

Judges 19:1-30  
Moral Corruption – Part 1

Introduction

1. As we learned last week, we are now in the third and final part of the book of Judges
2. In chapters 1 and 2 of the book, the author told us what Israel would struggle with throughout the time of the judges—essentially, there’s was a cycle of apostasy, oppression, crying out to God for help, deliverance, and then back into apostasy (over and over again)
3. We witnessed this struggle in chapters 3 through 16
4. The author then uses these final five chapters to explain WHY Israel struggled—essentially they had a spiritual and moral problem described by the author as simply doing what was right in their own eyes
5. He addresses the spiritual problem in chapters 17 and 18, and now moves on to discuss the moral problem in chapters 19-21
6. The events of these chapters take place early in the period of the judges, but are intended to be a representation of the moral problems that plague Israel during the time of the judges

A. The hospitality of the Levite’s father in law (1-10)

1. In the first three verses we are introduced to a Levite and his concubine (1-3):
  - a. The concubine (i.e. best understood here in the sense of “wife”) had “played the harlot” and then left the Levite and went back home to her father’s house (2)
  - b. After four months, the Levite sets out to win her back (3a)
2. Now the majority of this portion of the passage focuses on the hospitality of the father-in-law and it is used to setup a contrast for what will take place in the next part of the story (3a-9):
  - a. When he arrives at his father-in-law’s house, the father-in-law is “**glad to meet him**”: the Hebrew text says that “**he rejoiced**”
  - b. Initially, he convinces the Levite to stay for three days (4): The NASB says, “**He detained him**” but the NET’s “**[he] persuaded him to stay**” is a better rendering
  - c. When the Levite gets up to leave on the fourth day, the father-in-law persuades him to stay another day (5-7)
  - d. When he attempts to leave on the fifth day, the father-in-law tries again (in vain) to get him to stay (8-9)
  - e. Unwilling to stay an longer, the Levite finally leaves with his concubine and servant and heads back home (10)
3. The purpose of these seven verses appears to be that of setting up a contrast for what is about to happen:
  - a. There is no question that the author goes to great lengths to show the overwhelming hospitality of the father-in-law
  - b. Hospitality is an important Biblical principle:
    - 1) It was commanded in the Law:
      - a) Exodus 22:21: “**You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.**”

- b) Exodus 23:9: **“You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers I the land of Egypt.”**
- 2) It is also commanded in the NT:
    - a) Romans 12:13
    - b) Hebrews 13:2
    - c) It’s a require trait for elders (1 Timothy 3:2)
    - d) And was even one of the character traits require of widows before they were put on the list to receive support from the local church (1 Timothy 5:10)
  - 3) Beyond these commands, the Bible is filled with examples of hospitality
    - a) Abraham and the strangers (Genesis 18:1-15)
    - b) David’s army at Mahanaim when they were given bedding, pottery and tons of food (2 Samuel 17:27-29)
    - c) The poor widow who cared for Elijah (1 Kings 17:7-16)
4. The reason hospitality is so important to God is not simply because it reflects his hospitality toward us, but because hospitality reflects goodness, which is a moral trait

One reason my parents were/are so well liked is because they were so hospitable

- a. That is exactly how the author is using it here
- b. He is using it to set up a contrast with what is about to take place in Gibeah
- c. So, we will see the hospitality of the Levite’s father-in-law contrasted with not just the lack of hospitality of these men, but their absolute moral corruption (i.e. expressed through their mistreatment of the Levite, his concubine, etc.).

**B. The horror of Gibeah (11-30)**

1. The Levite seeks a safe place to stay for the night (11-13):
  - a. The servant recommends Jerusalem, but the Levite declines because it’s not an Israelite city (Jebusites were Canaanites who lived in Jerusalem until David conquered it;11-12)
  - b. Instead, he heads to Gibeah, an Israelite city in the land of Benjamin, assuming it would be more hospitable (12-13)
  - c. Again, the author is setting the stage for contrast, this time between foreigners (who one wouldn’t expect to be hospitable and an Israelite city that should be)
2. The lack of hospitality—and ultimately the moral depravity of the Gibeans-- is evident upon their entrance to Gibeah (15-:
  - a. They wait in the city square but no one offers them lodging (15)
  - b. Only one man, someone who wasn’t even from the city originally, offers them lodging (16-21):
    - 1) We also see the author’s intent here to setup a contrast—this time between the lack of hospitality of the men of Gibeah and the old man
    - 2) He was from the hill country of Ephraim (same place as the Levite) and only staying in Gibeah temporarily (the author makes sure to reveal he wasn’t a Benjamite, but an

outsider; “**now the man was from the hill country of Ephraim and he was staying in Gibeah, but the men of the place were Benjamites**”; 16)

- 3) The author also throws in another clue to indicate the depth of the Benjamites unwillingness to be hospitable—the Levite and his companions would not have been a burden to anyone because they had everything they needed, even for the animals (17-19)
  - 4) We see one more clue—the old man warns them not to stay overnight in the town square (20-21)
3. The depth of the Gibeon’s moral depravity is finally revealed (22-28):
    - a. Some men of the city attack the man’s home and demand that he give up the Levite so they can “**have relations**” (i.e. rape) him (22)
      - 1) The similarities between this event and that of Genesis 19 (when the men of Sodom attempt the same thing with the angels who visited Lot) are deliberate
      - 2) This is the author’s way of indicating that Gibeah was the Israelite Sodom, and serves to show their moral depravity was equal to that of the pagans around them
    - b. The old man tries to appease the wicked men by offering them his virgin daughter and the Levite’s concubine (23-24)
    - c. When they refuse, the Levite seizes his concubine and tosses her out to the men and allows her to be abused, raped and murdered (25-26)
  4. The moral depravity doesn’t stop there, however. The behavior of the Levite and the old man are also quite troublesome (26-29):
    - a. Any person of God would be appalled at the actions of the old man and the Levite offering up anyone to these men, let alone a daughter or wife
    - b. But the Levite shows an immense amount of callousness and lack of compassion:
      - 1) He apparently went to bed while she was abused, raped and murdered (27): “When her master arose in the morning...”
      - 2) There is no indication that he was concerned about her; the author reveals him simply getting up in the morning and planning to leave
      - 3) When he discovers her limp (and dead) at the doorway, his words reveal a complete lack of concern or compassion (28): “**Get up and let us go...**”
      - 4) Lastly, his dismemberment of her dead body and dispatching the parts to the 12 tribes of Israel is beyond comprehension, especially for a priest

Conclusion
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1. There are two primary purposes for today’s text:
  - a. One is that it sets the stage for what is about to happen in the next two chapters
  - b. The other is that it presents a picture of the utter moral corruption that existed in Israel during the time of the Judges
2. The author uses the theme of hospitality as a backdrop and mechanism to reveal this moral corruption, but if we make the passage about hospitality then we miss the author’s point
3. In other words, the author is not telling us to be hospitable, but rather warning us about the ramifications of spiritual corruption

4. This is why he started with a description of the spiritual state of Israel first, in chapters 17 and 18—their spiritual corruption is what led to their moral corruption
5. There is this principle in the Bible:
  - a. Our eternal state and standing before God is determined by one thing: God's grace as a result of our faith in Jesus Christ
  - b. Our behavior and conduct, however, is determined by our daily relationship with God, our nearness to Him and our reliance upon the Holy Spirit
  - c. This is one Paul's major challenges in the book of Ephesians where he calls on us to walk in a manner that worthy of our calling as Christians and reminds us that this is only possible if we do so under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18)