

Judges 9-10 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

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II. The Judges 2:11-16:

F. Abimelech Ch. 9

1. Abimelech sows treachery at Shechem 9:1-6

¹Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

'Jerubbaal' was the nickname Gideon's father gave him when the men of Gideon's hometown came to kill him for tearing down the altar to Baal.

The name means, "Let Baal deal with it!" and it was a challenge. Gideon's father told the men that if Baal was a god worthy of their devotion and loyalty, he could deal with the one who'd shown such sacrilege himself.

Every time someone called Gideon by his nickname 'Jerubbaal', it was an abiding reminder of Baal's *impotence* because Gideon was still alive & well.

As we finished Gideon's story in ch. 8, we saw that like so many leaders throughout history while he made a great *start*, he didn't finish too well.

The power & position he attained through God's blessing went to his head & corrupted him.

He had a whole bunch of wives & mistresses by which he had lots of children.

8:30 says he had 70 sons!

One of them was this guy Abimelech, who was, as we'll see, a really unsavory fellow.

His mother was Gideon's concubine living in Shechem.

His name means "My father is king."

In our last study we saw that when the people had tried to make Gideon king, he refused, reminding them that **God** was their king.

Apparently Abimelech's **mother** had large ambitions for her son & had planted those in him. He desired to take the position his father had refused.

So he went to the city of his uncles and set them a proposition -

**2“Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem:
‘Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?’
Remember that I *am* your own flesh and bone.”**

Living in the ancient world, governed as it was everywhere by kings who came from royal dynasties, the people would look to Gideon's family to continue to provide leadership.

But with 70 sons, the question was, “Which one is in charge? Who do we follow?”

Because Gideon had not accepted the position of King, he never set an order of succession. But that didn't stop the people from looking to his sons to continue to provide leadership.

Also, keep in mind that at this time, a king wasn't what we think of, someone who sat on a throne over an entire nation.

Kings were much like mayors, only with a lot more power.

Kings ruled over **major cities**, not over nations.

A major city might dominate several small cities & villages in its immediate vicinity, but that was it.

So the real competition was not between nations so much as it was between major cities.

Abimelech was capitalizing on this inter-city rivalry.

Gideon's hometown was **Ophrah**, which was little more than a town.

Shechem was much larger & far more important.

Since it was the hometown of his mother, he had connections there.

He knew it **irked** the men of Shechem to be under the influence of little Ophrah where Gideon's sons lived.

And the confusion of **who** actually was in charge among the 70 sons of Gideon added to his appeal.

He said, “Wouldn't it be better to just have one person in charge?”

And since I'm your kin, why not pick me - after all, think about my name – my father was the king! If you support me, then Shechem can become the power center instead of little Ophrah.”

³And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother."

Abimelech's uncles held a meeting with the men of Shechem & laid out the proposition.

They agreed and threw their support behind him.

⁴So they gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him.

This was a considerable sum of money the men of Shechem gave him.

And it shows how devoted to this god they were that they had made him these kinds of offerings.

“Berith” means “covenant.” “Baal” means “lord/master” & was the title the Canaanites gave their chief deity.

Baal-Berith was the Canaanite answer to Israel's God – Yahweh, which was His *covenant* name.

While the rest of the tribes of Israel simply tried to *add* the worship of the Canaanite gods to the worship of Yahweh, the people of Shechem had formally & publicly broken with Yahweh, & set Baal-Berith up instead; *he* was their covenant God.

They saw aligning with Abimelech as a way to end the insult Jerubbaal's survival & success served.

What better way to get back at Jerubbaal than to kill his sons?

And how sweet to have one of them do it? [Slide of temple at Shechem]

Abimelech took the money & hired some no-good mercenaries.

⁵Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself.

Gideon's sons were gathered & put to a public execution. Only one survived the purge.

The reference to the execution being on one stone likely means they were offered as human sacrifices on the altar to Baal which Abimelech rebuilt.

You see, this was the way the men of Shechem who were devoted to Baal could reverse the affront of Gideon's nickname, Jerubaal.

6And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem.

After the purge at Ophrah, Abimelech returned to Shechem where he was made king.

The details mentioned here add a touch of clarity to the story.

The prime real estate in any city is the heights. That's where the nicer homes are and where the wealthy & influential usually live.

Shechem was located in the little valley between two hills, Gerizim & Ebal.

The city stretched up onto the flanks of Gerizim, & that's where *Beth Millo* was.

The words mean "house of the rampart/mound."

We'd refer to Beth Millo as "Shechem Heights." It's where the powerful men of the city lived.

They supported Abimelech at his coronation which took place at a well known and sacred tree.

This tree is referred to as far back as the time of Abraham, who camped under it. [Gen 12:6].

Jacob buried the idols his wives had taken from their father Laban under this tree. [Gen 35:4]

The pillar mentioned here was set up by Joshua when Israel had camped here years before. [Joshua 24:26]

2. Jotham's warning 9:7-21

7Now when they told Jotham,

The youngest of the 70 sons who'd managed to escape the purge of his brothers . . .

he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim,

Which overlooks Shechem. The acoustics in this place would make his words easily heard by all those below.

and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them: “Listen to me, you men of Shechem, That God may listen to you!”

Jotham asks that the conspiracy of treachery the men of Shechem had made with Abimelech be exposed & avenged by God.

He challenges them by telling a parable . . .

8“The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, ‘Reign over us!’ 9But the olive tree said to them, ‘Should I cease giving my oil, With which they honor God and men, And go to sway over trees?’ 10“Then the trees said to the fig tree, ‘You come and reign over us!’ 11But the fig tree said to them, ‘Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, And go to sway over trees?’ 12“Then the trees said to the vine, ‘You come and reign over us!’ 13But the vine said to them, ‘Should I cease my new wine, Which cheers both God and men, And go to sway over trees?’ 14“Then all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come and reign over us!’

The olive, fig, & vine all represent the judges God had raised up from Othniel to Gideon.

The people had wanted each of them to be king, but all had refused because they all understood Israel’s king was the Lord.

The bramble represented Abimelech.

A bramble is a weed, a shrub that grows to just a few feet & sucks the moisture & life out of the soil.

It lives for only a short time, then dies & dries up & is used to start cooking fires because it catches and burns so easily.

15And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you anoint me as king over you, Then come and take shelter in my shade; But if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!’

Jotham has the bramble inviting the trees to take shelter under it, which is a comical picture because the bramble is all of about 2-3 ft. high while the trees tower over it by many feet.

His point was that the bramble is wholly unfit for the trees to

shelter under.

Nevertheless, if the trees refuse to take shelter under it, the
bramble will combust & set them on fire.

This was the ever present danger brambles presented to the trees
they grew near.

All it took was a tiny spark to cause a dried bramble to explode
into flame, setting everything else around it on fire.

Jotham's point was that Abimelech was not capable of ruling over the
men of Shechem, he was a murdering criminal.

And the alliance they had made with him would come back to bite
them.

**16“Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity
in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with
Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he
deserves— 17for my father fought for you, risked his life,
and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; 18but you
have risen up against my father's house this day, and
killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made
Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the
men of Shechem, because he is your brother— 19if then
you have acted in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and
with his house this day, *then* rejoice in Abimelech, and let
him also rejoice in you. 20But if not, let fire come from
Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth
Millo; and let fire come from the men of Shechem and from
Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!” 21And Jotham ran
away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for
fear of Abimelech his brother.**

Jotham has no power to exact revenge.

But he knows he must confront Abimelech & the leaders of
Shechem with their crime.

He says that if what they've done is right & good, then fine.

But if it's wrong, then may the men of Shechem and Abimelech
be proven worthy of each other in their mutual destruction.

Having said his piece, Jotham splits, & we don't hear from him again.

3. Abimelech reaps treachery 9:22-57

a. leaders of Shechem rebel vs. 22-29

22After Abimelech had reigned over Israel three years,

23God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech,

Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows, that he shall also reap.

24that the crime *done* to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers. **25**And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech.

Abimelech did not stay at Shechem; he made his headquarters in the city of Arumah.

Because he wasn't at Shechem, the men of the city began a covert campaign of harassing caravans & travelers.

Since a king was responsible for keeping order & providing safety, such highway robberies would make Abimelech look weak & ineffective.

Also, most of Abimelech's wealth came from the tariff he collected from the trade that passed by Shechem, which was a major cross-roads.

Word would quickly get out to bypass this area & the tariffs would decline.

26Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

Gaal was a townless Canaanite who'd earned a reputation as a mercenary, much like Abimelech had started out.

What had originally attracted the men of Shechem to Abimelech attracted them now to Gaal.

27So they went out into the fields, and gathered *grapes* from their vineyards and trod *them*, and made merry. And they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech. **28**Then Gaal the son of Ebed said,

“Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *Is he* not the son of Jerubbaal, and *is not* Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him? ²⁹If only this people were under my authority! Then I would remove Abimelech.” So he said to Abimelech, “Increase your army and come out!”

The people of Shechem held a harvest festival in the early Summer celebrating the grape harvest.

They crushed the grapes and set it aside to ferment for wine.

Then they opened some of the previous year’s vintage and celebrated in a huge drunken festival.

The more inebriated they got, the more belligerent they became, & started mocking on Abimelech who was far away at Arumah.

Gaal saw this as the moment to make his play, and took center stage in challenging Abimelech’s authority.

His appeal was to the Canaanite population of Shechem, the sons of Hamor he calls them in v. 28.

His question to the men of Shechem was, “Why do you Canaanites allow a half-Jew to reign over you? Why not me, your Canaanite brother?”

Then he insulted Zebul, Abimelech’s representative in Shechem, & sent an invitation to battle by him.

b. Abimelech takes Shechem, kills leaders vs. 30-49

³⁰When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was aroused. ³¹And he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, “Take note! Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and here they are, fortifying the city against you. ³²Now therefore, get up by night, you and the people who *are* with you, and lie in wait in the field. ³³And it shall be, as soon as the sun is up in the morning, *that* you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and *when* he and the people who are with him come out against you, you may then do to them as you find opportunity.” ³⁴So Abimelech and all the people who *were* with him rose by night, and

lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. ³⁵When Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance to the city gate, Abimelech and the people who were with him rose from lying in wait. ³⁶And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!" But Zebul said to him, "You see the shadows of the mountains as *if they were men*." ³⁷So Gaal spoke again and said, "See, people are coming down from the center of the land, and another company is coming from the Diviners' Terebinth Tree." ³⁸Then Zebul said to him, "Where indeed *is* your mouth now, with which you said, 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' Are not these the people whom you despised? Go out, if you will, and fight with them now." ³⁹So Gaal went out, leading the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. Zebul sent an update to Abimelech about the insurrection brewing in Shechem.

Abimelech then rallied his army & marched on the city.

He divided his forces into 4 separate groups and dispersed them around the city.

In the morning when Gaal went to the city gate, which is where the leaders spent their day, he looked out to see Abimelech coming toward the city with a group of guys at his back.

But it was only 1/4th of his total force, and Gaal was tricked into thinking at first that that was all the men he had – so he couldn't be attacking!

Zebul, as the chief ruler of the city was also there, feeding him bad intel, trying to get him to delay calling his forces together.

But finally it was obvious to Gaal as he saw the other quarters of Abimelech's force advancing on the city from their hiding places that Abimelech was attacking.

By then, it was too late for him to order his defenses or properly organize his men.

⁴⁰And Abimelech chased him, and he fled from him; and many fell wounded, to the very entrance of the gate.

⁴¹Then [At that time] Abimelech dwelt at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, so that they would

not dwell in Shechem. ⁴²And it came about on the next day that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. ⁴³So he took his people, divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the field. And he looked, and there were the people, coming out of the city; and he rose against them and attacked them. ⁴⁴Then Abimelech and the company that was with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city; and the *other* two companies rushed upon all who were in the fields and killed them. ⁴⁵So Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people who were in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt.

The first day's battle went badly for Gaal but he managed to retreat to Shechem as the evening came.

Abimelech took most of his forces home, but sent some to sneak into the city that night to protect & reinforce his governor Zebul.

The next day, these forces inside the city rounded up Gaal's supporters & evicted them from the city where they were wiped out by Abimelech's forces in a second day of battle.

Abimelech then totally destroyed the city, scattering salt over it so as to kill any chance of resettling it for years to come.

Archaeology has confirmed this sowing of salt over Shechem at this period.

Shechem remained a ruin until Jeroboam I rebuilt it and made it the capital of the Northern Kingdom. [1 Kings 12:25]

What comes *next* did not happen *after* the destruction of Shechem; this is an elaboration of what happened to those leaders of Shechem who'd originally struck the bargain with Abimelech at the beginning of the chapter.

This took place *during* the destruction of the city.

⁴⁶Now when all the men of the tower of Shechem had heard *that*, they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith. ⁴⁷And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

These guys were the residents of *Beth Millo*, referred to here as the

Tower of Shechem.

They fled for refuge in the strongest place in the city – the inner sanctuary of Baal’s temple.

48 Then Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, [a nearby hill] he and all the people who were with him. And Abimelech took an ax in his hand and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it and laid *it* on his shoulder; then he said to the people who were with him, “What you have seen me do, make haste *and* do as I *have done*.” ⁴⁹ So each of the people likewise cut down his own bough and followed Abimelech, put *them* against the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire above them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

He turned the temple into an oven and killed the refugees by burning them.

c. Abimelech is killed vs. 50-57

50 Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and took it.

Thebez was a small town not far from Shechem.

It was one of the outlying villages of Shechem and came under its influence and control.

It had united with Shechem in its insurrection against Abimelech, so he marched on it as well.

51 But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and women—all the people of the city—fled there and shut themselves in; then they went up to the top of the tower.

Such a defensive tower was a pretty common fixture in these ancient cities.

People could flee there if & when the city walls were breached.

Such towers were kind of like bomb-shelters during WWII.

Often times marauding armies wouldn’t wait around for long after breaking onto a city.

They would plunder what goods came easily to hand, take as slaves what people they could find, then run off before defending armies from another city could come.

Towers provided a place of survival from such attacks.

52 So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

He was going to follow the same tactic he had in Shechem.

53 But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.

Since a woman dropped this on him, it had to be from a handmill, not the massive stone pulled by an ox.

This was the stone used to make wheat & bread.

It was a crude rolling pin; about 8 inches long, 2-3 inches thick, & weighed a good 5-7 lbs.

Dropped from a height, it could do a lot of damage.

It hit Abimelech in the head & smashed his skull but didn't kill him.

54 Then he called quickly to the young man, his armorbearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his young man thrust him through, and he died.

When Abimelech realized the weapon that had killed him was a kitchen utensil hurled by a woman, he was undone!

So he asked that his servant kill him before he died of the wound, & forever have the reputation of having been killed by a woman.

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place.

As soon as Abimelech was dead, his men quit fighting.

The whole battle was over one thing – Abimelech's pride.

A lot of people were brutally killed & a whole city was wasted because of one man's foolish pride.

56 Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. **57** And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

What you sow is what you reap.

Abimelech is NOT considered a judge. His story is told as an *addendum* to the story of Gideon, his father.

Abimelech did not *deliver* Israel, he was a *trouble to it!*

This story gives us a hint of the growing desire among the tribes for a king, which will come to full flower in just a short time during the reign of the last judge, Samuel.

G. Tola & Jair 10:1-5

¹After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim. ²He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir.

³After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called “Havoth Jair” to this day, which are in the land of Gilead.

⁵And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

We don't know much about these 2, only what we find here.

Since Tola isn't listed as delivering Israel from a *specific* enemy, it's suggested by some that his role as a judge was merely to recover from the chaos under Abimelech.

Jair ruled in Gilead, east of the Jordan River.

30 sons mean he was wealthy & had several wives.

Donkeys were given to *rulers*, so we ought to understand these 30 sons as rulers of 30 different cities in the Transjordan area.

H. Jephthah 10:6-12:7

Now we get a section that gives some details on the waywardness of Israel at this time.

1. Israel's sin & oppression by the Ammonites 10:6-18

⁶Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him.

They served EVERY god except the one true God. What is wrong with these people???

They are like a thirsty child sitting at table where there is a tall glass of ice-cold water right in front of them.

But he pushes it away, and instead grabs a bottle of bleach &

takes a big pull.

Then he picks up a cup of chicken fat and chugs that.

Then he reaches over and wraps his fingers around a glass of sour milk & downs that.

Then he empties a warm mug of worm guts.

As repulsive as all this sounds, what Israel did in rejecting God to worship these idols was far, far worse!

⁷So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.

All God is doing here is giving Israel what they chose.

If they wanted the Philistine's & Ammonite's gods, they could have their people as well.

⁸From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years—all the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. ⁹Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed. ¹⁰And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!"

How many years did it take before Israel cried out in repentance? 18.

And it took the oppression spreading to ALL the land before they would cry out.

When Judah heard about Gilead's trouble, they didn't repent – because the trouble had not troubled them.

When Judah was oppressed, Benjamin didn't repent, until Benjamin was attacked.

When Benjamin was oppressed, Ephraim didn't repent, until Ephraim was attacked.

When New Orleans was hammered, New England didn't repent.

When New England is hammered, the West Coast won't repent.

When the West Coast is hammered, the central plains won't repent.

So how many years & how much misery till we repent?

How many useless days of trouble must we endure before we
come to our senses and turn back to God?

God's answer to Israel is not what we'd expect . . .

11 So the LORD said to the children of Israel, "*Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines?*"

12 Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. **13** Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more.

14 Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress."

This is not the response we've seen from God in the past & knowing His mercy & grace, it's not what we expect.

But it was necessary at this point because God wanted them to learn something.

The people of Israel had been willful & rebellious, thinking nothing bad would come of their sin.

They needed to understand that as God's people, they were in covenant with Him & that He is a real person who has feelings and emotions as well.

God is not a man, but He is a person, with will, with emotions; He *feels*.

When they broke covenant with Him to worship idols, it was akin to adultery.

They needed to understand just how deeply their betrayal hurt Him.

This response brought home to them the reality that God cared about them deeply and that they had insulted and offended Him in a profound manner.

What Israel needed to learn, we also need to know.

God is not some dispassionate spiritual glob of divine energy that vibrates at just the right harmonic.

He is a person – He is *The Person*.

Our whole *idea of personhood* finds its consummation in Him.

His experience of emotion is perfect.

Which means His experience of hurt & emotional pain is perfect.

God loves us; He loves all – even those who hate & reject Him.
If you've ever been cheated on or rejected & know what that feels like, then multiply that by about 40 billion & you *begin* to get an idea of what God feels from a fallen human race.

15 And the children of Israel said to the LORD, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray."

God's response has drawn forth from them the expression of a desire to not just be delivered from trouble, but to be healed of the waywardness of heart that has led to their rebellion.

They admit that they have sinned!

They aren't victims, nor poor unfortunates who were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

They don't just want to be rescued from trouble; they want to be forgiven of their sin.

They accept the need for discipline & correction, if it will truly deliver them from the **CAUSE** of their distress.

There are many people, Christians even, whose lives are a mess because they're reaping the seeds of foolish choices they've sown. They lament the bitter fruit of their rejection of God's will & word & demand that God rescue them.

What they need to do is humbly admit their sin & accept that fact that their real need is forgiveness.

In light of the Scriptures' clear teaching that repentance is an on-going reality & need in the life of the believer, I'm surprised so few Christians practice it.

They act as though having repented when they first believed and were born again, they need never do it again.

There's a goofy teaching going round – advocated by guys like Bob George & Steve McVey which says Christians *ought never* ask God for forgiveness because complete forgiveness was granted them when they were born again.

These guys teach that the Christian stands before God *in Christ* as perfect, sinless even.

Therefore, Christians don't *really* sin. They error, but that isn't really sin.

They go so far as to say that God doesn't discipline or correct believers because in Christ they are already perfect, so there's

nothing to correct.

There have been some folk in this congregation who've been seduced by this silliness and have left to attend another church that's into all this stuff.

Deliverance begins with an honest confession, as we see demonstrated here with Israel.

1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful & just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

16 So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD.

The genuineness of their repentance was seen in that they *took action* & changed their conduct.

If you genuinely repent of sin, then throw out that bong.

- Get rid of that pipe.
- Stop carrying a lighter.
- Trash those magazines.
- Dump those videos.
- Pour that bottle of Jack Daniels down the sink.
- Flush those papers.
- Get rid of the hip flask.
- Ditch the cigar cutter.
- Cancel the subscription.
- Pull the plug.
- Don't go there.
- Don't hang with them.

And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

As a parent, I can tell you that I've had to apply some pretty harsh discipline on my kids at times.

And there are times when they've been *defiant* in the face of discipline.

When they are, the sense of the need for the harshness is reinforced, because I know they will eventually come 'round.

But I'll tell you what, as soon as they break & show true contrition, admitting their error & demonstrate a desire to be restored to normal fellowship with me, the thought of being harsh a moment longer is utterly repulsive.

Discipline aims at correction. When correction comes, then

further discipline becomes abuse.

Love is never abusive.

17 Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah.

It was obvious it was time to end the harassment the Ammonites were giving.

18 And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, "Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

They had no captain, no one to lead them into battle.

Recent history had taught them that God raised up someone to lead, but no one had presented himself, so they began to search.

And that's where we'll have to leave it till next week.