

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel Ch 20

Both Ch 19 and Ch 20 begin in a rather awkward place that you can't really just jump into without having an understanding of what's previously happening. Ch 19 Begins in the midst of that excessive grieving of David's over the loss of his son Absalom. And we learned the need to be careful to consider others even in our grieving, and those times when we're down, and how our attitude and defeatist mentality can be contagious. And David learned that lesson, he crucified the natural inclinations of his flesh and went out and encouraged his men, showed them appreciation for their support of him as their king, and their willingness to sacrifice themselves for him. The rebellion was over, the insurrection crushed, God had granted a victory to David and his men and it was time for the rightful king to regain the throne. But David wouldn't force his reign upon the people, rightful though it may be, he waited until he was invited and it was a unanimous consent before he re-entered Jerusalem and assumed the throne. And you recall that wonderful picture of Jesus that we're able to glean in that happening, how that Jesus doesn't force *His* reign, rightful though *it* may be in our hearts and in our lives, but rather He waits until He's invited, and then He enters in and assumes His rightful position as King over our lives. But a funny kinda thing happened (funny in the sense of strange, not humorous) when David was making his way back to Jerusalem. The 10 northern tribes of Israel had instigated the need to bring David back, but the southern tribe of Judah (having unanimously consented to bring back the king, their hearts having been swayed as one man) beat the 10 northern tribes to the Jordan where David was to cross. And they began the procession before the men of Israel made it there to officially welcome back the king, and so what was meant to be a joyous occasion of celebration, became a trash talking tug of war with David in the middle. And so these same men who were just the week before fighting *against* David, were now fighting *over* David, and they were fighting over who deserved to be the official escorts and royal entourage (so to speak) of the king, who it was who had the right to honor him more.

You would think that after having had a major rebellion snuffed out, and things already being on the hyper sensitive mode, that people would be careful to simply accommodate the situation in whatever way necessary in order to keep the peace. But more often than not controversy stirs up controversy, and this whole thing was like a freshly tended to wound that was perhaps beginning to scab over but was easily irritated. And when you consider the fact that for 7 years David reigned over Judah before he was accepted by all of Israel initially, by Judah pressing forward apart from the rest of Israel present it was like knocking the scab off of the already volatile situation. The tribes of Israel looked at the action as a sign of segregation, of Judah considering themselves as superior, and so they began to argue back and forth and the words of the men of Judah, were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel, and so Ch 20 begins.

Vs1-2

Now let me give you a few scriptures, a few nuggets of wisdom from the proverbs, “*The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.*” Prov 17:14 And again “*It is honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel.*” Prov 20:3 Prov 26:21 “*As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.*” And Prov 29:22 “*An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression.*” Now Sheba had an opportunity to be like the former man mentioned, one who saw the turmoil getting out of control, and doing what he needed to do in order to stop the contention. One who retained honor by putting an end to the striving, encouraging the people to consider the great works that the Lord had done and how Israel was united once again.

But instead he served as the latter man mentioned. The fool who instigated further contention and confusion, he threw fuel on the fire and in his anger was abounding in transgression. He’s inciting another rebellion here, now it’s probable that he was a fairly high-ranking military officer in order to command such influence over all the people. But let me just say that in a given situation, volatile though it may be you have a choice as to whether or not to use your influence to be a peacemaker, or a peace breaker. Things may not be going the direction you’d prefer, “But one thing I know is that God detest contention, and strife, and people who sow discord among the brethren and so why don’t we just stop striving here and just commend this situation over to the Lord and let His will be done. So return to your corners and commence to praying,” (kind of a thing).

But this son of Bichri is standing up and bickering over this whole deal, and so he surfaces as a wolf in the midst of these sheep, and he’s scattering the flock, doing damage and serving his own agenda. He’s taking advantage of David’s weakened and vulnerable position to serve his own agenda. And he capitalizes on the current conflict, “Hey, why follow David anyway, everyone follow me, I’m *of* you people and *for* you people, David doesn’t care about you” and he’s turning the people away from their God appointed leader in order to become their leader himself. Sounds familiar doesn’t it, it’s like Absalom all over again, accept this time he’s doing it right up in the king’s face. And he’s seeking to draw the people after himself. And as it happened then so it happens today, people who aren’t contented with whom God has placed over them seek to draw people away from their God appointed leader to follow after themselves. Paul the apostle in speaking to the Ephesian elders told them how, “*...from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.*” Acts 20:30 And so let’s not be ignorant of our enemy’s devices, and how he looks for volatile and vulnerable circumstances to take advantage of by which he can scatter the flock, and divide the people.

And there are some clues here as to how we can discern a rebel, or someone who’s seeking to sow discord among the brethren as seen in Sheba and the way he instigated this whole thing.

Obviously he wasn't speaking kindly of David but rather he was speaking negatively of the king. And so #1 see it there in vs 1, he denied the king's sovereignty, "We have no share in David, nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse." In other words "David doesn't have any right to impose his rule over us, he may be a king, but not over me, not over the men of Israel." Remember back in the last ch the men of Judah were bragging on the fact that David was of *their* tribe. And so Sheba says in essence, "He may be your king, of your tribe, but he's not ours." So #1 He denied the king's sovereignty, his right to rule over them. And then #2 He devalued the king's identity, called him the "son of Jesse." "Well," you say, "That's who he was." Yes, but this isn't a simple description, what kind of man was Jesse? A wealthy influential leader? No, he was a humble/simple farmer, and what Sheba is saying is, "Hey, farm boy doesn't appeal to us, we're don't have to subject ourselves little farm boy here." It's a slap at David's person, and so this is how he justifies his rationale, he denies his *sovereignty*, he devalues his *identity*, and then he decides to go his own way, and make a rally for that *corporately*. "Every man to his tents." So he denied his platform, devalued his person, and dissuaded, or discouraged the people. And his plan worked, the 10 northern tribes took off, now I'm not saying that the tribes of Judah handled things right, but is it a corrective measure in any sense of the word to counter a wrong with a greater wrong? Now how does this apply to us?

Well, not only do we glean some tools here to help us discern the motives in people, are they building up the body, or tearing down, promoting the vision, or causing division, speaking well of the manager, or the pastor, or negatively? What's the fruit of the matter, of their words what's the net effect of that conversation, did it leave me edified, or confused, and as to where I was fine before now I have questions, and these should be some practical ways in which we're able to begin to discern a situation.

The other thing is that I have a choice to make peace, or break peace, now it's in man's nature to divide, that's our flesh, in a moments time they've gone from fighting one another over who loves David the most, "We love him more, no we love him more, no we love him more," to saying, "Well, we don't love him at all, we're out of here." Again this is the fickleness of humanity, it takes the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit to hold us together, because in our flesh we're divisive by nature. Consider the dynamic of people that even come to church here, in the natural world the largest percentage of us would have nothing to do with one another, there's nothing we have in common in the natural. Be it different career goals, no career goals, some in one tax bracket, other in another, and we just wouldn't be hanging out in the natural. But the work of the Holy Spirit has brought us together in the person of Jesus Christ, has broken down those walls of separation and unified us, and now we have a choice, keep the peace, or break the peace, the work of creating peace has been done, it's simple up to us to maintain it. Paul put it like this, "*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" Eph 4:1-3 Sheba wasn't safeguarding the peace, he was severing it, but I love what it says at the end of vs 2 about the tribe of Judah and their loyalty, notice it there (read).

So it distresses us to see the 10 tribes revolt, but it encourages us to see the tribe of Judah to remain. And though it's always a grievous thing to see people divide or desert, that serves as a great backdrop for you and me to demonstrate loyalty. Other people may mock our King Jesus, they may decide they have a low opinion of Him, and seek to minimize His person, and take people away from their God ordained leader, but may it be your testimony, and my testimony that we remained loyal to our King. Others may split, even people of influence, or what I thought were people of integrity, but as for me and my house, we'll stay, we'll remain loyal to our King, though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back.

Another real quick thing that I want you to see is the fact that David has been faced with one trial after another, out of the frying pan and into the fire. And we can get this mentality that trials are the exception in the Christian life, but the fact is it's more true to say that they're the norm. Don't think that you're out to lunch in your Christian walk if you're facing hardship, Peter said, "*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*" 1 Peter 4:12 Now if *no* trial ever tries you, you might begin to think it strange, but as we stated Sunday morning many are the afflictions of the righteous, so by the very nature of tribulation in your life, it could mean you're on the right trail. Now there are times we bring hardship on ourselves, we make decisions and we reap accordingly, but just because a hard time visits your life it doesn't mean God has forsaken you, your flesh may want to rebel, but that's a prime time to demonstrate your loyalty to Jesus, we're to fight the good fight of faith. If it weren't a struggle it wouldn't be called a fight.

Vs3

Remember Absalom had violated his dad's concubines, so though David supports them, he no longer has relations with them.

Vs4

Now you recall that Ahithophel had given Absalom the advice that the best way to assure his victory was a quick decisive attack delivered with precision. Don't give David time to recompose himself and get his troops in order, Absalom rejected that advice and it cost him his life. David had been a long time friend to Ahithophel and had no doubt had similar conversations regarding strategy and had seen the fruit of it. And so David says, "We need to deal with this guy swiftly, and be prepared to advance with in 3 days." And so he set Amasa off to rally the troops of Judah, and you remember Amasa was Absalom's general, David's nephew and David sought to reconcile the breach by offering Amasa a job in Joab's place. (Which personally to me, seems to have been a mistake) the guys were behind Joab, but Amasa had been there enemy, and now they were expected to rally behind him, but notice.

Vs5-7

Why did Amasa delay? I'm not sure but when you consider Amasa's military record it may shed a bit of light on the situation. Amasa's army under Absalom was defeated by Joab, and now we're supposed to follow you to war? And so it's quite possible that the men of Judah didn't think too highly of his competency, and so they were leery of following him. For years Joab has led successful campaign after successful campaign, and all we've seen out of you is one big military blunder and a lot of dead guys under your leadership. So it's possible that these guys didn't respect Amasa like they did Joab, and they weren't as excited about getting behind him. So he's having real trouble rallying these guys up, so David says to Abishai, "Look, we can't wait anymore (again having demoted Joab, now Abishai his brother is over him as well, his rank was taken down a few stripes) so take my personal elite forces and go get this guy before he gets his rebellion in full swing." This is the shepherd's heart, we talked about this Sunday, he's protecting his flock, getting in between the nation and it's predator, and when threatened by a predator it's better to act sooner than later. And in vs 7 we see the mention of Joab's men, he's the field commander of these troops, but his brother is over him.

#### Vs8-10

Apparently Amasa caught wind that the special forces were dispatched and since he's the commanding general he books it back to catch up with them, and as he approaches the troops (you see it in your mind's eye) Joab's sword falls out of its sheath (wink wink) "oops." So that as he's approaching Amasa to greet him, Amasa isn't edgy (no pun intended) at all. Because the combination of Joab/swords and close proximity is enough to make anyone nervous, especially the man who took Joab's job, especially when Joab has served David faithfully all these years and I was a betrayer to the king. So talk about disgruntled employee, this is a sticky situation (again no pun intended), and so Amasa is actually relieved to see Joab unarmed. And so as Joab approaches Amasa, he extends his right hand (which was the traditional hand of war, the hand with which the sword was gripped) and so as he greets him and seems to take interest in him it's all a decoy to disarm him so that he can destroy him. Amasa being preoccupied with the right hand, doesn't take inventory of the left, either Joab picked up his sword with his left hand, or he had a dagger tucked away within reach of his left hand, but Amasa never saw it coming. Again the bible says, *"He who hates, disguises it with his lips, And lays up deceit within himself; When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, For there are seven abominations in his heart; Though his hatred is covered by deceit, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly."* Prov 26:24-26 You might say that Amasa didn't discern the unhealthy interest Joab took in his life, be careful when people become radically interested in your life. I'm not saying that you need to question everyone's motives over every thing, but be careful and exercise discernment.

Joab didn't mess around with people whom he thought to be problematic; I don't think this was as simple as a disgruntled employee issue. Though he and David had their differences, I have to credit Joab with radical loyalty to David, and just like he ran Absalom through, I think he saw Amasa in much the same way, a potential threat, and an unstable man who would betray the king for a better offer. And so he just took matters into his own hands and eliminated the equation altogether. (Notice vs 11)

## Vs11

The connotation there is that Joab didn't think that Amasa *was* for David, he didn't trust him, so he eliminated him.

## Vs12

So apparently he didn't die right away, and it's like the scene at a modern day car crash, everyone who goes by just sort of gawks at it and stares at him lying there, (these are some tender guys here, not) just starring at Amasa writhing in his own blood. And so this guy just drags Amasa over in a field somewhere and throws a cloak over him, so that people would get a move on.

## Vs13-15

Now this is what David didn't want, remember back in vs 6, David feared that he'd make it to a fortified city and escape them. And that's exactly what happened, but Joab won't take defeat for an option and so he says, "Prepare the battering rams, we're taking this place apart." And of course as you know the way they'd lay siege to cities in ancient times is they'd take the walls down if they could, if not, they'd set up a parameter, let nothing in, and nothing out, and eventually they'd starve them out. It might sustain itself for a year, or 5, or even 10, but eventually they'll run out of resources, and so that's what they're preparing to do, and if that whole city has to fall in order for him to get Sheba, than so be it.

## Vs16-19

Thank God for wise women, I'm so glad that God has given me a wife that's able to speak wisdom into my life. So many times we men just go about things in such a blunt, or brute kind of approach. Tear into this, or break that apart in my pursuit of the goal, but do yourselves a favor men, when your wives speak to you, listen to them, they just may save you a lot of trouble and unnecessary toil.

## Vs20-21

I'm telling you, you couldn't write a script this good, she's all, "Hey, what have we done to you, people come here when they're ready to *end* disputes." And Joab says, "It's nothing personal but we can't leave here with out this guy in our possession, so if you'll deliver him, we'll leave you alone." And so she says, "Fine, you want this troublemaker you got him, his head is going to come flying over this wall in a few minutes."

## Vs22

Can you imagine her speech to the city counsel, "Yeah, this army out here is here for the long hall, they're willing to see any and everyone of us destroyed if necessary, so we can either wait this thing out, consume all our crops and slowly wither away until we're *all* destroyed, or we can just grab this troublemaker cut off his head, and throw it over the wall, all in favor?" I have a suspicion that this petition made it around on the 1<sup>st</sup> pass, next scene, this head is catapulting over the wall and rolling down at Joab's feet.

The moral of the story is that it's a losing proposition when you seek to get "ahead" apart from the will of God. Sheba wanted to get ahead, and wound up losing his head. Again the proverbs say, "*Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way, He himself will fall into his own pit; But the blameless will inherit good.*" Prov 28:10 David's throne is still secure, but this man who led the people astray in an evil way, fell into his own pit, tried to destroy David's life, and in so doing destroyed his own.

Why? Because it wasn't David he was rebelling against, it was God Himself, and it's just not safe to go against the grain of God's will, there is no wall that can seal you in safely from the will of God. Better to find out what God wants and then go with that, rather than do your own thing and see if God will bless it.

And there's a final analogy we can see in this and then we'll be done. A commentator by the name of John Trapp sees the city walls as the refuge of our hearts, and Sheba represents sin that seeks to hide itself there, that has brought rebellion against our King within those walls, and the Lord doesn't have anything against the city itself, it's never a personal thing, He'd rather you just cut the head off that sin and throw it out to Him. Now we can wait it out, until we wither away, or we can just toss the head of that sin over the wall and be done with it. Some people feel as though God is laying siege to them, as though He's surrounded them, and is starving them out. But God's not against you, He's tracked down a traitor in there, some sin that's seeking refuge in your life, and He won't leave until He has it, do yourself a favor and cut the head off that thing and throw it out to Him. God wants the city to prosper on, but not at the expense of harboring a traitor. Destruction awaited that city had they not complied, and unresolved sin will bring destruction into your life, but don't be confused, God's not after you, He's after that sin. Now if we see the no brainer wisdom that this city displayed in giving the king what he wanted, how much more do you need to give that sin that the Lord is perhaps dealing with you about over to Him?

Vs 23-26

David's personal chaplain, how we need that person of accountability in our lives, that one who can encourage us in our devotional lives. If David saw the need, how much more you and I need those people in our lives who can encourage us in godliness, people who won't coddle sin in our lives or some how help us justify it, but will take us to the Word of God and keep us pressing towards the mark. Again not in a weird way, or lording over us, but just encouraging us in the word, David saw the need for that solid accountability, and we need it as well.