

JUDGES 17:6-13
CONFUSION IN THE CHURCH!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 17 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Judges.

And as I said last time, these last five chapters of Judges are not necessarily in chronological order but they are more of an appendix as they are filling in some information that occurred during this period of time, the period of the Judges.

And, as we have seen, things are a mess because of just one reason and that reason was then manifested in many immoral and wicked ways. It is what we are told in Judges 17:6, **“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”**

And let’s face it, anyone who is left to do their own thing is headed for disaster! And apart from the Lord guiding and directing our lives, our lives are a disaster because we will do what we want, what the flesh desires and it does not matter who may try to stop us, we are going to do it anyway!

And that is what we see here in Judges and these last five chapters are going to get uglier and uglier until we get to the end of the book and we read once again, kind of an exclamation mark to close with, **“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** Judges 21:25.

Now I have broken down chapters 17 and 18 of Judges into three main points and they are as follows.

CONFUSION IN THE HOME – JUDGES 17:1-5

CONFUSION IN THE CHURCH – JUDGES 17:6-13

CONFUSION IN SOCIETY/GOVERNMENT – JUDGES 18:1-31

Now you may not see this as such a big deal, but, as you will see, it is a very big deal!

You see, these three institutions God has ordained in His Word and thus, if you want to destroy a people, if you want to destroy a nation, you destroy the institutions that govern the people of God, and that is what we see happening here in Judges and, I am sorry to say, it is what we see happening in this nation!

Last week, in our study – ***CONFUSION IN THE HOME***, we saw how this man from the mountains of Ephraim stole eleven hundred shekels of silver from his mom.

And his mom places a curse on the person who has done this, not knowing it was her son.

After a time the son feels guilty, tells his mom that he is the one who stole the money and her response to what he did was this, “**... May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!**” Are you kidding me?

No discipline, no consequences for his sin, for stealing, but a blessing and a blessing from Almighty God she is calling for!

Then, with some of this money that was returned she dedicates this money to the Lord for her son and makes a carved image and a molded image for her son!

She brought idolatry into the home!

God has instituted the family unit, a father, mother and then children. Satan has come along and destroyed the family unit to the point that we don't even know what a family is anymore!

The parents are not in control, the children are.

Things are out of order and when that happens, what you see is that children will become disrespectful to parents, to those who are in authority because the order that God has established for the family has been destroyed! Marriages fall apart because the Lord is out of the picture!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this, and it does drive home the point regarding the destruction of the family, of the home and the results of that. He wrote,

Because Micah and his family didn't submit to the authority of God's Word, their home was a place of religious and moral confusion. But their home was a good deal like many homes today where money is the god the family worships, where children steal from their parents and lie about what they do, where family honor is unknown, and where the true God is unwanted. Television provides all the "images" the family will ever want to "worship," and few worry about "thus saith the Lord."

I recall hearing Vance Havner say, "We shouldn't worry because the government won't allow children to have Bibles in school. They'll get free Bibles when they go to prison."

But today our prisons are so crowded that the government doesn't know what to do. If every family would make Christ the Head of the home, we could stop some of the nation's crime right at the source. Godly homes are the foundation for a just and happy society.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT*, pp. 467-468

I agree with what Warren Wiersbe said here. We need to bring Christ back into our homes because as He leads a family, they will be moving in the right direction. Not perfect, not that they won't have problems because we have our own free will, but if we truly surrender to God, we will see the blessings that God has for the institution of the family!

But that is not what we saw here in Judges and thus, we saw – ***CONFUSION IN THE HOME!***

This morning we are going to look at another institution that God has established, and Satan is attacking, and that is the church and we will see in our study – ***CONFUSION IN THE CHURCH!***

Let me share this with you. This article is from April 12, 1968, almost 52 years ago. And listen carefully to the warning back then and think about where we are at today. We are told,

We are confronted today by a strange spectacle: those who presume to provide spiritual leadership, those whom we might hope “the Holy Spirit has made overseers to feed the church of God,” appear to be more confused and uncertain than those whom they are to lead.

There remain, of course, many leaders who firmly distinguish right from wrong and separate truth from error.

But the general confusion seems so deep and so widespread that laymen who are hungry at heart often cannot perceive which leaders are faithful to the truth.

In their discouragement they try not to be greatly concerned; life already presents enough burdensome complexities.

And as a consequence, men drift into agnosticism and indifference. Millions simply do not try to determine who is right and who is wrong; often they conclude that no one really knows. Something is drastically wrong in the Church.

We read of the “religious dilemma,” of the “paradox of the Church.” Men do not hesitate to assert that the institutional church is impotent, dead, or dying.

How true it is that few churches show anything very desirable about the Christian life.

“As an active and dedicated churchman,” writes Keith Miller, “I had seen from the inside that to call the Christ of the New Testament Lord of the average congregation’s contemporary activity in any true sense was preposterous.”

He is honest and he is right.

- <https://bit.ly/3kV41ne>

Here we are, some 52 years from what was written here, and we see how much worse things have gotten, how much confusion there is in the church and many don’t even care, they don’t even see it as a problem, but it is!

I have broken the verses we will be looking at this morning down into four main points. They are,

THE PROBLEM – JUDGES 17:6

A WANDERING HEART – JUDGES 17:7-8

A DEAL HE COULDN’T REFUSE – JUDGES 17:9-10

DOING WHAT IS RIGHT IN THEIR OWN EYES – JUDGES 17:11-13

So let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 17, beginning in verse 6 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through the book of Judges and we look at the topic of –

CONFUSION IN THE CHURCH!

JUDGES 17**VERSE 6**

Why is there all this confusion? We are told very clearly in this verse. They had no King, no one to lead them, they did not want God and thus, they did what was right in their own eyes and that is never a good thing.

The reason it is not good is because man's heart is evil and he will do whatever, and when I say "*whatever*" it is amazing the depravity that man will sink to in order to satisfy his flesh.

And once you start to travel down that path, please understand your flesh will never be satisfied, and you will keep going down, farther away from God and farther into depravity!

We saw how messed up the home life becomes, how much confusion between right and wrong when you take God out of the picture.

But now we will also see this, in all places, ***THE CHURCH!***

And the Devil is brilliant here because the church is to be a light in this world but what happens when that light is covered? You don't see it anymore.

Thus, the Devil has entered the church with his doctrines of demons and the light of the church, the preserving force that the church is to be, is not there anymore. I guess I should correct that. It is not as strong as it should be with the number of churches we have and the number of people who claim to be Christians in this nation!

Look at what the Emergent Church is doing, they are worshiping God the way they want, through experience and they have taken God's Word away because you really can't know what it means, words have so many meanings.

Which is interesting because they do write many books and produce many DVD's to teach their doctrines of demons to the people! So I guess words are important to them, their words and not God's!

And the end result is people in the church do what they feel is right in their own eyes and that is not good!

It brings anarchy inside the church and it brings anarchy in this world!

It is as Proverbs 14:12 tells us, "**There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.**" May we not forget that!

Let me give you an example of a church that brought psychology into it and just one thing it was teaching, and you tell me if it is right or wrong.

We are not sheep, but we are giraffes and thus, we can look above and see what is before us!

That sounds great, we have a view of everything that is before us and as we go through life, we can see clearly by being a giraffe!

Let me say this, with my height, I have never been called a giraffe, but that is another story.

First of all, what does the Bible say!

I think it is very clear that the Bible speaks of God's people as being sheep.

In Psalm 95:6-7 we are told, "**Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. . . .**"

Also, in Psalm 100:3 we are told, "**Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.**"

And there are many more that speak of us being sheep and that the Lord is our Shepherd. You don't have a shepherd for giraffe's and maybe that is the idea, we are doing what is right in our own eyes, we don't need a shepherd!

And we even see this in the New Testament as well, that we are sheep!

Now let me ask you this. How tall do you have to be to see all that you need to do in life, all that is going to happen in your life so you can walk appropriately?

I don't care if you are a 500-foot giraffe, you can't see the future, you don't know what is right and what is wrong apart from God. Well, again, let me clarify that. You don't know what God desires of you apart from God and His Word and thus, you will do what is right in your own eyes and that is exactly what we are seeing!

And this is so important in the days we are living in. Who are you going to follow? Are you going to follow other people? If you are, how do you know they are going in the right direction. Are you going to follow your own hearts desires? If you are, how do you know that you are going in the right direction?

Let me share with you a few Scriptures, because, again, this is so important for us to understand, that we follow the Lord's direction and if anyone, even ourselves, is leading us in the wrong direction, turn around and follow the Lord!

In Psalm 139:23-24 we are told, **“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”**

Notice David's cry. He wants God to search his heart, to take away any wickedness in him. But why? I believe it is so that he does not go astray. He wants the Lord to lead him into everlasting life and he knows that his heart won't do that, but the Lord can, and He does, but we must listen and obey!

In Proverbs 3:5-6 we see this same thought as Solomon tells us, "**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.**"

I don't know about you, but I have done this in the car driving to a place I am not familiar with. I was leaning on my own understanding of the directions and it got me lost! I needed to listen to the GPS! And it is true in our own lives, we need that God Positioning Satellite to guide us where we are to go, what we are to do. We need to trust Him and follow Him because He will direct our paths if we are willing to listen and obey!

In Proverbs 4:25-27 we are told, "**Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.**"

There are so many things in life that are competing for our attention, drawing us away from what we are to be doing and here we go, down another path instead of moving forward following our shepherd, Jesus Christ. Be careful and don't be distracted!

But what if we are not sure what to do, where to go? Listen to what David said in Psalm 31:3, "**For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.**"

If you are not sure where to go, what to do, then just ask God and He will guide you. Yes, there are times we must wait upon the Lord, but if we step out in our own wisdom, we are going to be in trouble. We need to let the Lord lead us and guide us in this journey of faith we are on!

In Psalm 32:8-9 we are told, **“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.”**

That is pretty simple. Keep your eyes upon the Lord, be in His Word and let the Holy Spirit guide you. If you don't, then the Lord will inflict some pain upon you to turn you around and get you to the place He wants you to go. But that is not how He wants to direct you. And even then, with the pain, you still must turn and follow Him, He will not force you to do so. But understand that God has what is best for our lives.

You see, God knows everything about me, all that I need in my life and He is working, He is molding and shaping me, just as He is working in you, to be the men and women that God wants us to be.

So are we going to be a giraffe doing our own thing or are we going to be sheep that are guided by our shepherd, Jesus Christ? The choice is ours but I am following our Great Shepherd Jesus Christ!

And I will give you one more that truly points to the fact that we are sheep and the Lord is our shepherd, and that is Psalm 23, which says, **“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.”** Psalm 23:1-6.

If you want direction and correct direction in your life, look to the Lord!

If you don't, then do whatever you want but understand your life will be filled with confusion and misdirection! It will not be good!

But look at not only the unsaved but look at the saved today who tell us to, *“follow-your-heart”* or *“let-your-heart-be-your-guide”* thinking.

Modern culture regards this as the ideal state of society. Yet the Bible and common sense tell us that this kind of moral, spiritual, and social anarchy brings nothing but destruction.

Let me give you a few examples to show you that it is not right to do what you think is right in your own eyes, but you need to follow the Lord!

- *It seemed right to the eyes of Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, but God said it was wrong.*
- *It seemed right to the eyes of the sons of Jacob to sell Joseph into slavery, but God said it was wrong.*
- *It seemed right to the eyes of Nadab and Abihu to offer strange fire before the Lord, but God said it was wrong.*

- *It seemed right to the eyes of King David to commit adultery with Bathsheba and cover it with murder, but God said it was wrong.*
- *It seemed right to the eyes of Judas to betray Jesus, but God said it was wrong.*

Remember what we read in Proverbs 14:12, “**There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.**”

I don't care how smart you think you are, how wise you may feel, when man follows his own instincts, it leads to ruin. We need to follow God's way, not our own.

THE PROBLEM, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Judges 17:6.

And out of that we are going to look at another person that comes into the picture, a religious man you might say and the focus here – ***A WANDERING HEART!***

VERSES 7-8

In Judges 18:30 we are told that this Levite's name was Jonathan.

And he should have been in one of the 48 Levitical cities set up for them to minister throughout the land, but he was in Bethlehem instead.

And he was having a hard time finding work, maybe the people were not providing for them like they should of and thus, he goes looking for work!

And thus, he is not only wandering through the land but he has a wandering heart as well. He is not seeking direction from the Lord, but he was just looking for a place where he could make it, not necessarily where God wanted him to be!

Here is this man of God, someone who was to be leading the people of God, and yet, he doesn't even know where he is going. He is just wandering about looking for some place where he could make it, like I have said.

Now let me bring this to the application for us, because this is important. If we miss this, then we, like this Levite, will be wandering about, trying to find a place to fit in and again, not necessarily where God wants us to be!

God has given to us a lot in life, a place to live you might say. And it is when we are disappointed in what we have, it is when we are not satisfied with what we have, that we go out looking for other places to live, to try to get another lot in life you might say.

And that can be where you physically live, or the person you are living with you are not satisfied with, or the job you have and the list can go on-and-on. But you get the idea.

We need to be satisfied where God has planted us and when we are where God wants us to be, that is where we will grow!

Listen carefully to what we are told in Proverbs 19:23, "**The fear of the Lord leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.**"

Maybe this Levite was not satisfied because he did not fear the Lord. Thus, he did not experience that abundant life that the Lord had for him. I am not saying it was easy or that everything was perfect, but satisfaction is in the Lord and the fear of the Lord leads to life.

But, if we don't fear the Lord, if we don't obey the Lord and we are running to and fro after this satisfaction, it will not be good and you will never find the satisfaction that you are looking for!

Make no mistake about it, the fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom, but it is the source of true and lasting satisfaction.

You see, having a relationship with Christ leads to eternal life, and as you continue to see all that He has done and all we have in Him, there is contentment in that.

It is as Paul told Timothy, “**For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.**” I Timothy 4:8.

But apart from the Lord or not obeying the Lord, being directed by Him, you will have *A WANDERING HEART* like this Levite did and it is not going to end well, as we will see. He is going to move farther and farther away from God and being a representative of God, he is going to move others away from God!

And as this Levite is traveling, we are told, “**. . . Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.**”

Which brings us to our next point, *A DEAL HE COULDN'T REFUSE!*

VERSES 9-10

Remember in the first Godfather movie, as Marlon Brando is speaking to a guy who is down, he wants to be involved with Hollywood and they are not offering him any deals, and Marlon Brando, the Godfather, says to him, “*I’m gonna make him and offer that he can’t refuse.*”

That is kind of what we are seeing here as Micah made Jonathan a deal he could not refuse.

What do I mean by that?

Micah is going to pay this Levite, give him a place to stay, if he would be a priest. Not only that, but Micah would give him some cool clothes to wear. It was truly a deal that he could not refuse and yet, it was not the deal that God wanted him to take.

And we see that Jonathan grabbed at this offer, but the reality is, he was a hireling, selling himself out for money.

Yes, there was comfort; there was security in the house of an idolater!

Don't sell yourself out to the enemy doing things you should not be doing because it will be easier for you or provide what you will need. Do what God has called you to do!

I have shared this with you before but I think it is important to understand that you don't go looking for the best offer, you do what the Lord is calling you to do!

When I first came up here to be the pastor of Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc, their pastor had stepped down several months earlier.

So there was a lot of emotional things going on. People were wondering how long this guy is going to stay!

In fact, at a meeting we had, that was one of the questions that was asked of me, ***“How long are you going to be here?”***

And I thank God for the words that God had given me. It wasn't that I didn't know the answer, but at this point I didn't realize the hurt that was going on in the congregation and how leery they were about a new pastor and what he was going to do. And, like I have said, if I was going to even stay.

And the point that Joe Samz was making, he asked the question, and it was a great one, I still remember it some 25 years later, was basically this.

Was I going to use this ministry here at Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc as a stepping stone for something bigger, something better, something where I could work fulltime in the ministry and not have to work some 32 plus hours outside of the ministry to support my family. Was I going to wait until some church, with more people, better benefits, or whatever, asked me to come and be their pastor?

In other words, was I waiting for – ***A DEAL I COULDN'T REFUSE!***

I wasn't and I am not!

I basically said this to Joe and to the rest of the people of this church. ***“God has called me to be the pastor of this church. You have called me to come up here and be the pastor of this church. And, as the pastor, the under-shepherd of this church, I am not called to look for a bigger flock of sheep, wealthier sheep or whatever. I believe that this is where God has called me and thus, this is where I will be through the thick and thin, the easy and the tough times.”***

And, I think I have shown that over these past 25 years, I have been here through it all, and there have been some tough times but we have gotten through them, or I should say, God has seen us through them all.

This Levite is nothing more than a hireling, he is hired by Micah!

Now what do I mean by ***“hireling”***?

Noah Webster gives this definition for ***“hireling.”***

One who is hired, or who serves for wages . . . employed for money or other compensation.

- American Dictionary of the English Language – Noah Webster 1828

Now some may think, *“Isn’t that what you do Pastor Joe?”*

No, I don’t work for the money, I serve the Lord. And a worker is worthy of his wages but when wages become the priority, then you have a hireling and he will do whatever he has to so that he can get paid, even compromise what he believes to tickle the people’s ears and keep that money coming in!

In John 10:11-13 we see Jesus show us what a true shepherd is about and what a hireling is about. He said, **“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.”**

What we see here in these verses is the Shepherds concern for His sheep. We see that He was willing to die for His sheep. He loves His sheep. And He unites His sheep.

Jesus is going to compare the True Shepherd to the false shepherds or the hireling, a hired man. And one of the ways you can tell a false shepherd is that he takes from others instead of giving His life for the sheep.

Jesus, being God, could have taken anything He wanted but instead He gave His life so we can have that abundant life in Him. But the false shepherds steal life away, they destroy life!

And we think today or hear today how we should not come against the false teaching in the church, we are being much too hard on them. That is foolishness. Of course we are to deal with it because by ignoring it you are endorsing it and you are putting the sheep that God has entrusted to you in danger!

And listen to what we are told in I Timothy 5:20, **“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”** They are to be rebuked, exposed. Many today feel that they don’t want to name names of those who are teaching false doctrine, but that is not Scriptural. If you are teaching false doctrine it is a sin and it does need to be exposed!

Listen to what Spurgeon had to say, over 125 years ago and how many have ignored those words today. He wrote, *“How many there are of whom we have reason to fear that they must be hirelings, because, when they see false doctrine and error abroad, they do not oppose it! They are willing to put up with anything for the sake of peace and quietness.”*

There was the warning, and many have not heeded this warning and they are embracing the false teaching that is flooding into the church.

And as pastors, we are accountable. You see, the title of *“pastor”* translates from the same Greek word as *“shepherd.”*

And let me be clear on this. There is only one Good Shepherd, that is Jesus Christ, but as pastor, I am what you might say an under-shepherd.

Too often today someone feels that if they can teach God’s Word, they are a pastor. That is not true! You see, a pastor is not a position you are granted or assume, it is a position that is given to you by God and is seen in the things that you do!

What do I mean?

Are you willing to display the same characteristics as the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ towards your flock?

Will you sacrifice for them, know them, and will they know your voice?

That has not only been my prayer since we moved up here but also my wife's, that the sheep here at Calvary would hear my voice as I represent to them the things of God, share with them the Word of God and they would grow.

My heart's desire has always been to sacrifice my life for the sheep that God has entrusted to me. And I guess one of the greatest compliments that I have had, even though this person was putting me down, was said to me after I was released from the hospital and this person said, and I am paraphrasing, ***"You are just a martyr, wearing yourself out, making yourself so sick that you end up in the hospital!"***

I love the sheep that God has entrusted to me and I thank Him for them and I will watch over them, protect them, and feed them like I have been doing for the past 25 years!

And, as we saw in John chapter 10, for the hireling, this is a paid position and there is no attachment to these sheep. If they are injured, if they die, if they go hungry, if they are attacked by false doctrine by wolves in sheep's clothing, it is not their concern. They are interested only in ***THEMSELVES!***

If there is a better position, more money, more people, more benefits, or whatever, they will move on to other sheep because they are only interested in ***THEMSELVES.***

So, when danger comes, when times get tough, when things don't go their own way, they leave!

And listen to what the Lord said to the shepherds of Israel because I believe He is speaking to shepherds today as well.

In Jeremiah 23:1-2 we are told, **“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!’ says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: ‘You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,’ says the LORD.”**

You see, that is not the heart of a shepherd and tragically many sheep have been hurt by these hirelings who are only interested in themselves and not the sheep that God has entrusted to them.

Peter put it this way in I Peter 5:2-4 when he said, **“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”**

So, we have seen that the shepherd has so much concern for His sheep that He is willing to die for them.

But, not only that, we see in John 10:14-15 the love that the shepherd has for His sheep!

Now, back here in Judges, for Micah, to have his own personal priest would legitimize his shrine that he made.

Folk’s, man cannot legitimize anything we do, only God can and if we are serving Him, walking as He called us to walk, that is all we need to encourage us to continue on. We do not need man to legitimize the work!

Morgan put it like this, showing us what was going on with both men. He wrote, “*Micah was attempting to maintain his relationship with God by violating the commands of God. The Levite degenerated into an attempt to secure his own material comfort by compromise.*”

So Micah gives Jonathan – ***A DEAL HE COULD NOT REFUSE!***

And that leads us to our last point – ***DOING WHAT IS RIGHT IN THEIR OWN EYES!***

VERSES 11-13

First of all, was Micah sincere about what he was doing?

Absolutely he was sincere. Micah was utterly sincere, but he was also totally wrong!

Let me say this. Sincerity is nice but gets you nowhere if it is not coupled with truth. I hope that makes sense to you and if not, think of it like this.

A person who sincerely thinks they can swim across the Pacific Ocean will drown just as surely as the person who isn't as sincere. That should just make sense!

And think about this now. How warped the mind of Micah was. He thinks that now that he has this priest to attend to the shrine he has made, that God will bless his household.

The reality was that this man was not a priest; he was only from the tribe of Levi.

How could they move so far away from the truths of God?

Very simply, they had nothing to guide them, and as you start getting off course, it is not long before you are totally lost, not knowing where you are.

Let me explain.

Imagine if you were going to sail from California to Hawaii, and when you started you were only a few degrees off course. Not much at all. But by the time you were to arrive in Hawaii, you would be so far off course that you would miss the island completely.

So how can we stay on track?

Simple, you need a compass.

For us our compass is the Word of God that keeps us on track. You will never go astray if you are guided by the instruments that God has given to you to keep you on track and that is the Word of God which is powered by the Holy Spirit.

This Levite should have known the Word of God and he probably did, he just did not agree with it and he did it his own way!

Remember these songs and sayings, because they do reflect what was going on in Israel and what is going on in our nation today.

Frank Sinatra sang, "*I did it my way!*"

And the Burger King saying, "*Have it your way!*"

Or those songs from the 60's, "*I've gotta be me!*" or "*Born free!*"

That just does not work because when we do what is right in our own eyes, it is not good, and God will not accept it. Learn the lesson!

And like I have said, Micah was sincere in what he was doing and I believe that Jonathan was sincere as well, but they did not have the truths of God from the Word of God and thus, they were sincerely wrong!

It is amazing to me, but the Jonathan's and the Micah's will always find each other, because they need each other.

Remember what Paul told Timothy, warning him of what was to come, **“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”** II Timothy 4:3-4.

You see, there will always be those seeking to satisfy self, no matter if it contradicts what God has said, and there will always be those who will teach that garbage of lies to others. For they need each other.

Our responsibility, Paul says, is to, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”** II Timothy 4:2.

You see, there will always be false doctrine out there; our responsibility is not to embrace it but expose it as error with the *Word of GOD!*

And yes, there are seasons when people don't want to hear God's Word, but don't let that stop you. You need to be ready for whatever season comes our way and give the truth in love to a world in darkness!

Now let's apply this to what is going on today. People are really not interested in hearing the Word of God, they want a feel-good message.

Pastors want to get paid; they want their congregations to grow, and they give the people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. This writer sums it up nicely for us. He wrote,

Ear-tickling sells.

Anyone doubting that should stand outside a typical church on a Sunday morning and listen. “I like the way he preaches.” “He makes me feel good.” “I don’t like what I hear.” “I’m not sure what it is about that preacher, but I don’t like him.” I like, I don’t like, I feel, I don’t feel.

What I want in a church. What we’re looking for. Why we’re considering leaving. On and on, ad infinitum. People want what they want. And with the availability of churches of all stripes and colors—varieties of sizes, architecture, programs, music, preaching, doctrine—no one need stay where they are unhappy. So, they keep moving.

And so pastors keep studying “what people want in a church.” And lay leadership keeps polling the congregation: “What you want in a pastor.”

God help us.

In the Peanuts comic strip, the children were writing an assignment about their summer vacation. Linus was hard at work. He wrote something like, “Even though I had a lot of fun this summer – at the beach, going to movies, playing ball, and vacationing with my family – I could not wait to return to the hallowed halls of learning. I missed my amazing school, my wonderful books, and my outstanding teacher. I’m so happy to be back.”

He handed in the paper, then stood there while the teacher read it. He says, “An A-plus? Thank you very much, ma’am.” As he leaves the room, he remarks to another child, “As the years come and go, one learns what sells.”

Many a pastor has figured out what sells and has determined to offer a steady menu of that to their congregations.

This is powered by a lot of things: personal ambition, job security, drawing crowds, increasing the budget, and getting noticed.

The flesh craves what it wants. The Gospel of Eartickling says pastors should speak nice words, never rock the boat, and choose only those doctrines that the locals agree on. Or even better, avoid doctrine altogether and stay with topics sure to draw in a crowd. “How to be a winner in a losing world.” “How to overcome your low self-esteem.” “How to be popular and still please God.” “How to romance your spouse.” “How to have perfect children.”

In his final warning to the church – specifically to young Pastor Timothy, but through him to us – Paul implies that sound doctrine may be unpleasant to the ear. The truth of God preached by a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus does a lot of things . . .

- it rebukes our self-centeredness.
- it holds us to a higher standard.
- it is like surgery or medicine in that for the short term it can be painful, but the result of which is health.

This is why only courageous leaders should be chosen by churches. They understand these things and are willing to pay the price. Others are not. . . .

- <https://bit.ly/3kXuznZ>

For Micah, he had his molded image, his carved image and now he has Jonathan to authenticate what he is doing, to justify what he is doing and that last point – ***DOING WHAT IS RIGHT IN THEIR OWN EYES!***

If you want to destroy a nation, you destroy the family so that future generations don't know good from evil, they don't know right from wrong and thus, the world can conform them into the image that they want, and we are seeing that played out in our nation today and in the world!

If you want to destroy a nation, you destroy the church and you destroy the church by filling it with unbiblical teaching, drawing people away from saving faith and getting them involved in areas that are of no value. And, once again, we are seeing that played out in our churches today!

Remember what the church is to be about. Paul tells us in I Timothy 3:15, “**. . . I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**”

Next time we will look at the destruction of society and the government. And as you look at our nation today, wow, we are there!

Now I don't want you to leave you on that downer. You see, we don't have to go down that path as individuals, we have choices.

Thus, like Paul, may we say, “**But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.**” Acts 20:24.