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2 SAMUEL 2:8-4:12

Last week as we began our study of **2 Samuel**, we saw the death of Saul and Jonathan and the second anointing of David. David had already been anointed as king while he was still a shepherd boy, but he had not yet been given the throne. For many years David had fled from Saul, but now, Saul is dead and David is anointed king of Judah.

Let me just say this...

Judah was David's tribe. The people of Judah were David's people.

We know that later on, after the reign of Solomon, the kingdom would be split and the land of Judah would consist of the tribes of **Judah and Benjamin**. But this was not true at this point. Saul was a **Benjamite** so at this point the people of the tribe of **Benjamin** were still loyal to Saul and his family.

Today's lesson is about several men. **And to say the least, their lives aren't shining examples of how life should be lived.**

The Holy Spirit has given us a look at these men and He has told us a good deal about them...and He has done it for a reason. When Bill and I first looked at this lesson this week we wondered "*what does this mean to us today...on June 9, 2002?*"

And when we come to passages of Scripture like this, we need to be reminded of the verse in **2 Timothy** that tells us that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for our **teaching and reproof and correction and training in righteousness.**

Let's approach this passage with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will teach us and will apply it to our lives today. Let's ask Him to reprove us and correct us and train us in His righteousness by that which we will be looking at today.

So, with that as our prayer, let's look first at a man named **Abner**.

Abner and Saul were cousins. Their fathers were brothers. Abner was very, very loyal to Saul. He was Saul's faithful personal bodyguard.

Abner did not like David. One reason was that he regarded David as an enemy because Saul regarded David as an enemy.

But, another reason is that David had **greatly embarrassed** Abner earlier when King Saul was still alive.

Back in 1 Samuel 26 we see that Saul and his army were pursuing David to kill David. Well, they set up camp one night and they all went to sleep.

Saul went to sleep. **Abner**, Saul's faithful bodyguard went to sleep. **All Saul's men** went to sleep. *No one stayed awake to keep watch over the camp.*

While they were all asleep David and Abishai crept into their camp. Abishai wanted to take Saul's life, but David stopped him. But they **did** leave obvious signs that they had been there.

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David and Abishai rearranged Saul's spear and water jug so that in the morning when everyone awoke, they would know for certain that their camp had been invaded the night before.

Then David and Abishai left and when David was on the top of a hill with a great distance between them, David cried out and he called Abner by name and this is what he said...

"Are you a man? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came to destroy the king your lord. This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, all of you must surely die, because you did not guard your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now, see where the king's spear is and the jug of water that was at his head."

Now, don't you know that humiliated Abner in the eyes of Saul and the other soldiers? What David was saying was, "*Abner, you're not fit to live because of the sorry job you've done protecting your king.*"

Well, Abner remembered that for a long, long time and when David was anointed king of Judah, Abner decided he would do everything in his power to fight it!

2 Samuel 2:8-11...

He spent 5 1/2 years gathering together and reuniting all the Northern tribes...the nation of Israel...and then he had Saul's fourth remaining son, Ish-bosheth, crowned king.

Then, Abner became the commander in chief of Ish-bosheth's army. He was power hungry and we'll see in a few minutes something that bears this out.

So, that's in a nutshell who Abner was.

Let's look briefly at **Joab**...

Joab was the son of David's sister. He was David's nephew. Joab is mentioned only one time in passing in **1 Samuel**, but we're going to see him play a prominent role in **2 Samuel**. He became commander in chief of the army of Judah...David's army. Joab was power hungry as well.

And we'll see him more in today's lesson and the weeks ahead.

So, these are the first two men we're going to look at today.

One man, Abner, who was outside of the will of God. And we know this because he was following the house of Saul and God had already rejected Saul and had chosen David.

Joab, on the other hand, was following the Lord's anointed. **Abner** had chosen and anointed **Ish-bosheth** as king and **God** had chosen and anointed **David**.

Now, I want us to think briefly of a man named **Asahel**.

Verses 18-23...

Asahel was Joab's brother and one day he decided to pursue Abner and Abner killed him.

Now, that's about all Scripture tells us about Asahel. He was **Joab's brother**. He was **David's nephew**. He was a **fast runner**. He **ran after Abner**. **Abner killed him**. **THAT'S IT! THAT'S ALL WE KNOW ABOUT HIM.**

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But, I believe we can learn a few things from this man just the same. We learn that we cannot replace the power of faith by the energy of the flesh.

Think about it...here was a young man who decided to pursue a veteran soldier. He didn't seek God's guidance. He could run really fast and he just decided it would be a great idea to chase Abner and kill him. **You've got to commend Abner.** He at least tried to get Asahel to turn back before he killed him, didn't he?

But, Asahel was determined! **"He refused to turn aside" - Verse 23**

He was **determined!** He had **stamina!** He had **persistence!** But, there's not one word in these verses that tells us that God told him to go after Abner. Asahel was going after Abner in the power of the flesh, not the power of faith. **Faith is getting a word from God and acting on it!**

Another thing we can learn from Asahel is that past victory doesn't guarantee present victory. Asahel was on David's side. He had seen his side win! **So, he presumed he would be victorious over Abner, didn't he?**

He substituted presumption for seeking God's will.

So, Abner killed Asahel, but we'll see in **chapter 3** that would be Abner's downfall.

2 Samuel 3 is a very interesting chapter.

In this chapter, we see **birth and death.**

We see **war and peace.**

We see **loyalty and defection.**

This chapter reads like a soap opera, but it's not a soap opera. It's an actual historical account of things that really happened to these folks back then in the land of Judah and Israel.

But, I don't believe Scripture is given to us for the sole purpose of historical facts. I believe we can see some things in this chapter to apply to our own lives...remember...for **teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **training in righteousness.**

2 Samuel 3:1...

This war was about 2 1/2 years in length. And David's house grew stronger and stronger and Saul's house grew weaker and weaker.

We're not going to read **verses 2-5**, mainly because these names are hard to pronounce...they didn't name folks John and George and Bill or Mary and Shirley and Judy back then...but basically what this tells us is that the 7 1/2 years that David lived in Hebron, he had six sons by six different women. He would have other children later by other women.

But, we see right here in this passage the seeds being planted that will yield an abundant harvest of discord in David's family.

Deuteronomy 17 tells us the king should not multiply wives unto himself. But, David disregarded that and his house was filled with strife. This will become more and more evident as we progress in **2 Samuel.**

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There were so many positive things in David's life. He was the “sweet singer of Israel”. He was “a man after God's own heart.” He prayed that God would keep him “as the apple of His eye.” He was a man who was capable to lead his people...both on the battlefield and off.

But, David was a failure in his own home, and it was because in the area of marriage, David failed to follow God's plan for his life. In this area, David was rebellious.

By the way...Absalom was the son of David by a woman who was the daughter of the king of Geshur. **1 Samuel** tells us that David had raided the land of Geshur when he was living in Gath.

David was out of God's will when he fled to Gath to live among the Philistines. Some theologians believe the mother of Absalom was taken captive when David raided her homeland. It would be highly unlikely that the king would give his daughter in marriage to a man who had just raided his land, wouldn't it?

I said all that to simply say this. **Sin indeed has its price.** God had told David that he would be king. Yet, when Saul began to pursue him he ran to the Philistines...the age-old enemy of the Jews. As the result of one of his raids he probably took Absalom's mother captive and Absalom was born and we'll read later about the havoc this son caused in David's life.

Of the six sons mentioned here,

One raped his sister (Amnon)

One murdered his brother for raping his sister (Absalom)

Two tried to take the throne and are murdered (Absalom and Adonijah)

The others are seldom or never mentioned again.

That's what happened to **these** children of David mentioned in these verses and we'll see the details of this as we go through **2 Samuel**.

Well, this chapter also introduces us to **Michal**.

A strange thing happens in this chapter. Abner went in to one of Saul's concubines. It was the custom of those days, that the man who succeeded the king would also acquire his concubines.

So, Ish-bosheth was the one who should have gotten this woman. But, Ish-bosheth was really a “puppet-king” put in place by Abner. We said a few minutes ago that Abner was power-hungry. Well, when Ish-bosheth confronted Abner about the concubine Abner became very angry and transferred his allegiance from Saul to David.

Do you see why I said this chapter reads like a soap opera?

Abner sent messengers to David and said,

“David, I want you to know I'm no longer in league with Ish-bosheth. I've left him. I'm pledging my allegiance to you. I'll do anything you want me to do. Just make a covenant with me.”

And David said, “Good! I'll make a covenant with you, Abner. But first, bring Michal to me!”

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Now, who was Michal? Michal was David's first wife. Saul had given his daughter to David when David was a very young man. But, Saul had an ulterior motive for giving Michal to David. I mean, he didn't give Michal to David because he wanted them to have a long and happy marriage.

No! **1 Samuel 18** tells us "***Saul thought, 'I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him...'***"

Saul must have known his daughter very well!

Then, when Saul began to pursue David, Saul took Michal **away** from David and gave her to someone else as a wife. And here is David demanding that she come back.

I think it's interesting to know that Saul's **eldest** daughter was a girl named **Merab**, and she should have been the one given to David...in fact, she was promised to him. But **1 Samuel 18** says that it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was given to someone else. Wasn't Saul a conniver?

I'm not going to go into Michal's story in detail because we're going to see her in a couple of weeks...but I want to give you a little food for thought...something to chew on...

The Bible says in **1 Samuel** that Michal *loved* David.
But the Bible says in **2 Samuel** that Michal *despised* David.

What happened to make Michal's love for David turn into hatred?

And did David **really** love Michal? Or, did he marry her simply because she was the king's daughter? And did he want her back simply because he could demand that she be brought back?

Just think about those things...and we'll look at Michal more closely week after next.

Verses 20-30...

Let me share with you something I found very interesting. Hebron was a city of refuge. Folks who were in trouble with the law could flee to Hebron and find refuge. If Abner had stayed in Hebron, Joab couldn't have harmed him. But, **verse 27** tells us that Joab took Abner aside *to the middle of the gate(NAS)* and killed him there.

Why did Joab kill Abner? Because Abner had killed his brother, Asahel. And Abner had every right under Levitical law to go after Abner, but not in Hebron.

Not only that, but Abner was there because he was in covenant with King David. And I can't help but believe that Joab felt threatened by that.

Verses 33-34...

Verse 31 tells us that David told Joab and all the people to mourn for Abner. King David walked behind the bier. This showed the honor David had for Abner.

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David would not eat because he was mourning for Abner.

Verse 36-39...

Do you see that David actually pronounced a curse on Joab?

David didn't have Joab punished, he simply pronounced a curse on him. And we'll see later when David sinned with Bathsheba and Uriah that God didn't kill David, but He did pronounce a curse on his house.

To quickly summarize **Chapter 4**...it tells us about the death of Ish-bosheth. He was slain in his bed. He was beheaded and his head was brought to David. David had the murderers of Ish-bosheth killed.

WHEW! This is without doubt one of the bloodiest passages in all the Word of God!!

In the few minutes we have left, let's just draw a few applications...

1) Sin always brings tragic results...

God had laid down certain prerequisites for kings. David knew them! Yet he went ahead and had many wives and the result was tragedy. His children were rebels. Now, even good "hands-on" parents can have rebellious children, but children with loving, caring parents have a much greater chance of being loving and caring people themselves.

We need to learn and remember that God honors us when we honor Him and His Word. And He allows us to reap what we sow when we don't!

2) We should judge sin in our own life before we judge sin in someone else's...

Was David right to judge Joab? Yes! **But David had the same seeds of murder festering in his own life, didn't he?**

We are so prone to look at someone else's sin and say, "Their sin is so much worse than mine."

Jesus took this very seriously. He said in **Matthew 7:**

"Do no judge lest you be judged yourselves. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you."

And He goes on to talk about looking at the speck in your brother's eye while you have a log in your own eye.

3) God's purposes are accomplished in spite of our sin...

Was David ever rebellious in his life? He was.

Was David a failure as a husband and father? He was.

Did God use David mightily? He did.

God can accomplish His purpose in spite of our sin. He did it in David's life and He's done it in your life and in mine.

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But, how much sweeter David's life's story and your and my life story would be if he hadn't rebelled. How much stronger David's family and your family and my family might have been. How much godlier his children and your children and my children might have been. How much richer his testimony and your testimony and my testimony might have been.

4) The only thing stronger than God's will is God's grace...

When we look at David's life at this point and the kind of husband and father he was, we wonder why God didn't remove him, don't we?

But I told you last week that this book is full of God's grace! And God's grace is strong! God's grace is sufficiently strong!

And lest we be too critical of David, let us not forget the times God's grace has been applied to our own lives.

While our sin may not be the same as David's sin, our sin is just as real and just as vile and wicked in the sight of God. Are we ever beyond the boundaries of God's love and grace? NO! Even in our darkest hours, even when we are paying the consequences of sin, God's grace is still available...as long as we turn to Him as David did.

And if God had thrown David away and cast him into hell, then you and I would have no hope of eternal salvation because our flesh is no stronger than David's flesh and our commitment to God is no stronger than David's commitment.

We'll never get to heaven because of the strength of our commitment to God...we'll get to heaven only because of God's commitment to us!

**“Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe.
You who are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?”**

**Grace. Grace. God's grace.
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within.
Grace. Grace. God's grace.
Grace that is greater than all our sin.”**

The only thing stronger than God's will is God's grace! PRAISE HIS HOLY NAME!!!