

IMPACT

I **M**ust **P**ersonally **A**cknowledge **C**hrist **T**oday
Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; *in all your ways acknowledge Him* and He shall direct your path.
Proverbs 3:5-6

Passage: Hebrews 11:32 “And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of...Jephthah...” [The list of men quoted in this verse is not in the order of when they actually served Israel.]

Quote: “It’s amazing how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit.” Unknown

Because of their sins, God sold Israel into the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites who harassed and oppressed them for eighteen years. “And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!’ So the LORD said to the children of Israel, ‘Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore *I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.*’ And the children of Israel said to the LORD, ‘*We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.*’ So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel. Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah. And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, ‘Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.’”¹

Jephthah, the son of Gilead and a harlot, enters the scene. When they came of age, his half-brothers drove Jephthah from his father’s house and he dwelled among “worthless men” who joined themselves to him. The Hebrew word for worthless means “to make empty and refers to idle people looking for something to do.”² They made their living by going on raids. Most likely this is how Jephthah got the reputation for being a mighty, courageous man. The very people who drove him from his father’s home knew of his leadership

ability. When the Ammonites attacked Israel, they asked Jephthah to lead them in battle, and to rule over them. He replied, “If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I be your head?” They gladly agreed. The power of God came over Jephthah and he sprang into action. He tried diplomacy, rehearsing how Israel had gotten the land from the LORD, all to no avail. The stage was set for war.

Determined to gain victory, Jephthah made a rash vow to the LORD. “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” Jephthah returned home after a tremendous victory. When he came to his house, his daughter came out to meet him! She was his only child. When he saw her, he tore his clothes, and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For **I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it.**” So she said to him, ‘My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies...’”³ It is difficult to imagine God blessing human sacrifice which He repeatedly condemned.⁴ Many commentators hold that she would never marry and have children, considered a curse in Israel. The text speaks of her “bemoaning her virginity” and that “she knew no man.”⁵ Jephthah’s oath brought with it a huge price!

Whatever his shortcomings, Jephthah was a man of his word who demonstrated commendable faith in God. Christians would do well to remember, “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—*Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.*”⁶ May we be known as people of our word—that our “yes” means “yes” and our “no” means “no” whether prayed to God, or said to men.⁷

¹ Judges 10:10–18 ² W. Wiersbe ³ Judges 11:35-36 ⁴ Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:10 ⁵ 11:37-40 ⁶ Eccl.5:4-5 ⁷ Matt.5:37