

Grossly Immoral Conditions Existed in the Time of the Judges

Judges 19:1-30

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. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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.

⁵ 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."

⁶ 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." ⁷ And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. ⁸ 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.

⁹ 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."

¹⁰ However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and departed, and came opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine was also with him. ¹¹ 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."

¹² 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." ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. ¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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?"

¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ 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."

²⁰ 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." ²¹ So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

²² 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!"

²³ 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. ²⁴ 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!" ²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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.

²⁹ 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. ³⁰ 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!"

Background Notes

Chapters 17 through 21 of Judges form the last section of the book of Judges. The contents of these chapters were selected by the Holy Spirit to show us how bad the conditions were, spiritually and morally, during the dark days of the Judges. In Judges 17 and 18 we see how low Israel had sunk spiritually. Idolatry and spiritual anarchy reigned as everyone did that which was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6). In Judges 19 through 21 we see how low Israel had sunk morally. Immorality and moral anarchy prevailed, as "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

So now we understand why the Holy Spirit recorded these very unholy events in holy Scripture. It shows us the awful moral conditions that existed in Israel during the time of the Judges, and it doesn't take too much insight to realize that these same moral standards exist in our nation today. If Judges 19 were to appear in our local newspapers (with just a few updated terms such as car instead of donkey, and "mistress" or "live-in girlfriend" instead of concubine), no one would doubt that such an event could happen today in our own country.

What is God teaching us with this gross and disgusting story that He included in the Bible? Romans 15:4 says, "whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." And that includes Judges 19.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. God's people can sink to the moral level of unbelievers.

These days it seems that we often hear the phrase that certain immoral acts "don't rise to the level of being really immoral." That's an indication of how low the moral standards have sunk in our society. The really sad note here is that God's people can sometimes sink to the moral level of unbelievers.

That's what we see here in Judges 19 – we see it in the Levite, and we see it in the host and the men of Gibeah. What was a Levite doing with a concubine, anyway? Levites were supposed to be servants of the Lord, and models for the people of Israel. Most Bible versions translate verse 19 to say that this Levite was on his way to "the house of the Lord," the Tabernacle, which at that time was located at Shiloh. Think of a Levite, on his way to the house of the Lord, possibly to present a sacrifice -- and yet at the same time involved with this woman, and regarding her as "chattel" or "property" – a "thing," to be used and thrown away!

God's people can sink to the moral level of unbelievers. We see this truth in the homosexual behavior of the men of Gibeah. The scene reminds us of Genesis 19, when the two angels came to Sodom and Gomorrah -- but this situation is much worse. The homosexual men who surrounded Lot's home were pagans, but the men of Gibeah were Israelites! Israelites were supposed to be God's people!

God's people can sink to the moral level of unbelievers, and it can happen today. Recently I read a report about a Christian convention. The convention hotel's records showed that just as many X-rated movies were watched in the guest rooms during the time of the Christian convention as at any other time! God's people can sink to the moral level of unbelievers.

2. Society's moral values are not the same as God's moral standards

Verses 23-24: *"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. ²⁴ 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!"*

How could they do such a thing? The answer is that, in that day, society's values were that a host must protect his guest -- no matter what the cost, even if it meant that a woman would be horribly

abused. But the standards of Israelite society in that day were certainly **not** God's standards! Both the host and the Levite were brainwashed by the values of the prevailing culture and degraded societal standards. This is true today. Society's moral values are not the same as God's moral standards. Going along with our society's values is fine, as long as they line up with God's standards. Sadly, many times they don't.

Here's an illustration. If you were to ask the average non-Christian which they consider to be "worse" -- cheating on your wife, or telling a lie when you're under oath? I think most people in our secular society would say that lying under oath is worse than adultery. They would say that "cheating on your wife is wrong," but as long as the adultery is between "consenting adults," and reconciliation can be worked out, it's not a big deal! Lying when you're under oath, however, could mean removal from high office, and even imprisonment!

Now compare our current society's standards with God's unchanging standards. God's Word says that both adultery and lying under oath are wrong. Both are sin -- but by God's law, cheating on your wife is far worse! Adultery was punishable by death, according to God's Law. Lying under oath involved a much lesser penalty. As to penalties, we are no longer under the Mosaic Law -- but **God's view of sin and His moral standards do not change!**

Society's moral values change depending on a variety of factors, such as what is politically correct at any given moment. **God's moral standards do not change**, so let's not allow ourselves to be brainwashed with society's values. Society's changing values are not moral standards. Let's not get confused. Get your moral standards from the Bible! Society's moral values are not the same as God's moral standards.

Practical Application

Remember -- we don't drift into godliness.

The moral conditions during the times of the Judges didn't happen overnight. As the people of Israel turned away from the Lord and His Laws, the nation went downhill, step-by-step, into ungodliness. The same thing can happen today in our country, in a society that has cut itself off from biblical standards. You can easily drift into ungodliness.

However, the reverse is not true. There is no such thing as to "drifting into godliness." Godliness must be diligently and carefully maintained by keeping our eyes on Jesus, and by a

steady diet of reading God's Word, spending time in prayer and in fellowship with strong believers.

If you don't maintain godliness, you **will** drift into **ungodliness**. There are no exceptions to this moral law! Remember, it's easy to drift into ungodliness, but we can never **drift** into godliness.