

April 16

2 Samuel 21

2 Samuel 24

1 Chronicles 22

Psalm 30

In 2 Samuel 21 the first thing to remember about the Gibeonites is that they were the ones who in the days of Joshua had tricked Israel into making a peace treaty with them, even though they were neighbors living in the land of Canaan. It was also an inconvenient thing, this treaty, and it bothered them to no end that they had been duped when they found out that the Gibeonites were really their neighbors. But they had sworn before the Lord and they were committing to keeping their word.

The second thing that we need to notice is that God sent a famine to the Israelites that lasted for three years because of the unrighteous actions of Saul. Israel, under Saul, broke a treaty -- a sacred trust -- and God was not going to let them get away with it. God knows what individuals do and He holds them accountable.

Next, the cause of the famine is explicitly said by God to be the "unjust" treatment of the Gibeonites by Saul. God is always interested in how we treat minorities and the weak who cannot protect themselves adequately.

The really tough thing about this incident is the terribly cruel way that the remedy is sought. It is imperative to remember here that though God identified the problem, He did not prescribe the solution. The solution is cruel -- unjust -- and maybe even unjustifiable, but it is man's solution, not God's.

In 2 Samuel 24, we have come to the conclusion of the material recorded concerning David, the greatest king that Israel would ever know until the son of David -- Jesus Christ -- returns to sit upon His throne. David certainly was not a perfect king. His failures were at times colossal, but his repentance was always genuine, and at the bottom he had a heart that hungered after God and after righteousness.

David knew how to worship God. That is one of the biggest things that we can learn from him. And as we have said, he knew how to repent of sin. That is another thing we can learn from him. He knew how to trust in God, but better than any other king ever did and better than most of us have yet learned. He knew how to be a leader. He could inspire loyalty and love in those nearest him to a remarkable degree. Finally, David knew how to pray.

There was in David's entourage a group known as "The Three" -- Josheb-Basshebeth, Eleazar son of Dodai, and Shammah son of Agee -- these were David's medal-of-honor winners, men who had achieved almost legendary status because of their great prowess in battle.

These mighty men of David were the human heroes that placed him on his throne and kept him there. I'm sure you noticed as I did that one of the 30 was Uriah the

Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba. David's sin is all the more heinous in light of who Bathsheba's husband was, and how loyal and important Uriah had been to David.

It is not completely clear if God was mad at David because he wanted to count the troops or for some other reason. If the sin was in the counting, it probably relates to the fact that the only reason troop strength is important to you is if you believe that the number of well trained troops has some direct bearing on your ability to win the battle.

In 1 Chronicles 22, the building of the temple was a team effort between David the father and Solomon the son. God prevented David from building the temple because he was a man of war, with blood on his hands -- that task was to fall to Solomon. But Solomon was "young and inexperienced," so the task of planning the temple fell to David. David was to conquer and plan; Solomon was to build. Both were part of God's purpose. Both were used by God to achieve His ends.

One of the reasons for God's determination that the temple should not be built until the reign of Solomon is clearly connected to the long recognized goal of establishing the Israelites in the Promised Land and giving them "rest." The theme of a "Sabbath rest" that provides opportunity for a special time of worship and enjoyment of the Lord is a very important one in Scripture.

It is quite clear from the Scripture we read that Solomon was not only David's choice to succeed him, he was God's choice.

Psalm 30 is a Psalm that David wrote at the end of his life and passed on to his son Solomon to be kept for use at the dedication of the temple, David gave Solomon all the building materials. He gave him the blueprints, and he even gave him the songs to sing.

The basic message of this Psalm is very clear, "Lord, I owe everything to you. When I was down you lifted me up. Your presence and your pleasure are the only things that really matter. When I am conscious of your favor, Lord, I cannot be shaken, but when I do not have an awareness of that presence, then I cannot stand. Lord, you have turned my wailing into dancing."

Many Psalms are models for us and remind us that no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, the appropriate responses is prayer and praise. If we are in trouble, we ought to pray. If we need to repent, we must pray. If we are fearful, prayer is our very best antidote. When we are confused, prayer is the path to clarity. When depressed, prayer can turn our wailing into dancing, and when victory is our lot, and we want to rejoice and worship, prayer is the highest form of worship and the worthiest method of praise.