

JUDGES 19:1-9
PERSONAL IMMORALITY!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 19 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Judges.

We are in the home stretch, you might say, in our study here in Judges and you may have thought that the first sixteen chapters of this book were dark, were horrible, but now, as we get into the last five chapters, it is even worse.

Now let's think about this for a minute. Why did God even include this in the Bible? What purpose is there for learning these things that happened in Israel, kind of the dark ages for this nation? There is a purpose.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

The Book of Judges depicts a very dark hour in the history of Israel, and yet the events of this book come so very soon after the "golden years" of the "Joshua generation." It is not the kind of reading we do for pure enjoyment, but it is an important era in the history of Israel, an era that we need to understand, and from which we should learn important lessons. Sad to say, it is an era that is very similar to the days in which we live, making it a message all the more pertinent to us. Let us listen well, and heed the message God has for us in these difficult pages.

- <https://bit.ly/34bayop>

I think that is the point. What happened in Israel can happen in our lives, in our nation, and thus, we need to learn these lessons so we don't go down that same path. Or, if we are heading in the wrong direction, we too can return back to the Lord, get back on the right path, the one that the Lord has for us!

Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”**

You see, these stories that are in the Bible are here for our learning and as we read them, as we study them, as we apply them to our lives, we can grow, we can mature in the Lord. In fact, as you read these stories they should give us hope that God does not give up on us but is always drawing us to Him and then it is up to us to listen and obey or, like we see here in Judges, they did what they wanted because there was no King in Israel.

And when I speak of no King in Israel, I am speaking of the Lord being on the throne of their hearts leading them and guiding them in what they should do. And that is always a dangerous place to be, letting our hearts guide us instead of the Lord.

And what we see here in Israel we are seeing in our nation today and the reason we see it in our nation is because that is what is going on in people's lives, they are doing as they please and it is contrary to what God desires of them!

Let me share this with you about this moral chaos that we will be seeing in Israel, because, like I have said, we are seeing this play out before us today. Yes, it was the dark ages for Israel, and, as I look at our nation, I believe we have entered the dark ages as well. And the only solution is the Lord!

Listen to what we are told,

It's surely no accident but part of the wise design of the author that a story about idolatry is followed so closely by a story about immorality. Only the God who made the world and everything in it, including ourselves, has the absolute right to tell us how to live our lives.

He who brought order out of *physical* chaos by separating light from darkness (Genesis 1:3-5) also gave order to the *moral* universe by separating right from wrong (Genesis 2:15-17).

The creator of the world is also its lawgiver and judge. Once we displace him from his rightful place in our lives and allow other things to take his place, we cut ourselves adrift from the only thing that can give moral stability to our lives.

There is then no truth, just "*my* truth" and "*your* truth." Nor is there any right or wrong (only what *seems* right or wrong to me), and no common authority we can appeal to when our personal judgments or preferences differ.

Without God we are afloat on the shifting currents of relativism. Everyone "[does] what [is] right in his own eyes" – the effective refrain of Judges 17-21 – and the result is moral chaos (Judges 17:6; 21:25; cf. 18:1; 19:1).

Idolatry and immorality are bedfellows; where you have one, you also, sooner or later, have the other.

The last five chapters of Judges are about a decaying society in which all the institutions that should give stability to life are failing because of the character of those who operate them.

It is the story of a nation collapsing in on itself because it has lost its anchorage in God and no longer knows how to deal with the chaos it has unleashed by its own folly. And tragically that nation is Israel.

It is like post-Christian Europe or Australia or the United States or any number of other nations that once, at least nominally, acknowledged their Christian heritage and sought to be true to it, but no longer do so.

Or like a Christian denomination that was birthed in the fires of revival, but is now enfeebled by false teaching and false living.

The only doctrine still preached is tolerance, but the church is torn with dissent and cannot heal itself because it has no means of accurately diagnosing its sickness.

The last part of Judges is not pleasant reading, especially chapter 19-21, but if we read carefully we will find that even here God is present and therefore there is hope.

- Barry G. Webb, *Judges and Ruth – God in Chaos*, pp. 227-228

Again, I think this is so important that we read, that we understand what took place because it is what is happening in our nation, and if we are not careful, we can allow these things into our lives and the result is that we will do what is right in our own eyes, just as Israel was doing!

I have called our study this morning – ***PERSONAL IMMORALITY!***

And I have broken down these verses like this,

A WANDERING HEART – JUDGES 19:1

BREAKDOWN OF MARRIAGE – JUDGES 19:2

PSEUDO-RECONCILIATION – JUDGES 19:3

ENTERTAINMENT – JUDGES 19:4-9

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 19, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at the topic - ***PERSONAL IMMORALITY!***

JUDGES 19

VERSE 1

Now some people read the events that are taking place in this verse and they don't see a problem with what this Levite was doing. But the key is how this verse opens up, "**And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel . . .**"

And then it speaks of this Levite and I will deal with what he was doing in a minute, but it is not a good thing because of what we are told here. You see, this is the crux of the problem! They did what was right in their own eyes and that is never good!

It is as the Lord said in Jeremiah 17:9, "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately (incurably sick) wicked; who can know it?**"

Make no mistake about it, the Lord knows our heart and what we see here is that God is showing us the history of Israel. And when He does this He does not hold back. He tells it like it is.

God does not make us look better than we are. He knows what is going on inside our hearts and in time that will overflow into actions.

If our heart is wicked, so too will be our actions, and that is what we have seen in the book of Judges and this little introduction to this series of events is setting the stage for this horrible story that we will be reading about.

So we see that Israel is doing what is right in their own eyes, and out of that we are told, **“. . . that there was a certain Levite sojourning in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.”**

Here is this Levite, not Jonathan that we read about in the previous chapters, but he was from the remote mountains of Ephraim.

And that tells me that he is doing his own thing, not what God had called him to do. How do I know that?

Because this Levite was not in one of the Levitical cities that we are told about in Joshua chapter 21.

Remember that the tribe of Levi did not get an inheritance in the land because the Lord was their inheritance. But they were to get 48 Levitical cities spread throughout the land, given to them by the various tribes, but it was not their inheritance. And from these Levitical cities they would teach the children of Israel the things of God!

But from what we read here in Judges 19:1, he is in the **“remote mountains of Ephraim”** and not in one of the Levitical cities in Ephraim.

This Levite was doing his own thing, he is out in the wilderness and if you still doubt that I think this will help. We are told that this Levite was **“sojourning”** in these remote mountains in Ephraim!

In other words, this Levite was wandering around, not having a place to dwell, doing his own thing, and that is never good.

Now, because he is not walking with God, he does not marry a woman but finds a concubine in Bethlehem and takes her.

A concubine was a legal partner but did not have the same status in the home as a wife did.

And this Levite disregarded God's plan for a couple and that was marriage, not this partnership!

And yes, we see others who did this very thing in the Old Testament, but understand that God established what a relationship between a man and a woman was all about in Genesis. It was established when He brought Adam and Eve together in a marriage relationship and we see that continue on in the New Testament teaching. One man married to one woman!

How did this Levite lose his sense of direction?

Because he moved away from the Word of God and he did what was right in his own eyes.

We do see the Scriptures speaking of wandering because they have moved away from the Word of God, which is what helps to direct them and us in life.

In Amos 8:11-12 we are told, **“Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord God, ‘That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, And from north to east; They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, But shall not find it.”**

Make no mistake about it, God speaks to us through His Word! God directs us through His Word! God corrects us through His Word!

And as we negate the Word of God in our lives, as we do what we want, we lose direction, and we are walking aimlessly through this life.

Let me give you a *“for instance”*, and it may offend some of you, but maybe that is what is needed.

God tells us in His Word that He has formed us in the womb. And yet, look at the number of Christians who support politicians that are for abortion. How can that be? Because they are doing what they feel is right in their own heart and not what God has stated in His Word.

They are selling themselves out for what? The pleasures in this world?

Again, some may be upset about that, but how did God feel about the sacrifice the children of Israel were doing to the god Molech? Not good as they were sacrificing their children to this god and we are doing the same thing if we support people who support abortion.

Or, as Paul said in Romans 1:32, **“who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”**

So it is not only doing immoral, wicked acts, but it is approving of those who do them and we see that so often today and it is wrong!

Now as much as there was a famine in the days of Amos, we see another one in the days we are living in. And it is not that people don't have the Word of God, they just are not interested in it or they want it to say things that make them feel good about the way that they are living.

To do that you have Bibles that distort the Word of God, you have teachers that are willing to tickle the ears of the people and thus, the deception that Jesus warned us about in the Last Days is upon us because people are not testing what is being taught with the Word of God!

Listen to what one writer wrote regarding what we see happening in churches today. He wrote,

“It is well and good for the preacher to base his sermon on the Bible, but he better get to something relevant pretty quickly, or we start mentally to check out.” That stunningly clear sentence reflects one of the most amazing, tragic, and lamentable characteristics of contemporary Christianity: an impatience with the Word of God.

The sentence above comes from Mark Galli, senior managing editor of *Christianity Today* in an essay entitled, “Yawning at the Word.” In just a few hundred words, he captures the tragedy of a church increasingly impatient with and resistant to the reading and preaching of the Bible. We may wince when we read him relate his recent experiences, but we also recognize the ring of truth.

Galli was told to cut down on the biblical references in his sermon. “You’ll lose people,” the staff member warned. In a Bible study session on creation, the teacher was requested to come back the next Sunday prepared to take questions at the expense of reading the relevant scriptural texts on the doctrine. Cutting down on the number of Bible verses “would save time and, it was strongly implied, would better hold people’s interest.”

As Galli reflected, “Anyone who’s been in the preaching and teaching business knows these are not isolated examples but represent the larger reality.”

Indeed, in many churches there is very little reading of the Bible in worship, and sermons are marked by attention to the congregation’s concerns, not by an adequate attention to the biblical text. The exposition of the Bible has given way to the concerns, real or perceived, of the listeners. The authority of the Bible is swallowed up in the imposed authority of congregational concerns. . . .

The fixation on our own sense of need and interest looms as the most significant factor in this marginalization and silencing of the Word. Individually, each human being in the room is an amalgam of wants, needs, intuitions, interests, and distractions.

Corporately, the congregation is a mass of expectations, desperate hopes, consuming fears, and impatient urges. All of this adds up, unless countered by the authentic reading and preaching of the Word of God, to a form of group therapy, entertainment, and wasted time - if not worse.

Galli has this situation clearly in his sights when he asserts that many congregations expect the preacher to *start* from some text in the Bible, but then quickly move on “to things that really interest us.” Like . . . *ourselves?*

One of the earliest examples of what we would call the preaching of the Bible may well be found in Nehemiah 8:1-8 . . .

Ezra and his companions stood on a platform before the congregation. They read the scriptural text clearly, and then explained the meaning of the Scripture to the people. The congregation received the Word humbly, while standing. The pattern is profoundly easy to understand: the Bible was read and explained and received.

As Hughes Oliphant Old comments, “This account of the reading of the Law indicates that already at the time of the writing of this text there was a considerable amount of ceremonial framing of the public reading of Scripture. This ceremonial framing is a witness to the authority of the Bible.”

The reading and exposition took place in a context of worship as the people listened to the Word of God. The point of the sermon was simple: “to make clear the reading of the Scriptures.”

In many churches, there is almost no public reading of the Word of God. Worship is filled with music, but congregations seem disinterested in listening to the reading of the Bible. We are called to sing in worship, but the congregation cannot live only on the portions of Scripture that are woven into songs and hymns.

Christians need the ministry of the Word as the Bible is read before the congregation such that God's people - young and old, rich and poor, married and unmarried, sick and well - hear it together.

The sermon is to consist of the exposition of the Word of God, powerfully and faithfully read, explained, and applied. It is not enough that the sermon take a biblical text as its starting point.

How can so many of today's churches demonstrate what can only be described as an impatience with the Word of God? The biblical formula is clear: the neglect of the Word can only lead to disaster, disobedience, and death. God rescues his church from error, preserves his church in truth, and propels his church in witness only by his Word - not by congregational self-study. . . .

- <https://bit.ly/356BG72>

Paul warned us what will happen if we move away from the truths of God found in the Word of God. In Ephesians 4:17-19 we are told, **“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”**

In other words, if you are not reading the Word of God, if you are not applying the Word of God to your life, then your walk with God is going to be off, you will walk like the world is walking, **“in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened.”**

And that is what we see here with this Levite. He was wandering around aimlessly through life and he **TOOK** for himself this concubine from Bethlehem in Judah!

And again, you look at the church in general today and they don't have a direction that they are going but they are being tossed to and fro by the winds of false doctrine that are blowing through the church and they are setting their sails and drifting away!

For me, I know what the Lord has called me to do, I know the direction He is leading me. As a pastor, the Lord has directed me to, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 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. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:2-5.

And that is why I do what I do and that should be the direction that every pastor has taken, to preach the Word in season and out of season, when people want to hear it and they don't want to hear it!

But that is not all that the Lord has for me. From Genesis through Revelation He is showing me how to walk, what to avoid, what to embrace, and-so-on. And He has given me the power to accomplish what He desires, His Spirit. And then, it is up to me to walk accordingly or to obey the Lord.

If I choose not to, then, like this Levite, I will wander in life and the course of this world will lead me where to go instead of the Lord.

As Solomon said, may we do. He wrote in Proverbs 3:5-6, “**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 think that is very clear.

Now look at what happens in this relationship with this concubine, and I have called it – ***BREAKDOWN OF MARRIAGE!***

VERSE 2

We are told that after some time, we don't know how long, she goes back to her father's house and has an affair.

Now some feel that she went to her father's house for protection, but it clearly states that she “**played the harlot**” and thus, it would seem that she was unfaithful to her husband and had sexual relations with another man!

This truly is a sad commentary on marriage. Again, we don't know how long before she left her husband, but it does not seem like it was that long of a period of time. And here's the thing. If God is not in the center of a marriage, it is very hard for that marriage to stay together.

Why is that?

Because in marriage there are two different people coming together and when self is on the throne of a person's heart, then it will be all about them. That is the exact opposite of what a marriage is to be about. It is to be about the Lord and then your spouse and then you!

But self can easily get in the way and destroy a marriage.

If she went and had an affair, then her fleshly desires outweighed what God desired of her, to be faithful to her husband.

If, as some think, that this Levite was a man who abused her and she went for safety to her father's house, then again, self was on the throne of his heart and it drove his wife away!

Let me share a few things with you about marriages and why we are seeing marriages struggle so much.

Examples are disappearing, and commitment is no longer cultural.

Fewer people have access to know and interact with living, breathing couples who have honored their vows in lifelong marriage. . . .

[I think it is important to find examples of marriages that are succeeding and learn from them, what they do to make this work for them.]

Opportunities to sinfully connect with others besides one's spouse are incalculable due to social media.

Opportunities to sinfully connect with others besides one's spouse are incalculable due to social media. . . . Just a few years ago, if you wanted to check in on an old girlfriend, you had ask somebody for her number. Immediately, this would've raised some eyebrows and, even in moments of weakness, the potential reactions curbed a lot of sinful thoughts from ever becoming actions. Now, in complete anonymity and secrecy, your former love interests are just a few screen touches away. An innocent hello or "like" on a picture is all it takes to restart interaction that can be deadly to a marriage. . . .

[How true that is. It is so easy to just go onto social media and look up anyone and everyone or go to sites that are not healthy for a marriage relationship!]

People are living closer to the ragged edge.

Divorcing is never good, and it is always linked to bad decisions. Bad decision-making does not happen in a vacuum. People who make bad decisions often do so because they lack emotional and spiritual health in their lives. Emotional and spiritual health require a life that is balanced, nurtured and lived at a pace that is realistic and God-honoring. Unfortunately, for many, proper pace and balance is non-existent. People are swimming in debt to fund a lifestyle the culture says will lead to happiness. . . . When a man or woman is tired, under pressure and not spiritually nurtured, they will begin to look to their spouse for relief. A relief which no other human, even a devoted spouse, can provide. When their misguided efforts come up empty, they become disappointment and resentful of their marriage. This is precisely why people will say of their failing marriage, "I'm just not happy," or "I've fallen out of love with you." Unhealthy living leads to unhealthy loving...which causes unhealthy leaving.

Sex continues to NOT deliver, yet the world continues to believe it can.

According to world, sex solves all our problems. If a person can have more and better sex with beautiful, exciting partners, then life will truly be fulfilling. This is literally how our culture sells and celebrates sex. There is just one problem; it is absolutely not true. . . . God, the creator of sex, did design it to be a powerful and pleasurable part of our lives. But He did not make it the end-all of our purpose on this earth. The world tries to deny this by chasing more sex with more people in more ways. But it never delivers, because it cannot. Yet, like never before, it is always in front of us. And, as the prevalence of illicit sex grows, so too does our divorce rate.

Christians are trying marriage without Christ.

. . . There is no hope to living the Christian life without a personal relationship with Christ which brings the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit of God into one's life. Without this, Christianity becomes an empty religion filled with helpful moral codes and commands, but empty of transformative power. Now apply this to marriage. Having a pastor perform your wedding, attending church together and even praying before meals most certainly does NOT constitute a Christian marriage. It may look Christian on the outside, but without His Spirit ruling and reigning in a man's and woman's hearts, you can forget having a love for a lifetime.

- <https://bit.ly/35ki6V2>

If you are struggling in your marriage relationship, **YOU** need to look to Christ, and **YOU** need to deal with issues within your own heart and let God deal with the issues in your spouse's heart. You are the only one who can change and thus, as both marriage partners draw closer to God, they will grow closer to each other because the focus will be upon the Lord and the other person and in doing that, you will be blessed!

Here we see this Levite, who was not walking with God, and, obviously, neither was his concubine or partner and we see what took place – ***THE BREAKDOWN OF MARRIAGE!***

But we see something that outwardly looks good, but inwardly, this Levites heart is still not right with God. And because of that it will be manifested in what he does next, this – ***PSEUDO-RECONCILIATION!***

VERSE 3

And for this Levite, it took him four months to finally decide that maybe he should go after her and he does.

Who does that sound like?

To me, it sounds a lot like Samson who went back to get his wife after he left her at the wedding feast before the marriage was consummated.

I don't see this as a heart that is in love with this woman, and I will explain that in a minute.

First, I want to share with you what other commentators say took place here. They feel that this man did what was right, they give him a thumbs up for the efforts he made in going after his concubine and trying to reconcile this relationship.

One commentator put it like this. He wrote,

The previous scene has raised some questions about the Levite's character. The way this one opens, however, seems to indicate that he has some redeeming features.

After "four months" (v. 2) – long enough to reflect on what has happened and perhaps accept his own at least partial responsibility for it – the Levite sets out for Bethlehem to get his estranged concubine back. . . .

This is no casual affair, but a mission planned and undertaken with care. And the fact that he goes to "speak kindly" to his concubine (literally, "speak to her heart") shows that the Levite intends to win her back with gentle persuasion rather than simply demanding that she return and that her father hand her over to him.

The way he is greeted on arrival, too, suggests that both the concubine and her father are eager for reconciliation rather than confrontation.

She brings him “into her father’s house,” and her father comes forward “with joy to meet him” (v. 3).

- Barry G. Webb, Judges and Ruth – God in Chaos, p. 229

And I would agree with him if that is all we read of what transpired. But, as we read on, we will see that this is a pseudo-love, a pseudo-reconciliation.

I think he missed her, she was gone for four months, and thus, he goes to get her.

And the reason I say that this is not true love is the way that he is going to treat her, what he is going to do to her or allow others to do to her and it is almost like she is nothing more than a possession to him and not his wife!

And if you have read this story, you know what is going to take place is horrible and I can’t imagine saying I love my wife and then would throw her to the dogs, in a sense! But that is what this Levite is going to do, he is going to let the men of the city rape her all night long and in the morning, when it is time to depart, after she was raped all night long, this is what he tells her as she is laying at the threshold of the door, “**Get up and let us be going.**” Judges 19:28.

He is not a very good guy! Not at all! No compassion, no concern, get up and let’s go! How heartless that is!

I don’t know about you, but as I read that it just makes my blood boil, to see that unloving, uncaring attitude of this man towards his wife or concubine.

He was not even concerned about her and that is why I feel that this reconciliation is fake, it is only because he missed her probably sexually, and folks, if that is all a marriage relationship is based upon, it is in trouble.

Like I have said, it must be based in Christ. There is nothing wrong with sexual relations between a husband and his wife, but again, if that is all your relationship is based upon, it is going to be in trouble.

I know my wife and she knows me, we have been married for forty-one years! But we are not done learning about each other. You see, once you stop your marriage is in trouble. I thought I loved my wife more than I could ever imagine when we first got married. But I was wrong. The more I know her the more I love her!

But for this Levite, that is not the case and I will talk more about that in a minute. But first, let me say this.

Okay, sorry guys, this one is for you.

You can't treat your wife like she is a possession one minute and then the next minute you call her "*Honey*" or "*Sugar Cakes!*" or "*Dear*" or whatever!

Let me put this into perspective for you.

She is the daughter of the Great King, Jesus Christ! And you better treat His daughter correctly!

In fact, Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 5 that we are to love our spouse as Christ loves the church and died for the church!

And I can only speak for myself, but I don't even come close to what Christ has done, but that should not stop us from working towards that goal, of being more like Christ.

Now there is something else that is missing here in these verses we have been looking at this morning, do you know what that is?

The main thing that is missing in this Levite's life and in the life of this marriage is this – ***GOD!***

Isn't that interesting. This man is a Levite, and yet he is not even speaking about God, not even seeking direction from God. He has *A WANDERING HEART* that led into this relationship and out of this wandering heart we see the *BREAKDOWN OF MARRIAGE!*

And yes, there is this *PSEUDO-RECONCILIATION* but that is all it is.

Now, as this Levite arrives at his father-in-law's house this woman's father is excited to see him, maybe wanting his daughter out of his house or seeing the lifestyle she is now living, he is hoping that this reconciliation will put an end to the way she was living!

And that will bring us to the last point, and many don't see this as a problem, but it is.

This last point is this – *ENTERTAINMENT!*

VERSES 4-9

Notice what this Levite and his father-in-law are doing, they are drinking for three days! And it will last for five days in the end. Here was one of the spiritual leaders of the nation and as this nation walked in darkness, what is he doing? He is partying it up! That should not be. He is doing like the rest of the world was doing, and that should not have happened.

I think this man's father-in-law likes to party with his son-in-law; he doesn't want him to leave. Which is interesting, he wanted his daughter to go, but he is enjoying the drinking with this Levite!

And it is easy to see others do this, but let me be clear on this, it is happening in the church today.

The church has become an entertainment center where we have basketball courts, climbing walls, skits instead of teaching the Bible, light shows and fog machines for worship, there was even a rollercoaster set up on stage for the worship team to use as they are worshipping the Lord at one church.

Now I like to have fun like everyone else, but there is a time to have fun and there is a time to be serious. And instead of instructing people on holiness, we are entertaining them. They are feeding the flesh instead of building up the inner man.

I know, some of you think I am going overboard on this and thus, I will let you come to your own conclusion on this matter.

Listen to what this church in Glendale Arizona has concluded as important in the instructing of their members. And keep in mind that this was some twenty-seven years ago, and things have gotten a lot worse since then.

This is what the article tells us,

... Terey Summers, Arizona's actress of the year, likes to stage skits in the sanctuary instead of having ministers preach from the pulpit. "People today aren't interested in traditional doctrines like justification, sanctification and redemption," the pastor concluded.

- Newsweek, Dead-end for the Mainline?, Kenneth Woodward, August 9, 1993

Did you hear what the pastor said, ***"People today aren't interested in traditional doctrines like justification, sanctification and redemption."***

Folk's, it is time for the church to wake-up and get serious.

What do you mean you are not interested in the fundamental principles of the Christian faith? What are you giving your people then?

You are entertaining them and not strengthening them in the faith! It is not a time to party when a war is going on. God wants us to be a holy people and you won't become holy through entertainment but as you are taught the Scriptures and the Spirit of God opens them up to your life!

That is how you grow and yes, you have a choice to obey or do your own thing.

Over 130 years ago Charles Spurgeon gave us this warning and I don't think people were or are listening. This is what he wrote, ***“A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats.”***

That is tragically prophetic and very sad that we closed our eyes to the warning and now we are entertaining the goats or the unsaved while the saved are starving to death!

And here's the thing, another warning by Charles Spurgeon. He wrote, ***“If you have to give a carnival to get people to come to church, then you will have to keep giving carnivals to keep them coming back.”*** They will want more and more shows, entertainment and it will never be enough!

And listen to these words from A. W. Tozer. He wrote,

For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was – a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of the conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability.

For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world.

But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god Entertainment she may as well join forces with him and make use she can of his powers.

So today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven.

Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God.

Many churches these days have become little more than poor theaters where fifth-rate “producers” peddle their shoddy wares with the full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defense of their delinquency.

And hardly a man dares raise his voice against it.

- A. W. Tozer

We are spending money on entertainment and yet, across all church sizes a survey revealed that approximately 5% of the church budget goes toward missions both international and domestic.

That is outrageous!

My desire here at Calvary has always been at least 15% of our annual budget goes to missions and we have been well over 20% that has gone to missions.

But a church can't do that if they are spending millions of dollars on sound systems, light shows, fog machines, different stage set-ups for the different skits that are being done and the list goes on for the expenditures that need to be made to entertain us.

Let me share this with you. We are told,

So much of the Church is focused on this god of Entertainment. The entire “service” is a show. The music is both worldly and a show. True worship of God is missing as now we substitute “music” for worship (Romans 12:1-2).

The entire “church service” is a show from beginning to end and its meant to entertain you. Biblical, expository teaching is gone as the church now favors more entertainment than anything else.

The church, rather than being the “one another” church of the New Testament, is largely going from one entertaining event to the next. Church signs promote one event after another.

The church, instead of seeking to make disciples and spare people from an eternal hell, is largely fixed on being a place of sure pleasure and joy and entertainment.

Where did this come from?

From an institutional view of the Church, the Church has to be promoting entertainment. How else will they come?

With TV, movies, theaters, etc. competing with the business-driven Church, the institutional church must then produce better plays, better music, more entertainment to keep the people coming back for me.

As John MacArthur called it, “Give me that show time religion.”

Prayer meetings are empty.

Fasting is abandoned.

Evangelism using the Law of God to confront sinners is completely ignored for its “offensive language such as sinners.”

From a house church view, the god of entertainment filling the institutional church shows the weakness of not following 1 Corinthians 14:26 and setting up a system of church that depends on money.

The house church doesn't need money. . . . Therefore, the house church can continue to preach 2 Timothy 2:8-11 and call people to repent. We are not here to entertain you. We are only here for the people of God to come and be discipled and grow and go out and make more disciples (Hebrews 3:13; 10:23-25).

Our attitude is not "come and see" but "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). We do have fun with one another but our goal is not entertainment but to glorify Jesus alone and if few want this, so be it.

We are not in a business. We are in a kingdom.

- <https://bit.ly/37pt4Ly>

And let me share this with you. Listen to what can happen when the Word is not proclaimed, it is very dangerous. We are told,

As vital as it is to see the truth proclaimed regardless of our popularity, I believe there is much more at stake when we consider the bigger picture.

In summary, there is significant rebellion toward God throughout the earth today. To be a Christian - whether a leader or not - and to say nothing is to align ourselves more with the problem than the solution. Let me explain . . .

Willem Ten Boom, a Dutch pastor in the 1930's, tried to awaken his listeners to a biblical understanding of Europe's instability and the rise of a new dictator, Adolph Hitler.

Rather than responding to his messages with faith-filled action, one church after another decided to replace him with someone else until he found himself directing a nursing home.

Upon German occupation of his country, because of his foresight and convictions, he was ready to help as many Jews find safety as possible.

Eventually, he was imprisoned with his sister, Corrie Ten Boom, the author of *The Hiding Place*.

How different it could have been for many believers in Holland, and maybe Holland itself, had Willem's message been taken to heart by the church before it was too late.

Similarly, Chinese pastors in a conversation with Corrie Ten Boom years later, admitted their mistaken perspective before China was violently overtaken by Chairman Mao and communism.

These pastors openly regretted not preparing their congregations for the difficulty ahead. Their weekly sermons before these devastating changes occurred were similar to what I often hear today: "God is a loving God and won't allow us to suffer," and "Christians will be raptured before anything difficult happens."

If this is true, why are godly Christians persecuted today around the world in many countries, including Sri Lanka, India, China, Indonesia, various African nations, Europe, and the Middle East?

Are American Christians of a special class that are somehow exempt from trouble - personal and national?

And why did so many godly Christians in the Bible suffer for their beliefs? For that matter, why did Jesus warn His followers that suffering is part of the calling (Luke 14:26-27; John 15:18-21)?

Peter gives us the proper response to be embraced by Christians in every culture: "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, *arm yourselves also with the same attitude*, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God" (1 Pet. 4:1-2, italics added).

In order to shift from entertainment centers to a cultural force, the church must not only find its voice in preparing its people for difficulty but must also speak into the issues of the day - the very issues that will decide our nation's outcome.

Will we present Jesus' exclusive truth claims to all who will listen, God's purposes for sexuality between *one man and one woman*; His creation of *males and females*; the evil underbelly of globalism; God's role as *judge over individuals and nations*; and the *sanctity of life*?

Until we find our voice on so many issues broadcasted within the culture, we can anticipate the continued evolution of churches into entertainment centers. How can the church be a house of God, which implies that God Himself is present and active, if God's voice cannot be heard among His people?

- <https://bit.ly/3o5f3Jb>

What an important point that is. *“How can the church be a house of God, which implies that God Himself is present and active, if God's voice cannot be heard among His people?”*

It can't and that is the problem. As we move away from the truths of God found in the Word of God, then we can't hear the voice of God because God is speaking to us through His Word! Thus, all kinds of personal immorality explodes because there is no direction for them to follow, except what is in their own hearts!

Remember what Paul said in I Timothy 3:15, **“but if I am delayed, 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.”**

I have been teaching, verse-by-verse through the Bible for the past twenty-five years and I will continue to teach verse-by-verse until I go home to be with the Lord or if I ever need to retire.

The house of God is the pillar and ground of the truth and thus, the truths of God found in the Word of God need to be taught.

Like it or not, I am here to feed the sheep!

What about the goats?

Let me ask you this question. How are people saved?

The Bible tells us, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” Romans 10:17.

So as the Word of God is being taught, the saved will be built up in the faith and the unsaved will come to saving faith!

I am not here to entertain you but to teach you the truths of God found in the Word of God so that you will not be tossed to and fro by the winds of doctrine that will and are blowing through the church.

And, even with doing that, some have been blown away by these false teachings, these winds of doctrine, but I look at you and I am blessed to see you grow in the Lord and use the gifts that God has given to you to bless others by!

Here, with this Levite, we see his personal immorality affect him and those around him. He just wandered through life and wherever he felt to go, there he went. He had a –

WANDERING HEART!

Not only that, but we saw the – ***BREAKDOWN OF MARRIAGE***. And I think this was because he was not walking with God and it affected his relationship with his wife.

And yes, he tried to reconcile things with his wife, but it was nothing more than a – *PSEUDO-RECONCILIATION!* He really didn't love her as we will see as we continue looking at this chapter next time.

I think this Levite was happier to be entertained than obeying the Lord and walking accordingly. And not only walking accordingly but sharing this faith with those around him. Yes, it was all about – *ENTERTAINMENT!*

And, as we will see next time, at the end of five days of drinking and eating this Levite decides it is time to go even though his father-in-law wants him to stay longer.

Not a pretty story and it will get even worse because there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes!

I will leave you with these words from Proverbs 4:23-27 to meditate upon. We are told, **“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. 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.”**

Stay focused on the Lord, let him guide you, direct you and what God is doing on the inside, as you build up that inner man, will be manifested in your outward actions, your outward speech!