

JEPHTHAH – THE POWER OF FINDING FORGIVENESS

What does it mean to forgive or to be forgiven? We really need know! After all, the words forgive, forgiven, forgives, and forgiving appear _____ times in our English Bibles. The Christian lives under the constant command to “forgive” “as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven” (Eph. 4:32)!

What does it mean to forgive or to be forgiven?

- Does it mean “forgiving God?”
- Does it mean “forgiving yourself first?”
- Does it mean “venting at an inanimate object or writing a letter to a phantom who will never receive it?”

Forgiveness is the oil that makes the machinery of life run smoothly. The Christian who fails to forgive will find the gears of his Christian life grinding to a halt on deposits of bitterness.

Judges 11 introduces us to a man who first found it in his heart to forgive and today finds his name listed in the Hall of Faith (Heb. 11:32). Jephthah tapped into the power of finding forgiveness. Let’s see what we can learn from his example

When is Forgiveness Most Difficult (v. 1-3)?

All would agree that Jephthah’s life was no fairy-tale! He was born as the illegitimate son of Gilead’s union with a harlot (11:1). He was rejected by his half brothers (11:2) who disinherited him and banished him. The circumstances that he faced were not of his own making! Jephthah was injured by two of life’s greatest traumas:

1. Humiliation (v.1). He was born a social outcast (Ps. 10:13; 68:5).
2. Rejection (v. 2-3). While he was logically the first-born son and seemingly entitled to the status of that position, he was rejected!

Note: Forgiveness is most difficult when . . .

- We have been rejected by those closest to us.
- We are victims of circumstances beyond our control.

- We have been falsely accused.
- Our reputation has been smeared throughout the community.

Question: Can you think of any other bible characters who suffered challenges similar to those suffered by Jephthah?

How Forgiveness is Granted (v. 4-10)

Americans are accustomed to apologizing and to accepting the apologizer. The word “apology” is not found in the Bible. In fact, the Greek word *apologia* means to offer a defense. True biblical forgiveness is built on more than a meaningless apology. Let’s look at the steps that brought reconciliation between Jephthah and his brothers.

1. The facts are clear (v. 4-7). James 5:16 admonishes us to “confess our faults one to another.”
2. The offended party is honest (v. 7-9). Jephthah was no passive participant in the process of reconciliation. Jephthah makes certain that those who offended him understood what they did (Matt.18:5-7; Luke 17:3). The offended party and the offender are both to take an active role in the process of reconciliation (Matt. 5:22-23).
3. The offender is genuine (v. 10). Offenders who genuinely repent change (Luke 19:8)!

Why Forgiveness is Necessary (v. 11-29)

When Jephthah was reconciled to his brothers, blessings became obvious:

1. The work of the Lord was clearly understood (v. 14-27). Jephthah was able to discuss the history of God’s working with amazing clarity.
2. The power of the Lord was once again available (v. 29). No forgiveness – no power. Find forgiveness – find power!

Those who fail to find forgiveness run the risk of losing spiritual power!

- The power of prayer (I Pet. 3:7).
- The power of a clear account with God (Mark 11:25).
- The power of a clean conscience (Acts 24:16).

There is great power to be found in finding forgiveness!