JEPHTHAH

**DATE: 11/17/2013 pm**

**TEXT: Judges 11:1-11**

**INTRODUCTION**

Studying the book of Judges can be very depressing

This book chronicles the years in Israel between the death of Joshua and the appointment King Saul

What we see in this book is *a nation in crisis*

- Israel would abandon the Lord for false gods

- God would allow their sin to take its course by allowing their enemies to defeat and enslave them

- After a time of enemy oppression, Israel would repent and God would rise up a judge to deliver them

- They would be set free from their enemies, and then the cycle would repeat itself all over again

The spiritual climate in Israel during those days is summed up by the last verse in the book

**Judges 21:25 says - “*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*”**

What is so discouraging about this book is that there is ample evidence that man does not learn his lessons well

That scares me!

Left to ourselves, we will do little but get ourselves into trouble time and again

Of course, the positive side of this book is the fact that God never completely forsakes His people

They failed Him and He chastised them,

But He always took them back if they turned to Him in genuine repentance

That, lets me know, that He will never forsake me

You see, the people of Israel had been purchased with the blood of a lamb

**Exodus 12:1-13** (The 1st Passover)

The church has been purchased with the blood of His Son

**Revelation 1:5 – *“And from Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood”***

**I Peter 1:18, 19 – *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;” “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”***

Thus, He will always stand by us

**Hebrews 13:5c – *“for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”***

While the times of the Judges were dark days for Israel

A few lives stand out as bright lights

One of those lights is the man we will look at tonight

In this passage we are introduced to a man named **Jephthah**

What the Word of God teaches about this man I hope will be an encouragement

Jephthah went through some hard times in life,

Yet he overcame all the obstacles and accomplished great things for the Lord

He was a man …

- Rejected by his family

- Outcast by society

- Written off by everyone else

Yet, in the end, Jephthah became the Leader of his people

Jephthah is not an altogether good example

In that he wasn’t chosen by God, but the people

Israel would repeat the same mistake years later when they would choose Saul to be their king, rejecting God as their sole Authority

Jephthah is a mixture of the spiritual and the fleshly

He’s like Gideon, confusing at best

While he was not the Lord's choice as Judge in Israel,

The Lord allowed Jephthah to lead the people for His Own purposes

God had a plan in using Jephthah

We just don’t know all the details of that plan!

Let's get to know Jephthah and learn the *lessons* his life teach

**~~~Prayer~~~**

**I. JEPHTHAH’S “REJECTION” – vs. 1-3**

No one likes to be rejected

Rejection is to behave in an unkind and unfriendly way toward somebody else …

Somebody who as a reasonable expectation of being loved

The Bible introduces us to this *soon to be* Judge …

***“Jephthah the Gileadite”***

Gilead, meaning rugged, was a highland region east of the Jordan River, extending approximately from the southern end of The Sea of Galilee to the northern end of The Salt Sea, with the Jabbok River roughly marking its mid-point

For its mountains it was known as ***“the mount”,*** or ***“hill country of Gilead”*** in **Genesis 31:25**

But was also called ***“the land of Gilead”*** in **Numbers 32:1** or simply ***“Gilead”*** in **Genesis 37:25**

After God commanded the possession and division of the Promised Land, it was held by Gad, Reuben and part of Manasseh (**Deuteronomy 3:13-15, Numbers 32:40**)

Today this territory is outside of Israel's national borders, and is occupied by the Kingdom of Jordan

This is where Jephthah was from

Now before we look at Jephthah’s Rejection let’s 1st look at

**A. His ‘Character’ – v.1a**

In that, we see that Jephthah was …

**“*a mighty man of valor*”**

The phrase **“*mighty man*”** means that Jephthah was marked by *great bravery*

The word **“*valor*”** refers to *strength, ability and confidence*

This identified Jephthah as courageous and powerful

- He was the kind of man who did what was right

- He was the kind of man who refused to back down

- He was the kind of man who had your back in battle

- He was the kind of man others look to, for leadership

He was a Strong, Able and Confident man

**His ‘Character’**

**B. His ‘Challenge’ – v.1b**

**“*he was the son of a harlot*”**

I like the way God puts things, the good before the bad

The next thing we learn about this man is that …

His father's named was **“*Gilead*”**

It seems he went to a prostitute and fathered a son

This was a major strike against Jephthah as it marked him as an illegitimate son

Jephthah did not ask to be born this way

**Truth:** Like all of us, we have our past to deal with

We are all in the same boat

There will always be things we regret

Most people will Trumpet their Abilities …

.. But go to great lengths to Conceal their Problems

**Prov. 20:6 – *“Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?”***

This just reminds us that we are all human, and as long as we live in this world …

… we are going to remain less than perfect

No matter how far up the ladder of holiness we think we’ve climbed

We will still be sinners, and we will still desperately need our Saviour

*“Prone to wander, prone to leave the One I love”*

**His ‘Character’,** **His ‘Challenge’**

**C. His ‘Conflict’ – v.2**

***“And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman”***

Jephthah's father also had other children

When these legitimate children reached maturity,

They turned on Jephthah and forced him out of the family home

I’m assuming that their father is dead and they don’t want the inheritance to go to Jephthah

I’m also assuming Jephthah was the oldest; he would have been the rightful heir

But his step-brothers didn’t see it that way

Most likely they were motivated by greed & envy

With Jephthah out of the way, they could split the money up

Jephthah's presence in the family was a constant reminder of their father's infidelity

They had probably hated Jephthah all their lives

I’m sure they envied him since he was a Strong, Able and Confident man

He was probably everything they were not

They hated him because he represented everything they would never be

**His ‘Character’, His ‘Challenge’, His ‘Conflict’**

**D. His ‘Companions’ – v.3**

***“Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him”***

When Jephthah left the family home, he went to a place called ***“Tob”***

Tob was located east of the Jordan River in the country of Syria

We are told **“*vain men*”** gathered themselves to Jephthah

The phrase **“*vain men*”** here are those who were *unemployed, bankrupt and empty*

These were idle men looking for something to do

We don’t know why they were attracted to Jephthah,

- It may be that they were drawn to his leadership

- Maybe they saw someone who could help them find a purpose in life

Whatever their reason for coming to Jephthah,

The Bible tells us that they **“*went out with him*”**

(This does not mean that they dated)

What it means is that Jephthah became the Leader

A Leader of a band of misfits and outcasts

They are a lot like David and his men during the time they were running from King Saul

They may have served as an informal police force that protected the Hebrews from the attacks of their enemies

It seems that Jephthah was able to mold these misfits into an effective fighting force

Meanwhile God was molding Jephthah into a Leader of men

**Truth:** Let look several Lesson here

**1.** *Jephthah took a negative and turned it into a positive*

He could have taken the rejection by his brothers as an indication that his life was over and that he would never amount to anything

Instead, he rose above the challenges of his life and made something of himself

Sometimes it looks like life is against us,

But if you believe in Divine Sovereignty; you know that ever the worst of circumstances are part of His plan to make us more like Him,

**Psa. 37:23 – *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in His way”***

Whether you see it or not, whether you believe it or not …

All the days of your life have been structured by God to make you into the person He wants you to be!

**2.** *God delights in using the unusable*

He specializes in taking those who seem to be the least of the least and making them vessels of honor for His glory

**I Cor. 1:26-31 …**

**3.** *Birds of a feather tend to flock together*

People like Jephthah, came to Jephthah

The principle is this:

…people tend to gravitate toward those who reflect what is in their own hearts

Look at the people you talk to

They are often people just like you

We usually seek out others who are just like us

Look at the people you spend time with

They reveal the sort of person you are!

If someone is discontented,

They will gravitate toward the discontented

If someone is given over to a specific sin,

They will gravitate toward others who do the same thing

Conversely, if someone has a true heart for the things of God;

They will gravitate toward others who are seeking God too

Today would be a good time to consider the kind of people you spend time with!

**4.** *Rejection is hurtful, but beneficial*

Whether we like it or not …

God uses the animosity and attacks of others …

… to build our character and refine our lives!

**JEPHTHAH’S “REJECTION”**

**II. ISRAEL’S “REQUEST” – vs. 4-8**

Jephthah is living in exile

He is something of a Robin Hood figure

He is protecting the Israelites and making the best out of his situation …

… When his own people come looking for him

They come to him with an Astonishing Request

Let's examine that Request

**A. The ‘Cause’ – vs. 4, 5**

**v.4 – *“And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel”***

The nation of Israel was under attack

The Ammonites are trying to take over the land

The children of Ammon were the descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot

They are the result of Lot’s incestuous relationship with his daughter

The Ammonites were cousins to the Jews,

But they were also their perpetual enemies

So, Israel is under attack and they realize they don’t have a Strong Leader

So they send for Jephthah

**v.5 – *“And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:”***

Jephthah must have made a name for himself!

**The ‘Cause’ of the Request**

**B. The ‘Character’ – v.6**

***“And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon”***

The elders of Israel come to him with the request that he come back and become their ***“captain”***

This word means *commander, chief, or ruler*

At one point they asked him to Leave

Now they come to him asking him to Lead!

What a change of mind!

What a change of direction!

**Truth:** The call to service might come without notice

We are to be ready and prepared to answer His call when it comes

Our duty, is to faithfully serve the Lord where we are

We should be doing His will where He has placed us

We must strive to learn all the lessons He wants to teach us

It is God's responsibility to open the doors of ministry and opportunity

It is our responsibility to grow where we are planted,

And to trust the Lord to use us When, Where and How He sees fit

If we will make our hearts available to Him,

He will give us plenty of opportunities for service in His work

When we serve Him faithfully today, He will look after our tomorrow's!

**C. The ‘Commitment’ – vs. 7, 8**

**v. 7 – *“And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?”***

Jephthah recounts their past attitude towards him

He reminds them that they were the ones who asked him to leave

Now they want him to come back and be their ruler?

**v. 8 – *“And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead”***

They now confirm their promise that Jephthah will be their **“*head*”** if he will only come back with them and deliver them from their enemies

The word **“*head*”** means *the top, the summit, the chief*

- They now wanted Jephthah to come back and take over!

- They now wanted him to come back and be their boss

- They are now offering him control over their lives

There treatment of Jephthah in these verses is sad

They had no use for him when things were going well,

But when the bottom fell out, they ran to him for the help they needed

**Truth:** This is how many people treat the Lord

- They refuse to be faithful

- They refuse to serve Him

- They refuse to honor His Word, His Will, His house

- They treat Him like He is an unwanted intruder

They treat Him like He is the spare tire on a car

He is to stay in the trunk, keep quiet, but He better be ready when they have a flat and pull him out!

What a shame!

If you leave Him out of your life, He may just let you deal with your problem on your own when they come!

If He did, who could blame Him?

**JEPHTHAH’S “REJECTION”, ISRAEL’S “REQUEST”**

**III. JEPHTHAH’S “RESPONSE” - vs. 9-11**

I don’t know what I would do if I were Jephthah and that bunch of yahoos came to me

I probably wouldn’t have responded like he did

Let's look at his Amazing Response

**A. His ‘Acceptance’ – vs. 9-11a**

Jephthah wants to confirm their offer is valid

**v. 9 - *And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children***

***of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?***

He’s saying – *“Are you sure this is what you want?”*

**v.10 – *“And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words”***

When they confirm it, he consents to go and lead them

**v.11a – *“Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead”***

His treatment of them is vastly different from their treatment of him!

Even though they had abused him and treated him like dirt

Surprisingly, Jephthah is not bitter

He was able to get over the things they did to him

He was able to see past their mean spirits

He caught a glimpse of the hand of God at work in his life

(One that will become clear as we learn more about his life)

He might have been an exile from Israel, but he was never exiled from God

Unlike his relatives, he proved his commitment to the Lord by his treatment of others!

**Truth:** Whether we like it or not …

How we treat others is a direct reflection of the place God holds in our hearts

If we are mean spirited and mistreat and attack those who are made in God's image (Saved or not) …

It does not say much for our opinion of God

When we love God as we should, we will love others as we should

**Matthew 22:33-39 …**

**I John 3:14-16; 4:20 …**

**B. His ‘Advancement’ – v.11b**

***“and the people made him head and captain over them:”***

The people honored their word and they elevated Jephthah and make him their ruler

He became their ***“head”*** and **“*captain*”**

**C. His ‘Acknowledgement’ – v.11c**

***“and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh”***

The word **“*Mizpeh*”** means *watchtower*

In **Gen. 31:33-35** the place is called **“*Mizpah*”** (with a ‘a’)

It was there that Jacob and Laban made an agreement that they would not fight against one another

They called upon the Lord to witness their covenant

That is what Jephthah is doing here

- He is calling on the Lord to look upon the promises made to him by his people

- He is calling on the Lord to watch over him as he goes out to battle

- He is acknowledging the Lord and looking to Him for the help he will need to win the victory

Jephthah knew that any victory was of the LORD

**v.9 – *“And the LORD deliver them before me”***

It would be good to remember that any victories we do get are of the Lord

Victory does not come from us, our efforts or our abilities

Victory comes from the Lord and from a relationship that is centered in Him and in Him alone!

**I Cor. 15:57 – *“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”***

It pays to acknowledge God in everything we do

It pays to call on Him, look to Him and trust Him for the victories we seek in life

Jephthah became a victor …

… but only because he was first a servant of God who looked to the Lord for the victory!

**CONCLUSION**

There are a whole lot of lessons we can take away from this message on Jephthah

Let me just review a few

**1.** *We all have a past, but the Lord can use us and make something special out of our lives*

**2.** *There may be a cycle of sin in our background, but it can be broken and broken today!*

**3.** *God can use you in spite of your past, your family or your failures*

(A $50 bill has the same value whether it is new, worn or torn. Its value never changes!)

4. *Your treatment of others reveals how you really feel about God*

5. *You can, and should, serve God faithfully today and trust Him with all your tomorrows*

**THE “REJECTION”**

**THE “REQUEST”**

**THE “RESPONSE”**