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A Kindness Rejected II Samuel 10

Intro: We have been looking at David's reign over Israel and how it is both the reality of **YHWH's** reign over Israel & a preview, a small example of the ultimate reign of David's greatest Descendent, not just over Israel but the world. In ch8, we saw all the military victories that David won thru **YHWH's** power; how he extended the reach of **YHWH's** influence in that region of the world. We paused in ch9 to watch David extend kindness (*hesed*) to Mephibosheth. This has brought us to ch10, a brief description of a political offense that degrades into all out war. For all its abruptness, the chapter does serve a *literary purpose* but it also has application for the Christian life today.

1-2- kindness- here again, we see David desiring to extend *hesed* to another individual; in this case it's **Hanun**, the son of **Nahash**, king of the Ammonites. Nahash has died & Hanun has succeeded him. David's show of kindness was both heartfelt & customary. He sent several diplomats from his court to offer condolences to Hanun. Now, we don't know when, what or how Nahash showed kindness to David but it was most likely while he was running from Saul. If you recall, Saul's first military victory as Israel's king came at the expense of Nahash in I Sam 11. Thus, if David was seen as the enemy of Saul, he would have been acceptable to Nahash as an ally worth having & caring for.

Regardless of custom or personal reasons, David's offer was a class act! Now, I'll bet David didn't cry himself to sleep over Nahash's death & that there was a whole lot of formality involved here but it was a nice, thoughtful touch; an overt act of royal kindness in tribute to a departed leader. Even with all the formality, it should have been seen as a gracious formality & at least, acknowledged with reciprocal courtesy. Oddly enough, that's not what happened.

3-4- It's hard to know why Hanun's counselors advised him thus. Maybe they were truly suspicious of David's intentions or maybe they were just contemptible louts in their own right. Maybe they used this as a means to appear wise to the new king. It's common for liars to always suspect others of lying. So, instead of receiving David's ambassadors warmly, Hanun bestowed upon them 2 disgraceful insults: he cut their beards & robes in half.

In that culture, most men would rather die than have their beards shaved off b/c only slaves were shaved but free men wore beards. The beard was a man's greatest ornament & to have half of it cut off was the greatest insult that could have been given to these ambassadors. But it didn't stop there: they also cut their royals robes in half which is an obvious insult & humiliation. By this shameful insult, the men's manliness was both marred & exposed. I'm sure Hanun's lackeys made their departure out of

town as humiliating & embarrassing as possible. We should understand that this insult was not just to David's ambassadors but it was to David as well. It was royal officials they were mistreating & royal garments they were abusing.

This act of mockery was nothing short of **spitting in David's face**.

5- Note: David's concern was for the honor of his men. He didn't call them back to Jerusalem & use their embarrassment to whip up anti-Ammonite feelings among the populace. He cared more for their dignity & honor than to use them as political pawns. He told them to wait in Jericho until their beards grew back to return to Jerusalem.

6-7- repulsive- big stink! It wasn't that David had rejected the Ammorites, they had done this to themselves & they knew it! Clearly, Hanun's advisers were wrong but did they sue for peace & try to make restitution? No, they doubled down on their offense (act of war) & hired 33K Syrians to come help defend them against the soon arriving Israelites.

8-14- Joab has marched into a classic pincher move: the Syrian mercenaries were on 1 side of the battlefield & the Ammonites were lined up in front of the gate on the other side. Note Joab's mindset: he presents a battle plan that anticipates a difficult fight but the thought of retreat never enters his mind. Joab walks into a trap & his only thought is: attack! The Syrians were a more notable force so he took the best soldiers & faced them while Abishai took the rest to face Ammon. Joab's resolve must have unnerved the Syrians b/c it doesn't even say they put up a fight – they just ran! When the Ammonites saw the Syrian run they said, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander!"

15-19- When Syria realized they'd been whipped, they must have figured things would be different with more soldiers so they gathered another army from the other side of the Euphrates (Hadadezer's). When David heard about it, he decided it was time for him to show up & lend a hand. Vs.18 is brief but contains an amazing truth: this was David's greatest military victory of his career & what an amazing feat: an Israelite king, on foreign soil, facing a confederation of soldiers that was more numerous, more powerful & more experienced w/ chariot warfare & yet, they were struck down by David; so much so that they realized they would rather serve David than be slaughtered by him.

This chapter is a bit different than others we have studied. Except for the specifics of Hanun's insulting etiquette the rest of ch10 doesn't have the same graphic details & exciting battlefield close ups we've seen previously. But, as I mentioned before, ch10 does serve an important literary function: it sets the stage for the next 2 chapters. The Ammonite War is the historical background for the David, Bathsheba, Uriah fiasco & the Ammonite problem isn't resolved until the end of ch12. Still, the initial theme of ch10 links back to ch9 b/c David desires to show **hesed** to the Ammonite **Hanun** just as he had shown **hesed** to the grandson of Saul, **Mephibosheth**.

So, ch10 points both forward & backward but that is not its **only** function. Ch10 does have its very own witness. It does have its own word to say to us, a word that applies specifically to all Christians today & the church as a whole.

Prophetic – Initially, there doesn't seem to be anything prophetic in this story, it just reveals the typical. As offensive as they seem, the Ammorites were just being Ammorites. Their despicable barbering & tailoring jobs aren't unusual. They're the guys who like to scoop out the right eyes of people they subjugate, just for the insult of it. Amos tells us they like to rip open pregnant women to get rid of 2 generations at once. That's what Ammonites do. The Syrians were no different. Any excuse to gain control over the lucrative trade routes of the area would help their economy. That's just what Syrians do. It's all so typical but the typical can also be prophetic as well (see **Ps 2**).

Ch10 is a regionalized version of Ps2. Hanun & Hadadezer set themselves against David just like the kings & rulers of the world are bent on resisting **YHWH** & His Davidic Messiah King (1-3). Even after their initial defeat, Hadadezer thinks he can still win & mounts another massive, all-out assault which David smashes to bit when he attacks them at Helam. In the end, Hadadezer & his cronies finally smarten up & sue for peace with David.

If you think this is a stretch, just remember: David is **YHWH's** chosen king (anointed) & Hanun & Hadadezer have arrayed themselves against him & they lost! Ch10 is Ps2 in miniature & the important truth it proclaims is simply this: ***in spite of all the resistance & hostility, the Davidic king will rule!*** If we're not assured of this principle then none of the other principles will apply. If we're not assured of this fact, what's the use of going on any further?

Theological - This 1 may be even more surprising, not b/c of the truth it offers but b/c of the lips that speak it. The only mention of **YHWH** in ch10 is in Joab's speech in vs12. Some may balk at the idea that theology could spill from the lips of a murderous, vindictive, self-serving military man but truth is truth no matter who speaks it (Caiaphas)! The writer gives no details of the battle but gives ample space for Joab's speech in which he makes 3 important points:

1) Be of good courage – courage isn't a matter of feeling or circumstances, it's a matter of choice – especially when God makes His strength available to His people (**Eph 6:10**) It's not a request for us to try but a command to obey.

2) for our people – Joab reminds them of all they have to lose: their people & their cities. This fight involved more than their honor, glory or even their lives. The battle was bigger than themselves & their personal concerns, they were fighting in defense of **YHWH's** people & **YHWH's** territory. In short, they were fighting for the kingdom of God!

3) do what is good – here's the theology, here's Joab's main point: after all the preparation (spiritual, emotional, physical) the end result is left in **YHWH's** capable

hands. To some, this may seem like a cop-out but the reality is: this has always been the resting-place of God's troubled people: God will do what He thinks is best! Joab's not in despair here, this is an honest expression of faith! It's the surest comfort for any believer in the midst of uncertainty.

When you combined the truth that God's King will rule & that God always does what's best it should lead us to the truth that God will never abandon us. Ultimately, God will reveal to us that our hope in Him was not in vain. Thus, our faith will never falter if it rests on His mercy & truth. While we know this to be true, there's still plenty we don't know. When we ask for our daily provision, we don't always know how that will be accomplished. When we're sick, we ask for healing but are left in suspense as to how or if it will occur. All we know is the God hasn't forgotten us, we still have access to Him & that He still loves us. So, what ever happens – we must understand that it will be for the best!

There's a strange dichotomy here: bringing Joab's speech into our problems might make us more confident & less certain. But, as God's people, as we mature in our relationship with Him, we will eventually come to the point where we accept that if God will do what He thinks is best, it will also be what is best for His people! Lord, help my unbelief!

Contemporary – which characters relate closest to us today? David's ambassadors! Paul applied this same title to himself & the other apostles in **II Cor 5:20** & it still applies to us today. There's a lot of responsibility in that job! An ambassador doesn't speak to please his audience but to please the King who sent him. He doesn't speak on his own authority; his opinions & expectations carry no weight. He only says what he has been commissioned to say. But an ambassador is more than just a messenger; he's also a representative & the honor & reputation of his King & his country are in his hands. What message did Paul carry? That God was **pleading** for men to be reconciled to Him! What an honor it is for us to carry such a critical message to a world that so desperately needs to hear it.

Believers today are called by God to do the same thing that David's ambassador's were commissioned to do - to **show kindness** to Hanun. Yet, even tho their intentions were pure, their message was received with suspicion & they suffered insult & disgrace at the hands of those they were sent to comfort. Was it wrong? Of course! Was it painful? I'm sure! But how did it turn out? David, thru the power of **YHWH**, won the greatest military victory of his reign.

We've also been commissioned by our King to **show kindness (hesed)** to those who are still at enmity with the Lord. Some will receive the kindness but most will not, at least not initially. Most people will act like they work for Hanun – they will try to insult you & disgrace you & many will succeed. So why should we bother? B/c we have been commissioned by our King, b/c our God will always do what's best & b/c our King, God's Anointed, will rule the earth!

“Yet, but it may cost us some dignity.” True, but the Bible teaches that it’ll cost much more if we refuse (**Rom 8:18**).

Are we willing to be obedient & simply trust that the Lord loves us & will do what is best for His kingdom? He’s going to win in the end but will He win b/c of us or in spite of us? That’s the only question we need to ponder.