

07. The Book of 2Samuel—3:1-39

“Important Lessons to Glean”

(8/7/16)

We are currently going through the book of 2Samuel here at Calvary on Sunday mornings.

When we came to chapter two we saw how that, after the death of King Saul, a civil war broke out in Israel between the forces of David (the man God had chosen to replace Saul as king) and the forces of Abner who had been Saul’s general.

This led to a bloody civil war that lasted for the next seven and a half years—

2 Samuel 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

I’d like to divide chapter two into two main parts—

I. Historical Lessons to Learn

II. Spiritual Lessons to Glean

I. Historical Lessons to Learn

A. David's harem grows—v.2-5

2 Samuel 3:2-5 (NKJV)

² Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; ³ his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; ⁴ the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; ⁵ and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.

It was very common in those days for kings of the east to have large harems—it was a symbol of their power and status—David's son Solomon took this to an extreme.

However, it went against God's command for marriage as expressed in Genesis 2:24; and against His command that the kings of Israel not multiply wives to themselves as stated in Deut.17:17.

David and his family would pay a heavy price for his disobedience down the road.

B. Abner joins forces with David—v.6-21

2 Samuel 3:6-11 (NKJV)

⁶ Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner was strengthening *his hold* on the house of Saul. ⁷ And Saul had a concubine, whose name *was Rizpah*, the daughter of Aiah. So *Ishbosheth* said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?" ⁸ Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "*Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman?*

⁹ May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the LORD has sworn to him-- ¹⁰ to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba." ¹¹ And he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

The text implies that Abner was really the power behind the throne and was using Ishbosheth, Saul's son, as a puppet or figure head.

In that culture to sleep with one of the king's concubines was tantamount to treason because it was seen as an attempt to usurp his authority and overthrow his government—as Absalom did with his father David's concubines when he tried to overthrow him. (Chapter 16)

Why Ishbosheth believed Abner had done this we're not told—neither are we told if Abner was really guilty of this crime against the king.

We do know that he exploded in rage at the accusation—and that led him to join forces with David over it.

Now I personally believe that Abner set this whole thing up to give himself an opportunity to go over to the winning side without losing face.

Look, Abner was a shrewd general and no fool to be sure.

He saw the handwriting on the wall, he knew his side was losing this war, so he concocted this plan to sleep with one of Ishbosheth's concubines.

I believe his plan was to have Ishbosheth find out about it, accuse him of this horrendous act of treason—which would then allow Abner to put on this little performance where he would fly into a 'righteous' rage and act so offended by the accusation that he had no other choice but to leave Ishbosheth and join David.

I can just hear Abner's phony indignation—*"How dare you accuse such a loyal subject as me of such a terrible crime! I won't be a part of your administration a moment longer—I'm joining David's side!"*

When Abner said to Ishbosheth in v.8—**"Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah?"**—he was saying in effect,

"By this accusation you're calling me a worthless, contemptible traitor who is really working for David, king of Judah by committing this act of treason—if that's what I am, then that's what I'll be!"

2 Samuel 3:12-16 (NKJV)

¹² Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, "Whose is the land?" saying also, "Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel to you." ¹³ And David said, "Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face." ¹⁴ So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." ¹⁵ And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. ¹⁶ Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, "Go, return!" And he returned.

So David said he would make a covenant with Abner, which no doubt included that he become one of David's top generals, but only under one condition—that Michal, Saul's daughter, be returned to him.

You remember back in 1 Samuel 18 Saul had given Michal to David as a wife for a dowry of one-hundred Philistine foreskins (which David gladly raised to two-hundred).

After Saul tried to kill David to remove him as a threat to his throne—David ran for his life and became a fugitive from Saul for the next ten years.

When David took off Saul immediately gave Michal to a man by the name of Paltiel as wife.

David now makes her return to him a condition for any covenant that he would make with Abner.

You might be thinking, “*Why did David have to take Michal away from her current husband—I mean he already had six wives and Paltiel loved Michal and was heartbroken when she was taken from him—why couldn’t David just leave them alone?*”

First of all, warriors like David didn’t think that way.

If you fought the enemy to win a woman’s hand in marriage—she was not only a wife but a ‘trophy’ of your courage and victory.

To allow her to be taken from you was to allow a piece of your honor and valor to be taken also—and for a warrior like David that was unacceptable.

Second, under Jewish law, she was still legally his wife since he had not divorced her.

I’m sure that David’s pride was part of the issue—to have his wife taken from him unlawfully and given to another man I’m sure was a source of non-stop humiliation for him—and he wanted her back—period!

But finally, and maybe more the issue than anything else—it was good diplomacy.

To have Michal join him as his queen would help to heal the division between the forces of Saul and the house of David thus unifying the kingdom and finally putting an end to this protracted civil war that had been going on for so many years.

2 Samuel 3:17-21 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David *to be* king over you. ¹⁸ Now then, *do it!* For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.' " ¹⁹ And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin. Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin. ²⁰ So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who *were* with him. ²¹ Then Abner said to David, "I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

So Abner becomes a voice of reconciliation to the nation...and David, in return, throws a feast in Abner's honor welcoming his new general into his administration—what a great day!

The nation is well on its way to reconciliation and healing. David has a new general. Abner is excited to finally be a member of the winning team—I mean things couldn't have been any better!

C. Joab kills Abner out of revenge—v.22-30

2 Samuel 3:22-27 (NKJV)

²² At that moment the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them. But Abner *was* not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. ²³ When Joab and all the troops that *were* with him had come, they told Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace." ²⁴ Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why *is it that* you sent him away, and he has already gone? ²⁵ Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing." ²⁶ And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know *it*. ²⁷ Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in [or 'toward'] the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother...

Many commentators contend that Joab murdered Abner—however, he was not guilty of murder but of avenging his brother Asahel’s death (2Samuel 2:12-23).

If Joab had been guilty of murder—the law of Moses said that he was to be stoned.

What Joab did, in the mind of David, was reprehensible, ruthless and wicked—but it wasn’t murder.

I mean Abner had just defected to David, they were now on the same side, the nation had just begun to heal—and now Joab has ruined everything David thought.

What Joab did was selfish to be sure—he put his own desire for revenge above the good of the nation when he killed Abner—and no doubt part of it was out of pride to get rid of a rival general so Joab could maintain his place as top dog in David’s army.

However, it wasn’t murder because in the law of Moses it stated that if someone killed a member of your family the oldest son in the family was designated as “the avenger of blood” and he would be honor bound to avenge his dead relative’s life by killing the person who killed his family member.

However, Abner had killed Asahel in battle because Asahel wouldn’t stop pursuing him.

Abner tried to reason with him to break off his attack so that he wouldn’t have to kill him—but Asahel refused to listen so Abner had no choice but to kill him.

In my mind that was a mitigating circumstance that should have caused Joab to forgive Abner—or at very least to break off his vendetta to get even by killing him.

D. David mourns for Abner—v.28-39

2 Samuel 3:28-39 (NKJV)

²⁸ Afterward, when David heard *it*, he said, "My kingdom and I *are* guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. ²⁹ Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread."

³⁰ So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. ³¹ Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner." And King David followed the coffin. ³² So they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. ³³ And the king sang *a lament* over Abner and said: "Should Abner die as a fool dies? ³⁴ Your hands were not bound Nor your feet put into fetters; As a man falls before wicked men, *so* you fell." Then all the people wept over him again. ³⁵ And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, "God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!" ³⁶ Now all the people took note *of it*, and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people. ³⁷ For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's *intent* to kill Abner the son of Ner. ³⁸ Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? ³⁹ And I *am* weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruah, *are* too harsh for me. The LORD shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness."

Alright, we've looked at the historical lessons to be learned from this chapter—now, let's look at the spiritual lessons to be gleaned.

II. Spiritual Lessons to Glean

A. David

1. He multiplied wives to himself

Deuteronomy 17:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away...

One of the main problems with polygamy, and one of the reasons it was never God's best for His people was that it made for a lot of insecurity and fighting in the family—a lot of competition for which wife and children were loved most.

This brought a lot of strife, hatred and even murder into the family—and David's family was no exception.

Amnon, David's firstborn, would rape his half-sister Tamar (chap. 13) and be murdered by Tamar's full brother Absalom, who would be killed while trying to take the kingdom from his father (chap. 14–18).

During David's final illness, Adonijah would try to usurp the throne and would be executed by Solomon (1 Kings 1–2)—

And these are all that's recorded for us in Scripture—I'm sure there were many more examples of power struggles and backstabbing that went on in David's family all because he violated God's command and multiplied wives to himself.

Whenever we violate a commandment of God—we will reap the consequences—consequences that God wants to keep us from. (Explain)

2. He was willing to be reconciled with his enemies

We see this in his willingness to be reconciled with Abner—something Joab was not willing to do.

It takes a big person with a good heart to let go of past hurts and be reconciled with someone that had once been an enemy—here David demonstrates the heart of good king.

And this was genuine on David's part—as seen in how he honored Abner in death and mourned and fasted for him out of love and respect.

I think this more than anything else was used by God to turn the hearts of the people fully to David as their new king.

A bitter, vindictive, unforgiving heart will only poison you from the inside out and push everyone away from you so that you die lonely and miserable.

B. Abner and Joab

This whole civil war that the nation fought for so many years was started through the pride of Abner and Joab competing with one another to see whose men were the toughest warriors. (2Samuel 2:12-17)

Pride, jealousy and competition among brothers and sisters—or even among husbands and wives have resulted in civil wars that have torn families a part—and when that happens no one wins.

This kind of thing, competition, pride and backstabbing, has torn many churches to pieces.

Joab got his revenge—but in the process he brought a curse upon his family and died a violent death.

Revenge never brings blessings and peace upon a person's life—only forgiveness can do that.

I'll give you one more—there are many other lessons that can be gleaned from the passage.

C. To be close to the city of refuge wasn't good enough—only being in it would save from judgment

As we've already mentioned, in Israel if someone killed a member of your family the oldest son in the family was designated as "the avenger of blood."

And he would be honor bound to avenge his dead relative's life by killing the person who killed his family member.

This would even apply to accidents—like when you're in the woods chopping down a tree and your friend is standing by you.

As you're chopping the tree you swing the axe back and the head flies off and strikes your friend and kills him—that was a total accident but the avenger of blood would still come after you.

What could you do, what recourse did you have?

Well, God appointed cities throughout the land that you could flee to and be safe called "cities of refuge".

There were six cities of refuge God appointed and strategically placed (three on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west side) so that you were never more than a day's journey (ten miles) from one of these cities—no matter where you lived in Israel.

Hebron was one of these cities—and that's why Joab had to kill Abner outside the city gates.

You'd think that Abner would have been a little more cautious when meeting with Joab knowing he was the family "avenger of blood".

It could be that even though he wasn't technically in the city—he was 'close' and therefore felt a sense of safety.

These cities of refuge were a picture of Christ—our place of safety from the *sword of judgment*.

In Hebrews 6 the writer talks about how we need to flee to Christ for refuge from coming judgment—the idea of fleeing to Christ for refuge is a reference to the cities of refuge in the O.T.

The Bible says there is only safety from the sword of judgment *inside* Christ—not by being 'close' to Christ but by being in Christ (salvation).

Too many people go to church and are 'hanging' around Jesus, they're in close proximity to Jesus—but they're not in Him because they have never received Him as their Lord and Savior and this has given them a false sense of security.

The city of refuge was close, it was available, safety and protection from the avenger's sword was possible—but only if the person ran to it and took refuge in it—that was their responsibility.

It only protected him when he entered into it—outside the city there was judgment and death, but inside life and safety.

The same is true with Jesus whom we are commanded to flee to "*to escape the wrath to come.*"

In Him alone is life and safety—outside of Christ there is judgment and death.

Look, after switching his allegiance to David—Abner admonished everyone, "*You delighted in David and wanted to follow him—now do it!*"

This is the most important admonition you will ever hear—

In the past you've heard the gospel presented; something in your heart wanted to follow the Son of David, Jesus Christ; you even started to go to church to be 'near' Him.

That's all well and fine but that in and of itself won't protect you from God's coming judgment.

The time has come to make a full commitment to Him by entering into Him by faith and following Him with all your heart!

Hebrews 10:37-39 (NKJV)

³⁷ *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.* ³⁸ *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."* ³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.