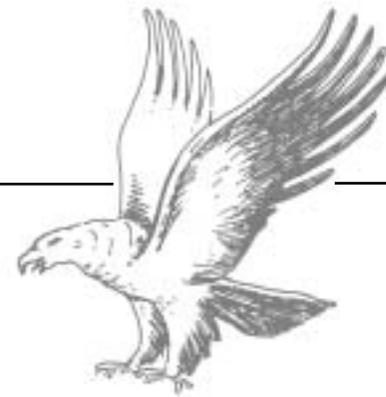


Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



September 26, 2010

Choosing the Tribe Over Truth

When the tribe of Benjamin decided to defend murderers, it almost led to the tribe's complete eradication. We can make the same mistake.

The final three chapters of the book of Judges recounts a story that often gets overlooked. There was a point in time that the twelve tribes could have become eleven. The tribe of Benjamin was brought nearly to the brink of extinction, and it could have all been avoided if the leaders of the tribe had been more concerned with truth and justice than protecting a few bad apples of their tribe.

A man who is left unnamed but is identified as a Levite is traveling back to his home after retrieving his estranged concubine and has to stay overnight in a city. He has the option to stay at a Jebusite city (later to be named Jerusalem), but instead decides it is better to stay in a city of the people of Israel and so stops at the city of Gibeah, a Benjaminite city.

At Gibeah, the man is not invited to stay with anyone and makes camp in the town square. An older man from Ephraim who lived in Gibeah saw the Levite and insisted he should not stay out in the open and invited him to his home. What happens next is horrific.

In a display that harkens back to the scene in Genesis when Lot invites two men into his home in Sodom, the Benjaminites of Gibeah descend upon the house of the Ephraimite and demand to "know" the visitor. Like the Lot story as well, in an act of desperation, the men offer their women instead. The men refuse and beat on the house. In the Judges story there are no angels to rescue Lot. The Levite's concubine is sent out to the men where she was raped throughout the night and died on the doorstep of the Ephraimite.

After learning of this incident, the other tribes of Israel met together and determined to punish the men who had committed such a vile act on the woman. They gathered together 400,000 strong and marched to Gibeah. At Gibeah they demanded that the tribe of Benjamin hand over the men responsible so they might be put to death.

And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What evil is this that has taken place among you? Now therefore give

up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and purge evil from Israel." But the Benjaminites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the people of Israel (Judges 20:12-13).

Instead of giving over the evil men, Benjamin decided it was better to go to war. Instead of abhorring the evil committed within their own city, the Benjaminites decided to "circle the wagons" and protect their own. It cost the Benjaminites dearly in the end. In the civil war that followed the tribe of Benjamin was reduced to 600 men. The people of Benjamin saw more importance in defending their tribe than in defending the truth, and because of that they suffered greatly.

We too can make such mistakes. We can choose to defend members of our family or friends, or those in the church who do evil instead of rightly reprimanding them. It can lead to our own downfall if we choose to side with evil people even if they are of our "tribe."

– Eric Hamilton