

## **Judges 11:1-28– Identifying a Good Leader**

TSK, Handfuls, HebrewLexicon, Henry, Gill, Geneva, Poole, Trapp, JFB, Expositor, Delitzsch, Clarke, Barnes?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Surely good leaders don't grow on trees and they don't fall out of the sky. But good leaders – husbands, elders, and politicians- are a necessity for Christ's kingdom. So it is most important that you identify who the good leaders are. This is what you will about from God's Word today.

Our headings are:

**A common man**

**A courageous man**

**A cunning (聪明的, 才智多谋的) man**

Our goals are: **That you will learn what makes a good leader, that you will embrace a good leader, and that you will work together for Christ's kingdom – for its prosperity and expansion.**

### **A Common Man**

1 Now **Jephthah the Gileadite** was a mighty man of valor, but he was the **son of a harlot**; and Gilead begot Jephthah. 2 **Gilead's wife bore sons**; and when his wife's sons grew up, **they drove Jephthah out**, and said to him, "You shall have **no inheritance in our father's house**, for you are the son of another woman." 3 Then Jephthah **fled from his brothers** and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him.

**1. The writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 11:32) called Jephthah a man of faith. He had faith in Jesus Christ.** So we must work from there. This is what made the difference in his work. No one is good without faith in Jesus Christ.

**2. Jephthah was a common man.** Yes, he was a man of valor (英勇), but he was son of a wicked woman and a wicked man, Gilead. Gilead and Jephthah's mother were not married. So Jephthah had no right of inheritance. This sin was a barrier to his relationship with God.

**Deuteronomy 23:2** "One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

You will remember that this curse (咒诅) was not made to punish the child; this curse was to prevent parents from sinning against the Lord in this way. Remember how David's son by his adultery with Bathsheba died? Yet, there was hope for him. Though his parents were sinful, he knew that Jesus would come to remove curses from his children on the cross. The work of Jesus made this common man a valuable tool in the army of the Lord. Jesus removed that veil of separation between God and man!

**3. Jephthah's father's sons by marriage did not accept Jephthah into the family because of his illegitimate birth and drove him away as soon as they were able.** (Your sins do affect other people.) But his brothers had no right to threaten his life or his work. And the men of the city supported Jephthah's brothers' actions. Fearing for his life, Jephthah fled. Isn't it interesting that

**Joseph, David, and Moses, 3 of the great leaders of God's people, were also innocently forced to flee from their own people.** Jephthah moved to Tob, which means "good."

#### **4. Being forced to flee from his brothers, Jephthah joined with "empty" not "worthless" men.**

These men were treated as useless. This same word translated "worthless" is used to describe empty containers. These empty men (went out) raided (偷袭) lands that were probably given to Israel but not yet captured. The translators assumed they were raiding because they chose to translate "empty" as "worthless."

David employed similar tactics of attacking the enemies to save Israel when he was forced out of Israel by Saul.

#### **5. Lessons:**

**a. The world might treat you as ignorant (无知的, 愚昧的) and useless to society,** but don't let their view of you prevent you from doing your duty to the Lord. Have you been passed-over as a husband, wife, or leader? Keep working where you are! The Lord will raise you up at the right time.

**b. Hard lives help to strengthen men for the task of leading God's people.** Don't avoid leaders because of their ethnic origins, their poverty, or their nationality. Look at their qualifications. Are they spiritually strong to do the spiritual work they are called to do?

And don't complain about the hardness of your life; you'll be thankful for it. A hard life prepares you for future battles.

### **A Courageous Man**

4 It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. 5 And so it was, when the people of **Ammon made war against Israel**, that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6 Then they said to Jephthah, "**Come and be our commander**, that we may fight against the people of Ammon." 7 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "**Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father's house?** Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?" 8 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." 9 So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "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?" 10 And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The **LORD will be a witness between us**, if we do not do according to your words." 11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them; and **Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.**

**1. Being convicted by faithful preaching to change their way of life, the people of God determinedly repented (悔改) and** God forgave them. But that was not good for the Ammonites. When the Ammonites saw Israel getting their lives in order and knew they were no longer going to get the yearly tribute (贡物) from Israel, they crossed from east of the Jordan and came to war against Israel.

#### **2. So Israel's leaders decided to go to Tob and try to get Jephthah to lead them against Ammon.**

This was a good sign! The Israelites did not act like they knew everything! They knew they needed help from God leaders not only repent and return to God, but they also needed help to **continue to grow.** Preaching pointed out both needs.

**3. Jephthah's initial response was to question the men of Israel in order to make them aware of their sins and make them repent.** Similarly, Joseph had humbled his brothers so they might confess their sin of selling him. In order to see if they were truly sorry, Jephthah asked them if they would make him their leader. They agreed. And they swore this on oath. Jephthah wanted to be sure they would not go back to "everyone doing what was right in his own eyes."

**4. What is noticeable here was Jephthah's faith in the Lord.** He never once assumed that he was able to defeat Ammon by his skills and smarts. **He knew that victory came from the Lord.** He said: "...the Lord delivers them to me." And notice verse 11. He took his oath before the Lord as well. This **leader was willing to open up his campaign against Ammon, not with the sword, but with supplication** (祈祷, 请求). Israel found a ruler with faith, not just a man with courage.

#### **5. Lessons:**

**a. It is important to admit that you need leaders**...that you don't know everything, and that you need to be taught and disciplined. Do you see how many churches have fallen asleep because of the lack of faithful teachers? Indeed, this was the failure of the church's leaders in Ezekiel 34. The sheep became prey (猎物) to wild animals. And do you see how many have had to run to the state for social assistance because deacons have failed to do their work?

**b. Like Israel to Jephthah, you must make Jesus your Lord if you want to be saved from hell.**

#### **A Cunning man**

12 Now Jephthah **sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon**, saying, "What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?" 13 And the king of the people of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, "Because **Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt**, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and to the Jordan. Now therefore, restore those lands peaceably." 14 So Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, 15 and said to him, "Thus says Jephthah: **'Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the land of the people of Ammon;** 16 'for when Israel came up from Egypt, they walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. 17 'Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please let me pass through your land." But the king of Edom would not heed. And in like manner they sent to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained in Kadesh. 18 'And they went along through the wilderness and bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab, came to the east side of the land of Moab, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not enter the border of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab. 19 'Then Israel sent messengers to **Sihon king of the Amorites**, king of Heshbon; and Israel said to him, "Please let us pass through your land into our place." 20 'But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together, encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 21 **'And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country.** 22 'They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. 23 'And now the LORD God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel; **should you then possess it?** 24 'Will you not possess whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God takes possession of before us, we will possess. 25 'And now, are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel? Did he ever fight against them? 26 'While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time? 27 'Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.'"

**1. Jephthah's first action was to write diplomatic letters 外交信函 to the leaders of Ammon? Why?**

**Because he was wise!**

a. Knowing that **Ammon was ready for war but Israel was not, Jephthah delayed matters to get Israel ready.**

b. It is always good to try to avoid **unnecessary bloodshed** and death. This attacks the image of God in man.

**2. In his letter, Jephthah ask Ammon why they were attacking.** This was shrewd. Surely this communion took days, with no cell phones and texting. **Ammon's response was that they were trying to reclaim** land that Israel had stolen. Strange that this accusation (指控) was now coming but wasn't make earlier by Eglon, the fat king.

**3. Jephthah's response was to deny their charge and give a detailed historical account to prove it. Israel had taken no land from the Moabites, Ammonites (sons of Lot) and Edom (Jacob's brother).**

**Deuteronomy 2:9** "Then the LORD said to me, `Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you *any* of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.'" [19] `And *when* you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession."

And the fact was that Israel had taken great pains to avoid trouble with Moab, Ammon, and Edom, and traveled all around them as they traveled from Egypt to Canaan 300 years before. And even when Israel fought with Og and Sihon, the Amorite kings, those kings were the aggressors. **How knowledgeable this leader was!**

**4. Then Jephthah brilliantly used his argument to stick spiritual dagger into the hearts of the Ammonites:** He told them that if their god (Chemosh) wanted them to get the land, he would make them get it. Jephthah wasn't showing the equivalency between Jehovah and Chemosh, but he wanted to make them blame their own god for their failure to capture more land. After all, **Jehovah would not capture land, put it into Israel's hand, and then tell them to give it to the Ammonites.** Rather, Israel had an obligation to use and protect what God had given to them. **This was his confident faith in God.** This was his confidence that Ammon's god was nothing!

**5. Lessons:**

a. **If someone is lazy, he is not fit to be a leader.** The one who plays video games all the time is not fit to be a husband or the father of your children. An elder (教会长老) who has no good advice is not a good elder to have.

b. **A good leader must learn to use God's Words effectively to destroy the arguments of men.**

A good leader must therefore know the Word of God well. A father must be able to tell a man or woman who is not a Christian why he won't allow his daughter or son to date him. He must be able to explain how evolutionary thinking (进化论思潮) undermines society. He must be able to explain why all other people, except for Christians, will go to hell. In other words, a good leader is wise.

1Peter 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—（因为神的旨意原是要你们行善，可以堵住那糊涂无知人的口。）

**c. Do you cherish what God has given you? Do you cherish his salvation in Christ, his kingdom, and his new name?**

### **Conclusion:**

Though Jephthah was a common man in his background, he was a courageous and cunning man and therefore fit for service as a leader in Christ's kingdom. And make no doubt about it: **His motivation for his work was his faith in Jesus Christ.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. **If God calls you to serve as a leader in Christ's kingdom in home, church, or state, don't let your hard background hinder you from service.** Respond by loving Christ, knowing his Word, calling on his Holy Spirit for help so that you might be courageous and wise and adequately be able to fulfill your task.

2. **If you have need for a leader, ignore the poor origin or ethnic background of the man and look to see if he loves Christ and is courageous and wise.** These characteristics of your leader will put you in good stead.

3. **Either as a leader or a follower, your ultimate goal must be to bring praise to the Savior**（救主）. Die to yourself and live for Christ's glory.

Finally: The Gospel I am preaching to you today could be either life or death for you. If you receive the fact that Jesus conquered your greatest enemy death, and its mother, sin（罪），then you will have life. If you reject Jesus, then you will and live with death forever. It is the most important choice you will make all of your life.