

Jephthah: A Man Committed to God

INTRODUCTION.

- A. The Bible is filled with stories of commitments made and honored. One such story is that of Jephthah. Jephthah was a man who, despite the cost, honored his commitments to the Lord.
- B. Let us examine the story of Jephthah and see what lessons we can glean that will help us in honoring our commitments to the Lord.

I. THE STORY OF JEPHTHAH. (Judges 11:1 - 12:7)

- A. There was a man named Gilead who had a son by a harlot. This man also had other sons by his wife. The other sons looked down on the son of the harlot, Jephthah, and drove him out of the house. Jephthah fled to the land of Tob and dwelt there. (11:1-3)
- B. In the process of time, the children of Ammon made war with the children of Israel. The elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. The elders of Gilead asked Jephthah to lead them against the Ammonites. (11:4-6)
- C. Jephthah asked the elders of Gilead why they had come to him since it was they who had cast him out. They told Jephthah they wanted him to lead them into battle and that he would be made head of Gilead. (11:7-11)
- D. Jephthah tried to reason with the king of Ammon, telling him that it was the Lord who had given the Israelites the land of the Ammonites. Since the Lord had given the land to the Israelites, it was not theirs to give back. The king of Ammon did not hearken unto Jephthah. (11:12-28)
- E. *{Read 11:29-33}* Jephthah, being moved by the Spirit of the Lord, went to the land of the Ammonites. Jephthah vowed that if the Lord gave him victory, that Jephthah would sacrifice to the Lord the first thing that met him at the door. The Lord delivered the children of Ammon into Jephthah's hands. (11:29-33)
- F. *{Read 11:34-40}* When Jephthah returned from battle, his only daughter met him at the door. Jephthah became upset because of his vow to the Lord. Jephthah's daughter told her father to follow through with his vow. All that his daughter asked for was two months in the mountains with her companions so that she could bewail her virginity. After two months the daughter returned and Jephthah fulfilled his vow. (11:34-40)
- G. The men of Ephraim were angry at Jephthah because he had not called them into battle. Jephthah told the men of Ephraim that he had called them but they did not come. The men of Ephraim were ready to battle against Jephthah. (12:1-3)

- H. Jephthah and the Gileadites fought against the men of Ephraim and killed forty two thousand of them. Jephthah judged Israel for six years and died. (12:4-7)

II. LESSONS LEARNED REGARDING COMMITMENT.

- A. We must count the cost of the commitment.
1. When Jephthah made his vow, it is apparent that he did not count the full cost. How could he have anticipated his daughter meeting him at the door upon his return home?
 2. We must count the cost of our Christianity. (Luke 14:25-33)
 3. If we find the cost to be greater than what we expected, we must, nevertheless, be willing to follow through with our commitment to the Lord.
- B. We must possess the will to be committed.
1. It took a lot of “will power” for Jephthah to follow through with the vow he had made to God.
 2. A person who wills himself to be totally committed to God will be committed to God.
- C. We must have complete love for the one to whom we are committed.
1. Jephthah apparently loved Jehovah God more than his daughter. This is not to say that Jephthah was sad about having to fulfill his vow, but his respect and love for God took precedence.
 2. We must love God more than any other person or thing that might challenge our commitment to God. (Matthew 10:34-39)
- D. Commitment requires sacrifice.
1. When Jephthah made his vow, his commitment to the Lord, he honored his commitment despite the cost of his sacrifice.
 2. When a person becomes a Christian, he is vowing or committing himself to Jesus Christ. In order to honor that commitment to the Lord, he must be willing to make the necessary sacrifices.
 3. Quite often, when we talk about making sacrifices as Christians, we think about giving up sinful practices such as alcohol, swearing, engaging in immoral acts, engaging in premarital sexual relations, etc. All are valid sacrifices. (Cf. Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-11)
 4. However, there is another side to making sacrifices as a Christian. There are times when we will have to make sacrifices so that we can obey what the Lord has commanded.

5. Consider the following areas of commitment where we must be willing to make the sacrifices.
 - a. Assembling with fellow Christians. (Hebrews 10:24-25)
 - (1) Worship Services
 - (2) Bible Classes
 - (3) Gospel Meetings
 - (4) What are we willing to give up so that we are able to assemble with saints? What is currently hindering you from being present both on Sundays and Wednesdays?
 - b. Personal evangelism.
 - (1) Learn how to conduct a home Bible study.
 - (2) Ask someone to study with you.
 - (3) Are you willing to sacrifice the time needed to study God's word so that you might be able to teach the lost? Are you willing to put aside fear and shyness so that you can invite someone to the worship services and Bible classes?
 - c. Correct an erring brother. (Galatians 6:1-4)
 - (1) Help a brother to turn from his error.
 - (2) Be willing to turn from a brother who is unwilling to repent and change.
 - (3) Are you willing to risk angering a brother in order to show him the error of his ways? Are you willing to withdraw your physical fellowship from a brother who is unwilling to repent and change?
 - d. Doing your part as a member of the local congregation. (I Corinthians 12:12-20)
 - (1) Teach a Bible class. This requires commitment and must study time.
 - (2) Contribute financially to the work of the church.
 - (3) Contribute to the upkeep of the physical meeting place, the building.
 - (4) Participate in the worship services by singing and by following along in your Bible during the sermon.

- e. Raise your children to respect God and to study His word.
 - (1) Teach your children the purpose of the worship services.
 - (2) Teach your children to study their Bible during the week. This weekly study time is a great opportunity to do their Bible lessons before Sunday or Wednesday.
 - (3) Teach your children to sing and to listen to the sermon, following along in their Bibles.
 - (4) Let your children see in your life an example of true commitment.
- E. Remember: True commitment begins and ends with sacrifices.
 - 1. A hen and a pig approached a church and read the advertised sermon topic: "What can we do to help the poor?" Immediately the hen suggested that they feed them bacon and eggs. The pig thought for a moment and said, "There is only one thing wrong with feeding bacon and eggs to the poor. For you it requires only a contribution, but for me it requires total commitment!" (Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, pg 73)
 - 2. The Lord does not accept contributions only. He expects and accepts acceptable sacrifices. Paul wrote, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*" (Romans 12:1, KJV)
 - 3. Note: Paul did not write, "... present your bodies a living contribution, ..." He said, "... a living sacrifice. ..."

CONCLUSION.

- A. Are you like Jephthah? Are you willing to honor your commitment to the Lord?
- B. How great is your commitment to the Lord?
 - 1. If you are a Christian, then your commitment to the Lord should be beyond measure. Nothing in your life will interfere with your service to the Lord. However, if your commitment to the Lord has been wavering or taking second place to some other commitment in your life, then you need to repent and change. You need to once again put God first within your life.
 - 2. If you are not a Christian, then consider committing yourself to the Lord today by answer His call to obedience. Commit yourself to Jesus Christ by obeying His command to believe and be baptized. (Mark 16:16) From that

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point on, work daily to put the Lord first in all things, making whatever sacrifices are necessary to remain totally committed unto the Lord.

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