

JUDGES 12
TURMOIL AMONGST THE BRETHREN!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 12 as we continue our study through the book of Judges.

We are currently looking at the Judge Jephthah. If you remember, his father Gilead begot Jephthah through a relationship he had with a harlot. And, as we have seen, that did not go over too well with the rest of the family as Jephthah grew up.

In fact, listen to what we are told in Judges 11:2, **“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.’”**

Obviously Gilead’s sons did not want to share in the inheritance of their father with this son of a harlot and they drive Jephthah away.

And it was not only Gilead’s sons that drove Jephthah away, but the elders of the city of Gilead drove Jephthah away as well.

Listen to what Jephthah said to them in Judges 11:7, **“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?’”**

Because of that we see Jephthah flee and he banded together with **“worthless men”** and they stole from people to survive.

But that is not the end of the story, not even close. As much as Jephthah’s brothers and the elders of Gilead hated Jephthah and kicked him out of town, when they were in trouble and they had no one to deliver them, they called Jephthah to rescue them.

You see, for eighteen years the Ammonites oppressed Israel and there was no leader to deliver them. We saw that in Judges 10:18, where we are told, **“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.’”**

And it is out of this turmoil that they ask Jephthah to lead them into battle against the Ammonites and he does agree as long as they would follow him in battle and then, that they would continue to have him lead the people after the battle. And they agree to this.

And God gave Jephthah and the children of Israel a great victory against the Ammonites. We are told in Judges 11:32-33, **“So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands. And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith - twenty cities - and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.”**

Now, as we move into Judges chapter 12 this morning, we are going to see a conflict arise after this great victory. And that happens more than we would like to think about.

God gives us a great victory and the Devil is right there to bring us down. And thus, we need to be careful, we need to be on guard, because it will happen, not might!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

An incident is related in Greek history of a wrestler who was so envious of Theagenes, the prince of wrestlers, that he could not be consoled in any way. After Theagenes died, a statue of him was erected in a public place. His envious antagonist went out every night and wrestled with the statue, until one night he threw it over. The statue fell on him and crushed him to death.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

That is what we will see here in our study of Judges chapter 12, jealousy is going to cause the men of Ephraim, once again, to come against a Judge in Israel. And, in the end, it is not going to turn out well for them, it never does.

I have called our study this morning – ***TURMOIL AMONGST THE BRETHREN!***

And I have broken down these verses we will be looking at as follows,

THE ACCUSATION – JUDGES 12:1

THE EXPLANATION – JUDGES 12:2-3

THE CONFRONTATION – JUDGES 12:4-7

THE AFTERMATH – JUDGES 12:8-15

THE JUDGE IBZAN – JUDGES 12:8-10

THE JUDGE ELON – JUDGES 12:11-12

THE JUDGE ABDON – JUDGES 12:13-15

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 12, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at this topic of - ***TURMOIL AMONGST THE BRETHREN!***

JUDGES 12

VERSE 1

Keep in mind that this dispute, this conflict, this turmoil is coming on the heels of a great victory that God had given the children of Israel. For eighteen years they were oppressed by the Ammonites and now they were subdued.

And out of this great victory we see that the tribe of Ephraim came to the conclusion that they were not treated fairly, that they were slighted by Jephthah in this battle. They felt that since they were such a big and powerful tribe, they should have had a more prestigious role in this victory over the Ammonites.

But, since they didn't, they were mad, they were angry with Jephthah.

That should sound very familiar because that is exactly what happened with another Judge, Gideon, and the tribe of Ephraim.

Remember back in Judges chapter 8 we saw them do a very similar thing with Gideon. They complained that they were a strong tribe, mighty warriors and yet Gideon didn't call them to assist in the battle and they were angry with Gideon.

And Gideon, instead of blasting them, which he could have done, tried to ease the tension and he said to them, “**. . . ‘What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?’ Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that.**” Judges 8:2-3.

In other words, he told them that what they did far outweighed anything he did and that satisfied them, and their anger had subsided. I guess for a time they were satisfied, but, as we see here with the tribe of Ephraim, that all has changed once again.

But, because of what Gideon did and how the men of Ephraim responded, the work of God could continue on and instead of them fighting against each other they fought against the enemy and defeated the enemy.

And as you look at this, I think you can safely say that they did not learn their lesson from the last incident, where pride almost destroyed them, there was almost a Civil War that broke out because of it.

Yes, the tribe of Ephraim was a strong tribe, they had the numbers, they had the might, and yet, when you really think about it, who gave the children of Israel this great victory?

It was not Jephthah or anyone else but the Lord!

In fact, Wolf gives us this perspective as he wrote, ***“Why should the Ephraimites complain about a victory accomplished through God’s intervention for the benefit of all the tribes? It was a strange jealousy that spurred on Ephraim.”***

And I think this time they let this anger get the better of them as they threaten Jephthah by saying, **“... We will burn your house down on you with fire!”** Judges 12:1.

They are threatening to kill Jephthah, burn his house down upon him. I guess they backed up their anger with this threat.

Keep in mind that they were family, children of Israel, and yet, as Morgan reminds us, ***“This clearly again reveals the sad disintegration of the nation. The consciousness of the unity of the people seems largely to have been lost.”***

You see, it is all about them, not about the victory that they had. It was not about what the Lord had done. It was about how they should have been called and lifted up because they are the tribe of Ephraim!

Make no mistake about it, they were lovers of themselves and once we have a mindset like that, it will only bring about death and destruction.

If you doubt that, then listen to what Paul said in II Timothy 3:1-6 about the days we are living in and what is manifested in the lives of people who are self-centered, people who love themselves.

We are told, **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”**

Notice how Paul opens up here. He says, **“But know this . . .”** And in the Greek, it is speaking of this, to *“constantly know, remember and understand so that you always will be on guard and respond properly.”*

He is speaking of how to know what to do which is based on the knowledge or based upon the Word of God is the idea.

What I want you to see what is at the top of this list of fleshly actions, **“lovers of themselves”** or self-love!

Make no mistake about it, self-love is the foundation for all these other depravities.

Calvin put it like this, “But readers should note that *lovers of themselves*, which comes first, can be regarded as the source from which all the others that follow spring.”

And so, out of loving ourselves we go after money; we boast about what we have done; we are proud; we are blasphemers; we are disobedient to parents because it is really all about us; we are unthankful because we deserve all these things; we are unholy in that we do whatever we want to do; we are unloving because we love ourselves so much we don't care about others unless they can give us something in return; we are unforgiving because how could they do that to us, don't they know who we are; we are slanders or put people down because we are superior to them; we have no self-control; we are brutal; we are haughty; we love pleasure more than loving God, because again, it is all about us!

And I think that is what we see here with the tribe of Ephraim, they thought too highly of themselves!

Now, before we are too quick to judge them, what about us?

“What do you mean by that Pastor Joe?”

Make no mistake about it, there is a tendency within each of us that wants to receive credit for what we have done. And do you know what that is? That is self-love.

Can we be satisfied in what God has allowed us to do or maybe not do, and give glory to Him even though someone else may be taking the credit for doing it?

“Don't they know who I am? I am the pastor; I did that and now they are taking credit for it!”

You know what that is? It is self-love and it is always destructive!

Let me show you what the Biblical perspective of this is, because today, in our nation, we see that self is at the forefront of everything that is being done.

But Paul makes it very clear that self is not what we are to be looking out for, but we are to be looking out for others.

In Philippians 2:3-4 Paul put it like this, **“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

In other words, you need to put others above yourself!

And the key to all of this is found in Philippians 2:2, where Paul wrote, **“fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”**

You see, Paul starts out with the idea of **“being like-minded.”**

That phrase, **“by being like-minded”** in the Greek is HO AUTOS PHRONEO, (ho ow-tos’ fron-eh’-o) and it literally means ***“to think the same thing.”***

In other words, to think as God thinks in regard to things, to let His nature then flow from our lives.

Paul put it this way in I Corinthians 2:16, **“For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”**

How is this done?

It is done as we read, and study God’s Word and the Holy Spirit then opens us up to the things of God.

We know the mind of God because it is God Himself who is teaching us these things!

And here’s the thing. Self-will is at the heart of every sin, it caused Lucifer to fall, it caused Adam and Eve to fall, and it remains at the forefront of sin today, as I have said!

You see, ***there can’t be unity when there is selfishness.***

Paul then speaks of **“conceit”** and it comes from the Greek word KENODOXIA, (ken-od-ox-ee’-ah) and it is formed by the adjective KENOS meaning ***“empty”*** and the noun DOXA which means, ***“glory.”***

Thus, it speaks of empty glory, vain glory. The point is this. It is thinking too highly of yourself; it is an issue of pride!

Thus, *there can be no unity when there is conceit.*

And then Paul speaks on the positive side, “**lowliness of mind.**”

You see, how do you put away self-will and vain glory?

By having humility of the mind and that will then be manifested in your actions.

As I have said, unity is seen through humility!

In this position you place others above you, you are a servant of God.

You see, as you have a humility of mind, you are going to be watching and helping others more than yourself, it would be impossible then to have strife and contention if that is our hearts focus.

I realize this may seem difficult; it may seem unfair.

Some may say, “*You don’t know how I’m being treated. How people unfairly treat me.*

I have to fight for my rights!”

It is true. I don’t know everything you are going through, how people are treating you.

And let’s face it, I’m sure we have all felt that way at one time or another or we may even feel that way right now.

What can we do?

We must put on the mind of Christ, and not only think as He would think but also do what He would do!

And that is what we see here with the men of Ephraim, self-love had caused them to think too highly of themselves and it was causing a division, it was causing turmoil with Jephthah and the children of Israel. They did not want Jephthah to lead them anymore and thus, they were not only going to fire him as their leader, but they were going to burn him down as well!

So we have seen – ***THE ACCUSATION!***

And from here we are going to move to – ***THE EXPLANATION!***

VERSES 2-3

Jephthah's approach to the men of Ephraim and their complaints is much different than Gideon's.

Gideon tried a diplomatic approach and it did work; he diffused a bomb that was ready to explode.

Jephthah let them have it. He did not speak soft or kind words, he blasted them for not helping in this battle and then complaining about not being involved in this battle, which was something they chose to do, not help!

And Jephthah lets them know that even though they refused to help out in this battle, God was with them and gave them a great victory against the Ammonites, while the Ephraimites just stood by!

And thus, why in the world were they complaining? This was something that they chose to do and not something that Jephthah did to them!

And as you see what the men of Ephraim are doing, it would seem that they were chronic complainers. When self was not built up, when they felt they did not get what they wanted, when they did not get the praise and glory, they complained again and again!

And now that the battle is over and God is getting the victory, their complaint is – ***“Hey, what about us?”***

I like the way that one writer put it. He wrote, ***“The fact that a victory had been gained over their common enemy appears to have been overlooked. Accusation and counter-accusation followed in bewildering succession; the claim that they had been passed over was met by the charge that an appeal had been made to them to which they had not responded.”***

(Cundall)

Isn't that interesting!

For eighteen years the Ammonites had oppressed the children of Israel and now God has delivered them, and all that God had done, the victory that was given, was lost in their desire to build up self!

Again, keep in mind that these were brethren and self-love is going to cause a division, a war!

That would never happen today! Let's face it, we are Christians and we know better than to do something like that, don't we?

I would love to say that we do understand that, and this is not an issue for us, but it is!

And I am amazed at what Christians fight over. It truly is amazing the silly things that we as Christians battle over.

Let me show you what I mean and you will see the silly things that churches fight over and yet, when it comes to doctrine, there is no standing up for the truth, but a complacency that is weakening the body of Christ.

We are told,

The fights shown below, however, are a bit unusual. Indeed, most of them are downright absurd. I picked 25 of my “favorites.” They are listed in no particular order. The parenthetical commentary is my own.

1. **Argument over the appropriate length of the worship pastor’s beard** (*I think I saw a verse in Scripture that indicated it is to be no more than 1.5 inches longer than the pastor’s beard.*).
2. **Fight over whether or not to build a children’s playground or to use the land for a cemetery** (*I’m dying to know the resolution of this one.*).
3. **A deacon accusing another deacon of sending an anonymous letter, and deciding to settle the matter in the parking lot** (*The church could have sold tickets to this event and raised a lot of money.*).
4. **A church dispute of whether or not to install restroom stall dividers in the women’s restroom** (*I’m calling unfair on this one. The men should have their stall dividers too.*).
5. **A church argument and vote to decide if a clock in the worship center should be removed** (*I think this one is a timely argument.*).
6. **A 45-minute heated argument over the type of filing cabinet to purchase: black or brown; 2, 3, or 4 drawers** (*This one is an official cabinet meeting of the church leadership.*).
7. **A fight over which picture of Jesus to put in the foyer** (*I just want to know who took the pictures.*).
8. **A petition to have all church staff clean shaven** (*No church planters are allowed.*).
9. **A dispute over whether the worship leader should have his shoes on during the service** (*I vote for shoes, shirts, and pants.*).
10. **A big church argument over the discovery that the church budget was off \$0.10. Someone finally gave a dime to settle the issue** (*I have to admit this issue is ten times more important than the church missing a penny.*).
11. **A dispute in the church because the Lord’s Supper had cran/grape juice instead of grape juice** (*Of course it should be grape juice. It’s right there in Hezekiah 4:11.*).

12. **Business meeting arguments about whether the church should purchase a weed eater or not. It took two business meetings to resolve** (*Wow. This fight was really whacky.*).
13. **Arguments over what type of green beans the church should serve** (*I could have resolved this conflict quickly: none.*).
14. **Two different churches reported fights over the type of coffee. In one of the churches, they moved from Folgers to a stronger Starbucks brand. In the other church, they simply moved to a stronger blend. Members left the church in the latter example** (*Perhaps they started a new church: The Right Blend Fellowship.*).
15. **Major conflict when the youth borrowed a crockpot that had not been used for years** (*I bet it was a bunch of crocky old adults.*).
16. **An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal** (*Only if it's balanced with angel food cake for dessert.*).
17. **An argument over who has the authority to buy postage stamps for the church** (*The members were licking their wounds over this issue.*).
18. **A disagreement over using the term "potluck" instead of "pot blessing"** (*I get it! The concept of luck contradicts the theology of a sovereign God. This issue is very serious. Good luck trying to resolve it.*).
19. **A church member was chastised because she brought vanilla syrup to the coffee server. It looked too much like liquor.** (*Beth Moore confessed she was the culprit who brought the syrup. Don't you know, Beth, we Baptists cannot have vanilla syrup at anytime? Chocolate is fine though.*).
20. **An argument in church over who has access to the copy machine** (*I think a calendar should be made where every church member has at least five minutes access to the copy machine each year. You can have a business meeting to vote on each five-minute increment.*).
21. **Some church members left the church because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner from them. It resulted in a major fight and split** (*Thus the Second Electrolux Church was born.*).
22. **An argument over whether to have gluten-free communion bread or not** (*I thought gluteny was a sin.*).
23. **A dispute over whether the church should allow people to wear black t-shirts, since black is the color of the devil** (*Are you sure he's not red? That's what I've heard.*)

24. **A fight over whether or not to sing “Happy Birthday” each week** (*I’ve got an idea. Alternate it with the doxology.*).
25. **An argument over whether the fake, dusty plants should be removed from the podium** (*Just give them a little water. They should be fine.*).

Yes. These issues are silly; many are absurd. But they are all distractions from what we should be doing in our churches. In that sense, they are really great distractions from the Great Commission.

- <https://bit.ly/2BEbBSt>

Now we laugh at this, but these are real problems and brethren fight over these things.

Why? What is the problem? Why are they fighting?

The answer is simple, and I have said it already several times this morning – ***SELF-LOVE!***

If you care more about the coffee given to you at church than you do about worshiping the Lord and hearing from Him, then self is in the way!

Remember what Paul said in II Timothy 3:4, “**... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.**”

Instead of fighting over coffee in the church, or what color the church is to be painted, or whatever, let’s get to the real battle.

You see, the real battle is against the enemy and not with each other.

Listen to what Paul said to the Corinthian church, “**And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**” I Corinthians 3:1-3.

Why were they fighting with each other? Why was there jealousy among them? Why was there envy between them? Why was there division among them?

It is simple, they were carnal, they were walking in the flesh and not the spirit and thus, it was all about them and they had no concern for others.

In other words - ***SELF-LOVE!***

Make no mistake about it, that is not the mind of Christ but that is the flesh showing itself and it is not pretty.

But Paul clearly shows us these are immature Christians, carnal Christians for he calls them “**brethren**” and he calls them “**babes in Christ.**”

In other words, they are not growing up!

The Greek word that Paul uses for “**carnal**” is SARKINOS, (sar'-kee-nos) and it speaks of being “***characterized by the flesh***” or being dominated by the flesh.

Folks, we need to understand that the message of the cross is more than justification, it also speaks of our sanctification, but if you are allowing the world to control your life, you will remain carnal, fleshly, you won't grow up in the Lord!

What are we to do?

Instead of manifesting the works of the flesh, put on the mind of Christ, act as He would in the situations you face and as you do, as you submit yourself to the leading of the Holy Spirit who gives to us the mind of Christ, then the fruit of the Spirit will flow from your life!

We might not agree on every single issue in the Christian life, and we won't, but does that mean we need to war and fight and bring about divisions because of it?

Absolutely not, we need to put on the mind of Christ and let His nature flow not only in us but also through us! And do you know what happens when we do? Then we can do battle against the enemy instead of fighting amongst ourselves!

The work of God can continue on!

And let me also say this. For some Christians, unless they get some kind of recognition, some kind of credit, some kind of acknowledgement for what they are doing, they won't do it.

Obviously that is wrong and if that is where you are at, you need to repent and get right with God and then do the work that God has called you to do!

For others, they don't want to do the work they just want to join in when the work is done and the blessings are flowing, they want the rewards even though they did not do the work.

Obviously this is wrong also. You may join in and get the recognition from man, but God knows what you did and didn't do, and, in the end, He is the one who will reward us for the work.

Don't be foolish as these men in Ephraim were and it was costly for their actions or their lack of action as we will see next – ***THE CONFRONTATION!***

VERSES 4-7

Because of their actions, Jephthah brought war upon the men of Ephraim. And I guess they were better at talking than fighting because the men of Gilead defeated them rather easily it seems.

It truly does seem that they thought too highly of themselves as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

A story is told of a watch which became dissatisfied with its little sphere in a lady's pocket. It envied Big Ben, the great tower clock in London. One day, as it passed over Westminster Bridge with its mistress, the little watch was heard to say, "I wish I could be up there. I could then serve the multitude."

"You shall have your opportunity, little watch," said a voice. Magically the watch was drawn up to the tower by a slender thread. When it reached the top, its mistress said to it, "Where are you, little watch? I cannot see you." Nor could anybody else. Its elevation became its annihilation.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

And that is what we see here with the men of Ephraim. They lifted themselves up and God brought them down!

And as Jephthah does battle with Ephraim for their words and their lack of action in assisting them, they set a group of men at the fords of the Jordan River, that is those areas in which you could cross the Jordan, and would catch any enemy that was trying to escape to safety across the Jordan.

And this is interesting to me. They were able to tell who the enemy was by getting them to say the word, "**SHIBBOLETH.**"

If they could not pronounce it correctly, they were captured.

It is kind of like **TOMATO** and **TAMATO** or **CREEK** or **CRICK.**

During World War II, the German soldiers sometimes identified Russian Jews by the way they pronounced the word for corn: "kookoorooza." Their distinctive pronunciation revealed their ethnic background.

Now I am not picking on people from Boston, but the way they say words is just a little different and when they say these words, you know exactly where they are from. Now I am not from Boston so I am not very good at this, I should have Barry come up here, he has it down. But I think you will get the idea.

For instance, chowadah = chowder.

Then there is, howahyah? = how are you.

And if you are thirsty, there is soder = soda.

And if you go to a fancy restaurant, there are people there pahking the cash = parking the cars!

So it was for these men of Ephraim. And how sad as they let pride, prestige, jealousy get in the way of what God was doing and 42,000 lives were lost of the people of Ephraim!

Now, how in the world does that apply to us today?

Think about it. When you talk about Jesus people can tell something about you.

When you talk about the Bible people will see something about you.

How we speak, what comes from our lips, will show people where our faith is at, what we believe. They will be able to tell if we are an enemy of Jesus just speaking forth His name but not knowing Him or if we are true believers!

In Psalm 19:14 we are told, **“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”**

I want you to notice the prayer of David here. David is calling for his actions and his desires to be in line with God’s will for his life, which would be pleasing to God.

And that will only happen as we saturate ourselves in His Word asking God’s Spirit to teach us the things we need to know and to conform our life into His image.

You see, the more you spend time with Him, the more He will be seen in you!

Our lives should reflect what we believe in, who we believe in. And yes, we are not perfect, we will blow it, but how do we respond in our failures, what are people seeing? Are we letting them know that what we did or said was wrong, or are we making excuses for what we did?

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 12:37, **“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”**

Now we need to understand that the only way we are justified is by what we say about Jesus, is He our Lord and Savior? If He is, then we are justified, if He is not, then we are condemned. You see, your words will either justify you or condemn you!

It is as Paul tells us in Romans 10:9-10, **“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”**

All you must do, the free will of man, is confess that Jesus is Lord, He is God, believe in His resurrection and what is in your heart will be confessed from your lips!

It is as Denney put it, *“A heart believing unto righteousness, and a mouth making confession unto salvation, are not really two things, but two sides of the same thing.”*

Do you see the simplicity of salvation – it cost Christ His life and He has extended that free gift of eternal life based upon His finished work, if we believe by faith and receive Him into our lives.

Justification happens at the time we are saved and thus, all our sins have been paid in full, there is no record of any of our sins; past, present and future. It is just as we never have sinned because Jesus paid for our sins on the cross of Calvary.

And that is where some Christians live and die, in justification.

Please understand I am not putting that down or trying to make something as amazing as that is into nothing.

What I am saying is that is not where it ends, it is where it begins. Yes, we are justified once, but then the sanctification process begins in our life. And as we draw close to the Lord, then the nature of the Lord will be manifested in our lives.

And listen to what Paul admonishes us to do in Romans 13:11-14, **“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”**

Paul is admonishing us to wake-up out of our spiritual sleep for the Lord's return is drawing close.

In other words, our time is limited, it is short, don't waste it but use it for the Lord – walk accordingly. Live what you say you believe so that others may see your love for the Lord!

Paul, in Ephesians 5:14-16 tells us, **“Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.’ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”**

It is hard to do anything productive when you sleep, thus, let's awaken to what God has for us and walk as He leads us!

And after Paul calls for us to awaken out of our spiritual sleep, to be aware of the days we are living in, to know what time it is, he then tells us to **“... cast off the works of darkness ...”**

I like the way that Spurgeon put it in regard to casting off the works of darkness. He said, *“The rags of sin must come off if we put on the robe of Christ. There must be a taking away of the love of sin, there must be a renouncing of the practices and habits of sin, or else a man cannot be a Christian. It will be an idle attempt to try and wear religion as a sort of celestial overall over the top of old sins.”*

What we see here is a call to apply the things of God, the Words of God, to your life. In other words, walk decently, honestly, properly before God and our fellow man for the days are short! Again, it is all about application. Applying the truths of God found in the Word of God to our lives!

But how can we do this? It is simple. Paul tells us that we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, fill our lives with Him every moment of every day!

Take off the old clothes and put on the new ones, put on Christ, let His light and His life be manifested in yours!

It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:8-10, **“But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.”**

Ray Stedman gives us this illustration in regard to putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. He said,

When I get up in the morning I put on my clothes, intending them to be part of me all day, to go where I go and do what I do. They cover me and make me presentable to others. That is the purpose of clothes. In the same way, the apostle is saying to us, “Put on Jesus Christ when you get up in the morning. Make him a part of your life that day. Intend that he go with you everywhere you go, and that he act through you in everything you do. Call upon his resources. Live your life ***IN CHRIST***.”

- Ray Stedman

Make no mistake about it. A life that is surrendered to God, placed on the altar of sacrifice as a living sacrifice unto God, will walk properly before God as his life continues to be transformed into the image of God.

Not only that, but then we will be a light to this world that is in darkness, a world without hope and without love. We can give them hope and love in Christ!

So Jephthah only Judged Israel for six years before he died. Not a long time but he was able to deliver Israel from their bondage at the hands of the Ammonites. You see, it is not the amount of time that matters it is how you use the time that you have for the Lord!

We need to ask the Lord to help us to number our days so that we would be wise in all we do! (Psalm 90:12)

So that we would walk worthy of the high calling by which we have been called!
(Ephesians 4:1)

Now the last division of the verses we are looking at this morning I called – ***THE AFTERMATH***. And, as you will see, I have broken Judges 12:8-15 into three main sections, the three Judges that came after Jephthah!

We don't know a lot about these three Judges, some even calling them minor Judges. But just because we don't have a lot of information on them, does not mean that their work was insignificant.

I like that about our God. All that we do for Him is important. And it really doesn't matter what the world thinks or anyone else, we are important to Him and He will use what He is given to us for His glory. And that is what I see with these three men. They played an important role as a Judge, even though we don't know much about them.

VERSES 8-10

Ibzan is the next Judge and he Judged Israel for seven years and then he died. That is all we know of this Judge and yet God has placed him here for us to read about and thus, he must have been an instrument that God worked through to accomplish His purposes.

Now it says that he was buried in Bethlehem, which was also probably where he was from.

And when we think of the city of Bethlehem, or the *“House of Bread”* we think of the Bethlehem in Judah.

But I don’t think this is where he was from. It is not written Bethlehem-Judah. More than likely it was a town in Zebulun, about 10 miles north of Megiddo. (See Joshua 19:15)

This man had thirty sons and he gave away thirty daughters in marriage. Not only that, but he brought in thirty daughters to marry his thirty sons.

Ibzan had brought peace to a time that was most likely difficult, as that is why these Judges were raised up. And there is nothing more we can add to it, except, **“Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.”** Judges 12:10.

VERSES 11-12

And next came Elon as a Judge in Israel and he Judged Israel for ten years and he died.

Now some say that these men did not have much of an impact on the people, but I disagree.

Think about the apostles of Christ, most of them we don’t know much about after the death and resurrection of Jesus but I believe they served the Lord faithfully and as a servant, you don’t need the recognition.

The Lord included those apostles and the things they did so we can learn from them. But that does not mean the others did not impact those around them.

It is easy for us to get in that kind of mindset, *“Who am I?”*

But the reality is, you are a servant of Christ and whatever you do, do it faithfully and you will be rewarded accordingly!

VERSES 13-15

And here comes Abdon and he Judged Israel for eight years and he died and there is nothing more we know of him.

In our study of the book of Judges over the last several months, we have looked at 12 Judges in Israel: *Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon.*

In our next study we will begin looking at the last Judge in the book of Judges, there are others, as we have seen in our studies through the Bible, but this is the last one in the book of Judges.

And this last Judge we will look at in the book of Judges is Samson. A very interesting Judge, one who had great potential but came up far short of what he could have done for the Lord because he let the lust of the flesh control his life.

We have looked at a variety of situations, a variety of different people that God used to deliver His people from the oppressors they were facing and that should also encourage us.

You see, God uses us, a variety of different people, in a variety of different situations, to carry out His work in this world.

And be aware, after God has given you a great victory in your life, there may arise some ***TURMOIL AGAINST THE BRETHREN*** – against you!

Be aware, be surrendered to God and walk accordingly!

With that said, let me leave you with these words to encourage you in the work that God has called you to do.

Paul admonishes us in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord [always being superior, excelling, doing more than enough in the service of the Lord], knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile [it is never wasted or to no purpose].”**

Keep pressing on in the work that God has called you to do, for your efforts are not in vain!

The world may not know anything of you, but God knows everything about you. Never forget that, He sees all that you are doing for Him!