

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, OT History, Lit., and Theology, Lecture 21

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This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in his Old Testament History, Literature, and Theology course. Lecture 21: finishing up the book of Judges with Samson, the tale of the two Levites, and then the book of Ruth.

Abimelech

All right, let's talk about the book of Judges. What we were talking last time was about Gideon fighting Midian, Gideon defeating the Midianites with the sword of the Lord, Gideon throwing down their Molotov cocktail lamps and catching things on fire, blowing the trumpets and winning the victory against the Midianites. What happened after Gideon's big victory is that Gideon has a son and the son's name is Abimelech. Now the name is really important. His name is Abi-melech. *Ab* means what in Hebrew? *Abba*: father. So *Abi* is "my father." *Melech* means "king." "My father is king." Who is his father? His father was Gideon. Was his father king? No, he wasn't. Are there any kings in Israel in the time of Judges? No. So is this name really kind of an interesting name? It clashes with the book, my father is king but he wasn't king. But his name is Abimelech, nevertheless.

Jotham's Fable

Now what happens is Abimelech takes over. He's the older brother. What he does to all of his other siblings is he kills them all off. There's I don't know, thirty, forty, fifty, there is a ton of them. He kills off his brothers and sisters. What happens is Jotham, one of the youngest guys hides and gets away. Jotham then goes up on a hillside and he's going to tell a fable to his brother and this is in chapter 9 of the book of Judges. He's going to tell this fable. I'll just narrate and give kind of a summary of the parable. But basically he goes up and he tells this story. "The trees of the forest went out to make themselves a king." By the way, what is a fable? Are there fables in the Bible? What's a fable? Usually a fable is like an animal talking, or a tree talking. Well, here the trees of the forest go out to

anoint themselves a king. “And so they go to the olive tree and they say to the olive tree: olive tree would you be our king? You give us olive oil and all these wonderful things that we eat. Olives that we can put them on a pizza. And we would just love to have an olive tree for our king. And the olive tree says, I can’t be your king. If I am your king, there’s no olives and that’s no good.

So they go to the vine. And they say, hey, vine would you be our king? You can party all the time now when a vine is our king. There will be wine for everybody. The vine says, I can’t be your king because if I am your king, I can’t produce the grapes to grow that makes the heart of man happy.

So, finally they go to the bramble bush. Have you guys ever been in Texas? A bramble bush is a bush that there’s no leaves on. All it is thorns and thistles. It slices your legs up when you try to walk through them. They’re usually about knee high. They’re low very thorny bushes, with almost no leaves. They’re just these thorns and thistles. So what happens is they come to the thorn bush and they say: thorn bush would you be our king? And the thorn bush says, I will be your king. Come hide in my shadow.

Now why is this so ironic? The thorn bush doesn’t have any shadow. The thorn bush is good for what? It is good for nothing. Yet it claims it’s going to be the king. What is Jotham trying to say about Abimelech through this story? Is Abimelech least likely to be the king? And yet he’s pretending like he’s the big king, but he’s really the least likely. The olive tree is gone. The vine is gone. And here is this bramble bush, now this thorn bush is trying to become king.

So this is a fable. This is a fable that Jotham tells. It’s a fable that’s recorded in the Bible. So if you want to get people mad say: there are fables in the Bible. And people will get all bent out of shape because a lot of people think the Bible is a fable rather than history. But there are fables in the Bible. This one is told by Jotham, about the trees making this bush their king.

By the way, is this sarcastic fable meant to put down his older brother? And so that’s what this fable is there for. The thorn bush fable is a satire on power. I

think we've said this before, money, sex, and power. We talked about this last time. Power is the one that gets Abimelech. He kills his own brothers. So that he can have power and be the next ruler. Often times you see that kind of thing. So sad. This is a sad story.

This is the end of Gideon. Do you see how Gideon was really a good person? But do you see after Gideon leaves, his sons they go onto this warfare in their family and just destroys his family. So Gideon's clan goes down.

Now, the first kingship attempt is Abimelech. Some people associate this with the first kingship attempt. A failed attempt at kingship is found here in the book of Judges. In the book of Judges there is what? "There is no king in Israel, and everyone does that which is right in their own eyes." Right? Abimelech makes a run at the first attempt at that kind of petty kingship in the book of Judges. It was failed attempt, however.

Jephthah

What about this fellow Jephthah? He is famous for basically one thing. He's a Gileadite. He didn't really fit into society well. So he was driven out because he was not accepted. His mother, there was some illegitimacy there. What happens? Does God ever say the exact opposite of what he means? And chapter 10 verse 14, God says this: "But you have forsaken me." He's talking to the people of Israel. "He says you have forsaken me and served other gods. So I will no longer save you." God's role as the rescuer. "I will no longer save you." And then God says this: "Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble." Is God commanding his people to idolatry here? He says, "Go to the gods you've made and cry out to them!" Is God commanding idolatry, here? Is this sarcasm? Is God being sarcastic? He says: "I'm no longer going to save you because you guys are worshipping these idols. Okay, go to the idols, let them save you." That's sarcastic. He's wanting to tell them "get rid of their idols and come back to him." But he uses sarcasm here, saying the exact opposite of what he meant. Is there sarcasm in the Bible? Actually, does God get

sarcastic? Yes, he does. You've got to be real careful with sarcasm.

A lot of times I use sarcasm. Can sarcasm be very detrimental? I'll never forget my daughter when she was in sixth grade. She came back to me ten to fifteen years later and she said, I remember when you said and quoted some crazy thing that I had said, but I was being sarcastic. She didn't get the fact that it was sarcastic. She thought that that was what I actually held. So what I'm saying is be careful with sarcasm because sarcasm can do damage on people who don't understand. But God uses it here. So there's a place for sarcasm and there's a place not for sarcasm. Sounds like Ecclesiastes or something doesn't it.

So context determines meaning. It is clear here that God did not mean for them to be idolaters. By the way, this is the point. God is using sarcasm to do what? What is the function of the sarcasm? Does the sarcasm function to rebuke them? So he's using sarcasm to rebuke them. You have got to pick that up from the context then.

Now, what happens? Jephthah goes out. He says, "Okay, I'll fight for you guys. I will lead you. I'll be the judge." God makes him a judge. Then it says this: "The Spirit of the Lord came on Jephthah." This is chapter 11.2. "He crossed over Gilead. And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord." And this is the vow this is what Jephthah is most famous for, his vow. "Jephthah made a vow to the Lord: if you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out 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." He goes out to battle against the Ammonites. The Ammonites are over here in Jordan. What happens? He comes home. Who comes out to meet him when he comes home? His daughter comes out to meet him when he comes home.

So now this raises a question about vows. You have to be careful about taking vows before God. Ecclesiastes says some interesting things on this. Let me just read this. Ecclesiastes 5. There is great wisdom in the book of Ecclesiastes, by the way. It says this: "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near

to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.” Jump down to verse four, “When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.” What does he say? “When you go into the house of God let your words be few.” I worry sometimes about some of these youth rallies they had when I was younger. People would get up there and say, “do you commit yourself to reading three chapters of Scripture every day. How many of you will do that? Everyone stand up.” They make a vow to read and things like that. What I’m saying is be very careful about doing that. God does not delight in fools. Just be careful about making vows before God.

Jephthah makes this vow, “whatever comes out the door of my house.” Now the question comes up, then, does Jephthah burn his daughter up? Does he burn her as a sacrifice? Let me just say this: Probably 80-90% of Old Testament scholars say that Jephthah burned his daughter up. Now what should that do? I’m going to tell you that I don’t think he burned her. But what should that put in the back of your mind? Hildebrandt’s the professor of this class, he’s got it right. No, no. Hildebrandt is most possibly wrong on this. But does he still think it’s right? What I’m saying is I know that most of my friends who are Old Testament scholars would disagree with me on this point. But let me tell you why I think that Jephthah did not burn his daughter up. I think he didn’t. It is a minority position. So what I’m trying to say is, do I have to admit that I can be wrong sometimes? Yes. And I may be wrong here. I just want to warn you that this is a minority position. He may have burned her up.

But here are the reasons why I think he didn’t. So first of all when she is told when Jephthah returned to his house at Mizpah who should come out to meet him but his daughter dancing to the sound of tambourines. Her father’s come home from the war. It’s like a military guy coming back from Afghanistan. His

kids come to welcome daddy home. Then it says, “She was his only child.” Why does it bring up that she was his only child? Just notice that “she was his *only child*. Except for her, he had neither son nor daughter.” So it makes it really, really explicit. “‘My father,’ she replied, ‘You have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised. Now the Lord has avenged on your enemies.’” She says, “Okay, I’m in with this too, father.” She says, “Give me two months.” She has one request from her dad. “Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends.” Why? Because I’m going to be burned up. No. “Let me go two months to roam the hills to weep with my friends, because I will never marry.” Now, if you were getting burned up as a sacrifice on an altar would you be worried about the fact that you never married? Or would marriage kind of take a second place. If you’re going to be burned with fire, isn’t that a little more important than being married? But notice here she says: “because I may never marry. You may go. And she went two months in the hills.” She and the girls grieve out on the hills. And why? Because she will never marry. “In two months, she returned to her father and he did to her as he had vowed.” What is the next line: “and she was a virgin.” And you say: wait a minute, he just burned her up. Who gives a rip at that point if she’s a virgin or not? This guy just smoked his daughter in the sacrificial fire. Why would it mention, “and she was a virgin”? Do virgins burn hotter? What’s the deal? I’m sorry. If he just burned her up, why would you mention right after you burned her up that she’s a virgin?

If something else happened, however, is it possible that what he says that he would offer up whatever came out the door of his house that there are two ways of taking this? Is it possible to read it like this? The Hebrew word for “and” can also be translated “or.” Is there a difference between “and,” and “or”? What if you take it this way? “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 **or** I will offer it as a sacrifice.” Now, the NIV says “will be the Lord’s **and** I will offer it as a sacrifice.” Is that different than saying “I will

dedicate it to the Lord **or** I will offer it as a sacrifice”? That allows him to dedicate his daughter to the Lord.

By the way, is it important then that she’s a virgin, that she never married, that she’s dedicated to the Lord? What does that mean? Will she have any children? She will never have any children. That means that Jephthah will have what descendants? She is his only daughter. By the way, in the ancient world was it a big thing to have no descendants? Did your line end at that point? And that’s why she’s weeping, he’s weeping because his line is over. She is his last shot at having descendants and now it’s cut off. She’s dedicated to the Lord. She will never marry; she’s a virgin; she will have no children. Does that make sense? I think this is what happened. He dedicated her to the Lord.

By the way, if you go over to Numbers 8, and Dr. Hugenburger at Park St. Church, pointed this out, I think it was a brilliant observation. I never noticed it in the past. That’s why I love going to his church. Every time I go to his church I learned something new. He pulled this thing out of Numbers 8.11, check this out. Numbers 8.11, it says, “Aaron is to present the Levites before the Lord as a wave offering.” The Levites are to be presented as a wave offering. Does that mean that he kills all the Levites and waves them before the Lord as a sacrifice? No, it means he dedicates them to the Lord as a sacrifice.

Does anybody remember Romans 12.1. “As a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” We are to dedicate ourselves to God as a sacrifice as well. So that it’s more of a dedicatory thing when it refers to human beings.

Do I have to kind of back off myself to say what? Most Old Testament scholars disagree with me. Is it likely that I’m wrong here. The honest truth is that the NIV is translated with an “and” instead of and “or.” So with certain points you got to be humble. But can you still be stubborn? You can still say that “I think he didn’t burn her, I think he dedicated her to the Lord.” The context kind of

indicates that. But I could be wrong here. So, that's Jephthah.

Shibboleth

Now, Shibboleth and Sibboleth... This is a SAT vocabulary question. What does Shibboleth mean? Shibboleth is an in word that gets you in to a group. Are there certain groups that have certain words that they use to get you into their group? If I said, I'm part of the 99%. That would get me into what group? Occupy Wall St. Yes, I'm part of the 99%, on these salaries you can guarantee that I'm not part of the 1%. So that's a big thing for them.

Various groups have certain buzzwords that they use. Have you seen this in high school? Do they still do this in high schools? Different groups have different buzzwords that they use. The athletic guys talked a certain way, people who are doing drugs in my day talked a different way. So, different people talk with different jive talk. So, here's what happened with Jephthah. Jephthah is fighting over in Jordan. The Ephraimites that were fighting were in a different area. They didn't come over to help Jephthah. So they come over to Jephthah and they want to make war with Jephthah and say "you didn't invite us to war." We're going to come over and now raise cane with you. So Jephthah sets up at the Jordan river. As the Ephraimites cross the Jordan, he gets them to say "Shibboleth." But he knows that because they're from Ephraim, they can't say shibboleth, because they always say "Caa" [for "car"], and they say "idear" and he knows that because they say those words he knows they're from Boston. He knows that there are regional dialects. If I say "y'all come down to my place" As soon as I say "y'all" what happens? In New England when you say "y'all" your IQ goes down 20 points. That's how it is in New England. On the other hand, if you talk with a British accent in New England your IQ goes up 20 points. I'm just joking, but not really.

So what I'm saying is when they cross the Jordan here, he says "say shibboleth" and they say "sibboleth." Then he said those guys are Ephraimites. He knew it by the way that they pronounced it, that they were lying. Then he

killed the Ephraimites. So this shibboleth is used now, in general, in the English language to mean a buzzword within a certain group, which means you're identified with that group. So every group has these buzzwords or special code words.

By the way, do we as Christians talk in a certain language that's different. I'm saying we have different buzzwords as well. Every group will have those. So those group identifying code words are called "shibboleths."

Introduction to Samson

Now Shim-shon--how many of you guys pronounce this word Sampson? With an "p" in it? Sampson. We pronounce it with a "P". Is there any p in Samson? Actually what you're doing is you're using the Greek pronunciation. The Greek has a "p" in it and it has come over into English. By the way, you see that "SMS" *shamosh* means "sun." So actually his name means "Sunny." So, Samson if you were to really translate his name means "Sunny." I'm just joking around, but not really. I call Samson, "Sunny."

Now, what do we know about Samson? First of all let me just do some territorial things with Samson. Where are the Philistines? Let's do a classroom activity: Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Dead Sea. You guys are Jordan, you guys are Israel and you guys are the Mediterranean Sea. Where are the Philistines going to be? Right on the Mediterranean coast. The Philistine's are always going to try to attack to the Jews from the west. Where are they going to attack the Jews? Where are the Jews? In Jerusalem, in Israel. The Jews are always up in the mountains. So the Philistine's would always come up into the mountains.

But there are only certain ways that you can get into the mountains. So, one of those ways into the mountains is up through Beth Horon, upper and lower Beth Horon. By the way, the roads are still there to this day. Till this day, when you want to go up into the mountains, you follow the same roads that have been there for two or three thousand years. This is the Beth Horon entrance. There's another entrance here. This is the Kiriath Jearim entrance. That's where David took the

ark up to Jerusalem. So this is where David brought the ark up. Remember and the guy touched the ark and was killed by the Lord? Uzzah, Perez-Uzzah. And so this is the Kiriath Jearim entrance. Now, where is Samson? Shim-shon, or Sunny, lives right in the area of Zohar and Beth Shemesh, house of the sun. That is where Samson is from.

Samson's Wife from Timnah

Now where is Samson's first wife from? When he goes to get married, his wife is from Timnah. Do you see how close that is? So he goes up, and that is where Samson hangs out and where she hangs out in the neighboring towns. So Samson meets this Philistine woman and that's when he goes down and has contact with her.

Now one other entrance that is important later on for us is the Elah Valley. By the way, do you see the town Gath here? Who is famous from Gath? He's a big guy who didn't like kids throwing stones at him: Goliath of Gath. When Goliath of Gath comes and fights Israel they fight in this Elah Valley. The Elah Valley goes right up into what town? Bethlehem. David is from Bethlehem. David comes down from Bethlehem here and this is where David fights Goliath right here. This is how you enter. If you want to get up into the mountains, this is how you do it, and this is where they fought. Goliath was from Gath and David was from Bethlehem and they fought in the Valley of Elah. So Samson, Shim-shon, he's going to hang out right here in the Kiriath Jearim entryway and he's going to meet this girl from Timnah.

Samson's Early Narrative

Now, chapter 13: here's what happens with Samson. "Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord." So you've got this rebellion, and then retribution. "Again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. And so the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years." Did the Philistines like to beat up on Jews? Yes, they did. The Philistines worked with iron. They had the technology on their side and they would go after the Jews.

What happens is, there is a man named Manoah. He's got a wife. An angel comes to Manoah's wife and he said you're going to have a son and when you have a son, from his birth, he's not to take anything of the grape, and he's not to cut his hair. In other words, from birth he's going to be a what? He's a Nazirite from birth. Never cuts his hair for his whole lifetime. By the way, she is even told, "don't drink any wine." You've got a baby in your belly who's going to be a Nazirite and you as his mother are not to drink any wine. This just means in pre-natal care you shouldn't do drugs, right? No, that was a joke, not really, but you know what I'm saying. Is she not to drink wine because it's alcohol? Or is she not to drink wine because he's a Nazirite? It is because he is a Nazirite.

Samson's Marriage to the Philistine woman from Timnah

So Samson is born and Samson grows up. Then Samson goes down to Timnah and he finds there a woman that he wants to marry. In chapter 14, "Samson went down to Timnah and saw a young Philistine woman. And he returned and said to his father and mother, 'I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah. Now get her for me, for my wife.'" He sees the girl, but question: in ancient times did the parents arrange marriages? Did the parents have to arrange the marriage? I think this is a good thing. Actually, it's crazy but that's the way they did it back then. I shouldn't say it's crazy. By the way, do some cultures do that until this day; where the parents arrange marriage? So he goes to his parents and says "get this girl for me that I've seen."

I've often asked: What is love? Geography plus hormones equals love. You can write that down. Geography plus hormones equals love. Why did Samson fall in love with this girl? She was located in Timnah in the next town over. Who do you fall in love with? The people you're around. The people you work with, the people you go to school with. You know? Does geography have a big part to do with it? Geography has a big part to do with it. So Samson, right next door to Timnah, falls in love with this girl. But his parents come back. "His father and mother replied, 'Isn't there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among

all our people. Must you go after the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?’ But Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me. She is right one for me.’” It’s interesting, the parents here, and this is a point that I want to bring up as far as his wife from Timnah seemed to have an inability to say “no” to Samson. Samson gets what Samson wants. Samson wants this girl, they object to it, and he overrides their objection. He gets this girl from Timnah, the Philistine from Timnah.

Now, the Lord was also involved in this and was going to use Samson’s attraction to this woman to defeat the Philistines. So Samson goes down the first time and what does he do? He meets a lion. Samson, a very very strong guy, rips the lion apart with his bare hands. He takes the lion apart, kills the lion and then he goes down to see his future wife. He comes back a second time and when he comes back to the carcass of the lion, what’s in the carcass of the lion? There are some bees and some honey. So what he does is he grabs it. I always wonder how you can do that without all the paraphernalia but smokes them out or whatever and he gets the honey. So now he’s got what? Now, by the way, it tells you the story about this lion and the honey because that is going to become important later on.

So then he goes down there, he’s this big strong guy who’s going to do some incredible feats. He is really tremendously strong. Obviously, endowed by the spirit of God but also, really just a strong guy. Have you ever seen a big strong guy, the athletic type, who wants to also be the smart guy? So Samson here has got to prove he’s the smart guy. So he’s going to tell them this riddle. So he goes down to the wedding and they’re in this seven day wedding feast. Samson says: “Let me tell you a riddle” Samson says to them. “If you can give me an answer within the seven days of the feast I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. If you can’t tell me the answer then you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes.” “Tell us the riddle,” they said. “Let’s hear it.” “He replied,” and this is the famous riddle. There are riddles in the Bible too! “Out of the eater came something to eat, out of the strong came something sweet.”

So, then what happens? They can't solve the riddle and on the fourth day, they asked Samson's wife. If you can't get it from facing up the man, one to one, what do you do? Go through the wife. Question: is that effective? Yes, it is. I don't recommend it, but it is effective. Been there done that, kind of thing, if you know what I mean.

So, okay...on the fourth day they said, "Coax your husband into explaining the riddle to us or we will burn you and your father's household to death. Did you invite us here to rob us?" Then Samson's wife threw herself on Samson sobbing. 'You hate me! You hate me! Don't you really love me! You've given my people a riddle and you haven't told me the answer!'" You're at your wedding, and this is like a seven day feast wedding, and your wife starts balling. What do you do?

Now, I always feel like when I go to this passage I better bring this up. I know a young man who when he got married they went through the wedding. By the way, is there a lot of pressure on the woman? When you're going to a wedding is there a huge amount of pressure? Yes. Are weddings now worse than it's ever been as far as the pressure goes, in my opinion? So this woman was very, very pressurized. They went through the ceremony and everything seemed to go well. They went down in the basement of a church. They had a reception there. They ate dinner with everybody, going around greeting everybody. That's cool. And when it's all over they get in the car with the cans and they ride off in the sunset and they go on their honeymoon night. The guy goes "finally at last, I'm married to this woman. This is the best day of my life." This guy's so happy. They get to the hotel and all of a sudden she starts crying. The guy is trying to figure out, "What did I do?" Did I say something wrong? Was there something I shouldn't have done? What do you want? Do you want flowers? What? What do you want? I'll get what ever you want! Why are you crying like this? "I don't know why I'm crying." Have you ever asked a woman why they are crying? If they don't know why they're crying, how are you supposed to figure that out? What's wrong? Did I

say the vows wrong? I said the vows right. So you're freaking out because you've never been married before and all of a sudden she starts crying.

All I want to tell you is: have you ever been in a situation where the adrenaline is really strong and there's so much pressure and adrenaline, adrenaline, adrenaline and then all of a sudden you get to relax? When you come down all of a sudden you start crying for no reason? That's what can happen. Well, that is what happened in that wedding, I'm very familiar with. The woman starts crying and it wasn't that he did anything wrong. But it was because the wedding and all the pressure was over. It was all over now and it just took her down. So, all I'm saying is that it's not cool when a wife cries at a wedding. It's not a good thing. But it happens because of these cycles. I'm just wanting to warn you because nobody warned me and it was a night that didn't work out too well.

Why is Samson stupid? His wife threw herself on him sobbing, "You hate me! You hate me! You don't really love me! You told a riddle to my people but you haven't told me the answer." Now Samson is going to say some things here. Are tears powerful? Is Samson strong? A woman cries and the strong man, what? What do you do when a woman cries? You're helpless. Big strong Samson is helpless before a woman's tears. What can you do? So there are the tears, but then what happens is, and what I'm going to suggest is how not to treat a woman.

This is Samson's response. She's crying, "You haven't told me your beloved wife." He responds: "I haven't even explained it to my father and mother he said. Why should I explain it to you?" Rule number one: you don't bring the father-in-law and mother-in-law in to it. You bring the father and mother-in-law it, it explodes. It's ugly. You never do that. That is really stupid. Now you say, Hildebrandt how do you know that? I know that's stupid, been there done that. I'm just telling you this is the voice of experience. You don't bring the father and mother-in-law into it. You deal with it without those external things. So what Samson did here was really stupid. You don't say, "I haven't even told my father and mother. So why should I tell you?" What does that do to her status? He has

just placed her over or under his father and mother? Under. He's supposed to be married to this woman. This is really stupid. "And so then she cried the whole seven days of the feast. So on the seventh day he finally told her because she continued to press him. She in turn, explained the riddle to her people. Before sunset on the seventh day, they came in and said: "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than the lion?" And they solved his riddle.

Then this guy just doesn't get it. This is really funny. I mean it's really terrible, don't ever do this. They got his riddle: What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? Samson said, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle." This is called speaking metaphorically. When you speak metaphorically and you use a heifer to metaphorically symbolize your wife it's not good. Now, by the way, are there certain animals that the Bible uses to symbolize a woman like a gazelle. They're beautiful animals. No, no in the Song of Solomon. A heifer, no, you don't use a heifer. That's terrible. So Samson here, just really...it's over.

So what happens is, the spirit of the Lord comes down in him with power. He goes down and kills 30 Philistines and brings back their garments and gives them to the guys. Then what does he do to his wife? "And burning with anger he went to his father's house and Samson's wife was given to his friend." Now, this is something you've got to know. In those kind of contexts you had a friend who is like your best man. If the guy bails out, then the best man marries the woman. So what Samson says is, he's in this marriage process. It falls apart and so the other guy steps in and so Samson goes back home. This is a disaster.

Student Question: How often and why do guys bail out?

Samson bailed out because he was angry because his wife betrayed him and didn't tell him. But if she hadn't betrayed him, what would they have done to her father? They would have killed her father. So, yeah they had backups even back then. But the reasons are often complicated. So, this is how Samson gets started. This is his first wife, his wife from Timnah. Three strikes and you're out. This is

his first strike.

Now concerning the Spirit of God on people of the Old Testament, it says, “the Spirit of God came on Samson and he went on and slew the 30 Philistines.” So the Spirit of God is his strength. What is the relationship between the Spirit of God and the people of the Old Testament? Did the Spirit of God ever leave people in the Old Testament? Can you tell me a situation with a person where the spirit of God left him? King Saul. Now some people think that when the Spirit of God leaves him that means Saul is not a believer in God anymore that he lost his salvation. No, no, no. The Spirit of God endowed them with special gifts. Samson was endowed with the gift of strength. Saul was endowed with the gift of kingship. When the Spirit leaves him that means that the spirit of kingship leaves Saul. It doesn’t mean he’s necessarily a nonbeliever. Saul has other problems that make that clear. But it wasn’t the Spirit of God. Some people feel that the Spirit of God only came in Acts 2 in the New Testament at Pentecost. The Spirit comes down at Pentecost. Was there the Spirit of God in the Old Testament? Yes, it was, and it came on people, endowing these people with certain gifts. In Samson’s case it was strength, with Saul it was kingship. So you’re going to see the Spirit of God working with people in the Old Testament. It wasn’t that the Spirit of God wasn’t here. It’s in Acts 2 but I’ll leave that for your New Testament Prof. So, the Spirit of God was in the Old Testament endowing people with gifts.

Samson and the Gaza Stripper

Now, that’s Samson’s first woman. Who is the second woman? Samson goes down to Gaza. I call this woman the Gaza Stripper. No, it’s the Gaza Strip. You realize the “stripper” fits in there. So this is Gaza. He goes down to Gaza. “Samson went down to Gaza where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her.”

Now, I told you how much respect I have for Dr. Gordon Hugenburger. He is a top thinker and just quality, one of the best preachers I’ve ever heard in my life. Dr. Hugenburger goes over to Hebrews 11...and in Hebrews 11 it says: one of

the great heroes of faith is Samson. Samson, in Hebrews 11 is listed among the great heroes of the faith. So he comes back and he says he doesn't see the foibles as being negative, even Samson going into a prostitute. I thought, "how does he do this?" he stopped his sermon series on Judges before he did Samson. I was just on the edge of my seat waiting for a solution. But I found out, here's what he does: He says, who also in Israel went into a prostitute that was totally kosher? Does anybody remember how Joshua sent out the spies? And the spies went into whom? Rahab the harlot. Now were they in there for her business or were they trying to get information. This was a spying endeavor. So Dr. Hugenburger, apparently, and I have not heard him say this, I heard it through the grapevine, he said Samson's going to this woman's house maybe in a spying kind of context. I think he was spying but it was on something different than the land, if you know what I mean. So I would take this as Samson doing this with women again. So I would take this in a negative context.

But what I want to use this passage for is this woman, the prostitute at Gaza, the Philistines surround them and say, "in the morning we're going to kill Samson." So Samson wakes up in the middle of the night and he pulls the doorframe out of the wall and walks off with it. Now this is what is really important to me, in terms of the strength of Samson. First of all, if you pull this doorframe out of here, would this be a big thing to carry, this doorframe? This doorframe is made out of metal and, to be honest with you, it's cheap metal or sheet metal. It would be about 30-40 pounds. That's not too much you could carry 30-40 pounds for a long way, right? When you pull the doorposts in the ancient world they weren't made out of cheap metal, they're made out of posts. Are we talking about 100s of pounds? Yes, hundreds of pounds.

Samson hauls them. The other thing, have you guys ever done has anybody ever put up hay in here? When I was down in Tennessee we put up hay. I was a young guy about 25 and so these guys get these 100, 200 bales of hay. They said "you get in the truck and you throw them up to us in the loft." So I get in there and

these bales of hay 30-40 pounds I'm throwing them up there. So I'm throwing these bales of hay up there. These are nothing because they think I'm a city slicker and they're the country folk. They're the farmers, the strong ones. So I'm throwing those bales of hay up there and I throw you know 20 bales of hay up there. Then I throw 30 bales of hay up there. Then I throw 40 and 50. By the time they were done with me I was pushing the bales up with my shoulder I couldn't lift my arms anymore because it was just too much.

Samson carries things about 20 miles and it was all up hill. He sets them up in front of Hebron. We know where these places are. It's about 20 miles and it's uphill. Question when you carry weights up hill, is uphill a problem? Yes and 20 miles is that a good distance to carry this kind of weight? Is this guy a hulk? This guy is a massive individual. A normal human being, you'd be lucky to walk 20 miles up hill like that, and he is carrying this couple hundred pounds at least up this way. So Samson is incredibly strong. By the way, the Spirit of God comes on him to empower him and he's extremely endowed. So, this is when he hauls the walls there or the doorway actually now.

Samson and Delilah

Next woman, and this is the final woman in his life, Delilah. Delilah is very famous even to this day she's got a radio program. But it says, "Sometime later he [Samson], fell in love. This is chapter 16 verse 4, "fell in love with a woman of the Sorek Valley whose name was Delilah." Notice this says he fell in love with her. What's the problem with that? Have many of you guys been trained in kind of Greek thinking where you've got *agape* and you've got *eros*, right? And *agape* and *eros* love are very very different right? *Agape* love is very spiritual and self-sacrificial love and *eros* love is erotic, very lustful. So erotic love is lustful, *agape* love is spiritual. In Greek we make this separation between *agape* and *eros*. In Hebrew they don't have that distinction. The word for love is the word *ahav* and it includes both love and lust. So this brings the question out is it always easy to separate between love and lust? When I was younger they tried to portray lust

over here and real love over here. What I'm saying is, when you actually fall in love sometimes do the love and lust get all entangled? So be careful about this Greek analytic way of thinking. The Hebrew thinking is much more organic and holistic.

So Samson falls in love with her. Now she nags him and basically the Philistines show up to Delilah and they say, "Delilah do you want to make some money?" And Delilah says, "O yeah." And so they said, "tell us the secret of his strength and we will take him down." They're going to pay her some silver and notice what is she doing? Delilah is selling Samson. Notice here is the woman selling the man for money? Often times that is reversed, but in this case, it is Delilah selling Samson.

So she comes to Samson and she nags Samson, "'Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.' Samson answered her, 'If any one ties me up with seven fresh thongs that may not be dried I will be as weak as any other man.'" Guess what? He wakes up and he's got seven thongs tying him. "Samson, the Philistines are on you," what does he do? He snaps the things he and jumps up. Now when you guys read this did you realize how stupid he is. She does this over and over again how can anyone be that dumb. I want explain, I don't think that's the point here. This narrative is compressed. Is it possible that these different trials with the seven fresh thongs, going to seven ropes going to tie braids of his hair, is it possible that this was over months and months of time and that this narrative was spread out? When you write history do people ever take the narrative and compress it. So what happens is that it makes it seem like all these events were one after another and after another and closely related. It could of be that they were separated in time. What I'm trying to say is Samson is not as dumb as he looks. So this may have been spread out over a considerable time period.

Well, finally she gets down, he starts playing with the hair braiding like that. Nagging does seem to work. What I'm suggesting with Samson here is that time compression is how history is written. By the way do historians ever take

events that are maybe 50 years apart and put them back to back in history? Just because that's the way they're writing history and they don't want to go through all the details. So history always involves some sort of compression. If you take history at Gordon College here you'll find some wonderful historians that talk about historiography, how history is written. A lot of times events that are distant from each other are put back to back because you collapse history, you compress history. If you were to write a totally exhaustive history it'd be too much for anybody to read. All history is compressed.

Now what's interesting with Samson is Delilah cuts his hair and she tells the Philistines, I think I got it this time. This is it. So she shaves his head cuts his hair and Samson then is captured by the Philistines. What is the first thing they do to him when they capture him? When he's really strong you want to use his strength but you want to incapacitate him what do you do? You blinded him. So they blind him, they gouged out his eyes, and now he's strong but a child can attack him because he can't see where he's coming from. By the way, they take him out then it says, "when the people saw him they praised their god saying, 'Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands.'" But is God going use Samson even in a blinded state to accomplish his purposes.

Samson's end at the Philistine temple

So what happens is the people pull Samson out and they make him do tricks. It's like a circus and you get this big strong guy and he's going to do all these tricks. Samson does these tricks but then Samson says to the boy that's with him guiding him. First he prays to God then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Oh sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." Is Samson pretty vengeful here? He wants vengeance for his two eyes. Would you have liked him to have said, "I want for your name, God, to be honored. I want to show you're the victor." But, instead, he's worried about his two eyes. Samson reaches for the two central pillars. He's going to take the two central pillars and he's going

to collapse the whole building down on about 3000 people. Samson kills more in his death than he killed in his life.

Now what's interesting here we've got two pillars in this room. If you knock down these two pillars would this whole building collapse? I don't think so. I think there's enough cross beams that would possibly hold the roof. Do you know what they have found on the Philistine plain? They have found some Philistine temples. Do different cultures produce different styles of temples? Yes. Israel's temple, by the way Solomon's temple was built on a Phoenician model by Hiram why? Because he hired Hiram from Phoenicia to build it. When you look at the Israelite temple that Solomon built its very similar to ones built up in Phoenicia. The blue print is exactly what you've got up in Phoenicia. The Philistine temples, they found have two pillars in the middle of them with load bearing walls. In other words, all the weight comes to those two pillars. You take those two pillars down and what happens to these Philistine temples? The whole place collapses. So is archeology showing that this actually works? You take out the whole building that is weighted on these two pillars. So this has been a really interesting confirmation. The Bible says Samson takes down the two pillars and the place collapses. Samson dies and this is the life of Samson.

Now, how can Samson be listed as a great hero of the faith? Given all this messed up life. To be honest with you, there's a lot of messed up stuff. I think that the Bible is showing us that some of the great heroes of the faith, had messed up lives. That gives me hope, because I've got a messed up life. Hopefully not that bad, but you know what I'm saying. Have you seen almost everybody in the Old Testament we've seen, has every one of them had problems of one sort or another? David is the man after God's own heart, well you know about David now right? So you have got problems with all these people. So I think with the Bible's saying is that believers in God are not better than everybody else, they've got problems just like everybody else but they believe in God and God uses them to accomplish his purposes. They're flawed heroes. It's wonderful to be able to be a servant of

God even though you got stuff going down. So Samson's a hero but he's not perfect, he's got his problems and such is real life.

The tale of two Levites

Now here is the Tale of Two Cities, no, the tale of two Levites. The book of Judges ends with these, what I call, tales of two Levites. Well first of all, let me start this story. This is the first Levite, a Danite Levite. I'm going to chapter 17 and 18 in Judges. There's a guy from Ephraim, where is Ephraim? Ephraim is right above Benjamin. So it's just Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, so it's right up in there. There's a guy in Ephraim and he's got a lot of silver and gold. So he makes himself an idol. Then he says, "Hey, I've got an idol now." But all of a sudden a Levite is passing through Ephraim and this guy, Micah, says to the Levite, "You know I got this gold/silver idol here, why don't you come be my priest? I've got this idol and I will pay you, you can live with me, I will pay you and give you shelter. I'll give you food. I will take care of you and you be my priest." So the Levite then becomes Micah's priest. Micah makes the idol and then he hires this Levite to be his priest. Now he's got an idol and a priest, this guy's got a pretty good gig going. He's got this religious corner here.

Now what happens? What was the problem the tribe of Dan had? The tribe of Dan is out by the Philistine plain, which means the Philistines were beating up on the Danites all the time because they're tribal territory was right out with the Philistines west of Benjamin. So the Danites said, "We're tired of fighting the Philistines we're going to go north. We've heard it is really really nice and it is one of the most beautiful places in Israel in north. So the Danites migrate north. When they migrate north what tribe did they have to go through? Ephraim. So they go by Micah's house and they say, "Hey, this guy Micah's got one of these metal idols and he's also got a priest, this Levite. So the tribe of Dan, now this is a whole tribe moving, and this whole tribe is going to consolidate down from being a tribal territory down to being a city. North of Israel back where Kyle's sitting. Dan is going to be the northern most point of Israel. The tribe is moving from the

Philistine territory all the way up north. They come by this Levite and say, “Hey Levite, why don’t you come with us? If you come with us you can be a Levite and can be a priest for a whole tribe. You don’t have to be one for some little family, you can be a priest for a whole tribe.”

So the Levite says, “Hey, that’s a pretty good gig, I’ll go with you guys.” So the Levite goes north. The Levite then goes up to the city of Dan to the extreme north and he sets up an idol there. This priest then becomes the priest at Dan. Is this idolatry in Israel? So this is where Dan is this associated with this idolatry. It even says here in a certain place, “Therefore the Danites set up themselves idols and Jonathan son of Gershom the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Levi until the time of the captivity of the land. They continued to use idols Micah had made, all of the time the house of God was at Shiloh.” So the tabernacle is going to be at Shiloh. All the time it was at Shiloh, the Danites are worshiping an idol up in Dan.

Now there’s going to be one other place that an idol is set up later on. This narrative is setting you up for that later on. Later on there’s a guy named Jeroboam, do you remember him? And he’s going to set up idols in what two places? One’s going to be in Dan coming out of this narrative I believe, one of them is going to be at Dan. Where’s the other golden calf going to be that he’s going to set up? Does anyone remember the place? Bethel. Yes, down in Bethel. Why does he set it up in Bethel? Is Bethel a holy place? What happened in Bethel? Is Bethel where Jacob’s ladder took place? It is here Jacob met God in Bethel. So Jeroboam uses that place and sets up a golden calf and says, “This is Yahweh, this is Jehovah, this calf.” God says, “No, I’m not a calf, I’m not a golden calf.” God condemns Jeroboam for setting up idols at Dan and Bethel. So Dan was in the north and Bethel was in the south. So this narrative sets up this problem that Israel will have later on.

Levite and his concubine

That’s the first Levite, the Danite Levite. Now our second Levite and this

story is in chapter 19 and this story is a rather gross story of the Levite's concubine. So I just want to put some geography on this. First of all, do you see here there's a main road running right here? This road is Route 1. Now this road it's not Route 95, 95 is a big super highway. This is called the Ridge Route. It's the Ridge Route. It runs on a ridge north and south, down the spine of Israel. This runs on a ridge and it's called a Ridge Route. So you come from Bethel, you travel Mizpah, Gibeah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem on down to Hebron on this is the Ridge Route.

First of all, when you've got a Levite with a concubine is that a problem? The Levite's got a concubine and the concubine runs home. So she runs home to Bethlehem. Then the Levite chases her and he runs and he catches up to her in Bethlehem at her parent's home. Then it's kind of like a thanksgiving vacation a little bit. Have your parents ever when you come home they say, "can't you stay just a day or two more?" Do your parents ever do that? "Can't you just stay just a little bit longer?" And so what happens is the Levite stays at the concubine's house for a little bit longer. Finally, he says, "We got to get out of here. I've got to get going." So they leave late in the afternoon. They come up here it's about five miles when they walk up passed Jerusalem. When they get up to Jerusalem the lady's tired and she says, "I'm just tired of walking why don't we stay here at Jebus." But the guy says, "No I don't want to go into Jebus." The Jebusites who live there are not Jewish. So he says, "I want to go up to a Jewish territory." So I'm going up to Gibeah from Bethlehem. So he comes up and passes by Jerusalem. He won't go in there because these people are not Jewish. He comes up to Gibeah and he says I want to be with the Jewish people there in Gibeah.

Now what happens when he pulls in to Gibeah? This is where it gets nasty. The storyline goes like this. He pulls into town and it's almost a Sodom and Gomorrah situation. He pulls into town and he's out in the neighborhood in the common square. An old guy comes up to him and says you shouldn't be here. Come home with me. He invites the concubine and the Levite home with him, and

says you shouldn't be out here.

Once upon a time I was traveling in the city of Los Angeles I've never been there before. We drove all the way out to California. So I said I wanted go down Los Angeles. I want to see the beach in Los Angeles and so my friend refused, "I don't want to go down to Los Angeles." He was supposed be taking us around. I said we're going down Los Angeles and so finally he said we'll go down to this place called Venice Beach. So we get down to Venice Beach and we look around there with my kids. We get back in the van that we had and we're trying to get up on the thruways. These thruways are going over our heads and but we can't get up to the thruways. So we're driving around all these neighborhoods in LA. We have no idea where we are. We pull up, there's a guys about 6' 5" big dude. We pull up I role down my window and say, "Can you tell us how to get on the thruway here?" The first thing the guy said to me, he did not even answer my question, the first thing he says, "You shouldn't be here, you shouldn't be here." Question, when a guy like that says "you shouldn't be here," question, should we not be here? Yes sir. We'll try to get out of here as soon as we can. How do you get to the thruway? So he told us how to get there but was it really clear we were out of our neighborhood.

So what you have here with this old guy warning him don't stay in this town square or it's going to be bad for you. Come home with me. So they come home with him and what happens? The guys show up at the door and then what happens? They start beating on the door like in Sodom and Gomorrah. "Bring the guy out to you to us that we may have sex with him," or "that we may know him." The guy does almost the same thing pushing his daughters out, the Levite's got his concubine so he pushes his concubine out. You remember the story because it's so gross you can't help but miss it. The guys abuse the women all night she comes the next day she's where? The Levite opens the door the next day and there's his concubine laying on the ground. He says "Get up let's go it's time to go now." But the concubine doesn't move and all of a sudden he realizes: his concubine is dead.

So then what he does is he puts her on his donkey and takes her back. Then what does he do? It gets worse. He is so ticked off these guys killed his concubine he starts chopping her up. He chopped her up into 12 pieces and sends her body parts to the 12 tribes of Israel. By the way, when you're kosher Jewish and you get this body part--the tribes freak. It's "Whoa, we've never seen anything like this in Israel before. What's going on here? This town of Gibeah we're going to go take out those people. They need to be punished for what they did." So the tribes, the 11 tribes, get it together. They go up against Gibeah and the tribe of Benjamin which is located with Gibeah. The tribe Benjamin says we're not giving Gibeah up. So the whole tribe of Benjamin goes to fight the other 11 tribes of Israel.

Benjaminite Inter-tribal Warfare

So now you have tribal warfare and what happens? The Israelites go up to attack them and they lose the first time. They go back to God, "God what's going on, these people are evil. We're trying to do what's right." God says, "Go up again." They go up again and the tribes of Israel defeat the Benjaminites but then what's the problem? They kill all the Benjaminites but 600 of the guys get away. They go up on this defensible high territory where they can't get to them. So there are 600 Benjaminites left. They want to go up and kill the 600 Benjaminites but what's the problem? If you kill the 600 Benjaminites what happens to one of the tribes of Israel? It's like the black rhinoceros they become extinct and there are no more of the Benjaminite tribe. So they realize, we need to call time out. There's only 600 of these guys left. We've got reconstitute the tribe or we're going to lose one of our tribes of Israel.

But then what's the problem? How are these guys going to reproduce? They've got to marry somebody but all the guys that were in battle swore they will not give their daughters to be married to a Benjaminite. Would you want to give your daughter to a guy like that? No. So they said, "We will not give our daughters there." So then thought, "what are we going to do now? We've got 600 guys. We've got to give them children and let them multiply again. There's a city right

over here called Jabesh Gilead and the men of Jabesh Gilead did not come to battle. So what they did was they went to Jabesh Gilead rounded up 400 girls and brought those 400 girls over to the Benjaminites.

Now you've only got 200 left that don't have wives. So now what are we going to do? We've got 200 that don't have wives. By the way, don't laugh, I think you want to do it the way the Bible does this dating thing. You want to date just the way the Bible does it. Kiss dating Good-bye just like the Bible does it. So they go to Shiloh and the girls are coming out for a feast and they're going to be dancing at Shiloh where the tabernacle was. They're going to dance. They said, "what we'll do with these 200 guys we'll put them in the bushes. When the girls come out to dance the guys come out of the bushes catch them and whichever you catch is yours."

Now I've always said Gordon College we've got a quad. Do it like the Bible says? So this is, yes I'm joking. That's what happens to these other guys. So now the tribe of Benjamin is reconstituted. Now you say why do you tell the gory story, this is what my mother would say. You don't have to tell those stories Ted. There's these really lurid stories in the Bible you shouldn't be telling college students these. My question is to myself though is the concubine raped and killed divide and conquer, this is how they got the wives for Benjamin, Jabesh Gilead provided the wives. This Jabesh, by the way, the reason why I mention that is this could become important for us later on. There's a guy I won't say his name but he was from Jabesh Gilead then the Shiloh dancers and that's where they come up with these wives for the Benjaminites.

Now why does the Bible include this story and the Bible doesn't tell us why but I think we've got a suggestion here with the story of the Benjaminites. What is the book of Judges setting up? There is no what in Israel? In the time of the judges there is no king in Israel and everyone does what is right in his own eyes. Who is going to be the first king of Israel? Saul. What tribe is Saul from? Benjamin.

I believe this story is setting up the reign of king Saul. I believe this story in

the book of Judge is put in there to set up the tribe of Benjamin. By the way when they go to make Saul king do you remember what Saul says? He says, "I'm from the least tribe." Does everybody why he's from the least tribe? Yes. So Saul is going to be from the tribe of Benjamin, so I think this story is put there as a background to king Saul.

Ruth

Now, are next story is one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible. It's the story of Ruth. Green Fried Steel Magnolias these are movies in the past about women friendships. Are women friendships different from guy friendships? I've watched my wife over like 30-60 years. I've watched how my wife makes friends. It's how she makes friends and the nature of her friendships are different than guys and guys friendships. What you have in the book of Ruth is two women you don't often get to see this in Scripture. These two women are best friends who become really close friends. It's a beautiful story of friendship in the book of Ruth.

Here's what happened in the book of Ruth. There's a series of tragedies happen in the book. First of all, they're from the town of Bethlehem. Naomi is an older women and her husband Elimelech are from Bethlehem. There's a famine in the land. So when there's a famine in the land what do you do? You migrate. You migrate from a lower elevation to a higher elevation because a higher elevations gets more rain water. So they come from Bethlehem which would be over here. They go down across the Jordan River and come up to this side over to Moab. Moab's about 500-700 feet higher and so what happens is they get more rain over here. Therefore they come over to Moab to get crops.

They then settle in Moab and then what happens? She has two sons Mahlon and Chilion . When her two sons are over in Moab what kind of women are they going to marry? Geography plus hormones equals love. They're going marry Moabites. Their two sons Mahlon and Chilion marry Moabite women and one of those women is Ruth. So Ruth is Naomi's daughter-in-law and her son marries her.

Now what happens in the narrative? All the men do exactly the same thing. This often happens with men. All the men do what? Die. It's usually what guys do. All the men die. Now what happens is you've got three women by themselves. Three women in a culture by themselves is that hard? Yes, especially in that culture.

By the way, is that true in our culture? Yes, I'll never forget I had a student friend that was down at our house all the time we kind of adopted her as our daughter. She was from California and she was out in Winona Lake, Indiana and she took her car in. She was like our daughter and she was down at our house all the time. So she took her car in and her battery was dead. This guy named Pinky had a gas station and he replaced her battery. Now when a battery goes dead the first question I ask is the alternator good or did the alternator kill the battery? So it's not really the battery's problem it's the alternator killing the battery. So the guy replaces the battery, charges her big bucks for the battery and about two or three weeks later guess what? The second the battery goes dead. She goes in and the guy is trying to charge her now double for the battery and the alternator. So she comes back saying I don't know what to do? Now question, because she was a woman did Pinky take advantage of her? Yes, he did.

So I was furious and so I got in my car. I've only done this one time in my life. I drove and I parked my car, he had two garage doors going into his garage. I parked sideways in front of both of them, so no cars could get in or out. I went in to see Mr. Pinky. I started, he had his costumers all lined up there sitting there. I proceeded to tell him he was ripping off this girl. I did it very gently at first. He got a little belligerent. So I raised the tone of my voice so I was shouting at him about how he was ripping off this young girl. Meanwhile all his costumers were sitting right there. Get the point? And so I'm being very boisterous. Then he's saying I've got to get my car out there. I said, "I'm sorry, I'm not moving my car until you give back her money." I wasn't going anywhere. So finally the guy he's hollering at me that finally goes over to the register. He picks out her check

and throws it back at us. Once we got our money back guess what? We left.

By the way did I say out of poetic justice today if you go down to Warsaw Indiana and you look where Pinky's gas station was, guess what happened to Pinky's gas station? This is no joke two years later there was a bulldozer went there and they paved it and made Pinky's into a parking lot now. So anyways I thought there was poetic justice there.

But what I'm trying to say is that you've got Naomi, Ruth and Orpah. Orpah goes back home but Ruth goes back with Naomi back to Bethlehem. You get these women by themselves in their culture, are they very vulnerable in that culture? Very vulnerable in that culture.

So now what you've got is males all die. Something that's easy to miss in the book of Ruth that's really important are the names of the characters. The names of the characters are important. Check the name of this guy: Elimelech. They used to have a song like that in my day in age. It was called Elimelech, Elimelech, Elimelech. Anyway it was Elimelech. *Eli* means what? "Eli" is God. "Eli" is my God. What is "melech"? King. Elimelech is "my God is king." This is in the period of judges. Who is king over Israel? Elimelech "my God is king." Is this a good name? In the period of judges "my God is king." Mahlon and Chilion the names of the two kids mean "weakly" and "sickly." What do "Weakly" and "Sickly" do in the narrative? They die okay. Do you see how these names fit incredibly? "Weakly" and "Sickly" die.

Now does Naomi play off her own name? Naomi, the mother who lost her husband, comes back into town and this is in chapter 1 verse 20. "Don't call me Naomi," Naomi means "pleasantness." "Don't call me Naomi" or pleasantness, "call me," what? Does anyone remember that: "call me Marah." What is Marah? Bitterness. Why call me Marah? "Because the almighty has made my life very bitter I went out full but the Lord has brought me back empty." I am bitter. So she says, "don't call me pleasantness, call me bitter [Marah]." By the way, just to finish this out do you know what "Ruth" means? Ruth comes from the root that

means “friendship,” or “friend.” By the way, what role does Ruth play in the narrative? Friend to Naomi. By the way, Boaz and he is one of the heroes. What does Boaz mean? Boaz means “strength.” What role does Boaz play in the narrative? He is the strong one. Do you see how learning Hebrew is really cool? All of a sudden this thing you say, “Wow, look at this.” It’s kind of incredible.

Now on the friendship between Naomi and Ruth, Ruth makes this really wonderful statement here. Naomi has just said she’s the old lady, she’s lost her husband, she’s lost her two sons. She turns to Ruth who’s her daughter-in-law and says, “Go back to your home. You can’t come with me. If you come with me I’m old if I had a child today you wouldn’t wait for him to grow up to marry him. So go home. The Lord has dealt bitterly with me.” And she tells her to go home. This is what Ruth’s response is, “but Ruth replied, don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you, where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God.” Isn’t that a beautiful statement? “Where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay, your people will be my people and your God my God.” Is Ruth a friend? A friend indeed. So this is a beautiful thing here Ruth demonstrates loving loyalty.

You know I forgot there’s a Hebrew word here that’s really beautiful for this kind of relationship. It is the word *hesed*. I haven’t talked at all about it very much. *Hesed*, I’ve translated it different ways in my lifetime, I used to translate “stubborn love.” It’s not just love but it’s a love that won’t quit. It’s a stubborn love that just pursues. Now in the DASV I translate it “loyal love” in other words it’s a loyal love that’s sticks. It’s Ruth who is loyal to Naomi. She exhibits the *hesed* kind of love this loyal love. So this is a great example of *hesed*. By the way, who has the great *hesed* of all times? God has loyal love for his people. So that word *hesed* is used.

Now what happens here is Bethlehem is down here. I’d just try to add a little geography on it. Moab is up there so they migrate from Bethlehem over there Elimelech and Naomi. They marry and all the guys die. Ruth and Naomi

come back to Bethlehem. Now let's kind of finish up this story. Do circumstances affect one's view of God? When I was younger I was told circumstances shouldn't affect your theology. However, look at this: "call me Marah because the almighty has made my life bitter. I went out full but the Lord has brought me back empty." Do circumstances affect the way people look at God?

My son just got back from Afghanistan. He was shot at almost every day that he was over there. Question, did that effect how he views God? Has he had to really wrestle with how he thinks about God when he's seen people blown up? Yes, it affects the way you view God. Your circumstances affect how you view God. I think you have to deal with it.

Now Ruth goes out. She's a gleaning machine. What's gleaning mean? Gleaning means she goes out after the harvesters. So they go out and they take a sickle and they cut the stocks down. When they sickle the grain what happens? Some of the grain falls on the ground. What do the poor people do? The poor people follow behind picking up the grain that the reapers drop. Basically the reapers drop grain accidentally and the poor people go get pick it up, that's what's called "gleaning."

What happens? Ruth goes out gleaning. She's with the poor people trying to glean food. Does Boaz notice her? Boaz notes her and he says, "everybody knows that you are a virtuous women, a VW where have you ever heard of the virtuous women before? Proverbs chapter 31. He calls her a Proverbs chapter 31 woman. The guys tell Boaz that she's been out working all day. Does Boaz take care of her? Boaz says you don't go into anybody else's field stick with my field. Is Boaz trying to protect her? Don't go to somebody else's field. Then he tells these guys drop some grain for her.

So when she goes home she has all this grain. Naomi says, "who's field were you in?" She says Boaz's and all of a sudden Naomi, match-maker, match-maker, she says, "Boaz is related to us you know." So she coaches Ruth and says he's going to be up on the threshing floor tonight. When you go up there uncover

his feet and lay down next to him and he will tell you what to do. By the way when she goes up and uncovers his feet remember what I told you about “feet” in Hebrew. Feet can mean something else [male genitals] and it probably does in this context. Does it mean that she uncovered his feet? Probably it means something else.

Is she offering herself to Boaz? She offers herself to Boaz. Is Boaz going to tell her, no? Now, by the way, if anybody else in the period of judges had a women offer herself to the guy you know it would have been over. Boaz says, he can't. Why? Because there's a kinsman redeemer closer than he is and he's going to tell her, “No.” Now she has offered herself, is she going to feel hurt that she's been rejected? She has just offered herself, her whole self, to him and he's going to say, no. Is she going to be hurt? So Boaz tells her you are a virtuous women, everybody knows that. He tells her I've got to check with this guy that's a closer kinsmen redeemer than I and if he says, “no,” then I will marry you. So he tells her, “no” but does he honor her? Does he, I don't want call it flattery, does he compliment her? He is careful to spare her dignity? He tells her to go home before the lights come on so that no one will know that she was there. He protects her reputation and he gives her food to go home with it. This is called the Levirate marriage. When someone dies in the family, you marry into the family and you raise up kids to the person that died. This is called the Levirate marriage where you have to marry a person and raise children for the person that is dead.

Now you say, “wait a minute Hildebrandt. Why is this story of Ruth in here?” In chapter 4, Ruth is the great grandmother of guess who? David. Ruth is the great grandmother of David. In the last chapter of Ruth, you get a genealogy going from Boaz down to David. Which means what? The story of Ruth points forward to whom? To David. The book of Judges last chapters about the Levite's concubine points forward to Saul. Do you see how these two stories set up the first two kings of Israel in a really neat way. So the story of Boaz, Boaz is what?

“Strength.” Does Boaz protect her? That is a really important role, protector role that Boaz fulfills. And we are done.

This is Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in his Old Testament History, Literature and Theology course lecture number 21, finishing up the book of Judges with Samson and the tale of the two Levites and the book of Ruth.

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