

“Pastoral Perversion”
Judges 19-21
(Preached at Trinity, August 23, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I pointed out before, **Chapters 17-21** make up the third and final major section in the Book of Judges. These are confusing chapters and can be difficult to interpret. What was the narrator's purpose in telling the story for us? It is made even more difficult because the narrator merely describes the events but provides no moral application at all, even though the morality is appalling. Everything in this account exudes wickedness:
 - A concubine who is unfaithful
 - A Levite who is selfish and uncaring
 - A tribe who would rather defend wickedness than promote justiceThese are dark days in the history of Israel.
2. What we find here is the description of a nation that had completely forsaken their God. While maintaining the outward symbols of religion it was nothing more than empty syncretism as they tried to blend the worship of Yahweh with the idolatry of their pagan neighbors. Again, chronologically these events probably come at the beginning of Judges. It was a perverse time.
3. Last time, as we entered **Chapter 19**, we were introduced to “a certain Levite.” We are not given his name which stresses his insignificance as a spiritual leader.
 - A. The Levites were the priestly tribe. They were set apart and ordained to have oversight over the holy things of God. They were to lead Israel in the way of holiness. They were Israel's shepherds, Israel's pastors.
 - B. Everything about this tribe spoke of separation. The Levites were not given a territory to settle in. Instead, they were given 48 cities scattered throughout the other tribes. The reason was that God alone was their inheritance.
Joshua 18:7 NAU - "For the Levites have no portion among you, because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance."
4. But by now even the Levitical tribe had become perverted. They were no longer leading the people in the pathway of righteousness.
Jeremiah 23:1-2 NAU - "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!" declares the LORD. ² Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: "You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds," declares the LORD."

5. What we find in the remainder of this chapter and the rest of the Book of Judges is a woeful testimony to the spiritual bankruptcy of God's people. And the spiritual shepherds of Israel were leading the way. Their spiritual leaders had become corrupt. Sadly, this situation never reversed with Israel.
- Matthew 9:36 NAU** - "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd."
7. This should speak to every generation. God has given pastors to the church, but when they fail as leaders the church is left as sheep without a shepherd. As we look at this passage in Judges I want us to see some of the signs of pastoral perversion?
- I. When they are more concerned for themselves than they are for the sheep
- A. They are most concerned about their personal advancement
1. We saw this with the Levite in **Chapters 17-18**
Judges 17:9 NAU - "Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" And he said to him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I may find *a place*."
 - a. The Levite found a comfortable place with Micah the idolater.
 - b. That is until he got a better offer from the tribe of Dan
Judges 18:19-20 NAU - "Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?" ²⁰ The priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod and household idols and the graven image and went among the people."
 2. We can see little of a shepherd's heart with this Levite in **Chapters 19-20**
 We are stricken at his lack of love or compassion upon his concubine
 - a. He quickly traded her life for his own
Judges 19:25 NAU - "So the man seized his concubine and brought *her* out to them; and they raped her and abused her all night until morning, then let her go at the approach of dawn.
 - b. It makes you wonder if he slept while she was being abused.
 The next morning as he came upon her lifeless body there wasn't even a hint of compassion
Judges 19:27-28 NAU - "When her master arose in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, then behold, his concubine was lying at the doorway of the house with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ He said to her, "Get up and let us go," but there was no answer."
 - (1) The narrator points out to us that her hands were on the threshold as if she crawled to the security of the Levite, but found none. We are left presuming that the door was locked.
 - (2) And notice in **Verses 26-27** the narrator refers to the Levite as the concubine's "master" rather than her "husband"
 - c. The Levite acted indignant over how these men treated her but what about his own mistreatment?

3. The Levites no longer saw themselves as servants and shepherds. Instead of servants they desired to be served. 600 years later Isaiah would describe Israel's spiritual leaders:
Isaiah 56:11 NAU - "And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; They have all turned to their own way, Each one to his unjust gain, to the last one."
4. This became worse and worse until we hear the condemnation of Christ
Matthew 23:14 NAS - "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation .*"
Matthew 23:27-28 NAS - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ "Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

- B. The same can happen to the pastoral ministry
1. The focus can easily leave the care of the sheep and focus upon personal advancement. Today the average tenure for a pastor is 4 years.
 2. It can become a matter of education, of getting a large church, of becoming well-known
 3. Sacrificial service begins to disappear
 4. They cease praying for the sheep
It is so easy to lose this priority
1 Samuel 12:23 NAU - "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way."
 5. We must never cease hearing the words of the apostles
Acts 6:4 NAU - "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

II. When they cease feeding the sheep

- A. The Levites had ceased teaching Israel
1. Micah's Levite did not chastise him for his idolatry nor did he correct the Danites when they stole Micah's idols. The Levites should have spoken loud and clear on this great sin
 2. As we are introduced to this Levite in **Chapter 19** we find nothing regarding God's law and the behavior of the concubine. God's Law is completely ignored
Exodus 20:14 NAU - "You shall not commit adultery."
Leviticus 20:10 NAU - "If *there is* a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."
 3. When God's Word ceases to be taught everyone does that which is right in their own eyes. This was Israel's problem.

4. We read of God's condemnation of Israel's shepherds from the prophet Ezekiel – Israel was not being taught.
Ezekiel 34:2 NAU - "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"

B. God demands that His Pastors teach sound doctrine

1 Timothy 4:6 NAU - " In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following."

1. A faithful pastor recognizes that his primary duty is to be a teacher of the Scriptures

1 Timothy 3:2 NAU - "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach"

2 Timothy 4:1-2 NAU - "solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

1 Timothy 4:13 NAU - "Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching."

1 Timothy 4:16 NAU - "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

2. The great Puritan theologian, **John Owen** – "The first and principal duty of a pastor is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the Word."

3. He must recognize his great authority in delivering God's Word

1 Timothy 4:11 – "These things command and teach."

- a. God demands a high standard

(1) The world says, "no body's perfect" "we're only human"

(2) God says, "Be perfect!"

Matthew 5:48 NAU - "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

- b. The standard of perfection is the Word of God

2 Timothy 3:16-4:1 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. "

- c. The good pastor must continually push his congregation towards perfection – and is satisfied with nothing less. He continually commands the Word of God

4. The reason for our worldwide spiritual famine is the absence of good biblical preaching and teaching

Amos 8:11 NAU - "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD."

- a. Just as a person will become weak if he eats nothing but junk food, a church will become malnourished if not given a steady diet of God's Word.
 - b. The good pastor must give himself to feeding his congregation
Acts 20:28 NAU - "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
5. This demands that the Pastor give himself to study - Biblical knowledge demands diligent study
- a. Isaiah spoke of the false pastors of his day –
Isaiah 56:10-11 NAU - "His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; ¹¹ And the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding"
 - b. Study demands the careful guarding of time. This is true of both vocational and bi-vocational pastors.
 - c. This is one of the functions of the deacons – **See Acts 6:1-7**
As the Apostles were freed to the labor of prayer and the ministry of the Word:
Acts 6:7 NAU - "The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem"
5. Study must be with a proper motive
- a. Personal holiness and piety – to honor God
 - b. A desire to handle the Word of God properly – there isn't enough fear of error today.
 - c. To lead his flock to spiritual adulthood

III. They scatter the flock

Jeremiah 10:20-21 NAU - "My tent is destroyed, And all my ropes are broken; My sons have gone from me and are no more. There is no one to stretch out my tent again Or to set up my curtains. ²¹ For the shepherds have become stupid And have not sought the LORD; Therefore they have not prospered, And all their flock is scattered."

- A. As the shepherds stray from God their hearts become hardened and they become blind to spiritual truths
 - 1. This theme of spiritual corruption runs throughout the book of Judges
 - a. We're reminded of the absence of leadership in **Verse 1**
Judges 19:1 NAU - "Now it came about in those days, when there was no king in Israel"
 - b. And we can't forget the consequences – doing what is right in God's eyes has little importance.
Judges 21:25 NAU - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

- c. Over and over we read,
Judges 2:11-12 NAU - "Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, ¹² and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers"
 - 2. We can see this blindness with this Levite as well as the Levite in Chap 17
 - a. His heart had become completely numb, void of compassion
Judges 19:28 NAU - "He said to her, "Get up and let us go," but there was no answer. Then he placed her on the donkey; and the man arose and went to his home."
 - b. What he did next was unthinkable
Judges 19:29 NAU - "he took a knife and laid hold of his concubine and cut her in twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout the territory of Israel."
 - 3. This was Israel's leadership. Upon receiving their package the people exclaimed:
Judges 19:30 NAU - "Nothing like this has ever happened or been seen from the day when the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel and speak up!"
 - a. They were speaking about the rape but it is also true that the response of the Levite was unknown among Israel
 - b. What kind of counsel were they going to seek? Who were their counselors?
 - c. And notice the Levite's report was not the whole truth. He says nothing about giving her to her murderers.
Judges 19:25 NAU - "So the man seized his concubine and brought *her* out to them"
Judges 20:5 NAU - "They intended to kill me; instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died."
 - 4. The result was the scattering of God's people. They allowed their enemies to dwell among them but went to war against themselves.
 Israel's lack of strong leadership led to disastrous consequences
 The tribe of Benjamin was almost destroyed
Jeremiah 50:6 NAU - "My people have become lost sheep; Their shepherds have led them astray."
- B. When the pastors are weak the flock is left without a shepherd and will soon be scattered
 - 1. I'm not talking about the scattering that is taking place in many churches today. It is not the scattering of God's people but a great reduction in cultural Christianity. God is purifying His Church.
 - 2. But where a church is not built upon a love for Christ and sound doctrine division will always result. People will divide over every possible fringe issue. It can become a matter of personality conflicts and the diversity of opinions.
 Instead focusing upon the lost world outside they begin to devour one another.

3. Compare this with the early church.
Acts 2:42 NAU - "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Conclusion:

1. Our hearts must continually be united upon Christ and His Word. We must never allow anything else to infringe upon this priority.
2. You must hold your pastors to this priority – Christ and His Word! The flock of Trinity must be led by strong leadership who are committed to this.
3. Israel's problem was that they abandoned God and His Word. We must ever be on guard against this ever present danger.