

Series: Lessons From the Lives of the Judges

JEPHTHAH THE SON OF A HARLOT

JUDGES 11:1-11

Text:

Introduction:

This 9th judge of Israel was a man of impeccable character and integrity. He stood out among his brethren because they had little or no character.

Where are the people of principle, with core values which cannot be blown about by the winds of the polls and popular opinion today?

Jephthah is a great example for us all:

Hebrews 11:32

³² And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets:

Note:

1. JAPHTHAH'S CHARACTER IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTY (VS. 1-3)

Judges 11:1-3

¹ Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. 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. 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.

If anyone had an excuse to blame their failure on their past or their upbringing it was this guy.

He was the child of a prostitute.

Because of the circumstances of his birth, Jephthah was branded from birth with a stigma, was excommunicated, ostracized, and exiled by his own half-brothers.

Note they thrust him out, and disowned him.

As a result of this he fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob.

He became the leader of a group of vain men or thugs.

So he's the son of a harlot, ostracized from his family, a gang leader, and yet in the end he's named to God's hall of faith! Only God can do such a thing.

Remember your past does not have to determine your future!

You may have no control over the character of your ancestors, you can determine the destiny of your descendants.

All Jephthah ever knew was failure, rejection, and poverty. But if he were in America today he would be viewed as a victim...oh, poor Jephthah! He would easily be diagnosed w/ some made up syndrome and be on disability drawing welfare! Now I'm not unsympathetic toward those w/ real needs, but you know what I'm saying is true about what's wrong w/ the overall system today.

We do people a great disservice when we allow them to use their background as an excuse for failure.

Some of the most influential people in history were folks who refused to be shackled by their past.

Illustration:

Helen Keller, the deaf/blind girl who learned to communicate, was taught by Anne Sullivan. How did

she teach her? Especially when at age 5 Anne had an illness that left her nearly blind. A few years later her mother died, and 2 years later she was abandoned by her father. She was sent to an orphanage. In those days they didn't have programs for her, so they fed her and let her sit and rot. But she longed to go to school and learn like the other children.

Her persistence caught the attention of a visiting man, a state inspector. His heart was gripped, and he paid personally to send her to the Perkins Institute for the Blind, in Boston. She learned to read using Braille, and she graduated at the top of her class. A few months later she had a surgery which restored some of her sight, and a couple years later she became the caretaker for little 6 year old Helen Keller. She used to be Helen for all practical purposes, and now she's her teacher!

Up to that time Helen's family had let her live like an animal, walking around the family table just grabbing food off their plates and shoving it in her mouth. There was no discipline, no control, and no efforts to teach or train her. But Anne Sullivan gave her time, her love, and her heart to train and nurture Helen to the point she could not only communicate but get a college education, and eventually travel worldwide speaking w/ Mrs. Sullivan, raising millions of dollars for the American Association for the Blind.

These 2 ladies refused to let their past control their future!

Remember:

If your birth wasn't a good one, take courage, you can be born again. God's grace is plentiful, His forgiveness is free, and His strength is sufficient for your future! And even if your background is dark, God can use that as a black velvet background on which to display you as a diamond of His grace!

Notice not only Japhthah's Character in the Face of Difficulty but also:

2. JAPHTHAH'S COURAGE IN THE FACE OF DANGER

Judges 11:4-11

⁴ And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. 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: ⁶ And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. 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? 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.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?¹⁰ And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.¹¹ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

The Ammonites are now attacking the nation of Israel. And Jephthah has the reputation as a bad dude...a tough guy, and a leader of his people who rejected him before.

It's interesting and so similar as to what the people in Gilead did to Jephthah is what our nation has done to God. We only turn to Him when in distress.

Illustrations:

During the Korean War an atheist soldier was in a foxhole and bullets were flying above him. Some of his comrades were fallen in the field nearby, and were not dead. His Commanding Officer ordered him to leave his foxhole and rescue some of his comrades. When his CO turned his back he hunkered down and looked at his

watch. 2 others in the foxhole watched and wondered why he wasn't obeying. A few minutes later the CO returned and said, "Hey boy, didn't I tell you to get out of this hole and help your fellow soldiers?" "Yes sir, will do!" The CO walked away, and he again hunkered down and looked at his watch. His buddies in the hole wondered if he was sick or afraid or what. The 3rd time his CO appeared again, this time livid, and repeated his command along with the threat of punishment if not followed. The soldier apologized, and acted like he was leaving the foxhole as his CO moved along to others. But again he looked at his watch for about 2 minutes. Then, like a bolt of lightning he fired out of that foxhole and went out where the battle was raging and by the time it was over he had successfully rescued several of his fallen comrades.

When it was all over one of his buddies asked, "I noticed that you waited so long to obey that command, and kept looking at your watch. Why?" The young atheist said, "I'm ashamed to tell you why. I don't believe in God, but my mother does, and the day I left she gave me a Bible and inside she wrote down several different hours at which she would be praying for me. I was waiting for one of those hours to strike, because I knew that under the cover of my mother's prayers, whatever happened would be ok."

That big strapping soldier, armed to the teeth, claiming he didn't believe until he was in danger - he is a picture of what is happening in America today.

Jephthah said, so, now you need me, huh? And if I help you, will you let me be your leader? [v. 9]

Judges 11:9

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?

Could it be that God is asking America a similar question: If I deliver you, will you follow me?

Close:

Jephthah maintained his obedient faith and courageous character without compromise and in the end of the story passes the ultimate test of integrity and keeps his word in the most difficult of circumstances.

He followed God even when it hurt and cost him dearly