

**Theme:** Sometimes our “solutions” are nothing more than a reflection or example of our “problem” – not the apparent one before us, but the real one of our sinful hearts. We praise God that our ways are not his ways.

**Background:** Israel did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord, not in the theological abstract, but in ways that nearly everyone in the world would recognize – and repeatedly.

**Introduction:** My first trip to Chile. The “signs” were all there, but I couldn’t read any of them. The writer of Judges hides his perspective in plain sight.

## **I. Israel’s Dilemma**

### A. How to preserve Benjamin

1. Over-zealous “obedience”
  - Punish “the wicked men” of Gibeah (20:13) turns into *destroy* Benjamin
2. Compassion for Benjamin (6, 15)
3. Concern for the integrity of Israel (they need wives to survive)

### B. How to keep their vows (2 emerge in the passage)

1. A great oath (5)
  - a. Put to death any who don’t join us.
  - b. Who didn’t come? Jabesh-Gilead!
2. A solution emerges (8-12)
  - Keep our vow *and* get Benjamin’s wives
  - Net 400 young girls whose fathers never took the vow

APPLICATION: Be very careful with the vows and promises you make. Consider the implications before you make them.

3. Reconciliation
  - a. A peace offering (13, 14)
  - b. Restoration
    - Still 200 “wives” short
4. The second oath (2, 18)
  - a. We can’t give them our daughters
  - b. Another brilliant idea – kidnapping! (16-24)
    - 200 “wives” are secured a la Boco Haram

### C. All’s well that ends well??

1. Benjamin has their wives – the continuation of the tribe is secured
2. No one had to break their vows

NOTE: The account raises at least three major questions.

## **II. The Problem of Evil (*Why do we know this is evil?*)**

### A. This is all wrong!

- B. It is not (fundamentally) a cultural issue
  - Not just wrong in our *modern* culture, but in *ancient* culture, too

### C. God defines evil

1. God's unchanging, inviolable standard/law
  - Rooted in his nature and revealed in his word
2. Evil: the absence of the good
3. God's standard is fixed – ours is *fluid*

### D. All sin is against God

1. Sin is more than a violation of my conscience
  - A “clear conscience” and “without guilt/ sin” are quite different
  - NOTE: Israel had a clear conscience in their handling of the Benjamin affair.
2. Reason contradicts such a statement
  - Everyone is right?
3. What is sin?
  - a. The transgression of God's revealed will
    - *Westminster Shorter Catechism* Q.14
  - b. Rebellion against God as God
    - I can be like God! (The garden)

APPLICATION: We are good at justifying ourselves. Need to set our conscience next to the word of God.

## III. The Problem of God's Sovereignty

- A. Who made the breach? (3, 15)
  - Israel's “amnesia” – Were they part of the problem?
- B. God's ultimate authority
  1. His sovereign will
    - Everything is under his control! Everything is according to his plan.
    - But I cannot blame God for my willful, sinful actions
  2. God's revealed will
    - a. We can and do act contrary to what he has made known
    - b. To our own peril
      - Exodus 20:7; Acts 2:23; 2 Samuel 12:13; Matthew 23:23,24

## IV. The “Problem” of God's Mercy

- A. Israel persists – Why are they not destroyed?
- B. God's inviolable promise (God's vow!) (Malachi 3:6)
  1. Chosen to be his own possession
    - Exodus 19:5; Malachi 3:17; Genesis 17:8; Zechariah 9:16;
  2. Not a rash vow
    - God knew what it would require (1 John 4:10; Romans 3:26)
- C. Securing our salvation, forgiveness and life (Romans 9:8)

ALL *IS* WELL THAT ENDS WELL.