



Deut 13:12-18

12 " If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the LORD your God gives you to dwell in, saying,

13 'Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods" ' -- which you have not known --

14 "then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you,

15 "you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword -- utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock, with the edge of the sword.

16 "And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the LORD your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again.

17 "So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers,

18 "because you have listened to the voice of the LORD your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do what is right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

We have been dealing in these verses with the various ways that apostasy can seep into the covenant community. First we read of the danger of false religious leaders could corrupt people, and then family members, and now lastly we have the danger from apostate rulers or political and civic leaders in the cities.

What held the nation of Israel together and made them one people, was not a shared racial identity or a common language, it was their shared Covenant union to God. What made an Israelite city different from the Canaanite cities like Jericho, was that it was a dwelling place of the people of the Lord. So if those people broke their covenant with God and ceased to follow him, and went after other gods who were worthless idols then they came under the same curse as cities like Jericho and became *herem* that is place under the ban or devoted to destruction. They are to be dealt with as traitors who have taken up arms against their true prince.

So there was great danger that not only individuals and families would be led astray, but that men would rise up who would, like pied pipers, lead entire cities to worship false Gods. These are the corrupt men of verse 13. The phrase "corrupt men" in verse 13 is actually a Hebrew idiom – *beni belial* – literally sons of worthlessness or Sons of Belial. It is a phrase meaning children of lawlessness or the children of the devil. But what is being taught is clear, these men are servants of the evil one.

Now when the report of this kind of apostasy came out, the people were not to act simply upon a rumor or hearsay, they were to make trial of it, to investigate and come up with proof. We remember that God

himself, before he destroyed Sodom, is said to have come down to see “whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me”, Gen. 18:21. Now God knew what they had done, but amongst other things the principle of needing evidence was made clear. But when the evidence was clear “if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination was committed among you” they were to act quickly and with pity. Avarice was removed as a motive for bringing a false charge against the city by devoting *all* of the plunder to destruction. It was to be gathered together and burned. The only motive Israel would have for bringing judgment was a zeal to obey the commandments of the Lord.

Now we might ask what if there were a few righteous men in the city, well it was their responsibility to remove themselves and their families out of such a dangerous place, and then all the inhabitants, men, women, and children, must be put to the sword (v. 15). Lot and his family were told to flee when it became clear that Sodom was going to be judged for its wickedness, so to the families of Israel must do the same.

If they would not do this, then they could be certain that as Matthew Henry put it, “a little of this old leaven, when it is entertained, soon leavens the whole lump.”

And therefore they must exercise this judgment as the best way to turn away of God's anger from the land, by execute justice upon the wicked of the land (v. 17), that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, which was ready to break out against the whole nation, for the wickedness of that one apostate city. It is promised that, if they would thus root wickedness out of their land, God would multiply them. They might think it impolitic, and against the interest of their nation, to ruin a whole city for a crime relating purely to religion, and that they should be more sparing of the blood of Israelites: "Fear not the" (says Moses), "God will multiply you the more; the body of your nation will lose nothing by the letting out of this corrupt blood."

Now in the New Testament, Paul emphasizes the fact that because the church exists in the midst of fallen and corrupt world it will be impossible for us to separate ourselves entirely from pagans and idolaters for instance in 1 Cor. 5:9-10 he writes

9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

10 Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

Myrtle beach “Medieval Times” example, murk from the beach.

We are not to take the Amish route no matter how appealing it should be – Jesus assumes that you will be faithful in the midst of the world.

Matt. 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

The church is like a ship and the world is like the water. There is no problem when the ship is in the

water, the problem however occurs when the water gets into the ship. We must *not* have worldlings in our fellowship:

This means the exercise of discipline in the case of morals:

1 Cor. 5:11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner -- not even to eat with such a person.

12 For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

And avoiding religious fellowship with idolaters

1 Cor. 10:20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

2 Cor. 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

Applications:

1) *Prov. 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.*

Many Americans seem to labor under the misapprehension that God will Bless America regardless of how it acts and whom it worships. In some senses we are rather like Jerusalemites who assumed that God was required to continue to bless Jerusalem *regardless* of their idolatry and unrighteousness because his temple was in their midst. The Lord tried mightily via his prophets to disabuse them of that notion:

Jer. 7:3 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

4 "Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these.'

5 "For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor,

**6 "if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt,
7 "then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.**

We need to remember that God was willing to use the army of Nebuchadnezzar to utterly destroy his own beloved city and let it lay in ruins seventy years because of Apostasy.

2) We often fear that if we exercise church discipline we will somehow destroy the church, “we don’t want to drive people away” they so, so many today simply neglect it altogether and

Two weeks ago we dealt with the need to deal with ministers who go astray, now we must deal with the excising of congregations and denominations – larger bodies. CRC example. We might say, well with the weakness of evangelicalism today, can we really afford to break fellowship over something like allowing women in the ministry? A congregation that goes

We need to remember that it is actually church discipline that *preserves* the church, and without it the leaven of apostasy will leaven the lump and bring us under God’s judgment.

3) Christopher Wright Quote from 177-178