

SERMON NOTES:

A Journey Through Judges and the Cost of Compromise

Part 13: Has it Come to This?

BIG Idea: The greatest danger of sin is not simply what it makes us do—it is what it convinces us has become normal.

Application: Followers of Christ must continually return to God's definition of righteousness because sin slowly normalizes compromise until we no longer recognize what is truly right.

Join us as we read the Bible together in 2026.

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Judges 20:1-14 (NLT) *Israel's War with Benjamin*

¹ Then all the Israelites were united as one man, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, including those from across the Jordan in the land of Gilead. The entire community assembled in the presence of the Lord at Mizpah. ² The leaders of all the people and all the tribes of Israel—400,000 warriors armed with swords—took their positions in the assembly of the people of God. ³ (Word soon reached the land of Benjamin that the other tribes had gone up to Mizpah.) The Israelites then asked how this terrible crime had happened.

⁴ The Levite, the husband of the woman who had been murdered, said, “My concubine and I came to spend the night in Gibeah, a town that belongs to the people of Benjamin. ⁵ That night some of the leading citizens of Gibeah surrounded the house, planning to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she was dead. ⁶ So I cut her body into twelve pieces and sent the pieces throughout the territory assigned to Israel, for these men have committed a terrible and shameful crime. ⁷ Now then, all of you—the entire community of Israel—must decide here and now what should be done about this!”

⁸ And all the people rose to their feet in unison and declared, “None of us will return home! No, not even one of us! ⁹ Instead, this is what we will do to Gibeah; we will draw lots to decide who will attack it. ¹⁰ One-tenth of the men from each tribe will be chosen to supply the warriors with food, and the rest of us will take revenge on Gibeah of Benjamin for this shameful thing they have done in Israel.” ¹¹ So all the Israelites were completely united, and they gathered together to attack the town.

¹² The Israelites sent messengers to the tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What a terrible thing has been done among you! ¹³ Give up those evil men, those troublemakers from Gibeah, so we can execute them and purge Israel of this evil.”

But the people of Benjamin would not listen. ¹⁴ Instead, they came from their towns and gathered at Gibeah to fight the Israelites.

Judges 21 (NLT) *Israel Provides Wives for Benjamin*

¹ The Israelites had vowed at Mizpah, “We will never give our daughters in marriage to a man from the tribe of Benjamin.” ² Now the people went to Bethel and sat in the presence of God until evening,

weeping loudly and bitterly. ³ “O Lord, God of Israel,” they cried out, “why has this happened in Israel? Now one of our tribes is missing from Israel!”

⁴ Early the next morning the people built an altar and presented their burnt offerings and peace offerings on it. ⁵ Then they said, “Who among the tribes of Israel did not join us at Mizpah when we held our assembly in the presence of the Lord?” At that time they had taken a solemn oath in the Lord’s presence, vowing that anyone who refused to come would be put to death.

⁶ The Israelites felt sorry for their brother Benjamin and said, “Today one of the tribes of Israel has been cut off. ⁷ How can we find wives for the few who remain, since we have sworn by the Lord not to give them our daughters in marriage?”

⁸ So they asked, “Who among the tribes of Israel did not join us at Mizpah when we assembled in the presence of the Lord?” And they discovered that no one from Jabesh-gilead had attended the assembly. ⁹ For after they counted all the people, no one from Jabesh-gilead was present.

¹⁰ So the assembly sent 12,000 of their best warriors to Jabesh-gilead with orders to kill everyone there, including women and children. ¹¹ “This is what you are to do,” they said. “Completely destroy all the males and every woman who is not a virgin.” ¹² Among the residents of Jabesh-gilead they found 400 young virgins who had never slept with a man, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan.

¹³ The Israelite assembly sent a peace delegation to the remaining people of Benjamin who were living at the rock of Rimmon. ¹⁴ Then the men of Benjamin returned to their homes, and the 400 women of Jabesh-gilead who had been spared were given to them as wives. But there were not enough women for all of them.

¹⁵ The people felt sorry for Benjamin because the Lord had made this gap among the tribes of Israel. ¹⁶ So the elders of the assembly asked, “How can we find wives for the few who remain, since the women of the tribe of Benjamin are dead? ¹⁷ There must be heirs for the survivors so that an entire tribe of Israel is not wiped out. ¹⁸ But we cannot give them our own daughters in marriage because we have sworn with a solemn oath that anyone who does this will fall under God’s curse.”

¹⁹ Then they thought of the annual festival of the Lord held in Shiloh, south of Lebonah and north of Bethel, along the east side of the road that goes from Bethel to Shechem. ²⁰ They told the men of Benjamin who still needed wives, “Go and hide in the vineyards. ²¹ When you see the young women of Shiloh come out for their dances, rush out from the vineyards, and each of you can take one of them home to the land of Benjamin to be your wife! ²² And when their fathers and brothers come to us in protest, we will tell them, ‘Please be sympathetic. Let them have your daughters, for we didn’t find wives for all of them when we destroyed Jabesh-gilead. And you are not guilty of breaking the vow since you did not actually give your daughters to them in marriage.’”

²³ So the men of Benjamin did as they were told. Each man caught one of the women as she danced in the celebration and carried her off to be his wife. They returned to their own land, and they rebuilt their towns and lived in them.

²⁴ Then the people of Israel departed by tribes and families, and they returned to their own homes.

²⁵ In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

1. Sin makes us lose sight of the real enemy.

James 1:19-20 (NLT)

¹⁹ Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. ²⁰ Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

The greatest enemy is rarely the person in front of us – it is the sin within us.

When we confuse defeating people with defeating sin, we have already lost the battle.

2. Sin convinces us we can fix ourselves.

We manage consequences when God is calling us to repentance.

Proverbs 14:12 (NLT)

¹² There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NLT)

⁹ “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?”

Human ingenuity can solve many problems, but it cannot heal a sinful heart.

3. Religion can survive after righteousness has died.

You can maintain the performance of faith while missing the very heart of God.

Isaiah 1:10-17 (NLT)

¹⁰ Listen to the Lord, you leaders of “Sodom.”

Listen to the law of our God, people of “Gomorrah.”

¹¹ “What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?”
says the Lord.

“I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams
and the fat of fattened cattle.

I get no pleasure from the blood
of bulls and lambs and goats.

¹² When you come to worship me,
who asked you to parade through my courts with all your ceremony?

¹³ Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts;
the incense of your offerings disgusts me!

As for your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath
and your special days for fasting—

they are all sinful and false.

I want no more of your pious meetings.

¹⁴ I hate your new moon celebrations and your annual festivals.

They are a burden to me. I cannot stand them!

¹⁵ When you lift up your hands in prayer, I will not look.

Though you offer many prayers, I will not listen,
for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims.

¹⁶ Wash yourselves and be clean!

Get your sins out of my sight.

Give up your evil ways.

¹⁷ Learn to do good.

Seek justice.

Help the oppressed.

Defend the cause of orphans.

Fight for the rights of widows.

Amos 5:21-24 (NLT)

²¹ "I hate all your show and pretense—
the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies.

²² I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings.

I won't even notice all your choice peace offerings.

²³ Away with your noisy hymns of praise!

I will not listen to the music of your harps.

²⁴ Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice,
an endless river of righteous living."

Matthew 15:8-9 (NLT)

⁸ "These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

⁹ Their worship is a farce,
for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God."

2 Timothy 3:5 (NLT)

⁵ They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

God is not seeking religious people. He is shaping righteous people.

Nobody wakes up in Judges 21 – they drift there one compromise at a time.