

Reading: Romans 15:4 ⁴For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures.

Leviticus 19:1-3: **19** The LORD spoke to Moses: ²“Speak to the entire Israelite community and tell them: Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. ³“Each of you is to respect his mother and father. You are to keep my Sabbaths; I am the LORD your God. ⁴Do not turn to worthless idols or make cast images of gods for yourselves; I am the LORD your God.

I had Ryan read the first part of Moses’s retelling or re-issuing of God's Law. His standard by which all people, especially His people, the Jews, would be evaluated by. For the depravity of Judges 19-21 to have any effect on our life we need Leviticus 19 to compare it with. Read with me a selection of Leviticus 19.

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³“Each of you is to respect his mother and father. You are to keep my Sabbaths; I am the LORD your God. ⁴Do not turn to worthless idols or make cast images of gods for yourselves; I am the LORD your God.

⁹“When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. I am the LORD your God.

¹¹“Do not steal. Do not act deceptively or lie to one another. ¹²Do not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God; I am the LORD.

¹³“Do not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages due a hired worker must not remain with you until morning. ¹⁴Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you are to fear your God; I am the LORD.

¹⁵“Do not act unjustly when deciding a case. Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly. ¹⁶Do not go about spreading slander among your people; do not jeopardize your neighbor’s life; I am the LORD.

¹⁷“Do not harbor hatred against your brother. Rebuke your neighbor directly, and you will not incur guilt because of him. ¹⁸Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

²⁹“Do not debase your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will be prostituted and filled with depravity. ³⁰Keep my Sabbaths and revere my sanctuary; I am the LORD.

³¹“Do not turn to mediums or consult spiritists, or you will be defiled by them; I am the LORD your God.

³²“You are to rise in the presence of the elderly and honor the old. Fear your God; I am the LORD.

³³“When an alien resides with you in your land, you must not oppress him. ³⁴You will regard the alien who resides with you as the native-born among you. You are to love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your

God. ³⁶ ...I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ³⁷ Keep all my statutes and all my ordinances and do them; I am the LORD.”

God is Israel's Lord. That has never been in question, but they have become wayward subjects. Abandoning not one but every command listed above. The Law is the standard by which we compare ourselves. Pastor Ryan introduced two things last week that we continue in today's message. 1) The end of judges is a mirror. Simply reading the horrific accounts of wickedness to ridicule those involved is missing what the author intends for us. We must examine our life to find where we are alike with the people of Judges. 2)

Main Point: We need a righteous King. Adding upon what he established, we need a righteous king who will save us. What must he save us from?

Let me recount the story to you. These chapters are a series of dominos that fall one after another. I will read from one of my commentaries in the order he listed. We'll start from the end and work our way back to the beginning. What was the cause and effect that brought the calamity to fruition?

Read Block 516.

Now that you know the events, let's examine what a righteous king will save us from:

1. Inhospitable world

¹² But his master replied to him, “We will not stop at a **foreign** city where there are no Israelites. Let’s move on to Gibeah.”

The Levite’s father-in-law shows us an ideal host. One whose generosity borders on oppressive. Compare his actions to that of the town of Gibeah. No one offers to take the Levite, his servant, concubine, and animals into their house. We read in Leviticus that the sojourner is to be treated as one of our family. We were created with hospitality in our DNA. Willing to give to another without question. All the while knowing we are God’s instruments of provision to others. The inverse is true too. We should count on our fellow image bear’s kindness and generosity as gracious hosts.

The people of Gibeah disobey God’s command by ignoring the traveling party. The author clearly elevates the irony of the Levite’s words in verse 12. They bypass Jebus, home of the Jebusites and the future Jerusalem, to stay with fellow Hebrews. Only they didn’t receive the reception they expected.

2. New Sodom

The Sodom I am referring to is the Sodom from Genesis 19. The city was destroyed by God because of their vile wickedness. Our story in Judges 19 and Genesis 19 are mirror images of one another. ¼ of all the Hebrew words in these stories and 24 expressions are identical in meaning and order. Our author makes it abundantly clear “This is like that.” Gibeah is New Sodom.

Judges 19:22 ²² While they were enjoying themselves, all of a sudden, wicked men of the city surrounded the house and beat on the door. They said to the old man who was the owner of the house, “Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him!”

Genesis 19:4-5 ⁴ Before they went to bed, the men of the city of Sodom, both young and old, the whole population, surrounded the house. ⁵ They called out to Lot and said, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out to us so we can have sex with them!”

The same iniquity found in Sodom now resides in the people of Israel, God’s people. What evil is there?

- **moral indifference and self-preservation**

19:23-24 “Please don’t do this evil, my brothers. After all, this man has come into my house. Don’t commit this horrible outrage. ²⁴ Here, let me bring out my virgin daughter and the man’s concubine now. Abuse them and do whatever you want to them. But don’t commit this outrageous thing against this man.”

The old man is morally confused. He seems to be a good host, but he is the one who conceives of the idea of sacrificing the concubine and his daughter. "Don't do this foolish, vile things with this man but take these women and do what you think is good with them." Genuine hospitality evaporates, and instead of doing good in the Lord's eyes, the man does what seems good in his eyes.

- **rape, abuse, and discard**

19:25 "They raped her and abused her all night until morning. At daybreak they let her go."

The narrator rapidly and graphicly portrays the depths of evil in the heart of the people of Gibeah. There is no good here. The depth of human depravity on display is a sober acknowledgment that without a righteous king, this action is deemed right in someone's eyes.

- **callous to sin and suffering**

19:25,27 so the man seized his concubine and took her outside to them. ...²⁷ When her master got up in the morning, opened the doors of the house, and went out to leave on his journey, there was the woman, his concubine, collapsed near the doorway of the house with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ "Get up," he told her. "Let's go."

Securing his own safety, the Levite goes to sleep! Without concern for his concubine, he prepares to leave, and upon seeing her lifeless body on the threshold, he says, "Get up; let's go." I detest this man and I hate what he has done. A priest of Israel, and minister of God for his people, has neither compassion nor care for the sin that killed his wife nor the suffering she endured. New Sodom is not just in Gibeah; it is in the heart of all people. That is not the end of his actions. The same callousness that led him to hand over this woman to her abusers leads him to dismember her body for revenge, not justice.

3. Manipulation of liars.

20:3-5 The Israelites asked, “Tell us, how did this evil act happen?” ⁵ Citizens of Gibeah came to attack me and surrounded the house at night. **They intended to kill me, but they raped my concubine**, and she died.

Outrage spreads over Israel, and 400,000 warriors and the leaders of each of the tribes gather to bring justice upon Gibeah and Benjamin. They are manipulated by the half-truths of a callous, vengeful man. He does not convey his cowardice. His decision to sacrifice his concubine to save his honor. He leaves out his refusal to accept his fathers-in-law's hospitality. He frames himself as the victim when he is anything but one. His guilt is closer to that of the wicked men of Gibeah than the murdered woman.

We are just as easily manipulated by talking heads and liars who will say anything for personal gain, self-preservation, or vengeance. We, in turn, must rely on God's word as our sole rule of faith and practice. No other voice will lead us into lasting hope, true joy, and abundant love. A righteous king will lead us by God's words of eternal life.

4. Tragic Unity

20:8-9 ⁸ Then all the people stood united and said, “None of us will go to his tent or return to his house. ⁹ Now this is what we will do to Gibeah: we will attack it. By lot.

For the first time in the book of Judges all the people gather to wage war against an enemy. The nation never unified to this extent to obey God's will to drive the Canaanites from the land. Not under Barak, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, or Sampson. This unity is impressive but tragic. God's explicit will is not their cause for unity but the half-truths of a vengeful man. If we as a church are to unify, it must be under the banner of Christ's gospel. Every other rallying cry leads to destruction. Without the gospel we cease being a church of God and become a mere social club of like-minded people.

5. Injustice

20:13, 16 ¹³ Hand over the wicked men in Gibeah so we can put them to death and purge evil from Israel.” But the Benjaminites **would not listen** to their fellow Israelites. ¹⁶ There were seven hundred fit young men who were left-handed among all these troops; all could sling a stone at a hair and not **miss**.

The wicked are protected, and the tribe of Benjamin becomes enemies of God. An interesting note given to us by the author is the descriptor of Benjamin's elite skirmishers. Benjamin means son of the right hand, a sign of honor. Their elite warriors are left-

handed, and they do not miss. What is the Hebrew word for missing? You know, it's "sin." The tribe of honor relies on left-handed warriors who do not sin. Do you see the irony the author intends? Benjamin defends sinners, and they have no honor.

We hope for a day when all wrongs will be righted and every injustice dealt with by a just judge. Until that day comes, may we be told that we are the ones who do not miss.

6. Destruction of New Sodom

⁴⁸ The men of Israel turned back against the other Benjaminites and killed them with their swords—the entire city, the animals, and everything that remained. They also burned all the cities that remained.

Like Sodom before, only a few were spared from the blood lust of Israel. 600 men hiding in the hills are all that remains of God's enemies and defenders of injustice. But like them, all of humanity is destined for Judgment and destruction. Will God leave a remnant? Will some of us be spared? More on this at the end.

7. Foolish oaths

21:1, ⁵ The men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah: "None of us will give his daughter to a Benjaminite in marriage." ⁵For a great oath had been taken that anyone who had not come to the LORD at Mizpah would certainly be put to death.

At the very least These oaths indicate God's people assuming God's will. More likely, they are a way to entice him to act on their behalf. Therefore these oaths are foolish attempts at being noble before God.

Their folly is confirmed when they begin to chafe at their self-imposed constraints. Look at God's words concerning the matter, Proverbs 19:2-3 "² Even zeal is not good without knowledge, and the one who acts hastily sins. ³ A person's own foolishness leads him astray, yet his heart rages against the LORD."

The passion of the Israelites does not produce wisdom but foolishness because they lacked knowledge of God's word and will. So, They set out to do what all legalists do best. They look for loopholes. Wondering when does this oath not apply to me?

8. Casting blame

Look back to the 3rd verse in Proverbs 19, ³ A person's own foolishness leads him astray, yet his heart rages against the LORD." The gatherer tribes committed blasphemy. 21:3 Why, LORD God of Israel, has it occurred that one tribe is missing in Israel today?" The people cry out to God for answers. Why did you let us do this? Why was it necessary for us to wipe out all of Benjamin. Why did we make this oath to end the line of Benjamin? No different than our first father, Adam, who blamed his wife for his failures. "The woman you gave me led me astray." God is not to blame for our sins or those committed against us.

9. Patterns of wickedness

The sin that so easily entangles also so quickly continues. Through our story, we witness sinful patterns that seem to only gain momentum. One argument between a man and a woman led to a city-wide problem, escalating into a tribal crisis only to become a disaster for the entire nation. Sin only gives way to more sin.

The apostle Paul warns the Galatians in chapter 6:7-10 ⁷ Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, ⁸ because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹ Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith."

God is not a fool. A person can not pull a fast one on God. He has made it so that every sin planted results in destruction being harvested. One woman's murder leads to the death of tens of thousands in battle. One rape and abduction led to the rape and kidnapping of 600 women sanctioned by the elders of Israel. One foolish oath by those elders leads to the extermination of an entire village. One man's cowardice leads to a woman's death. One town's inhospitality leads to their slaughter. When there is no king, everyone does what seems good. Or, in our vernacular, whatever makes them feel good. The elders were to lead the people and safeguard the sacred standard of God. The Levitical priests were ministers of worship, sacrifice, and promoting Godliness among the people. The elders and the priest do what seems good and abandon what is right before God.

The wicked action found in the pages of judges is not the most egregious thing in this book. They are bad. No argument concerning that. But the greatest wickedness is our own internal standard. The wickedness we see finds its root in the heart.

10. Ourselves

In these final chapters, any mentions of Canaanites or foreign oppressors are absent. Why? The author wants to clarify that God's people are their worst enemies. Daniel Block says clearly, "It is not the enemies outside who threaten the soul but the Canaanite within." The Canaanites amplified the sinfulness and rebellion that already existed in their heart. This is the crescendo of Judges. God's will to drive out the Canaanites from the promised land was to establish obedience and devotion in Israel's heart way more than removing temptation.

One thing has been missing in these last three chapters that makes it unlike any other. Do you know what it is? Names. Only one person gets a name. A priest in chapter 20 is named to ground the time when these events took place. Every other character is nameless, and the author intends it. These chapters are a mirror for the people of God. A check and balance to evaluate our hearts. Am I the Levite who is selfish? Am I the host with twisted morality? Am I the abused and discarded? Am I the woman who runs away when she's angry? Am I insensitive to sin and suffering? Am I the defender of injustice? Am I the fool who curses God? Am I the zealot blinded by vengeance? Am I a leader looking for loopholes? Am I the hedonist looking for pleasure? Am I the worshiper of idols? Am I the king of my life?

The anonymity shows the dehumanization of God's people when they are enslaved to sin. The individual's value as an image of God is gone. Women are property, inhabitants of cities are acceptable casualties, and self-preservation is everything. Another way to view it is the de-imaging of God in the person. This reality is nothing new; it began long ago in the garden when the serpent deceived our first parents a simple lie, "If you want to be like God, you must disobey him." "If you want to enjoy God, you must do what seems good." Doing what feels good is not what it means to be human. It is what it means to be less than human.

The apostle Paul quotes the Psalms in his epistle to the Romans, "There is no one righteous, not even one."¹¹ There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.¹² All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. He repeats these words like the author of Judges tells these stories. We need a righteous king who will rescue us from ourselves. We cannot save ourselves from the wicked perversion in us, let alone around us. But more than that, we need rescue from something far more perilous. Something that our sin has brought upon us.

11. The wrath of God

Our sin has brought upon us God's wrath. Paul writes in Romans 1:18-19 "¹⁸For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, ¹⁹since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them." God's wrath is the proper and just response toward

images bearers who have rebelled against his rule. Image bears who have become self-gods doing what seems best in their eyes. Isreal had a King; it was God himself. It also has many rebel kings. That is, every person who acted counter to God's word and will. Where did it begin? In the garden. It started when a serpent tempted Adam and Eve, saying, "Take and eat." But God showed them mercy.

He also showed mercy to the Israelites. He did not destroy them; despite their actions, he brought forth a King, King David. The king who will set the stage for our great King, Jesus, to once and for all save. He is the righteous king who upholds the Law and saves us from all unrighteousness. How did he do it? By bearing the weight and punishment of God's wrath on the cross. He offers it to us.