

Burial

2 Samuel 21:10-14

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 6-8-2014

Later on in the sermon I am going to be dealing with the subject of burial. But verses 10-14 also give principles that relate to some other sticky issues as well. For example, how should a family member relate to a relative who is in prison for murder, or who is under church discipline? It can get really tricky. Let me illustrate. One phase of church discipline that sometimes happens right before excommunication is the discipline of shunning – where Paul commands the members of the church to no longer have fellowship with the rebellious church member. How would you relate to that family member if the apostle Paul had just given the following admonition?

Romans 16:17-18 says, “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. *Keep away from them.* For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.” What if that is talking about your spouse or your parent? How do you keep away from them without violating other Scriptures? Well, this passage gives us some hints of how to approach that sticky situation. General commands do sometimes have exceptions when there are other Scriptural commands to consider. For example, the command, “If a person does not work, neither should he eat,” does not apply to a baby or an invalid in exactly the same way as it applies to most people. And so the question comes, “How do general commands related to discipline impact a person who has dual loyalties – to his family and to his church?” Consider the following admonitions from Paul, and pretend that Paul is making those admonitions about one of your family members. Paul said,

- “If *anyone* teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. *From such withdraw yourself.*” (1 Tim. 6:3-5)
- Or this one: “If *anyone* comes to you and does not bring this teaching, *do not take him into your house or welcome him.* Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.” (2 John 2:10-11) Ouch. What if that person is your wife or husband?

- Or consider this one: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves... disobedient to parents, unthankful... unforgiving, slanderers... headstrong... having a form of godliness, but denying its power. And *from such people turn away!*” (2 Tim. 3:1-5) I can think of relatives who fit that description perfectly.
- Or consider this admonition: “*withdraw yourself* from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us... For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies... And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” (2 Thes. 3:6,11,14)
- Or, consider one more: “I wrote to you in my epistle *not to keep company* with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolators, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you *not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person.*” (1 Cor. 5:9-11)

I think you can see how each of those commandments would put you into a very awkward situation if that brother who was being shunned was a member of your family. How do you deal with it? Well, I think that Rizpah gives a beautiful balance. And the reason I believe it is a beautiful balance is because of God’s instructions elsewhere – and we will look at some. But let’s dive into the text first.

Verse 10 shows not only a maternal love for her two children and her five nephews, but it also shows a love for God and a total agreement with God’s judgment upon her relatives. She is not a crazy woman. She is coming into agreement with God’s judgment without relinquishing her devotion to and her allegiance to her relatives. And, she is also bringing a very humble rebuke for something unbiblical that has gone on as well. Verse 10:

2Sam. 21:10 ¶ Now Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until the late rains poured on them from heaven. And she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night.

There are several things to notice. First, she did not cut her relatives down from the gallows. There probably would have been plenty of opportunity to cut them down at night or when no one was watching and to have buried them. But she did not do so. This is the first hint that she had no intention of undermining the civil government’s judgment or God’s curse upon her relatives, despite the fact that leaving them exposed for so long was

unbiblical. She did not fight this judgment that came from lawfully ordained magistrates.

The second thing to notice is that she spread sackcloth for herself on the rock. This sackcloth was a symbol that every Jew would have immediately understood as mourning over sin and asking God to do something. So there is mourning over sin; but whose sin? Obviously chasing away these birds and animals showed devotion to her family. But the sackcloth itself was a Godward symbol. Sometimes people wore that itchy sackcloth under their clothes so that others wouldn't see it, but God would. And let me give a few Scriptures to show this symbolism. When God judged the nation because of David's sin of numbering Israel, he and all the elders clothed themselves in sackcloth and fell down in national repentance before the LORD (1 Chron. 21:16). When Israel sinned against the Lord with their mixed marriages in the book of Nehemiah, they were confronted about their sin, and they repented. It says,

Neh. 9:1 ... the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads.

This was an Israelite way of not only humbling themselves before God, but also asking God to have mercy upon the nation and to forgive their sin. In Isaiah 32:11 God commanded Israel to put on sackcloth and to mourn over their sins that required His judgments. In Jeremiah 4:8 God says,

Jer. 4:8 For this, clothe yourself with sackcloth, lament and wail. For the fierce anger of the LORD has not turned back from us.

And in other passages, God commanded His people to wear sackcloth as a symbol of their repentance and sorrow over national disaster (Jer. 6:26; 49:3; Joel 1:13). The King of Nineveh's response to God's pronouncement of judgment was this:

Jonah 3:8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

Jonah 3:9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

I guess my point is that for Rizpah to spread out her sackcloth before heaven was her way of not only mourning for her family (and it was that), but it was also asking God to relent in His judgment on the nation. And if you are a bit skeptical of that, take all of these points together and see if you do not think so by the time we are done.

The third thing to notice is that she stayed there from the time of the beginning of harvest until the late rains poured on them from heaven. We will see in verse 14 that no rain fell upon them until after the bodies were buried. God did not answer their prayer for rain until after the bodies were buried. But she didn't quit her vigil simply when the bodies were buried. She quit her vigil when God actually answered the nation's prayers and poured out the rain. She stayed there until the rain fell. So it's yet another hint that she wasn't *only* mourning over her family; she was *also* mourning over the national calamity of this famine that had been directly connected to her family. She must feel like she is in the national spotlight for being part of a family that has caused a national famine. It grieved her that her family was the cause of the famine. She had dual interests. If she were only interested in her family, the text would say that she stayed there until her family was given a decent burial. But it doesn't; she stayed longer. She stayed until the late rains finally poured on them from heaven (or from God).

So in the first half of the verse we see that she *does* come into agreement with the civil judgment, and in particular is seeking God's reversal of the calamity of this horrible famine. She did not cut down the bodies like the men of Jabesh Gilead had done with the other sons. She had plenty of opportunity to do so, and nobody would likely have complained if she had done so. She also very deliberately wore sackcloth and very deliberately stayed there until God answered the nation's prayers.

But the second half of verse 10 shows an amazing devotion to her family as well. It says,

...And she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night.

In a moment we will get to why burial was considered so important in Israel. But here we see a very tangible way of showing her devotion and love to her family – she kept the birds and animals from eating the bodies, and she chased them away for weeks. Some people take the attitude, “Who cares what happens to my body. Put it in a dumpster, or I will give it to medical science or I will have it cremated.” But ancient Jews never took that attitude. It mattered very much to them what happened to the bodies of their loved ones. But we will deal with that in a few minutes.

The question for now is this: did her actions in chasing away these birds and animals constitute fighting against God's curse and fighting against His will? No. Actually, we will see that it was the nation that had violated God's will by exposing them so long. And secondly, the law itself

expected loved ones to do this when such an unlawful tragedy happened. It was never normative in Israel to leave bodies out exposed. In fact, the worst curse that could come in Deuteronomy 28 is given in verse 26 when it says,

Deut. 28:26 Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten *them* away.

When there was no loved one to frighten birds and animals away from the carcasses, the person truly was abandoned and cursed. But the very way the curse is worded implies that God considers such an act of love to be expected from a relative. No relative would want his or her loved ones eaten by birds or animals – that’s the point. Even the law of God recognizes that what she was doing was a lawful act of devotion and love.

Now, that’s a lot of exposition without giving much application. But I think the applications should be fairly obvious. And I will begin with the one that I started with. Just as no loved one should be forced to testify against her family in court,¹ no loved one should be expected to distance herself from her family simply because there has been civil punishment or ecclesiastical discipline.

And this is where I disagree with some of the Plymouth Brethren that I have known. In those churches, when a man was under the discipline of shunning, the wife was expected to deny her husband all marital relations, to have no conversation with her husband, and to eat in a different room from her husband. But that would make her violate other clear-cut commandments, such as 1 Corinthians 7:5 (“Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”). In that passage there is only one exception – and it is by mutual consent with prayer and fasting. The Plymouth Brethren approach also violates the principle in verse 4 of that chapter, that “the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.” She cannot use withdrawal of love as a way to punish or even as a way to come into agreement with the church’s discipline or the state’s punishment. She does not have that authority over her own body. Her husband has that authority. It would also violate the admonition in 1 Peter 3

1. Witnesses were required of the prosecution but not the accused (Deut. 19:15). To require witnesses would violate the right to remain silent. Only the accuser was forced to testify. The right to remain silent is implied in Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15 and affirmed by Christ’s silence in Mark 15:3-5; Matt. 27:14. The implication in the Old Testament was that the prosecution had the responsibility of bringing witnesses and that the accused did not.

that wives must submit to even an unbelieving husband who disobeys God's word. So that passage shows that at least between husband and wife, church discipline would impact the immediate family a little bit differently than it would other people. And you can look at other Scriptures that would apply this same sensitivity to children, parents, and siblings. The Bible gives us help when there is tension between lawful jurisdictions, and it shows us how we can honor both.

So what would be a more appropriate way of handling these things? Even though 1 Peter 3 is dealing with a husband wife relationship, it illustrates the same kind of balance of loyalties that Rizpah had with her children. Peter says that the believing woman should agree with God's Word even if her man does not. So her submission to her husband is not a blind submission. Yet it also says that though she has submitted to God's Word when he has not, she should still also submit to her husband and be devoted to him. So there is a tension there because she has dual loyalties. Peter represents church authority and her unbelieving husband represents family authority. Peter indicates that though she disagrees with her husband's disobedience to the Word and though she is without a word trying to win him to the same chaste conduct that she is holding to, she should not make an issue of it by nagging her husband or being disrespectful of her husband. Do you see how God commands her to honor dual loyalties – to church and to her husband? So it is a similar kind of a situation to what Rizpah faced with her family.

In other words, should you have a relative convicted of murder and sentenced to be executed, you can fully agree that the judgment is just and good without giving up on your relative. You don't want to go to the extremes of abandoning your relatives on the one hand or blindly supporting your relatives and opposing just punishment from the state. To fight against that civil judgment out of devotion to your family would be to have an idolatrous loyalty to the family. God calls for loyalty to *Him* before loyalty to anyone else, so a mother should not oppose civil punishment of her criminal son. Deuteronomy 13 is quite clear on that. In fact, that chapter indicated that a loved one needed to be a part of the stoning. It says that every family member should agree with God's lawful judgments through the state, no matter how near and dear that family member may be. But that agreement with God's judgment does not mean she cannot cry her heart out before the Lord, or speak lovingly to her son in prison. And prison would be just as unbiblical as this extended exposure of bodies was. So any time there is a conflict between the jurisdictions of family, church, and state, we need

to look to the Scripture for how to resolve that tension. There is always an answer. Life can sometimes be sticky, and our dual loyalties may sometimes be severely tested. And that's what Deuteronomy 13:6-11 is saying.

But back to our passage, it is clear that David thought that this woman was doing the right thing because he responded positively to what she did. And you can see that in verses 11 and 12.

2Sam. 21:11 ¶ And David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

2Sam. 21:12 Then David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son... [etc.]

Everyone agrees that it was a direct result of seeing what she had done that made David take these actions. But commentators are puzzled over the wording. Why doesn't it simply say that when David saw her devotion to her family that he had sympathy and buried these seven men who had been hanged? The text doesn't even mention *her* children till the end of verse 13. Why is the text suddenly preoccupied with the bodies of Saul and Jonathan? Though the seven hanged men were the closest thing on David's horizon (only a three mile walk away from Jerusalem), the text focuses on Saul and Jonathan. And when you understand the geography, you realize that this is very deliberate. The first thing that the text mentions as a result of seeing Rizpah's devotion was for David to make a 68 mile trip to Jabesh Gilead where the bones of Saul and his previous sons had been stored, and just about as long of a trip back to Gibeah to pick up the bodies of these seven men and to bury them all together. Why did her actions immediately bring 1 Samuel 31 to mind?

I believe that her actions brought conviction to David on three counts. First, it convicted him that he had not taken as much concern about the treatment of Saul and Jonathan's bodies as he should have. Yes, he had been concerned in the beginning of this book, but her actions made him realize that there was more that could have been done.

Second, her actions convicted David that Deuteronomy 21 had been violated here in exactly the same way that it had been violated by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 31. Please turn to Deuteronomy 21, and we will look at verses 22-23.

Deut. 21:22 ¶ "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,

Deut. 21:23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.

Commentators point out four things that are relevant to our discussion. The first is that capital punishment is not considered simply man's judgment. It is here called God's curse. And if a magistrate's judgment is the imposition of God's curse, then that magistrate must do it in God's way, or God's name is blasphemed. This is why Romans 13 limits a civil magistrate's authority to exactly what God has delegated to him. The magistrate *must* be God's minister of justice, and verse 1 says that he has no authority if not from God. We saw two weeks ago that David did indeed give God's justice in the execution of these seven men. They were all guilty of murder. So that point is not in question. Even Rizpah does not seem to be fighting that point.

The next thing that this passage shows is that exposure of the bodies to the public view was allowed in the law of God. The person didn't have to be buried as soon as he was executed. Exposure after execution was a way of highlighting how serious the crime was. It was used to warn people.

The next thing we see is that God gave limits to how long the body could be exposed. One commentator said, "The exposure of his body was the utmost desecration. Such humiliation, however, has limits. Continued exposure would desecrate the land..."² Notice those words especially: "Continued exposure would desecrate the land..." Another commentator said,

The corpse of the executed criminal had to be buried the selfsame day at all costs. The Hebrew syntax is strongly emphatic.³ The reason was that the corpse of an executed man was an object accursed of God and would defile the land (cf. Num. 35:33f.; Lev. 18:24-27). The presence of the corpse hanging up to the public gaze, with crime, as it were, clinging to it and God's curse resting on it, might result in untold calamities. Hence as soon as the necessary amount of publicity had been achieved and other likely offenders had been warned, the corpse was buried, and that before sunset.⁴

This is where David had erred. He had not specified to the Gibeonites that the bodies could only be exposed for one day. And this brings up the relevance of 2 Samuel 21:12, where the author brings up the fact that the Philistines had done exactly the same thing to Saul and three of his sons in 1 Samuel 31. When he reminds us of the Philistines, he is not bringing up an irrelevant detail. He is juxtaposing what David had allowed and what the Philistines had arrogantly done. Both were just as unlawful. And David removes the defilement just as the men of Jabesh Gilead were praised for

²Earl S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien and J. D. Douglas, vol. 3 of Expositor's Bible Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), n.p.

³The footnote given in the commentary is, "It comprises the so-called infinitive absolute plus the regular finite verb."

⁴J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5 of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 255.

doing the same with the bodies of Saul and his sons. So the text is crafted very deliberately.

But Rizpah's balancing of duties to family and to state no doubt reminded David of His own tough balancing of loyalties under king Saul. On the one hand, he couldn't agree with Saul's unbiblical actions. Yet back in those early chapters of David's life, he never allowed Saul's disgraceful conduct to become an excuse for his own rebellion. Repeatedly he sought to serve Saul well and to submit to God at the same time as submitting to his king. It was only when it became evident that he was going to be killed that he had to make a run for it. Rizpah's balancing act was very similar to his own balancing act in the early years. And it made David want to do things right. So with that as a background, let's read each verse in 2 Samuel 21:11-14.

2Sam. 21:11 ¶ And David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

Rizpah didn't have to give verbal rebuke to David in order to influence David. The public testimony of her life and her actions made David want to be better. He was shamed by her actions Her actions reminded him of better times in his own life. And in this, there is a similarity to the spirit of 1 Peter 3:1-2.

1Pet. 3:1 Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, *may be won by the conduct* of their wives,

1Pet. 3:2 when *they observe your chaste conduct* accompanied by fear.

There was no need to nag; there was no need to preach; her conduct had an influence. And we can have faith that God can use our conduct even when words might not be allowed or where words aren't making a difference. Don't ever think that your conduct is not a testimony. Just as God can powerfully use your words, God can powerfully use the testimony of your conduct.

Verse 12.

2Sam. 21:12 Then David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh Gilead who had stolen them from the street of Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, after the Philistines had struck down Saul in Gilboa.

This verse highlights three ways that the dead bodies were treated. The Philistines hung the bodies on the city wall. The valiant warriors from Jabesh Gilead broke through the Philistine defenses, cut down the bodies,

and burned them in 1 Samuel 31, preserving only the bones. David was not content with this partial cremation. He buried the bones in the family tomb with honor. This verse is therefore contrasting the proper way of burial from the pagan way of treating the dead. Jews have always taken Deuteronomy 21:23 as a command to bury the body right away. It says,

Deut. 21:23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.

Notice especially the command, “you shall surely bury him that day.” Jews have always taken that as a normative command for all deaths except for those authorized by the law of God. When you couple that command with the numerous passages that speak of it being a curse when people are not buried, there is a strong argument against cremation. The only ones cremated were those singled out for additional shame and curse. Leviticus 20:14 commanded the Jews to burn the executed body of a person who married both a mother and her daughter. Why burn the body? Well, it showed God’s utter contempt for a person who would engage in such a sinful marriage. Leviticus 21:9 commanded the Jews to burn the executed body of the daughter of a priest who became a prostitute. Why burn the body? It was to show God’s utter contempt for the child of a preacher who would degrade herself to become a prostitute. While an ordinary prostitute might be executed for adultery, this one was executed and then burned. In Joshua 7 God commanded those who took the accursed things to be stoned and then burned. So it was an extra curse that went far beyond execution and showed God’s total contempt for the person.

Anyone else who was thus cremated, was cremated unlawfully. And it’s not just Deuteronomy 21 that commands burial. The second passage is Amos 2:1. In Amos 2:1 God cursed the country of Moab for four transgressions of His law, but only mentions one of those transgressions – that they engaged in the abomination of cremation. It says, “For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.” We aren’t told why cremation was considered a transgression of God’s law, but it was. God calls cremation a transgression.

And this has been the historic position of Judaism, Western Christianity, and Eastern Christianity. And Rodney Swab pointed out so well in his sermon against cremation in 2010 that if the Biblical evidence he presented (and he presented more than I am presenting here) – if that evidence against cremation is not sufficient to prove the point, then you

could not prove that cannibalism is unlawful. There is less evidence against cannibalism than there is against cremation.

The Eastern Church has always considered it an extremely sad event if burial could not happen. For example, in the Pastoral Guidelines by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, it says,

Because the Orthodox Faith affirms the fundamental goodness of creation, it understands the body to be an integral part of the human person and the temple of the Holy Spirit, and expects the resurrection of the dead. The Church considers cremation to be the deliberate desecration and destruction of what God has made and ordained for us. The Church instead insists that the body be buried so that the natural physical process of decomposition may take place. The Church does not grant funerals, either in the sanctuary, or at the funeral home, or at any other place, to persons who have chosen to be cremated. Additionally, memorial services with *kolyva* (boiled wheat) are not allowed in such instances, inasmuch as the similarity between the "kernel of wheat" and the "body" has been intentionally destroyed.⁵

So that is in the East. In the West, it was not until 1963 that the Roman Catholic Church lifted the ban upon cremation. Jewish prejudice against cremation was similar, and they have always tried to bury the body without embalming within 24 hours if possible, in obedience to Deuteronomy 21.

Verses 13-14 say,

2Sam. 21:13 So he brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there; and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged.

2Sam. 21:14 They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the tomb of Kish his father. So they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God heeded the prayer for the land.

Notice the inspired comments about when it was that God removed the curse from Israel. It wasn't removed after the guilty parties were put to death. And the reason is clear in the law. Their continued exposure defiled the land. Let me read that verse once again:

Deut. 21:23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, *so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance...*

This means that it wasn't simply the violated treaties and murder that we looked at in verses 1-9 that led to ongoing famine. God considered this issue of failure to bury the bodies to be extremely serious as well.

⁵ See <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith8083> This is quoted at numerous sites, such as <http://holytrinityindy.org/services/funerals>

Does it mean that you are forever cursed if you get cremated? No. But it does mean that you failed to show the respect to the body that God intended us to have. Does it mean that all cremations are sin? No. Some would depend on the circumstances and the attitude of heart. I have already read two verses from Leviticus that commanded cremation in certain circumstances. In fact, those passages would make me recommend cremation of certain criminals because honoring them with a burial would be too good for them. *But it was always intended to be something that was considered sad.* That's the key point. And if you want to dig into this more, I recommend that you listen to Rodney's sermon from June 27, 2010.⁶

And I think that Rodney gave a very nice balance. I don't want to lay a guilt trip on anyone. Love sometimes might make you willing to sacrifice the honor of burial for the cause of Christ. This is what happened to missionaries who were eaten by cannibals. And love might do it in certain circumstances in America. So I don't want to say that this is an absolute principle. But I believe we should repent if we have been utterly indifferent to the handling of dead bodies. That is not a Scriptural attitude. And I have devoted a sermon to this because too many people treat the manner of disposing of the body as inconsequential. It is not. The law of God regulates even funerals. For example, Leviticus 19:18 forbids the Ethiopian practice of gashing yourself with knives at funerals. Aren't you glad? But certainly honoring the dead in a burial seems to be the norm. This past week I called up a cemetery to purchase burial plots for my mother, my wife, and myself. And I did that for three reasons. First, now that Grandma is no longer travelling we don't need to worry about wasting the money on a plot. Second, we can save a lot of money by buying plots early. And third, just as Abraham's purchase of his future burial spot was a statement of faith that he would inherit the land, I am doing it as a statement that I really don't have any intention of moving away from Omaha.

Can God raise a body that has completely disappeared in fire or by being eaten by a shark? Of course He can. He knows the blueprint for the old body and the blueprint for the new glorified body. And there will be some connection between the old and the new, even though 1 Corinthians 15 indicates that it will be as different as a tree is different from an acorn. The old body is planted a seed, and the resurrection body will be something far more glorious. But there will still be a connection. So my admonition to you is, treat dead bodies with the utmost respect. It is not like fingernails to be

⁶ http://www.dominioncovenantchurch.com/?page_id=8&sermon_id=16

discarded. It is a part of who you are, and disrespect for your body is disrespect for the person according to the Bible. It is simply not Biblical to say that your spirit is the *only* real-you. That's Greek dualism. The Bible ties the body to the real-you much more closely.

But there is one more application that I want to make – the importance of prayer. You might be discouraged that God has not answered your prayers. But just as Israel kept praying for three years until God answered, we should persevere in prayer.

But when prayers are not being answered for long periods of time, it is worth asking God if there is sin that is preventing our prayers from being answered. Psalm 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” Sometimes sin can prevent answers. 1 Peter 3:7 is quite clear about that. And confession of sin is critical to power in prayer.

But even when it is not in your power to deal with the sin, you can still repent on behalf of the nation. If Rizpah's sackcloth and continued prayers till the rains came were indeed prayers on behalf of the nation, we know that God used her to turn David's heart. We may be as powerless as Rizpah was. But if we pray, God can move the hearts of leaders to do what is needed. Our text underscores that point. It indicates that God can hear the cries of a Rizpah to make leaders repent of their sins.

And it also indicates that once sins are dealt with, God delights in answering prayer. The norm is not unanswered prayers. This text seems to indicate that God's norm is to always answer prayers. He is a prayer answering God. And we should allow this passage to motivate us to pray. Amen.

Questions For Sermon on 2 Samuel 21:10-14

Burial

By Phillip Kayser

1. What passages in the Bible show sensitivity to the conflicting loyalties that we sometimes face?
2. What three things seem to indicate that Rizpah was not disagreeing with the fact that her sons deserved judgment?
3. What is sackcloth a symbol of? (1 Chron. 21:16; Neh. 9:1; Jer. 4:8; 6:26; 49:3; Joel 1:13; Jonah 3:8-9)
4. When did God end the drought? (v. 14b)
5. Why did Rizpah care what happened to her relative's bodies?
6. Why was it considered to be a curse to have no "Rizpah" to frighten birds and animals away from the dead bodies (Deut. 28:26)?
7. Why would it be a bad thing for a relative to oppose lawful civil penalties against a loved one (Deut. 13:6-11)?
8. Why did Rizpah's actions immediately make David want to treat the bodies of Saul and Jonathan with respect (vv. 11-14)?
9. How does Deuteronomy 21:22-23 influence our interpretation of 2 Samuel 21?
10. Why did God command cremation in Leviticus 20:14 and 21:9?
11. What verse in the law was being transgressed in Amos 2:1?
12. What other regulations does Scripture give with regard to funerals?
13. Why is it a good thing to start preparing for burial like Abraham did?
14. What are some encouragements to prayer that pastor applied from verse 14?

