



March 22, 2024

One Wrong Action led to Another and Another

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

We had a wonderful pastoral visit to Mississippi and east Texas and are home now catching up this week with the normal day to day. One of the highlights of our visit was spending a good part of last Sunday playing Dominoes with the brethren in Big Sandy at the church hall. Some of the older ladies really shined and kept both of us reflecting on how we need to improve in our strategy!

God throughout his Word gives us very real vivid living examples of human nature.

We had left off last Friday night with 600 of the fleeing Benjamites seeking refuge in a rocky area. The Israelite tribes continued to attack and slaughter other Benjamites and burn their towns. The next day a number of Israelites bemoaned the fact that one of the tribes of Israel, Benjamin, was almost wiped out! The Israelite men had made an oath that none of them would give his daughter as a wife to a Benjamite male. They had also made an oath to kill any who had not come up to Mizpah and inquire at the ark concerning going to battle. They took a count of who went up and found that none from Jabesh Gilead had gone up to join the fighting force. They then proceeded to kill everyone at Jabesh Gilead except the young virgin women.

They then offered 400 of these women as wives to the Benjamite men at the rock of Rimmon refuge and offered to make peace. More Benjamite men must have joined the original 400 because there were still not enough women for the men at the rock of Rimmon. So the Israelites devised a plan to have the Benjamite men

hide in the vineyards at Shiloh at the time of one of the Feasts. The young women did a traditional dance and while they were dancing the Benjamite men rushed in to capture the women and take them back home to be their wives. Since the women were not actually given by their fathers or brothers it was deemed acceptable and not breaking the oath. What an incredible series of events and what awful bloodshed!

How might things have been handled differently? We can identify a number of ways.

First, the Levite bore considerable responsibility. He comes across as selfish and self-righteous. Why did he take the concubine in the first place? He evidently did not marry her. Why did she leave him and seek other relationships? The Levite came to her father's home to get her and spoke "kindly" to her, but it seemed like an act to me. Women were not respected in general at that time and I suppose concubines were even less as much. What an ugly and abusive act to offer her to the abusers. It seems he did not show any concern for her the whole night when she was out being assaulted. Then he has such a callous attitude in the morning to just tell her to "get up and get going", when she lay lifeless at the door step!

I can't give any compliments to the host who also offered his daughter to the men who accosted his house and demanded the Levite be handed over to them. He took it upon himself to offer the Levite's concubine to them as well. The old man did tell the abusive men that they should not act wickedly toward the Levite. Wasn't it wicked also to invite them to abuse his daughter and the concubine?

Obviously the lustful perverted men initiated the scenario with their demands and their abuse of the Levite's concubine. They bore a weighty responsibility and should have been punished for their actions! When the Levite found his concubine dead, he should have first sought the elders and other leaders in the city and made an attempt to work through them to bring the evil-doers to justice before he resorted to the sensationalism in getting all of Israel to side with him in dealing with the situation.

When the Israelites came to Mizpah and interrogated the Levite, he purposely left out some of the story and made it seem like the evil doers forced their way into the house and grabbed the concubine. He did not relate all the facts of how he had handed the girl over to the men. The huge army of Israelites should have selected several priests to go to Gibeah to attempt to encourage the city leaders to take action against the abusers. Confronting the Benjamites with such a huge army and issuing a stern demand was quite provoking. The Benjamites did not humble themselves and acknowledge the horrible deed that was done, but gave in to pride and stubbornness. The die was cast and there was going to be war. It seems that the Lord worked through the events to humble and bring correction to both sides in this recorded conflict.

Once the tide of battle turned, the Israelite army went on a rampage and did not ponder the outcome of what they were doing until most of the Benjamites were killed. Then they ruthlessly punished the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead who did not want to go along with them. This seems like a great over-reaction! One wrong action led to another and another. Yes indeed, what a tragedy and historical portrait of human nature. "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



Scott Hoefker

Senior Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)

(*Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios*)

tshoefker@cogministries.org / www.cogministries.org

P.O. Box 983, Daphne, AL, 36526-0983 / 251-930-1797 Office