

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 12B
SECOND SAMUEL
CHAPTER 21**

INTRODUCTION

The just retribution of God is timeless. There is no expiry date. One of the most difficult things to accept in life is to see injustice prevail. The difficulty is multiplied manifold when the perpetrators of this injustice get away with it. They have all the "right" connections, the money-power and seemingly the "right" people on their side.

This is a very common observation within Christianity. Throughout the ages, two opposing forces exist side by side, one on the side of God doing God's will and the other on the side of Satan doing satanic deeds. These two factions have dominated church history for centuries.

The group on God's side is normally the minority and the group on Satan's side, the majority. The former will lean on the power of the Spirit of God to see them through indescribable trials, temptations and persecutions including death and imprisonment. Whereas the other side will use the arm of the flesh and by might and power, they will kill, murder, lie and conquer. Very often in this battle, they will appear to have defeated the Lord's side to receive the reward of money, land and earthly power! But this is not the end. True victory from God's perspective

is never measured by the transient yardstick of material possession and earthly potency. It must be measured by God's yardstick in terms of eternity. In 2 Samuel 21, we are given a glimpse of the injustice that the Gibeonites suffered at the hands of a king who had died long ago. But his wicked deeds had remained unchallenged by man.

Chapter 21 records the events that took place during David's reign. Although David was not the king who committed this travesty of injustice, he had to sit in judgment and bring justice back to his kingdom. The descendants of the perpetrator would have to pay the price of the sin committed. The first question that comes to our mind in this study is the oft asked question, "Should the sons pay for the sin of the father?"

COMMENTARY

**A Sad Legacy from the Past
—21:1-9**

During David's reign, the nation suffered a famine for three consecutive years. David perceived that the LORD had a message for him. He enquired of the LORD. The LORD answered that the three years of famine was caused by Saul's sin of slaying the Gibeonites. The phrase used to describe Saul's sin is crucial in understanding the final outcome when justice was finally served after all these years. The Hebrew phrase for "bloody house" is "the house of blood". As Barnes commented, "the house of blood," that is, the house or family upon which rests the guilt of shedding innocent blood". It was not just Saul alone who committed this great injustice against the Gibeonites but it was his house as a whole who had done it. The edict to kill the Gibeonites might have come from

Saul but the edict of blood was carried out by the house of Saul!

Saul had attempted to wipe out the Gibeonites from the land of Israel (21:5). Who were the Gibeonites? 2 Samuel 21:2 describes them in this manner, "...now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah". The account of the covenantal relationship between Gibeon and Israel originated in the days of Joshua when they entered the Promised Land to conquer it. This account is found in Joshua 9.

The Gibeonites knew that they would die under the onslaught of the Israelites so they deceived the Israelites into thinking that they had come from a far country. Old clothes and mouldy bread with old wine bottles were used in their deception. They succeeded in making a covenantal relationship with Israel. It was a covenant sealed in the name of the LORD and therefore could not be broken. Later, Israel found out that the Gibeonites were actually their neighbours. They made them their servants for the rest of their existence but the covenant must remain which meant that the Gibeonites had every right to live in Israel. Saul was very wrong to kill them and wipe them from the land of Israel. Saul had broken the covenant which was sealed in the name of the LORD.

In killing the Gibeonites, Saul and his house had breached the covenant between the Gibeonites and Joshua, a covenant made in the name of the LORD. It was a very serious offence because it discredited the name of the LORD

and brought shame to the name of the LORD.

Now that the cause of the famine was made known to him, David was committed to address the problem. He asked the Gibeonites (21:3): "What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?" The interesting thing to note here was that the blessing of the LORD's inheritance which was Israel lay in the hands of the Gibeonites. It was no accident that David deliberately used the name "the inheritance of the LORD" instead of Israel! It was most likely a reminder to the Gibeonites of how they came to be in Israel and that they were dealing with not an ordinary nation but a nation that belonged to the LORD Himself.

The Gibeonites stated clearly that they did not want silver or gold of Saul. They did not want any man in Israel to be killed for their sake. Instead, they demanded that seven of Saul's sons be given to them to be hung unto the LORD. This was a very just and fair demand. The Gibeonites could very well have asked for more descendants of Saul to be killed since the intention of Saul was to wipe out the Gibeonites. Many must have died by the hands of the house of Saul. The number seven of course is the number for completion. This was symbolic that with this act of justice, the matter would be equitably settled.

David promised to do so. David took the two sons of Rizpah (the daughter of Aiah) whom she bore unto Saul. He also took the five sons of Michal's sister, Merab (the daughter of Saul) (1 Samuel 18:19). David did not pick Mephihosheth, Jonathan's son, because of his

covenant with Jonathan. David understood very well the importance and lasting consequences of a covenant made in the name of the LORD. It was very clear from this chapter that the covenant must be honoured by even the descendants of Israel as long as a covenant had been made in the LORD's Name. He delivered the seven men to the Gibeonites who hanged them.

Howard F. Vos commented on this issue (1, 2 Samuel p.153): *“to many, this narrative of judgment has appeared to be very cruel and unjust. To help the modern Western reader understand what was involved, several points need to be made. First, the punishment was an example of national responsibility for keeping covenants. Saul's massacre at Gibeon evidently was more horrible than this execution and represented a flagrant violation of Israel's covenant made with the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua. Second, judgment for Saul's sin was pronounced on him, his household, and his descendants. This execution was part of the expiation for his wrongs. Third, it is a principle of judgment that God sometimes visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations (Exodus 20:5). Fourth, lex talionis, the law of retaliation or “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (cf. Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20), is a principle of Semitic justice generally and biblical justice in particular. A life must be given for a life; one guilty of murder should pay with his own life (Numbers 35:31), and bloodguilt is passed on to members of the family. Fifth, when capital punishment was not administered for the expiation of murder, the land was said to be polluted (Numbers 35:33). In this*

case the land was evidently polluted by the murderous actions of Saul and the pollution resulted in a famine that continued until expiation was made by the execution of family members.” What do you think of Vos' observations?

Love of a Mother—21:10-14

Rizpah kept vigil by the side of the bodies of her dead sons. She kept the birds from landing on the bodies until the rain came. This phrase in verse 10, “from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven,” lasted about six months. Barnes commented rightly when he said, “The “early rain,” or heavy rain of autumn, usually began in October, so that Rizpah's devoted watch continued about six months. How rare rain was in harvest we learn from 1 Samuel 12:17-18; Proverbs 26:1. The reason for the bodies being left unburied, contrary to Deuteronomy 21:23, probably was that the death of these men being an expiation of the guilt of a violated oath, they were to remain until the fall of rain should give the assurance that God's anger was appeased, and the national sin forgiven.”

Her act of devotion and courage was made known to David. The king was moved. He decided to do something to comfort her. He arranged for the bones of Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 31:8-13) to be exhumed and transferred from Gilboa in Jabesh-gilead to the land of Benjamin, in the cemetery of Kish, Saul's father. David also arranged for the bones of the seven men to be properly buried. This was done according to king David's instruction and finally after more than six months, the Bible said that the LORD was intreated for the land.

An Old Enemy—22:15-22

The Philistines were Israel's perennial enemies, with whom they were often at war. During the later years of David's reign, he was nearly killed in a battle. Abishai saw the danger and came to his rescue. He killed Ishbi-benob, the Philistine and saved David.

Then the men of Israel remarked that their king should not go out with them to war again. They considered David as the "light of Israel", the focus of the nation, the source of the policies of the nation, and the keeper of the LORD'S covenant. Three more battles were fought - two in Gob and one Gath - in which the Israelites emerged victorious over the Philistines. The sons and brother of Goliath were killed in this account.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Life has many twists and turns. Very often we think that since no man knows our sins, we can get away with committing them. Or perhaps we believe that we have the might and the power to cover them up. Such foolish notions are of the world. No man can ever get away with sin in the sense that he can avoid punishment. Not even death can help him get away from the penalty of sin. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Beware of sin. It can hurt people even years down the road. When we do sin, confess and repent and pray that God in His mercy will ameliorate the consequences. God is ever gracious to help us deal with sins. The only way is to confess them before God and claim the cleansing

power of the blood of Christ to wash away all our sins including the guilt and the stain of sin. 1 John 1:8-9 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

David was called the light of Israel. The king's men knew from the very beginning that David was a warrior. He fought his own battles. But when the years caught up with him, he could not fight the way he used to. He was nearly killed by the enemies during one of these battles. His men saved him and from then onwards refused to let him fight any more. The reason they gave was that he was the light of Israel. There will be people in the ministry who are highly regarded and greatly needed for the work of the LORD. The ministry needs them to be around and to remain faithful. Do you know of such men today?

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 2 Samuel 20:1-6; Matthew 12:22-30.

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 20 7-22; Judges 4:4-14.

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 20:23-26; Romans 12:3-13; Daniel 7:27.

Thursday: 2 Samuel 21:1-14; Joshua 9:15-19; Psalm 15:1-5.

Friday: 2 Samuel 21:15-22; Romans 16:1-4; Ephesians 6:12 18.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
2 Samuel 21:1-14	
2 Samuel 21:15-22	

2. Do you agree with Vos' comments as recorded in the notes?

3. Why did the LORD of Israel hand over the demand for an equitable settlement to the Gibeonites instead of stating them Himself?

4. Was David partial toward Jonathan's descendants when he did not include Mephibosheth in the list of Saul's descendants to be killed?

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think God view the covenants made by His people today? Should they be viewed in the same light?

5. If you were Rizpah, would you have done what she did? Why do you think God took so long before He intreated for Israel?

6. David handed over seven of Saul's descendants to the Gibeonites to be hanged. Was his action defensible?

7. Why was David called the light of Israel? Was this the right term? Do we have a light of Calvary Pandan?
