

The Old Paths

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“Going To War With Brethren”

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If I asked you to name a city in the Bible whose men tried to rape a male visitor, which city would come to mind? Sodom? That’s one of them, but that’s not the one I had in mind. The city I’m referring to is the one that tried to rape a Levite who was seeking refuge for the night with his concubine. While in the city, he found an old man who was willing to feed and keep them for the evening. But the men of the city, upon learning of this visitor’s presence, “surrounded the house and beat the door...saying, ‘Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally.’” (I’ll give the reference a little later.) And, like the scene out of Genesis, this man pleaded with the men to stop their perversion, and to take his daughter instead—“Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man’s concubine; let me bring them out now.” The only difference between this proposal and Lot’s is the men of this city took him up on his offer. They took the Levite’s concubine and raped her “all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go.” Their brutality was so severe that the girl died later that day.

Which city was so perverted and corrupt? Believe it or not, it was a city among the people of God: Gibeah in the land of the

Benjamites (Joshua 19:16). The men who tried to rape the visiting Levite were Benjamites! (vv. 22-24) The men who brutally raped and beat the Levite’s concubine were the descendants of God! (vv. 25, 26) Not those evil “Sodomite” Sodomites, but children of God who perverted their ways and corrupted themselves. These were Jews who were doing things worthy of the same fire as Sodom!

When he found his concubine ravaged and dead, the Levite petitioned the help of the rest of his brethren throughout Canaan. And without a moment’s hesitation, the other Jewish tribes gathered as “one man” against Gibeah and the Benjamites to “repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel” (Josh. 20:11, 10). Why a stand against the entire tribe of Benjamite and not just the city of Gibeah? Because they defended what Gibeah did! Instead of demanding repentance from one of their cities, “the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children of Israel” (Josh. 20:14). It is no surprise that God not only approved of this battle, He led them in victory over the Benjamites (v. 20). “The Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel” (v. 35).

What a tragic ending to a story that never should have occurred. Powers that were given by God to defeat the pagans of Canaan had to be turned upon and used against

perverted brethren. The armies God built among the Jews to defeat the godless nations of the land eventually had to be used against a member of their own nation because of rebellion and worldliness. This wasn’t part of God’s original design in establishing armies, lands and territories among His people. It wasn’t supposed to turn out this way. But because a few decided not to abide by the covenant they made as a nation, the other members of that covenant had to take action against those few—by the direction of God. It’s not that God wanted His people to fight one another (the law forbade hating one another, Lev. 19:17, 18). But rape, homosexuality and murder were crimes that required capital punishment under their national law. Had the people of God condoned such perversion to go unchallenged among the Benjamites, they would have violated God’s law toward judgment and righteousness. Their commitment to God required action on their part against erring and rebellious brethren. The Levite and his concubine needed the righteous vindication of their brethren to judge sin, as well as to protect others from similar attacks. Thus, “the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck down with the edge of the sword—from every city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to” (Josh. 20:48).

It is unfortunate that similar judgment must still exist among God’s people today, the Christians. Relationships that originate in love and faith in God sometimes result in judgment and taking a stand against one another. People who are bonded in the love and peace of God must sometimes use their righteous

judgment against one another. Minds that are taught to stand for truth and defeat evil (Eph. 5:11), sifting through the deceit of arguments for sin (2 Cor. 10:3-6), must sometimes do stand against erring brethren and their crafty arguments for sin! That is not the original purpose for God giving us such abilities and duties! He hasn't trained us to be zealous for truth so that one day we might take a stand against other brethren. They are not the people we have in mind when we are taught to oppose error and unrighteousness. That stand is supposed to occur against people not associated with God or His will. But because of their rebellion and unwillingness to live by the covenant they agreed to, erring Christians must be judged and condemned by faithful children of God. True Christians must sometimes judge their own brethren (1 Cor. 5:12, 13).

Does God want His people to hate one another? Absolutely not. It is forbidden at all times, even in times of judgment (2 Thes. 3:15). Why then does God want His people to stand against one another? Because erring brethren need to see the perversion of their way (v. 14), other brethren need to see the danger in imitating such evil (1 Tim. 5:20), to protect brethren from the spread of such evil (1 Cor. 5:6) and to exercise righteous judgment. It is our duty to stand against that brother or sister who no longer lives by the covenant we all agreed to in becoming Christians (1 Tim. 1:19, 20). Hopefully, they will see the error of their ways and repent (Jas. 5:19, 20), but that is not always the case. Sometimes, brethren

choose to do like the Benjamites in defending the city of Gibeah (e.g., sin among their family and friends) and fight against the rest of Israel! If such is the case, may the true people of God endure such hostility and slander in exercising God's righteous judgment. He will eventually deliver you from the attack of Gibeah and reward you for having the courage to love Him more than anyone in this world, even your own family and brethren. "On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified" (1 Pet. 4:14). By taking a stand against Benjamin, you're letting the rest of Canaan (including the Levite and concubine's family) know that Gibeah was wrong in their immorality and violence. You're letting the rest of the world know that neither you nor God condone or compromise for such heathenism and perversion, not even among the people of God. If Israel had not judged Benjamin, God would have judged them all!

"Will You Help Yourself?"

Someone remarked, "I just can't get interested in Bible study." Another answered, "No, some can't. It is like getting interest at the bank. You have to put money in first. Therefore, the more (time, prayer, work) you put in, the more the interest can be expected to grow."

If your interest is down in Bible study, etc., begin now to put more into it and watch the interest grow!



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

Come and meet with the church at Southside.

Our address is: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303.

MEETING TIMES:

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Don't forget the call-in radio program on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-9246 (WBIO)** with your Bible question.

Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs

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"Changing The Label Makes Sin More Dangerous"

Richie Thetford, Castleton, IN

One of America's great needs is to recognize sin for what it is. We are too prone to explain it away, or to soften it's horrors.

Wilbur Chapman tells of a distinguished minister who preached on sin, and one of the leading members came to talk to him in his study. He said to the preacher, "We don't want you to talk so plainly about sin, because the more our boys and girls hear you talking about sin the more easily they will become sinners. Call sin a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about it being just plain outright sin.

The preacher took down a small bottle from the shelf marked "**POISON**" and showed it to the visitor. It was a bottle of strychnine. He said, "I see what you want me to do. You want me to change the label. Now, suppose I took off this label marked "Poison" on this bottle, and put on some mild label, such as "Oil of Anise," don't you see what happens? The milder you make the label, the more dangerous you make the poison!

And so it is with sin. It is hideous and horrible and no amount of whitewashing will change the picture. **It must be branded for what it really is** if we are to escape its blighting devastation.

***Have You Read Your Bible Today? Bible
Reading Calendars Are Found At:
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