

Judges 20:18-48 – Waking Up For The Big Fight– Part 2

Beloved in the Lord: Suppose fire broke out in your house tonight, what will you do? Are you prepared? Does your family have a plan? If you don't, you could suffer injuries. If your hallways are clogged, you could drip and fall, and get injured before you get out. Often people panic and jump out of a window and get injured even when they could have used a different exit. This is similar to what happened to Israel when they finally woke up...they rushed to leave the danger and suffered for it. Hear about this today.

Our headings are: **Defeat. Dedication (奉献) . Deliverance**

Our goals are: **That you will prepare to fight to restore the honor of the Lord and work so that his church will expand.**

Defeat

18 Then the children of **Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God.** They said, "Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?" **The LORD said, "Judah first!"** 19 So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. 20 And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah. 21 Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day **cut down to the ground (杀死) twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites.**

1. The children asked for the Lord to decide who would go into battle first against Benjamin. They did not trust themselves, knowing their **instinctive reaction (本能的反应) to self-preservation(自保).** They communicated with God where the Ark of the Covenant (约柜) was. Why? The Ark of the Covenant represented Jesus. Blood was sprinkled on it before prayer was made for the people. But **they forgot that there was no prayer without sacrifice.**

2. The Lord chose Judah to lead. Why Judah? Judah was the tribe from which the kings would come and was a picture of the ultimate defender of the Christian, Jesus Christ. Judah had the promise of leadership! Gen 49,

3. But Israel lost the battle that 1st day. Why? Israel was angry about murder **but they were happy about idolatry and misusing God's name.** So God was settling his quarrel with them. Because Israel knew that their cause was good and their numbers were strong, they thought victory was guaranteed. But not so! They were missing something – a right relationship with God. They prayed, but sin hindered their prayer. **Their hearts were not right with God.**

22 And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and again formed the battle line at the place where they had put themselves in array on the first day. 23 Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, "Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?" And the LORD said, "Go up against him." 24 So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. 25 And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day, and cut down to the ground **eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel;** all these drew the sword.

4. Israel encouraged themselves after their defeat, wept before the Lord, prepared for battle the next day, but lost again. Again, they trusted in their cause and in their arms of flesh. Israel then **mourned their slaughter but not their sins.** In total, they lost 40000 soldiers, trying to bring justice for 1 woman. But you have to see that the cause of this **was the greater sin of abandoning God and his Word!** They thought that their meagre (不足的, 少得可怜的) service of destroying the adulterers was enough to please God. But God is never fooled. Of this situation:

(ESV)Hosea 10:9 -From the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, O Israel; there they have continued. Shall not the war against the unjust overtake them in Gibeah?

Joshua 24:20 "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then **He will turn and do you harm and consume you,** after He has done you good."

I think it is symbolic that God required a 1/10 of their lives-40,000. For too long they robbed him of their service.

5. Lessons:

a. North American churches believe that if they give a mouth praise to God and token obedience that God would be pleased and bless them. How low we view God today! God demands more.

b. A stitch in time (及时处理, 及时弥补) saves nine. That is true. If you deal with matters early – in your hearts, homes, and in church, **then you will likely not have to do major surgeries later.** Live close to God now! Deal with your sin quickly. Don't wait for your children to get old to discipline them. Train up a child in the way he would go...

c. You have to be prepared to be hurt as you challenge the lethargy (昏睡, 倦怠) in the church. You will suffer. You will be called names – names like: fanatic (狂热分子), self-righteous, and insensitive (无动于衷). Smile and

keep fighting. The battle is not about you; the battle is about the honor of the Lord.

d. God is righteous though you may not always see his reasons. Don't ever forget this.

Dedication

26 Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and **wept**. They sat there before the LORD and **fasted** (禁食) **that day until evening**; and they offered **burnt offerings** (燔祭) **and peace offerings** (平安祭) before the LORD. 27 So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, 28 and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?" And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

1. This serious and long standing problem in Israel wasn't solved by their first attempts at a little weeping and prayer.

They needed to see how serious sin was and how bad life was away from God. There were in a deep hole. So after their 2nd defeat they got down to serious prayer – **prayer with fasting**. They followed God's plan. They **brought burnt offerings** – showing total dedication to God. They brought **peace offerings – showing** that the broken relationship was restored.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart--These, O God, You will not despise.

2. With their lives dedicated to God and with their relationship properly restored, they then asked God for help and God gave them the assurance that they would win the next day.

29 Then Israel **set men in ambush** (设下伏兵) all around Gibeah. 30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and **put themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at the other times**. 31 So the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down and kill some of the people, as at the other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah) and in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

3. God not only accepted their repentance, and God not only brought them near to him, God also worked for their continued success – directly. God told them how to fight.

4. Lessons:

a. God is not a grandfather. He demands that you truly remedy issues you have with him. Unlike your grandfather, God cannot look at sin.

b. Be a church that daily prays for repentance for the church of Jesus Christ which has been complacent 自满的 for many decades. Show that you are truly sorry for decades of resting in filth by looking to Christ's sacrifice for sins.

c. The world hates you and thinks that you are afraid of them (don't be), but their hate and arrogance will be the grounds of their destruction. God will preserve you because you are his child.

Deliverance

32 And the children of Benjamin said, "**They are defeated before us**, as at first." But the children of Israel said, "**Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways**." 33 So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel's **men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba**. 34 **And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah**, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them. 35 The **LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel**. And the children of Israel destroyed that day **twenty-five thousand one hundred** Benjamites; all these drew the sword. 36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, **because they relied on the men** in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah. 37 And the men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword.

1. Human responsibility worked in concert with Divine sovereignty (神的主权) for Israel's deliverance. God's plan was to fake the Benjamites into thinking that Israel was running from them. This drew the Benjamites out of Gibeah. At the same time, Israel's choice soldiers were in ambush near the city. (Benjamin did not consider this danger because they trusted in their war abilities.) Because the soldiers were drawn out of Gibeah, it was exposed, and was totally destroyed by the Israelite ambushers. Benjamin lost 25,100 soldiers. **What a tragedy this was for Benjamin, who were the soldiers of Israel**. They had to be cut down for their sins. The gangrene (坏蛆) had to go to save the whole body. And who did it? Ultimately, it was the Lord. V35.

38 Now the **appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush** was that they would make a **great cloud of smoke rise up from the city**, 39 whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike and kill about **thirty of the men of Israel**. For they said, "**Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle.**" 40 But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up in smoke to heaven (烟气冲天). 41 And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, **for they saw that disaster had come upon them**. 42 Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and whoever came out of the cities they destroyed in their midst.

3. Israel's soldiers who pretended to be fleeing from Benjamin, kept going until they saw Gibeah in flames behind

them. They when Benjamin realized that their homes were on fire and wanted to turn back, the apparent "fleeing" Israelite soldiers turned around and trapped Benjamin between them and the ambush soldiers coming out. (Ever been chased by a dog and then stop and chase the dog?)

4. Weakened Benjamin thought that they were winning because they saw a small victory. Eighteen died. But they had only won a battle. God consumed their confidence. The victory was God's and God's people.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they say, "**Peace and safety!**" **then sudden destruction** comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

43 They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, and **easily trampled them down** as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. 44 And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell; all these were men of valor (勇士). 45 Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them. 46 So all who fell of Benjamin that day were **twenty-five thousand** men who drew the sword; all these were men of valor. 47 But **six hundred men turned and fled** toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months. 48 And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword—from every city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to.

5. The wicked had to be destroyed for Israel to remain free and for Messiah to come. And they defeated Benjamin. Benjamin's army, which was almost 27000, was then reduced to about 600. (25000+1100+600)

6. Lessons:

- a. No one is indispensable (不可缺少的) to the kingdom**. So don't think that God needs you (like Benjamin thought) and won't remove you from your position or from this life if you sin. Members and pastors can be removed.
- b. One man's sin can affect the whole church. One church's sin can affect the whole kingdom**. Live faithfully.
- c. The church might take some losses as we try to wake up from her coma (昏迷)**, but be assured that we will win in the end. God says so. Jesus made it possible.

Malachi 4:3 You shall trample the wicked, **For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet** On the day that I do *this*," Says the LORD of hosts.

Conclusion:

Israel suffered significant defeats as they trusted in their cause and in their numbers. It was not until they truly returned to a right relationship with God, through blood sacrifice, that victory came.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. There are many who think that passing good laws and electing good politicians would stop the moral decline in the west, and that abortions would stop, that adultery will be controlled, that terrorism will go away, and that life will get better. It surely seems this way to me as that is often where Christians put much energy. This is a no-good plan to flee to safety. God wants you to look at a more fundamental cause – the hearts of the people in churches are sedentary (静止的).

2. How will the hearts of God's people be revived? How will evil be destroyed? What is the real plan? Just like Israel did – by going back to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ – your whole burnt offering. When you look back to the cross, and when you dedicate yourselves back to God in regular fellowship, change will come. Guaranteed! They you will use this weapon to make the wicked surrender.

Finally: If you are not on the side of God's people, you are bound for judgment (审判). You are on slippery ground. You might think, like the Benjamites, that you will survive, but God's fires will come upon you and your home – a fire that cannot be stopped. But you have a way out – if you turn over your sins to the Lord Jesus who took punishment for the sins of the world.