

Judges 12:5-7

In Judges 12: 5-7 is the story of making people eat their words. It is here that we read of the battle amongst brothers as Jephthah found himself having to go against the Ephraimites (one of the 12 tribes of Israel.) Though not his fault as the Ephraimites were taught a lesson that they deserved but what happened after they were retreating is what caught my attention. As the Ephraimites began streaming back across the Jordan River Jephthah wanted to make them “***eat their words***”! When each soldier came to the river’s edge they were asked to pronounce the Hebrew word for “stream” and because they had an accent they were unable to pronounce the “***sh***” sound. The meaning of the word “*Shibboleth*” in the English Dictionary is “*to test a group of outsiders to see if they truly belong.*” Their mere mispronunciation of the word caused 42,000 soldiers to die that day. The truth is Jephthah killed more in that one event of his own countrymen getting even than all the other Judges combined (except Gideon) killed the enemy. Friends, there is a lesson in this and it’s: When we try to get even with others especially our brothers in Christ wanting them to “***eat their words***” like ***Jephthah we become our own worst enemy!*** There is a ***spiritual ignorance of the character of God*** that deals with the grace of God. Jephthah had been a recipient of the grace and mercy of God in his own life but was unwilling to extend that grace towards others. He became hardheaded which caused him to become hardhearted. There was no tenderness, no forgiveness just cold hearted legalism and an “*I’ll get even*” attitude. But how can we get even when Romans 13:8 says that we are to “*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.*” Christian history is littered with stories like this one:

- Martin Luther who taught the truth of justification by faith alone turned his anger towards those who sought to practice what he had taught

- Ulrich Zwingli who had been at the end of Luther's wrath participated in the drowning of Anabaptists who had a different view with regards to believers baptism
- The Puritans who fled England to find religious liberty denied that same liberty to many others

Far too often we Christians make what we differ on what divides us then we treat each other as enemies instead of brothers and sisters.

Blessings,

Pastor Dale