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Reruns II Samuel 20

Intro: Ch18-19 have brought us the end of Absalom's rebellion but unfortunately; **not** to the end of David's troubles. As we move into ch20 we'll discover that, tho some characters have changed, the events are strangely familiar; in fact, we've seen it all before. There's not much different here, just more rebellion, more tragedy, etc. There's barely a passing reference to **YAHWEH** in the chapter so quite naturally, the whole story is driven by human activity; so much so that the human characters serve as the focal point of the story. As miserable as that sounds, we can still draw some sanctified warnings from these wretches. If the Bible doesn't tell us what to do, it will faithfully tell us what **not** to do!

1-2- Ch19 had concluded with a dust up between the 10 northern tribes & the tribe of Judah. The argument started when the northern tribes took issue over the fact that the tribe of Judah presumed to escort the king back to Jerusalem without them. The northern tribes felt they had a greater share in David but Judah disagreed & did so with gusto (19:43b)! Apparently, the men of Judah used certain "trigger words" & failed to provide enough "safe spaces" for the men of the northern tribes to retreat to because all of a sudden, they didn't seem to care about David much anymore. What started out as an argument over who was more loyal to the king & who had the greatest right to honor him disintegrated into political abandonment & an outright revolt! In a complete reversal, the men of the north went from claiming to have "10 shares" in David to having "no share" in David. Note how fickle humans can be. Jesus knows this: 1st the crowds cried out "**Hosanna**" but then they cried out "**Crucify Him!**"

Of course, all of this was instigated by 1 man: **Sheba**. The writer not only goes to the trouble of giving his heritage (**son of Bichri**) & tribe affiliation (**Benjamite**) but he also gives us insight into his character: **a rebel** (lit, **man of Belial**) meaning a **worthless, good for nothing, unprofitable, base fellow**. No ambiguity there! Tell us what you really think! Since he is a Benjamite, we can assume he still had strong feelings for the old regime (Saul's) but what makes him such a scoundrel; a man of Belial? Because he is rejecting **YAHWEH's chosen king!** He is **rebelling** (& **calling others to rebel**) against

YAHWEH's anointed king & in so doing, he is violating the covenant that bound the northern tribes in mutual loyalty with the king (**II Sam 5:3**). Now, Sheba may justify his actions by claiming emotional distress caused by Judah's words or accusing David of engaging in political favoritism towards Judah but neither of those alters his crime: **rebelling** against covenant kingship & thus, **rebelling** against **YAHWEH** Himself, which is a **crime** in itself.

While the idea of revolt may be tiring to us since we just **covered all that in the story of Absalom**; I must admit that the principle of revolt is alive & well in the Body of Christ, even in the "Bible-believing" churches! I've seen it all my life: people who insist on only attending a church that has a high view of Biblical authority, which is a good thing. But, let a married woman find another man she prefers over her husband or a husband gets too close to another woman at work & wants to divorce his wife: **somehow** the **authority of the Bible doesn't matter** too much. Or someone's been offended by another. They've been hurt too bad, the wound is too deep; there can be **no** reconciliation even tho the offending party is **repentant** & **seeks forgiveness**. You might suggest they never pray the Lord's Prayer again (**Mt 6:12**) or point out that Jesus didn't give any alternative but reconciliation (**Mt 6:14-15**). Too bad for Jesus & His prayer – their wrath is too precious to them. Rightful authority of the Scriptures can just go pound sand!

There are Shebas in the church – even "Bible-believing" ones. They are quite willing to rebel against rightful authority when it runs contrary to their fleshly desires. They are determined to go their own way, to call their own shots; they dare to lift up their hand against the King of their heart.

3- A sad scene indeed. Note: this is the 1st thing the author reports David doing upon re-entering Jerusalem which implies its importance. Of course, we can't read this verse without thinking back to what **YAHWEH** had told David in **12: 11-12** & what Ahithophel advised Absalom to do in **16:22-23**. If we're reminded of all this, I'm sure David was as well.

He was told what Absalom had done to these women & now, as he's making arrangements for them, for their future; he realizes that their misery was caused by his sin. No, these women weren't homeless, starving or destitute. David provided for them; but at the same time, he would have nothing more to do with them. They would live out the remainder of their lives confined to secluded quarters, isolated & alone. They were doomed thru no fault of their

own.

Again, **we've seen all this before** in the tragedy of Tamar. Amnon craved her, violated her, despised her & then kicked her to the curb like so much garbage. He had his way with her & she was laid waste for the rest of her days. Amnon sinned but Tamar suffered. It's shocking, it's senseless but most of all – its just sad!

And yet, we continue to see this desperate sadness in the Kingdom of God today. Many a Christian knows what its like to have their lives turned upside-down by the sin of other people. Maybe a parent let you down (or a child), maybe a close Christian friend turned on you or someone in authority failed you. This is the dichotomy of the kingdom of God: the **miracle** of God's kingdom is that He uses fallen humanity to accomplish His will; the tragedy of God's kingdom is that He uses fallen humanity to accomplish His will. I'd like to be able to tell you there's a solution but in the end, there is no help for this except in the One who was sent to **heal the brokenhearted** (Is 61:1b) & in the hand that promises to **wipe away tears from all faces** (Is 25:8). In **II Cor 12:9** the Lord doesn't just mean that His strength is made perfect in our own weakness; surely it is made perfect in the weakness of others as well. Tho the sins of others may darken our world, by the grace of Jesus & the power of His Spirit, they need not doom our world.

4-14- While David had turned a blind eye to Absalom's treachery, he wasn't going to make that same mistake with Sheba. Having made good on his word, he commissioned his new general to call up the Judean militia within 3 days. Apparently, the men of Judah had been quite prepared to fight over their king, but not very prepared to fight for him. When Amasa fails to show in the time allotted, David orders Abishai to take his royal guards & take care of Sheba. Note: David passes over Joab & appoints his brother as the temporary commander of his elite fighting forces. Now, Joab doesn't have a commission from his king but it seems he goes along for the ride, so to speak.

Tho Amasa's late (soon to be in more ways than 1), he catches up with Abishai's troops as Gibeon. Now, Joab makes his move. Tho hastily planned, his rouse was perfectly executed. There was the grand distraction of that silly ole sword that won't stay in its sheath; then Joab approaches Amasa with kind words & apparent affection; then comes a slight of hand

that any magician would envy: the right hand for greeting & the left hand for gutting. It was all over but the field dressing & that wasn't a pretty sight! But, as awful as it may seem, it was business as usual for Joab. An obstacle had been removed, now time to move on to the next item on the "to do" list. Well, almost removed. Even in death, Amasa's holding up Joab's progress – until he's dragged off unceremoniously & covered with a blanket.

Shocking? Yes, but **we've seen it all before**. Joab slaughtered Abner in a similar way, then Absalom, now Amasa. He specializes in treachery & blood & is successful! At the end of the chapter, he returns to David & faces no retribution!

Nothing **succeeds** like **success**! I'm sure David wasn't pleased with Joab at all but he had saved the kingdom. So, without any pomp or fanfare, David restores Joab as his top general, with all his personal failures & political victories.

Joab is confusing: you want to cheer for him because he's a winner but he's such a scoundrel. You want to like him because he seems to have David's back but for every political victory he gives, there's a personal slap in the face to go with it. In short, Joab is **intensely loyal** & **completely uncontrollable**. He never revolts against David or seeks his throne – he is loyal to David. He never tries to become king but he always seems to act as his own king. He's **extremely loyal** to David & **consistently unsubmitive** to David. There's such a thing as recognizing a king's sovereignty & ignoring his will. **Mt 7:21** describes just such an instance. In eternity, these people will have **no** place in God's glorious kingdom.

15-22- Abel Beth-Maacah was in the far north of Israel, showing that Sheba had gathered very little support for his cause. When Joab showed up, he got right to work: apparently, he believed the city was behind Sheba. Apparently, the men of Abel were prepared to defend their city to the death. Apparently, no 1 seemed to be willing to ask many questions. At least there was 1 level head attending that day who had the presence of mind to ask, "Hey, what's up?"

Joab tells her what he needs to end this & she says, "**Well, that isn't a big mountain to climb! I'll be right back!**" It seems level heads prevailed. In fact, Sheba was the only 1 who lost his head over the matter. Case closed. Let's go!

This is human cleverness. The **wise woman** goes to the people **in her wisdom** & saves the city. She's sharp, clever, insightful & successful. But – no surprise – we've seen all this before. Il Sam literally pounds us with human wisdom: David's scheme to cover up his affair with Bathsheba & his plot to murder her husband; Nathan's story about lamb; Jonadab's foul advice to Amnon; Absalom's plan to murder Amnon, or get Joab's attention, or persuade the men of Israel to support him; David's sending his 5th column into Absalom's court; Ziba's conspiracy against Meph; etc, etc... Some are legitimate, some are corrupt. Here, the woman's wisdom ends up saving many lives.

Still, we should be wary of wisdom which is basically **the skill to know how to be successful**. That skill can be used for good or for evil. Wisdom that is **not** mixed with **sanctification** is **destructive & can be deadly**. Here in **ch20**, it was beneficial but that's not always the case. It's not enough to be successful; our goal is to be successful in God's will.

23-26- These last verses serve a dual purpose. They mark the conclusion of this section of the book but they also quietly tell us that despite all the problems & failures, David's kingdom is still intact. It's fragile because of the sin of its king & the rebellion of its subjects but despite internal corruption & external attacks, the kingdom still stands.

It was a close call for **Abel** – the city obstinately resists Joab, believing he wants to destroy them. Joab attacks them furiously believing they all side with Sheba. Both are wrong! Come to find out, the single condition of peace was the surrender of the traitor! It's the same when God begins to deal with the soul. He will besiege a heart with conviction, even to the point of distress. You may fear that you don't measure up or think God wants to come in, take over & destroy your life as you know it. That's not the case – all He wants you to do is surrender the traitor: sin is the traitor & your sin nature is the rebel. Recognize its utter wretchedness, surrender it to the Lord & all will be well. Do it today!

Christian, take note where this national argument, this falling out to revolt takes place: in Gilgal! This is the 1st place Israel stepped foot when they entered the Promised Land under Joshua. What happened at Gilgal? Israel set up memorial stones to remind them of what **YAHWEH** had done for them in the past. Hen, they consecrated themselves to the Lord, in the face

of their enemies, in preparation for what the Lord was going to do for them in the future. Before they could conquer Canaan, they had to conquer themselves. It seems Israel forgot **YAHWEH**'s goodness, that's why they're struggling so much. How about you? Have you forgotten God's goodness or your commitment to Him? We must always remember: God won't use an unconsecrated people to reach an unconsecrated world. When was the last time you spent any quality time in Gilgal? The Lord is waiting for us to look to Him. 😊