

## Jephthah: Faith Despite Hardships

Ponder: Remaining faithful when it's really difficult.

Scripture: "For I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back on it" (Judges 11:35, NKJV).

Jephthah had a rough start in life through no fault of his own. Fellow-Israelites, especially his own brothers, despised him for being the son of a harlot. He fled to the land of Tob, which was east of the Jordan in the general area of Gilead and the country of Ammon. Like David centuries later, Jephthah made his living as a raider, and probably protected the Israelites on the east side of Jordan by raiding their enemies.

Upon request, Jephthah returned home to lead the men of Israel against Ammonite invaders, as recorded in Judges 11. He demonstrated faith in a number of ways.

First, he sought peace and justice, in keeping with God's nature. In short, he asked the Ammonite king why he was invading Israel. The king replied that Israel had taken Ammonite land long ago, and he wanted it back. This led to Jephthah's second demonstration of faith.

Look at Jephthah's remarkable knowledge of the books of Moses. He rehearsed in great detail what actually happened as Israel came out of Egypt. The Ammonites had been the aggressors, and the Lord had given Israel victory. Thus Israel occupied the territory fair and square. The Ammonites had no legitimate complaint.

Ammon's king ignored Jephthah's sound reasoning, so the fight was on! Prior to the battle, Jephthah vowed that if the Lord gave him victory, he would offer as a burnt offering the first thing that came out of his house. Keep in mind that animals commonly went in and out of houses back then. Nevertheless, we remember that it was his daughter who first came out. The Lord has never accepted human sacrifice, so it is doubtful that Jephthah literally offered her. More likely she was set apart for service to God and could never marry. Brother Rob Redden authored a scholarly paper on this subject which I commend to your reading.

Hebrews 11:32 includes Jephthah among the great examples of faith. Jephthah was far from flawless, but he trusted the Lord and received His blessing.

Song: "In The Hour Of Trial"

Prayer: Father, we thank You for recording the example of great people of faith like Jephthah. Help us to be faithful even when it is difficult. In Jesus' name, Amen.