

where His Word might be given, ;and from which it might spread. The situation was more vital to His kingdom than anything in our day is apt to be. Third, while it is God's desire that each of us should be very strict in condemning sin in ourselves (Heb.xii.4), He wants us to be charitable of others, and to try to help them, rather than to condemn them (see Jn.viii.7; 1 Cor.vi.9-11; Gal.vi.1)

b. The zeal of Phinehas (xxv.6-15)

When people of special prominence sanction evil, their influence is far greater than that of others. If not checked, it can ruin a nation. Hence God gave special praise to the man who took action in such an instance. Most men, however zealous in ordinary cases, might have been glad to look the other way when so outstanding a person was involved (14). Yet his influence would be especially great, if not stopped, since he did not sin in secret, but in the sight of all Israel (6). It is to be noted that Phinehas was not acting from any private jealousy or sense of personal wrong. His interest lay in the honour of God and the safety of God's people.

God promised to give to Phinehas my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood (12-13). Except for a short period in the times of the judges, Phinehas and his descendants held the office of High Priest throughout Jewish history. The Hebrew word shalom, has a much fuller meaning than our English word, peace. It involves the total condition of prosperity and well-being. Cf. its use in Ex.xviii.7 ('welfare'); 1 Ch.xviii.10, etc.

c. The command to smite the Midianites (xxv.16-18)

In this case the purpose of the Israelite campaign would not be to repel an armed attack, as on most previous occasions, but to remove a danger to their nation far worse than any military aggression. Probably the campaign was not undertaken immediately, since it is not described until chapter xxxi.