

13. I did it my way

3/9/2006

Wife abuse, blatant homosexuality, gang rape, murder, injustice, brother killing brother and kidnapping. Don't they sound like what happen in the United States? That is what we are going to find out from chapter 19-21. Not a whole lot has changed.

When evil isn't dealt with properly, it has a tendency to grow. Here is an interesting chain reaction:

- 1) **It all starts from individual's spiritual condition.**
- 2) **When it gives in to worldly influences, that person's family will suffer.**
- 3) **When families start to disintegrate because of lack of love for one another, people will see moral chaos happen all over.**
- 4) **When the social morality decays to the point of accepting wrong as right and push right as wrong, we will face political corruption in the nation.**
- 5) **That will bring down the nation in the end.**

A. THE CRIME OF GIBEAH

A Levite had a concubine who played the harlot, left him, and went back to her father's house. This Levite followed her to take her back. He was warmly received by her father, and stayed with him several days. Then the Levite and his concubine left and headed northward. They stayed one night in Gibeah, a city of the Benjamites. An old man who was also from mount Ephraim and was staying in Gibeah offered them hospitality.

We will pick up the story from v22 of chapter 19.

Judges 19:22-30 As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!" 23 But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage. 24 Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!" 25 But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go. 26 Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, till it was light. 27 When her master arose in the morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine, fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. 28 And he said to her, "Get up and let us be going." But there was no answer. So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place. 29 When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. 30 And so it was that all who saw it said, "No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!"

Don't you feel like you are hearing the same song the second verse in this gross incident? In Genesis chapter 19, we find Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of their sinful way like this. Now these Benjamites are doing the same thing.

How a father could offer his own daughter as a sacrifice to the lusts of a mob is difficult to understand. Yet many parents today allow their sons' and daughters' minds and hearts to be violated by what they see and hear in movies, on television, at rock concerts and even don't have a problem with them having casual sex.

In the culture of this period of time, men put supreme value on hospitality and very little value on women. Women were considered to be just possessions and were not respected.

About forty years ago in America, satan and his cohorts twisted the minds of a group of radical 'Women's Live Movement' and they were convinced that the Bible is against women's rights. That is far from the truth.

Jesus and the writers of the New Testament promoted the equality of women and the fact that men and women are made one in Jesus Christ. The New Testament elevated the place of women. giving honor to the woman and demanding respect for women.

Sad to say, as our modern society is pushing out Christianity and its influence, we are seeing a return to the devaluation and degradation of women. They are again being regarded as property and are used and exploited in horrible ways through pornography, prostitution and other unspeakable abuses.

The devil sugarcoats this degradation of women's position with packages of short-lived fame, money and false love. Unfortunately many women are buying his story in hook, line and sinker.

I can easily see why the concubine had left her husband in the first place. She was virtually sacrificed to save his skin as the men sexually abused her all night. This is a painfully clear demonstration of the heartlessness of the Levite towards his concubine. He was supposed to be a Levite priest whose job was to stand between God and people.

B. THE WAR THAT LEADS BROTHER TO FIGHT AGAINST BROTHER

Judges 20:1-11 So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the Lord at Mizpah. 2 And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword. 3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the children of Israel said, "Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?" 4 So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, "My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night. 5 And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but instead they ravished my concubine so that she died. 6 So I took hold of my concubine, cut

her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel, because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel. 7 Look! All of you are children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!" 8 So all the people arose as one man, saying, "None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house; 9 but now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah: We will go up against it by lot. 10 We will take ten men out of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, to make provisions for the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel." 11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man.

The Israelites wanted to deal with the rebellion on the tribe of Benjamin, so they inquired of the Lord as to which tribe should go up to fight first. It would seem that their first question should have been, "Lord, should we go up?" but they had already assumed that they were going up. They just wanted to know who would go first.

Often we give God multiple-choice questions. We give Him a few options: "Lord, shall I do this, or that, or maybe this one?" But maybe the Lord doesn't want to do any of the things on my list. It is better to say, "Lord, what shall I do?"

I believe the Israel people wouldn't have experienced the defeat that followed if they had asked the right question. How important it is that we are led by the Spirit of God, not just to do the right things, but to do the right things in the right way: Our first question should always be, "What shall I do, Lord? I'll do whatever You want me to do."

Between v12-17 we find that the other tribes of Israel did the right thing in asking the tribe of Benjamin to deliver up the men who committed this crime. They sought to justly resolve the crisis without full war. But the tribe of Benjamin committed a great sin by putting their loyalty to the tribe before obedience to God's Law.

When God's people refuse to obey God's Word, the results are always tragic. The spiritual life of a church is crippled and eventually destroyed when the congregation shuts its eyes to sin and will not discipline offenders. There can never be unity among the people of God as long as some of them cover up sin and allow it to infect the body.

At the first census after the exodus from Egypt, there were 35,400 men of war in Benjamin according to Num. 1:37, and this increased to 45,600 by the time of the second census in Num. 26. During this three-day war, the Benjamites were left with only 600 men stranded on the rock of Rimmon, a fortresslike rock formation near Gibeah. What a price the tribe of Benjamin paid for refusing to obey the Law of the Lord!

C. SCRAMBLING TO PATCH UP THE PROBLEM

Judges 21:1-3 Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife." 2 Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, 3 and said, "O Lord God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel?"

I believe that the Lord wasn't pleased with the people of Benjamin because they still

hadn't confessed their sin and admitted they were wrong. The 600 soldiers who were stranded on the rock of Rimmon still weren't seeking God's face. They were simply fleeing from the victorious army.

Judges 21:4-12 So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5 The children of Israel said, "Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the Lord?" For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the Lord at Mizpah, saying, "He shall surely be put to death." 6 And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother, and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today. 7 What shall we do for wives for those who remain, seeing we have sworn by the Lord that we will not give them our daughters as wives?" 8 And they said, "What one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the Lord?" And, in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. 9 For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there. 10 So the congregation sent out there twelve thousand of their most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children. 11 And this is the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately." 12 So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

Instead of getting directions from the Lord, the eleven tribes depended on their own way to solve the problem. The Israelites solved the problem by killing more of their own people. Nobody had come to the war from Jabesh-Gilead, which meant two things: They hadn't participated in the oath, and the city deserved to be punished.

Eventually, in their worldly thoughts, the Israel leaders provided wives for the remainders of the Benjamites. So, the 600 men got their brides, the eleven tribes kept their vow, the citizens of Gibeah were punished, the tribe of Benjamin was taught a lesson, and the twelve tribes of Israel were saved. The 600 men of Benjamin, with their brides, returned to their inheritance, cleaned up the debris, repaired the cities, and started life all over again. It seems that everything is well. NOT!!!

But all of this stupidity and destruction happened because one Levite didn't have the courage to stand up for what was right and treat his wife honorably. Once again, as with the young Levite from Micah's house and the Danites, the problem started in the individual's obedience to the Lord. As goes one's spiritual obedience, so goes the home. As goes the home, so goes the nation.

For the four times, the writer tells us that "there was no king in Israel" and for two times, he adds that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Today, there is no king in Israel because the nation chose Barabbas instead of Jesus. They said, "We will not have this man to reign over us". Because there's no king in Israel, people are rebelling against God and doing whatever pleases them, It will be that way until the King returns and takes His throne on earth.

D. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF JUDGES

1) God is looking for servants

God is looking for people who are available to hear His Word, receive His power,

and do His will. If God calls us to serve Him, it's not primarily because of our abilities and talents. He often calls people who seem to have no leadership qualities at all. Let's not look at ourselves. But let's look to the Lord.

2) God graciously forgives and helps us begin again

The historical cycle in the Book of Judges assures us that God chastens when we disobey and forgives when we repent and confess our sins. It's too bad we don't learn from the failures of others and from our own past failures, but that's one of the occupational hazards of being human.

3) God's Word stands despite people's unfaithfulness.

The judges accomplished what they did because they believed the Word of God. Sometimes their faith was weak and imperfect, but God honored their trust and glorified His name through them.

God's Word never fails. If we obey it, He is faithful to bless us, keep His promises, and accomplish His purposes. If we disobey His will, He is faithful to chasten us and bring us back to the place of submission.

As His children, we live on promises and not explanations. God doesn't have to explain to us what He's doing or why He's doing it that way.

4) When God's people are unspiritual, the nations decay.

We're the light of the world and the salt of the earth. When the church ceases to be a holy people, obedient to the Lord, the salt loses its taste and the light goes under a bushel. G. Campbell Morgan said that the church did the most for the world when the church was the least like the world. Today, many churches have the idea they must imitate the world in order to reach the world. And they are wrong!

Nations don't decay and collapse because of the people who peddle pornography or narcotics, but because of Christians who are no longer salt and light. God expects sinners to act like sinners, though He disapproves of what they do. But He doesn't expect believers to act like sinners. Compromising Christians not only hurt themselves and their families and churches, but also contribute to the decay of the whole nation.

5) God still blesses those who live by faith.

Faith is not believing in spite of evidence but obeying in spite of consequence. It also means obeying God no matter what we see around us or ahead of us or how we feel within us. Faith doesn't depend on our emotions or our understanding of the situation. Faith takes God at His Word and does what He tells us to do.

You can't serve God without faith, because "without faith it is impossible to please Him." If we wait until we have perfect faith, we'll never do anything for the Lord. He honors even weak faith and seeks to make it stronger. Exercising faith is like exercising muscles: The more we exercise, the stronger the muscles become.

No Christian can do everything, but every Christian can do something, and God will put all these "somethings" together to get His work done in this world.

The Book of Judges has given us a profound picture of current day reality.