

# 2 Samuel 20-22 • The Sword Continues to Devour

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And let's open our Bibles to 2 Samuel chapter 20. As you're turning there and as we get ready to start this 20th chapter of 2 Samuel on our way through 2 Samuel, I want to start off with a passage from Romans if I may. I want to put it up on the screen for you. It's Romans chapter 15 and it says,

## **Romans 15:4 (ESV)**

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

And I share that passage with you tonight as a reminder for why we're going through the Old Testament. Maybe somebody might even ask or say to you or ask you, why do you study the Old Testament? Why is it beneficial?

Well this passage right here in Romans explains the situation. That everything that “*was written in former days was written down for our instruction.*” It is there to teach us so “*that through (the) endurance and... (the) encouragement of the Scriptures that we might have hope.*”

So as we are getting into these last few chapters of 2 Samuel, this is it. We're looking for the reasons. We're looking for the purpose for which these things are written down. And what that means for you and I is, application. It all comes down to application, doesn't it? We're applying the Word of God, rather than just listening to a story.

I mean, stories are great. We love stories. We love to be told stories, from the littlest child, they love to have stories told to them. And I don't think we ever actually outgrow that, do we?

But we're not just here to listen to a bedtime story. We want to gain from this a heart of wisdom and have an application to say, when I walk out of this place today, I have a better sense of what God expects from me as a believer in my walk with Him.

Chapter 20. And let me, just one more thing in, in the way of doing a little bit of backstory here. You guys remember how the last chapter ended? We really just saw them putting down the rebellion that Absalom was had created by crowning himself king, and Absalom is now dead, but that's not the end of troubles. That's not the end of difficulties.

The very last verse of the previous chapter, look, you shouldn't even have to turn a page, but look at that last verse. It's verse 43 of chapter 19. It says this, *"And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, 'We have ten shares in the king, and in David also we have more than you. Why then did you despise us?'"* And they're arguing because they felt like they were left out in bringing the king back to Jerusalem.

And it goes on to say, *"Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?"* But the words (it says) of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel." In other words the rebellion has been put down, but the problems between these two factional groups; between the Northern part of Israel and the Southern part of Israel, are continuing. Isn't that crazy? Just problems, between people. It's like, can't you guys just chill and get along?

Well, it says that again, *"the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel."* And have you learned to that when there are all kinds of harsh words going around, it's just so easy for regrettable things to come out of those? Have you noticed that in your own life?

And we see that happening as we go into chapter 20 now. It says here in verse 1, *"Now there happened to be there a worthless man, (your Bible may have a different word to describe him but ...a worthless man) whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjaminite..."* (ESV)

Now remember, Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was considered part of the northern region of Israel, although it was just the very first tribe, right on the top of Judah. And so this man considers himself part of the northern area of Israel. But he has been insulted and offended by what the men of Judah said, when the men of Israel said, why didn't you include us in bringing back the king? And they were like, hey, David is our own flesh and blood. We ought to be the ones to do it and so forth.

And the men of Israel come back and say, yeah, but we have a larger share of the king because there's more tribes represented in the northern area. And it says the, what the men of Judah said was fiercer. We don't even know what that was, but it was obviously very offending. And it was so offensive that it riled up in this man named Sheba, a rebellious heart, which obviously this man was already rebellious. But it riled up in him just this rebellious heart that, that wanted nothing more to do with David and Judah.

And look what it says. It says, *“And he blew the trumpet and said, (fine, then)*

*“We have no portion in David,  
and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse;  
every man to his tents, O Israel!”*

<sup>2</sup> *So all the men of Israel (and that's referring to the northern ten tribes) withdrew from David and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem.”*

Wow. I mean, it's like we just got done with this rebellion thing from Absalom and it's over. And now can't we be a country again? Can't we be a united nation? And the men are bickering to one another and offending one another, to the point where the Sheba guy who again, it says he's *“a worthless”* person. I think the NIV says, *“troublemaker.”*

And he just, he's had it. That's it. He blows a trumpet. That's it. We're done with you. We have absolutely no share. And what he's basically encouraging the people from the northern ten tribes to do is secede from the nation. Let's be our own country.

Now, eventually they will do that. It will happen in a couple of generations but, that's what he's hoping is going to happen. And it says that all of the men from Israel went along with him. Now, we're going to find out not all the men of Israel are going to stay with him. Later on, it's going to be just his own clan, and I'll show you that in just a little bit.

But right now, you know how people get all hot and bothered all at the same time? And it's and people just seem to love drama, have you noticed that? People are just drawn to drama, like a moth to a flame? And it's like, what is it you like about drama? Seems like if we've been raised with a lot of drama, we gravitate toward drama. If you've been raised in a home where there's a lack of drama, where drama was checked at the door, you tend to have a propensity to say no, not around here, not around me sort of a thing. Drama exists, but it seems that some people are just drawn to it.

So this Sheba guy, blows the trumpet and there's something in that attitude that says enough, that just gets something riled up in us. That just makes us want to go, yeah, because you know what? We all are rebellious. Obviously in differing levels depending on personality, and person too but there's a rebellious heart in all of us. It's there and it's just waiting to be expressed. And boy, if we feel like we've got a justifiable reason to show that rebellion, man, we'll do it.

And the whole northern tribes initially at least says, yeah, and they just, we're going to succeed. And they don't, most of them don't follow through. And that's often the case as well. So anyway, we're going to deal with yet another rebellion.

Now, verse 3 is inserted here, in the story of this rebellion, and it's a parenthetical comment about David returning to Jerusalem and what he did with those ten concubines he left behind. It says,

*“And David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to care for the house and put them in a house under guard and provided for them, but did not go in to them.”* That whole phrase of going into them, of course, is a euphemism for no longer having any kind of relations with them.

But essentially, what it is saying here is that because Absalom had defiled these ten concubines by laying with them in public so as to show his domination over his father David, when he got back to the city, put them in a special place to live and they lived out the rest of their days there, but they lived as widows.

In other words, they lived as if they had no husband any longer because they had been defiled. And so that's, again, that parenthetical statement and so forth. In fact, it goes on to end verse 3 by saying, *“So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood.”*

And then in verse 4, we get back to the rebellion. *“Then the king said to Amasa, “Call the men of Judah together to me within three days, and be here yourself.””* Now, I need to give you again a little reminder in the way of backstory.

Amasa is the man who was the rebel commander under Absalom, right? And Now that Absalom is dead David has granted amnesty essentially to everybody who's was involved in that whole debacle, that whole rebellion that was instigated by his son. Not only granted amnesty, but he also, invited this man, Amasa, to be the commander now of his army in place of Joab. And we assume,

although we didn't hear about it, that he demoted Joab because Joab disobeyed him and killed Absalom. Okay.

So he tells this Amasa, listen, go and assemble the men; this “*Sheba ...son of Bichri*” guy. He's probably going to bring some kind of military thing against us so we better get the army together. And I need you to do it within 3 days. All right.

Verse 5 says, “*So Amasa went to summon Judah, but he delayed beyond the set time that had been appointed him. (he didn't get back within the 3 days)*”<sup>6</sup> *And David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom.”*

And of course, the assumption from that statement is that Amasa has probably defected over to Sheba's side. Well, he didn't know. David didn't know. They didn't have cell phones back in that day. Amasa couldn't call and say, hey, it's taking a little bit longer to get the army together than I thought. We've had 2 flat tires and we had to stop for a coke. Hey, give me another day or so. They have no idea. This man has already defected once to be with Absalom. Who's to say that he's not now going to side with this Sheba guy?

So what is David supposed to do? He goes to Abishai, who is Joab's brother. He says, hey, you've been with me a long time, Abishai, I know that you're loyal. So I need you to go out and get this thing done.

He says here at the end of verse 6, “*Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he get himself to fortified cities and escape from us.*” In other words, he tells Abishai, I want you to go after Sheba lest he find himself some refuge where we can't get to it. Time is of the essence. We got to move quickly on this thing, so David commissions Abishai, Joab's brother, to go and do this thing.

Verse 7, “*And there went out after him Joab's men and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men. They went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.*”<sup>8</sup> *When they were at the great stone that is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them.*”

So here, they're out going to head after the Sheba guy and what happens? Here comes Amasa. Late, but he's coming. He's just one of those people that's just always late. Do you know the type? Fashionably late. Some of you are smiling, I know that resonates with you. So here he comes. He's just late. And this great stone that they're meeting at here is just outside of Jerusalem. He's almost back to the city, right? So here he is.

And it says in the, we're in the middle of verse 8, *"Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened on his thigh, and as he went forward (in other words, moving toward Amasa) it fell out."*<sup>9</sup> *And Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.*<sup>10</sup> *But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand. So Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died.*

(and) *Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.*" This is basically the way Joab deals with any competition. Joab is essentially a murderer. He's done this already. This is not the first time. You'll remember he killed Abner when David And Abner were working to put the kingdom back together again after the rebellion that followed Saul's death. And here Joab is at it again. This is just the way he does things.

And it tells us in verse 14, we'll deal with Joab a little bit more, but it says in verse 14, *"And Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-maacah, and all the Bichrites assembled and followed him in."*

Now, verse 14 is where we learn that all of the men of Israel are no longer involved in this rebellion against David. You remember? Again, it might gather a crowd initially when somebody rises up and shakes their fist in the air. But now it says it's only the people from his clan who have followed him. Here in verse 14, again, *"...all the Bichrites assembled and followed him in."*

Verse 15, *"And all the men who were with Joab came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah. They cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart, and they were battering the wall to throw it down."*

There's this again, this is what David was afraid would happen. Sheba found a city that had a fortified wall around it and he went in there and hid. And he convinced the people to close the doors and to protect him. And so what is now, Joab's back in charge, just by default, essentially. And so they begin to lay siege to the city, and you know what that looks like. An army would surround a city, not let anyone in, not let anyone out, and a siege could last for a very long time. They would keep people from coming with food and supplies, and essentially the people would be starved out.

They begin to do this, but they're not waiting for people to starve in this case, because it says that they were battering the wall, trying to get it to come down.

But it says in verse 16, *“Then a wise woman called from the city, ‘Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, ‘Come here, that I may speak to you.’”*<sup>17</sup> *And he came near her, and the woman said, ‘Are you Joab?’ He answered, ‘I am.’ Then she said to him, ‘Listen to the words of your servant.’ And he answered, ‘I am listening.’* (then she said)<sup>18</sup> *Then she said, ‘They used to say in former times, ‘Let them but ask counsel at Abel,’ and so they settled a matter.*<sup>19</sup> *I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?”*<sup>20</sup> *Joab answered, ‘Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! (yeah right)*<sup>21</sup> *That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba the son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David. Give up him alone, and I will withdraw from the city.” And the woman said to Joab, ‘Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall.’*<sup>22</sup> *Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.”*

Interesting story. The rebellion doesn't last very long and they are able to squash it with the help of a pretty smart lady who knew that if she didn't speak up, this might just spell the end of her city. So thank you to all the wise ladies that God has given to us.

But what other lesson can we really gain from this sort of thing? Well, it really has to do with this whole thing of rebellion. Recognizing rebellion for what it is. Sheba, the son of Bichri, appealed to a lot of people, and even though the crowd that stayed with him at the end wasn't nearly as large as the crowd that he gathered initially with his words of rebellion. Still, he gathered a crowd, and he recognized that there was an attitude in Israel that could easily be exploited by saying the right things.

People, do you understand that rebellious people still exist? I don't I might be a little bit challenged to refer to them as the Bible does, as worthless people. But still rebellious people continue on and they have done a great deal of damage within the context of the body of Christ. And they always couch their expressions of rebellion in what they believe to be in your best interest. I just have your best interest in mind. And I wonder how many church splits have happened because of Sheba son of Bichri living again in all of his glory. Tongue in cheek. It is the type of a situation where we're warned against this thing, even in the New Testament. Let me put another passage up on the screen for you. From Romans chapter 16, toward the end of Paul's letter to the Romans, he says,

**Romans 16:17-18 (ESV)**

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions (and look at this) and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*

But notice how they do it, with smooth talk and flattery. They flatter people. I know that you're a smart person and you see what's going on. I know that you see what's going on here. And I know that like me, that this is wrong. And this shouldn't be happening. And all the other things that they say to draw you in, to just suck you in to the rebellion that's happening. But make no mistake about it, it's a rebellion.

Now, I'm not saying that we should just roll over and play dead when there are issues and problems that are clearly unbiblical, but there's ways to respond without rebellion. There's ways to respond biblically, honorably, that can say way more toward doing, getting the right things to happen without the attitude of rebellion that so naturally rises up in all of us.

And if you don't consider yourself someone who is capable of being rebellious, you need to think again, because we all can. Present company included, meaning myself. We can all be rebellious. We might even call it different things. I used to refer to myself when I was in my twenties as a nonconformist. That's a really nice way of saying I was rebellious. It's all that is. And I was just spinning it in a way that, wouldn't look bad. So this is something that we have to be careful of. And this is one of the reasons why this story exists for it here for us here in 2 Samuel chapter 20.

Now the chapter ends essentially by giving us the rundown of David's people and who was in charge of what. And it says here in verse 23, “*Now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel; ...*” And again, that was by default because he had pretty much killed everybody else who stood in his way. Right. That's just the way things went.

Before I go on, I have to wonder though, I have to wonder if perhaps David was led to believe that Amasa had defected and gone toward the rebellion of Sheba and that Joab saved his life. I have to wonder if Joab spun this thing to David in



such a way as to say, boy, did I do you a favor? Yeah, that Amasa guy, he just couldn't be trusted, couldn't be trusted with Absalom, couldn't be trusted with the rebellion of Sheba. Boy, it's a good thing you got me around. We know better.

We're also told that, “...*Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites;* <sup>24</sup> *and Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder;* <sup>25</sup> *and Sheva was secretary; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests;* <sup>26</sup> *and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest.*”

Chapter 21. This is a challenging chapter. I'll just tell you right at the outset. Okay? It begins by saying, “*Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year.*”

Now there's a couple of things I want to say about this before we go on, because I think it's important to set the stage. Number 1., we don't know exactly when this event occurred, because you'll notice here in verse 1, and we didn't finish all of verse 1. But it begins with this very kind of obscure statement saying, “*in the days of David.*” So it's sometime in the days of David.

When you read through the Bible, you need to understand that the biblical writers didn't consider chronology to be all that important. Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of events that are given to you and I chronologically, but they will easily throw things in that are out of chronological order just because, it wasn't that important. We don't know when this took place. Probably took place earlier within the context of David's reign, but when we're not absolutely sure.

But it says here that, “*there was a famine.*” But it not only went on for a year, you can almost pass off a famine or a drought that happens for a year. You can think, well, that was a weird weather pattern year and we didn't get the rainfall that we needed. So here's hoping for better things next year. And then year 2 comes along. It's like, wow, that was another lean year in terms of rainfall and so forth. Sure hope things get better now. It's a third year in a row.

Now, here's why that would raise questions in Israel. God had promised the Israelites in the Word that wouldn't happen. He promised them that if they walked in accordance with His Word through the law, that He would bless them with the rainfall that would cause their crops to grow. So 3 years in a row, that's a little bit too much of a coincidence. We need to go to the Lord.

And it tells us here at the end of verse 1, if you look with me there, that *“...David sought the face of the LORD.”* So he goes to God about this situation, *“And the LORD said, “There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.””*

*<sup>2</sup> So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites. Although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had sought to strike them down in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.”* Now, stop there for just a moment.

Again, it's worthwhile to get a little bit of a backstory. The Gibeonites were people of Israel. We first met way back during the times of Joshua, when the Israelites, you'll remember, were taking the land that God had promised to them through their forefathers, and they were eliminating the previous occupants.

The Gibeonites were very cunning, clever people. They knew that their city was in line in the conquest that the Israelites were making through the land. They had already taken Jericho. They had already taken Ai and they were getting ready to come up against a confederacy of city states that were in Canaan at that time. And the Gibeonites thought we better do something quick.

So you'll remember the story. They came up with a ruse. They came up with a lie. They went to the Israelites and they caused them to believe that they were from a country a long way away and that the Israelites should make a pact with them, or a covenant to bless them and spare them. And they said, we'll do the same to you. We're not from around here.

And so the Israelites, who didn't consult the Lord on the matter, simply just believed the lie and said, all right, we'll make a pact to spare you. Well, then they come to find out a day or so later, the Gibeonites lived right down the road. And they call them together. And they say, why have you done this? Why? Well, it should have been obvious. We didn't want to die.

Well, they talked it over among the elders of Israel at the time, and they decided, well, hey, we made a vow and we're not going to go back on a vow we made in the presence of the Lord. We are not going to hurt these people but we are going to set them into menial tasks. So they had them you'll remember, become woodcutters and water carriers for the temple of the Lord, which the Gibeonites were thrilled about, by the way. They thought, given that and death, we'll take menial labor. They were delighted.

Well Israel has this ongoing relationship with the Gibeonites to protect them. Saul, we're told here, in his zeal, which was obviously misguided, tried to eliminate the Gibeonites. We don't know how many people he slaughtered. In fact, this story that we're being told about here, it appears nowhere else in Scripture.

We are never told about Saul doing this, only here. So we don't know the details, how many people were killed and so forth, but obviously Saul tried to wipe out these people and what would amount to genocide. And now because Israel had gone against their vow to protect the Gibeonites, a famine has come upon the land for 3 consecutive years.

Verse 3, look with me and let's see how this story turns out. *“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?’”*<sup>4</sup> *The Gibeonites said to him, ‘It is not a matter of silver or gold between us and Saul or his house; (in other words, money isn't an issue, we don't care about money, and that isn't going to, you can't pay us off) neither is it for us to put any man to death in Israel.’”*

In other words, we've been conscripted as water carriers and woodcutters, and we don't have the place. We don't have the right in Israel to exact revenge, right? They're saying we don't have the legal right to do anything about this issue.

And He said, this is David speaking. *“And he said, ‘What do you say that I shall do for you?’”*<sup>5</sup> *They said to the king, ‘The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel,’*<sup>6</sup> *let seven of his sons be given to us, so that we may hang them before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD.”* And the king said, *“I will give them.”*

<sup>7</sup> *But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the LORD that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.”*

So David, stay with me on this. David agreed to hand over to them seven sons of Saul or descendants of Saul to be punished for Saul's crime against the Gibeonites. Let's keep reading and then we'll talk about this.

<sup>8</sup> *The king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, (and by the way, Aiah was one of Saul's concubines) whom she bore to Saul, (and it names them there) Armoni and Mephibosheth; (not the same Mephibosheth, as Jonathan's*

son) and the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; <sup>9</sup> and he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the mountain before the LORD, and the seven of them perished together. They were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest.

<sup>10</sup> Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah (and again, that's Saul's concubine) took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell upon them from the heavens. (and that's an important note that rain fell that would signal the end of the drought) And she did not allow the birds of the air to come upon them by day, or the beasts of the field by night.

<sup>11</sup> When David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, <sup>12</sup> David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, on the day the Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa. <sup>13</sup> And he brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan; and they gathered the bones of those who were hanged. <sup>14</sup> And they buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan in the land of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father. And they did all that the king commanded. And after that God responded to the plea for the land."

Stop there if you would please just for a moment so we can talk about this rather troubling passage of Scripture.

First of all, you can see here that when David heard that what one of Saul's concubines had done, keeping vigil, if you will, over the dead bodies of her slain sons, keeping the birds of prey from lighting upon the carcasses, and so forth.

When he heard about all that, and the fact that they had hung there for that terrible long period of time, must have been horrible. It says that David was moved with compassion for the sons of Saul, and he gathered them up; their remains, along with the remains of king Saul and Jonathan, and he brought them all to the family tomb. The tomb of Kish, the son or the father of Saul, rather, and he buried them. Gave them a family burial.

Now, to you and I, that may sound like very little. We don't put the same emphasis on, well, we put an emphasis on burial, but it doesn't mean the same thing culturally to us as it did to them. For an individual to be left if you will, without a proper burial was a very serious concern in the heart and mind of an Israelite. And it was a situation where David's expression of concern was, probably under the circumstances, about the best thing he could do to express

his love for the family. And the fact that this was not on his part, an act of vengeance. This was not any kind of an expression of bitterness on his own part, which people would be likely to believe from the standpoint that he was now, he was king in the place of Saul. David is doing a good thing.

But we tend to look at this story from the perspective Of the New Testament and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And we view it today with a mixture of disgust and confusion, because it just doesn't fly. I mean, we're like, what is that all about? I mean, there are so many Scriptures that I can think of that seem to go against this.

God forbade His people from being involved in any kind of human sacrifice. We know that. He hated human sacrifice. But then when we sit and think about this thing for a while, we realize, now wait a minute, this isn't a sacrifice. This isn't a human sacrifice. That's not what's going on here so that doesn't specifically apply.

What about the passage that talks about the fact that a son is not to suffer for the sins of his father? I don't know. It seems like that is kind of being ignored in this situation. But we also have to keep a few other things in mind, not the least of which is that we're dealing with the Law and not grace. We're dealing with Israel and not the church. And we're also keeping in mind that we are not talking here about atonement in its specific term. These men did not die for atonement. They died for the purpose of legal retribution. In other words, payment in that sense.

But I think the most important thing we have to keep in mind as it relates to this very troubling story is that God did not command that this thing take place. I recognize that after the deaths of these men, the Lord did give rain once again to the land, but we don't know it might've happened anyway. The fact of the matter is there had already been a famine for three years. For all we know, that was the time period that God had ordained for the famine to take place as a result of that violated vow. And it was about to end on its own.

We have to remember something about this. God didn't tell David to give up seven sons of Saul. God didn't tell him to do that. This whole arrangement was between David and the Gibeonites. That's a very important thing to think about as we're looking at this story. And it's one of those strugglesome stories that we have in the Old Testament. Like the story of Jephthah and several others that we can think of. Where there's an end to the story that leaves us just feeling like, yuck, that's awful. What in the world were these people thinking? And why did God allow this to happen?

Well, the fact of the matter is God allows a lot of things to happen that you and I wish He wouldn't or think that He shouldn't. But it doesn't mean that God was in favor of the solution. As I said, it says from the text that God did allow rain to once again come to the land, but it nowhere specifically says because these men were killed. It just simply happened at the end of that time period.

This chapter ends with some reminders about the fact that the sword still did not leave David's house. In verse 15 it says, *“There was war again between the Philistines and Israel, and David went down together with his servants, and they fought against the Philistines. And David grew weary.”*<sup>16</sup> *And Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of the giants, whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of bronze, and who was armed with a new sword, thought to kill David.*<sup>17</sup> *But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid and attacked the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, “You shall no longer go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel.”*”

This is one of those difficult times that every man either has or will come to terms with, and that is the inevitable slowdown that comes with age. We don't like to admit it. That's why Brett Favre played for so long in the NFL. We don't want to believe that we're deteriorating and that our strength is going down.

I'll never forget when at one time when I was probably in my early forties, but I was at a basketball game cause I was at that time in my early forties, I was still refereeing basketball. And these kids were walking in front of me under the basketball hoop, where you have these things connected to the wall. And one of these tall kids just reached up and grabbed the supports that hold the basketball hoop, that to the wall. And I thought to myself, I can do that.

And of course, when I was a kid I did. So I remember, I reached up and I grabbed with my arm and I grabbed a hold of that bar and I hung there for a while and I came down to the ground and I couldn't move for the next several minutes. And the next morning, every muscle along here just ached like you wouldn't believe. And I remember thinking, what happened? What happened to me?

This is called getting old. But isn't that fun? It's just it's fun. Every guy, every guy. None of these guys are going to nod their head right now because none of them even want to admit it right now. But it happens to all of us.

David, it says, was going and we don't know exactly his age here because again, these are, chronologically, we're not sure. But it says that he grew weary and almost got killed, almost got himself killed. And that would have been a very

serious issue in Israel. Thankfully for Abishai, he came to his rescue and the men pulled David aside and said, that is it, buddy. That is the last time you come out with us to the battlefield.

Verse 18 says, *“After this there was again war with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was one of the descendants of the giants. <sup>19</sup> And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.”*

By the way, this story is also retold in 1 Chronicles chapter 20 and in that story, in that account, he is referred to as the brother of Goliath, the Gittite, which is probably the case.

And then it says, *“<sup>20</sup> And there was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number, and he also was descended from the giants.”* Too bad he lived way back then, today he could just have a good living in the circus, right? Or something like that. But in this case, he's a warrior, and he's someone to be feared, because he's big and huge, and so forth.

And it says, *<sup>21</sup> And when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down. <sup>22</sup> These four were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.”*

Like war. That's this last section of this chapter is just to remind you and I of the ongoing issues of war. What was David told? That the sword would not depart from his house. He did not live at peace for the rest of his days. If it wasn't something from within his own household, it was an issue of war from without.

We're going to do this last chapter that we're going to deal with tonight. Chapter 22, which is just a Psalm of David. And then we'll cover the final couple of chapters next time Lord willing.

*“And David spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. <sup>2</sup> He said,*

*“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,  
<sup>3</sup> my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation,  
my stronghold and my refuge,*

*my savior; you save me from violence.*  
<sup>4</sup> *I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,  
and I am saved from my enemies.*  
<sup>5</sup> *“For the waves of death encompassed me,  
the torrents of destruction assailed me;  
<sup>6</sup> the cords of Sheol entangled me;  
the snares of death confronted me.*  
<sup>7</sup> *“In my distress I called upon the LORD;  
to my God I called.*  
*From his temple he heard my voice,  
and my cry came to his ears.*  
<sup>8</sup> *“Then the earth reeled and rocked;  
the foundations of the heavens trembled  
and quaked, because he was angry.*  
<sup>9</sup> *Smoke went up from his nostrils,  
and devouring fire from his mouth;  
glowing coals flamed forth from him.*  
<sup>10</sup> *He bowed the heavens and came down;  
thick darkness was under his feet.*  
<sup>11</sup> *He rode on a cherub and flew;  
he was seen on the wings of the wind.*  
<sup>12</sup> *He made darkness around him his canopy,  
thick clouds, a gathering of water.*  
<sup>13</sup> *Out of the brightness before him  
coals of fire flamed forth.*  
<sup>14</sup> *The LORD thundered from heaven,  
and the Most High uttered his voice.*  
<sup>15</sup> *And he sent out arrows and scattered them;  
lightning, and routed them.*  
<sup>16</sup> *Then the channels of the sea were seen;  
the foundations of the world were laid bare,  
at the rebuke of the LORD,  
at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.*  
<sup>17</sup> *“He sent from on high, he took me;  
he drew me out of many waters.*  
<sup>18</sup> *He rescued me from my strong enemy,  
from those who hated me,  
for they were too mighty for me.*  
<sup>19</sup> *They confronted me in the day of my calamity,  
but the LORD was my support.*  
<sup>20</sup> *He brought me out into a broad place;  
he rescued me, because he delighted in me.*



- <sup>21</sup> *"The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.*
- <sup>22</sup> *For I have kept the ways of the LORD  
and have not wickedly departed from my God.*
- <sup>23</sup> *For all his rules were before me,  
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.*
- <sup>24</sup> *I was blameless before him,  
and I kept myself from guilt.*
- <sup>25</sup> *And the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to my cleanness in his sight.*
- <sup>26</sup> *"With the merciful you show yourself merciful;  
with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;*
- <sup>27</sup> *with the purified you deal purely,  
and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.*
- <sup>28</sup> *You save a humble people,  
but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down.*
- <sup>29</sup> *For you are my lamp, O LORD,  
and my God lightens my darkness.*
- <sup>30</sup> *For by you I can run against a troop,  
and by my God I can leap over a wall.*
- <sup>31</sup> *This God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the LORD proves true;  
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.*
- <sup>32</sup> *"For who is God, but the LORD?  
And who is a rock, except our God?*
- <sup>33</sup> *This God is my strong refuge  
and has made my way blameless.*
- <sup>34</sup> *He made my feet like the feet of a deer  
and set me secure on the heights.*
- <sup>35</sup> *He trains my hands for war,  
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*
- <sup>36</sup> *You have given me the shield of your salvation,  
and your gentleness made me great.*
- <sup>37</sup> *You gave a wide place for my steps under me,  
and my feet did not slip;*
- <sup>38</sup> *I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,  
and did not turn back until they were consumed.*
- <sup>39</sup> *I consumed them; I thrust them through, so that they did not rise;  
they fell under my feet.*
- <sup>40</sup> *For you equipped me with strength for the battle;  
you made those who rise against me sink under me.*
- <sup>41</sup> *You made my enemies turn their backs to me,  
those who hated me, and I destroyed them.*

<sup>42</sup> *They looked, but there was none to save;  
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.*

<sup>43</sup> *I beat them fine as the dust of the earth;  
I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.*

<sup>44</sup> *“You delivered me from strife with my people;  
you kept me as the head of the nations;  
people whom I had not known served me.*

<sup>45</sup> *Foreigners came cringing to me;  
as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me.*

<sup>46</sup> *Foreigners lost heart  
and came trembling out of their fortresses.*

<sup>47</sup> *“The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock,  
and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation,*

<sup>48</sup> *the God who gave me vengeance  
and brought down peoples under me,*

<sup>49</sup> *who brought me out from my enemies;  
you exalted me above those who rose against me;  
you delivered me from men of violence.*

<sup>50</sup> *“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations,  
and sing praises to your name.*

<sup>51</sup> *Great salvation he brings to his king,  
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,  
to David and his offspring forever.”*

Isn't that a great Psalm? It's wonderful on so many fronts, not the least of which is it expresses a heart of praise and a continual heart of praise as it tells the story of God's deliverance of David over the course of his life.

Again, at what specific point in his life? Not exactly sure but certainly, a song of deliverance. Whether it was done after God delivered him from Saul, or just right at that time, David is expressing his heart toward the Lord.

When's the last time you did that? When's the last time there was an extended expression of thanksgiving that came out of your lips?

We forget sometimes that when we come for prayer, the Bible tells us to “*enter his gates with thanksgiving, and... his courts with praise.*” (Psalm 100:4) And so many times I think, we forget about that and we begin to pray, but we pray like so many of us have prayed in the past. And that is treating God like a genie in a bottle who we go to, to get something specific out of Him. Or when there's a need in our life.

But have you ever been challenged to just spend a significant extended portion of your prayer time, just in praise. Just praising Him, just thanking Him. And just say to yourself, I'm not going to move off the dime here until I spend this period of time, just praising the Lord.

A heart of thanksgiving so many times for you and I is something that rises from emotion. And there's nothing specifically wrong with that, but if it only arises from a heart of emotion, then that means that when you don't feel like it, you're not going to do it. And it means that when you do feel like it, that's when you'll do it. And when do you praise? You praise when you feel like it.

But, the Bible doesn't say, enter His courts with thanksgiving when you feel like it. It doesn't say come before him with singing and thanksgiving when you feel like it. It says do it. When? When you're entering. When you're coming in. Come before His courts with praise. Enter His gates with thanksgiving.

Paul said, *"Rejoice in the Lord always; (and) again I... say, rejoice."* (Philippians 4:4) Our hearts ought to be one of rejoicing, but the problem is we have become so American in our thinking that we only do it when the emotion is there, rather than doing it out of obedience. Praising is something that we do or ought to do because we are told to do it.

We are given that command in the Word, praise the Lord, go before the Lord with praise, but I don't feel like it. Do it anyway. Do you know, it can just, it can really change the whole complexion of your time with the Lord when you determined to start your prayer time with praise. We're not going to ask for anything. We're not going to lay out any sort of a request until we've praised, until we have praised the Lord.

You know what? The more you do it, the easier it becomes. And sometimes we wonder why there isn't joy in our lives. I keep hearing about this joy of the Lord, and then all this stuff. And we have never taken a step of faith to begin to walk in that attitude of praise and thanksgiving. And then we wonder why we're not overflowing with joy.

So many times we need to take that step of faith, that step of obedience. Jesus, I'm just going to praise You. I love how David takes this long Psalm. I mean, that goes on for a long time and just recounts the goodness of God.

Have you thought about doing that in your prayer time? Just recounting His goodness, how He has saved you out of this situation and that circumstance,

how He saved you period. And all the things that go along with that, just recounting that to Him.

Lord, I praise You for your goodness. I thank You, for delivering me. You delivered me. You sought me out. You drew me unto yourself. And when I was at the worst possible place in my life, you drew my heart to understand your salvation. When I wanted nothing to do with You, You focused my attention on your presence by bringing difficulties and challenges into my life so that I would be focused on You and come to know You as my Savior.

Maybe it would work for you to do David obviously wrote this stuff down. Maybe it would work for you to get out, pen and paper and write down your praise. Enter His gates with thanksgiving. If it works that way for you, then do it. Whatever works for you, do it. But just do it!