



GOD'S FAITHFULNESS • Even in Wrath, God Fulfills His Promises

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

2 Samuel 21:1-22

When you read the passage for our lesson, you might squirm and wince a little bit. Not because it's grotesque, but because you might wonder how David could be justified in killing seven random men for a mistake that Saul made years ago. Instead of focusing on the death and trying to get David off the hook, we should look to what it represents. It is here to show us how bad our sin is against God and what it required – the death of God's Son in our place. The chapter ends with war upon war with the Philistines and God stays faithful and rescues His people out of their hands. Pray that your group will experience the weight of their sin and the faithfulness of God. Second Samuel 21 should cause us to turn to God in praise and trust Him that He never fails to keep His promises.

David Avenges the Gibeonites (21:1-14)

The passage begins by mentioning that there is a famine in Israel. This is yet another part of God's wrath on David for his sin. Still, David seeks the Lord (v. 1). As he seeks the Lord, God tells him that there is still bloodguilt on Saul and his house because of how he treated the Gibeonites (though they were not of Israelite descent). Israel swore to spare them, but Saul did not honor that promise. David asked the Gibeonites what it would cost to "make atonement" (v. 3). They responded, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel, let seven of his sons be given to us, so that we may hang them" (v. 5). David obliges and hangs seven descendants of Saul – but not Mephibosheth. Keep in mind that these are not just seven random dudes. We must trust God that David chose the right men to be put to death for the right reason. Turn your attention back to verse 1 of the chapter when it says, "And David sought the face of the LORD." David looks to God for guidance, wisdom and knowledge to lead Israel.

As we think back to Saul's sin, we see that it was quite the bonehead move to take the lives of so many Gibeonites. In fact, it was a fatal mistake. Saul's sin is a simple allusion to the sin we have committed against God. How costly is our sin against God? In order for atonement to be made, it cost the life of His only Son. Let this passage be a reason for praise and worship, rather than a condemnation of what could seem to be a senseless vengeance. Lead your group to praise God for His mercy on His people by taking His wrath out on Jesus so that we might be able to have a right relationship with God.

David Fights the Philistines (21:15-22)

What's the Big Idea?

God shows His faithfulness to His people as He expresses His wrath and preserves them from their enemies. God keeps His covenant and is faithful to His people, even though they are unfaithful to Him. This points us to the sacrifice that Jesus made, at great cost to Himself, to make a covenant with God's people.

What's the Problem?

We are completely sinful and because of our sin, a great payment is required to atone for us.



Throughout the Samuel narratives, there are lots of battles with the Philistines. In verses 15-22, there are four different battles, with four different Philistine warriors (all descended from the giants) who fall to David's servants. David went out to battle with his servants to begin, but quickly grows weary (v. 15). David isn't a young pup anymore. He's gotten quite a bit older and has had to deal with some very stressful situations in the last few years. David's men tell him, "You aren't going out with us anymore. You might die!" (v. 17).

In verses 18-22, God delivers David and his servants and keeps the "lamp of Israel" aflame. How many times will God deliver David? David is God's anointed and He has promised that He will establish an eternal kingdom from his family, so God will never forsake him. This section shows the power of God to save His people. The Philistines might be better warriors, but Israel has the living God Almighty on their side. For the millionth time, it seems, God rescues His people in battle and keeps His promises.

Conclusion

The first half of our passage is the most significant in that it points us to our own sin and the sacrifice that Jesus made, at great cost to Himself, to make atonement for us. Sometimes, we don't realize how bad our sin is. Perhaps Saul at the time he persecuted the Gibeonites did not understand the weight of his mistake. For us today, if we simply turn our eyes upon Jesus and look at Him as He dies on the cross, we will understand that our sin put Him there. If we see Jesus' death like that, maybe we will take our sin more seriously. Help your group see the weight of their sin and that it put their Savior to death. But encourage them to not despair. We should rejoice! For without Christ's death, we'd be hopeless and eternally condemned. This is the beauty of the gospel. Tim Keller, of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, says of the gospel:

It tells us that we are more wicked than we ever dared believe, but more loved and accepted than you ever dared hope – at the same time. In fact, if the gospel is true, the more you see your sin, the more certain you are that you were saved by sheer grace and more precious and electrifying that grace is to you.

What's Our Response?

Rejoice that God made atonement through Jesus' death on the cross and trust that God keeps His promises.

What Are the Questions?

2 Samuel 21:1-22

LAUNCH

What's the costliest mistake you've made recently?

EXPLORE

Read 2 Samuel 21:1-14.

1. What alerts David to the problem in his kingdom, and how does he respond?
2. What is the source of the problem? See Joshua 9:1-15 for background.
3. Read Exodus 20:7. In what way is Saul's covenant-breaking an example of taking the Lord's name in vain and therefore more than a mere broken promise?
4. How does David satisfy the Gibeonites?
5. Why does David spare Mephibosheth? See 1 Samuel 20:15 for additional insight.
6. Who is Rizpah, and how does she respond to the deaths of Saul's descendants?

7. What is your emotional response to Rizpah's actions?
8. How does this situation ultimately resolve itself?

Read 2 Samuel 21:15-17.

9. What happens in this section?
10. How does God work through this circumstance to keep the "lamp of Israel" aflame?

Read 2 Samuel 21:18-22.

11. Summarize these verses in your own words.
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APPLY

12. Read 1 Peter 1:17-19. How does the costliness of Israel's covenant-breaking with the Gibeonites point to the costliness of our redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ?
13. Read John 6:39; John 10:28; and John 17:11-12. How is the circle of safety David draws around Mephibosheth, because of his faithfulness to his covenant, a picture of the circle of safety God draws around us as His followers because of Christ?
14. Read 2 Samuel 3:18 and Isaiah 54:17. How do these verses put in perspective the faithfulness God expresses to His people in 2 Samuel 21:18-22?
15. How does this chapter remind you of the costliness of the redemption we have in Christ?
16. What is going on in your life right now that calls for you to reflect on God's faithfulness and the circle of safety God has drawn around your life because of your faith in Christ?

What Are the Answers?

1. There are three straight years of famine. David responds by seeking the LORD.
2. Saul had broken Israel's covenant with the Gibeonites by putting them to death.
3. The Israelites would have invoked the Lord's name in making the covenant with the Gibeonites, so Saul breaking the covenant amounted to defaming God's name, in whom they made the covenant.
4. He grants their request for seven of Saul's descendants to be executed.
5. David spares Mephibosheth because of the covenant he made with Jonathan.
6. She's the mother of two of Saul's descendants who were killed. She stands vigil over the bodies of the slain until David orders their bones to be buried.
7. Allow the group to discuss.
8. God is moved by the prayer for the land and removes his hand of wrath.
9. David becomes weary in battle and is nearly killed by a giant Philistine, so his men decide he can't go out into battle anymore.
10. He uses David's men to protect him and thus preserve Israel's king.
11. God works through David and his servants to deliver Israel from its enemies.
12. As sobering as God's wrath against the Israelites is, it fails to compare with the wrath God poured out on his Son because of our covenant-breaking with God.
13. Just as Mephibosheth was safe from wrath because of David's covenant with Jonathan, so we as God's people are safe from wrath because of Christ's faithfulness to us.
14. They show that God works through his anointed to defeat and silence the enemies of his people.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

And David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? And how shall I make atonement, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?"

2 Samuel 21:3