

God is faithful
Rev. Budy Setiawan
2 Sam 21:15-22
19/09/2021

What can we learn from this passage? It is not simply a historical report, but a war between David and the Philistines that was growing in intensity. It is not written in chronological order but offers a perspective centred on the Kingdom of God. We can take at least three lessons from this text.

Firstly, we learn that God cares for those He has chosen. In verses 15-17, when David was exhausted from the war, Ishbi-Benob (one of the giants) thought to kill him. However, Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid and killed the Philistine instead. The Israelites then said to David, 'You shall go out no more with us in the battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel' (v17b). The interesting point to note here is that David was called the 'lamp of Israel'. If he had died, the Israelites would have been walking in darkness. Throughout the history of salvation, we can pinpoint particular individuals who are crucial to it – whose absence would change the course of events as we know it. Of course, the history of salvation ultimately rests upon God, but God uses these individuals to shape it. He guides and protects them, so that when we look back, we can see how important they were to the accomplishment of God's plan. For example, God looked after Isaac, the promised son of Abraham, as well as Moses, the leader of the Israelites. Similarly, God cared for David through the ups and downs of his life, until His plan was fulfilled through him. Just as David was the 'lamp of Israel', Jesus is the light of the world, and God the Father took care of His Son also. Though it seems that Jesus was abandoned on the cross and darkness enveloped the nation, we know that He was eventually raised from the dead. God used this to make known His care and salvation to everyone who believes in Him.

Secondly, we learn to honour those who serve God. The four people who killed the giants are listed in this passage with their full names. Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Sibbechai the Hushathite, Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim, and Jonathan the son of Shimeah. They had already passed away by the time 2 Samuel was written, but it was an honour they deserved for obeying God and risking their lives to kill the Philistines. The Bible repeatedly reminds us of this principle. For instance, Paul often names specific individuals at the end of his letters and describes their situations. In Romans 16:1-16, he honours several people for risking their lives to preach the gospel and says that God honours them as well. Paul explicitly teaches this principal in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. Hence, let us also value and honour those who strive for the goodness of the church.

Lastly, we learn that God accomplishes His plan. The four Philistines listed in this passage are emphasised over and over again to be the descendants of the giant. In the NIV translation, they are called the 'descendants of Rapha' (e.g., v16). Rapha was a place in Philistine whose people were actually huge in stature. One of them was described as having 24 fingers (v20). I believe the writer here is not trying to insult the giant, but rather to emphasise the terrifying enemy Israel faced. However, the problem was not his physical characteristics but his tongue, which he used to taunt the people of God. The word *taunt* in Hebrew means to mock, insult, and be condescending of the Israelites. The same word is used to describe Goliath when he mocked the Israelites. Importantly, to insult the people of God is to insult the God of the people. Notice that these four conflicts and battles were against the Philistines, the enemies of the Israelites.—In 2 Samuel 3:18, God had promised David that He would use him to save His people from the hands of the Philistines and all their enemies. This promise, which was written decades earlier, was eventually fulfilled at the end of David's life.

There are other promises in the Bible that apply to all of us, God's people, which will be fulfilled in God's time. God's faithfulness and promises will be fulfilled in the lives of those who strive for Him and long to be united with Him. On the other hand, the enemies of God will be defeated, just as He had promised. The death of the Philistines is a foreshadowing of what will happen to the enemies of God. Revelations 20:7-10 tells us that the enemies of God will be defeated. We may still face death at the end of our lives, but death itself has been defeated and overcome by Jesus. Thus, whoever is united in Christ will also conquer death.

Topic/keywords: The Sovereignty of God