

We live in a time of thick moral smoke... that has settled upon our nation. Each of us can plainly see that the old moral standards... our nation... and our once civilized world held... have slowly been eaten away like termites chewing through all the wind-blown logs... that are strewn around the forests of La Pine. ... All across our nation... and the world... prayer is considered preposterous... the Bible is banished... morality is mocked... perversion is promoted... law enforcers are murdered... and patriotism is plummeting. ... Civilization is out of control as no one seems to know the difference between right and wrong anymore.

I wont offer my own personal indictment about last Sunday's AFC Championship game... But the New England Patriots are going to the Superbowl... amid allegations that they used underinflated footballs (which are easier to grip in the wet weather that they played the game in)... I respect my dear friends and ministry team partners... Bob and Linn Johnson... so I will not postulate whether there was intentional cheating or not. But what concerns me... is the way some of the arguing back and forth in the media has gone. ... Some of the loudest cries have been "it couldn't have affected the game very much at all... therefore it is alright... let it go..." ... But once we are willing to turn away from it... because it probably did not effect the outcome of the game in any significant way... it contributes to our society's problem of indifference to right and wrong. ... "Who cares if the NFL's clear rules may have been broken... in what was a possible attempt to gain an avantage... if it did not have the desired effect... then just move on. No harm – no foul! No one cares about right and wrong. ... The only thing that matters is whether the possible wrong doing was successful in bringing about it's desired result.

But oh... how the indifference between right and wrong... has its consequences in far worse matters than professional football. ... The bitter crop we must contend with now is rampant divorce and adultery... teen pregnancy... rape and the continual rise of the molesting of our children... and organized pedophilia... widespread prostitution and pornography... almost sixty kinds of sexually transmitted diseases... fifty million abortions... feminist lesbianism and militant homosexuality. ... The consequences of our perversion have destroyed the foundations and fabric of our families and our country. ... But perhaps the most shocking element in all of this... is that Christians are involved in all of this... living like the heathen.

Arthur F. Burns... the former chairman of the United States Federal Reserve System and also a former ambassador to West Germany... was a man of considerable stature. ... He was economic counselor to a number of presidents from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Ronald Reagan. ... And when he spoke... his opinions carried weight... and Washington listened.

Arthur Burns was also Jewish... so when he began attending an informal White House group for prayer and fellowship in the 1970s... he was accorded special respect. ... No one in fact quite knew how to involve him in the group... and... week after week when different people took turns to end the meeting in prayer... Burns was passed by—out of a mixture of respect and reticence.

One week... however... the group was led by a newcomer who did not know the unusual status Burns occupied. ... As the meeting ended... the newcomer turned to Arthur Burns and asked him to close the time with a prayer. ... Some of the old-timers glanced at each other in surprise and

wondered what would happen. ... But without missing a beat... Burns reached out... held hands with others in the circle... and prayed this prayer: "Lord, I pray that you would bring Jews to know Jesus Christ. I pray that you would bring Muslims to know Jesus Christ. Finally, Lord, I pray that you would bring Christians to know Jesus Christ. Amen."

If God answers his prayer... we would see revival across our land. ...

I think that it is hardly possible to read the Book of Judges... in our Old Testaments... and not make the parallel that it describes our world today. ... Reading the Book of Judges ought to prompt every believer to pray for revival. (Especially as they read today's passage... which is designed to get us to see and feel the depths of depravity to which humanity can stoop... how far it **did** stoop in that time period... and how far it **has** stooped in our own day.) ... And as we get ready to study our passage for today in the Book of Judges... perhaps even leading many to want to pray for revival... let me show you... what you would be praying **for**...

1 Peter 4:12-17 (ESV)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Revival starts with judgment. ... Sin will be judged. Consequences will be paid. ... But look where it all begins. ... Judgment will begin at the household of God. ... Praying for revival means that you are praying for God to start judging us... as believers... holding us accountable... and seeing many who think that they are getting away with their sin... paying the consequences of it.

Now... let's turn to our passage in Judges... where we might find motivation... for us to pray like that...

Judges 19:1a

There was no leader... no ruler... to guide the people. There was no king in Israel... nor any other leader with the moral strength and integrity to lead the people. ... The people had rejected the Lord and turned away from Him. They refused to acknowledge Him as king... rejecting His law and commandments. ... They were doing their own thing... living as they wanted... not as He commanded. ... They professed to be God's people... they claimed to follow after Him... but their behavior betrayed them.

"In those days there was no king in Israel..." - We have been seeing this phrase repeated several times in the final chapters of Judges. ... We first saw it in Judges 17:6...

Judges 17:6 (ESV)

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Then... a part of this formula was given to us again as we began last week's chapter... Judges 18... *"In those days there was no king in Israel..."* ... This same phrase is given to us as we begin today's passage (Judges

19:1) ... *“In those days there was no king in Israel...”* ... And we will see it again as the very last verse of this book... but there... we are given the full phrase, as it appeared initially: *“In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*

The writer obviously wants us to know that this entire section... Judges 17:6... to the end of the book... is a single unit. ... Prior to this unit... the first sixteen chapters... the narrator has told of events... where Israel contended with outside enemies... (Gentile nations and people groups... who were oppressing the Jews.) But in this section... chapters 17-21... the narrator wants us to see that Israel had even greater problems than those from threats that are on the outside. ... As difficult as those threats were... their bigger problem was on the inside... it was their own moral decline.

We... as a church... can pretend that our biggest problem... is the threat that we feel... as it comes from the outside. The world is becoming more and more intolerant... and even now is attacking the church... and Christianity. ... Persecution is starting to come from outside the church... from a society that is in rapid moral decline. ... Many of us believe that the persecution of Christianity has only begun... and will get a lot worse... before it gets any better...

But this is not our worse problem... either. Worse than our growing assaults from the outside... is our own moral decline... our own pulling away from the Lord... It is doing what is right in our own eyes... as if we are not under the rule of the King – Who we claim... is our Lord. *“Don’t tell me what to do! I am independent... I am my own person... If I want to go to church... If I want to participate in ministry... if I want to pray for others... ...*

*It will be under my own terms... under my own conditions. ... I will do what is right in my own eyes... I decide what is best!... Even though I will say Jesus is Lord... I will live as though I have no King over me! ...And this is **God**-given independence and freedom... because I was born in America!"*

[P A U S E] "In those days there was no king in American Evangelical Christianity. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

Now our passage continues to reveal the shamefulness of this...

Judges 19:1b

Verse one introduces us to a Levite... who will be a main character in the narrative that continues to the end of the book. ... Keep in mind that the Levites... along with the priests... were in charge of the spiritual growth and welfare of God's people. ... But as we will see throughout this climatic close to the Book of Judges... this Levite was anything *but* a spiritual leader. ... He was a scoundrel... an incredibly selfish and callous scoundrel. ... Instead of having a ministerial spirit of unselfishness... and tender care... he had a spirit of unthinkable insensitivity... and cruelty. ... All this will be seen as we move through today's chapter.

This Levite took a concubine from Bethlehem-judah. ... By God's law... he should have married within his own tribe... the Tribe of Levi... not Judah. So already we are seeing that this man is a compromiser.

Having concubines was an accepted part of Israelite society... although this is not what God intended (Genesis 2:24). ... A concubine had most of the duties but only some of the privileges of a wife. ... Although she was legally attached to one man... she and her children usually did not have the

inheritance rights of the legal wife and legitimate children. ... Her primary purpose was giving the man sexual pleasure... bearing additional children... (or the only children if he could not have any from a proper wife)... and contributing more help to the household or estate. ... Concubines were often foreign prisoners of war. ... But they could also be Israelites... as was probably the case in this story.

This concubine was unfaithful to her husband and returned home to her father for four months. ... Why she left... we don't know... because we are not informed. It is easy to infer... from what we are about to read... though... that her husband being so callous... cold... and indifferent... may have had something to do with driving her away. ... These traits will surface later in the story.

Judges 19:2

In studying... this week... what several scholars have to say about our passage... many of them were careful to point out something very interesting about the word... in English that is translated “unfaithful.” ... It has another possible meaning. ... There is considerable evidence that a better English reading... should be “Angry” instead of unfaithful. “*And his concubine was **angry** with him, and she went away from him to her father’s house...*” ... As I have studied the context of the passage... I lean toward this word “angry” and here is the reason. The way the narrator tells this story... it is as if he wants us to pay attention... as he moves through the story... to find out why she was so angry that she left him. ... He drops clues for us. ... For example – she gets angry and leaves him – but he waits four months... before he finally shows any concern. ... I think that the

author of Judges is hinting at the problem... that he will bring out later... in a more obvious fashion.

Judges 19:3-8

Rather than suffer the public shame for having his daughter flee her husband and come home... the father is glad to see his son-in-law. ... He wants the Levite to reconcile with his daughter... rather than have to suffer any more humiliation. He was certain to have been humiliated by her return... in front of his friends and family. ... *“Welcome! Welcome! I’m so glad you came. ... Come in! Let’s party!...”* He had good reason to be overjoyed. ...And what a relief!

A three day visit was a normal duration for a visit. The father urges him to stay a fourth and fifth day. ... The custom of that time was to urge a person to stay. ... They were eating... drinking... and being merry but little did they realize that tragedy was around the corner. ... What a picture of people without Christ today. They carelessly live without the Lord only to find tragedy is around the corner.

But also... this Levite illustrates the careless attitude of many believers today. They are children of the day... but they act like children of the night. Judgment is around the corner... but these people think of nothing but enjoying life. ... God says... *“Make the most of the time... knowing that the day is drawing near...”*

James 4:9 (ESV)

Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Yes, there's "a time to laugh" (isn't that what Ecc. 3:4 says...?)... and God wants us to enjoy His gifts (according to 1 Tim. 6:17)... but for many Christians... that time is *all the time!*

In too many churches... the laughter of "religious entertainment" has replaced the holy hush of worship. ... The sanctuary has become a theater. When the saints get together, the most important thing is to "have fun." ... In order to salve our consciences... we have a "short devotional" before the fun time ends... and we piously thank God that we've had such a good time.

Nobody appreciates laughter and good humor more than I do... and I certainly do not believe that we should come to church every week looking as though we just sucked a lemon. ... But I fear the church is losing its sense of awe... and needs a better balance of all the fun... with a serious quietness and being still before Him.

The narrator who is telling us this story in Judges... is setting us up... for what is about to come. The father shows incredible hospitality. It goes beyond expectation. We are about to read a contrast... and see the exact opposite.

Judges 19:9-14

The Levite had enough and departed from his father-in-law's home. ... He departs late in the day. ... Traveling during the day was dangerous... and worse at night. ... The concubine had traveled this on her own... when she left her husband. (But her husband did not show any concern for her welfare for several months...) ... But on the return... their safe little travel

party had journeyed six miles and came near the city of Jebus or Jerusalem. ... Jerusalem wasn't the Jewish capital yet... in fact it still had not yet been conquered by Israel. This was the city of the Jebusites. They were tough Gentiles. The tribe of Benjamin should have conquered the city but it didn't. ... And the character of our story... this Levite... did not want to stay with Gentiles... because he knew of their wickedness. ... He presses onward five miles more to the city of Gibeah... which is inhabited by his own people. *"Ahhh... now here are people I can trust!* ... He felt more comfortable and secure.

Judges 19:15

The Levite expected his own people to care for them... but that was not the case. ... His security turned out to be insecure. ... There was no Ramada Inn and Tom Bodeut wasn't available to leave the light on for ya at Motel 6... in those days. So hospitality was one of the sacred laws of the East... and no stranger was to be neglected. ... Hospitality to strangers was of such a priority in Bible times... that we see Genesis 19... how it took precedence over the well-being of Lot's family... ... Not to extend hospitality... was a great fault... and it spoke extremely poorly of the residents of Gibeah. ... Since the Levite had plenty of provisions for his party and his animals... he wouldn't have been a burden to anybody... but nobody took them in. This just further indicts the people of Gibeah. ... The residents of Gibeah were cold and calloused... apathetic... unconcerned... But we are about to see what cold and calloused REALLY looks like.

When self becomes the consuming focus of our life... when we live as though we have no King... and are consumed with doing what is right in our own eyes... we become indifferent instead of interested... calloused instead of concerned and compassionate.... pathetic instead of attentive to the burdens of others.

Judges 19:16-21

As we proceeded from here in the narrative... I believe that the author has intentionally formatted the story to resemble closely the narrative of Genesis 19... the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. That was such a horrific scene... and I think we are supposed to get the message that “things are as bad as they were in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah...”

Judges 19:22-24

The father offers his own daughter and the Levite's wife to these homosexuals. ... The rape of two women was acceptable... but not the man. ... He is willing to sacrifice these women at any cost. ... How this father could offer his daughter as a sacrifice is beyond me. ... The only reason I can think of why he did... is it was the custom of that day to protect a male guest at all cost! ... But in this... we see that God's people drifted so far from God... that they became calloused... cold... and irrational in their thinking. ... It will happen to us too if we drift away from the Lord. When a society becomes degraded... many evils become unthinkably tolerable.

But we have not yet reached the depths of the cold callousness... this story has for us. ... Next... the Levite will chose to sacrifice his wife/concubine... in order to save himself.

Judges 19:25

In the next chapter... Judges 20:5... the Levite reveals that he was afraid the mob would kill him... so what does he do...? He pacified them by giving them his concubine... and she had to endure gang rape the whole night. ... Our hearts revolt at the thought of a man so insensitive to the feelings of a human being made in the image of God... so indifferent to the sanctity of sex and the responsibility of marriage... and so unconcerned about the laws of God... that he would sacrifice his wife to save his own skin. ... Was he punishing her for running away...? ... If so... the punishment was far greater than the sin.

I would like to tell you that we have reached the depths of this man's incomprehensible callousness... but we haven't. It sinks even lower.

Judges 19:26-27

Did you happen to notice in verse 27 that the narrator... for the first time calls the Levite "master" of the woman...? Some "master"! ... Anyway, the woman's master gets up to "continue on his way" - not to check on his woman... whom he had handed over to ravenous men the night before.

Wait! What was that...? "*Gets up...?*" ... You mean he was lying down while his woman was being gang-raped all night long? ... That's exactly what the narrator means. ... When he gets up to leave... he all but trips over

his woman on his way out the door. ... Not only did the Levite surrender his wife to the perverted appetites of an ungodly mob... but also he was able to *lie down and go to sleep...* while they were abusing her in the street! ... How calloused can a man become?

Morning finds the Levite emerging from his host's house... ready to resume his journey. ... The sequence of verbs reflects his indifference to his concubine's fate: "He arose in the morning"... "he opened the door of the house"... "he went out to go on his way." ... If these verbs sound nonchalant... the motive clause is shocking. ... Instead of going out to look for his concubine... the man intends "*to continue on his way.*"

But... to his surprise... when he steps outside... he trips over the woman... lying at the doorway... with her hands on the threshold. ... The image is burned into our minds... by the reference to the hands. ... Reaching out for the door... reaching for the protection of her husband... reaching for the security of their host's house... reaching — but all she could grasp was death. ... Obviously she had been too weak to open the door or even to knock.

Judges 19:28

As if nothing unusual had occurred... he commands her... "*Get up; let's go!*" The narrator's report of her response is deafening: *wě'ên 'ôneh*, "*But no one answered.*" ... What? ... Not even a word of concern for her state? ... No... not one word... only words of concern for the timing of his departure. The beaten woman is unable to even answer her man... let alone get up... so the Levite... apparently with no expression of emotion... throws her onto

a donkey like a bundle of fire wood... and heads for home. ... Is she dead? Unconscious? The narrator doesn't say.

The Levite is supposed to be a shepherd in Israel... but instead of laying down his life for the sheep... he throws his lamb to the wolves. ... Indeed... we are left to conclude... now that the Levite's character has emerged... that his concubine was rightly angry with him when she left him.

Our gruesome Scripture passage this morning... deals with the horrible subject of calloused indifference. There may be calloused indifference in your life... that you are tolerating... because you have never seen it for what it is. ... You have never realized the depths of depravity that it wants to take us to... or maybe already has...

Elie Wiesel is a Nobel-Prize winning writer, teacher and activist known for the memoir Night, in which he recounts his experiences surviving the Holocaust.

On April 12, 1999, Elie Wiesel delivered a speech to President Clinton, his wife, and members of Congress in Washington, D.C. The world-renowned humanitarian and author spoke about "The Perils of Indifference":

What is indifference? Etymologically, the word means "no difference." A strange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness, dusk and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and evil. What are its courses and inescapable consequences? Is it a philosophy? Is there a philosophy of indifference conceivable? Can one possibly view indifference as a virtue? Is it necessary at times to practice it

simply to keep one's sanity, live normally, enjoy a fine meal and a glass of wine, as the world around us experiences harrowing upheavals?

Of course, indifference can be tempting—more than that, seductive. It is so much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And, therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is of no interest. Indifference reduces the Other to an abstraction.

Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony. One does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it.

Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor—never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees—not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own.

The present course of the world around you and I right now demands that we NOT be callous and indifferent. ... To allow ourselves to be this way is a **repugnant** sin.

The speech that Elie Weisel delivered to President Clinton and members of congress addressed an indifference to others... who are suffering around us. ... As we see the overwhelming evidence that Christ is about to return... are we indifferent about the masses who need Christ...? Are we too “ho-hum” about our mission and outreach efforts as the church. Is our praying as invigorated as it should be...?

Donald Miller gives some practical insights on actions and belief in his book *Blue Like Jazz*:

The trouble with deep belief is that it costs something. And there is something inside me, some selfish beast of a subtle thing, that doesn't like the truth at all because it carries responsibility, and if I actually believe these things I have to do something about them....

I used to say that I believed it was important to tell people about Jesus, but I never did. [My friend] Andrew very kindly explained that if I do not introduce people to Jesus, then I don't believe Jesus is an important person. It doesn't matter what I say.

Outwardly... we must not be indifferent. But neither should we be calloused inwardly... toward our own spiritual growth.

Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Obviously... David... in this prayer... is NOT asking God to do a search... so that God would discover something. ... God already knows! This is a gutsy prayer that asks God to shine a spotlight throughout all of our thoughts and motives... and to reveal to us... anything that is wrong... anything that is blocking the “way everlasting” within us.

Would you be willing to honestly ask God... with a prayer like that... to thoroughly go through your life... and point out to you all the hidden and buried matters... that you need to deal with before the Lord...? ... Don't be indifferent outwardly to the needs of others... and do not be indifferent inwardly... to your spiritual blemishes. We all have them! ... Third... do not be indifferent upwardly. (Don't be indifferent in you worship.)

Prepare your heart for worship every week. ... Before we begin our corporate time of worship together... ask God to elicit sincere praise... and ask Him to focus your heart and mind on His glory... and on His being present in the worship service.

Being calloused and indifferent is an awful sin... especially in times like this.