

King David *Unfinished Business*

2 Samuel 21:1-14

September 8, 2019 am

HDBC

Once again, this morning, we dive into the history of King David's life. And, once again we find a bloody, disturbing chapter. Quite frankly I have had to fight the temptation to skip some of these chapters. I'd rather talk about David's mighty men, or his beautiful songs. And, we will get to those things. But staring me in the face is a chapter in David's life that must not be ignored.

So, open your Bibles to 2 Samuel 21:1-14. This is the story of unfinished business. God has a **long memory**. There may be unresolved things in our pasts that we simply cannot ignore, hoping they will go away. God will eventually force us to deal with them. This is true of Individuals, churches, nations.

Individuals can have unfinished business!

If I have an abscess in a tooth or an infected appendix we deal with it. In a similar way there can be things in our past that we have ignored, that are festering, poisoning our lives. Bad decisions, unfulfilled commitments. They will not just go away if ignored. They must be confronted and dealt with.

Churches can have unfinished business!

From time to time churches need to confront past actions that are hurtful to others and harmful to the kingdom of God. Covering up **sexual abuse**, rejecting people because of **racial prejudices**, **failing to love our neighbors**, being **critical of other churches** in a spirit of jealousy. **Our own SBC and slavery.**

Nations can have unfinished business!

Our nation: the treatment of **native Americans**; **slavery, Jim Crow and racial injustice**; the **internment of Japanese Americans during WWII**. These are just a few easy illustrations. This is an ongoing process.

David faced a national crisis because of unfinished business traced back to King Saul. So, let's look at it and see what we can learn.

1. The Problem (1)

Israel experienced a crisis in the form of a draught that lasted for three years. This led to a famine. People were starving. This was a national crisis. Thankfully, David knew what to do. . He prayed.

In response the Lord reveal that he was causing the famine because of unfinished business going back to Saul. He ignored a vow, a commitment, a promise that Israel had made to the Gibeonite people. They have received assurances from Israel many generations earlier that they would not be killed. Yet Saul determined to kill them.

The original vow happened during the time of Joshua. When the Israelis were coming into the land of Canaan, the Gibeonites used a dishonest but effective strategy to save their lives. They put on old clothes, gathered stale bread, then approached Joshua and his warriors, pretending that they have traveled a long distance. They simply wanted assurances that they would not be killed. Because Joshua and the people did not seek the Lord, they were tricked. Thinking these people were not even inhabitants of the land that God was giving to them, they made a vow that they would not be killed.

They honored that vow for many, many years. However, Saul decided to eradicate the Gibeonite people, regardless of the commitment that had been made to them. He was unsuccessful, but even his attempt was a sin against God. This sin of the nation of Israel. It was lingering and festering. Now, God would not allow it to linger and fester anymore. Payment was due!

2. The Solution (2-9)

Israel, under Saul, had sinned against the Gibeonites. So, David asked, ***how can we make this right?***. They made it clear that they were not interested in money or wealth. Some of their people had been murdered. The only thing that would satisfy would be a death penalty against Israel.

Seven descendants of Saul must pay his sin debt with their lives. David agreed. Seven men were chosen. These men were turned over to the Gibeonites and executed. Five came from one family and two from another. I'm going to be honest, this is disturbing. I have a hard time getting my head around this. It's hard for me to grasp. But this is what happened.

A couple of quick observations at this point.

1) These seven men were representatives of a larger number

Saul had killed more than seven. He tried to exterminate the entire group. It could not be called equal justice. It was not a true life-for-life.

2) Reminder that human justice is limited

All human justices comes up short. There is no way for absolute justice to happen in this life. A murder is committed and the murderer is punished. We call it justice, but there remains a lingering longing for real justice. Human justice never fully satisfies because it is never complete.

3. The Responses (10-14) There are three

1) A Mother is Grieved (10)

The mom of two of those boys was beside herself with grief. She put on sackcloth and sat by the bodies of her boys, keeping the birds from pecking at their faces and the animals from tearing at their flesh. She was grieving her personal loss.

2) The King is Motivated (11-13)

When David saw what she was doing, it reminded him that the bodies of Saul and Jonathan had not yet been properly buried. As this woman protected the bodies of her fallen sons, David realized he had an obligation to bury the bodies of Saul and Jonathan in the proper place. **So, he** retrieved their bodies, as well as the bodies of the men who had been executed and gave them all a proper burial.

3) God is Moved (14b)

After that, God was moved by prayer for the land.

I love that. After all this, God was moved to act on behalf of the land. This means the draught ended. The discipline of God was over because justice had been done and honor had been restored. **The mercy of God had to be preceded by the justice of God.** Even though human justice can never satisfy fully, God accepts human justice in a broken world as an adequate picture of the ultimate justice of God.

What we learn: Four statements to consider as you make personal application.

1. Our vows to God are important to God

He does not forget them. There is no statute of limitation. If you have made a vow or commitment to God, you should fulfill it. Commitment to **purity**? Commitment to **marriage**? Commitment to your **church**? Commitment to **follow Christ**? Think back to the commitments you have made to God. He remembers them and expects you to stay true to them.

2. Our sins may hurt other people

The death of 7 innocent men reminds us that my sins might cost someone else dearly. **Babies born to moms who abused drugs while pregnant pay a heavy price. People killed by drunk drivers pay a heavy price. Victims of random violence pay a heavy price because of the sins of others.** Don't be so naïve to think your sins cannot affect someone else. They often do.

3. Substitutionary atonement is necessary for my salvation

The death of these seven men is a picture of substitutionary atonement. Substitutionary atonement refers to **one person dying to pay for another person's sins**. They died to pay the debt that Saul owed. But their atonement was neither full nor complete. It is simply a reminder of our need for substitutionary atonement. It reminds us of the kind of substitutionary atonement that can only come from Jesus in His death. Note a few differences between their deaths and Christ's death.

First, they were coerced to give their lives. Jesus gave His voluntarily.

Second, they were guilty sinners dying for other guilty sinners. Jesus was the sinless man, dying for sinful people.

Third, their deaths are a picture of justice. Jesus' death is justice.

Only the death of Christ is able to absolutely atone for Saul's sin and for ours. This is true because only Christ lived a completely sinless life.

2 Corinthians 5:21. *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

1 Peter 3:18. *For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.*

1 Peter 2:24. *He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

That is why He came. He came to live and die for us.

4. Unfinished business can lead to painful consequences.

They were suffering because of unfinished business. So, I ask you.

Do you have any unfinished business that you need to take care of?

Have you become a Christian but never been **baptized**? That's unfinished business.

Are you a follower of Christ but not an active **member of a local church**? That may be unfinished business.

Has God called you to **share Jesus** with a friend and you have not done so? That's unfinished business.

Have you been thinking of **becoming a Christian**, but putting it off? That's unfinished business.