

## Judges 20 - cont.

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that if we lose a battle, we must keep going. Pray without ceasing (Luke 11:5ff; 18:1ff; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). The Israelites had to wait for the final outcome (Judges 20:28). Prayer is not always answered in the manner or in the time we want (Deuteronomy 3:26; 2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

### A Lesson in Punishment

Finally, there is a lesson to be learned about punishment. The Benjamites were punished for their relativistic morality (Judges 17:6; 21:25). When we follow what we think is right, it will lead to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). The Benjamites brought needless confusion and civil war upon themselves and their brethren (Matthew 12:25; 2 Timothy 3:13).

### Principles to Ponder

Friends, the basis of our moral behavior is of critical importance (Hebrews 5:14). Like the Benjamites, ethical relativism is degrading, dehumanizing, and destructive. We must never let our theology and morality be separated. We must not only know God's answers, but we must also internalize his values. Know and live God's word each day! - *Chris Reeves*

## Sentence Sermons

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- Secular education without God is like a ship without a compass.
- With the right character, you can take the stumbling blocks of life and turn them into stepping stones.
- Blaming our faults on others still does not remove our responsibility for our actions.
- It is more important to weigh your words than to count your words.

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## THE WARFIELD BULLETIN

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.  
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

# Judges 20: Victory and Defeat

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Have you ever won a competition and then later lost the same competition? Have you ever done what was right and then later done what was wrong? Have you ever been a part of a group of people that did good and then later did bad?

We've all experienced in our life the situation of winning and losing. In the same way, God's people can win spiritually and lose spiritually. They can do what God wants (win) and they can resist what God wants (lose). Let's consider a story from Judges 20 that teaches the lesson of victory and defeat for God's people. How is it that God's people can have victory and defeat at the same time?

## Background

To understand what is going on in Judges 20, the reader must understand the background to this period of time. The period of time is one of situation ethics. We are told that "every man is doing that which is right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). With this approach to ethics and morality, it is no surprise that we find a part of Israel at this time who is not willing to do what is right according to God's will. They are harboring sinners.

Idolatry was also practiced at this time (Judges 17-18). Not everyone was faithfully serving God.

Immorality was also practiced at this time (Judges 19). The particular sin here was sexually immorality. Certain "base fellows" of the city of Gibeah sexually assaulted (raped) a married woman and she later died (Judges 19:22-28).

Indifference was also practiced at this time (Judges 20). The town of Gibeah was located in the territory of Benjamin, but the Benjamites did not want to punish their own. What the base men of Gibeah did was lewdness, folly, wickedness, and evil (Judges 20:3, 6, 10, 12-13). Yet, the Benjamites were indifferent toward their sinful actions and would not listen to their fellow-Israelites who wanted the sin punished (Judges 20:13).

Because the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow-brethren, a civil war broke out between them (Judges 20:14). What can we learn from the victory and defeat of the Benjamites?

## A Lesson in Pride

First, there is a lesson to be learned from the Benjamites. They were mighty warriors ("men of valor", 20:44, 46) and

very talented (Judges 20:15-16, 19-28), but they had a character flaw. They were proud and stubborn (Judges 20:13). They would not turn over the sinful men of Gibeah who were to be punished by death according to the law of Moses (Leviticus 18:20; 20:10).

After two days of winning this civil war battle, the Benjamites had become over-confident (Judges 20:32, 39). They assumed that they would win on the third day, but they did not. When they followed after the Israelites, they were ambushed and surrounded and lost the battle. The Benjamites found that pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18; 29:1).

## A Lesson in Prayer

Second, there is a lesson to be learned about the importance of prayer. The Israelites asked the Lord for guidance before the battle began and at the end of the first and second day of battle (Judges 20:18, 23, 27). In our spiritual battles today, we can read our Bible and we can pray to the Lord for guidance and help.

The Israelites were also drawn closer to the Lord after each defeat (Judges 20:18, 23, 27). We must learn