

Judges 19 - Gibeah's Crime

A. The Levite and his concubine.

1. (1) A Levite takes a concubine.

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.

a. **There was no king in Israel:** This sets the stage for the terrible story in the following chapters. This meant more than Israel not having a political monarch; it meant that they refused to recognize God's leadership over them.

b. **He took for himself a concubine:** The Levite's **concubine** was recognized as his legal partner, but she did not have the same status in the home or in society as a wife had.

i. In this sense a concubine was a legal mistress. Many prominent men in the Old Testament had concubines. Examples include Abraham (Genesis 25:6), Jacob (Genesis 35:22), Caleb (1 Chronicles 2:46), Saul (2 Samuel 3:7), David (2 Samuel 5:13), Solomon (1 Kings 11:3 - 300 concubines), and Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:21). Significantly, we *never* see this kind of family life blessed by God.

ii. The New Testament makes it clear that from the beginning God's plan was one man and one woman to be one flesh forever (Matthew 19:4-6), and each man is to be a "one-woman man" (1 Timothy 3:2).

2. (2-4) The Levite reconciles with his concubine after she commits adultery.

But his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there four whole months. Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her *and* bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. So she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there.

a. **Went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back:** Here the Levite is an example of how an offended spouse should act when there is adultery. Though she broke the bond between them, he worked hard to bring the relationship back together and succeeded.

i. Jesus told us that divorce is never commanded when there is adultery (Matthew 19:8). If a partner in marriage is sinned against, they can still

work to make the marriage survive and succeed.

b. When the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him: Perhaps the father was glad to see the Levite and his daughter back together or perhaps the father was simply glad to have his daughter out of his house again.

3. (5-10) The father of the concubine extends the visit with a traditionally generous show of hospitality.

Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart; but the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way." So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry." And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart." So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate. And when the man stood to depart; he and his concubine and his servant; his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home." However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and departed, and came to opposite Jebus (that *is*, Jerusalem). With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine *was* also with him.

4. (11-15) Returning home, the Levite and the concubine decide to spend the night in Gibeah.

They *were* near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, "Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it." But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who *are* not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah." So he said to his servant, "Come, let us draw near to one of these places, and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah." And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into *his* house to spend the night.

a. We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners: The Levite and his concubine considered a pagan town too dangerous. They therefore went on to **Gibeah**, a city of Israel, because they thought they would be safer there.

b. **No one would take them into his house to spend the night:** The Levite and his concubine found no hospitality in Gibeah. This reflects poorly on the people of Gibeah, because God commanded such hospitality among the people of God (Leviticus 19:33-34, Leviticus 25:35, Matthew 25:35, Hebrews 13:2). There is something wrong when there is no such hospitality among God's people.

4. (16-21) Finally, a fellow Ephraimite finds them and takes them in.

Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also *was* from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place *were* Benjamites. And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, "Where are you going, and where do you come from?" So he said to him, "*We are* passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; *I am* from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; *now* I am going to the house of the LORD. But there *is* no one who will take me into his house, although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man *who is* with your servant; *there is* no lack of anything." And the old man said, "Peace *be* with you! However, *let* all your needs *be* my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square." So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

a. **Who also was from the mountains of Ephraim:** The only person to extend hospitality to the Levite and his concubine was a man from their own region. None of the native people of Gibeah cared for the strangers in their midst.

B. The crime of Gibeah.

1. (22) Their perverted demand.

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!*"

a. **Surrounded the house and beat on the door:** The verb form of the term **beat on the door** indicates that there was an increasingly loud pounding on the door. This was in no way a polite or casual request.

b. **Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!** Their request was the same made by the homosexuals who

surrounded the house of Lot in Sodom (Genesis 19:5). The picture is clear: During the time of the Judges, Israel was as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah.

2. (23-26) The wickedness and perversion of the men of Gibeah.

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. Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master *was*, till it was light.

a. **The man took his concubine and brought her out to them:** Though the perverted men of Gibeah are clearly guilty, so are the Levite and the host of the home. They clearly should have been willing to sacrifice themselves before their daughters and companions.

b. **And they knew her and abused her:** When describing the full meaning of the original Hebrew, Adam Clarke, due to modesty, did not translate the meaning into English. He left it in Latin so only the learned could understand the full implications of the wickedness and perversion of the men of Gibeah.

i. "One can easily see why the concubine had left her husband in the first place. She was virtually sacrificed to save his skin as the men sexually abused her all night." (Wolf)

ii. Clarke on Gibeah's sinful men: "Rascals and miscreants of the deepest dye; worse than brutes, being a compound of beast and devil inseparably blended."

iii. Centuries later, Israel still remembered this crime at Gibeah, and used it as an example of wickedness. *They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah* (Micah 9:9). . . . *O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah* (Micah 10:9).

3. (27-30) The Levite discovers his dead concubine and issues a call for national judgment.

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. When he entered his house he took a knife,

laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. 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!"

a. **Get up and let us be going:** This is a painfully clear demonstration of the heartlessness of the Levite towards his concubine.

b. **Divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel:** This was an obviously grotesque way to deliver a message, but the method worked. It was tragic that the Levite did not show this kind of concern for righteousness earlier.

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