

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 14A

JUDGES

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

With each successive judge, Israel fell deeper into sin. Chapters 19 to 21 record the horrible acts which were committed by the children of Israel. Homosexuality was openly and unashamedly practised by the chosen people of God. This sin was further compounded by the gang rape of a woman. And, as if these acts were not horrid enough, the husband of the woman chopped her body to pieces and sent them to the other tribes of Israel arousing them and seeking reprisal by them on his behalf. War ensued and the children of Israel nearly had one tribe obliterated from the face of the land.

These were the results of rejecting the Word of the LORD. There was a breakdown of law and order, coupled with a collapse of morality ending in religious syncretism (combining of different beliefs and practices). The life of people will be transformed as the fruits of idolatry are devastating even for the people of God like the nation of Israel. She had everything given to

her, by God's grace, to succeed. God gave to Israel the Word of God, the priests as mediators, the Tabernacle for worship and the entire Levitical system to teach the people the right way to live to please God. The world would then see in Israel the grace and mercies of God. But alas Israel threw it all away when she worshipped the LORD in front of idols. Such yoking together of the one living and true God with Belial is an abomination to God. Israel paid a very heavy price for it as these final 3 chapters of the Book of Judges revealed.

These were written for our learning that Christians and the Church today will be sufficiently warned that they do not take the same path and suffer the same consequences (Romans 15:4).¹ Our study should benefit us spiritually as individuals and corporately as a church. We should guard ourselves against becoming "members of a club house" rather than "the called people of a holy God" who has saved us "unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Beware of the sin of self-will where the sinner does what is right in his own eyes. There is a heavy price to pay for the sin of pride and lawlessness.

¹ Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

OUTLINE

1. The Levite takes a concubine (19:1-15);
2. Boarding in Gibeah (19:16-21);
3. The heinous sin of the men of Gibeah (19:22-30).

COMMENTARY

The Levite Takes a Concubine – 19:1-15

The narrative is about a Levite. The Levite in this chapter took “a concubine” (literally in Hebrew, *a wife a concubine*). The inference is that the Levite might have a wife already and that this was a concubine or second-class wife. But the text does not mention this. However, she was his concubine-wife meaning that she performed all the duties of a wife without the legal rights of one.

This Levite’s concubine “played the whore against him, and went away from him” to her father’s home in Bethlehem-judah where she stayed for four months (v.2). Two issues to take note of here. Firstly the Levite ought not to have taken a concubine. Secondly the concubine should have been stoned to death according to the Law of Moses. But when the sin was committed by the concubine of the Levite, the teacher of the Law, how could there be any justice? This first episode highlighted the period of Judges where lawlessness reigned.

The text states that she returned to her father’s house. She remained there for 4 long months. After this period, the Levite decided to go after her and “to speak friendly” (Hebrew, *to her heart, affectionately*) to her and to bring her back. The Levite went with his servant, and brought two asses, which showed that he was confident in persuading her to return to him. On the way back, she would not have to walk but could ride on one of the two asses.

His father-in-law was glad to receive the Levite. He played the part of an impeccable host. He accommodated him for three days and gave him food and drink. On the fourth day, the Levite woke up earlier than usual preparing to depart. His father-in-law also woke up and persuaded the Levite to have breakfast before leaving. The Levite obliged. They were talking and when the Levite wanted to leave, his father-in-law succeeded in persuading him to stay another night. The Levite did. On the fifth day, the father-in-law succeeded as on the other days to get him to have breakfast before leaving, which lasted till late afternoon. Then he tried to persuade the Levite to stay for the night and then leave the next day. This father-in-law acted in a strange way indeed. Either he was lonely and wanted a friend or he wanted his daughter to remain with him and the Levite too. Maybe, he was exceptionally hospitable! But this time the Levite

was determined to leave. Although his father-in-law again encouraged him to stay, the Levite would not. So, he left with his concubine-wife.

They came near the city of Jebus (the former name of Jerusalem which was then in Gentile hands). The Levite's servant suggested that they stayed in Jebus. But the Levite remarked that he would not stay in "the city of a stranger" (19:12). What was probably in his mind was that since the inhabitants in Jebus were Gentiles and unfamiliar to him, he could not trust them. He preferred to stay amongst his own people i.e. Israelites. So they travelled farther north and came near to Gibeah and Ramah (about 8 kilometres apart). Either town would be all right. He decided to stay overnight in Gibeah which was nearer. We learn something of the custom then in Gibeah.

The Levite was a stranger in the town and had no accommodation. The custom was that he made himself known by sitting in the street of the city. Hopefully, someone would see them, and take them into his house for the night. But no one came to extend to them their hospitality. It seemed the entire town was turning its back on its God-given responsibility. We can understand how anxious the Levite and his fellow travellers could become with the prospect of sleeping in the street looming. But hospitality eventually came.

Boarding in Gibeah (19:16-21)

An old man, returning from his work in the field, who was originally from the hill-country of Ephraim but who now lived in Gibeah, put the Levite and his entourage up in his home. This was another indication that the people disdain the Law of Moses. The people were supposed to remain in their respective lot assigned to them by God in the days of Joshua after the conquest. Their portions of Land were selected by lot. They were to stay there for perpetuity. But apparently he did not. He chose to stay in Gibeah.

The hospitality of the old man was complete. He offered them food and lodging. He also offered to feed his asses. It was like a prayer answered! From waiting in the streets and night was falling and being ignored by people and it seemed as if no help would appear and suddenly this old man came and provided everything for them. In extending his hospitality, the old man said, "... only lodge not in the street" (19:20). Why, one wonders? It would soon be revealed.

The Heinous sin of the Men of Gibeah – 19:22-30

As they were feasting, a group of men of the city, "sons of Belial" (literally means, "useless people") surrounded the old man's house, loudly knocked at the door, and demanded that the old man bring out the Levite so that they might "know

him” (19:22). The phrase to “know him” means to have sexual intercourse. This is a euphemism found in the Bible. This was similar to the incident in Sodom and Gomorrah, a long time ago (Genesis 19:1-10). Contrary to what the Levite expected from the inhabitants of Gibeah who were Benjamites, the city was utterly pagan and its male inhabitants homosexuals. This was shocking!

While the old man considered such an act “wicked” and “vile”, yet he was prepared to give his daughter and the Levite’s concubine to let the men do their worst to her. The vile homosexuals would not listen. The Levite took (literally took by force) his concubine-wife out to the men. They raped the poor woman until daybreak and then let her off. She trudged back to the old man’s house and collapsed at the entrance until daylight. The conduct of the Levite was deplorable. He saved himself by sacrificing his concubine-wife, sleeping through the night in the comfort and safety of the house. This was terrible! The Levite was also corrupt to core!

The Levite, departing to continue with his journey, found his concubine-wife dead lying across the door. Without any feeling of compassion and pity, he just told her to get up and let us be on the way! Words could not describe such callous behaviour from a supposedly man of God, a Levite and teacher of God’s Word! He conducted himself

as if this was a common sight and event! There was no shock or sign of grief! She was his wife-concubine, was she not!

But there was no reply. She was dead. He carried her and put her on an ass, and returned to his home. When he was in his house, he committed a gruesome and ghastly act. He cut his concubine-wife with a knife into twelve pieces. He then sent them to “all the coasts of Israel” (19:29). The reaction of the children of Israel seems appropriate. Everyone said, “There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of Egypt unto this day” (19:30). How low had the morality and the spirituality of the people fallen!

PRACTICAL VALUE

Homosexuality is definitely incompatible with the Christian faith. God hates it. It is just like any other sin, and the sinner is under the wrath of God — reserved to be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. Many have argued that homosexuality is a genetic sickness and those who are afflicted with it should be given the freedom to practise it. This argument is flawed. Every man is born with a depraved sinful nature. If this line of argument is accepted, then all other sins should also be accommodated: murderers should not be punished; thieves should not be arrested, fined or jailed; perjury should not be

penalised in court, and the list goes on *ad infinitum*. Man is desperately wicked. But it is not a hopeless state. They have a choice to accept deliverance from the power of sin by repenting and believing in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The power of Christ will free them from the power of their sinful nature. Homosexuality can never be condoned or allowed. The old man and the Levite knew that it was wrong and that God’s Law demanded the death penalty immediately for those who practised it.²

The Levite’s conduct was also reprehensible. Being a Levite, a God-favoured tribe, his duty was to teach the Law of God to the children of Israel. But he forsook his God-appointed responsibility and duty to serve his self-interest. Even more deplorable was giving his wife to the “sons of Belial”, who abused and killed her. While all this was going on, he was sleeping in comfort and safety. By mutilating the corpse of his wife into 12 pieces, he showed no respect for the body of his wife. He was thinking of himself, of how the injustice against him by the Benjamites could be redressed. He was the one guilty of causing her death. Man has not changed morally. In fact, they have become worse. We must be careful and resolve to walk in

² Leviticus 20:13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.

the path of righteousness according to the Word of God. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Judges 19:1-15; Galatians 5:19-21.

TUESDAY: Judges 19:16-30; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:25-28.

WEDNESDAY: Judges 19:1-30.

THURSDAY: Judges 19:1-30.

FRIDAY: Judges 19:1-30.

Discussion Questions

1. What could possibly be the reason for the Levite’s father-in-law delaying him for so many days?

2. How could people be so hospitable and yet so idolatrous and lack all moral sense?

3. What is your opinion of the Levite at the conclusion of Chapter 19?

4. What was the Levite doing when his concubine was being raped and beaten? How did he try to justify his behaviour? How do you describe him?

5. What do you say is the main point God is making in this chapter of Judges?

6. There is a great deal of tolerance today toward people who wish to live as they like. What warnings does this chapter have for you?
