

22. The unsettled kingdom

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The biggest mistake people make against God, including Christians, is that we don't take God seriously. God despises our sins. Yes, He loves us and there is no doubt about that. But it doesn't mean that God just winks at our sins after we confess and repent. We still have to face the consequences of our sins.

It is extremely dumb for us to think that there will not be consequences for our sins. If that is the case we wouldn't learn how to follow Jesus because we are born with sinful nature.

Chapter 20 is the record of another revolt against David. After all the troubles that have come to David so far, you would think the Lord would let up on him. But, as He promised, the sword will not depart from the house of David. Through all of this, we do not hear a whimper and whining from David. He recognizes it as the just punishment of his sin.

A. REBELLION OF SHEBA

2 Samuel 20:1-2 And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: "(1) We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in (2) the son of Jesse; (3) Every man to his tents, O Israel!" 2 So every man of Israel deserted David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king.

Sheba was from Benjamin, the same tribe as Saul. The term 'rebel', which also means 'worthless person,' suggests that Sheba was a scoundrel and an opportunist.

Sheba took advantage of David's weakened position after Absalom's failed rebellion and the conflict between Judah and the other northern ten tribes. He based his rebellion on 3 principles common to those who rebel against those who have God-given authority:

1) We have no share in David: Sheba denied the king's sovereignty.

The rebel wants to make sure that people have doubts about the authority and God's call on the current leader.

2) The son of Jesse: Sheba devalued the king's identity.

The rebel wants the people around him to think less about the current leader and consider the rebel as their rescuer.

3) Every man to his tents: Sheba decided to go his own way and drew others with him.

The rebel wants to have his own followers and wants to be the leader but doesn't know how to start his own group. So in every case, they take the people away from the current leader and leave.

This is the exact same pattern of those who split churches. They deny the pastor's calling and authority in that church. Then, they gather up malcontents around them. Finally, they split the church and start their own churches with those who agreed with them. However, those churches never last long, because the Lord is not with them.

We just studied about how upset the people of northern Israel were because they were not included in the procession of returning David as the rightful king of Israel.

Here we find that the same people would turn their backs against king David AGAIN. Their response to Sheba's rebellion shows that their desire to honor David had nothing to do with honoring him, but in exalting themselves.

We might say, "Oh yeah, those Israelites don't have any loyalty. They are fickle people." Are they the only ones? Are we much different than them? Do we stick with Jesus all the time? If that is the case, we wouldn't have to worry about sinning against Him or potential backsliding either, huh? We, too, are fickle. I am so glad that our God is faithful while we are not faithful.

B. THE TEN CONCUBINES IN SECLUSION

2 Samuel 20:3 Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.

I feel sorry for these women who were told to hold the fort while the rest of David's family fled out of Jerusalem. Obviously, we don't understand the reason for them to stay in the palace where Absalom would take over. Then, they were raped by him, and later they were put away by their husband David until their death as if they were discarded toys. Talk about being unfair.

The sad fate of David's ten concubines is an example of how our sin often has horrible effects on others. They suffered because of Absalom's sin and David's sin.

C. AMASA COULDN'T CUT IT

2 Samuel 20:4-7 And the king said to Amasa, "Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself." 5 So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him. 6 And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he find for himself fortified cities, and escape us." 7 So Joab's men, with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, went out after him. And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

As you may remember, Amasa was Absalom's former commander. David made him the commander of his army as a reconciliation move after the death of Absalom. From what we see here, Amasa is not qualified to be the commander of David's army.

David knew that Sheba's revolt was potentially more dangerous than Absalom since Sheba's rebellion was based on long-standing tribal animosity between Israel and Judah.

David also knew that time was of the essence. When Absalom had the chance to quickly crush David, he did not take advantage of the opportunity. David did not want to take that kind of chance. He needs to finish off Sheba's rebellion quickly.

D. JOAB THE KILLING MACHINE

2 Samuel 20:8-13 When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came before them. Now Joab was dressed in battle armor; on it was a belt with a sword fastened in its sheath at his hips; and as he was going forward, it fell out. 9 Then Joab said to Amasa, "Are you in health, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. 10

But Amasa did not notice the sword that was in Joab's hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and he did not strike him again. Thus he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri. 11 Meanwhile one of Joab's men stood near Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David—follow Joab!" 12 But Amasa wallowed in his blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted. 13 When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

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 commander 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.

What David is doing is 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 withdraws and leaves them to do their own things according to their desires but without His aid. The inevitable result is unspiritual and disastrous with capital 'D'.

For some reason, Amasa delayed longer than the set time, which opened the door for Joab to take his job back. It is so important for us to move when God gives an order. If He tells you to do something, do it now without delay.

Joab apparently adjusted his sword so that it fell from the sheath as he stepped forward to greet Amasa.

When Joab said, "Are you in health, my brother" in NKJV, this phrase should have been translated as "How are you?" In Hebrew word, it is 'shalom' which means "peace". The word 'Brother' is not just a formality here. Because Joab and Amasa were cousins, sons of two of David's sisters. Once more, the sword was at work in David's household.

Joab showed how ruthless he was. He murdered Amasa – the man who replaced him as commander of David's armies – out of both rivalry and concern that Amasa was not genuinely supportive of David.

This is the third person Joab is murdering without permission from David. The first one was Abner, the commander of king Saul's army. The second one was Absalom, David's son. Let's see what David says about Joab on his death bed:

1 Kings 2:5 Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist, and on his sandals that were on his feet.

E. WISE MAMA, NO MORE SHEBA

2 Samuel 20:14-22 And he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel and Beth Maachah and all the Berites. So they were gathered together and also

went after Sheba. 15 Then they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart. And all the people who were with Joab battered the wall to throw it down. 16 Then a wise woman cried out from the city, "Hear, Hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.'" 17 When he had come near to her, the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening." 18 So she spoke, saying, "They used to talk in former times, saying, 'They shall surely seek guidance at Abel,' and so they would end disputes. 19 I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?" 20 And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy! 21 That is not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." So the woman said to Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." 22 Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.

When Sheba took refuge in the city of Abel, Joab set a siege against the city. Siege warfare was a terrible ordeal of the citizens who were inside of the besieged city, and this wise woman was smart enough to seek a speedy end to the struggle.

Impressed by the logic of the woman's argument as well as by her sincerity, Joab relents. Besides, Joab was a practical man he had nothing against the city of Abel, only against Sheba. If the people of Abel would help him get Sheba it was all that mattered. No casualty to his troop is another good reason for Joab.

Sheba probably thought he was safe within the walls of that city, but no one is safe when they run against God's will. There isn't a wall high enough or strong enough to hide us from God and His will.

F. THE ADMINISTRATION OF DAVID'S KINGDOM

2 Samuel 20:23-26 And Joab was over all the army of Israel; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; 24 Adoram was in charge of revenue; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 25 Sheva was scribe; Zadok and Abiathar were the priests; 26 and Ira the Jairite was a chief minister under David.

The greatness of David's kingdom was not built on David's abilities alone. He knew how to assemble and lead an effective team.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) We must be loyal to Jesus in spite of the rebellion of our fleshly desires.

We must be loyal to Jesus in spite of the mocking of the multitude.

We must be loyal to Jesus in spite of the times when He seems distant.

We must be loyal to Jesus in spite of His 'NO' or 'WAIT' answers.

2) We must remember that there isn't a wall high enough or strong enough to hide us from God and His will.

While we are in sin, we tend to come up with completely illogical excuses and justifications for our sins. We even think that we can escape from God's justice.

Psalm 139:7-12 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.