** ["let him add"] **called Barsabas** ["son of Sabas" (generosity)], **who was surnamed Justus** ["just"; this Latin-named addition of 'Justus' clarifies that this is not the same person as is in **Acts 4:36**], **and Matthias** ["gift of God"].

24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts [Greek is *kardiognostes*, meaning, 'knower of the hearts'] **of all, show** [an **imperative**—strong language when talking to God] **which of these two You have chosen 25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."** [They aren't asking to change God's will, but to **know** it] **26 And they cast their lots** [Casting lots was used often in the Bible to decide something that was hard to discern], **and the lot fell** [see **Proverbs 16:33**] **on Matthias. And he** [Matthias] **was numbered** [assigned a place] **with the eleven apostles.**

Matthias **was** picked. **How would you feel if you were Matthias?** Joseph Barsabas Justus **was not** picked. **How would you feel if you were Joseph Barsabas Justus?**

Ray Pritchard: The choice between Joseph and Matthias is the choice between two good men. There was no obvious reason to favor one over the other. It's easy to make a decision when one option is clearly better than the other.

Winston Salem Church of Christ: Don't ever get drunk on the culture's need to measure success by selection. . . . Selection is not always a sign of success, but readiness is. . . . It's about God.

David Guzik: We should not assume he [Matthias] **was a "dud" as an apostle; except for Peter and John, none of the original twelve are mentioned again after Acts 1.** We just don't know.

Points ("So what is the point?")

1. Be **ready** (even if you don't get come in first place)
2. Someone will always come in **second** place (think about how many in that room that were not even nominated)
3. This story is really about **God** and us giving Him first place. He's asking, "Why not Me?"

Application ("Now what do I do with that?")

1. Don't **quit**
2. **Serve** anyways

Suggested Resources

1. *Second String*, by Wes King
2. IAmSecond.com

POINT TO PONDER: AM I FIRST OR AM I SECOND?

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JEPHTHAH A Life of Swearing

Preview

Have you ever made a promise that you later regretted?

Past (Judges 11:1-28; Hebrews 11:32-34)

Jephthah is pronounced, yif-TAWK (spit), and means 'he **opens**.' He lived around 1100 BC and his story is in **Judges 11:1-12:7**. His life progressed from an outcast to a marauder to a captain to a negotiator and finally to a judge. Nave's Topical Bible gives a great overview.

Is **Judges 11-12** the only time Jephthah is mentioned in the Bible? No. He is mentioned in **Hebrews 11** (the faith chapter). Synopsis of **Hebrews 11:1-31**: By faith, somebody did something awesome. **Hebrews 11:32-34: 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets:** [Jephthah is lumped in with some big names] **33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.** Jephthah was a member of the hall of faith.

For a summary of Jephthah that brings us to our passage, we go to **Wikipedia: Jephthah is driven out by his half-brothers, and takes up his dwelling in Tob, east of Gilead. . . . The elders of Gilead ask him to be their leader in the campaign against the Ammonites, but he holds out for a more permanent and a broader position, and the elders agree that provided Jephthah succeeds in defeating Ammon he will be their permanent chieftain. On behalf of Israel as a whole, and in reliance on the might of God the Judge, Jephthah challenges the Ammonites.**

Passage ("What does Judges 11:29-40 mean?")

Judges 11:29-40: 29 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced toward the people of Ammon. 30 And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, 31 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 [either '**and**' or '**or**' can be used—all modern translations use 'and' or split the verse up into two sentences, but the best grammarians say that this should be translated as 'or'] **I will offer it up as a burnt offering."**

E.W. Bullinger: The connective particle ו (vau, our English v) is often used as a *disjunctive*, and means “or”, when there is a second proposition. Read the full article here: bit.ly/d8ah9W. Examples of this in the Old Testament include: **Exodus 20:4; 20:17; 21:17, 18; Numbers 22:26; 2 Samuel 3:29; 1 Kings 18:27;** and **Psalm 26:9**.

E.W. Bullinger: It thus seems clear that Jephthah’s vow consisted of two parts; one alternative to the other. He would either dedicate it to Jehovah (according to **Leviticus 27**), or, if unsuitable for this, he would offer it as a burnt offering. The only two English translations that come close to translating **Judges 11:31** as ‘or’ are Young’s Literal Translation and Green’s Literal Translation.

Judges 11:32-33 describe Jephthah’s victory. **34 When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels [ancient tambourines] and dancing; and she was his only child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. 35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word [literally, “I have opened my mouth”] to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it.”**

Jephthah realized that he could not go back on his word to God (as **Deuteronomy 23:21-23** clearly states) and that he just committed to giving his daughter to the Lord’s service for the rest of her life. There are Biblical examples of this: **David Guzik: We know that there were women who were set apart for the tabernacle service; they were called the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting (Exodus 38:8; 1 Samuel 2:22).** It is likely that Jephthah’s daughter became one of these women who served at the tabernacle.

36 So she said to him, “My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon.” [Talk about an obedient daughter] **37 Then she said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail [bitterly weep] my virginity [she did not weep for her death, but for her virginity], my friends [maidens] and I.”**

38 So he said, “Go.” And he sent her away for two months; and she went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. 39 And it was so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man. [not, “She died”] And it became a custom in Israel 40 that the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament [to rehearse/talk about] the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

E.W. Bullinger: This being done annually, the friends of Jephthah’s daughter went to rehearse with her, this continued virginity of her life, and not to mourn over the past fact of her death.

I believe what Jephthah actually did was similar to what Hannah did in **1 Samuel 11:1** (dedicated a child to the Lord for the Lord’s use the child’s entire life). He just did not do it on purpose and was sad about it because it meant he would have no offspring—a significant blow in a culture that elevated posterity.

A few questions about this text:

1. Was Jephthah's vow logical? **No**. **Fausset's Bible Dictionary: Passion is unreasoning**. What would Jephthah have done if an unclean animal or his neighbor's son had walked through the door? None of those were acceptable things to dedicate to God.
2. Would God have approved of a vow of human sacrifice? **No**. See **Leviticus 18:21** and **Leviticus 20:2-5** for verses that denounce human sacrifice. God certainly would not have approved of a female burnt offering (**Leviticus 22:18-19** says they have to be male). Additionally, burnt offerings were for condemning evil, not for promising something to God.
3. Was Jephthah just ignorant of the Law? **Probably** not, since he recounted so much of Israel's history earlier in **Judges 11:14-22** (which implies he was probably aware of the law).
4. Would God have approved of a vow of human dedication? **No**. Vows are never made to make deals with God. Vows are made to show God we love him no matter what He does in response. I am almost positive that we have all 'promised' God something in a moment of weakness—I used to get sick a lot as a child and remember vividly saying, "God, if you will get me through this, I will never do anything wrong again!" Can I get a witness?

Points ("So what is the point?"—these are true no matter which view you hold to)

1. Our **speech** can get us in trouble
2. Promises to God to get Him on our side should be **avoided**
3. Obedient children are **inspiring** (no matter the era)

Application ("Now what do I do with that?")

1. My emotions should not rule my **tongue**
2. My promises to God should be based on what I can do for **Him**, not what He can do for **me**

DIFFICULT PASSAGES

The bigger question in Jephthah's story is not whether or not he sacrificed his daughter (the points of the story are true either way). The bigger question is, "What do you do when you come to a difficult to understand passage of Scripture?" Most avoid, ask, or analyze.

I have done all three. I challenge you never to avoid a passage. I challenge you only to ask someone else after you have analyzed a passage. However, some of you may be wondering, "How do I analyze it? Let me walk you through my process. I did not start out doing this (and, for some lessons I do not do all of the steps because of the focus)—this process is the result of years of practice, error, refinement, practice, error, refinement, studying about studying, practice, error, refinement, etc.

1. **Pray** for understanding

God promises in **James 1:5** that if we ask for wisdom, God will deliver. I start praying for understanding several months before the lesson. I have found that bathing study time in prayer is incredibly effective—things leap out that I am confident would not have otherwise.

2. **Read** the English text and write out **questions** that I have about the text

I like to read the text somewhere between 10 and 15 times. If you are serious about Bible study, you will get a literal translation of the Bible—it is almost impossible to do serious study with a paraphrase. Reading the text multiple times helps me to clarify the difficulties that I have. Many times, if the passage is more than a few verses long, I can come up with several dozen questions that I have about the text (this, like everything else, is a habit that grows with usage).

3. **Meditate** on the obvious meanings and write down observations

This is the first level of understanding. Sometimes, the 'deep' truths of Scripture are sitting on the surface and they should not be ignored. Do not miss the forest for the trees.

4. **Look up** the text in the **original** language

This is the next level of understanding. Notice I did not say, 'read the text in the original language.' I cannot speak Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic, but there are plethoras of resources (online lexicons allow you to click on a word in the original and see the meaning) that tell you what each word means. I primarily use online resources for my studying. I use studylight.org (for lexicons and commentaries) as my primary reference tool, but also use biblegateway.com (to copy/paste large portions of text) and bible.cc (to compare multiple versions quickly). For a word study (not an English word, but a Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic word), I like blb.org.

5. **Meditate** on the differences between the English text and the original language text

The best analogy I have ever heard about the difference between the English and the original is that of TV. The original is in color and is rich with meaning and nuance, and the English is in black and white and rarely conveys the full depth of the original. Now, some black and white photos are beautiful, but a richer experience comes with looking at a full color photo.

6. **Read study** materials to get the cultural, political, and societal context

Nothing happens in a vacuum and no one person can be an expert on everything, so there is a good place/time for study materials (Biblical encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc.). I like to use older materials because they have stood the test of time and I read from a variety of theological sources (no one has a corner market on truth—read: heaven will not be filled with only conservative Southern Baptists).

7. **Meditate** on everything I have learned so far and write down any observations

I hope you have noticed the focus on meditation and writing at this point. Since I use a computer for my study, I use a different color font for my typing out my observations versus those observations I have gained from another source (this helps me give credit appropriately).

8. **Pray** for clarity

At this point, several hours have been spent and much information has been covered. This can be overwhelming, so a prayer for clarity such as, "Lord, help me to focus," or, "Lord, illuminate the truth in your word," can be very helpful. God wants us to get it right, right?

9. Read **commentaries** and **sermons** that others have done about the topic

This can be the most time-consuming step, and I liken it to panning for gold. Sometimes you find a nugget of understanding that the Holy Spirit uses to illuminate a truth in His word (i.e., a perspective, an interesting historical fact, a pithy phrase that sparks a thought).

10. **Organize** everything and answer the three questions

(1) What does the text mean? (2) What is the point? (3) What do I do with that?

Note: I am not sure the following steps are needed unless you are not going to teach the material, but I want to pull back the curtain and show you what I do to prepare.

11. Formulate questions for discussion

Most of the time, I never use these in class, but they are good for me to come up with and answer myself, as they typically are the same questions that you all will ask in class. Sometimes you will see me answer a question quickly and it is usually because I have already thought about that question and come up with a (hopefully) Biblical and reasonably logical response.

12. Proofread my notes and create a draft version of my teacher notes

I usually delete 75-80% of everything that I have written or studied at this point. If I did not delete this much, the Sunday school lessons would be two hours long. Eliminating everything that is not necessary to convey the main point of the lesson is still the hardest thing for me to do, but it is critical.

13. Wait 24 hours and try not to think about the lesson (set it and forget it)

Think about the difference between something cooked in the microwave versus something cooked in the crock-pot. By far, my best lessons are crock-pot lessons and not microwave lessons. This takes time and there is simply no substitute for time. When I struggle with transitions, staying glued to a single train of thought, or appear scattered, it is usually due to me skipping this step. Soaking is vital.

14. Review my notes and create a final version of the teacher notes and create a handout

The typical Sunday school lesson takes me somewhere between 10-15 hours of preparation (if you add up all of the steps). I do not tell you this to brag, I tell you this to encourage you to add at least one thing from this list to your own study of Scripture. It might be prayer, writing out questions, meditation, looking up words in the original language, using study materials, or just organizing everything so it makes sense.

I don't claim that my method is bullet-proof or inspired in any way—it is just the product of 17 years of teaching the Bible and reading, researching, and reworking a process (and if you ask me what my process is in a few years, I will probably have tweaked it some more).

POINT TO PONDER: WHAT AM I GOING TO ADD?

BIBLE CHARACTERS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

ROPE HOLDERS Lives of Scaffolding

Preview

Have you ever had to make a quick getaway?

Past (Acts 9:1-22)

Here is a quick summary of [Acts 9:1-22](#):

- Saul is converted on the Damascus Road ([Acts 9: 1-9](#))
- Ananias loves Saul ([Acts 9:10-19](#))
- Saul preaches ([Acts 9:20-22](#))

Most commentators think that there is a three-year gap between these two verses where Paul went to Arabia (see [Galatians 1:17-18](#)). **David Guzik: Luke skips the three years (perhaps) because he is writing a history of the church, not a history of Paul.**

Passage (“What does Acts 9:23-25 mean?”)

23 Now after many [literally, 'sufficient'] **days were past, the Jews plotted** [counseled together, deliberated] **to kill** [literally, 'lift up'—can mean anything from, 'take him away,' to, 'kill'] **him.**
24 But their plot [plan/plot] **became known to Saul. And they watched** [to stand **beside** and watch carefully—**Robertson's New Testament Word Pictures: watching . . . insidiously or on the sly**] **the gates day and night, to kill** [same word as before] **him.** **25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down** [send/let down from a higher place to a lower place by slackening or **loosening** something (rope)] **through the wall in a large basket** [a reed basket or hamper].
 The parallel passage for this text is [2 Corinthians 11:32-33](#): **In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.**

Biblical Architecture: Houses were built on the outsides of the walls (or in the walls themselves if it was a casemate wall—parallel walls with a space between). Lowering Saul down was ingenious and the work of copycats—it happened in [Joshua 2:15](#) (to the two spies that Joshua sent to spy out Jericho) and in [1 Samuel 19:11-12](#) (to David who was spared by his wife Michal).

Sneaking out the back door might not seem like the spiritual thing to do, but it's exactly what Jesus told them to do in **Matthew 10:23**: **When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. Barnes' Notes: Christianity requires us to sacrifice our lives only when we cannot avoid it without denying the Savior, or abandoning the principles of our holy religion.**

Somebody had to have a hold of that rope. Somebody had to have some control. This would have been a heart-pounding escape with a full garrison looking for them. Somebody had to love him enough to hold on to that rope. You know what was probably going through Saul's mind? "Don't let go of that rope. Hold on with everything you have. Hold on. Don't let go of the rope."

This took a few things from those unnamed disciples:

1. **Choice**: They chose to go there and risk their lives. They chose to get up in the middle of the night/stay up all night. Charles Alexander says that the most powerful thing is choice.
2. **Courage**: They risked their lives for Saul's sake. Saul didn't have the reputation for being the penultimate Christian yet—he doesn't become Paul for four more chapters. They had the love mentioned in **1 John 3:16**: **By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**
3. **Physical** strength: They were not too tired to do the work. They did not burn themselves out on their own work so that they had no strength left for God's work. God wants to use your body, not just your spirit. Let's face it, we're all basket cases at some point (LoriDrake.com).
4. **Cooperation**: This happened by night, so they had to have a set time to meet. They had to meet at a specific place. Someone had to get the supplies. Someone had to plan. They all had to coordinate lowering the rope—all of them working together. They brought simple, but effective things: rope, and a basket. Sometimes the simplest things are the best things.

Points ("So what is the point?")

Here's a few reasons to not let go of the rope:

1. You don't know who is in the **basket**. You might have a Saul in the basket. I see greatness in you—and I am not letting go of your ropes.
2. You might be the **only one** holding the rope. If you are the only one holding on, and you let go, it makes it harder on everyone because letting go of the rope makes a mess. When someone is at the end of their rope, you better bet at the other end and don't let go.

Application (“Now what do I do with that?”)

1. Acknowledge that my rope holders **love** me

I love faithful hands. Faithful hands that loved those on the other end. Faithful hands that were at risk of being caught themselves. Faithful hands that often go unnamed. Faithful hands that stayed true to the task until the job was done. You didn't read that Saul broke any bones because they dropped him, did you?

I love faithful hands. Faithful hands that prepare for those that come. Faithful hands that serve those that arrive. Faithful hands that clean up when all are gone. Faithful hands that hold the ropes so men and women can serve God in the roles to which they have been called. You've probably heard that behind every good man is a good woman. Behind every good man are people that are faithful at holding ropes. Faithful at holding the rope of daily prayer. Faithful at holding the rope of having a regular time with God. Faithful at holding the rope of regular giving. Faithful at holding the rope of Christian community. Faithful at holding the rope of love to a lost and dying world.

But rope holding is not without pain. Rope holding causes blisters if you don't hold the rope tight enough. Rope holding causes cramped hands if you hold the rope too long. Rope holding rarely is noticed and vastly underappreciated. Rope holding is not glamorous or the quick way to the top. But rope holding is critical. Everything God calls you to do is important—no matter how big or small.

2. Acknowledge that my rope is **worth** holding because of the people in the basket

Who has God put in your basket? Who do you need to hold the ropes for? Everybody needs help some time or another. I know that many of you have my ropes. Many of you work tirelessly to make this class successful. Many of you pray for me and I cannot begin to express how grateful I am. Many of you get here early to set up and to welcome people as they come in. Many of you come up after class and ask me what you can do to help. Keep holding those ropes. Don't let go. Keep holding those ropes. I am counting on you to do your part. Don't let go of the rope. Be an encourager. Be a helper. Don't let go of the rope. It's not about holding the pastor's rope or holding my rope. Hold the rope for Jesus. Don't let go because He loves those in the basket. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. If you've got someone you are praying for to come to know Jesus Christ, don't let go of the rope. Keep holding on. We are all here today because we are people that have been in the basket. We have experienced someone holding our ropes. Don't let go of the rope. Don't let go of the rope. Don't let go of the rope.

Somebody loved you enough to not let go of your rope. Don't let go of the rope.

POINT TO PONDER: DON'T LET GO OF THE ROPE!

BIBLE CHARACTERS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

GEHAZI A Life of Sickness

Preview

Did you ever get in trouble as a child for lying?

Past (2 Kings 5:1-19)

Here is a quick summary of **2 Kings 5:1-19** (around 900 BC):

- Naaman is the commander in chief of the Syrian army and he is a **leper** (leprosy at this time was incurable and required isolation so that it would not spread)
- Naaman is told about Elisha and takes a king's ransom (> \$1M) to **buy** his healing
- Elisha heals him after Naaman argues about Abana (uh-ban-uh) and Pharpar (par-far)
- Elisha **refuses** payment for healing Naaman
- Gehazi (Elisha's servant) has, apparently, been watching the entire event

Passage ("What does 2 Kings 5:20-27 mean?")

20 But Gehazi [valley of **vision**], **the servant of Elisha** [God is salvation] **the man of God, said, "Look, my master has spared Naaman** [pleasantness—Naaman does not begin to be pleasant until after he is healed] **this Syrian** ['this Syrian' sounds like it has some contempt in it], **while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him."** [One of Gehazi's problems was his desire to sustain **himself**—he was not depending upon God to be his Portion; see the following verses that speak to the fact that God is our portion: **Psalm 16:5; 73:25-26; 119:57a; Lamentations 3:22-24**] **21 So Gehazi pursued Naaman.** [Things probably would have worked out better if Gehazi had pursued God or Elisha when he was upset] **When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him** [this had huge social implications and was a great honor for Gehazi], **and said, "Is all well?"**

22 And he [Gehazi] **said, "All is well. My master has sent me** [Gehazi **lies** about Elisha (and in my mind, makes Elisha out to be a flip-flopper)], **saying, "Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver** [several thousand dollars then—today, that amount of silver would be worth about \$22K] **and two changes of garments."** [Gehazi **lies** about God's men in general]

23 So Naaman said, “Please, take two talents.” [Several thousand dollars then—today, it would be worth about \$45K. Naaman had brought with him ten talents of silver and 6,000 pieces of gold, so he had plenty to give (well over \$1M)] **And he** [Naaman] **urged him** [Gehazi], **and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments** [Naaman had brought with him ten changes of clothing], **and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them** [Naaman sent two servants because it took two people to carry 132 pounds of silver and two outfits] **on ahead of him. 24 When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed. 25 Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, “Where did you go, Gehazi?”**

Have you ever been asked that question?

And he [Gehazi] **said, “Your servant did not go anywhere.”** [Gehazi **lies** to Elisha. This is the lie I find to be just plain stupid—he lies to a prophet? Seriously? Elisha’s job is to tell the future.]

26 Then he [Elisha] **said to him** [Gehazi], **“Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing** [the things that Naaman gave Gehazi, but Elisha goes further], **olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants?** [Perhaps the things that Gehazi wanted to buy?] **27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever.”** [This probably would only extend one generation at most] **And he** [Gehazi] **went out from his** [Elisha] **presence leprous, as white as snow.** [This immediate punishment of white leprosy was, in itself, a miracle as leprosy takes time to fester (but also this happened to Miriam in **Numbers 12:10**).]

It is too bad Gehazi did not know **Proverbs 21:6: Getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death.**

Points (“So what is the point?”)

1. God is our **portion**
2. Don’t focus on **payment** for ministry (example: tipping voluntarily or having it added for you)
3. **Always** tell the truth

Application (“Now what do I do with that?”)

1. I must stop seeking after **money** as the answer to my life (it is not about money, it is about God,—here is a website to make you feel really good about yourself: globalrichlist.com)
2. I must be **impeccable** with my words (Miguel Ángel Ruiz and *The Four Agreements*)

POINT TO PONDER: BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORDS

BIBLE CHARACTERS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

This lesson is NC-17.

THE LEVITE'S CONCUBINE A Life of Subjugation

Preview

State your name and tell whether you grew up in the city or in the country. If it was in the country, how far was it to the nearest town?

Caedmon's Call: Petrified Heart

This old heart's been left
Out on my sleeve
And I have paid as it's been rent
Into pieces

Seems everyone I've loved has
Taken a bit of my insides
I'm scattered as the woman whose body
Was torn for the twelve tribes

When did my heart get so petrified?
When did it get so hard to feel?
When did my heart get so afraid to love?
When did it get so hard?

Passage ("What does Judges 19 mean?")

1 And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel [This phrase sets the stage for everything that happens—it doesn't just mean, 'no one was in charge;' this story is a direct result of man left to man's own devices. Many times in Scripture, we are not explicitly told that something is wrong—it is left up to the reader to discern what is right and what is wrong. As for who was in charge, judges made the equivalent of executive decisions at this time for the nation], **that there was a certain** ["a certain" means this was not a parable, but an actual story—the name of the man is unimportant because it represents the nature of their society] **Levite** [the tribe that was descended from Levi specially set aside by God for His service] **staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim.** [This was approximately 20-30 miles north of the events of this story] **He took for himself a concubine** [a slave that served as a secondary wife and sometimes mother (sort of a "legal mistress" according to **David Guzik**); the Hebrew word for concubine is close to the Hebrew for divide—implying that the husband's time was divided between more than one woman.

Baker's *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* has a great article on the subject of concubines. It was permissible for priests to marry, but having a concubine was never condoned by God. Problem: He was not satisfied with God's structure for **marriage**—one man and one woman for as long as they both shall live.] **from Bethlehem in Judah. 2 But his concubine played the harlot** [literally, 'was unfaithful'—this word can range from a one-time event to a full-blown life of prostitution] **against him, and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there four whole months. 3 Then her husband arose and went after her** [Why did it take him four months to go after her? When problems arise, act immediately. We live in a culture of apathy and avoidance of conflict when we should be constantly confronting instead of avoiding.], **to speak kindly** [literally, 'speak to her heart'] **to her and bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. So she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. 4 Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained** [a supporting time of holding up] **him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there.**

5 Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart; but the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way."

6 So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry." 7 And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged [pushed, pressed] **him; so he lodged there again. 8 Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart." So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate.** [I do not know why he was delaying things, and the commentators have myriad ideas—none of which help in understanding the story.]

9 And when the man stood to depart—he and his concubine and his servant—his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home."

10 However, the man was not willing to spend that night [Problem: he left at the wrong **time**—forcing him to spend the night in an unfamiliar place]; **so he rose and departed, and came opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem).** [Coffman: In the Conquest, Joshua had indeed captured this city (Joshua 10:23; 12:10). The Pulpit Commentary: But the Israelites had withdrawn and left the city entirely to the Jebusites who continued to hold it until David captured it and made it his capital (2 Samuel 5:6).] **With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine was also with him. 11 They were near Jebus** [Jerusalem is about six miles away from Bethlehem in Judah], **and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, "Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it."**

12 But his master said to him, “We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who are not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah [hill].” **13** So he said to his servant, “Come, let us draw near to one of these places, and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah.” [Gibeah was about four miles away from Bethlehem in Judah and Ramah was about six miles away from Bethlehem in Judah] **14** And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. **15** They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night. [There was no room for them. **David Guizk: They find no hospitality in Gibeah; this is a warning sign, because God commanded such hospitality among the people of God (Leviticus 19:33-34; 25:35; Matthew 25:35; Hebrews 13:2) and there is something wrong where it is lacking.**] [At this point, there begin to be parallels with Lot’s story in **Genesis 19**]

16 Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites. **17** And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, “Where are you going, and where do you come from?”

18 So he said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; now I am going to [a poor English translation as this is better rendered, ‘I walk at’ or ‘I frequent’—i. e., ‘I work at’] **the house of the LORD [John Gill: the tabernacle in Shiloh]. But there is no one who will take me into his house, 19 although we have both straw and fodder [feed] for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant [the English is awkward, but in Hebrew he is clearly referring to his concubine], and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything.”**

20 And the old man said, “Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square.” [If this were a movie, this would be foreshadowing] **21** So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder [feed] to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

22 As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men [literally, sons of Belial—meaning they were worthless, good for nothing, unprofitable, and wicked—Paul is rather blunt in his approach to the sons of Belial in **2 Corinthians 6:15**], surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!” [‘Carnally’ is not in the Hebrew, but it is clear that homosexual relations are clearly intended. **David Guzik: the picture is clear: Israel is as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah. Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: Both men ought to have protected the women in the house, even though at the expense of their lives, or thrown themselves on God’s providence.**]

23 But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brethren! [Why he calls them his brethren when they were not is confusing to me] **I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage** [senselessness, disgraceful folly immorality, profane actions]. [You almost get the feeling at the beginning of his speech that he is going to do the right thing. Then he takes a sharp left.]

24 Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man’s concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them [Sometimes when I study, I hope that words do not mean what they look like they mean—this one means what it looks like it means—it means to humble, mishandle, afflict, and to humiliate. Let me be clear—there is never an excuse for humbling, mishandling, afflicting, or humiliating your **spouse**. It has no place in society and it certainly has no place in Christianity. It is wrong and goes against everything that **Ephesians 5:25** commands: **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.** Their offer is a despicable act of wicked men too cowardly to confront the problem and too quick to seek an easy solution.], **and do with them as you please** [literally, ‘whatever makes your eyes happy.’ Are you disgusted yet? You are supposed to be disgusted. This is not intended to be pleasant.]; **but to this man do not do such a vile** [senselessness, disgraceful folly immorality, profane actions] **thing!”** **25 But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them.** [Her blood is on the Levite’s hands. The sons of Belial were satisfied with one woman when they were offered two.] **And they knew her and abused** [to collectively deal ruthlessly, to collectively abuse—the modern equivalent is, ‘gang rape.’] **her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go** [sent away, dismissed, cast off]. **Adam Clarke on Gibeah’s sinful men: “Rascals and miscreants of the deepest dye; worse than brutes, being a compound of beast and devil inseparably blended.”**

26 Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down [the Hebrew word for ‘fell down’ can be used for anything from exhaustion all the way to death—it is, however, incredibly sad to note that she practiced sexual sin in **Judges 19:2** and died because of sexual sin 24 verses later] **at the door of the man’s house where her master was, till it was light.** [There is debate as to whether or not she is already dead, but it is likely that she died on the threshold.]

27 When her master arose in the morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way [the Hebrew almost implies that he was OK to leave without her], **there was his concubine** [She was his—she was his responsibility—and he abdicated], **fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold.** [Like so many who die within the shadow of a church steeple or who die within the shadow of a silent Christian, so close to salvation yet uncared for enough to be loved, she died alone and unloved—and there is a powerful message here that we must not miss.] **28 And he said to her, “Get up** [an imperative] **and let us be going.”** [His response was callous, cruel, and cold. **Coffman: It was a mercy of God that she did not survive to hear the unfeeling voice of her lord.**] **But there was no answer.** [It was now too late—because sometimes time runs out to do the **right** thing.] **So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place.**

29 When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb [literally, along the joints], **and sent** [the same word used to describe the way her rapists discarded her] **her throughout all the territory of Israel.** [Apparently, this was to incense everyone who saw it into action—which it did in the following chapters.] **30 And so it was that all who saw it said, “No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it** [an imperative, think about it], **confer** [an imperative, plan], **and speak up** [an imperative, to speak a promise about it]!”

[Even hundreds of years later in [Hosea 9:9](#), this is mentioned.]

Summary: **Coffman: the brutal murder of a helpless bride whose husband sacrificed her to cruel Sodomite sons of the Devil without lifting a little finger to protect her.**

Before we get to the application and the personalization, we need to answer a more fundamental question: **Why is this story even in the Bible?** For most of us, this is a disgusting and sickening story. **Richard Halverson: the sewer of Scripture . . . To read these chapters is to be repelled by them; and one cannot help feeling rather dirty.** I do not have the vocabulary to adequately describe my disdain and horror at the acts committed in [Judges 19](#). However, we cannot ignore four words in [2 Timothy 3:16](#)—‘**All Scripture . . . is profitable.**’ It is all profitable. From the genealogies to the epistles to the history to the horror of [Judges 19](#)—it is all profitable. It is not all equally palatable, but it is all profitable. We must not skip over certain Scriptures because they are not comfortable. It is all profitable.

So, why is this in the Bible? Two obvious reasons:

1. It actually happened. The Bible does not skip over the **depravity** of man. The Bible calls it out and shows it for what it really is—sin. We, when describing ourselves, are often inclined to skip over the less palatable portions of our stories. We gloss over, reword, or reframe the past to make ourselves look good. The Bible does not do that. The Bible tells stories as they happened.
2. It had a significant impact on the **political** landscape of Israel. The political ramifications were that the tribe of Benjamin in the following chapters is almost wiped off the face of the earth because their tribesmen did this. The other tribes came together and warred against the tribe of Benjamin and it forced Israel to look in the mirror to see how far she had fallen away.

Points (“So what is the point?”)

From Ben Wyatt: (1) Don't overstay your welcome. (2) Don't listen to your in-laws.

1. Man is inherently **evil** and through the retelling of evil stories, we are reminded of that. Every character in this story is guilty of something. The concubine was guilty of cheating on her husband. I asked Marty Lasley (a lawyer in our congregation) to study the passage and let me know what each person in the story would be charged with if this had been committed this weekend in Hixson, TN: (1) The Levite would be charged with Aggravated Rape, possibly Felony Murder, and Abuse of a Corpse. (2) The old man would be charged with Criminal Facilitation of a Felony, Aggravated Rape, and Felony Murder (but this might not stick). (3) The men of Gibeah would be charged with varying degrees of Murder, Aggravated Rape, and

Aggravated Sexual Assault. We may not like to admit it, but the same sin nature that is in those wicked characters in this story is in us. I am capable of these atrocities. It is only by God's grace that I have not done those things. I am far more sinful than I care to admit, and I need to be reminded of that. Not every chapter in the Bible is like **Judges 19**—this is a reminder, but it is not the whole story.

2. Family life can totally fall apart when **God** is ignored. Many of you come from broken homes and I hate that. I hate that you have not gotten to experience a family where everyone stayed together their entire lives. I hate that sin ruins things, but when God is ignored, families crumble. If you want to guarantee a failed marriage, ignore Him. Commit to keeping God as the focus of both of your lives and this will not happen. [Two points graph here.]

Caedmon's Call: Petrified Heart

Strike this rock with Your rod

I'll take the blows

Till Your living water begins to flow

As it flowed from the Man of Sorrows' side

On that day when his body

Was torn for the twelve tribes

Was torn for the twelve tribes

When did my heart get so petrified

When did it get so hard to feel

When did my heart get so afraid to love

When did it get so hard

When did it get so hard

3. Recognize that **Jesus** was treated the exact same way as the Levite's concubine. His body was torn for the twelve tribes of Israel. His hand is at the door of each life, waiting to be brought in and prized. His sacrifice stirs us to act for a cause that is greater than we are. If you read this chapter through again and look for Jesus, you will see Him all over the place.

Application ("Now what do I do with that?")

1. Hate the **sin** that is in my life (lest it grow to something this perverse). Sin always grows more uncontrollable when it is not addressed. Sin always requires intervention.

2. Passionately pursue after **God** in my family. Love your spouse; rear your children; pursue God.

3. Look for **Jesus**—even in the brokenness and depravity of the Bible's worst stories. We must never forget that His story is the most unfair and broken and depraved story of all of Scripture—the Perfect Man suffered for all of our sins unfairly.

POINT TO PONDER: HATE THE SIN THAT IS IN MY LIFE

BIBLE CHARACTERS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

MEPHIBOSHETH A Life of Suspension

Preview

State your name and tell the last time that you were carried somewhere.

Passage (“What does 2 Samuel 4:4; 9:1-13 mean?”)

2 Samuel 4:4: Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled [his nurse ran away because at that time, the practice was that when you killed the king, you killed the rest of his family lest one of them take revenge on you one day—think, *Kill Bill*]. **And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame.** [This injury would disqualify him from being king—ADA laws were not in effect.] **His name was Mephibosheth** [his Hebrew name means, 'exterminating the **idol**']—he is also called by his Chaldean name, 'Merib-baal' in **2 Chronicles 8:34; 9:40**].

David Guzik: Mephibosheth was weak because of circumstances beyond his control. He was weak because of his age, and because of injury that came from the hand of another.

2 Samuel 9:1-11: 1 Now David said, “Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him [‘show,’ not, ‘think about.’ You have all heard, “It’s the thought that counts.” However, “It’s the action that shows.”] **kindness** [#1: *cheded*, goodness, kindness, faithfulness] **for Jonathan's sake?**” [David was remembering his promise he made to Jonathan in **1 Samuel 20:14-17**. **Matthew Henry:** It is good sometimes to bethink ourselves whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good; better do it late than never.]

2 And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, “Are you Ziba?” He said, “At your service!”

3 Then the king said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the **kindness** [#2] **of God** [the addition of the, ‘of God,’ here signifies this is **huge** kindness, great kindness, God-sized kindness—in Hebrew, the best way to amplify a word was to add ‘God’ to it]?” And Ziba said to the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet.”

4 So the king said to him, “Where is he?” And Ziba said to the king, “Indeed he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar.” [Mephibosheth did not even have his own house]

5 Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar. [Notice that the king did the pursuing] **6** Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, “Mephibosheth?” [It is possible that David remembered Jonathan's son from the time when David and Jonathan were friends] **And he answered, “Here is your servant!”**

David Guzik: Up to this point Mephibosheth and David never had a relationship and it was because Mephibosheth wanted it that way. He avoided David out of unfounded fears.

7 So David said to him, “Do not fear [What are, typically, the first words that God or an angel say to man when they appear to a man? “Fear not.”], **for I will surely show you kindness [#3] for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather** [by law, this land was really still Mephibosheth's, so this action was more justice than kindness—Clarke]; **and you shall eat bread at my table continually** [continually—not just for the rest of his life, but **every** time for the rest of his life].” [David Guzik: This goes far beyond giving Mephibosheth what was rightly his. He gave Mephibosheth the honor of a close relationship with the king. Jesus gives a similar promise in [Luke 22:30](#).]

8 Then he bowed himself, and said, “What is your servant, that you should look upon such a **dead dog** [*keleb*; used for dogs and for male cult **prostitutes**] as I?”

9 And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, “I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. **10** You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in *the harvest*, that your master's son may have food to eat. **But Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread at my table always.”** **Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.** [This must have been a huge estate to require so many people to work it—but Saul was the king, so this makes sense.]

11 Then Ziba said to the king, “According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do.” “As for Mephibosheth,” said the king, “he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons.” **12** Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha. **And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. 13** So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. **And he was lame in both his feet.** [Do not miss the fact that just because he was now cared for, that he was healed—God does not necessarily remove our physical infirmities, but He will certainly take care our sin.]

So, what is the rest of the story? Ziba was unfaithful to Mephibosheth and told lies about him to David and David revoked his promise to Mephibosheth about the land—but not the table (this all happens in [2 Samuel 16:1-4; 19:24-30](#)).

How does the story end? [1 Chronicles 8:34-40](#). Mephibosheth's descendents became warriors.

Coffman: Sinners all, we mortals, like Mephibosheth, have been wounded, crippled, because of the “fall” of our progenitors in Eden. Like David did for Mephibosheth, God has honored and blessed us with the promise of eternal life, inviting us to feast at His table in His kingdom perpetually. Also, God does this, not because of any merit or righteousness upon our part, but “for Jesus’ sake.”

Points (“So what is the point?”—from David Guzik’s commentary)

David's grace to Mephibosheth is a wonderful picture of God's grace to us. *We are Mephibosheth.*

1. We are hiding, poor, weak, lame, and fearful before our King comes to us
2. We are separated from our King because of our wicked **ancestors**
3. We are separated from our King because of our deliberate **actions**
4. We separated ourselves from the King because we didn't know him or His love for us
5. Our King sought us out **before** we sought Him
6. The King's kindness is extended to us for the sake of **another**
7. The King's kindness is based on covenant
8. The King returns to us what we **lost** in hiding from Him
9. We have the privilege of **provision** at the King's table
10. We are received as sons at the King's table, with access to the King and fellowship with Him

Leeland: Carried to the Table

Application (“Now what do I do with that?”—from David Guzik’s commentary)

David's grace to Mephibosheth is also a pattern for us in serving and ministering to others. *We are David.*

1. We should look for the poor, weak, lame, and hidden to **bless** them
2. We should bless others when they don't deserve it, and bless them **more** than they deserve
3. We should bless others for the sake of someone **else**
4. We **must** show the *kindness of God* to others