

## Misc.- 2 Samuel 20:1-3

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Grab-bag*

1. The Bible is unique among religious holy books in that it doesn't *sanitize* the life of its heroes.
2. Even the greatest among its pages are shown, warts & all.
3. We see that clearly in the story of David, a man whose life is chronicled at length.
4. David's example is instructive & encouraging *precisely* because he *wasn't* perfect.
5. If all we read about was his *victory* over Goliath, we might despair that *we* don't possess such confident faith.
  - a. But David's example after his hideous blunder with Bathsheba encourages us that *when we fail*, as we inevitably will, God forgives & restores.
  - b. From him we learn that *when we confess & repent*, God turns *even our failures* into valuable lessons that conform us to the image of Christ.

#### B. *Today*

1. We're closing in on the conclusion to David's this morning.
2. I've titled this message "Misc." because we'll be taking a look at a couple lessons these verses teach us.

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Set the Scene*

1. Absalom's rebellion has been put down, ended by his death at the hands of Joab, David's chief military commander.
  2. Even though the rebellion was over, the leaders of the tribes of Israel were slow in recalling David to Jerusalem.
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3. When they finally got around to it, they competed with each other over *who* was David's greatest supporter.
    - a. In ch. 19 we read how the people came out to *officially escort* the exiled king back across the Jordan River.
    - b. As they gathered, the lines were quickly drawn between the tribes, with David's own tribe of Judah on one side & the northern 10 tribes on the other.
    - c. The chapter ends with a *shouting match* as the 2 sides vied for bragging rights over who was *most loyal*.
    - d. Judah shouted, "We love David, yes we do, we love David, HOW 'BOUT YOU?"
    - e. Then the other tribes shouted back.
    - f. There were a lot more people from Judah there, so they managed to *out-shout* the others.
  4. One of the guys standing among the northern tribes saw this as a prime moment to *exploit* the growing rift between north & south.

#### B. *Vs. 1-2*

**<sup>1</sup>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: “We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!” <sup>2</sup>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.**

1. **Hebrew** is an incredibly expressive language, far more so than English which tends to be rather flat.
    - a. **Greek** is perfect for conveying important philosophical ideas & theological truth, so it was the perfect language for the NT.
    - b. But Hebrew was perfect for the OT because it's able to express things only body language or voice inflection can do in most other languages.
    - c. The stories of the patriarchs & words of the prophets come to us full of emotional weight & meaning, through the **written** word.
  2. For instance, in v. 1 we read, “There **happened** to be there a rebel, whose name *was* Sheba the son of Bichri.”
    - a. The Hebrew contains a bit of humorous sarcasm – “There ‘just happened to be’ a rebel there. Yeah, he **just happened** to be there.”
    - b. In other words, he wanted it to **look** like he was there as part of the crowd that had come to welcome David back, but in reality, he was there for the **express purpose of stirring up trouble**.
    - c. That's why he's called a “rebel” – literally, a “son of Belial” – a harsh word that marks someone as **utterly worthless – past redemption**.
    - d. This guy had used up all his chances at repentance & was given over to evil.
  3. Every time Sheba's name is mentioned, he's called the “Sheba, the son of Bichri” = another pun.
    - a. Bichri sounds a lot like the word for **she-camel**; which were usually ornery & difficult.
    - b. It was a serious affront, insult to call someone a female camel
    - c. The point is abundantly clear in Hebrew; **Sheba was one very nasty guy**.
  4. He was from the same clan of the tribe of Benjamin as Saul. He fancied himself a viable candidate to fill Saul's sandals as king.
  5. He'd gone to the Jordan, not to bring David back, but to look for an opportunity to spark rebellion.
  6. Absalom had dropped the baton, but Sheba picked it up & used the rift between Judah & the other tribes to run with it.
  7. When he saw the northern tribes were **hurt** by being bested by the men of Judah, he blew a trumpet and called for them to turn their backs on the south.
  8. If Judah wanted David as king – so be it! As for the rest of the nation, they'd go their own way.
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9. Right at first, the 10 tribes heed Sheba's invitation, but they quickly realized they were foolishly **repeating** their recent mistake in following Absalom against David.
  10. Sheba claimed the rule of the northern tribes. But his following never grew beyond a handful of supporters, and **even they** didn't stay with him long.
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11. The lesson for us is this – no matter how mature we are in spiritual things, no matter how great the battles we win, or the lessons we learn, as long as we are in these bodies, drawing breath, the battle goes on!
  - a. There’s no respite, no let up, no armistice or cease fire.
  - b. We’ll never come to a place this side of heaven, where the enemy will look at us and say, “Oh – he’s too strong to attack. She’s too close to God to bother with.”
  - c. There’s no break in the battle with Belial.
  - d. Jon Courson says, “There’s no furlough in the fight of faith.”
12. Consider David at this time. He’s just had a *mighty victory* against a major threat posed by his rebellious son.
  - a. He’s conducted himself with the utmost in godly humility as he’s endured the chastening hand of God for his sins with Bathsheba & Uriah.
  - b. The wisdom & spiritual maturity he’s demonstrated through it all has been nothing short of epic!
  - c. And now he’s on his way back to Jerusalem to take the throne.
  - d. Hundreds, possibly thousands of Israel’s leaders turn out to officially welcome him back, when something as petty as a pep-rally cheer contest turns into a major brouhaha.
13. Many, if not *most* people, if they were in David’s place, would throw up their hands in complete exasperation & say, “What now? You’ve got to be kidding! Is this never going to end?!?! How many more Absaloms & Shebas do I have to put up with?”
14. “All I want is a little peace & quiet; a chance to just sit & enjoy my throne for a while without someone to fight or a crisis to solve.”
15. David didn’t react that way. He didn’t get incensed or complain that being loyal to God wasn’t paying off in an easier life.
16. He understood that as long as he lived, he’d be at war with evil.
17. That was a truth he’d lost a grip on for a time some years before, and it had led to great trouble for him with Bathsheba.
  - a. God wanted David to *never misplace that truth again*.
  - b. Sheba was a test, to see if he’d learned the lesson. *He had*.
18. Have we? Have we realized that living this side of heaven means battle with an adversary who plays for keeps & offers no quarter?
  - a. We looked at this same point just a few weeks ago.
  - b. Sermon “how-to” books say I shouldn’t repeat a lesson this quickly.
  - c. But I must because I’m more concerned with your spiritual safety & growth than sermon etiquette.
19. So I’ll say it again - As long as we draw breath, as long as we’re in these bodies, we’re at war & must stand guard.
  - a. No matter how mature you may be, how many years you’ve walked or far you’ve gone with God –
  - b. You’ll never come to a place of exemption from battle.
20. Over the years I’ve had many young believers tell me how hard the battle with sin is.
  - a. With a wistful look they say how much they wish they’d been a Christian

- as long as I so that they *weren't tempted anymore*.
- b. I say, "Huh? You think I'm not tempted?"
21. This week, the news broke about a nationally known pastor & Christian leader who was caught up in really gross sin.
    - a. While we don't know the specifics of his fall,
    - b. We can be sure he followed the same path David did before his sin with Bathsheba.
    - c. He either forgot, or tried to opt out of the fact that he was at war with a vast realm of evil spirits who've effectively manipulated this world to turn it into a spiritual minefield.
    - d. If we don't keep our heads & hearts, we're going to misstep and get blown up.
  22. Jesus *repeatedly* called His followers to a life of *vigilant watchfulness*.
    - a. In Gethsemane, He urged them to stay awake & on guard.
    - b. The reason they *weren't prepared* & ran away when the mob came to arrest Him was because they'd not obeyed His command to remain on guard.
    - c. Like David, Peter learned the lesson his failure taught & later wrote, **1 Pet 5:8**

**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

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- d. What's worth noting is that while Jesus calls His followers of every generation to be vigilant, in Luke & Matthew, He calls those living in the Last Days to even greater watchfulness.
23. Sheba's trumpet was a reminder to David that no matter how good & glorious things can be in this life – this isn't heaven; it's still a fallen world. And breathing means battling.
  24. Even so for us, there will always be some Sheba that "just happens" to be hanging around waiting for an opportune moment to trouble you.
    - a. It might be some *person* who *hassles* or *tempts* you.
    - b. It might be some inner rebelliousness that is yet to be overcome by a renewed mind & yielded heart.
    - c. Whatever your Sheba: Stand guard & fight!
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### C. V. 3

**<sup>3</sup>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.**

1. When David fled Jerusalem, he left his concubines behind to take care of the palace.
2. More than likely he realized the *inner weaknesses* that had brought him *to* this place & wanted to distance himself from those things that had contributed to his troubles.
3. He realized his harem was a part of that. His concubines were a symptom of a brokenness he needed to see healed. So he left his concubines behind.
4. When Absalom entered Jerusalem, he laid with them to let everyone know he now claimed the throne.

5. When David returned to Jerusalem, one of the first things he did was to end the practice of a harem.
  - a. He sent these women into permanent retirement.
  - b. He provided for their needs, but he never again visited them.
6. This shows David admitted his past mistakes & was truly repentant. He took steps to make sure he didn't repeat them.
7. Earlier in his career as a ruler, he'd assembled a harem because it was a common practice of ancient oriental kings.
  - a. They demonstrated their wealth, power, & glory by the size, beauty, & appointment of their harem.
  - b. Though David knew God's people ought to walk in marital fidelity, he rationalized his need for a harem.
    - 1) Yeah – it was a good witnessing tool.
    - 2) It would show all Israel and even other kings how good & powerful the God of Israel was.
  - c. But in his heart of hearts David knew a having a harem was *moral & spiritual compromise*.
  - d. The problem is, following his head instead of his heart, once he started down that road, it was easy to keep going.
  - e. He built up an inertia of moral laxity that made it easy to not only *HAVE* a harem, but to *use* it.
  - f. After all, what's the point in paying for a harem if you don't take advantage of it?
8. But we all know what happened to David – the more he frequented his concubines, the more sensual & compromised he became.
  - a. His conscience became dull.
  - b. And one night, while walking on his roof, instead of sleeping on the battlefield where he belonged. He saw a beautiful neighbor woman.
  - c. And since he was already in the mode of having whatever woman he wanted, it was easy for him to take another.
9. Now, years later, through all the trouble that followed that fateful night, David traced back his steps & realized his problems began *years before* when he'd allowed his commitment to holiness to be weakened by adopting the world's ideas of success.
10. When he got back to Jerusalem after Absalom's rebellion, he decided being right with God was more important than being considered hot stuff in the world.
11. He ended his harem.
  - a. He ended it, *not* just because these women had been defiled by Absalom.
  - b. There was more to it than that.
  - c. We can draw that conclusion because after this, David took *no more wives either*.
  - d. He had no more children; evidence he was exercising discipline over an area of his life that had gotten out of control in previous years.
12. I don't think I need to spell out the application here for us. I trust the Holy Spirit will do that.
13. The only caution I want to bring is that when it comes to *compromise*, it's not

the size of the compromise that matters – it's *any* at all.

- a. You see, the devil is real good at temptation; he's got a lot of experience at it.
- b. He knows what works & what doesn't with different people. And he's knows that *gradualism* is most often the way to go.
- c. He starts with some small thing, a seemingly harmless compromise.
- d. Because once that step is taken, the next gets easier, & so on, until we're running like madmen after sin, greyhounds racing round a track after a fake rabbit.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Woodpeckers

1. Just prior to the launch of one of the space shuttles years ago, inspectors discovered thousands of little holes in the foam insulation of the fuel tanks.
  - a. The little woodpeckers living nearby found the foam irresistible & had pecked holes all over.
  - b. If the shuttle launched with the foam as it was, the ice that formed on the tanks would not fall away as it was supposed to & would damage the fuel tanks & blast nozzle.
  - c. So the launch was delayed for days until the foam could be replaced.
2. Compromise is like those little holes in the foam of the space shuttle.
  - a. It can be hidden for years, and each one might not seem to present that big a threat.
  - b. But one compromise leads to another, and soon our whole character is weakened.
  - c. Just like the shuttle, compromise delays our spiritual growth & keeps us from reaching the spiritual heights God wants to lift us to.

#### B. Balance

1. Now, I have to qualify this call to *no compromise* by saying I'm *not* referring to the necessity of negotiation & compromise in our relationships with one another.
  - a. Where we *can't* compromise is in the clear cut, black & white issues of Biblical morality & truth.
  - b. But living with one another in a less than perfect world means we're going to have to compromise with one another on issues of personal preference.
2. Every married couple knows becoming one requires a healthy dose of thoughtful compromise.
3. But we can never, ever negotiate morality or compromise holiness.
4. There's a Russian parable that illustrates the danger of such compromise.
  - a. The Russian winter was approaching and a hunter needed a new fur coat.
  - b. He took aim at a large bear & was about to pull the trigger when the bear said in a low, gentle voice, "Come now, why shoot? What do you want? I'm sure we can negotiate."
  - c. The man said, "I need a fur coat."
  - d. The bear said, "Well, that's reasonable. I need something to eat. Let's sit and see if we can't reach a compromise."

- e. The hunter put down his rifle and took a seat.
  - f. An hour later, the bear walked away alone. From his perspective, the negotiations had been a complete success: He had his meal, and the hunter had his fur coat.
5. In negotiations with the devil, guess whose going to win.
  6. We can't negotiate with satan or compromise with sin.