

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

Part II: History Of The Era Of The Judges

B. The Record Of Specific Judges, Judges 3:7-16:31

10. Jephthah's Judgeship, Judges 10:6-12:7

d. Ephraim's Defeat Due To Frustration By Unproductive, Faithless Fear

(Judges 12:1-6)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people today are expressing frustration at a lack of fulfilling productivity in their lives:

(1) It is happening in our national politics: (a) Republican candidate for president Jeb Bush, who once thought he could readily win the mantle of the presidency on the heels of two relatives who did, but who now trails Donald Trump in the polls, "insults Mr. Trump -- 'a jerk,' 'unhinged.' He told the Journal's Mary Kissel this week: 'Donald Trump's not a serious candidate' . . . Mr. Bush uncorks witless, prefab sound bites: Mr. Trump is a 'chaos candidate.'" (Peggy Noonan, "Palin and the GOP's Uncertain Trumpeters," The Wall Street Journal, January 23-24, 2016, p. A13)

Ms. Noonan called for some leader in the Republican Party, "the obvious one" being "Jeb Bush" himself, "to address Donald Trump and his rise in a thoughtful, serious way" in a "speech -- a serious, respectful, historically grounded one," for "(t)his moment is part of the political history of the United States," and "(s)omeone has to be as big as history" and explain the Trump phenomenon. (Ibid.)

(b) On the other hand, Michael M. Phillips' story, "Anxiety Fuels Trump's Fans" in the journal, (Ibid., January 27, 2016, p. A1) exposed frustration in Trump's supporters over a lack of productivity in their lives, claiming, "(M)any in the crowds swarming to Mr. Trump are worried about losing economic ground; angry at politicians who they believe put personal above national interests; convinced the Obama administration wants to take their guns and leave them defenseless in an unsafe world; and uneasy in an America they see as slipping away from its roots."

(3) We face it locally as believers: people visiting our Church report how many other churches are "slipping," that they are searching for a church that teaches Bible truth instead of going off into other unfulfilling endeavors.

Need: *So we ask, "What is the cause and cure for the frustrating lack of productivity in many lives today?!"*

- I. When Ephraim in Judges 12:1 expressed frustration for unproductiveness, this tribe already had a long history of being frustrated over a lack of blessing when the cause was its own lack of faith due to fear:**
- A. Back in Joshua 17:14-18, Ephraim in frustration had complained to Joshua when their fear was their problem:
1. While Joshua oversaw the apportioning of Israel's tribal inheritances, Ephraim and Manasseh had complained that their land allotments were too small as God had given them many people, Joshua 17:14.
 2. Joshua replied that if they were so great in number, they should go up to the Ephraim hill country, cut down its forests and clear out its pagan inhabitants to obtain the room they desired, Joshua 17:15.
 3. The tribal leaders continued their complaint, adding that even the hill country was not enough room, and that the lowlands in their allotments were inhabited by Canaanites who had iron chariots, Joshua 17:16.
 4. Joshua answered that since they were such a great people, they had great power and could clear both the hill country and the lowlands of the Canaanites, Joshua 17:17-18. Joshua had previously led Israel to victory over Canaanite chariots in a nearby region (cf. Joshua 11:1-15), trusting God to defeat better armed enemy soldiers providing Israel trusted God and did not fear her foes as directed in Deuteronomy 20:1-4.
 5. Then, trying to spur these people courageously to overcome their fear of Canaanite chariots to clear the land of pagans and forests, Joshua had repeatedly exemplified the responsible action Ephraim was to take:
 - a. He moved the tabernacle to Shiloh in Ephraim's hill country where trees and pagans had to be removed to set it up, Jos. 18:1; Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Jos. 18:1; Map 4: "The Twelve Tribes of Israel."
 - b. Joshua also chose as his inheritance Timnath-Serah in that Ephraim hill country, personally exemplifying the clearing of the land of trees and pagans, and he also even built the city there, Joshua 19:49-50.
- B. Not yet having learned to handle their fear by trusting God, Ephraim had then complained to Gideon for excluding them in his initial attack force when it was Ephraim's fault due to fear, Jud. 8:1; 6:1-2; Deut. 20:1-4:
1. Ephraim's complaint to Gideon for not including them in his initial attack erred, for Ephraim had hidden from the Midianites in Judges 6:1-2 versus trusting God to fight them as Deuteronomy 20:1-4 had taught.
 2. Gideon diplomatically appeased the Ephraimites, claiming their tribe was greater than his tribe of Manasseh, and that God had let them conquer the Midianite princes of Oreb and Zeeb, Judges 8:2-3.

- C. Still not having learned their lesson, the Ephraimites in Judges 12:1 chided Jephthah for not asking them to help him fight Ammon, threatening to burn his house down over him though Ephraim's fear was to blame:
1. Jephthah replied to Ephraim's complaint that he had actually called for their help, but that they had not responded, so he had risked his life to attack Ammon without Ephraim's manpower, Judges 12:2.
 2. Also, long before Jephthah was asked by Gilead to lead them, Ephraim itself had been attacked by Ammon, but Ephraim had not responded in faith in God to repel Ammon like Deuteronomy 20:1-4 taught, but had succumbed to Ammonite oppression in fear and unbelief, Judges 10:9, 18; Judges 11:1-11.

II. Ephraim's long frustration over its persistent unproductiveness due to unbelief caused by fear finally backfired as they in great frustration insulted Jephthah's men so that Gilead crushed them, Jud. 12:2-6:

- A. The men of Ephraim crossed the Jordan east to Zaphon to fight Gilead and burn Jephthah's house down over his head, claiming that they were upset that he had not asked them to help him fight Ammon, Jud. 12:1 NIV.
- B. Jephthah replied that he had indeed asked Ephraim for help, but that Ephraim had not heeded his request, so he had risked his life to lead Gilead in an attack on Ammon without the men of Ephraim, Judges 12:2-3a. Jephthah then asked the Ephraimites why they were then coming out to fight against him, Judges 12:3b.
- C. Having no fitting answer for Jephthah's question much as the Ammonites before had failed to answer him (Jud. 11:27-28), Ephraim in frustration taunted the Gileadites, calling them deserters from Ephraim and Manasseh, Jud. 12:4; Ryrie St. Bib., KJV, 1978, fn. to Jud. 12:4. This taunt called the Gileadites outcasts, a reference to the initial status of Jephthah and his band (Jud. 11:1-3), and it infuriated not only Jephthah and his band but all of Gilead who now fully supported them. (J. F. B., Com. on the Whole Bible, 1977, p. 195)
- D. The taunt thus sparked a military retaliation by Gilead, and it crushed the Ephraimites in battle, with Gilead seizing the fords of the Jordan River to kill every fleeing Ephraimite who tried to cross it to get home, Jud. 12:5a. The men of Ephraim could not form the "sh" sound, so, when asked by the Gileadite guards at the river to say "Shibboleth" (*shibbolet*), meaning "flowing stream" (B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 987) to refer to the Jordan, if they instead said "Sibboleth" (*sibbolet*), meaning "ear of wheat" (Ibid., p. 688) they exposed their Ephraimite identity and were slain, Jud. 12:5b-6a. In all, 42,000 Ephraimites died, Jud. 12:6b.

Lesson: *Unbelief in God out of fear left the men of Ephraim with little blessing, frustrating them, a frustration that led them to taunt and thus infuriate the men of Gilead who reacted by crushing the men of Ephraim in battle.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) If presented the opportunity to advance in blessing by trusting God, may we not fail to trust Him out of fear lest in frustration we tragically miss His blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In our sermon introduction, we noted that many evangelical churches even in our area are "slipping" away from a focus on the ministry of God's Word, with some believers increasingly looking elsewhere for "spiritual food."

Why? The problem is the same as that of the ancient tribe of Ephraim -- fear. Many pastors and church leaders fear that if they make Bible teaching their main focus as a church like Paul commands in 2 Timothy 4:1-2 that today's man in the pew will lose interest and go elsewhere, and that this will cause the church's income to drop.

To the contrary, Nepaug Church is staying with Bible teaching, and we have an encouraging illustration to that end: When Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer first published his book, True Evangelism in 1911, a work critiquing false forces in evangelism, eminent Christian leaders like John R. Rice and Bob Jones, Sr., founder of Bob Jones University, pleaded with Moody Press to remove it from publication as they opposed its contents. (Robert L. Sumner, ed., The Biblical Evangelist, Sept.-Oct. 2005, p. 2, "Book Reviews"; review of R. Larry Moyer's, 21 Things God Never Said)

However, Mr. Henry Varley in the foreword to Chafer's book, asserted of that work, "You have not failed to 'hold fast the form of sound words,' which the Spirit of God maintains in the New Testament," p. v. This is the same Mr. Varley who told the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody, "Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to him." (Moody Monthly, Feb. 1986, p. 70-71 [reprint of Henry Varley article, "The World Has Yet to See . . ." from the Dec. 1902 issue of Moody Monthly]), which remark had motivated Mr. Moody to yield himself to God before his famous 1873 Moody evangelistic crusade that led to many conversions to Christ.

Dr. Chafer courageously did not recant his book in 1911, encouraged by the claim of Mr. Henry Varley, a godly man of the past generation that his book was Biblical, and God blessed and financially provided for Dallas Seminary that Chafer founded. In line with Chafer's example, we too will stay true to the Word, preaching the Bible.

May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then may we trust God's Word and courageously convert our faith into action in faith that God will fulfill His promises to us that we not lose out on His great final blessings!