

### Prayers

#### **To God**

If all the beautiful, good and wonderful things of this world were to fall into our laps right now, we would praise You, Lord. If all the difficult, evil and troublesome things of this world were to descend upon us at this very moment, then we would struggle to lift our eyes to You. Give us the courage to turn to You in all the circumstances of our lives, and receive from You the strength to do what is right whatever happens to us each day. Then, perhaps, we would find that our praise becomes a true expression of love, which is both real and vigorous. **AMEN**

#### **For myself**

*Pray in repentance for the lack of love you have shown in your words. You may not see the way other people respond to what you say, but trust those who know you closest to warn you if your words are perhaps too cutting or dismissive. Pray, and ask the Lord to lead you into greater 'self-knowledge' so that you can control yourself, as the Bible suggests for the Lord's disciples.*

#### **For others**

Weekly theme: Water

*Pray for those who explore for water throughout the world, and the work that makes this pure and drinkable. It is said that the cleansing of water critically affects the lives of more people than all the surgical procedures done in hospitals throughout the world; so pray that this resource is properly valued and made freely available.*

### Meditation

Lord God Almighty,  
You have the means to solve our troubles;

If our souls are disturbed,  
lead us into the peace of Your presence;

If our minds are confused,  
bring us true knowledge and understanding;

If our hearts are broken,  
comfort us with Your unsurpassed love;

If our strength is failing,  
touch us with Your loving help and healing;

If our feelings are bruised,  
pour on us the grace of Your consolation;

If our pathway ahead is puzzling,  
guide us by the steady hand of Your Spirit;

For in Your peace and rest,  
Our lives will be blessed for all eternity.

## Bible Passage

### 2 Samuel 5:6-12

<sup>6</sup> The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites, who lived there. The Jebusites said to David,

*"You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off."*

They thought,

*"David cannot get in here."*

<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David. <sup>8</sup> On that day, David said,

*"Anyone who conquers the Jebusites will have to use the water shaft to reach those 'lame and blind' who are David's enemies. That is why they say, the 'blind and lame' will not enter the palace."*

<sup>9</sup> David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the supporting terraces inward. <sup>10</sup> And he became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.

<sup>11</sup> Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David. <sup>12</sup> And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel and had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

## Review

As we discovered yesterday, David became king of all Israel after a protracted period of time in which he was anointed king three times, once by Samuel (1 Sam 16:3), then by his own tribe of Judah (2 Sam 2:4), and finally by all Israel at Hebron (2 Sam 5:3). The Lord's will took time to unfold!

David was now the undisputed and anointed King of all Israel, and he faced two major issues. First, the need to establish his authority in the eyes of all Israel, and second, the need to deal with the Philistines. Israel had just been defeated by the Philistines in a battle that took the life of Saul and many of his sons, and it also resulted in large swathes of Israel coming under Philistine rule (1 Sam 31). Which move would David make first?

Our passage describes the result of this decision, in which David was led to capture the city of Jerusalem, and therefore achieve the first of these objectives, and make some important

headway in the second. Jerusalem would be David's city, his capital from where he ruled all Israel. The capture of the city also showed David as a king capable of succeeding where others had failed, so when he called Israel to trust him as they faced the Philistines in battle once again; who better to lead them than the man who had completed the occupation of the Promised Land!

Interestingly, Jerusalem was located in neither the tribal lands of Judah nor that of the northern tribes; it was neutral until captured, although later generations ascribed it to Judah because David was from Judah. Jerusalem would have an essential role to play in history and its location on the borders of Israel's sometimes divided tribes became crucial to that history, and eventually to God's plan of salvation through Christ.

## Going Deeper

### ***The city of Jerusalem***

The name Jerusalem means 'city of peace', though the name may have its origins in the name of the 'Jebusites' who occupied the city before the time of David ('Jebu' + 'Salem'). The city is in the extreme north of Judah, and on the border with Ephraim, the dominant northern tribe, and also very close to Benjamin, the tribe of King Saul. As a capital city, it served well the purpose of uniting the whole of Israel; it bordered all the main divisions of God's people and was not involved in the animosities of the tribes, not having been occupied by any of them. This may explain why later, after Israel divided again in the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12), future generations of Israelites from all the tribes still came to Jerusalem for worship even though it became the official capital city of Judah alone.

Jerusalem had defied the occupation of the Promised Land (see Joshua 15:63 and Judges 1:21), and was still in the hands of 'Jebusites' (5:6) at the beginning of 2 Samuel. It had survived because it was well fortified, and it was also the ancient city of 'Salem', the city of king Melchizedek, to whom Abraham brought tribute (Gen 14:18), a famous incident from the time of the very foundation of Israel. In the New Testament era, this is mentioned in Hebrews 5:6,10, 7:1-17 as part of the argument that the priesthood of Christ is of a more ancient order of God's justice and mercy than that founded under Aaron. Although Hebrews does not say this, the city of Jerusalem plays its part in this as the place of the death and resurrection of Christ.

### ***The capture of Jerusalem***

For David, Jerusalem was at first a formidable fortress, and the occupation of it would tax his military capabilities. Many had tried to take the city from the Jebusites who lived there, but had failed because of its terrain, and from this, it appears some kind of myth had arisen about the invincibility of the city, as we find here in this passage, *'you will not get in there; even the blind and the lame can ward you off* (5:6)!

Yet David, with his eye for spotting a military weakness evident since his days of defeating Goliath (1 Sam 17:4f.), was not going to be put off by such mythology. The Hebrew text is not as clear at this point as we would like because David appears to spot some pun on the phrase *'the blind and the lame'* (5:8), which we can only guess at. It seems that David saw in this phrase something of the key to unlocking the secrets of the city. Certainly, as he told his own army (5:8), an operation would have to be mounted in which the city was taken by surprise by soldiers climbing through the dark (blind?) and claustrophobic shaft (limited in movement or 'lame'?) delivering water to heart of the city. It was the only way that David's enemies who defended the city would be defeated, and so it proved to be. Once attacked from the inside, the Jebusites were not properly defended, and it seems that David took the old city with much cunning but relative ease.

The ancient water course played a crucial role in the history of Jerusalem; it was repaired by Nehemiah (Neh 3:15), and John reports Jesus sending a blind man to wash in the '*pool of Siloam*' where the water course entered the city (John 9:7f.). There is much symbolism in this great miracle of Jesus.

### ***The fortifications of David***

David set about fortifying the city he had captured. At that point in time, the site that would one day become the Temple Mount was a prominence to the north of the city of David, and we will meet some references to this in the later stories of David (the appearance of the angel at the threshing floor of Araunah - 2 Samuel 24:15f.). In this passage however, David set about creating his residence as king of Israel by fortifying the city and living there (5:9). His success was seen rightly as a sign of God's blessing on his reign as king of all Israel (5:10).

In a fascinating ending to the passage, we read that a certain king from nearby Tyre, King Hiram (5:11) was particularly pleased to see David prosper and sent professional people and materials to help David build a palace in Jerusalem (5:11). A palace took many years to build, and as we will see in the later detailed descriptions of king Solomon's building work (1 Kings 4-7), the effort was considerable.

### ***The king of Tyre***

The remarkable feature of this passage is the name of the supporting king, who is Hiram of Tyre. We find that this is the same king by name who helps Solomon do all his building (1 Kings 5f.). Either this same King helped both David and also in his old age the mature Solomon, or as was common in those days, the name 'Hiram' was a royal name denoting the king of Tyre, meaning that the 'Hiram' who helped Solomon was the son of the Hiram who helped David! Ancient records do not help us decipher this!

Tyre was to the north of the historic Israelite tribal lands, even if it is today's Israel! Nevertheless, this king seems to have observed the emergence of a possible stable state to the south, and was willing to support it. Tyre was an ancient city of trade, and it was much to the advantage of the city to have a stable nation to the south to ensure that trade routes were kept safe. The warlike Philistines who occupied territory in the region of the current 'Gaza strip' were not appreciated by these cultured merchants who made their living out of trade between southern Egypt and norther Persian empires.

## **Discipleship**

### ***Application***

#### ***Is there evidence here of prejudice against the blind and the lame?***

A case has been made by some that the Old Testament scripture is prejudiced against the poor, disabled and disadvantage, and in particular, the '*blind and the lame*'. In particular, they are described in verse 8 as '*David's enemies*'. Together with the Israelite purity laws by which those who were not perfect were not allowed to worship in the Temple, a legal requirement developed at a later date as a way to understand the sacrificial laws of Leviticus, there appears to be a case that Judaism is prejudiced towards the disabled.

I suggest however that as I have explained above, the description of the blind and lame as David's enemies was a pun used by David to encourage his troops to perform the rare military feat of capturing the city of Jerusalem from the inside. Unfortunately, the pun is not clear to us in English and it leaves us with a slight feeling of distaste, but there is no reason

why we should overplay this and try to make a case that Scripture is prejudiced against the disabled.

### ***The consequences of our actions***

At the time, it is often not clear what the consequences of our actions will be. Sometimes we do things imagining they are of great importance, and sometimes we do not see how God will use them at all. David may well have not been aware of the significance of Jerusalem at the time, for example, but the longer he lived the more the city meant to him, as we see towards the end of 2 Samuel.

It is important for us to realise, however, that if we are walking with the Lord as David walked with the Lord, then He will inspire our actions and use our decisions in ways that we cannot foresee. I was not aware, for example, how significant the word 'prayerandbiblestudy' would become when I decided to buy the domain name and start a website that has yielded this Bible study and devotions! Yet the important thing is to walk with the Lord and keep close to His will. He will do the rest.

### ***Ideas for what to do***

- Look back over your life and make a list of those things you have done that have become an important feature of your future life. Reflect on how God has led you to those things and the decisions you took. Ask yourself; how does God enable you to take decisions that keep you in His will?
- Pray for those who have the responsibility of leadership and whose decisions affect many people, for good or for ill.

### ***Questions (for use in groups)***

1. How important is Jerusalem to Christian people today?
2. Do you follow what I have said here about the way David's capture of Jerusalem is reported and the pun about the blind and the lame? If not, please check this out again and discuss what you think of it.
3. Do you think there is prejudice against the sick or the ill in places like this in the Old Testament where there is an emphasis on purity? How has Jesus dealt with this and yet remained true to Scripture?

## **Final Prayer**

This day, Lord God, is Your precious gift to each of us. Keep us from falling and fulfil Your purposes in us throughout our lives. Bring us to the end of each day rejoicing, so that as Your disciples, may we be glad to be Your servant and praise You through all we do and say.  
**AMEN**