

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

Taught in Ambassador's Class of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California

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by

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II Samuel 4 :5 - 5:5 Lesson #21 September 16, 1979

(Lessons on II Samuel, Chapters 2 & 3 are not available. Bob Roe was on vacation).

I offer a summary here, but for real continuity you might want to read those two chapters

In II Samuel 2, David, his men and his wives leave Ziklag, and, at the Lord's instructions, go to Hebron. There David is anointed king over the house of Judah. He is also told that it was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul. Abner, commander of Saul's army, takes Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, and makes him king over all Israel. There proceeds a battle between Joab, David's general, and Abner, Saul's general, in which Abner kills Asahel, Joab's brother. 19 of David's men (including Asahel) were killed and 360 of Abner's men were killed.

In II Samuel 3, Six sons are born to David in Hebron. There is a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. The house of David grows stronger, and the house of Saul weakens, but Abner is making himself strong in the house of Saul. Ish-bosheth gets into a little to do with Abner, and Abner threatens to remove the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah. Ish-bosheth is so frightened of Abner he makes no reply. So Abner goes to David with a deal. David welcomes him, and after their discussion, sends him away in peace. Joab, however, on his own, goes after Abner and kills him because Abner had killed Asahel, Joab's brother. David laments the passing of Abner "a prince and a great man...in Israel."

We begin this lesson with Chapter 4 of II Samuel. This is a rather tragic chapter. Instead of walking with his Lord, David has been playing power politics. Abner, the general of the northern ten tribes, has put the fourth son of Saul on the throne. Since Ish-bosheth is a very weak person, Abner makes maneuvers toward becoming king, but he finds it is not working properly, so he promises David he will deliver a power block, the ten northern tribes, to him. David makes a covenant with Abner. Even though David is now king of Judah, his troops are being fed and kept happy by allowing them to raid and bring back lots of spoil. Instead of settling down, reigning as king and teaching his troops to become normal citizens, he allows them to go out and do a little butchering under Joab. So on the one hand he has the unscrupulous general, Abner, who has deserted the king he put on the throne and offered to deliver the ten tribes of Israel to David, obviously, in turn for becoming leading general. On the other hand is his own general, Joab, who is also totally unscrupulous and who apparently has control of the army. So David, even though he is God's anointed king, because he is walking in the flesh, is a patsy for two generals.

Now Joab, David's general, slays Abner as vengeance for Abner's slaughter of his brother Asahel even though it was done in battle and in those days considered legal. Joab slew Abner during a truce situation and also in Hebron, a city of refuge, where you are not allowed to take vengeance without the pursued having had a trial, and David can't punish him. The result is anarchy. It is open season on leaders. Saul was killed by an Amalekite. Abner is slaughtered right there in Hebron, the capital city of David, and all David does is try to pass the buck. The tragic outfall, now, happens in chapter 4. You never sin as an island.

We pick up now with David as he existed in verse 39 of chapter 3.

II Samuel 3:39:

I am weak today, though anointed king; [He says this to his own confidential servants?] **and these men the sons of Zeruah** [that is Joab, David's chief general, and his brother Asahel] **are too difficult for me.** [But not for God. But it doesn't seem to enter David's head that he should ask God about this] **May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil.** [But that is not much in the way of doing justice]

With that background, let's look at poor old Ish-bosheth, Saul's son.

II Samuel 4:1

Now when Ishbosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died in Hebron, [Ishbosheth was the king of the ten northern tribes under Abner's authority. Abner really was the power behind the throne.] **he lost courage, and all Israel was disturbed. And Saul's son** [Ishbosheth] **had two men who were commanders of bands; the name of the one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the sons of Benjamin (for Beeroth is also considered part of Benjamin. and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim** [which is over in Philistine territory] **and have been aliens there until this day) Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the report of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.**

This sounds like a bunch of prattle but it sets an excellent background for us. Ishbosheth is the fourth and only remaining son of Saul. Although he is heir to the throne, he is on the throne at the grace of Abner. When Abner is slain by Joab and nothing is done about it, Ish-bosheth acquires the name Ish-bosheth which means "man of shame." Now all of Israel, the ten northern tribes, which have been held together as a power block by Abner, are at odds. They are each back in their own sandbox. Their leader is gone. Their king is called "man of shame," and the whole place is upset. Beyond that, Ishbosheth, this king who has no power, has two commanders from the tribe, or the nation, of Beeroth who are Hivites. They are not Jews. When Joshua came into the land, you will recall, he was told by God to make no covenants with anybody in the land. People far off yes, but people in the land were to be slaughtered, man, woman and child. He was to eliminate all inhabitants of the land. As they came in, Joshua began the elimination process. The Gibeonites and the Hivites, including the people from Beeroth, the Beerothites here, figured there was only one way to stay alive against 600,000 armed guerrilla warriors who had had all kinds of experience out in that wilderness. They were mean, lean and tough, and the Gibeonites figured they would surely lose any fight. So they dressed in ragged old clothes, took worn and mended wine skins that were popping leaks all over the place, scroungy old donkeys, stale and moldy bread and showed up on Joshua's doorstep pretending they had come from a great distance. Without inquiring of the Lord, Joshua made a covenant with them. Too late he discovered they happened to be the next two cities on his annihilation list. But he had made a covenant with them, and he had made it before Jehovah. He could not revoke it, and he could not kill them. So he made them slaves. That was part of the covenant. But in Chapter 21 of II Samuel, Saul in his zeal for Israel and Judah, not for the Lord, possibly in order to make more room for the people, tried to slaughter the Gibeonites and any Hivites who were involved with them, which included the Beerothites.

You can see the thoughts going through the head of Ish-bosheth's two commanders. "Abner has been killed in a vengeance slaying in a city of refuge and David has done nothing about it. Now, David's rival, with a rightful claim to the throne, is Ishbosheth, fourth son of Saul. The fifth claimant to the throne is Mephibosheth, not a son of Saul but a son of Jonathan Saul's firstborn, but he is a cripple. He can no longer actually act as king. So between David and the throne of all of Israel stands only one person, Ish-bosheth, and he is the son of Saul; Saul that fellow who tried to slaughter us in violation of the covenant we had with the Jews. So let's take a little vengeance: #1 by killing him and #2 by going to David and offering him the kingdom having removed his rival. We'll get blood vengeance on the murderer of our people, at least from his son, and we'll get ourselves a nice fat sinecure in the government of David." So, these two commanders, who

are Hivites not Jews, decide to murder their king.

Here is where II Samuel 4:5 picks up. You can see the groundwork for this murder was laid by David when he refused to act like a king and deal summarily, properly and decisively with Joab who had violated the law of God. The law of God said you could not kill a person in a city of refuge until he had been tried by the elders. If the elders found him not guilty of deliberate and willful killing you could not touch him as long as he lived in the city of refuge. He could never depart from the city of refuge until the high priest died, but he could not be touched as long as he remained in that city. When the high priest died all bets were off. Everybody was redeemed, and they could go back to their own town. This was a picture of Jesus Christ obviously.

Joab killed Abner in a city of refuge. He violated the law of God, not the law of Judah or the law of David, but the law of God, and he went unpunished. David was king in name only. He was just like Ish-bosheth. That was all he was apart from Jesus Christ. Apart from Jehovah, Yahweh, he had no power. So he was a pawn in the hands of Joab, just as Ishbosheth was a pawn in the hands of Abner. The tragedy is that David was God's anointed to reign over all Israel. But in the flesh he had absolutely no ability to reign. He had no claim upon God. He had done nothing about a violation of the known will of God. So he had set the stage for what happened.

In verse 5 we pick up the tragedy that results.

II Samuel 4:5:

So the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, departed and came to the house of Ish-bosheth in the heat of the day while he was taking his midday rest. [This was way up east of the Jordan about half way up to Galilee at Mahanaim] And they came to the middle of the house as if to get wheat, [They were officers of men, and since they were getting wheat for the people, it was very natural for them to go into the house of the king who was in charge of the wheat] and they struck him in the belly; and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. Now when they came into the house, as he was lying on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and killed him and beheaded him. And they took his head and traveled by way of the Arabah [The valley of the Jordan] all night. Then they brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, "Behold, the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, [incidentally, also their enemy] who sought your life; [They are playing right into David's self-interest] thus the Lord has given my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and his descendants."

They brought Ishbosheth's head to David and pretended it was the Lord's doing, when actually it was their doing. However, the circumstances were such that it looked pretty good. Since David's last rival had been removed, they expected a nice reward. Their declaration was that God had given David vengeance upon his enemies. Actually what they had done was murder the king and make an excuse for it. There's a little self-interest here.

We see this type of thing many, many time in counseling. People come in and say, "It is the will of God that I leave my husband. He is too hard to live with," or "I had a vision," or "I talked to my friends" The bible says absolutely the opposite. It says you are to submit without a word to a husband who is nonpersuadable by the Word and win him by your life. Here is the known will of God, but we hear their circumstances, their friends, their feelings, their emotions, and they try to persuade us that this is the will of God for them. Their only basis for that statement is their own feelings or the quotes of their friends, who are biased and on their side anyway, and who haven't looked at the Word of God either. Probably the reason they got in this state is because they came to us first of all for premarital counseling, and they didn't pick up on it. They're two Christians that love one another and therefore they feel that this is it. Unfortunately the word "love" is really infatuation. They interpret all the circumstances as being the will of God. They don't want to wait to see whether or not it really is God's will or even to search the Scriptures. It just might not be his will, and if it isn't, they will lose one another. You can see it in their lives and their attitudes. They want to rush into a marriage just in case God might say no later on, and then they won't get each other. So, they come and tell us they are both Christians, and they love one another and therefore they know this is a godly match. You ask them to wait, and they panic. Why? It just might not be God's will, so they try to associate God with their own desires.

It is a very human thing these men have just done here. Problem is David has had it up to his ears with anarchy. I think this is the incident that finally opens his eyes. If he doesn't stop the anarchy of leaders right now and stop the assassination of those anarchist leaders, what is to stop them from killing David? If Joab, who is still a general of Judah, can murder Abner in a city of refuge in violation of the known will of God and go scot free, and if Ish-bosheth can be slain by his own commanders in his own home and have them not only get rewarded but go scot free, what is to stop the next possible step of Joab taking care of David? Joab has a lot of ideas about getting ahead. Joab is a nephew of David. He has royal blood in his veins, and he controls the army, my friends. He might just pull it off. Just as Abner controlled the army and did pull it off. So David moves very rapidly on this thing.

II Samuel 4:9:

And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them. "As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, [I do not need murderers to take care of my enemies] when one told me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,'" and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news.

Remember the Amalekite who came to David claiming he had slain Saul at Saul's request since Saul was badly wounded, literally was in cramps, and couldn't kill himself. He said Saul was afraid of falling alive into the hands of the Philistines who would torture and make sport of him, so he begged the Amalekite to kill him which the Amalekite did. Then the Amalekite came to David with the royal crown and the royal arm band and handed them over to David expecting a nice reward for his loyal actions. He had saved Saul from suffering and was also delivering to David the crown of all Israel. David slew him right on the spot for killing God's anointed. So the reward that this particular young man got was death. David can see right through these men from Israel. They are seeking reward too.

II Samuel 4:11:

How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood from your hand, and destroy you from the earth?

David is indicating that, while the young Amalekite did kill the anointed of God and therefore had to be slain, at least he did do what Saul ask him to do. These men were murderers who killed a righteous man, not a man righteous before God necessarily, but one who was without crime. David recognized that Ish-bosheth was only a pawn and had only been on the throne because Abner put him there. David probably had some kindred feeling as he was kind of a pawn temporarily. So he puts it right to these two man, "If I had this Amalekite killed who was honoring the request of Saul, what will I do to wicked men who murder a righteous person?"

II Samuel 4:12:

Then David commanded the young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet, and hung them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron.

David takes very radical steps here. He had their hands and feet cut off. He probably cuts off their hands because they plunged the dagger. The feet were probably cut off because they ran down the valley. They ran all night with Ish-bosheth's head in their hands to get to David hoping for a reward. So what he did was probably symbolic. We don't know for sure, but even today in Islam it is not unusual for a Bedouin to lose a right hand as punishment for robbery. After he had the men killed, David hung their bodies up by the main pool in Hebron. You remember Deuteronomy says he that is hanged is accursed of God. David wanted to show these men were accursed of God. He took very violent, but effective, measures. He made a very strong proclamation that from then on murder and assassination were out. He indicated that from then on the laws of God would be obeyed. Next he gave Ish-bosheth, his so-called enemy, an honorable burial in the city of

Hebron along with the other so-called enemy Abner. He honored the two murdered people and destroyed the murders.

In chapter 5 we'll see that when David finally deals with sin in the way a man after God's own heart should deal with it, God begins to move. The northern tribes are now without a general. They are without a king. The next king in the line, Mephibosheth, cannot rule because of his physical ailments. What David could not accomplish by playing politics, is now given to him by Yahweh, the Lord himself, in the Lord's time.

II Samuel 5:1:

Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. [We are all out of the house of Jacob. We are all Jews. First requirement for a king of Israel was that he be a Jew, a brother. Second,] **Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in.** ["Even back in the days when Saul was there, you were the uniting force of Israel." He was the general of all the armies of Saul. He was the uniting force and all Israel rejoiced. There were not 10 or 12 distinct tribes in those days; they were united behind one general who worked for Saul. Third,] **And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler [captain] over Israel.'**" [You will both be a shepherd, literally one who puts them to pasture, and a civil ruler, and you will be captain of the army. You will be military and civil ruler in Israel, all of Israel. God had said so. Remember in Samuel 16, David was anointed king of all Israel. So the moment David begins to act like a king and uphold the law of God, the people come to him. He doesn't have to go to them. They come and make a covenant with him.] **So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David [he gets the title now] made a covenant with them before the Lord at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel.**

If you recall in the Abner situation, Abner was going to deliver a block of power to David, and then the power block would make a covenant with David. They were in the driver's seat, not David. Now with David walking as a man after God's own heart, David makes a covenant with them. David, as a type of Jesus Christ, is in charge. He makes the covenant. You don't dictate to Jesus Christ. You accept what Jesus Christ lays out for you. David acted like God's ruler and God's shepherd. He acted like a man of God. To be a man after God's own heart lays a heavy trip on David.

We have both a beautiful and a tragic picture here. David was thirty years old when he became king and he reigned 40 years, 7 years and 6 months over Judah and 33 years over Judah and Israel. He is a type of Christ. How old was Christ when he began his public ministry? Thirty years. The law of God said a priest could only be a priest at the age of 30. There was a restriction there. A prophet could be a prophet at any age. A king could be a king at any age at which he was accepted, but a priest had to be thirty years of age. He had to be at the height of his masculinity, at the height of his natural powers. He was to be God's man. David here is to become a king over a kingdom of priests. God promised Israel, "You behave yourselves and obey me, and I will not only exalt you, I will make you a kingdom of priests. You will all be priests." Priests are to be mediators between man and God. Now if the Jews were all to be priests, for whom were they to mediate? Who's left over? The gentiles. The whole world. God offered the Jew a ministry, a church membership, of the whole world. All God ask was total submission to him, a total walk of holiness before him in his strength and power, and he would make the Jews a kingdom of priests. He offered a ministry that would reach worldwide, an offer to mediate for the poor gentiles living in darkness which would bring them into the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Lord God Almighty. Can you imagine being offered a pastorate like that? And they blew it. But David is going to be a man after God's own heart. So God pictures this typology very carefully. David is the king of a nation of priests. Tragedy is he rules only Judah for seven years and six months.

Beyond the fact that Abner was playing power politics, why would the Israelites not accept David as their king right off the bat when Saul died? God had anointed David king over Israel. Everybody knew it by that time. Everybody! So why didn't they accept him as king over all of Israel? You say, "God hadn't opened the door." O.K., but why hadn't God opened the door? What had David done that slammed the door? Remember back a ways God had told David, "I want you to stay in Judah. I don't care if Saul is chasing you up one side of the hill and down the other. I have anointed you king over Israel. I have not anointed you to be slain by Saul, and I want you where you have to totally depend upon me and my protection. I want you to learn some lessons, to

be stretched out on Jesus Christ, totally dependent upon him and watching as the Lord God Almighty, POW!, knocks the circumstances all to pot." What did David do instead? He ran to Gath, aligned himself with the Philistines, a godless uncircumcised people, enemies of the nation of God. He took the easy way out. Well remember who the Philistines were attacking at that point in time? Was it the Jews? No they were attacking the ten nations of Israel. David aligned himself with the enemy of the northern kingdom and was on his way to battle them when the Philistines threw him out. I don't know what he planned to do when he got up there.

Also, what probably set Abner off, beyond his own personal ambition? Abner was an oriental. What had David done to Abner? He couldn't do it to Saul, but what did David do to Abner? He totally humiliated him in front of all his troops. Abner was a great general, a formidable man of power, and you just don't go around doing that. Just two little fleshly trips and David slammed the door for seven years and six months on becoming king of all Israel. He alienated the ten northern tribes, and he also alienated a power house controlled by Abner who took over the throne, put his puppet on the throne, consolidated the tribes of Israel and, you read through the passage, began to take back the land of Israel. He was an extraordinary general. When the time came that he couldn't make it with Ish-bosheth, he still could have delivered the total nation of Israel to David which would have made David king of all Judah and all Israel.

You do get what you sow. God does not stop the natural consequences of your actions. As a Christian you are an heir, a joint heir of Jesus Christ. You are mediators of the New Covenant. You are children of God, sons of God, but what you sow in the flesh God says you will reap according to the flesh. If you sow in the Spirit, you will reap according to the Spirit. David was anointed king over Israel and God said, "That's great, but David we have some natural consequences that have to work their way out. It is going to take seven years and six months and the murder of two men before you get the whole kingdom." But then he got 33 years as king over all of Israel and all of Judah.

Next time we'll pick up at II Samuel, chapter 5:6 thru chapter 6. Next time we hope to get through chapter 6 because the two tie together.

Father, we thank you for your Word. We just thank you for the way that you show us that we do not mock you. While we may be your chosen people, Father, we do reap in the flesh what we sow. So, Father, help us to be wise and to turn to you for everything and not try to do our own thing or to seek our own will or to rely on our own resources. So, Father, just teach us to day-by-day and moment-by-moment seek your will in our lives, allowing your power to live through our humanity that our lives might truly be in the Spirit and not in the flesh, that we might not have to reap those consequences, Father, which inevitably occur when we sow to the flesh even though we are children of God, sons of God, heirs of the New Covenant. Thank you, Father, for giving us this warning. Thank you, Father, for your love for us and that, in spite of the warning and in spite of our failures, we are still your children. Thank you, Father, for everything, in Jesus' name Amen.

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