

Fasting

Part 2

In those days Israel had no king. Now a Levite who lived in a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. ² But she was unfaithful to him. She left him and went back to her father's house in Bethlehem, Judah. After she had been there four months, ³ her husband went to her to persuade her to return. He had with him his servant and two donkeys. She took him into her father's house, and when her father saw him, he gladly welcomed him. ⁴ His father-in-law, the girl's father, prevailed upon him to stay; so he remained with him three days, eating and drinking, and sleeping there. ⁵ On the fourth day they got up early and he prepared to leave, but the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh yourself with something to eat; then you can go." ⁶ So the two of them sat down to eat and drink together. Afterward the girl's father said, "Please stay tonight and enjoy yourself." ⁷ And when the man got up to go, his father-in-law persuaded him, so he stayed there that night. ⁸ On the morning of the fifth day, when he rose to go, the girl's father said, "Refresh yourself. Wait till afternoon!" So the two of them ate together. ⁹ Then when the man, with his concubine and his servant, got up to leave, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said, "Now look, it's almost evening. Spend the night here; the day is nearly over. Stay and enjoy yourself. Early tomorrow morning you can get up and be on your way home." ¹⁰ But, unwilling to stay another night, the man left and went toward Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), with his two saddled donkeys and his concubine. ¹¹ When they were near Jebus and the day was almost gone, the servant said to his master, "Come, let's stop at this city of the Jebusites and spend the night." ¹² His master replied, "No. We won't go into an alien city, whose people are not Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah." ¹³ He added, "Come, let's try to reach Gibeah or Ramah and spend the night in one of those places." ¹⁴ So they went on, and the sun set as they neared Gibeah in Benjamin. ¹⁵ There they stopped to spend the night. They went and sat in the city square, but no one took them into his home for the night. ¹⁶ That evening an old man from the hill country of Ephraim, who was living in Gibeah (the men of the place were Benjamites), came in from his work in the fields. ¹⁷ When he looked and saw the traveler in the city square, the old man asked, "Where are you going? Where did you come from?" ¹⁸ He answered, "We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim where I live. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going to the house of the LORD. No one has taken me into his house. ¹⁹ We have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine for ourselves your servants—me, your maidservant, and the young man with us. We don't need anything." ²⁰ "You are welcome at my house," the old man said. "Let me supply whatever you need. Only don't spend the night in the square." ²¹ So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink. ²² While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men of the city surrounded the house. Pounding on the door, they shouted to the old man who

owned the house, "Bring out the man who came to your house so we can have sex with him." ²³ The owner of the house went outside and said to them, "No, my friends, don't be so vile. Since this man is my guest, don't do this disgraceful thing." ²⁴ Look, here is my virgin daughter, and his concubine. I will bring them out to you now, and you can use them and do to them whatever you wish. But to this man, don't do such a disgraceful thing." ²⁵ But the men would not listen to him. So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. ²⁶ At daybreak the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there until daylight. ²⁷ When her master got up in the morning and opened the door of the house and stepped out to continue on his way, there lay his concubine, fallen in the doorway of the house, with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ He said to her, "Get up; let's go." But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and set out for home. ²⁹ When he reached home, he took a knife and cut up his concubine, limb by limb, into twelve parts and sent them into all the areas of Israel. ³⁰ Everyone who saw it said, "Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came up out of Egypt. Think about it! Consider it! Tell us what to do!" (Judges 2:1-30)

That was a true story that had happened in Israel and the Israelites had to face and deal with such crime and discipline those who did that. Let us read the following that tells what they did:-

"Then all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came out as one man and assembled before the LORD in Mizpah. ² The leaders of all the people of the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand soldiers armed with swords. ³ (The Benjamites heard that the Israelites had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the Israelites said, "Tell us how this awful thing happened." ⁴ So the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, said, "I and my concubine came to Gibeah in Benjamin to spend the night. ⁵ During the night the men of Gibeah came after me and surrounded the house, intending to kill me. They raped my concubine, and she died. ⁶ I took my concubine, cut her into pieces and sent one piece to each region of Israel's inheritance, because they committed this lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. ⁷ Now, all you Israelites, speak up and give your verdict." ⁸ All the people rose as one man, saying, "None of us will go home. No, not one of us will return to his house. ⁹ But now this is what we'll do to Gibeah: We'll go up against it as the lot directs. ¹⁰ We'll take ten men out of every hundred from all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred from a thousand, and a thousand from ten thousand, to get provisions for the army. Then, when the army arrives at Gibeah in Benjamin, it can give them what they deserve for all this vileness done in Israel." ¹¹ So all the men of Israel got together and united as one man against the city. ¹² The tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What about this awful crime that was committed among you? ¹³ Now surrender those wicked men of Gibeah so

that we may put them to death and purge the evil from Israel. ” But the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow Israelites. ¹⁴ From their towns they came together at Gibeah to fight against the Israelites. ¹⁵ At once the Benjamites mobilized twenty-six thousand swordsmen from their towns, in addition to seven hundred chosen men from those living in Gibeah. ¹⁶ Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. ¹⁷ Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand swordsmen, all of them fighting men. ¹⁸ The Israelites went up to Bethel and inquired of God. They said, “Who of us shall go first to fight against the Benjamites?” The LORD replied, “Judah shall go first.” ¹⁹ The next morning the Israelites got up and pitched camp near Gibeah. ²⁰ The men of Israel went out to fight the Benjamites and took up battle positions against them at Gibeah. ²¹ The Benjamites came out of Gibeah and cut down twenty-two thousand Israelites on the battlefield that day. ²² But the men of Israel encouraged one another and again took up their positions where they had stationed themselves the first day. ²³ The Israelites went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and they inquired of the LORD. They said, “Shall we go up again to battle against the Benjamites, our brothers?” The LORD answered, “Go up against them.” ²⁴ Then the Israelites drew near to Benjamin the second day. ²⁵ This time, when the Benjamites came out from Gibeah to oppose them, they cut down another eighteen thousand Israelites, all of them armed with swords.” (Judges 20:1-25) The Israelites were not able to deal with the Benjamites and apply the discipline on them. Therefore they resorted to do the following:

²⁶ Then the Israelites, all the people, went up to Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD. ²⁷ And the Israelites inquired of the LORD. (In those days the ark of the covenant of God was there, ²⁸ with Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, ministering before it.) They asked, “Shall we go up again to battle with Benjamin our brother, or not?” The LORD responded, “Go, for tomorrow I will give them into your hands.” (Judges 20:25-26)

So we can see clearly when the Israelites went back to the Lord, humbled themselves, prayed, fast and inquire of the Lord, He gave them the assurance of victory. Let us read what happened after that:

²⁹ Then Israel set an ambush around Gibeah. ³⁰ They went up against the Benjamites on the third day and took up positions against Gibeah as they had done before. ³¹ The Benjamites came out to meet them and were drawn away from the city. They began to inflict casualties on the Israelites as before, so that about thirty men fell in the open field and on the roads—the one leading to Bethel and the other to Gibeah. ³² While the Benjamites were saying, “We are defeating them as before,” the Israelites were saying, “Let’s retreat and draw them away from the city to the roads.” ³³ All the men of Israel moved from their places and took up positions at Baal Tamar, and the Israelite ambush charged out of its place on the west of

Gibeah. ³⁴ Then ten thousand of Israel’s finest men made a frontal attack on Gibeah. The fighting was so heavy that the Benjamites did not realize how near disaster was. ³⁵ The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel, and on that day the Israelites struck down 25,100 Benjamites, all armed with swords. ³⁶ Then the Benjamites saw that they were beaten. Now the men of Israel had given way before Benjamin, because they relied on the ambush they had set near Gibeah. ³⁷ The men who had been in ambush made a sudden dash into Gibeah, spread out and put the whole city to the sword. ³⁸ The men of Israel had arranged with the ambush that they should send up a great cloud of smoke from the city, ³⁹ and then the men of Israel would turn in the battle. The Benjamites had begun to inflict casualties on the men of Israel (about thirty), and they said, “We are defeating them as in the first battle.” ⁴⁰ But when the column of smoke began to rise from the city, the Benjamites turned and saw the smoke of the whole city going up into the sky. ⁴¹ Then the men of Israel turned on them, and the men of Benjamin were terrified, because they realized that disaster had come upon them. ⁴² So they fled before the Israelites in the direction of the desert, but they could not escape the battle. And the men of Israel who came out of the towns cut them down there. ⁴³ They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them and easily overran them in the vicinity of Gibeah on the east. ⁴⁴ Eighteen thousand Benjamites fell, all of them valiant fighters. ⁴⁵ As they turned and fled toward the desert to the rock of Rimmon, the Israelites cut down five thousand men along the roads. They kept pressing after the Benjamites as far as Gidom and struck down two thousand more. ⁴⁶ On that day twenty-five thousand Benjamite swordsmen fell, all of them valiant fighters. ⁴⁷ But six hundred men turned and fled into the desert to the rock of Rimmon, where they stayed four months. ⁴⁸ The men of Israel went back to Benjamin and put all the towns to the sword, including the animals and everything else they found. All the towns they came across they set on fire.” (Judges 20:29-48)

In the New Testament we deal with sin not as above bloody way, but as a church when we face an offence against the church or against one of the members of the church, before we take any action we need to pray and fast and ask the Lord to help us and go before us. We have also the word of God that will instruct us of what we need to do to apply the right disciplinary action that is suitable for what had happened from wrong doing to be dealt with and to be corrected. The essence of the above story is that before we move forward and take any action against sin and put ourselves in danger we need to pray and fast, trusting God that He will lead us to take the right step according to His word and Himself will go before us to deal with the situation and corrected.

My dear and Beloved: Learn from the above story a lesson and apply it in your life to be spared troubles and to be effective in what you do.

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life. Lord I humble myself before you asking you to lead me and guide me of how to face the following situation _____. Lord goes before me and deals with the situation properly and according to your will, this is my prayer in Jesus name Amen.