

MAY 26

2 Samuel 9-11

It feels too soon in the record of David's life to begin looking at his ruin, but actually we've been reading about David for about 23 chapters. And we're not through by a long shot. This is more "history" than Noah or Abraham received. In reading the Bible and observing what is there, the "law of proportion" is important. The question to ask is "Why is so much written about David?" Apparently David is very, very important. Yesterday I quoted a verse from Paul to Timothy, in which he mentions that Jesus being descended from David was a part of the gospel he preached. In Romans 1:3 (RSV), Paul says, *the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh*. Knowing what Paul says in Romans, and the close attention Jesus' connection to David receives in other parts of the Bible, it seems safe to say that God's promise to David is huge. The promise is not only pointing to the redemption of man, but also to the redemption of Israel and the fulfillment of their purpose before God to be a witness to the nations. Jesus is the Son of David who fulfills everything.

It is good to keep in mind, that David was a true man of faith and graciously blessed by God. Remember that, because what you are about to read about David is shocking, tragic and sad. But then again, there's a lesson here. Many disciples begin well, but lose their focus on the love and mission of Christ.

2 Samuel 9

Remember the mention of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth (M)? I will only make a few comments on this story, but some of the small details here will be important later. I'm drawing your attention to this now, because you won't hear from Ziba again until chapter 16, and you won't know the full story until chapter 19. You'll get all of this, as you read your Bible year after year and take good mental notes, so treasure all these little details in your heart.

Vs. 1-8 Notice that the story is about M, but look at all the detail you have here about Ziba. That detail is very important. Ziba was a steward but was actually a rich man, living large off of Saul's estate, because there was no heir. He became a rich man, living under the radar until now.

M is very humble, and probably somewhat fearful of David, too. Being a cripple in any culture is hard, but being a survivor of the family of the last king, the king who tried to kill David, would make life harder.

V. 7 Mephibosheth would eat at David's table always. When the king ate, he usually had his closest friends and advisors with him. We'll see this spelled out more, looking at who ate regularly with Solomon. Probably, David's mighty men ate with him as well. This might play a role in the upcoming story. In any event, M was now a part of this group.

Vs. 9-13 Ziba and his family and his servants became the servants of a cripple. Not only that, Ziba was now accountable to David. The proceeds of the land had to be accounted for and given to M. This would change his lifestyle. Do you see what is happening here?

Vs. 10-11 The phrase, *Now Ziba*, is important. This footnote is being given to us for a reason, but you'll have to figure it out later. You seldom read about anyone with this many sons, much less daughters and wives. He had the means to afford this size of family. And I'll bet they rode on fifteen donkeys. David didn't have this many sons.

Notice v. 12.

V. 13 To make matters worse, M lived in the capitol city and ate at David's table in honor. Just imagine what this change meant for Ziba, now serving an absentee master.

Back to M, he seems like a nice guy and very humble, married with a little son that makes you think of Mickey Mouse.

So why are we told *Now* in v. 13? Again, this is introducing an important editorial note. In the NT you never hear of a cripple being anything but a beggar, much less a great man or a king. Back then, you reigned because you could defeat those who stood against you. When this all plays out, it will be sad.

2 Samuel 10

This story sets up chapter 11. It tells you why chapter 11 begins with Joab fighting against the main city of the Ammonites. Chapter 10 is also important in that Israel not only broke the strength of Syria, but they defeated armies beyond the Euphrates into Assyria. The nations knew to respect David. Israel was now secure in the world.

Vs. 1-5 This began innocently enough. The Lord was actually going to use this event to bring peace and security to Israel. I'll bet David even wrote a psalm about these battles.

Vs. 6-8 This was God's way of flushing out those enemies of Israel and David who could have slowly made life miserable for Israel. Here, for no reason, 33,000 men take to the field against David's army.

Vs. 9-14 This is one of the few times Joab looks like a godly man. At the end of this action it looked like the battle was over.

Vs. 15-19 But now the Syrians were mad. They had been hired as mercenaries. The original fight had nothing to do with them. So the Syrians gather a mega army. We don't know how many men were there, but we have some numbers of chariots and horsemen. The foot soldiers were probably double these numbers.

As disciples we need to remember, and I still forget, that when God allows conflict and opposition to rise, it is because He is trying to do something. It isn't our fault necessarily. He might be trying to flush out the problems all at once so that He can bless our work in the harvest. When you see Jesus in conflict in with the Jews, you understand that God was using them to get Jesus to clarify some teaching or something about Himself that brought someone closer to trusting Jesus. As Jesus abided in the Father, He expected the Father to work. And the Father did work and brought conflict to the feet of the Son. When we abide in Christ, sometimes the Lord does this for us too. We are His servants and it is His harvest, so we just need to be alert, relax and let Him do His work through us.

2 Samuel 11

V. 1 Sermons have been preached on all of this. David obviously should have been out fighting.

Vs. 2-5 This "sighting" might not have been an accident. This was a common time for women to bathe for ceremonial cleansing. David, in his palace, had a high vantage point.

Now, David had 11 wives and many concubines at this time. So, if he saw a naked woman, why not make a date with one of them? Actually, I think having so many wives meant that he was not "one" with any of them.

V. 3 If David didn't already know who she was, this information should have frozen him. It should have made him afraid. It should have made him rebuke himself. Unfortunately, once lust is on a roll, it is really hard to stop and submit to rational thought. As we'll see later, or you can find out on your own, David definitely knew who she was. I think that he knew who she was, and the fact that her husband wasn't home is the reason David didn't call in any of his wives or concubines.

These names are important. Not only will they explain some things that happen later, but these show how very tragic this was. These names also could mean that David stayed behind in

Jerusalem for this very reason. He knew that none of these men would be in Jerusalem and that Bathsheba would be alone. This might have been like a wife asking her husband if he wants to go with her and the kids to the store, but he prefers to stay home because he's tired. Then, as soon as the car pulls out of the driveway, he fires up the computer.

Also, just think of this: David crossed a line here from fantasy to action. This must have taken time. The names above (v. 3) will let you know that David knew who Bathsheba was and thought that, maybe, he deserved her more than her husband did. More on this later.

Vs. 4-5 How did David think he could keep this quiet? This had to have taken some planning.

That she had just cleansed herself meant she had just had her period (v. 4). It would be another month before she would know she had missed a period and was pregnant.

So here is the question: Was this mutual consent or was it rape? If it was mutual consent, both of them needed to be put to death for adultery. It is hard to imagine this any other way, but those were different times.

Now, what follows is my understanding of the situation:

In Leviticus 19:20 there is a case where a master rapes a slave woman who is engaged. She is not killed and he is not killed, although he has to pay for his crime. The reason the slave woman is not charged with any sin is because she is under the power of her owner. I think this was kind of the same case with David and Bathsheba. Her husband, Uriah, was a foreigner, and a close servant/friend of David. David was the ruler of Israel. Socially and culturally, if David made a demand of her, she could not deny David. This was more than statutory rape. In that culture, Bathsheba would have been required to consent, because of David's standing as king and her husband's position under David.

There is one more thing that points to rape in this situation. Later, when God judges David, He will tell David that though David did this secretly, God will do the same thing to David that David did here, and He will do it publicly. God will judge David by bringing David's own sin back upon him. As a result of what David did to Bathsheba and to Uriah, David's family will experience two cases of rape and a murder. His oldest son Amnon will rape his half-sister Tamar. Then Absalom will murder Amnon, and during the civil war that Absalom incites against David, Absalom will rape 10 of David's concubines (wives) openly, on the roof of the palace for all Israel to see. (I wonder if it is the same roof where David saw Bathsheba.) To further underscore this last event, look at 2 Samuel 16:21 and see who it was who suggested this. If you track that name down, this entire act becomes so sad and sick that you want to wring David's neck.

Now, I'm being a little sketchy here so that if you are interested, you can track down all the names and figure this out by yourself. When we get to 2 Samuel 16, I'll put all the details together for you. But right now, it is important to have an idea of what David did here. It was arrogant and ugly. Many, many people will suffer and the collateral damage will be widespread. And, David will never be the same. That should inspire us with the fear of God.

And by the way, nothing negative is said about Bathsheba, thereby suggesting that she was innocent.

V. 6 I wonder if Joab's sneaky mind got a hint of anything here.

Vs. 7-13 God Himself was thwarting David's scheming with a humble, simple man who was better than himself. What did David think when he saw this happening? I'm sure he knew it was God, but he kept on sinning. Sin makes fools of us all.

As bad as sin is, coming clean and admitting what you've done, yourself, is more honoring to God than having to be backed into a corner or trapped and forced into an admission. When we sin and create a tangled "Gordian Knot" of lies and involvements, it is simple to get out of it. The

next thing you do, after you come to your right mind, is to honor God. Obey Him and follow, regardless of the consequences, and the knot is sliced down the middle and God helps you sort out the mess. Keep lying, and you're imprisoned in the world of your lies.

Vs. 14-25 Can you imagine that David put a letter in Uriah's hand that was actually the order to have Uriah killed? Here David gave Joab power over himself. Joab could figure this out. They all knew Uriah (have you figured out why yet?) and knew this lowly, foreign guy had a "knock-out" for a wife. David would never be free of Joab now, because he had become a murderer just like Joab. David's conscience would be a mess forever.

V. 17 Notice that in order to get Uriah killed, Joab had to send a party of men to the wall and some of them were killed too. So actually, many men died to cover this sin. Now, just like in the situation with Achan, there is collateral damage and innocent people dying. How sad.

V. 25 Utterly sad. From this point on, David's ability to think clearly and judge others rightly is destroyed.

Vs. 26-27 There is a reason to fear the silence of God. There is a reason to be afraid when the intent of our heart is evil and God doesn't allow anything to stand in our way. David, the man after God's own heart, had sinned in a way that is absolutely mind numbing. The spiritual powers and the surrounding nations would mock the God of Israel for this. God would forgive David, but David will never be the same man. This sin will devastate his own heart, his judgment, and his family. And as we learned in Exodus through Deuteronomy, if one man sins, the entire nation will suffer. Israel will suffer, and many, many more will lose their lives because of one man's sin.

As we look at what happens here, obviously this is all written for our instruction and warning. Does God forgive? Absolutely. Should we play with God's grace and forgiveness, presuming upon His kindness and mocking His love? Absolutely not. Galatians 6:7 says, *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.* Notice that Paul/the Spirit was saying this to believers.

God loved David, but He will cut David very little slack in terms of consequences. As disciples, we also need to fear God. As we follow Christ in the harvest, in deep humility, we need to tune our hearts daily to God in the Word and in the Lord's Prayer. Thinking about those last lines of the prayer, *and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, we need to remember the danger we face on this earth, that we are very vulnerable and weak. But for the grace of God, this would happen to us too.

John 15

So, in this dangerous world, following Christ in the harvest, God the Father uses the very troubling circumstances, like what the disciples will be going through, to prune and equip them/us for effectiveness.

There are a few passages in this section that are murky, where someone could think that a believer could lose their salvation. Not so. The best way to view this passage is to think of a couple of examples as you walk through it.

First, think of the apostle Paul. He was shaped by the love of Christ, shaped by the suffering of Christ and shaped by the joy of seeing the power of the gospel transform lives. Paul lived no easy life, but there is no greater example, after Jesus, of what this chapter means.

Second, think of someone like David, who was fully saved, yet still suffered damage and "withering" on earth; because he chose not to walk close to God. Many believers have injured themselves, and have shipwrecked their faith and witness for Christ. It doesn't mean they are lost, but they are damaged and unfruitful.

Vs. 1-11 In the testing the disciples would face, Jesus tells them to remain or abide in Him. This is not just to "believe" in Jesus or go to church, it is to remain in His love, His mission and in the reality of the purpose of His life and death. In trial or persecution, they would be tempted to "forget" reality, to give up and retreat. If you think of all the discipleship teaching and warnings Jesus had given them, everything He taught them fits here. Those who heed His words build a house that stands in trials; those who hear and don't follow, well, their house gets ruined.

Notice how often Jesus uses the words, *abide*, *bear fruit*, and *love*.

V. 2 Pruning is normal and necessary to our lives following Christ in the harvest, in this darkness.

V. 4 Bearing fruit is to be looked at as normal and necessary.

V. 5 Abiding in Jesus (responding to Jesus' presence and actions like Jesus responded to the Father's presence and actions) insures bearing *much fruit*. *Apart from me you can do nothing* refers to bearing much fruit. To be fruitless means not to be abiding in Christ, whether we think we are or not.

V. 6 To me this is the same thing that happens to the salt that loses its saltiness or to a man who builds on the foundation of Christ with wood, hay or stubble. There is waste and loss during this lifetime, loss of reward and humiliation before Christ. Of course there is salvation and entrance into heaven, but *as through fire*.

V. 7 Notice the conditional nature of this promise. If a person abides in Christ (His love and mission and the reality of the purpose of His life and death) he will ask according to this reality in order to bear fruit for Christ. That prayer will be answered. Why?

V. 8 The Father will grant this prayer, because He is glorified when we *bear much fruit* and so prove to be disciples of our Lord.

Just in case we get lost here; what is bearing fruit? It is our lives being involved in and focused on being witnesses for Christ so that others may find salvation through Him. It is duplication. Whether we are doing this alone or doing it with the church, it is living as a witness to Christ. It might mean serving so that the church can reach out and make disciples, but it is living to follow Christ so that fruit can be borne for Him. Jesus said that the sower and the reaper are both responsible for the harvest, and both are blessed. Our service in the harvest is part of the harvest. The fruit is people coming to Christ. Jesus defines fruit in John 12 when He says that if He, Himself, died He would bear much fruit. This fruit is the outgrowth of His death and sacrifice. It is people; it is us; it is those who are still lost and need to hear the message. Saved people are the fruit of the travail of His soul. I know for some people, the bluntness of hearing that we are only here on earth to be witnesses to Christ seems oppressive, but it is the reality of living as disciples on this dying planet. Sharing His love is a privilege.

Vs. 9-11 It is all about joy and love in the context of following Christ in the harvest and not giving up or hiding. If we "hide" anywhere, it is in the love of the Father and the Son.

Vs. 12-17 Notice that the call to *love one another* is in the context of the mission, abiding in Christ, bearing fruit. Jesus invites us as friends into the very mission and plan for which He gave His life.

Notice that the commandments are in the context of, and defined by, the harvest, abiding and bearing fruit.

V. 16 The promise of answered prayer here is for that person bearing fruit in the harvest whose heart and desires are locked into following his Savior and bearing fruit.

V. 17 It is a precious thing to be united together by Christ and His mission. In Christ, it is the church, groups of people somewhere on this earth in their own small portion of the harvest field,

whom God is using to bring the gospel to the lost. We need to love and care for one another, to encourage and guard each other, to "have each other's backs." Our love is sort of like "Band of Brothers," and forged in His death and sacrifice for us. In the military, you have to be willing to protect your fellow soldier with your life. *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13). When you read Paul, you notice the strong bond he had with those who labored with him "side by side" in the gospel. Paul often called them *fellow soldiers*.

Vs. 18-25 Notice that Jesus immediately brings them back to the reality of their situation.

Vs. 26-27 Therefore, the giving of the Spirit is to equip, empower, comfort and encourage them and us as we all follow Christ in the harvest.

Psalm 119:49-64

Back to the David we love, who was still afflicted and hadn't been ruined by success. This ought to tell us something too. Our hearts are closer to God when we are being pruned and when we feel we can't survive without being in the Word every day. So we need to make sure we are pursuing Christ in the harvest, sweating and straining for Him. God made sure Paul had a thorn in the flesh to humble him, but Paul himself knew of no other way to live. Paul said, *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death* (Phil. 3:10). Notice how close to God David was when He really, really, really needed the Lord. Remember too, that the same guy who wrote this, when he became comfortable and successful, also did what we have just read in 2 Samuel. That frightens me.

Vs. 49-56 God's Word gave David hope in his afflictions. Our problem isn't finding afflictions. Our problem is finding hope in afflictions, and notice where David found this hope. It was in God's Word and promises and rules and law and statutes and precepts.

There is no shame in admitting we are wrecked by the sin within us and are spiritually "bi-polar," if we will take our "meds" daily, living in the Word of God. Paul said that he would gladly boast of his weakness, because when he was weak, he was strong in Christ.

Vs. 57-64 Knowing God's promises kept David from giving in to the despair of having so many enemies. The Word revealed God's *steadfast love* to him and led his heart in praise.

Proverbs 16:1-3

I guess another way to say this is, "if we deeply abide in Christ, our plans and work, our spirits and vision, our hearts and our tongues will be pleasing to the Lord." That's what I want, and the way to be like this is to abide in the love of Jesus my Savior.