

Judges 20:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:

Analysis

Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah (בְּנֵי בְלִיַּעַל, benei beliya'al)—'sons of Belial' means worthless, wicked men (same phrase described Gibeah's rapists in 19:22). Israel demands extradition of specific perpetrators: **that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel** (נְמִיתֵם וַיִּבְעֶרְהָ רָעָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, nemitem u-neva'arah ra'ah mi-yisra'el)—the phrase 'put away evil' (בָּעַר רָע, ba'ar ra, literally 'burn away evil') appears throughout Deuteronomy as covenant obligation for maintaining holiness (Deuteronomy 13:5; 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21-22, 24).

But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel (וְלֹא אָבוּ בְּנֵי בִנְיָמִן לִשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל אֶחָיֵהֶם, velo avu benei binyamin lishmo'a beqol acheihem)—Benjamin's refusal is emphatic: 'would not' (אָבָה, avah) expresses willful rejection. The text stresses relationship: 'their brethren' (אֶחָיֵהֶם, acheihem), emphasizing that Benjamin rejects brother tribes' legitimate demands. This refusal transforms criminal justice into civil war. Benjamin chooses tribal solidarity with criminals over covenant loyalty to God and Israel. Their refusal demonstrates the same 'everyone did what was right in his own eyes' mentality that produced the crime itself. When loyalty to our people group supersedes loyalty to righteousness, we become accomplices to evil.

Historical Context

The demand for extradition followed established covenant law for dealing with covenant-breaking wickedness. Deuteronomy 13:12-15 prescribed corporate punishment for cities that tolerated such evil. Benjamin's refusal to surrender the Gibeonite perpetrators made the entire tribe guilty of harboring criminals—a capital offense under covenant law. This created a true dilemma: Benjamin guilty for refusing justice, Israel guilty for escalating to total war rather than proportionate response.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. When does loyalty to your group, family, denomination, or nation lead you to defend the indefensible?
2. How do you choose tribal solidarity over covenant righteousness?
3. What does it mean to 'put away evil from among you' in church discipline and personal life?

Interlinear Text

וְעַתָּה ה	תָּנוּ	אֶת	הָאֲנָשִׁים	בְּנֵי	בְּלִיַּעַל
H6258	Now therefore deliver	H853	H376	But the children	of Belial
	H5414			H1121	H1100
אֲשֶׁר	בְּגִבְעָה	וְנָמִיתָם	וְנִבְעַרְתָּם	רָעָה	
H834	which are in Gibeah	that we may put them to death	and put away	evil	
	H1390	H4191	H1197	H7451	
יִשְׂרָאֵל:	וְלֹא	אָבוּ	בְּנֵימִן	לִשְׁמָעַ	בֶּקֶץ וְלֹ
from Israel	H3808	would	of Benjamin	not hearken	to the voice
H3478		H14	H1144	H8085	H6963
אֲחֵיהֶם	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל:			
of their brethren	But the children	from Israel			
H251	H1121	H3478			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 17:12 (Evil): And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.

Deuteronomy 13:13 (Parallel theme): Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

Judges 19:22 (Parallel theme): Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.