

20. Back to the throne with grace

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In last study of 2 Samuel chapter 18, we learned about the end of the rebel prince charming Absalom. I purposely left the last verse of the chapter 18, because it connects to the chapter 19.

Extending forgiveness and grace come from the same source, the mind of Jesus Christ. We really cannot forgive and extend grace to someone unless we have experienced the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ.

Again, God is going to use the imperfect David to show us about forgiveness and handling those who turned their backs on him.

A. MOURNING FOR HIS SON

2 Samuel 18:33 Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom--my son, my son Absalom--if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!"

The Hebrew idea of 'deeply moved' implies a violent trembling of the body. David felt completely undone at hearing the news of Absalom's death.

This verse surely had a deeper note in it than that of the merely half-conscious repetition of words occasioned by personal grief. The father recognized how much he was responsible for the son's death. David wanted to die in the place of his rebellious son.

In the cry of David, we actually hear the cry of God the Father for His lost children. His desire to restore, His desire to forgive them.

B. JOAB'S RIGHTEOUS REBUKE TO THE KING

2 Samuel 19:1-8 And Joab was told, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." 2 So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people. For the people heard it said that day, "The king is grieved for his son." 3 And the people stole back into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. 4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried out with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" 5 Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, "Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines, 6 in that you love your enemies and hate your friends. For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well. 7 Now therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now." 8 Then the king arose and sat in the gate. And they told all the people, saying, "There is the king, sitting in the gate." So all the people came before the king. For everyone of Israel had fled to his tent.

David's excessive sorrow made his loyal friends and supporters feel ashamed they won a great victory.

David's problem was not in what he knew - Absalom's tragic death and David's own role in it. David's problem was in what he forgot - that God was still in control, that a great victory was won, that he had many loyal supporters, that God showed great grace and mercy to David.

When some people go through excessive mourning for the lost, they are so concentrated in what they have lost that they can come to the point where they can lose what they have now.

As believers of Jesus Christ, we do have hope in Him. Remembering the sovereignty and omnipotent capability of God give us comfort in the midst of loss and difficulties.

Joab gave David a stern wake-up call. This is a sharp truth delivered with precision. Joab wants David not only to see that he is being foolish in his excessive grief, but he is also being selfish.

David's people need to see him sitting at the gate which represents the authority of the community.

Even though David was in the midst of his own inner turmoil, he was smart enough to take his general Joab's rebuke and did what was right.

B. EXTENDING GRACE TO THOSE WHO TURNED AWAY

2 Samuel 19:9-10 Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king saved us from the hand of our enemies, he delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the land because of Absalom. 10 But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing back the king?"

David survived Absalom's attempted overthrow, but the kingdom was not yet restored to David.

The stupidity of the Israel people's alliance to Absalom was clear. It had brought only misery and confusion. They were on the wrong side. They had rejected their true king. The people of Israel only seemed to want David back after the false king Absalom failed.

We often only decide to bring back King Jesus when our false kings, such as ourselves, our ambition in career or our feeble attempt to get rich quick, have failed.

2 Samuel 19:11-14 So King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, "Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, to his very house? 12 You are my brethren, you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?' 13 And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you are not commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.' " 14 So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah, just as the heart of one man, so that they sent this word to the king: "Return, you and all your servants!"

David would not force his reign on Israel. He would only come back if the tribes who rejected him for Absalom agreed to bring back the king.

David agreed to replace Joab with Amasa, who was the captain of Absalom's army. This was to put Joab in his place and to offer a gesture of reconciliation to the former supporters of Absalom.

The way David is doing so much like what our God is doing in our lives. The Holy Spirit does not take control of anyone against his or her will. When people who lack spiritual willingness and determination to cooperate with Him, are trying to run their lives, He quietly withdraw and leaves them to do their own things according to their desires, but without His aid. The inevitable result is an unspiritual and disaster with capital 'D'.

C. MERCY TO THE UNDESERVED

2 Samuel 19:15-23 Then the king returned and came to the Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to escort the king across the Jordan. 16 And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, who was from Bahurim, hastened and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. 17 There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over the Jordan before the king. 18 Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan. 19 Then he said to the king, "Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart. 20 For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king." 21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" 22 And David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?" 23 Therefore the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king swore to him.

Pretty soon we are going to have another Super Bowl and we will know which team is going to be next Super Bowl champion. Have you noticed how many vehicles have the champion team bumper stickers and flags the day after the Super Bowl including those who could care less about that particular team all year long previously? Since Absalom is dead, the people are coming out of wood work to show their alliance with David.

Remember Shimei, king Saul's distant relative, whom I called a 'genuine miserable slime'? He insulted David when he was down and out. Now when he realized that David is going to keep his throne, he is singing a different tune: "Viva David"

Shimei's blasphemies against the Lord's anointed were a capital offense, a fact that Abishai zealously points out.

Abishai-type people delight in the letter of the law and in watching people get what they deserve. Their advice is always, "Fight back! Make him pay!" To them, showing mercy is a sign of weakness. To David, however, showing mercy is a sign of strength and the cornerstone of his restored government.

How could David show such restraint? Two reasons:

1) His focus was on the Lord.

He had left Shimei's offense in God's hands.

2) He was aware of his own failure.

Once he had stood in Shimei's shoes, crying out, "I have sinned," and God had forgiven him for crimes much worse than hurling insults at a king. How could he not forgive Shimei?

D. THE AX HANDLE IS STILL STICKING OUT

As much as we would like the story to end here, with the tender strains of forgiveness ringing in the air, it doesn't. It concludes years later, on David's deathbed. In his final instructions to Solomon, David's open hand of mercy toward Shimei tightens into a fist.

1 Kings 2:8-9 And see, you have with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood.

How tragic that the sweet singer of Israel should approach his final days with revenge on his lips! As great a man as David was, as great an example, as great a king, he was still very much human.

E. DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH

2 Samuel 19:24-30 Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace. 25 So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?" 26 And he answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,' because your servant is lame. 27 And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king, but my lord the king is like the angel of God. Therefore do what is good in your eyes. 28 For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?" 29 So the king said to him, "Why do you speak anymore of your matters? I have said, 'You and Ziba divide the land.' " 30 Then Mephibosheth said to the king, "Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house."

This proves Mephibosheth's sincerity. Mephibosheth was not concerned that he no longer has his property, nor he was slandered by his lying servant Ziba. The only thing matters to him is that David is back in throne.

This gives me a thought: We are often more concerned about our rights as Christians than about His glory. We are often more concerned about our fame and reputation as Christians than His name. We are often more concerned about our day to day events than other people whom God put in front our lives to help.

F. A TOKEN OF APPRECIATION

2 Samuel 19:31-39 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went across the Jordan with the king, to escort him across the Jordan. 32 Now

Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. And he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very rich man. 33 And the king said to Barzillai, "Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem." 34 But Barzillai said to the king, "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? 35 I am today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king? 36 Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king. And why should the king repay me with such a reward? 37 Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you." 38 And the king answered, "Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you." 39 Then all the people went over the Jordan. And when the king had crossed over, the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own place.

Barzillai was a man of great resources - and he wisely used those resources to support the servant of God and the cause of God. Jesus teaches about this very thing in Luke: Luke 12:21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Barzillai was wise enough to use his resources to lay up treasure in heaven and he was rich toward God.

G. THE QUARREL ABOUT THE KING

2 Samuel 19:40-43 Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. And all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel. 41 Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, "Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king, his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan?" 42 So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?" 43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, "We have ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more right to David than you. Why then do you despise us--were we not the first to advise bringing back our king?" Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

Israel people couldn't wait to get rid of the king a few days ago. Now, they complained because they were not invited to take the king back to Jerusalem. People are just fickle.

This competitive attitude between Judah and the ten northern tribes sets the stage for civil war in David's day and the eventual division of the nation into two.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) If somebody cares enough to rebuke our wrongs in love, we should be wise enough to consider it.

After we put the rebuke against the Word of God, if it is correct, we should take heed and follow what we are told. It is a part of our growing process in Christ.

2) Let's remember what we have in Christ while we face the loss around us. When some people go through excessive mourning for the lost, they are so concentrated in what they have lost that they can come to the point where they can lose what they have now.

3) To forgive someone doesn't mean we have to "forget" the offense entirely. Forgiving is accepting the past and leaving it behind rather than dragging it into the future.

That's impossible. Forgetting has more to do with restoring an injured relationship, with letting the pain slowly fade until it doesn't ache whenever you see the other person. It's learning to trust again. It's accepting the past and leaving it behind rather than dragging it into the future.