

WEDNESDAY Free Choice

- Understanding God's gift of free choice to humanity, and God's justice (**His righteous judgment**) = crucial for grasping deeper meaning behind OT accounts of warfare /destruction

God's Warfare -- Not About Human Power, But Divine Justice

- **Deuteronomy 20:10, 15–18** outlines **laws of warfare** for Israel
- V. 10 Israel commanded to offer peace first= to cities **outside** Canaan
- Vss. 16-18 commanded to destroy Canaanite cities entirely
- **Deut. 20:18** Lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations... and you sin against the Lord your God
- Reason = total destruction in Canaan = spiritual / not political
- God sought to eliminate **persistent rebellion/ idolatry** that would otherwise corrupt His covenant people
- Warfare in Canaan = tool of divine judgment
 - against entrenched evil / not human conquest for glory

Hebrew Text uses / unique term / to describe destruction of people "Cherem" (Banned/ damned/ dedicated to annihilation)

- Means to set something apart exclusively for God
 - Objects / animals / people marked by cherem were irreversibly devoted to God's domain
- In the case of sinful cities = this meant destruction
- **Cherem** symbolized = God's absolute ownership of judgment
 - Only He could decide life/death over rebellious people
- Practice of total destruction = must be seen in broader context
 - **cosmic war between good / evil**
- From Eden onward = humanity lives on = spiritual battlefield
- **THERE IS NO NEUTRALITY = every person either**
 - Sides w/God (leading to eternal life) = OR =

- Chooses to rebel against His govt of love (lead to eternal death)
- Canaanites had become = fully hardened in defiance
 - Their destruction = an act of cleansing / not cruelty
- God's command for destruction = to protect future of salvation history = by preventing evil from overtaking His people

God's Judgments Are Always = Just and Measured

- God always extends mercy first = judgment when necessary
- For centuries/ extended mercy / chance to repent /Canaanites
- **Gen 15:16** iniquity of / Amorites = was not yet full in Abraham's day
- His judgment fell after long patience /many opportunities for change
 - **2 Peter 3:9** Even today, God “is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish”
- Destruction = not arbitrary = not nationalistic favoritism
- **Deuteronomy 13:12–18** shows even Israelite towns that turned to idolatry = faced same judgment = as Canaanites
- Israel itself/ subject to judgment = if they abandoned God's covenant
 - Privilege w/God could be lost = thru rebellion
- God's judgments /based on faithfulness = not ethnicity /or favoritism

Free Choice = free will = God's sacred gift / Spiritual Principle

- God honors humanity's free will
 - He does not force love / loyalty
 - Gives each person = opportunity to choose between life /death
- **Rahab** (Joshua 2) = Canaanite prostitute / aligned herself w/ Yahweh
 - proves that repentance/ faith = could save anyone
- **Gibeonites** (Joshua 9) sought peace / albeit deceitfully = spared
- In contrast, **Achan** (Joshua 7) = Israelite = rebelled against God's command / fell under judgment

- People of Canaan = like Rahab/ all humans = opportunity to respond
 - Yet = overwhelming majority chose stubborn defiance
 - sealing their fate
- Destiny = not predetermined by birth
 - Faith/ repentance/allegiance to God =were determining factors
- Free choice is real = carries eternal consequences

Lessons for Today = No Neutrality in Spiritual Life
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- Just as ancient Canaanites = had to choose = whom they would serve we also live w/ two choices:
 - Allegiance to God leads to life / blessing
 - Rebellion against God leads to separation/ death

John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Luke 11:23 “He who is not with Me is against Me”

- Every day = thru our choices = we align either w/God's kingdom
 - or w/ forces of destruction
- Persistently rejecting God leads to:
 - Hardening of the heart (Hebrews 3:15).
 - Loss of spiritual sensitivity.
 - Ultimate exclusion from eternal life (Revelation 20:15).
- God lovingly calls each person = but freedom He grants us
 - means consequences = real/irreversible = if we reject Him
- Moses' urgent appeal still rings today: **Deuteronomy 30:19** “I have set before you life/death, blessing/cursing; therefore choose life”
- God’s offer is full of grace, but it demands a response.
- He seeks loyal hearts = not thru force, but thru love /truth
- Choose Christ today while mercy is still extended.

Final Thought:

- God's righteous judgments in Book of Joshua reveal that
 - free will = sacred trust
 - **Our choices = matter for eternity**
- Though judgment against sin is real = God's heart is always to save
- Today, as then, the call remains:
 - **Choose life = choose Christ = choose victory**