

## **Rizpah – Lessons for Everyday Life**

### **2 Samuel 3:7-10, 21:1-14**

#### **Introduction:**

1. There is a lady in our text by the name of Rizpah who, on the surface, seems like a rather insignificant character in the Bible. She was a concubine of King Saul. Concubines were wives, but not united by the usual ceremonies and were considered inferior.
2. Rizpah bore Saul two sons, Armoni and Mephibosheth (not the same one as Jonathon's son – Saul's grandson).
3. Though Rizpah was insignificant in her status as a concubine and is only mentioned a couple of times in Scripture, she played a major role in two very significant events in the life of the nation of Israel.
4. There are two incredible lessons for everyday life that we learn from Rizpah.

#### **Rumors kill and destroy – 2 Samuel 3:7-10**

1. After Saul died, the commander of Saul's army (Abner) placed Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, on the throne of Israel, and united the ten northern tribes of Israel under his leadership.
2. Two tribes followed David as King and they began to win victories over Abner's armies. But then came the fatal blow, and it involved this lady, Rizpah. 3:7-10
3. A rumor began to circulate concerning Abner and Rizpah. There is no indication in the text that the allegations were true; they were simply rumors. Ish-bosheth was upset by the rumor, and naturally Abner was furious.
4. This led Abner to take his support to David and led to the total destruction and demise of the northern kingdom of Israel. What war and armies could not accomplish, a simple rumor did! We know David was God's choice all along, but isn't it interesting that it was a simple little rumor that divided and destroyed the kingdom of the ten northern tribes.
5. Oh, the great power that lies in the tongue! What is a rumor? "General talk not based on definite knowledge; mere gossip, hearsay." What does God's Word say about this? **Ephesians 4:25, 27, 29; Proverbs 18:8, 20:19, 26:20-22; cf. Proverbs 10:18**
6. One of the biggest threats to confidence in our lives is rumors.
  - There was a rumor going around at Thessalonica that they were already in the Day of the Lord. It caused all kinds of problems and issues in the church.
7. Rumors hurt, destroy, and are simply non-productive. How do we guard against this tool of Satan in our lives?
  - We must guard our mouths. James 3:8; cf. Ephesians 4:29
    - If our words do not build up and minister grace to others, then it is best we leave them unsaid.
  - We must guard our ears. 2 Timothy 4:3
    - We learn that part of our fallen human nature is that we love to have our ears tickled. The context here is false doctrine, but it also applies to rumors and gossip.

- People love to have their ears tickled with juicy gossip, especially if it is about another person. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, when people say, “Did you hear about...” we politely say, “No, and I would rather not. If it isn’t news that we can rejoice in, maybe it is best that I don’t hear it.”

### **True love reconciles and heals – 21:1-14**

1. There was a famine in Israel for three years, and David suspected it may be due to divine judgment. He was right. The drought was due to a reign of terror that Saul had conducted on the Gibeonites. vs. 1-2
  - Gibeonites – a group of people that Joshua had made a treaty with and that had lived peaceably with Israel for years. Saul broke the treaty and sought to destroy them.
2. The Gibeonites demanded seven of Saul’s relatives to exact judgment for those crimes done against them (vs. 3-6). David agreed to their terms and two of the men were the sons of Rizpah. vs. 8-9
3. The Bible does not give us a lot of details about this story. Were these seven men accomplices with Saul in his reign of terror? We do not know for sure, but they were all executed during the first days of the barley harvest. But the story doesn’t end here.
4. Rizpah’s deep love for her sons caused her to take sackcloth (symbol of sorrow), spread it on a rock and she kept a vigil day and night over the bodies of her sons, keeping the birds and animals from devouring their bodies. vs. 10
  - This watch could have lasted anywhere from three to six months.
  - She was there as an act of love and devotion. She was not permitted to move the bodies of her dead sons, but she could keep the buzzards and coyotes away!
  - What a testimony to abiding love! It reaches past the boundaries of this life and extends beyond the grave. Death could not diminish her love. Though her boys were grown and dead, though their bodies were left hanging as a sign of contempt and condemnation, she still loved them.
5. The news of this reached David and he was so moved by Rizpah’s actions that he went personally and retrieved the bones of Saul and Jonathon and buried them, along with these seven men in the tomb of Saul’s father, Kish. vs. 11-14
6. Because of Rizpah, the saga of King Saul ends with an honorable burial, an act that perhaps symbolized David’s own reconciliation with the man who had persecuted him.
7. Not only this, her actions also won for her sons an honorable burial, instead of their bodies hanging in disgrace and being devoured by wild animals.
8. Here is a woman who was grieving deeply, yet she allowed her grief and love to motivate her to action, and her actions brought peace and reconciliation. After this, God is entreated for the land of Israel and the drought was lifted. vs. 14
  - Her actions were a catalyst for closure.
  - They brought closure in regards to the famine, closure in regards to the feud between the house of Saul and the house of David, and closure in her own life and loss.
9. Rizpah was a healer, a reconciler. This is a mark of true love. Love always seeks peace, healing, and reconciliation.

**In Conclusion:**

1. Most likely you have never heard a message on Rizpah, but hopefully you can see the valuable life lessons that we learn from this woman.
  - Rumors kill and destroy and divide.
  - Love heals and reconciles.
2. If we could somehow have these two life lessons etched on our hearts, what a difference it would make in our lives.