

A STUDY OF JUDGES & RUTH

FRIENDLY FIRE

An estimated 12–14% of all Allied deaths in WWII were due to friendly fire. Many reasons exist for the thousands that died in friendly fire encounters—each one a tragedy.

Today, we are circling the drain of depravity with probably the worst, most sickening story in all the Bible. Serious consideration was given to skimming over this story and focusing on its result. However, the brutality is the point—sin so shocking it caused a civil war in Israel. The worst part is that all these events are friendly fire, Israeli against Israeli.

JUDGES 19:12, 22–30

¹² And his master said to him, “We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel, but we will pass on to Gibeah.”

²² As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, “Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him.”

²³ And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing. ²⁴ Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing.” ²⁵ But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. ²⁶ And as morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man’s house where her master was, until it was light.

²⁷ And her master rose up in the morning, and when he opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ He said to her, “Get up, let us be going.” But there was no answer. Then he put her on the donkey, and the man rose up and went away to his home. ²⁹ And when he entered his house, he took a knife, and taking hold of his concubine he divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. ³⁰ And all who saw it said, “Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I can imagine that some of you reading today's passage had no idea such an awful and violent story existed in the pages of Scripture. I dare say, you've never heard this story on a Sunday morning or in youth group. Unlike the violence of movies and video games, this happened in real life. This story and others may beg the question, "Why is the Bible So Violent?" Scan the QR code for a discussion of several answers—notably, "*God planned to save us through violence.*"



DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you were angry at a friend or teammate? What happened and how did you resolve it?

ICEBREAKER

1. Who was the master trying to avoid by passing on to Gibeah? (12)

2. What did the men of Gibeah want and what did they get? (22, 24-25)

3. What was the reaction when the Levite sent the woman's body out? (30)

4. Considering verse 12 and verse 30, what makes these events so surprising?

5. In your opinion, how do people get to the point of committing such evil?

6. What habits and patterns have you or will you establish to flee this path?

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

People do terrible things. Maybe you're the victim of terrible evil. Don't live in shame and guilt. You need help. If you have something like this hidden, talk to your Coach today!

STUDY NOTES HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE

Las Vegas odds-makers consider home-field advantage worth about 3 points in the overall spread for NFL games. That means, when the experts bet house money, they factor 3 points for the team with the home field. Most NFL games are decided by three points or less, which means home field matters a lot.

In the ancient world, home field mattered a lot too. When traveling, especially overnight, it was dangerous. The safest option was to bunk in a town of your own people.

Our passage today picks up as a Levite man and his servant were returning home after retrieving the Levite's concubine from her father's house. The day grew late and the servant suggested stopping off at the nearest town to rest. **His master said to him, "We will not turn aside into the city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel, but we will pass on to Gibeah."** It only seems logical—Israelites were safer with other Israelites. He was devastatingly wrong.

GODLY LEADERS MUST RESPECT GOD'S WILL (PART II)

The entourage made it to Gibeah and an old man invited them to stay for the evening so that they did not need to stay in the town's square. The new friends **were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him."**

This story reminds us of Genesis 19 when two angels visited Lot in Sodom. That story ended with the angels sending Lot and his family away and the total destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Like Lot, the old man begged the men **"No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing."**

Whereas Lot offered the townspeople his two virgin daughters who were thankfully spared by the angels, the old man's daughter and the concubine weren't so lucky. The old man said, **"Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing." But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.**

The next *morning* the Levite *went out to go on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold.* He spoke to her, but she did not move. She was dead. **He put her on the donkey, and... went away to his home.**

At his home, he **divided** the woman up *limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel.* The message had the intended result. **All who saw it said, "Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak."**

DISRESPECT CAN BRING INJUSTICE

We've all seen teams self-destruct where players yell at other players or coaches. Sometimes it's not hard to read the lips of someone swearing obscenities because of a bad play. Imagine how the tribes of Israel felt receiving a bloody package of a young woman who had been raped, brutalized, murdered, and hacked into pieces. They probably felt similarly to you and I reading this story—ready for vengeance.

Eleven of the tribes went to battle against the men who committed such terrible acts. The men of Benjamin wouldn't give them up, so they battled. After the fact, the tribes of Israel were concerned that the tribe of Benjamin would cease, so they encouraged them to take wives by force. They killed every person in Jabesh Gilead except for the female virgins to take as wives. For the remaining Benjamite men, they stole the daughters of Shiloh during a feast to the Lord.

All these events represent the evil that sin can cause when unrestrained. The book of *Judges* ends with the warning we saw last week, **"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."** As extreme as these events were, sin still takes people down the same roads today.

Let us not think, "This would never be me. I could never..." The whole point is that this evil exists in all of us apart from the Lord working in our lives. Jesus points this out in Matthew 5 that we commit murder and adultery when we have anger and lust in our hearts.

Granted, the kind of evil we read about in today's passage didn't happen all at once. Repeated compromise slowly chips away the shock of sin's effects.

Be aware and fight sin. Only by the grace of God may we avoid such consequences and reap the benefits of an uncompromised life.