

Jephthah Faith Mixed with Foolishness

The Cycle Continues

Judges 10:6-16

- Sin- “The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord...”
- Servitude- “He sold them into the hand of the Philistines and the Ammonites...”
- Supplication- “And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord...”
- Salvation- A DIFFERENT RESPONSE
 - “Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods; therefore I will save you no more. Go and cry out to the gods whom you have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress.” Judges 10:13-14
- Another Supplication: ***What was different?***
 - First supplication:
 - “And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘We have sinned against you, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baals.’” Judges 10:10
 - Second supplication
 - “And the people of Israel said to the LORD, ‘We have sinned; do to us whatever seems good to you. Only please deliver us this day.’ So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD, and he became impatient over the misery of Israel.” Judges 10:15-16

What we learn from this cycle:

1. More idolatry leads to more slavery.
2. More slavery leads to more idolatry.
3. Signs of repentance
 - a. A sorrow for sin, rather than just for its consequences
 - b. A sorrow over idolatrous motives, not just behavioral change
4. The Lord is merciful: “impatient over the misery of Israel”
 - a. “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”
Revelation 3:19
 - b. “My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.” Proverbs 3:11-12
 - c. Hebrews 12:3-11

How is this response from the Lord ultimately a gracious response?

Who is Jephthah? (Judges 11:1-3)

- Mighty warrior
- Son of a prostitute (father was Gilead): no inheritance
- Driven out of the land by his half-brothers: outcast
- A leader of “worthless fellows”

How did he become the judge of Israel? (Judges 11:4-11)

- The people commissioned him as leader and as their warrior
 - God did not raise him up
 - The people did not seek God’s approval
 - The people did not seek the Lord to fight for them

Jephthah: A Man of Faith and Foolishness

Jephthah’s Faith

- Attempted negotiation with the Ammonite king to prevent war (Judges 11:12-28)
- Jephthah’s three arguments:
 - Historical (15-22): The land was rightly won by Israel and was never the Ammonites land
 - Theological (23-24): God gave the land to Israel. Surely their god would do the same if it gave them victory
 - Legal precedent (25-27): The Ammonite ancestors did not challenge Israel’s right to the land in the past. Why now?
- Jephthah demonstrates a vast understanding of Israel’s history
 - Presents as a man of faith
 - Gives credit to “the Lord (Yahweh), the God of Israel” (v. 21 and 23)
 - “The Lord our God” and “the Lord, the Judge” (v. 24 and 27)

Jephthah’s Foolishness

- The vow
 - “And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, ‘If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.’” Judges 11:30-31
 - His need of extra assurance shows his lack of faith
 - Lacking trust in Yahweh, he attempts to insure his victory through the promise of a burnt offering
 - Jephthah did not have to make a vow to enlist divine help because “the Spirit of the Lord was upon him” (11:29)
- Mixing in with the surrounding religions
 - Pagan works-righteousness understanding of God’s character
 - Israel’s neighbors, especially the Ammonites, sacrificed their children

- Chemosh/Molech/Milcom
- “Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem.” 1 Kings 11:7
- Jephthah had a blended view of worship, sacrifice, and service to God
 - A Yahweh-worshipper had become so pagan in his thinking that he would resort to human sacrifice to assure success.
- His understanding of the Scripture
 - He previously demonstrated understanding of the law of Moses, to which such sacrifices were an abomination
 - “You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.” Leviticus 18:21 (also see Leviticus 20:1-5 and Deuteronomy 12:31)
 - Fulfilling his vow then compounded his crime
 - The Lord does not demand to do something that violates or contradicts His Law

Disastrous Disunity in Israel (Judges 12:1-7)

- Intertribal war with Ephraim highlights Israel’s inability to remain united as one covenant people under judgeship.
 - He seeks peace with the Ammonites before war, but not Ephraim
 - He justifies himself to Ephraim but does not allow time to respond before attack.
 - Jephthah brought victory against the Ammonites but did not bring peace or rest for Israel

Where are we too quick to judge and fight our fellow Christians?

Generational Unfaithfulness

- Failure to teach the next generation
 - “And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.” Judges 2:10
- While Jephthah has a good grasp of Israel’s past and God’s working in and through Israel, he ended his own family line so that there was no one to carry on the faith
- Jephthah’s story is surrounded by Tola and Jair and then Ibzan, Elon and Abdon.
 - The secondary judges had large families, worked at increasing their families, and saw their influence even to the third generation (12:13–15), but Jephthah ended his line completely in one foolish vow to God.

70—The number of Gideon’s children (8:30)

30/30/30—The sons/donkeys/cities under Jair (10:4)

1—The single daughter of Jephthah (11:34)

30/30/30—The sons/daughters/daughters-in-law of Ibzan (12:9)

70—The donkeys for Abdon’s 40 sons and 30 grandsons (12:14)

CONCLUSIONS

In what ways are we trying to manipulate and sacrifice to God instead of trusting Him?

- **Christ is the once and for all perfect sacrifice**
 - “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” Hebrews 10:10, 14

What sacrifices are pleasing to the Lord?

- “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.” Proverbs 21:3
- “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Psalm 51:17
- “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Hebrews 13:15-16
- “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” Romans 12:1

What blind spots do we have in our own culture? Where have we become numb?

How do we guard against becoming desensitized to and infused with the ideas of the culture?

- “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2
- “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” Colossians 3:1-2
- “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:22-24