

3. Power struggle

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When I used to work for Qwest Dex, a Yellow Pages directory company as a graphic designer, I've noticed a great deal of power struggles amongst salespeople, operational people, managers and executives. To cover their own behinds, they leave paper trails, copies of the e-mail correspondences and memos. Power struggles continue at the office.

We see the same kinds of power struggle in our homes. It starts from husband and wife from the preparation days of wedding, through their honeymoon and to raising children. Power struggles continue at home.

I don't believe that I have to explain what is going on in the U.S. Senate and Congress, election campaign for the President of the United States. Power struggles continue in the nation.

Gaza Strip, Iraq, Lebanon, India vs. Pakistan, Taiwan vs. China, the list goes on. Power struggles continues around the world.

Tonight, we are going to see the start of the power struggles within the dynasty of king David.

A. CIVIL WAR

2 Sam 3:1 Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

1) **The fact was that they couldn't just get along**, and that there could be no peace between the rightful king David and the king wanna-be Ishbosheth. Whenever there is civil war, the nation's energies are being depleted and their resources are being exhausted.

When we try to make peace between King Jesus and self-enthroned king within us, the result is a long, bitter civil war in our hearts. It is so much better to simply surrender and submit to the reign of Jesus.

B. ASKING FOR TROUBLES

2 Sam 3:2-5 Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

1) **During David's seven-year reign in Hebron**, his six different wives gave birth to six sons. This shows that David went against God's commandment that Israel's king should not multiply wives to himself according to Deuteronomy 17:17 and he went against God's heart for marriage according to Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:4-6.

2) **Adding many wives was one of the ways** powerful men and especially kings expressed their power and status.

3) **Some wonder why the Bible doesn't condemn** David's polygamy here, but as is often the case here the Scripture simply states the fact, and later records how David reaped the penalty for this sort of sin in regard to his family.

Hosea 8:7a They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind.

4) **We must say that God used and blessed David despite his many wives.**

Yet his family life and these sons were obviously not blessed.

- Amnon raped his half-sister and was murdered by his half-brother.
- Few mentions of three sons, Chileab, Shephatiah and Ithream indicate that perhaps they died young or that they were ungodly, unworthy men.
- Absalom murdered his half-brother and led a civil war against his father David, attempting to murder David.
- Adonijah tried to seize the throne from David and David's appointed successor - then he tried to take one of David's concubines and was executed for his arrogance.

5) **Who was the king of Geshur?** If we go back to 1 Samuel 27:8, we will find that David and his men invaded the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites. I believe David was wrong in doing this. He slew these people. God saw to it that David did not get away with his sin.

C. A BAD MOVE

2 Sam 3:6-11 Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner was strengthening his hold on the house of Saul. And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?" Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman? May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the Lord has sworn to him-- to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba." And he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

1) **The Scripture doesn't indicate whether or not it was a fault or true charge.** It could have been a true charge. Abner had perhaps gone in and is now being rebuked by Ishbosheth. It was a common practice for the new king that came in to take into his house, the concubines of the previous king. And that was more or less the sign of his authority and of his reigning.

2) **Ishbosheth accused Abner of a serious crime.** This was regarded not only as sexual immorality but also as high treason.

3) **This might seem strange that there was a controversy** over the concubine of Saul, especially since Saul was dead. In their thinking, the king's bride belonged to him and him alone, even if he was absent. This principle is even more true for Jesus and His bride - the church belongs to no one but Jesus, and it is treason to "take" the bride of Christ as if it were our own possession. Those church leaders who think they can do whatever they want since they think the churches belong to them should think twice about it.

4) **Abner's response leads me to believe that the accusation was false.**

Because of Abner's increasing power Ishbosheth felt it necessary to invent this accusation as grounds for getting rid of Abner.

5) **Abner told Ishbosheth that he would now support David** and help David fulfill what the Lord promised - to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David.

If Abner knew that David was God's choice for king, why did he fight against him before this? Abner is a good example of those of us who know things to be true but we don't live as if they were not true.

6) **Abner did the right thing in joining David's side**, but he did it for the wrong reason. Instead of joining David because Ishbosheth offended him personally, he should have joined David because he knew that David was God's choice to be king.

D. ABNER'S PROPOSAL

2 Sam 3:12-16 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, "Whose is the land?" saying also, "Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel to you." And David said, "Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face." So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, "Go, return!" And he returned.

1) **David received Michal in marriage, but Saul took her away to spite David.**

Why did David do this? Did he really need another wife? David insisted on receiving Michal as his wife again for at least two reasons:

- David remembered that Michal was simply his wife by both love and right, and that King Saul took her away as part of a deliberate strategy to attack and destroy David.
- David wanted to give himself a greater claim to Saul's throne as his son-in-law.

2) **I can picture this pitiful husband Paltiel who was following Michal while he was crying.** Abner must have been a real tough guy to scare him off.

E. ABNER RALLIES SUPPORT FOR DAVID

2 Sam 3:17-21 Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David to be king over you. Now then, do it! For the Lord has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.'" And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin. Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin. So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. Then Abner said to David, "I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

1) **It is significant that this word came from Abner regarding David** instead of from David himself. Though he was the rightful king, David would not reign over Israel until they submitted to him freely. He never moved an inch without an invitation.

This is an illustration of Jesus' Lordship in our life. He is in fact King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But He chooses, for the most part, to exercise His sovereignty only at our invitation.

- Some do not invite Jesus to rule over anything. They have nothing to do with Jesus. But they will face the fearful Great White Throne Judgement in the end.
- Some invite Jesus to reign over a small area - like "Hebron." They will be saved, but they would not receive heavenly rewards in heaven, nor they would understand the blessings God has stored for them on earth.
- Some give Jesus reign over everything He has authority over - which is everything. They get to know the heart of God and get to please Him. By doing so, they are the ones who get true blessings from the Lord.

Abner is a good example of someone who eventually surrendered to God's king. Now he wants to influence others to surrender to God's king.

2) We don't have a Biblical record of this exact statement Abner says the Lord has spoken of David.

3) David made a wise and generous gesture toward a former adversary. A lesser man would never forgive Abner for leading an army against him, but David was a better man.

F. COLD BLOOD MURDER

2 Sam 3:22-27 At that moment the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. When Joab and all the troops that were with him had come, they told Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace." Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why is it that you sent him away, and he has already gone? Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing." And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it. Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother.

1) Why wasn't Joab pleased that Abner had defected and joined David's side?

There are at least two reasons for his hostility:

- Revenge - Abner killed Joab's brother, and Joab was the avenger of blood for Asahel.
- Jealous - As the chief general of the former King Saul, Abner had a lot of top-level military experience. Abner might take Joab's place as David's chief military assistant.

2) Joab carefully engineered this murder, so the killing was done outside the gate of Hebron. This was because Hebron was a city of refuge according to Joshua 20:7, and it was against the law for Joab to kill Abner inside the city.

However, Abner killed Asahel during the combat, but Joab murdered him in cold blood.

3) **Joab may have justified this** by the thought, "I'm doing this to defend and honor David my king." But our sin and treachery never honors our King. We may even deceive ourselves into the belief that we are honoring our Lord and Master when we are, all the while, bringing disgrace upon His name.

4) **David was not very good at correcting what was wrong.** He should have taken care of Joab and Abishai at that time. We find the similar situation with his family later.

G. DAVID'S MOURNING FOR ABNER

2 Sam 3:28-39 Afterward, when David heard it, he said, "My kingdom and I are guiltless before the Lord forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread." So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner." And King David followed the coffin. So they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. And the king sang a lament over Abner and said: "Should Abner die as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound Nor your feet put into fetters; As a man falls before wicked men, so you fell." Then all the people wept over him again. And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, "God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!" Now all the people took note of it, and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people. For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's intent to kill Abner the son of Ner. Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? And I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too harsh for me. The Lord shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness."

1) **The murder of Abner was a very serious embarrassment to David.** The murderer was one of his senior officers, and the suspicion would have been widespread that David had given the instructions to kill Abner. David's only defense was to show publicly, in every way possible, that he was innocent of the murder. So he honored Abner and mourned him publicly. V 37 records that he was able to persuade the people's opinion, both in Judah and northern Israel, of his innocence.

2) **David did not want his kingdom established by violence.** He wanted God to establish his kingdom and to punish his enemies. David still believes that vengeance belongs to the Lord.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) **The internal civil war against the Holy Spirit within our heart is nothing more than expression of rebellious prideful attitude. Eventually, we have to give up to the Lord.**

It is a lot easier and safer to obey to God than fight against Him.

2) **We might be able to fool or impress other people with our grand schemes. But God sees our hearts and motives.**

While others see us and make us to build our reputation, God knows and sees through our hearts. Our motives for the work for Christ should be pure and godly.