

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Samuel: God's Shift Of Israel From Apostasy Under The Judges To David's Reign

II. 2 Samuel: The Reign Of David Over Israel

V. Rizpah: Nobly Responding To Great, Unfair Hardships (2 Samuel 21:1-14)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Every believer in Christ has faced some unfair hardships in life, and some believers a lot more than others:

(1) We face unfair hardships as voters: Jason Snead's story, "Voter fraud a persistent problem" (Republican-American, July 14, 2017, p. 6A) reported, "The Heritage Foundation's recently updated Voter Fraud Database" reveals "a slew of overturned elections and civil fines targeting vote fraudsters . . . in 47 states" who "steal votes, corrupt politicians and negate legitimate votes cast by eligible citizens -- effectively disenfranchising them."

(2) We face unfair hardships as taxpayers: Sadie Gurman's piece, "Huge health care scam" (Ibid., p. 1C) told how nearly 300 doctors, nurses and pharmacists have put greed ahead of their patients by illegally billing Medicare, Medicaid and the health insurance program to order painkiller opioids for addicts who were at times packed into standing-room-only waiting rooms! Meanwhile, 52,000 Americans died of overdoses in 2015 and experts think the number is climbing "often at the expense of taxpayers" according to U. S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Ibid.

(3) However, locally, we often hear of believers, men, women, teens and children, who have been handed very great, unfair experiences in their lives. I have often wondered what Scriptures I could share with them that they could use for special application in their lives, and we have a special one today in 2 Samuel 21:1-14 -- Rizpah's story!

Need: *Accordingly, we ask, "How does God want us to deal with very great, unfair hardships we face?!"*

- I. **Saul's concubine Rizpah faced a tremendous amount of unfair hardships in life, 2 Samuel 21:1-9 et al.:**
- A. Rizpah was a concubine, a slave who served as a mistress to king Saul, 2 Sam. 3:7; Z. P. E. B., v. One, p. 935.
 - B. Since she was the daughter of Aiah, possibly the Aiah of 1 Chronicles 1:40 and Genesis 36:24, she was likely a Horite, a Gentile, and foreign concubines were especially despised in Israel, Ibid.; Ibid., v. Five, p. 121.
 - C. The presence of a concubine in the home always created stress in the marriage, and there would have been significant tension between Rizpah and Saul's full wife or wives if he had multiple wives, Ibid., v. One, p. 935.
 - D. Rizpah had also lost her master Saul in battle, and Philistine soldiers had dishonored his body, decapitating it and hanging it up along with the bodies of his sons who had fallen with him in battle, 1 Samuel 31:1-10.
 - E. Saul's general, Abner, had then either sexually appropriated Rizpah to lay claim to Saul's throne, or the charge that he had done so had circulated in Israel, an oppressive and humiliating event for Rizpah, 2 Samuel 3:6-11.
 - F. Then, since Saul had violated Joshua's former oath given in God's name not to harm the Gibeonites, what led to God's punishing Israel with a famine, David chose Rizpah's two sons and five others of Saul's male descendants to give to the Gibeonites to execute and publicly hang to appease them and God, 2 Samuel 21:1-9.
 - G. What made the event even more tragic was that Joshua's former oath had been made in violation of God's will:
 - 1. In Joshua's day, the Gibeonites pretended to be from a distant land, not from the Canaanites Israel was to destroy, so they tricked Israel into swearing in God's name not to harm them, Jos. 9:1-15; Deut. 20:16-18.
 - 2. Tragically, Joshua and Israel had not asked counsel of God before making their oath (Joshua 9:14), but had they done so, God would have kept them from making their promise much to Rizpah's later relief.
 - H. Furthermore, the pagan Gibeonites had their own kind of justice, not that of God's Law, so they exacted a much more severe punishment on her sons than the Mosaic Law allowed, greatly enhancing Rizpah's grief:
 - 1. The Mosaic Law did not allow for a son to be punished for his father's sin, Deuteronomy 24:16.
 - 2. Then, if a man was executed and his body hung up for exposure in dishonor, the Mosaic Law directed that his body be taken down by nightfall lest the land be defiled in God's eyes, Deuteronomy 21:23.
 - 3. However, the **Gibeonites** were **wronged** by a **violation** of an **oath** in **God's name**, so *they* stood to be **appeased** on *their* terms for the sake of **God's testimony!** These **pagans** then called for seven of Saul's male descendants to be given over to them that they might kill them and hang up their bodies indefinitely in Saul's hometown of Gibeah where Rizpah happened to live all to dishonor Saul, 2 Samuel 21:5-6, 10b.
 - I. Also, Rizpah suffered a great loss of fame and fortune with the death and dishonoring of her master and sons:
 - 1. A concubine's sons could become heirs of their father's estate together with his sons by his full wives, Ibid.
 - 2. Since her master, Saul, was Israel's king, Rizpah's welfare and opportunity for fame and fortune as a despised Gentile concubine all relied on the fame and fortune of her master Saul and her sons by him.

3. However, with the death of her master and the dishonoring of his body by the Philistines coupled with the deaths of her sons and the dishonoring of their bodies by the Gibeonites, Rizpah's personal loss was great!
- J. Yet, most appalling, the **timing** of the execution and hanging of her sons was excruciating for Rizpah:
1. Abner's alleged sexual appropriation of Rizpah soon after Saul's death occurred in 997 B. C. when her sons by Saul were still young, but their executions came 27 years later, in 970 B. C., *Ibid.*, Vol. Five, p. 121.
 2. At their deaths, then, Rizpah's sons had wives and children, daughters-in-law and grandchildren to her, and to see them face the grief and humiliation she had faced at Saul's death would have been traumatic for her!
- II. In response, Rizpah heeded God's will and did her best to function as nobly as possible, 2 Samuel 21:10:**
- A. At the execution and hanging of her sons, Rizpah nobly **accepted** God's will -- the appeasing of pagan Gibeonites on **their** terms to protect **God's testimony** based on Joshua's ancient, tragic oath that had been made outside of God's will. She **expressed** her acceptance of God's will by taking "sackcloth" (*shaq*, B. D. B., *A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 974), what was worn to signify grief and repentance, and spread it on a rock near the bodies to signify the mourning and repentance of the land, *Ibid.*, *Z. P. E. B.*, v. Five, p. 121.
 - B. Then, spurred by all the dishonoring trials she had been handed in her life and trying to salvage what honor she could for her daughters-in-law and grandchildren, Rizpah kept the birds by day and the animals by night from scavenging off the bodies from April when they were hung until October, six months later when the rains came, signaling God's wrath had been appeased, *Ryrie Study Bible, KJV*, 1978, fn. to 2 Samuel 21:10.
 - C. Remarkably, Rizpah kept the scavengers off not only her sons' bodies, but off the bodies of the other bodies, those of the grandsons of her rival, Saul's wife! ***Rizpah fought for the honor of Saul's whole household!***
- III. God accordingly rewarded Rizpah for how she addressed her very difficult hardships, 2 Sam. 21:11-14:**
- A. David heard of Rizpah's gallant vigil over the bodies, and he was deeply moved by it, 2 Samuel 21:11.
 - B. Accordingly, influenced by the Holy Spirit ever since his anointing (1 Samuel 16:13), David rewarded Rizpah, giving publicly dishonored men of Saul's family an honorable burial, 2 Samuel 21:12-14:
 1. David retrieved the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan who died in battle with him from where the men of Jabesh Gilead had buried their bodies east of the Jordan River, 2 Sam. 21:12-13a with 1 Sam. 31:11-13.
 2. He also took down the exposed bodies of Saul's seven male descendants, his daughter Merab's (not Michal's, 2 Sam. 21:8; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to 2 Sam. 21:8) five sons and Rizpah's two sons, 2 Samuel 21:13b.
 3. David laid all of these remains in the tomb of Saul's father Kish at Gibeah, what was a normal and thus an honorable burial, 2 Sam. 21:14a,b; Roland DeVaux, *Ancient Israel: Vol. 1: Social Institutions*, 1961, p. 58.
 4. Rizpah and her extended family thus gained the respect of David and her Gibeah neighbors by her vigil over the bodies and by David's honorable burial of Saul and his descendants in the tomb of Saul's father!
 - C. God was thus appeased, so He heeded Israel's call for rain and ended the three-year famine, 2 Samuel 21:14c.

Lesson: *Rizpah overcame a great amount of unfair hardships in her life by first accepting God's will for her and her sons while doing her best to function heroically given her brutal set of circumstances, and God rewarded it.*

Application: *To handle great unfair hardships in life, may we (1) first yield to the will of God to believe in His Son Jesus Christ for salvation, Acts 17:30 with John 3:16. (2) Then, in the difficult circumstances we are permitted by God to face, (a) may we yield to God's Biblical will in those circumstances, as difficult as they may be, (b) while functioning as heroically as we can to be honorably productive in those circumstances, (3) and God will reward it.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Before the communists came to power in China, James Braga was raised there in a home by a godly mother who was married to a godless, unsaved father. James' father was most often away from home working with the railroad, but he demanded that his children attend the nearby Roman Catholic parochial school.

Scripture required Mrs. Braga to submit to her husband, so her children had to attend that school. However, she did her best to disciple them given the situation: when her son came home from school each day, she would ask, "James, what did you learn today?", and when he told her, she would undo in five minutes all the error he had heard!

James Braga grew up to become a professor at the Multnomah School of the Bible, and he taught us how to study the Bible, exhibiting a deep passion for digging up the nuggets of Scripture truth! That passion, that we seek to pass on to you, began with a godly mother who two generations ago in China faced her marital and family hardships by focusing on getting to know God's Word for herself that she might instill it in the minds and hearts of her children!

If facing great, unfair hardships, may we trust in Christ for eternal life. Then, may we heed God's will and live as honorably and heroically for Christ as we can in the circumstances we face, and see God reward it!