

**Series: God Cares #1481**

**Title: Judges 11**  
**Rejection**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world! I hope you have been with us as we have established that God cares for us. 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 7 says, **“He cares for you.”** In these days together we are looking at several ways in which God cares for His people. And today I want to speak with those of you who are experiencing rejection. Yes, rejection.

This is a painful reality for many of us. At one point or another in our lives we deal with being rejected. I can think of a hundred reasons for why people experience the pain of this emotion. For example, you may have been passed over for a job or a promotion you really wanted and were qualified for. The job went to someone else. Were you in a dating relationship and things seemed to be going really well and suddenly the person broke up with you? Were you not picked for the team? Maybe a fellow pastor tunes in who was candidating to be pastor of a church and that congregation chose someone else? Are you in prison and came up for parole and the parole board rejected you? These and a multitude of other examples can be given.

Why do *you* feel non-acceptance? Being passed over? Dismissed? Ignored? Rejected?

Lest you think I only speak from an ivory palace or a seminary library somewhere, I can give you several legitimate examples of times I have felt the sting of rejection *personally*. By the time I was through, I think you'd feel sympathy for me. But I am not here to throw a pity party, although sometimes tempting! I am here to tell you about a man in the Scripture who dealt with rejection and to show you how God responded to said man. His name is...Jephthah. *Who?* Jephthah, one of the judges in ancient Israel. Do you not remember him? His story is found in...(obviously) the Book of Judges. The Book of Judges, chapter 11. Turn there with me if you can.

I will be reading in Judges 11 in a moment, but first I remind you the Book of Judges covers the time period between the death of Joshua and the appearance of Samuel. It tells us what was going on after the Israelites entered the Promised Land. This was the period of theocracy (God was King) before the long period of the monarchy (men like Saul, David, etc.) were kings. Four times in Judges we read, **“In those days there was no king in Israel.”** We also read, **“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** This was a period of widespread and deep immorality and disobedience to God.

The cycle was Israel serves God, then does evil forsaking God, they are sold into slavery and only *then* do they cry out for God to have mercy on them, turning to Him they repent of their sins, God sends a judge, and the people of Israel are saved. Only to repeat this cycle. There were twelve judges, most of them not very well known, but among them are this man Jephthah. He is actually best known for an impulsive vow he made to God, and then has to keep. Perhaps you have heard of this? It is intriguing with lessons for all of us, especially the impulsive among us. But that will not be our focus. Let me encourage you to read all of the Book of Judges, and barring that, read Judges chapters 11 and 12 to get the full story on Jephthah.

I am eager to draw our attention to Judges chapter 11 and the first three verses. So let me read that. Judges 11.1-3, **“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior, but he was the son of a harlot. And Gilead was the father of Jephthah. <sup>2</sup> Gilead's wife bore him sons; and when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, ‘You shall not have an inheritance in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman.’ <sup>3</sup> So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob; and worthless fellows gathered themselves about Jephthah, and they went out with him.”**

There is the rejection. Verse 1 tells us that Jephthah was actually a valiant warrior. The man could lead. He was a knight, like Gideon one of the other judges. Trained in combat he furnished his own equipment, and having trained other men, led them successfully into battle. *But*, he was the son of a prostitute. Jephthah's mother was a harlot.

Even worse, Josephus (the ancient Jewish historian) tells us that Jephthah's mother was a Gentile. Jewish writings say she was an Ishmaelite. So she was an outsider, a foreigner to the Jews, the people of God. And her boy was illegitimate. His father has legitimate children with another woman and those sons drove out Jephthah from the family saying that he would have no share in the inheritance. So he is rejected, exiled, and ostracized. Verse 3 says Jephthah fled from his brothers and moved to a different land. And notice that there "worthless fellows gathered themselves around" him. These are other rejects.

So we meet a man who is the son of a harlot, he has been rejected by his family, and now he is the leader of a group of other rejected men, the Bible calls them "worthless fellows." So we would naturally think, after reading these three verses, that Jephthah is going to spend the rest of his days in this lonely, loser-like condition. God will not have anything to do with him, right? Well, hold on. Not. So. Fast. This is precisely the type of person God loves to choose and use for the glory of God. Just because his family and the world has rejected Jephthah does not mean God has.

Our Lord puts His divine hand on the weak people of this world. As Paul writes to the Corinthians, "**God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,** <sup>28</sup> **and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,** <sup>29</sup> **so that no man may boast before God.**" In the eyes of man, Jephthah was rejected, but in the eyes of God Jephthah was accepted. You too can go from rejection with people to acceptance with God, if you will put your faith in the Lord and count on Him to redeem *you* and use *you*!

Let's see what happens. Jephthah is in Tob, which was a frontier district northeast of Gilead. And he is spending his time with these other guys, probably mercenaries hoping to attach themselves to an army. When, suddenly, we read this in verses 4-6 of Judges chapter 11, "**It came about after a while that the sons of Ammon fought against Israel.** <sup>5</sup> **When the sons of Ammon fought against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob;** <sup>6</sup> **and they said to Jephthah, 'Come and be our chief that we may fight against the sons of Ammon.'**" Oh! What a development. *Now* the elders of Gilead call for that valiant warrior of theirs, their former leader Jephthah, whom they had rejected!

And when, not if but when, you read the full story you will see that after a period in which Jephthah wisely negotiates to be their tribal chief if he defeats the Ammonites, and the elders accept his proposal then Jephthah reaches out to the leader of the Ammonites attempting to find a way out of war. But when the king of the sons of Ammon disregarded Jephthah's messages, we read this in verses 32 and 33 of Judges 11, "**So Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord gave them into his hand.** <sup>33</sup> **He struck them with a very great slaughter...So the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel.**"

Amazing, isn't it? Like Jephthah, we can be set aside, feeling absolutely useless, until God calls for us. Then, if we respond positively to His call He can and He will use us, according to His plan and purpose for our lives. If you are experiencing unjust rejection and living under unjust circumstances, embrace this fact: God can still use you. Others may have no use for you, but God does have use for you.

My friend, God cares about your rejection. I think what God does with Jephthah is proof of this. Judges 11 and 12 has application for you at this very hour. Walking by faith, and not by sight, do you accept that while others have rejected you, maybe even family, God will accept you? Did you know that this man Jephthah is mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11, that famous chapter on people of great *faith*. Hebrews 11, verses 32 and 33 reads, "**And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,** <sup>33</sup> **who by faith conquered...**" Look what happened to Jephthah. I pray this encourages you. Join me next time as we continue to discover how God cares for us.

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