



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

Dr. Evan O'Neill Kane was a chief surgeon who on Feb. 15, 1921 operated on himself to remove his own appendix. This sounds absurd until you realize why he did this. He felt that an appendectomy was a simple procedure, yet many heart patients had to forego it due to their inability to undertake general anesthesia. Therefore, he promoted a local anesthesia and proved its effectiveness by performing the surgery on himself. It worked, and countless many have had this surgery since 1921. What was needed, Dr. Kane believed, was a *model of effectiveness*. Is this not true in a spiritual sense today? What is needed in our chaotic and unholy world are effective models of truth employing Paul's words (1 Cor. 11:1): "Imitate me, as I do Christ."



Early in Jared's life he knew that God wanted him in ministry somewhere outside America. In fact, before he attended Bible College he had already spent two years in Mongolia encouraging the newly-minted church leadership to reach their people with the gospel. Upon his college graduation in 2006, he immediately moved to Virginia Beach with his twin brother Jed so they both could begin their MDiv studies. The brothers were outstanding students. While a student at VBTS, God brought Sharon into Jared's life and they were married in the spring of 2008. Together they prayed for an opportunity to minister in a creative access country. After his graduation, God led them to a wonderful ministry team in Indonesia where they have been serving since 2016. Jared teaches theology at two local Bible schools. Because of his love for the Hebrew Scriptures, he is enrolled in an Old Testament PhD program in the States. God has blessed them with a beautiful family and also with a heart to "fulfill their calling to reach the nations within the borders of their location." Thank you, Jared and Sharon, for modeling grace and truth. May God continue to bless you for his name's sake!



The LORD Will Not Be Bargained With (Judges 10–11)

Jared Kaessner, Indonesia

The Lord's graciousness towards Israel in spite of her constant rebellion serves as a reminder of the personal nature of our relationship with God. As we consider this Old Testament narrative, we can ask ourselves, "What is our relationship with God like? Has the relationship become mechanical — do we seek to bargain with our God, or do we rest in his grace?"

During the time period of the Judges, Israel repeatedly abandoned the LORD for other gods and was consequently oppressed by other nations. The LORD's long-suffering is highlighted as he repeatedly rescues Israel from her oppressors. As the Jephthah narrative begins, Israel has abandoned the LORD . . . again. The narrator lists seven instances of Israel's apostasy. When the LORD delivers them to oppressors, Israel confesses her sins. The LORD responds by listing seven of his prior deliverances, which surely correspond to Israel's seven apostasies. The LORD's patience has been exhaustive, but is now exhausted. The LORD roughly declares, "Call on the foreign gods — I will not deliver you again!" Israel reiterates her previous confession, and adds, "Do whatever is right in your eyes, only deliver us this day!" Israel puts away her foreign gods, but the text demonstrates three reasons her actions lack genuine repentance.

First, the LORD has rejected their cry and seems to be speaking more generally of "your time of distress," while Israel is focused on the moment: "Just deliver us this day!" *Second*, the final note of the dialogue indicates the LORD's exasperation with Israel. The Hebrew construction of Israel's repeated cries is also found in the Samson narrative to speak of Delilah's constant nagging of Samson. The point is, Israel's words to the LORD are empty of genuine repentance so, "The LORD was exasperated with Israel's nagging efforts." *Third*, Jephthah's interchange with the Gileadites shares thematic similarities with the LORD's dialogue with Israel. Jephthah is approached by his family, the Gileadites, who had driven him away, just as the LORD is approached by the people who have abandoned him. The Gileadites are mainly concerned with negotiating for Jephthah's services rather than reconciliation. The narrative invites us to read Israel's negotiation with the LORD in the same light. Indeed, both Jephthah and Israel want to bargain with the LORD, but this is not what the LORD desires.

So we conclude that Israel's repentance is not genuine, but an attempt to negotiate with the LORD. Israel has reduced her personal relationship with the LORD to a bargaining system, which she hopes will result in favorable actions. In essence, she acts like the ungodly nations around her. This is exactly how we are to understand Jephthah's tragic vow, and it is perfectly consistent with the pagan theology of the Ammonites and Moabites—he seeks to bargain with God. What is striking is that the LORD does indeed deliver Israel! Ironically, the LORD acts contrary to his initial word and delivers his wicked people, while Jephthah keeps his word and fulfills his evil vow, murdering his daughter. The LORD's care for his people is intensely personal, but he will not be negotiated with: he is not a vending machine dispensing deliverance.

As followers of the Ultimate Judge, Jesus Christ, we recognize that there is no need for negotiation with the LORD, because Jesus has already "negotiated" the greatest bargain ever, our acceptance by the Father. Rather than coercing the Father to act on behalf of his people, Jesus submitted to the Father and secured our deliverance. Having now been "accepted in the Beloved" we have repented of our sin and now enjoy a sweet, personal relationship with God himself, without having to negotiate with God to secure better terms (Eph. 1:6).