

"The Walk of Faith"

Part 26

11:1-40

Introduction: We are currently looking at a verse in Hebrews which has taken us to the book of Judges to look at 4 people of faith whom the writer has lifted up to be an encouragement to the Hebrew believers.

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:

So far we have looked at Gideon and Barak and we have been permitted to see how these 2 men who struggled with their faith were used by God in a mighty way. Tonight we are going to look in some detail at Jephthae.

I. Jephthae

A. His Background

Notice Judges 10:15-18

Israel had repented of their sin and now they were looking for someone whom God would raise up to deliver them from the hand of the Ammonites. Now the Spirit of God will take us into the life of a man who, humanly speaking was not likely to be a leader in Israel.

Notice Judges 11:1

Here we are introduced to Jephthah. He was the son of Gilead but his mother was a prostitute.

Notice Judges 11:2

Because he was the son of a prostitute he was cast out by his brothers and forbidden to have any part in his father's estate. Because of his father's choices he had lost his place in his father's family.

I want to draw your attention to the words "*thrust out*". This is the word "*garash*" and it is used other places in God's Word. One of the places it is used is genesis 21. In this chapter we find the command of Sarah to Abraham to CAST OUT Ishmael and Hagar.

Genesis 21:9-11

⁹ *And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.*

¹⁰ *Wherefore she said unto Abraham, **Cast out** this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.*

¹¹ *And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.*

Now I point this out because pain came to Ishmael, Hagar, and Abraham all because of the choice which Abraham had made to father a child through Hagar. In the same way Jephthah suffered because of the choice which his father had made.

Application:

I want to use this as a reminder to all of us who are fathers. We can learn so much from the Old Testament examples of what others experienced and one of the lessons is right here. **OUR CHOICES WILL IMPACT NOT ONLY US BUT ALSO THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND US.** Both Gilead and Abraham desired that which God said was forbidden and when they partook of the forbidden fruit many others suffered. Let us who are the spiritual leaders of our families understand that when God's Word tells us something is forbidden God has warned us for our own good and often the good of others.

Notice Judges 11:3

The pressures and the rejection at home drove Jephthah from his father's house to the land of Tob where there was gathered to him "vain" or "worthless" men. Now these men were not worthless in the sense that they did nothing. The idea is they were men who did not fit in. They too would have been outcasts. We are told in this verse that they "went out with him/Jephthah". The idea is they became a group of men who fought against the enemy as they protected the Israelite villages.

Notice Judges 11:4-6

When it was time for Israel to face the Ammonites in battle they sent the elders of Gilead to Jephthah and they sought his leadership as they faced the Ammonites.

Let me present several lessons from these first 6 verses in Judges 11.

1. The time which Jephthah spent away from his people and with the vain men was a time which God used to sharpen his military skills. He had become a man of great character and now that the pressure was on his people they saw him as the man to deliver them from the oppression of the enemy.

Application:

This thought and application would have been like gold to the Hebrew believers who received the book of Hebrews. They too were now treated as outcasts because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Jephthah was hated because of his father's choice and the Hebrews were hated because of their choice to turn from Judaism and follow Jesus Christ.

But I am sure that in the minds of the Hebrews who were cast out of the Temple and out of their families they were questioning where God was in all of this. They could look at Jephthah and they could gather great encouragement because they could see that while Jephthah was cast out God used that time to prepare him for a mission. In the same way what they were facing was a time of training as God was making them into soldiers for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The Hebrews were now surrounded by people whom they would never have chosen to be with just as Jephthah but in his life they could see hope.

2. We must never think that God cannot use someone because of where they have come from or because of who their families are. Let me show you the words of G. Campbell Morgan concerning Jephthah.

"To those who are willing to see it, the story of Jephthah affords a solemn warning as to the wrong of treating a child born out of wedlock with contempt. It is constantly done, even by excellent people and it is wholly unjust. Here we see God raising up such a man to be a judge of his people, and to deliver them in time of grave difficulty. Jephthah was the son of a harlot, and had been thrust out from his inheritance by the legitimate sons of his father. The iron had entered into his soul, and he had gathered to himself a band of men, and had become a kind of 'outlawed freebooter. He was a man of courage and heroic daring, and it is impossible to read the story of the approach of the men of Gilead to him in the time of distress without recognizing the excellencies of his character. He can hardly be measured: by the standards of Israel, for he had lived outside the national ideal. Yet it is evident that he was a man of clear religious convictions. All of which should be remembered when the question of his vow is discussed. The picture of this man, defrauded by his brethren of his rightful inheritance, fleeing from them with the sense of wrong burning its way into his soul, is very natural and very sad. The one thing which we emphasize is that God did not count the wrong for which he was not responsible, a dis-

qualification. He raised him up; He gave him His Spirit; He employed him to deliver His people in the hour of their need. Let us ever refrain from the sin of being unjust to men by holding them disqualified for service or friendship by sins for which they are not to blame."

An unknown writer penned these words concerning Jephthah:

Jephthah thus lost family rights (v2) and was a social outcast but not in God's providential plan. And so although Jephthah's origins are even more clouded than Abimelech's, whose mother was at least a concubine, the Lord saw fit to use Jephthah in a remarkable way spite of the fact that he was an illegitimate child. God is still in the business of redeeming the lives of those born into broken family situations, praise God!

The Lord does not produce Christians the way General Motors produces cars, rolling them off an assembly line, differing only in a few options. We search Scripture in vain for the stereotype into which we must fit before He can use us. Yet many Christians suffer from a severe inferiority complex because they do not "fit the mold". Sometimes the fault is their's; often the complex comes from listening to other Christians. Thank God as Jephthah shows there is no such mold, the man nobody wanted. Driven out, he was alone in the world. Alone except for God. I do not have to be a prisoner of my past no matter how desperate that past was. God delights by using the unusable and in making what may appear ugly to men beautiful in His eyes."

Let me show you the words of **Warren Wiersbe**:

"No person should be blamed for the circumstances surrounding his or her birth. Why permit the things you cannot control to burden your life? Learn to accept them, and the Lord will work out His purposes in His own time. Opposition will one day give way to opportunity."

Wiersbe also points to Psalm 139.

Psalm 139:13-16

¹³ *For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*

¹⁴ *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*

¹⁵ *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*

¹⁶ *Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

Now let us get back to Jephthah's life.

II. Jephthah's Faith

We must look at the boldness and the faith of Jephthah in the exchange between him and the king of Ammon.

Notice Judges 11:11

It is so important here to see that Jephthah went to the Lord before he made any military move.

Notice Judges 11:12-24

Here in verse 24 we can see what it was that gave Gideon his boldness. It was his faith in his God.

Notice Judges 11:25-27

Jephthah had learned to stand while he had been in the time of training in the land of Tob. He knew the Truth and he would not back down.

III. The Victory

Notice Judges 11:29-33

Israel never lost a man in the battle. God delivered the children of Ammon into the hands of Israel and the victory was theirs.

What an encouragement this would have been to the Hebrew believers. Here was an outcast whom God trained and through faith he gained a great victory for the people of Israel. If the Hebrews would learn to walk by faith the possibilities were endless of what God could do through them.

Application:

No matter where you have come from or what your background is God can use you if you are willing to walk by faith. Too often there are people who sit in church and they refuse to get involved because they have an inferiority complex.

Conclusion:

Now let me show you what happened after Jephthah's victory.

Notice Judges 12:1-3

Ephraim was jealous because of the victory which God had given to Jephthah. They had also been jealous of Gideon.

Judges 8:1

And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.

Ephraim was jealous of the victories of others. Let me just say that if you choose to not get involved when there are open doors please do not allow jealousy to have a place in your life. It can be very costly.