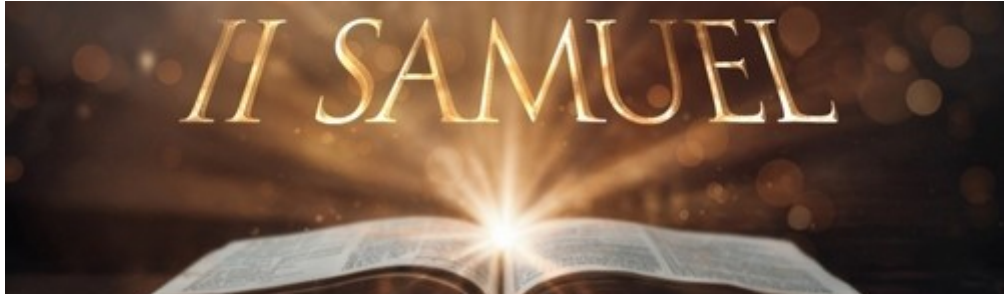


Let's Worship God

17th - 22nd August
2 Samuel





Monday - 2 Samuel 21:1 - The Mercy of Clarity

We have a God who doesn't just tell us that things are bad. We could work that out for ourselves. He also tells us *why* they're bad, and that's a mercy that we shouldn't take for granted. We see it in the passage in front of us. The chapter opens with a famine. But there's something unusual about the famine because it just keeps going. And David seeks the face of the LORD. Don't miss how wonderful that is. As Christians we have a God that we can go to for clarity. How different this is from the world. A crisis hits. What's the world's reaction? "We can fix this". They don't seek the face of the LORD, because they don't think they need to. Or think of the average unbeliever. Their child is rushed to hospital. Some other crisis hits their life. But they have no God to seek the face of. Do you realise how blessed you are, to have a God that you can go to in a crisis?

So David goes to the LORD to ask what's causing this famine. God's answer is: 'Bloodguilt'. In other words, sin. Now that might not necessarily be the answer David wants to hear. But again, what a mercy that God tells us what the actual issue is. Think of someone who goes to a counsellor. Maybe their life is just dominated by sin, and they're super stressed trying to keep it hidden, and also keep up appearances at home. That counsellor, if they're not a Christian, isn't going to say: 'You're living in sin and you need to stop it right now'. Why not? Because sin isn't a category that the unbelieving counsellor can use. Because they don't believe in it. Or perhaps the person is suffering the consequences of sinful lifestyle choices in the past. The counsellor isn't going to say what they should say which is first and foremost that they are suffering the consequences for past sin, that needs to be repented of and dealt with. Rather, all the counsellor will do is try and help them manage the situation they find themselves in now without dealing with the root of the problem. If someone went to the doctor with a physical illness, and the doctor knew what was causing it, but only told the patient how to manage the symptoms, that wouldn't be loving - if they could actually deal with the problem at the source. But God in his mercy tells us what the root cause of our problems is in order that we can do something about it. Or rather - that we might come to him, and have him do something about it.

Question

1. What is the root cause of our problems?

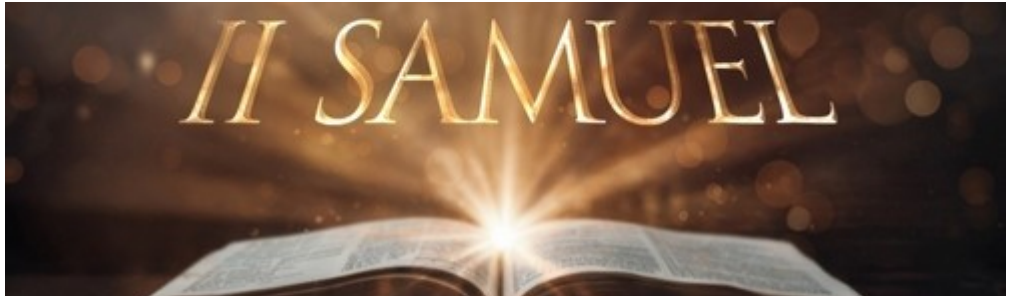
Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that we have a God that we can go to in a crisis.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

Praise: Psalm 49:1-5 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Tuesday - 2 Samuel 21:1-2 - A Broken Covenant

In law, there's such a thing as a statute of limitations. There are some crimes, where, if legal proceedings aren't begun within a certain number of years, then it's too late to do anything about it. But there's no statute of limitations with God. One of the great myths we believe is that time heals sin. That if something happened long enough ago, we can just move on. But not with God. And we have an example of that here. The crime, as we learn from verse 1, is Saul's execution of the Gibeonites. If you're wondering who the Gibeonites are, verse 2 gives you pretty much all that you need to know. In Joshua chapter 9, the Gibeonites had tricked Joshua and the people into making a covenant with them. They'd pretended that they had come from a long way away, when they were actually their neighbours. Three days after making the covenant, the Israelites found out who they really were. The people wanted to kill them. But Joshua and the other leaders told them: 'We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them. We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them'. Four centuries had passed between then and Saul's day. Although what Saul did isn't recorded elsewhere in the Bible, we learn here that he had slaughtered many of them. And that's in line with what we know of Saul from elsewhere, when back in 1st Samuel 22 he commanded the murder of 85 priests.

So why did Saul kill the Gibeonites? It seems that he struck them down in some sort of nationalistic zeal. But zeal isn't a good thing in and of itself. Zeal can be misplaced. Saul in his misplaced zeal broke a covenant that had been made four centuries earlier. And if it was wrong to break a covenant that the people of Israel had been tricked into making all those years ago, how much more serious is it for our own nation to have broken the covenants it made with God almost four centuries ago (in 1638 and 1643)? And actually, Saul's biggest crime here is taking God's name in vain. Remember what Joshua and the other leaders had said: 'We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel'. So to break that vow was to drag God's name through the muck. The blood that had been shed needed atoned for. And in fact if it wasn't atoned for, it would look like the God of Israel was some sort of nationalistic God, who never held his people to account.

Question

1. How had Saul broken a national covenant?

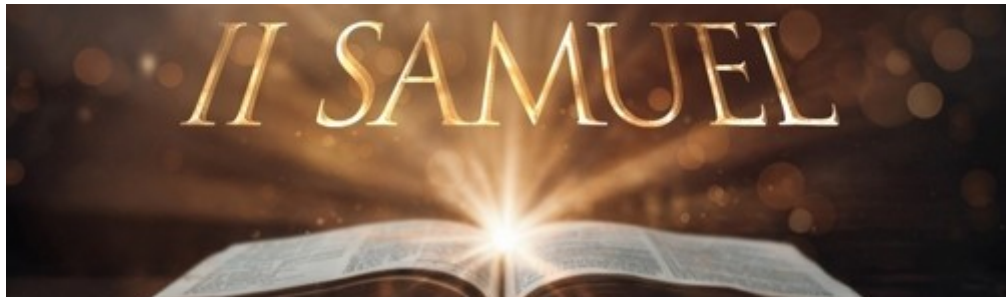
Prayer Points

1. Pray that our nation would repent of covenant breaking.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

Praise: Psalm 49:6-10 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Wednesday - 2 Samuel 21:1-6 - Sin Has No Time Limit

The shocking thing in this chapter is that the atonement is made not by executing Saul, who's not around anymore, but by executing seven of his sons. Don't miss the main point that this passage is making - which is that sin has consequences, and the guilt of sin will remain until atonement is made. Just because Saul is off the scene doesn't mean that his sin is forgotten. Committing sin against God isn't like getting penalty points. (Where if you wait long enough, they disappear off your licence.) What sort of god would God be if he had a perfect knowledge of all things - but just chose to overlook sin? If he said: 'Well, that was a long time ago, so it doesn't really matter'. Jesus himself said that on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak. And every careless word means words we spoke when we were young as well as words we spoke when we were old. Other people may have forgotten our sinful words. But God hasn't. Now, wonderfully, God has made a way for sin to be dealt with. Because of the death of Jesus in our place, we have the amazing promise that: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. But if we refuse to go to Jesus for forgiveness, one day we will have to answer ourselves for every sin we've ever committed.

Perhaps we get the fact that Saul's sin needs dealt with. But what people often struggle with is what happens next. Why were Saul's descendants killed? After all, does God's law itself not teach us in Deuteronomy 24.16 that: 'fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.' If you're concerned about the idea of children being put to death for the sins of their father, that's something the Bible is also concerned about. We'll look more at this tomorrow.

Questions

1. How has God made a way for sin to be dealt with?
2. What happens if we don't seek forgiveness.

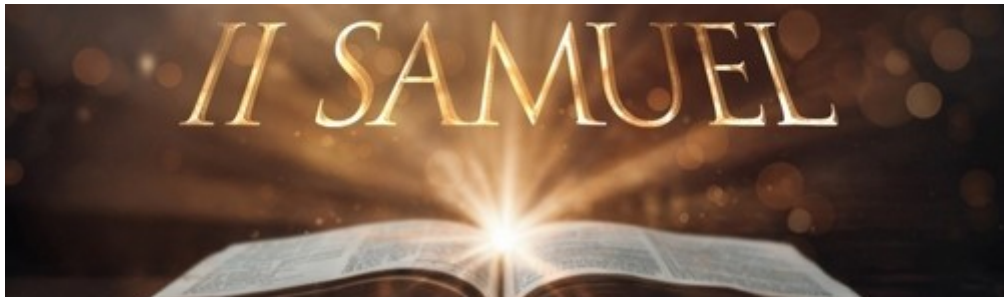
Prayer Points

1. Pray for the salvation of family and friends.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

Praise: Psalm 49:11-14 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Thursday - 2 Samuel 21:3-9 - The Cost of Atonement

Saul wasn't just an ordinary father. He was the king. And his actions as king involve more than himself alone. Just as if our government were to declare war with another country, we would all be at war. And Saul's sin brings consequences for his house - his dynasty. Now there's a new ruling dynasty; it's the house of David in charge rather than the house of Saul. David and his house don't share the blame for what Saul did, though they're suffering the consequences of famine like everyone else. But there are still some of Saul's family around. And the Gibeonites say that it is the house of Saul that bears the guilt. David offers to make atonement himself in verse 3. Perhaps he's thinking something financial. But the Gibeonites say in verse 4, silver and gold won't cut it. Rather, blood must be shed. That wasn't simply some belief that the Gibeonites had. God had given the people a law which said: 'blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it'. (Numbers 35:33) That hadn't been done during Saul's lifetime. Because the king - the one who should have been enforcing the law - was the one who had shed the blood. But the land was still polluted because of the blood that Saul had shed. So the Gibeonites request that they be given seven of Saul's sons to execute.

Perhaps at this point our natural reaction is to want to look away. We'd rather not think about it. Yet it's here in God's word. It's teaching us what atonement looks like. This is what it takes for God's wrath to be satisfied. Now in a sense, large parts of the Old Testament are there to teach us what atonement looks like. The shedding of blood of millions upon millions of animals is teaching that without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sins.

Atonement must be made for our sin too. We're born into this world as part of Adam's dynasty. We share the guilt of his sin. And we add to that guilt each day. And so atonement must be made. But if we have lost a sense of the horror of what that involved, this passage is meant to stop us in our tracks. If the cross has become sanitised for us, if it has become simply a symbol, here we have a reminder of the horror of atonement, of the cost of it. Surely this passage is here to point us forward to another son, being hanged before the LORD on a hill. Even though he was innocent, he hung there in place of the guilty. Surely Gibeah is here to point us forward to Golgotha.

Question

1. What is the cost of atonement?

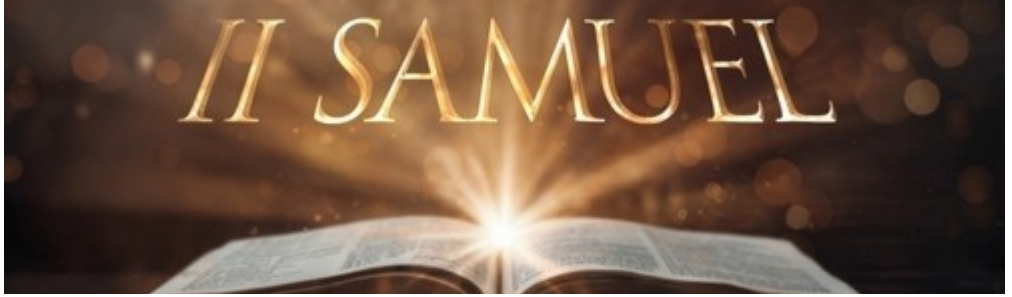
Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for Christ's death on the cross.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

Praise: Psalm 90A:1-3 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Friday - 2 Samuel 21:10-14 - What Atonement Looks Like

What we have in the passage in front of us is pretty unique. Surely it's meant to stop us in our tracks, and make us think of the seriousness of sin, and of what it costs for sin to be atoned for. And even then, Gibeah is nothing compared to Calvary, when the holy wrath of God was poured out on his eternal, sinless son.

Much as we might want to, this is not a scene we're meant to skip over. We're meant to linger here, and there's someone in the passage who does exactly that. In verse 10, Rizpah, who's the mother of two of those who were killed, spreads sackcloth for herself and stays beside the bodies, not allowing the birds or the animals to get at them. What grief she has. It's an incredibly sad picture. We're meant to feel the sadness of it. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us: 'It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart'. And as we linger here in the house of mourning, we can be sad at the thought of a mother bereaved of her children. But above all we should think of what our sin cost the Son of God. And if that leaves us with a profound sense of sadness and mournfulness, then I don't think there's anything unhealthy about that. And of course, there will be much gratefulness mixed in with it, as we think of the horror and the love of the cross, and the importance of dwelling on it. If we don't meditate often on the sufferings of the redeemer, our Christian lives will be impoverished.

Question

1. Why should we think about the cross more?
2. What should our response be to the cross?

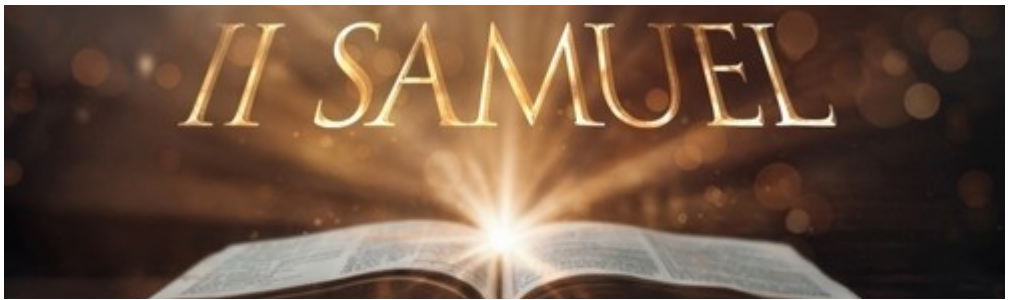
Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would be thankful for our Redeemer.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

Praise: Psalm 90A:4-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Saturday - 2 Samuel 21:7-14 - Atonement That Brings Blessing

There's a contrast in this chapter between the old king, and the new one. Saul is a covenant breaking king. He violated the covenant that had been made before God with the Gibeonites. But there's a little aside in verse 7 that reminds us that David is very different: "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." Saul ignores covenants and takes life. David keeps covenants and saves life. In this chapter, we have a better king than Saul, and that is David. But of course, as Christians we have a better king than even David. We've seen enough of David's sin in recent weeks to realise that he was very, very far from perfect. And if there's such a contrast between Saul and David, how much more infinitely glorious is Jesus Christ.

We can be confident that atonement works. How does this chapter start? Famine. How does our section end, in verse 14? God responds to the pleas for the land to bring an end to famine. Saul's sons are hanged in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest. Now there wouldn't have been much of a harvest that year, but it was coming. In verse 10 Rizpah guards the bodies until rain falls from the heavens. And rain signals the end of famine. It's all telling us that once atonement is made, the famine will be over, and blessing will come. Once atonement is made, it's the beginning of the harvest. And don't we see that with the death of Jesus? What happens 50 days later? Pentecost. The feast of harvest, or firstfruits. Atonement had been made on the cross, and now the first showers of blessing are falling, and 3,000 are saved. If you know true blessing in your life, if you're numbered with God's people by faith, it's only because atonement has been made for you at the cross. But on the other hand, if you approach the cross like some approach this passage, as an embarrassment, as something to be skipped over as quickly as possible, then you won't know the blessing that follows. But God in his kindness is inviting you again to experience the rule of a better king, and to experience the amazing truth that though atonement is brutal, it actually works, and you too can know the showers of blessing that it brings.

Question

1. How does atonement work?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12

Praise: Psalm 90A:7-8 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

**The goal of Let's Worship God is to
encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.**

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

**Let's Worship God is produced
by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.**

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