

Prayer

We would surely praise You, Lord God, if we were to experience all the beautiful, good and wonderful things of this world right now. But if all the evil and difficult things of this world were to descend upon us, give us the courage to turn to You and receive from You the strength to do what is right, and continue to praise Your Holy Name for ever. AMEN!

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Manufacturing

Pray for manufacturing industries facing pressures at a time of financial instability. Pray for honest and godly leaders who seek to do what is best for all in company affairs.

On-going prayers

- *Continue to pray for the world economic situation*
- *Pray for those who maintain the safety of our coastlines*
- *Give thanks for the carers who look after sick relatives*

Meditation

Make your decisions, make your judgements,
But do not point the finger. God is Judge.

Decide on what to do, to live, to love,
But He who gave you life is God, and He is Judge.

Take your choices, select the best,
But do not exploit the poor. God is Judge.

Use your earnings, enjoy its fruits,
But the only reward is God's, and He is Judge.

By what you do and the decisions you make,
You make this Judge your friend or enemy

So choose, decide, accept Him or reject Him;
But He wants to be your friend, do make it so.

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 5:17-25

¹⁷ When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they all went up to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold. ¹⁸ Now the Philistines had come and occupied the Valley of Rephaim; ¹⁹ so David enquired of the LORD, 'Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?' The LORD said to David, 'Go, I will certainly hand the Philistines over to you.'

²⁰ David went to Baal Perazim, and defeated them there. He said, 'As waters break out, the LORD has broken out against my enemies before me.' So that place was called Baal Perazim (which means 'the Lord breaks out'). ²¹ The Philistines abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them off.

²² However, the Philistines came up again and occupied the Valley of Rephaim; ²³ so David enquired of the LORD, and he said to him, 'Do not go straight up, but

go round behind them and attack them opposite the balsam trees. 24 As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, be alert, because the LORD will have already gone ahead of you to strike the Philistine army.’ 25 So David did as the LORD commanded him, and he drove back the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

Review

Chapter five of 2 Samuel begins with the acceptance by all the tribes of Israel of the authority of David as King, and it is a turning point of the Old Testament and the history of God's people. This great but simple occasion was immediately followed by David's choice of a new capital city for the united Kingdom of Israel, which was the stronghold of Jerusalem. David captured this ancient city from its Jebusite inhabitants with some military forethought and cunning, but his great achievement was to take a city that bordered all the warring tribes of Israel; Judah (David's tribe), Benjamin (Saul's tribe) and the majority tribe of the rest of Israel, often called Ephraim.

David's priorities as the new King Having capture the city, one would have thought that David would immediately begin to set it up as the social and religious heart of the nation, a process which was crucial to the success of the reunification of Israel. David did indeed do this (see 2 Samuel 6), but our passage today indicates that David had one important issue to address before working on the establishment of his court at Jerusalem. He needed to attack the Philistines and deal with the threat they posed to all Israel; a threat they had maintained for years and had extended considerably after the battle when Saul had died. However, David did not start by going north; the Philistines had been watching what was happening and were approaching David from the south. They had taken land close by in the Valley of Rephaim (5:18), part of the area immediately to the West of Jerusalem, and adjacent to Philistine territory along the sea, and posed an immediate threat to David and the new untied nation of Israel

The Philistine threat to David in the south The passage for today describes what happened as David dealt with this direct threat. He firstly enquired of the Lord about whether to fight the Philistine forces, and with a positive answer, he drove them back in two phases down the Valley of Rephaim from 'Gibeon to Gezer' (5:25). This first victory of David as King of all Israel was more than symbolic, although it would certainly have encouraged the Israelites to know that David was capable of defeating the Philistine threat. The region in which David fought off this Philistine threat was more than just a piece of Israel to the West of Jerusalem; it was the territory of Benjamin. By this action, David defended the tribe of Saul, the old King. The message was clear; although Saul had been his enemy, he was not going to repress the tribe of Benjamin because of this; instead, his first action was to liberate it! It was the action of a King who truly wished to see God's people unified rather than torn apart, and would have caused great surprise in its day. A new King would have slaughtered all his enemies and potential enemies, and before this action against the Philistines, the people of Benjamin probably thought David would fight them!

The liberation of Benjamin In addition, the whole campaign to liberate Benjamin from the Philistines is littered with religious significance. David went out to defeat the Philistines twice and on each occasion he did so with a direct command from God; ascertained through consultation with a Priest or Prophet (5:19, 23). Secondly, each battle was won by the direct intervention of the Lord (5:20, 24). The first miraculous intervention was heralded by the naming of a significant place of victory (Baal-Perazim, 5:20), and the second was heralded by a prophetically announced appearance of God, marching with the heavenly hosts through the wind in the 'balsam trees' to secure victory in front of Israel's troops

(5:23, 24). The first of these signs is a classic Old Testament description of the deeds of the Lord, and the second is as powerful story which doubtless found a powerful place in the history of the people of Benjamin. All of this served to tie Benjamin strongly into the new Israelite nation. We have not studied this here, but the Old Testament elsewhere records that the tribe of Benjamin sat loose to the other tribes of Israel (e.g. see Judges 20,21), and David did not want this to continue. The defeat of the Philistines was important, but what it demonstrated to the people of Benjamin and the whole of Israel about their unity was equally important and probably more so.

It is significant that David, despite the 'foreign policy' he had to adopt of fighting the Philistines in order to secure Israel's boundaries, proceeded to fight for a basic 'Kingdom' principle of the unity of God's people. By doing this for the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of Saul the first King of Israel and David's long-time enemy, David demonstrated what Jesus would one day teach; 'love your enemy'. These were the actions of David as 'the Lord's anointed', and through them he demonstrated the true nature of the God who had chosen Israel and the 'righteousness' which should lie at the heart of the nation.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. If you have a map of Israel at the time of David (many Bibles contain such a map at the rear) check out the place names you can find to get a 'feel' for what happened.
2. Why should we expect to find the Gospel in the Old Testament? Why do some people not expect to find the Gospel in the Old Testament?
3. Why do you think that David had to go out against the Philistines twice?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

When researching and writing this study, I did not expect to find an example of 'love your enemy' within the text. One of the wonderful things about being a disciple and trying hard to put the Gospel into practice in your own life, is that sometimes the Lord breaks through, if we let Him, and surprises us with an insight, or some act of care or understanding. These things may seem small, yet they sustain us and help our faith very powerfully.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Fast and pray for your enemies today. This subject has cropped up as a theme a number of times recently, so this must be an important reminder from the Lord that this is something we have to take very seriously.*
- *Ask the Lord to make known to you the spiritual support available to you in the more difficult battles you face, so that you can hear the 'rustling in the trees' of His support when times are rough.*

Final Prayer

When people all around me reject the faith I have, give me the presence of mind, O Lord, to stand firm in You in all circumstances. Your hand is my guide, Your Spirit is my strength and Your love is my comfort. No-one can take this away from me if I remain in Your presence; Thank You Lord; AMEN