

JUDGES 20
CUTTING AWAY SIN!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 20 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Judges.

We are near the end of the book of Judges and for some of you, you are excited about that because this has been a tough book to swallow.

It truly is a dark period for the nation of Israel as they turn from God and we see the results of that in their lives. The immorality, the spiritual adultery, the bondage that they placed themselves in.

But when they did repent, God raised up a Judge to deliver them from the bondage that they were in, and while that Judge was alive, they did okay. But as soon as that Judge died, they were back to their old ways, they did what was right in their own eyes, they turned from God and before long, they were back into bondage because of their sin!

Our story began back in Judges chapter 19, where we saw as we opened up that chapter, **“And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.”**

When a chapter opens up like that it is telling me that something is wrong in Israel, that there was no king in Israel, the Lord was not on the throne of their hearts or the heart of the nation.

And from there we are told of this Levite, who was not walking with God, not where he should have been, and he takes a concubine.

And from there the story deteriorates into something that you would never expect to find in the Bible and yet, when a person, when a nation turns from God, this is exactly what you will find, everything out of order, out of control and there is death and destruction!

We are told that this concubine left this Levite and played the harlot and went back to her father's house in Bethlehem.

Then, after some four months, this Levite decides to go and get his concubine and his father-in-law is very excited to see him come to take his concubine home with him. I guess he wanted his daughter out of the house!

And the father-in-law has a party, food and drinks for five days with this Levite, who keeps trying to leave and head home, but his father-in-law insists and then, after five days, as it was getting late in the day, he begins his journey home with his concubine and his servant.

As it was late in the day and it was getting dark, the sun was going down, it was even more dangerous to travel. They made it to the city of Jebus, which the Jebusites occupied and this Levite wanted to press on, he did not want to stay in a foreign land.

So they travel to Gibeah, where the tribe of Benjamin was located. This was family, and this Levite thought it would be much safer to remain there.

But no one would take them into their homes and thus, they were going to sleep out in the streets. Again, not a very safe thing to do, but what else could they do?

Then an old man comes upon them and he too was from the mountains of Ephraim, like this Levite, and he invites them into his home.

And this is what transpired, **“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!’ 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. 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!’ 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.”** Judges 19:22-25.

Now, when I read that I am shocked, and we should be shocked. How in the world could these men of Gibeah be that wicked? How could this man and this Levite behave like that? And how in the world could this Levite let his concubine be ganged raped, all night long, by these evil men?

There is just one answer to that, and we don't have to make it complicated, because it is not complicated. It is based on what we read in Judges chapter 19 and we saw this throughout the book of Judges. In fact, this is how the book of Judges closes, with the answer to how all this evil could be happening with the children of Israel.

In Judges 21:25 we are told, **“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”**

Make no mistake about it, the heart of man is evil and left to do what he wants, man will do the most depraved things that the mind can imagine! And that is what we see here, and it is what we are seeing today in this nation and in this world!

And we are not done with this story. Not even close!

This Levite's concubine was able to make it back to the door of this old man's home after she was gang raped all night long, and she just fell down.

When this Levite woke up, which blows my mind away. How in the world was he able to sleep when his concubine was being abused all night long? The heart of man can be very cold and insensitive to things, and we truly see that here, and it is even worse!

Listen to what we are told in Judges 19:27-28, **“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. 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.”**

Did you see that? No concern for his concubine, none at all. He does not try to reach down and pick up her, to even ask if she is okay. He tells her, and I will paraphrase what he said, ***“Hey, it is time to get up. I don't want to get caught in rush hour traffic. Get moving, I am not going to wait all day. What is wrong with you!”***

That is basically what he was saying, totally insensitive to her and the reality was, she was dead. These men had abused her so much that she died!

And this Levite picks her up, takes her dead body home, cuts it into twelve pieces and sends one piece to each of the twelve tribes of Israel!

And that chapter closes like this, “**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!’**” Judges 19:30.

And that is what we will focus on next, here in Judges chapter 20, how these eleven tribes of Israel will respond to what these Benjamite men did to this Levite’s concubine!

I have called this study – *CUTTING AWAY SIN!*

And, as you will see, this is what the men of Israel are going to try and do.

Sin is like a cancer and if it is not removed, cut away, it will consume the entire body!

Here in the United States, people are having surgery every day! They are willing to surrender their lives to a surgeon who is going to cut something out, repair something while they are under general anesthesia or some kind of anesthesia to knock them out!

Why in the world do people allow someone that they don’t know very well, do this to them?

Because if you have a tumor, it must be removed, or it will eventually consume your entire body and kill you.

If you have heart disease, you have to have surgery to bypass that blocked artery or arteries to save your life.

If we have a ruptured appendix, we want the appendix taken out.

If we have a gallbladder that keeps acting up it’s got to go!

And the list goes on and on with the various surgeries that are done in the United States and throughout the world.

Did you know that in 2009, some eleven years ago, Americans had some 48 million surgical inpatient procedures! That is crazy and yet, as nervous as they might have been, they let these doctors operate on them because they wanted healing to take place and without the surgery, this would not happen!

But these are surgical procedures done to the physical body.

But what about our spiritual bodies?

I don't think we think that much about them, but they too can become damaged, corrupted and in need of repair. They too need a qualified expert to take care of them. We can't do it on our own, we can't do spiritual surgery to ourselves to repair these spiritual bodies!

Let me recommend to you a Great Physician, Jesus Christ.

Listen to what we are told in Mark 2:15-17, **“Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, ‘How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”**

In other words, you are not going to go to a physician unless you understand you have a problem, and you want something done about it.

Think about that for a minute.

We are not going to come to Jesus unless we see ourselves as sinners in need of salvation. We will not come to the Great Physician unless we recognize we are sick in sin!

And once we come to saving faith, we still need the Great Physician to come and purge out that garbage in our lives, to cut away that sin in our lives so it does not consume us and destroy us!

Some important lessons the Lord has for us this morning.

I have broken this chapter down like this,

THE ASSEMBLY AT MIZPAH – JUDGES 20:1-11

THE APPEAL TO THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN – JUDGES 20:12-17

THE ATTACK AGAINST BENJAMIN – JUDGES 20:18-48

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 20, beginning in verse 1, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through the book of Judges and we look at this topic – ***CUTTING AWAY SIN!***

JUDGES 20

VERSES 1-11

I have called these verses – ***THE ASSEMBLY AT MIZPAH!***

And you can clearly see why.

In response to this Levite sending his concubines body parts throughout Israel, we see all Israel gather together, from Dan in the North down to the Beersheba in the South. And the reason, like I said, is obvious. It is because of this atrocity that has taken place in Israel. This blemish that needed to be removed and they were prepared to take care of it!

So, as all Israel gathered together, they ask this Levite what happened and he explained to them all that took place, except, he forgot to mention that he was the one that threw his concubine out to these men to abuse her sexually.

He put his own spin on it making him look good!

But again, we can look at his actions and they just reflect where his heart is at and it was not with the Lord!

And now this Levite throws it back to the children of Israel, asking them what they are going to do about this evil act that was done upon his concubine!

And yes, the nation itself was not doing good, they were not walking with the Lord as they should have been walking, but here is a positive sign. They were willing to deal with this problem of sin that was in their midst and has caused death and destruction!

Morgan makes that point as he tells us, ***“A great moral passion flamed out. Underneath all the degeneracy was a true stratum of religious conviction, which in the presence of the iniquity of the men of Gibeah sprang to life and action.”***

And thank God that this crime that took place in Gibeah shocked Israel. Today, we have grown accustomed to sin and it does not shock us like it did years ago!

Let me start with this, what the word ***“accustomed”*** means. We are told, ***“to think/start to think that something is normal or natural because you have experienced it regularly over a period of time. . . He had become accustomed to living without electricity, and missed it very little.”***

Think about this for a minute. What if you took a person who lived in the 1800’s and placed them into our world today, what would they think? Do you think they would be shocked by what they see?

I think they would be. I think their mind would be blown by what they see and what they hear, how immorality has grown to be a common thing in our society and even promoted as a normal lifestyle.

Now I can only speak for myself here, but I am sure most of you feel the same way. I am in my 60's, not that all of you are in your 60's, but in that period of time, in my life, I have seen things change so much and not for the better many times.

Today, we don't know what a family is any longer. We don't see families sitting down at the dinner table and talking. We, many times see them texting or going on social media with their smart phones. And I think these smart phones have not made us smarter but, well, you know!

We see sexual immorality growing and growing where today, anyone and everyone is having sex with each other and no one seems to mind. We have grown accustomed to sexual sin and what would have made us blush years ago, today, doesn't even seem to bother us.

We see the increase of homosexuality in our country, even letting children decide if they are a boy or a girl. Come on people, they can't even figure out what clothes to wear and we are letting them decide what gender they are. I can tell you this, they are the gender they are born with, either a boy or girl, the way that God made them and no matter how much surgery to alter their gender, it doesn't change that fact!

Just try and watch a television show and see how they interject their propaganda in regard to homosexuality.

And look at how our children have been taught in schools that this is a normal lifestyle, they have been accustomed to it and the next thing that is coming down the pike, is the acceptance of pedophilia!

And it won't end because the more you sear your conscience the more insensitive you become to the sin, no matter what it is!

Think about this. Today, in America, just about every conceivable type of evil that you could possibly name is growing, and we are even inventing new kinds of evil that the world has never seen before.

And people don't seem to be upset, concerned about it because they have grown accustomed to it and it does not bother them any longer!

Make no mistake about it, the foundations of our society are rotting and decaying in thousands of different ways, and our biggest problem as a nation is what is found inside our own hearts.

We have rejected the values and principles that were handed down to us by previous generations of Americans because we believed that we knew better than they did.

But now look at us. Our country is falling apart all around us, and we only have ourselves to blame.

I know, that seems harsh, and maybe you think it is unfair. But think about this. Some 80% or more of American's consider themselves Christians and if that is true, and I don't think it is, then why do we see immorality growing. We should be seeing holiness growing in our country. But it is not.

And when a person, when people, when a nation turns from God, God will give them over to do the things that are in their heart, which is wicked and we are seeing that grow today!

Now, as much as Israel was not walking closely with the Lord, they still had a conscience and this crime of Gibeah shocked the conscience of Israel.

And, like I have said, today it seems that the crime at Gibeah would be material for tabloid news, cable television, daytime talk shows, and talk radio – more than a national call to righteousness and repentance.

Make no mistake about it, the Lord instructed Israel on how to deal with such abominations that came up and the leaders of the people, all the tribes of Israel, present themselves to deal with this issue.

In Deuteronomy 13:12-18 the Lord told Moses what needed to be done if there is someone in a community or a community itself who are leading people away from the Lord, you don't ignore what is going on, but you deal with it.

You see, you were not only to destroy them, but the entire city, the animal's and-so-on. You were not to take any plunder.

And the reason they were not to take any spoil from this attack is because that way you would not be enticed to destroy a city for your gain.

There is another important point to this and that is this. Before you would destroy this city, you would have to investigate the situation and make sure that the accusations were true.

Now this seems pretty harsh. Why was God so serious about this, about idolatry in Israel?

Because the survival of the nation was dependent upon them being a separate people, separated unto the Lord and apart from these false gods!

Tragically they did not fully obey the Lord and both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into captivity because of idolatry!

Now you may be thinking that what has happened here with Gibeah and the tribe of Benjamin was not idolatry and thus, maybe they should have just left them alone.

Hear me out on this. This sexual immorality, this abuse of women, was just the symptom of the disease that they had, sin. They turned from God and if they turned from God they had made a god for themselves, and many times they were the god they worshiped as they did what made them feel good, no matter who got hurt.

So the children of Israel agree that the inhabitants of Gibeah who perpetrated this evil upon this woman would have to be dealt with, they needed to be held accountable for their actions and they were to be put to death.

Now, before they attack this city and the men of Benjamin, they had to find out what happened, they needed to find out not only if these charges are true, but who was involved in this abomination so that they would be dealt with, they would be utterly destroyed!

I think that is a reasonable thing to do, to remove the evil within that society, remove the evil men who perpetrated the death of this woman.

And that brings us to our next point – ***THE APPEAL TO THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN!***

VERSES 12-17

So the tribes of Israel are doing the right thing. They are inquiring to see what happened and they want the men that did this brought to justice, to pay for their crime.

But tragically we see here the hearts and minds of the people of Benjamin.

The children of Israel did not request some outrageous request or want them to do something that was wrong, that God never instructed them to do.

All they wanted was for the men of Benjamin to hand over these men from Gibeah who had done this crime, the ones who murdered this woman.

Again, that just makes sense, it sounds reasonable and I am sure that everyone knew who did it, they knew the lifestyle of these men, the things they did was not a secret with the people of Benjamin.

The problem was that the leaders in Benjamin did nothing about it. They let this continue on, maybe thinking it did not affect them and everyone should have the right to do what they want.

That is not true, obviously, and God has given us a standard to live by, He has shown us what is right and what is wrong and if we want what is best, we will follow Him, we will obey His Words to us!

But the men of Benjamin, as hard as this is to believe, they refuse to hand these evil men over. They would rather protect them than protect the innocent!

They should have been outraged over what these men did but instead they are upset with Israel and they are ready to go to war and fight against their own brethren for these evil men!

We see that today and a prime example is when a police officer has to use deadly force against a criminal, you have communities, you have groups of people upset and burning down buildings and vandalizing buildings, beating people up, attacking police officers, all in the name of peace. Again, they are so screwed up and they make excuses for what they are doing, believing it is right, the evil they are doing is right.

It is as Isaiah said, **“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”** Isaiah 5:20.

That is what Benjamin was doing and that is what many do today.

Why did they do this and why do people do this today?

I believe it is the philosophy that they have been taught and now they are living out. ***“I may not do what you are doing, but that is okay, everyone has the right to do what they want”*** philosophy!

And groups like the ACLU, many lawyers and others will fight for these people who have done atrocious crimes, who are living in sin and they, like the people of Benjamin don't even think twice about the ramifications of seeing these people set free!

They are standing up for evil and coming against good. And that is truly our nation, may we wise up and return to the Lord and do what is right and not what is evil!

Now it is easy to point our fingers at the unsaved for the evil they are calling good and the good they are calling evil, but what about those who call themselves Christians and are doing the same thing!

Let me show you what I mean about Christians standing up for sin and millions of Christians who are following their teaching and if you come against them, they will fight you, they will tell you that you are hateful, unloving, that you don't know the Scriptures, that God loves people and the list of their lies to support their sin continues on.

This is from a recent article, May of 2020, where we are told,

Since the homosexual political movement erupted in New York City 51 years ago, its success in gaining support from mainstream America has been stunning. From corporate America to Hollywood, from the nation's colleges and universities to Madison Avenue, the ideology that spawned the movement has been embraced and disseminated virtually everywhere.

By and large, during much of that movement's journey of success, the church remained the consistent opponent, holding the line against the devastating lie that homosexuality is natural, moral, and healthy.

However, while the advancement of the homosexual agenda has not been as successful or widespread as in other cultural institutions, the acceptance of a “gay theology” in many churches has been shocking. It represents a direct assault on the truth of Scripture and the gospel itself.

A new poll from Lifeway Research reveals substantial growth in support for the homosexual lifestyle among Protestant pastors, but especially those in mainline churches.

In one of the queries, the polling firm asked 1,000 pastors whether or not they agreed with the statement, ***“I see nothing wrong with two people of the same gender getting married.”***

According to Lifeway, the percentage of all pastors who agreed with the statement had increased from 15% in 2010 to 24% in 2019. For mainline pastors, the positive response had increased from 32% to 47% – nearly ***half***. . . .

Still, it has become clear that those who are adopting a pro-homosexual theology have, in fact, drifted away from a Christian view of Scripture itself.

“The movement we see among pastors’ views of same-sex marriage has less to do with their denominational tradition than their view of the Bible,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. ***“An evangelical distinctive is the ultimate authority the Bible has over one’s beliefs despite changing cultural perspectives. It is not surprising then that evangelical pastors across different denominations continue to view same sex marriage as wrong through this lens.”***

However, even among those who consider themselves evangelical Christians, opposition to the acceptance of homosexuality appears to be softening.

Numerous followers of Christ were disappointed when popular contemporary Christian singer Lauren Daigle fumbled her response when asked by a radio show host whether or not homosexuality is a sin.

“I can’t honestly answer on that,” Daigle sidestepped. ***“In a sense, I have too many people that I love that are homosexual. I don’t know. . . . I can’t say one way or the other. I’m not God.”***

Yes, Lauren Daigle isn’t God, ***but God is***, and He has spoken clearly on this subject. Of course, that’s the value of having the Scriptures.

Bible teacher Beth Moore’s apparent flinch on the subject is even more troubling. The popular teacher/speaker has influenced tens of thousands of Christians with otherwise sound instruction, but last year Moore removed references critical of homosexuality from her book that was undergoing a re-write for an online version.

Gone was her paragraph that cited these biblical truths: homosexuality is a “deadly sexual assault of the evil one;” homosexuality is a sin; and a promise that “God can indeed deliver you . . . from homosexuality.”

Once it was made public that the passage had been removed, Moore received significant blowback. So, she explained the deletion this way: ***“After taking three years to pray and test the fruit, it became clear to me that my words in this section, words that exceeded Scripture, were stopping many from God’s words which follow. It wasn’t a doctrinal shift. When our words keep people from God’s words, we’ve over-spoken.”***

As frustrated critics pointed out, nothing now remained in her online version that calls homosexuality a sin or promises freedom from it.

However, it was Moore’s bizarre reference to prayer and testing of fruit that may have been most revealing.

Like Daigle's milquetoast deflection away from the clear teaching of Scripture on the subject, Beth Moore's appeal to what she *feels* is the truth is a shameful admission from a Bible teacher.

One looks in vain for anything in Moore's original statements that *"exceeded Scripture."* After insisting that the deletion did not indicate *"a doctrinal shift"* on her part, one struggles to imagine how this is actually the case.

Part of the collapse of Christian truth-telling about what the Bible so clearly teaches is no doubt the result of fear. After all, the backlash that results when someone actually speaks the uncomfortable truth can be a shock.

Evangelical celebrity athletes such as Tim Tebow and Drew Brees, for example, certainly have felt the wrath of the homosexual community and its sympathizers, and both promptly withdrew from the fight.

Brandan Robertson, an LGBTQ activist who claims to be a Christian, told the Washington Post, *"Just five years ago it would have been okay to say homosexuality is a sin and an abomination. Today you would be hard-pressed to find any major evangelical leader who would say that publicly."*

Lesbian Julie Rodgers, who resigned her position in the chaplain's office of the evangelical Wheaton College, now pushes a gay-affirming version of Christianity and says the shift among leaders is helping to change minds.

"When pastors and leaders begin to come out [as LGBTQ affirming], people are going to move. They just need permission," she told the Post. *"I think a shift is inevitable. It's just a matter of [when]."*

She may be right. A 2017 Pew Research poll found that 47% of evangelical Christians born after 1964 favored same sex marriage. The percentage among that group in 2006? Only 16%.

It's one thing for a nation in rebellion against God to turn away from His truth and embrace the lies of the sexual revolution. But how is it that even the evangelical community finds itself toying with the idea of embracing what God calls an abomination?

The hard truth is that many people who identify as Christians are just as worldly as the culture that applauds sodomy. Many who claim to be Christ-followers are cohabiting and engaging in fornication or are in chains due to sexual bondage – whether it's to hardcore pornography or the softer perversions offered by Netflix and other streaming services.

Large swaths of the modern church have built an American-style version of the faith on the same postmodern foundations built by unbelievers.

How can it be argued otherwise?

Countless surveys reveal an evangelical community that doesn't know what its faith teaches and can't be bothered to learn.

Even a blind man should be able to see that a day of reckoning is coming to America; only a blind Christian would fail to understand that the reckoning will knock first at the church door.

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

Like the men of Benjamin, Christians today are ready to fight to support sin and to put down righteousness.

Now they would never see it that way, they feel that what they are doing is right. But let me be clear on this. And please understand that I am not trying to offend anyone here, those listening on the radio or the Internet. But I really don't care what you think is right! And I am sure you don't care what I think is right!

What is my point then?

My point is this. It only matters what God says is right – *AMEN* to that, right!

And God is very clear, not only on the sin of homosexuality, but all kinds of sins, not to ruin our fun, but to protect us from danger!

But, like here with Benjamin, there are those who are fighting against Christians who stand up for the truth and when they do stand up for the truth, they are told, "*If you don't like it, leave!*" Rick Warren told pastor's that, pastors who were moving away from the Word of God and adopting a purpose driven approach to church, those things which he was promoting. He told them that they either need to leave or the older people, who are the problem, will just have to die off! That is very sad.

So we see the people preparing for Civil War. The people of Benjamin were able to gather 26,000 men plus a Special Forces group of 700 who were left-handed and able to sling a stone some distance with precision and accuracy!

For the rest of the nation, they had 400,000 men ready for battle.

Obviously, this does not look good for the people of Benjamin, they are far outnumbered even with their Special Forces!

And let me say this because there are those today who say we must unite at any cost. I don't believe that, not at all. You don't compromise your faith for unity, it is not Scriptural!

Israel was right in believing that the greatest good was not unity. Unity apart from justice and truth is unity not worth having.

And now we move to our last point – ***THE ATTACK AGAINST BENJAMIN!***

And we are going to read through these verses and then I will expound on them, but I want to read through verses 18-48 to give you the flow of what is going on, and then we will break them down!

VERSES 18-48

Now as you read this you might come to the conclusion that the children of Israel did what was right, they inquired of the Lord who should go first in battle.

I don't think they were right on this one.

I know, that is a hard one to swallow, they went to the house of the Lord and inquired who should go into battle first, so what is the problem?

Here is the problem, I believe. They did not ask the Lord ***IF*** they should go into battle but ***WHEN*** they do, who will go first.

They are assuming that the Lord wants them to battle against the entire tribe of Benjamin and I don't believe that is the case.

And I believe we can learn from this as well, because we do the same thing.

What do I mean by that?

What I mean is this. We want to do something, and we basically ask the Lord of the two options that we want to do, which one do you pick?

That is wrong because maybe the Lord does not want either option.

Be open.

Here with Israel it was an emotional issue and maybe that got the better of them and they decided that they were going to take care of this problem instead of seeking the Lord and what He wanted to do.

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, **“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”**

First, we are to seek His will and as we do His will becomes our will and we do those things that are right and are pleasing to Him!

Now you might not agree with me on this one but look at what takes place in Judges 20:19-21 as the children of Israel are preparing to do battle against the tribe of Benjamin and specifically, Gibeah.

During this battle the children of Israel lost to the men of Benjamin.

Again, we might not think much about that, but let's put that into perspective.

The children of Israel had the men of Benjamin outnumbered 15 to 1!

Thus, how can the children of Israel lose 22,000 men when they inquired of the Lord about who should go first in this battle and the Lord told them that Judah should go first?

Because Judah was to always go first, that was not the issue.

Then what was the issue?

The real issue was this. Were they to go to war in the first place?

I don't believe this is what God intended at this point and when you see the results, you will understand why. I don't think the Lord wanted the whole tribe of Benjamin obliterated!

Thus, as they are out of God's will here, we see 22,000 men of Israel die!

There is always death and destruction when we are not where we should be; doing what the Lord desires us to do.

After this loss the children of Israel wept before the Lord and then once again they come before the Lord seeking what they should do, if they should go to war and the Lord does tell them to go, but I get the idea here that this is what Israel wanted and not what the Lord wanted, at least not yet.

You see, the children of Israel were no better than the people from the tribe of Benjamin and yet they are willing to wipe out an entire tribe because they are self-righteous and looking down upon the evil of this tribe instead of the evil that is in their own hearts.

Again, the reason I say that is look what happens in this next battle.

In Judges 20:24-25 we see that on the second day of battle the children of Israel lost 18,000 men and thus, in two days, against an army that was smaller than they were, they lost 40,000 men!

You see, I don't believe that this was the perfect will of God for the children of Israel but His permissive will! (See II Kings 20)

You see, the perfect will of God is always much better than the permissive will of God!

May we not forget that and stop fighting for things that the Lord doesn't want us to have!

Now, out of this second loss to the tribe of Benjamin we see the men of Israel repenting, fasting, offering sacrifices, they were broken, and this was the place they needed to be.

Did the tribe of Benjamin need to be rebuked for not handing over these evil men?

Absolutely but not destroyed.

These evil men needed to be destroyed, but they wanted to fight and again, I don't believe this is the perfect will of God in this situation because, as we will see, the entire tribe of Benjamin is almost wiped out.

So as they inquire of the Lord, as Phinehas the high priest asks the Lord what they should do, and the Lord tells them to go and fight and they will have victory, that is a promise from God and it will come to pass!

This was a great plan as they are now tricking the men of Benjamin into thinking that they are winning this battle as before, and it looks like the children of Israel are on the run, but they have set up an ambush against the men of Benjamin and they will wipe them out!

And, as we have read, Israel was victorious this time. This was such a crush against Benjamin that the children of Israel almost completely wiped out the tribe of Benjamin.

Think about this for a minute. Only 600 men survived this civil war from the tribe of Benjamin.

With this three day battle the tribe of Benjamin lost 26,100 men! This was a tremendous slaughter and great victory for the children of Israel but a very sad day when brothers will fight against brothers.

Yes, the men that committed this murder against this woman should have been put to death, but I don't believe God wanted them to wipe out the tribe of Benjamin. But now only 600 men are left in this tribe and that is not good.

How will this tribe survive, or will there be only 11 tribes of Israel? We will see what they will do next time, but I want to spend a few minutes dealing with this idea of cutting out sin in our lives, something that needed to be done here and something that needs to be dealt with in our own lives.

Listen to what Paul tells us in Romans 6:1-2 in regard to how we are to live and then I will expound on that. He wrote, **“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”**

I don't know if you have seen this, but it seems that common sense has been lost in the church. People love to use the grace of God to justify their wicked behavior.

An example of this is seen in the life of a Russian monk named Gregory Rasputin who lived in the early part of the last century. He believed, lived and taught that sinning and repentance leads a person to more of God's grace and thus, he lived a very wicked life, believing this was the way to obtain salvation, the grace of God!

Others feel that grace is not sufficient to keep people living holy lives and thus you must put people under the restraints of the Law!

Both views are wrong! Grace is grace, unmerited favor given to us by God; you can't add anything to it for if you do, it is no longer grace!

And the question here that Paul is speaking of, a question that some may have is this, ***“Should Christians go on living like fallen creatures because after all if the more we sin the more abundant God's grace is in our lives - let's sin it up so that we will be drenched in God's grace.”***

Again, common sense would tell us that is so wrong! And yet, since we have lost common sense, at least some have, we think that the more we sin the more of God's grace we see!

And please understand Paul is not saying that we, as Christians, are now sinless. Not at all!

Paul is speaking of habitual sin and should we continue in that so that grace may abound! And Paul says, ***“Of course not!” “Perish the thought!” “God forbid!”*** Or to put it in our vernacular, ***“What are you, nuts?”***

Paul says we have, “**died to sin**” and it is in the past tense meaning a specific point when that occurred, and it speaks of the day we were saved, it was then that we were dead to sin, or should be!

Keep in mind that we were once dead in sins, (Ephesians 2:1), but now we are dead to sin. In other words, sin no longer has power over us; it is not lord of our life. It doesn't mean that sin is gone, it is not extinct, we just are not slaves to it, under its power!

And sin is like a cancer and it needs to be **CUT OUT!** It needs to be removed from our lives or it will destroy us! And look at the Christians whose lives, whose witness has been destroyed because they did not deal with sin, they did not cut it out and before long, it consumed their lives!

Paul goes on to say in Romans chapter 6, “**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**” Romans 6:12-18.

There is the warning from Paul, don't let sin set up camp in your life because it wants to control your life.

But Paul wants us to be instruments of righteousness to God, to be a bondsman to Jesus and not a slave to sin. Jesus sets us free; sin puts us in bondage, and it needs to be removed, it needs to be cut out!

I am going to share with you a word, that, like “*sin*” is not spoken of much anymore.

That word is – ***SANCTIFICATION!***

Let me share with you what this word means, because, again, not many want to hear about this, they want to do what they want and, like I have said, the mentality is, “***We are under grace!***”

Yes, we are under grace, but we are to live a life that is pleasing to God and we are being sanctified and that word means this,

The generic meaning of sanctification is “the state of proper functioning.” To sanctify someone or something is to set that person or thing apart for the use intended by its designer. A pen is “sanctified” when used to write. Eyeglasses are “sanctified” when used to improve sight.

In the theological sense, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intends. A human being is sanctified, therefore, when he or she lives according to God’s design and purpose.

The Greek word translated “sanctification” (*hagiasmos* . . .) means “holiness.” To sanctify, therefore, means “to make holy.” In one sense only God is holy (Isa 6:3). God is separate, distinct, other. No human being or thing shares the holiness of God’s essential nature. There is one God.

Yet Scripture speaks about holy things. Moreover, God calls human beings to be holy . . . (Lev 11:44; Matt 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15-16). Another word for a holy person is “saint” (hagios . . .), meaning a sanctified one. The opposite of sanctified is “profane” (Lev 10:10).

So, whereas sanctification has been accomplished fully and finally in Christ and all those who are in Christ are positively sanctified, the Christian is progressively sanctified through the Spirit’s ministry.

- <https://bit.ly/37N4VyQ>

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 3:18, **“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**

The Lord is sanctifying us, and we play a role in that sanctification process as we allow the Lord to remove those things in our lives that are profane! But it is our choice, and, like I have said, today, this doctrine of sanctification has been lost and thus, instead of representing the virtues of God we are manifesting the ugliness of the flesh as we succumb to the things of this world!

Sin needs to be cut out of our life, out of the life of the church, it needs to be dealt with or it will destroy a person, a church, a nation!

That is what the children of Israel were doing with the tribe of Benjamin, even though I think they went too far, just those accountable to this sin should have been dealt with, but it did need to be cut out or it would consume the nation!

You see, after this battle there are only 600 men that are left in this tribe of Benjamin, and that is not good. How will this tribe survive, or will there be only 11 tribes of Israel?

We will look at that next time in our study. But I want you to understand the seriousness of sin and that it needs to be cut out of our lives before it destroys us!

As I close this morning, let me leave you with this story to show you the importance of dealing with sin in our lives. Sin cannot be tolerated in our lives, not at all!

We are told,

During my college years - in my infinite wisdom - it occurred to me that it made no sense to stop at red traffic lights when there was clearly no traffic around. So I began to stop only briefly - just long enough to check for cars - and then proceed.

My stops became shorter and shorter, and eventually I no longer stopped at all. I simply checked out the landscape well in advance and - if no cars were coming - proceeded full speed through the red light.

One day something changed all of that, and I've never run a red light since. I was approaching an isolated light in an area where there was rarely traffic in the busiest of times. I had already checked out the landscape and was near the empty intersection when a car topped the hill to my left. It was too far away to pose any threat, but it did pose a problem: it was a police car. But that is not what changed my ways, because I got the car stopped and received no more punishment than a dirty glance.

What scared me enough to put an end to that practice was what occurred in the split seconds between spotting the patrol car and getting the car stopped. In that instant, my foot moved from the gas pedal to the brake pedal, and then back to the gas pedal! I did not will it to do that; my foot just did it. My foot did that because that is how I had trained my mind to respond. I had continually ignored what had once been a clear signal to stop - a red light - and as a result that signal was no longer clear.

The same occurs with sin. Our God-given conscience gives us warning signals, and we can heed those signals or ignore them. If we ignore them often enough, we may eventually fail to recognize them as signals at all.

- Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

What a warning that is, how we can get accustomed to sin that it becomes a natural part of our lives. ***DON'T LET IT!***

And I will leave you with this, what Paul said in Colossians chapter 3, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of**

perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:1-17.

Take off the old life, crucify the flesh, that sin that entangles you, and put on Christ!