

Taking Our Lives in Our Hands

Sometimes we have to do the right thing by ourselves, but the Lord will deliver us

Judges 12

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • February 16, In the year of our Lord, 2014

I. Jephthah's family and community rejected him.

- A. Later they want him back.
- B. He leads his people to victory.
- C. Sadly, he offered his daughter to God forever.
- D. Then, Jephthah had to fight his own brethren.

Persuasion:

I. Judges 12.1-7 – Jephthah fought his own brethren

1 Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, "Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!"

- A. Sounds like they had already made up their minds.
 - 1. We have heard from the men of Ephraim before.
 - a) Judges 8.1 showed them confronting Gideon,
 - b) wanting a larger part in the battle.
 - (1) Either Ephraim stayed away when the actual fighting took place,
 - (2) coming back later,
 - (a) claiming to want to do more, or
 - (b) they were perpetual complainers.

1 Now the men of Ephraim said to him, "Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?" And they reprimanded him sharply (Jdg 8.1).

- 2. In the case with Jephthah, they either wanted to

- a) share in the glory or
 - b) they truly wanted to help.
3. Yet, if they truly wanted to help,
- a) why did they not show up to fight at the beginning?
 - b) Why did they threaten to punish Jephthah in such a severe manner?
4. Should they not have honored him for ridding them of an enemy?
5. They were so courageous when opposing one man,
- a) making it look like they would have been fierce warriors, but
 - b) where were they when Jephthah really needed them?

B. Jephthah rebuked them,

2 And Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. 3 So when I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?"

1. Likewise, secularists often malign the church.
- a) Evolutionists mock us for believing in the Bible.
 - b) Yet, the church continues to bless nations throughout the history.
 - (1) In time we will see and hear
 - (2) the world singing the church's praises.
2. Jephthah had to take his own life into his hands.
- a) There was a job that needed to be done,
 - (1) although his own brethren would not come to help him.
 - (2) Nevertheless, he did it.
 - (a) He does not seem to have complained before.
 - (b) Likewise, Philippians 2 instructs us

- i) to go about our work without complaining,

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing (Phi 2.14).

- ii) There are times when you will be like Jephthah,

- (1) asking for help, but
- (2) none will be forthcoming.
- (3) Do your job anyway.

3. Sometimes the job might be dangerous, but

- a) we have to do what is right.
- b) If we are willing to do that,
 - (1) the Lord will deliver us,
 - (2) even as the Lord delivered Jephthah.
- c) Second Timothy 4 shows Paul's experience in similar matters,

16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! (2Ti 4.16–18).

4. What cause did Ephraim have for fighting Jephthah and the Gileadites?

- a) If you see someone working in the church,
 - (1) do not complain about their work;
 - (2) help them.
- b) If others complain about you,
 - (1) do not let them get you down;
 - (2) do what has to be done.

C. Jephthah goes to war again,

4 Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, "You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites."

1. Ephraim was wrong,
 - a) Jephthah was right.
 - b) Therefore, the Gileadites defeated Ephraim.
2. Ephraim thought the Gileadites were fugitives.
 - a) Ephraim thought the Gileadites were wild renegades
 - b) who went off and did things on their own.
3. How sad
 - a) that Ephraim could not see that the Lord was with Jephthah,
 - b) that all who opposed him suffered defeat, and
 - c) that Jephthah had to fight his own people.
4. Yet, not all opposed Jephthah, for
 - a) he did have brethren who fought with him.
 - (1) Remember that you will often feel alone, but
 - (2) others will stand with you.
 - b) Remember Elijah when he thought he was the only one left.
 - (1) He wanted to give up.
 - (2) God told the prophet that 7,000 still served God.
 - (a) That was a large number, but
 - (b) Elijah did not know about them.
 - (3) Similarly, we will not know what is going on in everyone's lives,
 - (a) we would be surprised to find out how many think and

(b) act as we do.

D. The famous Shibboleth,

5 The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites arrived. And when any Ephraimite who escaped said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," 6 then they would say to him, "Then say, 'Shibboleth!'" And he would say, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce it right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.

1. You may have heard the expression "Shibboleth"
 - a) in reference to someone who splits hairs.
 - b) That expression comes from this incident.
2. This provided a way to find out who was an Ephraimite, but not of Gilead.
 - a) They all looked and dressed the same.
 - b) Therefore, a way had to be devised to make them obvious.
3. The toll on Ephraim for opposing the deliverer of Israel was heavy.
 - a) 42,000 Ephraimites lost their lives.
 - b) While Jephthah and the Gileadites were the victors,
 - (1) they were also losers,
 - (2) for Israel became smaller and
 - (3) they fought one another.

E. The end of Jephthah,

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in among the cities of Gilead.

II. Judges 12.8–15 – More Judges

8 After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. 9 He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. 10 Then Ibzan died and

was buried at Bethlehem. 11 After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. 12 And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun. 13 After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. 14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years. 15 Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites.

A. Why does the Bible not tell us more about these judges?

1. Was it true with these three judges, as with previous ones,

- a) that Israel sinned each time,
- b) requiring deliverance by these judges?

2. I would say yes, based on what is written in Judges 2.11–19.

B. The Holy Spirit did not need to give us all the details of every case.

1. The writer simply showed us what happened before kings ruled in Israel.

2. We get a general idea of what it was like and

- a) this is an expanded form of the summary of the Book of Judges
- b) given in the last verse of the Book,

25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Jdg 21.25).

C. The Book of Judges

- 1. shows the self-created war and peace cycle of Israel, and
- 2. shows the need for leadership.

Exhortation:

I. Consecrate yourselves to the Lord today.

A. Be faithful to Him regardless of what others do.

B. Ask God how you can be of service to the church.