

The Moral State of God's People Exposed

by C.A. Coates

C.A. Coates' sermon examines the moral failures of God's people, emphasizing the need for collective humility and spiritual discernment in addressing sin.

Scripture: John 5:21, Acts 20:9, Romans 6:11, 1 Corinthians 15:12, Ephesians 2:1, Hebrews 6:1, James 2:17, Revelation 20:5

Topics: "Spiritual Death", "Resurrection Power"

Description

The preacher delves into the multifaceted meaning of 'nekros,' emphasizing its literal and figurative implications of being devoid of life, spiritually separated from God, and the idea of resurrection from the dead. The sermon explores how 'nekros' is used in the New Testament to describe the spiritual condition of unsaved individuals, the triumph of resurrection, and the promise of life after death. Through various Bible verses, the preacher highlights the concept of being dead to sin but alive in Christ, the power of God to raise the dead, and the significance of Christ's resurrection in bringing believers from death to life.

Transcript

Judges 19, 20, and 21.

From the beginning of chapter 17 to the end of the book there are incidents which expose the moral state of the people of God in a very sad way. Perhaps the greater evil comes first, that is, the connecting of idolatry with the Name of Jehovah; that is the greatest evil possible, but it did not awaken anything like the indignation that was aroused in Israel by the moral corruption that came to light in Gibeah. There are things against which the natural conscience revolts, and everybody would rise up against them, but those are not the worst things. An offence directly against God in holy things is the worst possible evil. There was no gathering of all Israel from Dan to Beersheba in connection with idolatry in the house of Micah, furthered by a grandson of Moses. It might have been expected that such a thing would rouse all Israel as one man, but it did not.

This history shows that we are more likely to be roused by something that offends moral propriety than by something that touches directly the service and the glory of the Lord. The natural conscience can take account of the former, but it needs real love for God to feel deeply what sets God aside, and what is due to Himself among the people. What was done was very dreadful; it was the result, no doubt, of the association of the people with the Canaanites, and they had learned their abominable ways. It was, as Scripture says, "lewdness and villainy in Israel"; all that the people said about it was true. So they all

assembled unto Jehovah in Mizpah and the gathering was spoken of as the congregation of the people of God.

Dreadful as their state was, there was enough conscience left in them to be shocked at this gross wickedness. They used right terms about it. The Levite said, "They have committed lewdness and villainy in Israel", verse 6; and in the end of verse 10 the people said, "according to all the villainy that they have wrought in Israel", and in verse 13 they spoke of putting away evil "from Israel". But we often say right things without feeling them at all. They did not feel it as the sin of Israel, but as the sin of Gibeah. If they had felt it as the sin of Israel, they would all have been on their faces before God, confessing it as their own sin. They took it up in a way God could not support; they did not feel it, though they said what was right. There was a natural indignation about what was manifestly wicked, which was not the fruit of communion with God at all. There was no sign of their being humbled before God. They did not seek direction; they decided what they would do; they say, It cannot be tolerated; we must go and execute judgment on them at once. It was right, but they were not moving with God in it. So, while this evil was dealt with in faithfulness, yet it was only through much chastisement that the people were brought into such a state that God could be with them in what they were doing. Even then they had to go through the deepest sorrow about it, and realise that the thing had been handled in such a way that they nearly lost a tribe out of Israel. They did not take it up as the sin of Israel; they might have learned from the case of Achan when Jehovah said, "Israel hath sinned", and He held all Israel responsible. It should have been taken up as an assembly exercise.

If anything happens among the people of God that is unbecoming and offensive (there are some things offensive to the natural conscience), the first exercise should be that such a thing has transpired in Israel, so that it is for Israel to be humbled about it, to take up its shame and sorrow in deep humiliation with God. One can quite conceive that, if they had done so, it might have had a great effect on Benjamin; they would have said, 'Why, they are all breaking their hearts in sorrow about what we have done, and confessing our sin as if it had been their own!' I think it would have touched them.

This is a very important consideration for us about all disciplinary action, that is, as to our condition of soul in dealing with it, whether we are really with God in dealing with it. When there is anything glaringly wrong it is easy to say it is wrong and must be judged, but am I really with God in doing it? This is a searching exercise for us, because it is easy to see ten thousand things that are wrong, and many that are grossly offensive, but how do we feel them? Paul says to the Corinthians, "Ye have not rather mourned", 1 Corinthians 5:2. Even though they did not know how to deal with the wicked person, if they had mourned, the Lord would have dealt with him. Israel had to go through sorrow and very much exercise; they had to weep and fast, and bring burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and to recognise that after all Benjamin was their brother. Then they had to be severely chastened; 22,000 of them were killed in one day, and 18,000 on the next day. They were doing what was right, but God did not support their action. They were so indignant that they put themselves under a solemn oath to deal with it in the most drastic fashion, but they were not with God.

Then we see a very much worse condition in Benjamin. It was not the whole tribe that was guilty, but certain sons of Belial in a certain city; yet the whole tribe of Benjamin refused to judge the matter, and that was worse than the sin; to refuse to judge the evil is worse than the sin itself. Someone asked Mr. Darby how much evil would justify one in leaving a company of Christians, and he answered, No amount of evil would justify anyone in separating from any company of Christians, but the refusal to judge the least bit of evil would justify separation. It is important to understand that. Evil may come in anywhere, but, if it comes

in, it must be judged. The holiness of God and the righteousness of His throne demand judgment, and, if we refuse to judge, everything is forfeited. Benjamin refused to judge the evil; they would not deliver up these sons of Belial, so Benjamin came under the avenging stroke that was really divine justice.

There is twice an appeal to the whole company to deliberate and give counsel. It is sometimes easier to do that than to ask counsel of God. We do not find that they enquired before they decided their course. This represents a state of things, no doubt, very likely to be found in the last days of the church. There may be a certain indignation about that which is wrong, and faithful dealing with it, and yet it may not be handled in a spiritual way, and the result may be very solemn. ...

There is often a refusal to judge things on the part of even chosen men. They are very accurate men too; they could sling stones at a hair and not miss. How sad that men like that should refuse to judge what is evil! It is sad to see better men than ourselves who are not prepared to judge what is manifestly evil. We ought to feel it. I have seen it - able men, accurate men, chosen men - the more excellent they are, the more we should feel it if they are not prepared to judge evil. We see earnest, devoted and godly men, not prepared to judge what is evil, and we ought to feel it much. ...

Self-righteousness can come in in a very subtle way, even in connection with the judgment of evil. If I am on the line of 'You are wrong, and I am right', that is pure self-righteousness, and that is just the point God had to bring the people to. They had to be brought to the house of God, to Bethel, to weep and fast, and offer burnt-offerings and peace offerings. They had to come to the foundation on which they stood with God, and the foundation on which they could go on with one another, and that is the death of Christ. It is not that Benjamin is wrong and I am right; that is not the point.

When they went to Phinehas they brought the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. A remarkable cluster of ideas is brought forward; the ark of the covenant and Phinehas are there. Now Phinehas was a man who in his day executed summary judgment on what was evil. No man in Scripture was more noted than Phinehas for judgment of evil; he judged it unsparingly, but God says of him, "He was jealous with my jealousy", Numbers 22:11. We have to be brought to this, that we are not jealous with natural indignation, but with God's jealousy. We have to ask when we judge any kind of evil, Is this my jealousy or God's? If we have God's jealousy we shall have a blessed sense of the burnt-offerings, the peace-offerings, and the ark of the covenant. These are fine things to take account of when discipline is on hand. Phinehas had the covenant of the everlasting priesthood; he was entirely apart from any human motives; he took the javelin in his hand in jealousy for God; there was no natural indignation with him at all, but holy, priestly, and spiritual indignation. We have to come to that. A man of the world can judge what is wrong, for men have their code of good and evil, but God says to His people, I want you to judge it with Me - I want you to be in communion with Me about it, and judge it far more deeply than you would judge it with your natural conscience. Paul was the Phinehas of the New Testament.

On what ground are we? If we are going on with God it is on the ground of the value of the burnt-offering; we are with God entirely on the ground of the death of Christ. We are with the brethren on the ground of the peace-offering; that is the death of Christ in another aspect. That preserves us from any feelings of self-righteousness when judging evil. If not, we shall have the spirit of self-righteousness; I should say, That brother is wrong, and I am right. God will not have that spirit. ...

These closing chapters give us the moral state of Israel generally. It is not like a political history, under judges, but they are incidents brought in to show us the actual moral state of the people, how far they

were from God, even in judging evil; they were doing what was right in their own eyes. All this is very exercising for us. This would not be put in God's word if we did not need it.

From An Outline of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, by C. A. Coates. Pages 184-191.

"Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own. For I know this, that there will come in amongst you after my departure grievous wolves, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I ceased not admonishing each one of you with tears. And now I commit you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give to you an inheritance among all the sanctified. I have coveted the silver or gold or clothing of no one. Yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my wants, and to those who were with me. I have shewed you all things, that thus labouring we ought to come in aid of the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:28-35.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ca-coates/the-moral-state-of-gods-people-exposed/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net