

This chapter relates a devastating civil war that ends with only a handful surviving out of the tribe of Benjamin. It is a terrible vengeance upon a terrible crime. All Israel comes together at Mizpah. Let's read what Mr. Ridout says about this gathering:

"I want you to notice what has awakened them. It has been the commission of evil that has awakened them, and they gather together as one man, for what purpose? To take vengeance upon the evil. It is evil that has awakened; it is evil that brings them together; it is the execution of judgment upon evil that nerves their arm and unites their hearts. Ah, beloved, evil will never serve as a tie to hold the people of God together. Have you ever seen in some much more quiet way, people drawn together by occupation with evil? It will draw together for the time being; you may have your indignation meetings over evil, but having indignation meetings over evil is not the way that God would draw His people together."

Indignation and outrage are the means the Levite has used to call his brothers to arms (all the time ignoring his own guilt in the woman's death).

More from Ridout: "Well, all Israel comes together; they are united at last, as I said. What grace has not effected, judgment seems to do, or the desire for it. You will notice one thing. These people were thirsty for blood. That is what marks them. I do not see any horror at the sin. I do not see in it a spirit crushed at the possibility of such evil, occurring in Israel. As a matter of fact, if they were going to hold Benjamin so rigorously to his responsibility, why could they not do it for the whole nation? If they could say, for instance, that it is an awful thing that such evil is possible in Benjamin, why not say it is an awful thing that such evil is possible in Israel, too? Ah, there was the snare. It was pride and self-righteousness in their own heart."

It is unquestionable that a dreadful crime has been committed and that justice must be done. But even in these cases care must be taken to proceed according to God's will and not according to our own inclinations.

### Notes

**20:18,26** Most translations say the Israelites went up to Bethel to inquire before the ark, but other passages say the tabernacle was at Shiloh. Either the ark had moved (not uncommon) or Bethel should be literally translated as "house of God" (cp. 18:31)

### Questions:

1. Does the Levite tell the whole truth in testifying about the crime in Gibeah?
2. Where and how do the Israelites seek the will of God?

3. The Lord twice tells the Israelites to advance against the Benjaminite army, only to be defeated. Why do you think He does that?
4. Why is the army successful on the third try (verses 29-35)?
5. Would you say that justice is done in an orderly way? What might be a better or more scriptural approach?
6. What does this chapter tell us about discipline among Christians?