

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 (בָּנֵי בְּלִיעָל, 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** (נָתַתֶּם וַיַּעֲשֵׂה רָעָה מִשְׁרָאֵל) (בָּעַר רָע, ba'ar ra, literally 'burn away evil')—the phrase 'put 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 אָבִו בָּנֵי בְּנֵי לְשָׁמַע בְּקָול אֲחֵיכֶם) (אָבָה, avah)—Benjamin's refusal is emphatic: 'would not' expresses willful rejection. The text stresses relationship: 'their brethren' (אֲחֵיכֶם, 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

וַיַּעֲשֵׂת הָ	וְעַתָּה	תָּנוּ	אַת	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּלִי עַל
H6258	Now therefore deliver	H853	H376	But the children	of Belial	
	H5414			H1121		H1100
אֲשֶׁר	בְּגִבְעָה	וְנִמְתַּת מִ	רָעָה	וְנִבְאַכְתָּה	רָעָה	
H834	which are in Gibeah	that we may put them to death	and put away	evil		
	H1390	H4191		H1197		H7451
וְיִשְׁרָאֵל:	אֲבֹהָי	בְּנֵי	לְשֵׁם עַ	בְּקָר וְלָ		
from Israel	would	of Benjamin	not hearken	to the voice		
H3478	H3808	H14	H1144	H8085	H6963	
וְיִשְׁרָאֵל:	בְּנֵי	אֲחִיכָּה מִ				
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.