

Lessons from a Decaying Culture:

A Study in the Book Of Judges

Intro:

- Do these situations sound familiar? (unwanted then needed, upset yet refuse to listen to truth, sticky situation and bargaining with God)
- Background for Jephthah. Judges' Cycle but only worse!
 - Let your "gods" save you. (Judges 10:11-14)
 - God's grace delivers

I. Jephthah- The Man who Overcame

- He overcame a difficult upbringing (Jdg 11:1-3)
 - Mother was a prostitute
 - Unwanted by family
 - Excommunicated and joined a group of outlaws
- He overcame the initial temptation to stick it to the tribe. (Jdg 11:4-11)
 - Ammonites attack and tribe that ousted him asks for his help.
- He overcame an enemy bent on fighting (Jdg 11:12-28)
 - Ask "Why" and the justification was based on error
 - Corrects
 - Historically-their facts were wrong
 - Theologically- God gave us this land
 - Time- 300 years, why now?
 - Refuses to listen, prepare for war

II. Jephthah-The Man who made a Foolish Vow (Judges 11:30-35)

- Hard story. Many try to save Jephthah and tone down the story
 - Sacrifice to Temple, symbolic, etc.
 - Book of Judges provides real tragic stories including examples NOT to follow
- Why was the Vow wrong to make?
 - Wrong to kill your kids
 - Pagan culture influence
 - Wrong view of God
 - Don't bargain with God for a deal
 - Wrong because he made a demand from God that God never demanded
 - Scary things we do when we do in the name of a god in our own image
- Common Sense to admit the vow was mistake.

III. Jephthah- The Violent Man with no Mercy (Judges 12:1-7)

- Increasingly becomes more violent and unmerciful
- Say "Sibboleth"

IV. Lessons to Take Away

- Hurt People tend to Hurt People
 - Can we see the sad behind the bad?
- We Can't Deal with God like we Deal with other People
 - Trust, Obey, don't attempt to Manipulate
- When All is said and done, All prayers must end with "Not my will but Your will be done."
 - Does God owe us?
- We Still Struggle with this Concept of Grace
 - Philip Yancey's definition of Grace: "Nothing you can do to make God love you more than He loves you now. Nothing you can do to make God love you less than He loves you now."
 - Grace to accept but grace to change
 - We become extenders to that grace to others

