

BOOK OF JUDGES
UNNECESSARY CONFLICT
JUDGES 12:1-15

Introduction

There once were two men who lived in a small village and got into a terrible dispute that they could not resolve. So they both decided to talk to the same elder wise man in their village only they refused to go to him together.

The first man went to the wise man's home and told his version of what happened. When he finished, the wise man said, "You're absolutely right."

The next night, the second man called on the wise man and told his side of the story. The wise man responded, "You're absolutely right."

Afterward, the wise man's wife, hearing her husband counsel both of these, scolded her husband. "Those men told you two entirely different stories and you told them they were absolutely right. That's impossible! They can't both be absolutely right!"

The wise man turned to his wife and said, "You're absolutely right!"

As a Pastor, I am called on from time to time to try to help **RESOLVE DISAGREEMENTS** and **CONFLICTS** between individuals. And let me say that trying to help **RESOLVE DISAGREEMENTS** and **CONFLICTS** are some of the most difficult things that I am called on to do!

Normally, its difficult because those who are involved or engaged in a **DISAGREEMENT** or **CONFLICT** of some sort see things in an entirely different way and it is sometimes nearly impossible to get the two sides to **AGREE ON THE FACTS** and on the best way to **RESOLVE** their issues!

If **DISAGREEMENTS** and **CONFLICTS** were simple to **RESOLVE**, there wouldn't be any need for the help of others as **REASONABLE** people should be able to sit down and **WORK THROUGH ISSUES TOGETHER** and **RESOLVE** their own **CONFLICTS**!

This is especially true if both parties are **BELIEVERS IN CHRIST**!

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There are however some things we should note when a **DISAGREEMENT** or **CONFLICT** takes place so that we can navigate through it without making it any **WORSE** and without **DAMAGE** to ourselves or others!

In our text, we see an **UNNECESSARY CONFLICT** take place between **BRETHREN**! May we both see the **FOLLY** of it and **LEARN** from it! That's a large part of why these things are given to us in **SCRIPTURE**!
[Read *Judges 12:1-6*]

The author wraps up the aftermath of **JEPHTHAH'S** great **VICTORY** against the **AMMONITES**, by recounting to us this very tragic event in the history of the **ISRAELITES**!

I. WE SEE THE ACCUSATION AGAINST JEPHTHAH BY THE MEN OF EPHRAIM! (12:1)

These men accused **JEPHTHAH** of slighting them by leaving them out of the fight against the **AMMONITES**.

One might think that the **MEN OF EPHRAIM** would be **JOYOUS** that they didn't have to fight! We saw that even **JEPHTHAH** tried to avert having to fight the **AMMONITES** to begin with by using **DIPLOMACY**! When that didn't work, then he enjoined them in **BATTLE**, but it would have been better if the **DIPLOMACY** had worked!

But, apparently the men of **EPHRAIM** had some rather strong feelings about this! (Could it have been out of **BITTER ENVY** or **PRIDE**? Quite possibly!) To show how strong they felt about it they stated what they intended to do to **JEPHTHAH** over this!

Burning **JEPHTHAH'S** house upon him would have been a pretty strong reaction! No other possibility of satisfying the **MEN OF EPHRAIM** was given here! They were out to destroy **JEPHTHAH**! I think that's why we see in the verses that follow how that **JEPHTHAH** acted as harshly as he did against them!

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II. WE SEE JEPHTHAH ANSWER THE MEN OF EPHRAIM'S ACCUSATION! (12:2-3)

Let's think about what the **FACTS** actually were in this **DISPUTE**? As is normally the case, only the **PARTIES INVOLVED** and the **LORD HIMSELF** really know!

(This is a good example of **HE SAID** and **THEY SAID!** The **ACCOUNTS** here of what each side **SAYS** happened **DO NOT AGREE!** Could I tell you that is normally the case when there is a **MISUNDERSTANDING?!)**

JEPHTHAH gave them his side of the story here and then he **REBUKED** them for **NOT HELPING** him when he could have used the help. He also **REBUKED** them for both **ACCUSING** and **THREATENING** him when he had **HAZARDED HIS LIFE** and the **LORD** gave him a **VICTORY** that they all benefitted from! (Note: He did give the **LORD** the credit for the **VICTORY!**)

The **SCRIPTURE** does not tell us who was telling the **TRUTH** here, but we will see that the **LORD** allowed **JEPHTHAH** to prevail in this **DISPUTE!** So there's that, which is a good indication!

JEPHTHAH could not understand why these **BRETHREN** were picking a fight with him with the war being over and the **VICTORY** having been won!

The **MEN OF EPHRAIM** were being **PETTY** here and **QUARRELING** because of their **PRIDE** being hurt as they were **ENVOIOUS** of not being a part of the **VICTORY!** Yet, they were willing to take the **LIFE** of a fellow **ISRAELITE** whom **GOD** had used to **DELIVER ISRAEL**. That was **NOT** a good decision!

For **JEPHTHAH** all that he was about to do here was a matter of **SELF-DEFENSE!** His **LIFE** and **HIS HOUSE** were at stake!

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All of this sounds pretty ridiculous to us! **CONFLICTS** usually **LOOK SENSELESS** to onlookers, but not to the **CONFLICTING PARTIES!**

The **EPHRAIMITES** had forgotten who their real enemy was! They were willing to **WRONG A BROTHER** and **OTHERS** over their thinking that they had been **SLIGHTED** by **JEPHTHAH!**

III. WE SEE THE FALLOUT OF EPHRAIM'S DISAGREEMENT AND CONFLICT WITH JEPHTHAH! (12:4-6)

This is **NOT** the first time that **EPHRAIM** had a problem with one of the **JUDGES**. Remember they had a problem **GIDEON** as well! **GIDEON** handled them with **DIPLOMACY**, but they didn't threaten **GIDEON** like they did **JEPHTHAH**. (*Judges 8:1-3*)

What **EPHRAIM** managed to do by their **THREAT** is stir up **JEPHTHAH** and the **GILEADITES** against them!

In the end, 42,000 men of **EPHRAIM** lost their lives! (That's pretty serious stuff right there! Think too of all of the wives and children that were affected by the **FOOLISH ACTIONS** of these men!)

IV. SO, WHAT SHOULD WE LEARN FROM ALL OF THIS?

A. We Should GUARD OUR HEARTS against the SINS of BITTER ENVYING and PRIDE!

Proverbs 14:30– “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: But envying the rottenness of the bones.”

Galatians 5:26– “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

James 3:14, 16– “14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth...16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

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Proverbs 16:18—“**Pride** goeth before destruction, And an haughty spirit before a fall.”

Proverbs 13:10—“Only by **pride** cometh contention...”

We Should **GUARD OUR HEARTS** against the **SINS** of **BITTER ENVYING** and **PRIDE!**

B. We Should GUARD OUR LIPS And Be Careful With Our Words!

James 3:5— “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”

James 1:19— “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:”

Proverbs 13:3—“3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: But he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.”

Proverbs 21:23— “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue Keepeth his soul from troubles.”

C. We Should GUARD AGAINST CONFLICT And Consider The Possible Effects To Ourselves And Others Of CONFLICT As Well As All That We Say And Do!

Philippians 2:3-4—“3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

V. JEPHTHAH’S DEATH. (Vs 7)

VI. OTHER OBSCURE BUT IMPORTANT JUDGES. (Vs 8-15)