

2 Samuel 19 April 14, 2024

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Last week, we left off with David deeply grieving the death of his son, Absalom. And this angers Joab because David turned this great victory into mourning. David focused on his own sorrows instead of leading the kingdom. So Joab confronts him and basically tells him “You better clean yourself up and act like the rightful king, or everyone will leave you. Get your act together!”

David takes Joab’s advice and returns to the palace of Jerusalem. The big question for Israel is what is David going to do with the defectors who didn’t support him? We’ll see foolish arguments erupt between the tribes of Judah and Israel. Lives change as people scramble to align themselves with the victor. Let’s read the text to see how this storyline unfolds.

BOOK:

19 Joab was told, “The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.”² And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that day the troops heard it said, “The king is grieving for his son.”³ The men stole into the city that day as men steal in who are ashamed when they flee from battle.⁴ The king covered his face and cried aloud, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!”

⁵ Then Joab went into the house to the king and said, “Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines.⁶ You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead.⁷ Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the LORD that if you don’t go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come upon you from your youth till now.”

⁸ So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. When the men were told, “The king is sitting in the gateway,” they all came before him.

David Returns to Jerusalem

Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled to their homes.⁹ Throughout the tribes of Israel, the people were all arguing with each other, saying, “The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies; he is the one who rescued us from the hand of the Philistines. But now he has fled the country because of Absalom;¹⁰ and Absalom, whom we anointed to rule over us, has died in battle. So why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?”

¹¹ King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests: “Ask the elders of Judah, ‘Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, since what is being said throughout Israel has reached the king at his quarters?’¹² You are my brothers, my own flesh and blood. So why should you be the last to bring back the king?’¹³ And say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my own flesh and blood? May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if from now on you are not the commander of my army in place of Joab.’ ”

¹⁴ He won over the hearts of all the men of Judah as though they were one man. They sent word to the king, "Return, you and all your men." ¹⁵ Then the king returned and went as far as the Jordan.

Now the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet the king and bring him across the Jordan. ¹⁶ Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David. ¹⁷ With him were a thousand Benjamites, along with Ziba, the steward of Saul's household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed to the Jordan, where the king was. ¹⁸ They crossed at the ford to take the king's household over and to do whatever he wished.

When Shimei son of Gera crossed the Jordan, he fell prostrate before the king ¹⁹ and said to him, "May my lord not hold me guilty. Do not remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind. ²⁰ For I your servant know that I have sinned, but today I have come here as the first of the whole house of Joseph to come down and meet my lord the king."

²¹ Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said, "Shouldn't Shimei be put to death for this? He cursed the LORD's anointed."

²² David replied, "What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? This day you have become my adversaries! Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? Do I not know that today I am king over Israel?" ²³ So the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king promised him on oath.

²⁴ Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also went down to meet the king. He had not taken care of his feet or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. ²⁵ When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, "Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth?"

²⁶ He said, "My lord the king, since I your servant am lame, I said, 'I will have my donkey saddled and will ride on it, so I can go with the king.' But Ziba my servant betrayed me. ²⁷ And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king. My lord the king is like an angel of God; so do whatever pleases you. ²⁸ All my grandfather's descendants deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, but you gave your servant a place among those who sat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the king?"

²⁹ The king said to him, "Why say more? I order you and Ziba to divide the fields."

³⁰ Mephibosheth said to the king, "Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has arrived home safely."

³¹ Barzillai the Gileadite also came down from Rogelim to cross the Jordan with the king and to send him on his way from there. ³² Now Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years of age. He had provided for the king during his stay in Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. ³³ The king said to Barzillai, "Cross over with me and stay with me in Jerusalem, and I will provide for you."

³⁴ But Barzillai answered the king, "How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? ³⁵ I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between what is good and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of men and women singers? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? ³⁶ Your servant will cross over the Jordan with the king for a short distance, but why should the king reward me in this way? ³⁷ Let your servant return, that I may die in my own town near the tomb of my father and mother. But here is your servant Kimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king. Do for him whatever pleases you."

³⁸ The king said, “Kimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him whatever pleases you. And anything you desire from me I will do for you.”

³⁹ So all the people crossed the Jordan, and then the king crossed over. The king kissed Barzillai and gave him his blessing, and Barzillai returned to his home.

⁴⁰ When the king crossed over to Gilgal, Kimham crossed with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel had taken the king over.

⁴¹ Soon all the men of Israel were coming to the king and saying to him, “Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, steal the king away and bring him and his household across the Jordan, together with all his men?”

⁴² All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “We did this because the king is closely related to us. Why are you angry about it? Have we eaten any of the king’s provisions? Have we taken anything for ourselves?”

⁴³ Then the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, “We have ten shares in the king; and besides, we have a greater claim on David than you have. So why do you treat us with contempt? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?”

But the men of Judah responded even more harshly than the men of Israel.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

This entire episode of David’s rejection and return certainly illustrates the attitudes people today have toward Christ. There are the loyal few who stand by their absent King, and there are the selfish majority who prefer to rebel. But what will happen when the King comes back? And what are we, His followers, doing to hasten His return? (2 Peter 3:12)

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (2 Sam 19)*. Victor Books.

B. Absalom dies (18:1–19:15).

The vain prince followed Hushai's advice and led his army into the wood of Ephraim. Certainly, he was unprepared to wage war, but "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18, NKJV). Absalom caught his head and long hair (14:25–26) in a branch and could not get down. (See Job 20:1–7.) Joab disobeyed David's command (18:5) and killed the rebel; then he sent the news to the king who, when he heard it, wept bitterly. David was a man "after God's own heart" and found "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek. 33:11). David's abnormal grief, however, almost cost him the kingdom.

C. Shimei is pardoned (19:16–23).

Many a rebel will try to "change his tune" when the King comes back! David was trying to gather together the fragments of his kingdom, so he could not afford to alienate any of the tribes, but later on, Solomon gave Shimei what he deserved (1 Kings 2:36–46).

D. Ziba and Mephibosheth are reconciled (19:24–30).

It does not speak well of Mephibosheth that he arrived in the company of Shimei (vv. 16–17). Certainly Ziba had lied about his master, and David sought to give a fair judgment. Sad to say, his rash decision before made it difficult to settle matters completely; but we do appreciate David's attitude. We see in Mephibosheth a good example of concern for his absent king.

E. Barzillai is rewarded (19:31–43).

He had met David's company with help in their hour of need (17:27–29); and no doubt this act of kindness had cost him friends, but he was wonderfully rewarded when the king came back! Barzillai did not want to leave his home and die away from his loved ones, so he suggested that Chimham (perhaps a son or grandson) be given the blessing. Jeremiah 41:17 informs us that David gave Chimham land near Bethlehem and that his family lived there for many years.

This entire episode of David's rejection and return certainly illustrates the attitudes people today have toward Christ. There are the loyal few who stand by their absent King, and there are the selfish majority who prefer to rebel. But what will happen when the King comes back? And what are we, His followers, doing to hasten His return? (2 Peter 3:12)

Merrill, E. H. (1985). *2 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 474-475) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

1. THE PREPARATIONS FOR RETURN (CHAP. 19)

19:1–3. What should have been a day of triumphant joy became to David a day of profound grief. His elation at having regained the kingdom was undercut by his despair at having lost a **son**. So chagrined were David's soldiers that they slipped out of Mahanaim as though they were losers instead of winners.

19:4–8a. **Joab**, who had known before the frustration of doing what he felt was right only to have **the king** turn it against him (cf. 3:27–39; 14:28–33), confronted David and rebuked him for his insensitivity toward his officers and people. It appeared, **Joab** said, that David would have been more satisfied **if Absalom** had lived **and all of them** had died. In order to salvage what little morale was left, Joab urged David to appear before the troops and assure them that he appreciated their selfless service to him.

19:8b–13. The remnants of Absalom's army had made their way home and together with the rest of **Israel** found themselves in a quandary. They had rallied behind **Absalom**, but now he was dead. Moreover, David had provided effective leadership in the past. **So why were the elders not bringing the king back?** Sensing the local officials' indecision, **David sent ... Zadok and Abiathar, the priests**, to them to **ask** why they were so reluctant to restore David when it was clear that the people were willing and ready to do so. No doubt to shore up his support from Judah especially, David told the priests to promise **Amasa**, his nephew (cf. 17:25; 1 Chron. 2:17), that he would succeed **Joab** as **commander of the army** (2 Sam. 19:13). Joab, also David's nephew through another half sister (1 Chron. 2:16), had by now become completely discredited in David's eyes because of his open disagreements with David's policies.

19:14–23. The mission of Zadok and Abiathar was successful. With one accord (**as though they were one man**) the people of **Judah** not only invited David to return to rule over them but they also sent a delegation to **the Jordan** River to meet him and help him cross over the river. Included in the delegation were **Shimei** (v. 16), who had cursed David on his way into exile (16:5–8), and **Ziba** (19:17), Mephibosheth's servant who had refreshed David along the way (16:1–4). **Shimei**, realizing the peril in which he now found himself because of David's restoration, prostrated himself **before the king** and sought his forgiveness, a favor David temporarily granted over the objections of **Abishai** (19:21–23; but cf. David's last instruction to Solomon, 1 Kings 2:8–9). The large number of **Benjamites** who accompanied **Shimei** (2 Sam. 19:17) and who were identified by him (v. 20) as elements of **the whole house of Joseph** (i.e., Israel) indicates the first steps taken by the tribe of Benjamin to link itself with Judah.

19:24–30. Next came **Mephibosheth** who protested to David that **Ziba** had lied about Mephibosheth's motive for remaining in **Jerusalem** when **the king** was forced to leave. Saul's grandson said he had not tried to use the occasion as an opportunity to bring his grandfather's dynasty back into control as **Ziba** had reported (see 16:3). Whether this was true or not cannot be determined, but David at least was somewhat convinced by Mephibosheth and agreed to return at least half of the estate he had threatened to withdraw from him (19:29; cf. 16:4).

19:31–38. Then **Barzillai the Gileadite**, who had provided David with supplies when he had crossed into Transjordan (17:27–29), presented himself to **the king**. Grateful to the **80-year-old** for all his goodness, David urged him to move to **Jerusalem** and live out his days on government sustenance. **Barzillai** protested that he was too old to make such a move and preferred to die in his own land. He asked, however, that **Kimham**, perhaps his son, go in his place and be similarly rewarded. This David was more than happy to do.

19:39–43. At length David and his entourage **crossed the Jordan** and arrived at **Gilgal** where they were met by a throng of citizens from both **Judah** and **Israel**. The latter were upset that the Judeans claimed **David** as one of their own to the exclusion of the other tribes (v. 41).

When the Judeans replied that David was part of their own flesh (v. 42), the Israelite counter-response was that there were **10** tribes of them and therefore their claim was much more weighty. **Besides**, they said, they had been **the first** to insist that David return to rule over the nation (v. 43), a claim for which, incidentally, there is an apparent basis in the preserved narrative (vv. 9–10). The argument reveals the fickleness of the people who had first acquiesced in, if not actively supported, the rebellion of Absalom and now clamored to be first to welcome David **back**. But it also indicates the depth of the schism which was developing between **Israel** and **Judah**, a rift which eventually produced two separate kingdoms.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 130). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

David Returns (19:1–43). Joab continued to place the state of the nation above the feelings of the king. The aftermath of the war required a stronger show of Davidic leadership. Joab rebuked David for mourning the death of his enemies instead of greeting his triumphant soldiers. David took his place at the gate to receive his troops.

The tribes of Israel urged their leaders to reinstall David as their king. The men of Judah were initially reluctant. David replaced Joab with Amasa in a gesture of reconciliation. No doubt, Joab's demotion was also due to his killing of Absalom. The king also extended his generosity by sparing Shimei's life, hearing out the explanation of Mephibosheth, and sharing Saul's inheritance with Ziba in spite of his treachery. Furthermore, he welcomed to his court the son of his loyal advisor Barzillai.

The undercurrent of strife between Israel and Judah became apparent when the men of Israel were left out of the welcoming party that ushered David home. They interpreted this as exclusion from David's kingdom. The secession of northern tribes from Jerusalem occurred in the reign of David's grandson, Rehoboam (see 1 Kgs. 12:16–20).

Tatum, S. L. (1972). *2 Samuel*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (pp. 190-191). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

David Returns to His Throne (2 Sam. 19:1–40)

The passage—The mourning of David for his son continued for quite some time. What might have been the occasion of rejoicing for victory was turned into sadness for the nation because of the death of Absalom. Joab was angry. He thought David was acting foolishly. He had doubtlessly expected to be glorified for his part in the victory. He spoke harshly to his king. He said if he did not go out and speak words of encouragement to his people that they would turn against him. He said the conditions would then be worse than ever. King David complied.

Verses 9 and 10 tell of the strife and division that existed among the various tribes of Israel. David first appealed to the men of Judah to come back to his side. They responded to his claims of love and kinship and invited him to return to them and be their king. They met him at the River Jordan to bring him back home. Only about half of the men of Israel responded.

Shimei, who had cursed David as he left Jerusalem, met him at the River Jordan. He begged forgiveness for his crime against the king. David appeared to forgive him at the time, but in giving his final instructions to Solomon in 1 Kings 2:8–9, he told him to put Shimei out of the way.

Mephibosheth, Saul's lame son, also went out to welcome David home. David asked why he had not been loyal to him when he was leaving Jerusalem. Mephibosheth declared that Ziba had betrayed him and had lied about him to David. He claimed he had asked Ziba to saddle an ass for him so he could go with David. When Ziba failed him, he could not go, because he was lame. Mephibosheth reminded David of his kindness in allowing him to live and eat at his table. He begged for mercy. David, not knowing whether to believe Mephibosheth or Ziba, settled the matter by dividing the property of Saul between them. Mephibosheth said he would be willing to give up everything for the joy of David's return home.

Barzillai the Gileadite was a very old man. He came to welcome David home. He was a wealthy man and had helped David in his time of trouble. David wanted to reward him by making him an honored guest in his palace. Barzillai said he had helped David with no hope of reward. He had done so because he loved his king. He wanted nothing in return. He recognized that he was too old to enjoy the pleasures of the king's palace. He wanted to return to his home.

Special points—Notice especially the reaction of four men to the victory of David and the death of Absalom. Joab was impatient with David and expected special recognition. Shimei was the opportunist who had made a poor decision and tried to get back on the winning side. Mephibosheth, if he was truthful, was a poor man who had been wronged and desired to set the record straight. Barzillai stands out as a man of unselfish generosity. This passage is an interesting study in character.

The Revolt of Sheba (2 Sam. 19:41–20:26)

The passage—Jealousy between the northern tribes of Israel and the tribe of Judah flared into a war. The men of Israel felt that the men of Judah were claiming David as their king. The men of Judah pointed out that David was near kin to them. The men of Israel responded that they had ten shares in the king. They claimed to be the first to speak of bringing him back.

Sheba, a man of Benjamin, blew his trumpet and called Israel to revolt. He said, "We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel!" (2 Sam. 20:1). The men of Israel followed him. The men of Judah followed David to Jerusalem.

David did not want Sheba's revolt to become a greater threat. He called on Amasa to return with the Judean soldiers. When he did not respond promptly, he sent Abishai after Sheba. Joab went also with many other men.

Amasa finally arrived to pursue Sheba. Joab murdered him. He tricked him by letting one sword fall from his belt. He appeared to greet Amasa as a brother. When he was close to him, he drew out a hidden sword and thrust it into his abdomen. Thus, Joab was in firm control again.

Joab pressed forward in pursuit of Sheba. The rebel took refuge in a fortress in Abel of Beth-maacah. Joab came and besieged him. They were about to batter down the walls. A wise woman of the city agreed to exchange the head of Sheba for the safety of her city. It was agreed. In due time Sheba's head was thrown over the wall. Once again the threat of the throne of David was put down.

Special points—Why did Amasa not respond quickly to the call of David to pursue after Sheba? It may be that the Judeans did not want to follow a fellow who had been on the side of Absalom, even if David had been willing to trust him. It could be that David was trying to curb the power of Joab. The men of Judah must have known Amasa was not the best one to lead them.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Samuel 19). Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan.**

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