Promise Breaker and Promise Keeper
(2 Samuel 21)
7/27/16; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

We were watching a movie the other night about a man being rescued from space…

It was really intense as he drifted through space only to be caught miraculously by another astronaut..

It was also such an edge of the seat movie that he had to be rescued or I would have left more depressed than ever…

Movies just have to have happy endings…

It is what we like as people who watch them..

The hero needs to win and the bad guy needs to lose..

It is what we want as the people who pay to watch the movies…

Some movies end with tear jerking moments where people die, but we never want to watch those again…

So, movie directors usually end with something that makes us feel good…

We have been following David for some time now….

We followed out of the sheep pasture all the way to the throne in Jerusalem as the king of all of Israel..

And the movie of David's life has been good for the most part…

That is until we reached 2 Samuel 11 and his sin with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband…

Since that chapter, there has been very little good news in the story of David's life…

His family has been in shambles…

His kids are killing each other..

One of his sons even tried to kill David…

There has been murder around David and war and deception…

Last week in chapter 20, we got a good does of how David's kingdom and his reign as king was not a pretty picture…

He had a general named Joab that he couldn't control…

He has people like a man named Sheba trying to rebel against him..

He had murder in his own army…

And on top of that, he ruled a nation that was beginning to split in two…

The tribes in the north were at odds with Judah in the south..

Long story short, David's life is spiraling out of control ever since his sin with Bathsheba…

And that may seem unfair, but God had blessed David like no other man in the world…

So when David fell, it was a hard fall…

And if not far chapters 21-24 of 2 Samuel, this movie of David's life would not have the happiest of endings…

Therefore, in chapters 21-24, we get a flashback of sorts into the life of David…

What I mean by that is this…

These chapters are not the next things to happen after Sheba's revolt in chapter 20….

In fact, we are going to look at verses 1-14 of chapter 21, and we aren't even sure when the events of this chapter occurred….

We just know this….

It is put there to paint a better picture of David that what we have been seeing for the past 9 chapters…

It is put there as a happy ending of sorts to the story of David's life…

It is put to let us know that David was a man after God's own heart….

Though he was not the perfect king, he was a good king, and though he made bad judgments at times, he also made good decisions as well….

So over the next few weeks, we are going to finish up 2 Samuel and the story of David in chapters 21-24…

And we are going to look at some good things in David's reign as king with the exception of the final chapter which will show David's disobedience once again…

Now, why is it important to end the story of David on a high note?

For one, it encourages our hearts about David…

David is going to write many of the psalms that will become a part of the OT..

Who would want to sings songs written a man that puts bad taste in their mouth?

Two, for all of David's shortcomings, he is going to be the father of the line that gives birth to Messiah….

It would seem wise to cast Davi in the best light possible since that is the case…

We all David is not the perfect king, but he is also not the worst king either..

So, let's take on the first flashback in David's life as king tonight in verses 1-14….

I have entitled these verses…

Promise Breaker and Promise Keeper

In verses 1-6, we will see this….

I. Breaking Promises Leads to Famine (1-7)

II. Keeping Promises Leads to Food (8-14)

Let's begin in verses 1-2 with…..

I. Breaking Promises Leads to Famine (1-7)

21 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the Lord. And the Lord said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." 2 So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the sons of Israel [a]made a covenant with them, but Saul had sought to [b]kill them in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah).

You can see from verse 1 that this is not the next event after Sheba's rebellion in chapter 20…

It simply says that there was a famine in the land in the days of David…

It doesn't place it after the episode in chapter 20, and it says that the famine was the result of something that Saul did…

Since Saul has been dead for some time now by chapter 20, it is safe to assume that the famine was closer to the time that David was king over all of Israel closer to time when Saul died…

It would just seem odd for the Lord to bring a famine into Israel for something that Saul had done decades earlier…

Now, what did Saul do?

Well, verse 1 tells us that the famine came as judgment of Israel because Saul had murdered the Gibeonites.

Now, your next question is who are the Gibeonites and why was it wrong for Saul to murder them?

Well, we have to go all the way back to the book of Joshua to find out why Saul was wrong to kill the Gibeonites…

So, take your Bibles and go left back to the book of Joshua…

Now the book of Joshua is the history of how Israel got to occupy the land to the east of the Mediterranean Sea…

Joshua leads Israel across the Jordan River and into the land that God had promised to give them…

But it was a walk in the park to capture and settle the land…

Though God went with Israel, it was a series of battles and wars to finally capture and settle the land…

Well, as Israel marched into the land in the book of Joshua, news of their victories reached the ears of the people who lived there…

So, let's pick up the history of what happened in Joshua 9:3….

3 When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4 they also acted craftily and [b]set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and [c]mended, 5 and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all

the bread of their provision was dry and had become crumbled. 6 They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us." 7 The men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you are living [d]within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with you?" 8 But they said to Joshua, "We are your servants." Then Joshua said to them, "Who are you and where do you come from?" 9 They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country because of the [e]fame of the Lord your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, 10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth. 11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us."' 12 This our bread was warm when we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled. 13 These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey." 14 So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the [f]counsel of the Lord. 15 Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant

with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.

Long story short, the Gibeonites tricked Joshua and Israel into thinking that they were from a far away land out of the area that Israel wanted to settle…

And that they had walked a long way as evidenced by their old bread and clothes and shoes…

And since Joshua didn't ask the Lord about these people, he and all of Israel was fooled into making a covenant with them to not kill them but spare them…

You may say, well they were tricked into making a covenant…

And you would be right…

But it doesn't matter….

It was Israel's own fault that they were deceived because they didn't take take to seek the Lord about this group of people..

And regardless of how the promise was made, God is going to expect Israel to keeps its word and not harm the Gibeonites…

Because Israel represents God, and God always keeps his word…

He is a covenant keeping God and so he is going to expect His people to be covenant keepers as well…

However, Saul eventually comes along and puts some Gibeonites to death..

And although Saul had done it 400 years later, it didn't matter…

He had violated the covenant that Israel had made with the Gibeonites, and now the nation was hit with a famine as judgment from God…

God simply closed up the heavens and prevented rainfall which led to a famine…

And though David is king, his people are experiencing the consequences of Saul's promise breaking….

So, what does David do?

First he asks God about the cause of the famine, and once he gets his answer in verse 1, he seeks to correct Saul's sin beginning in verse 3…

3 Thus David said to the Gibeonites, "What should I do for you? And how can I make atonement that you may bless the inheritance of the Lord?" 4 Then the Gibeonites said to him, "We have no concern of silver or gold with Saul or his house, nor is it for us to put any man to death in Israel." And he said, "I will do for you whatever you say." 5 So they said to the king, "The man who consumed us and who planned [c]to exterminate us from remaining within any border of Israel, 6 let seven men from his sons be given to us, and we will [d]hang them before the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the Lord." And the king said, "I will give them."

To find relief from the famine, David asks the Gibeonites who he can do to right Saul's slaughter of their people…

And they replied, "We dont want our money, we want Saul's sons to die as payment for Saul's murder of our sons."

So David hands over 7 of Saul's sons…

Now, this would include sons and grandsons and even great grandsons in they were around…

Many people struggle with this….

Why would God allow more death to be the payment for Saul's killing?

And all I can offer is this…

Payment for sin is often made in blood….

God gave up his own son to atone for our sins against him…

Sometimes we forget that payment for sin is bloody and unpleasant, but it is payment nonetheless…

And if we forget the gore and bloodshed of Calvary, we forget the high price for sin's payment…

So, David sends these sons of Saul to the Gibeonites…

And we are reminded that Breaking Promises leads to famine and it also leads to death for some….

In Saul's act of what he thought was deep love for his country, he had brought judgment on them…

And now 1000s were going to starve to death unless atonement be made for Saul's murders…

And the atonement was going to come through these 7 sons of Saul….

Now, let's move from the Promise Breaking Saul to the Promise Keeping David….

II. Keeping Promises Leads to Food (8-14)

As David searches for some of Saul's sons to hand over, one son is not even to be considered….

Look at verse 7…

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the oath of the Lord which was between them, between David and Saul's son Jonathan.

This verse is really the key to this whole episode…

As soon as we see that Saul was a promise breaking king, we are reminded that David is a promise keeping king…

Though David had agreed to hand over some of Saul's family tree, he wasn't going to hand over Mephibosheth, who was the son of Jonathan…

And the reason that the Gibeonites wouldn't get Mephibosheth was simple…

David had made a promise to Jonathan that he would show kindness to his branch in Saul's family tree…

And I think this verse is simply put here to put a good taste in our mouth about David…

For the past 10 chapters, we haven't been too happy with David, but unless we think that David is just another king like Saul…

We are reminded that David is a man of his Word…

And though he must hand over some men to pay for Saul's promise breaking, David is not about to break a promise of his own by sending Mephibosheth…

However, there are other sons of Saul that must be offered to the Gibeonites in hopes of ending the famine…

Verse 8….

8 So the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, Armoni and Mephibosheth whom she had borne to Saul, and the five sons of [e]Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she had borne to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite. 9 Then he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they [f]hanged them in the mountain before the Lord, so that the seven of them

fell together; and they were put to death in the first days of harvest at the beginning of barley harvest.

Strangely enough, there is a Mephiboshehth that is offered to the Gibeonites, but he is the sons from another line of Saul's descendants…

And these 7 men are hanged together as payment for Saul's murder of the Gibeonites…

This brings us to a final scene in this passage that is meant to highlight another one of David's good qualities of the king of Israel…

Verse 10..

10 And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until [g]it rained on them from the sky; and she [h]allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night.

Since two of her sons were the ones hanging for Saul's sin, Rizpah comes out to the place where they are hung..

And she stays there from the time they are hung until the day it rains…

Her job was to keep the birds and animals from attacking the bodies of these men…

It was simply an act of love to keep their bodies from being disrespected by animals looking for an easy meal.

But then notice how long she stays with the bodies…

She stays until it rains…

And what would the rain signify?

It would most likely signal the end of the famine and God's judgment on Israel for Saul's sin…

This lady watching her son die remind you of anything?

It seems very similar to Mary going to cross to watch her son die to atone for the sins of God's people…

And though the scene is heartbreaking, it is good reminder of the ugliness of sin…

God is merciful, but God is just…

Someone's blood must be shed to pay for sin….

Whether that is Rizpah's sons or Mary's Son, it is never easy to look at but neither it is easy for God to look at sins against Him…

Forgiving sin is bloody business even though it breaks our heart…

And may be that is the point, unless we forget the ugliness and sadness of the death of our Savior…

Rizpah watched her sons die, but she also watched God's judgment on the land end and her own life be spared from starvation.

Mary watched her son die, but in his death her own life was saved…

That is the sadness and glory of the cross.

While it rips our hearts out, it also provides the solution to our sin…

We need to sit with Rizpah and we need to sit with Mary at times when we are tempted to forget the high cost of sin…

Well, David took notice of Rizpah's love….

Verse 11…

11 When it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, 12 then David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the open square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them on the day the Philistines struck down Saul in Gilboa. 13 He brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there, and they gathered the bones of those who had been [i]hanged. 14 They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father; thus they did all that the king commanded, and after that God was moved by prayer for the land.

David hears of Rizpah's incredible act of devotion to her sons and to the other 5 sons of Saul that were executed by the Gibeonites…

And it moves him so much that he decides to go get the bones of Saul and Jonathan in the northern part of Israel…

If you remember, Saul and his son Jonathan died on the same day in a battle with the Philistines at Mount Gilboa.

And the Philistines paraded their bodies around town and even put them on public display in a town called Beth Shan in the northern part of Israel.

Well, men in Jabesh Gilead heard of this humiliation of their king and his son, and they travelled all night to take down their bodies and bury them in Jabesh Gilead…

And their bones had stayed there ever since that day.

Well, Saul and Jonathan belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, and the tradition in Israel was to be buried near your family…

So, David ordered that Saul and Jonathan's bones be dug up and brought back to their hometown so they could be buried near Saul's father Kish…

David also gathered the bodies of these 7 sons of Saul and brought them to be buried near Saul as well..

And what do we see here?

David as a king who was filled with compassion for Rizpah and wanted to do something to honor her and her family in a time of great tragedy…

There is nothing special in the sense of bringing bones back to be buried…

It didn’t change Saul or Jonathan one bit for their bones to come back home.

Death was an end to them…

Wherever they were once they died, they remained…

The same is true for those 7 sons of Saul who had just died by hanging….

After they breathed their last breath, their future was sealed forever….

It makes no difference where they were buried…

There has been 1000s of bodies that have never been recovered due to plane crashes and war and other natural disasters…

And just because a body isn't recovered, it doesn't affect that person’s eternity…

Now, people do all sorts of crazy things and have strange beliefs about graves and burials…

Some people go to a grave and try to pray that person to heaven….

Not going to happen….

Some people even get baptized in a dead person's name hoping that secures them a spot in heaven..

The Bible is clear…

It is appointed for man to die and then the judgment…

The eternity of a person happens in an instant after death…

The funeral is designed to comfort the family…

The grave is there to help the family cope…

But neither the funeral nor the grave have the least bit of importance to the one who has died…

And I say all that because people have gone to great lengths to bring bodies back from great lengths based on this chapter in the Bible….

Let me assure you, this isn't put there to tell you to go get a body in hopes that it will get that person into heaven…

This scene is simply put here to show David as a compassionate king…

He is not a king that has no feeling for the people around him…

This woman was hurting and David did what he could to help her in her anguish…

So, he goes and retrieves the bodies of Saul and his family and orders them buried in the land of Benjamin…

David not only keeps his vows, he hurts with his people.

Conclusion

So what do we learn here?

#1 - David is committed and compassionate.

The primary purpose of these verses is to shed some good light on David after a number of chapters of darkness…

David has sinned and he is experiencing the consequences of it, but David is not like Saul and the other kings of Israel..

David honors his promises and David hurts with his people…

Mephibosheth was a nobody in this day…

Crippled and unable to care for himself…

Rizpah was a nobody in her day…

A widow who was a mother to some of the children by Saul, who was a disgraced and dead king…

Yet, David knows both Mephibosheth and Rizpah…

Not only does he know them, he cares for them…

#2 - David's Lord is committed.

You can't but look at David in these 14 verses of 2 Samuel 21 and see a preview of David's Lord, -the Lord Jesus Christ…

Jesus keeps his promises as well…

When Jesus promises to never leave or forsake His people, he means it…

That is why you know Jesus is with you wherever you go…

When Jesus promises to finish the good work he started in you, he means it…

That is why true believers know that no sin will overcome to cause them to become unsaved…

That is why true believers endure through tough times and even times of doubting their faith…

When Jesus promises to come back, he means it…

The end times are not the ideas of man or the stuff of science fiction….

A trumpet will sound and the Lord will appear and the dead in Christ will rise and the church will follow them into the air…

This is as sure as gravity…

The Lord keeps his promise to work in you…

The Lord keeps his promise to keep you in his hand…

And the Lord will keep his promise to rescue you when he returns…

And let me add one thing…

If we believe in a God who takes his promises seriously, shouldn't we take our promises seriously as well.

If we give our word, let's keep our word.

If we make a promise, let's keep our promise.

We are reflections of the God we love and serve.

And God is a man of his Word, and His people should be too.

Final thing..

#3 - David's Lord is Compassionate

You can't help but look at David's reaction to Rizpah's sadness and see the compassion of David's Lord, - the Lord Jesus Christ…

Hebrews 4 says that we have Jesus as our great high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses..

Jesus was God in the flesh, yet he stopped to talk to the lame, the sick and the blind…

A woman who had been sick for a decade grabbed his cloak, and Jesus didn't get irritated…

He didn't pull away in disgust…

He didn't just keep walking…

He stopped, he called for her, he turned to her and he healed her…

May we be just as compassionate as we live in this world..

May we see hurting people and do what we can for them…

Even if that means just stopping to pray with them and carry the weight of their burden for a few moments…

We are reflections of the God we know and love as we walk this earth…

May we reflect his compassion as we go about our daily lives..

Let us pray.