

**2 Samuel 20**  
**April 21, 2024**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Have you noticed that we can't turn on our televisions without a news report of fighting going on somewhere in our world?! In more recent years, you see Putin trying to take over Ukraine, or the fight between the Israelis and Palestinians, and now Iran is getting into the act. Or it's the U.S. suffering an insurrection, or political fights that go on. It just seems to never end. It's not hard to find disunity wherever we are.

Q: So what's so hard about living in peace with others? Why do you think "unity" is so hard?  
[Let people engage]

**Transition:** Following the death of Absalom, there was a power vacuum that left Israel and Judah in turmoil. This turmoil between the Israelite and Judean delegations at Gilgal became so heated that a **Benjamite** by the name of **Sheba** announced a rebellion against **David** and led the Israelites to desert the king. It was clear to **David** that he must overcome the insurrection that had been initiated by **Sheba** at Gilgal. So he ordered **Amasa**, his new commander (19:13), to reorganize the army **of Judah within three days** so that Sheba might be brought to a screeching halt. Poor David! It's as if he never gets a break! If it wasn't Saul pursuing David to kill him, it was David's son, Absalom, trying to usurp the throne. Now it's Sheba declaring a revolt against David. Let's read the text and see how well that goes!

**BOOK:**

***Sheba Rebels Against David***

**20** Now a troublemaker (Hebrew means worthless fellow, or good for nothing, wicked or lawless) named Sheba son of Bicri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted,

“We have no share in David,  
no part in Jesse's son!  
Every man to his tent, O Israel!”

<sup>2</sup> So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bicri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them, but did not lie with them. They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows.

<sup>4</sup> Then the king said to Amasa, “Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself.” <sup>5</sup> But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him.

<sup>6</sup> David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba son of Bicri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your master's men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us.” <sup>7</sup> So

Joab's men and the Kerethites and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai. They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bicri.

<sup>8</sup> While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was wearing his military tunic, and strapped over it at his waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheath. As he stepped forward, it dropped out of its sheath.

<sup>9</sup> Joab said to Amasa, "How are you, my brother?" Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. <sup>10</sup> Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, Amasa died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bicri.

<sup>11</sup> One of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!" <sup>12</sup> Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that all the troops came to a halt there. When he realized that everyone who came up to Amasa stopped, he dragged him from the road into a field and threw a garment over him. <sup>13</sup> After Amasa had been removed from the road, all the men went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bicri.

<sup>14</sup> Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel Beth Maacah and through the entire region of the Berites, who gathered together and followed him. <sup>15</sup> All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maacah. They built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications. While they were battering the wall to bring it down, <sup>16</sup> a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him." <sup>17</sup> He went toward her, and she asked, "Are you Joab?"

"I am," he answered.

She said, "Listen to what your servant has to say."

"I'm listening," he said.

<sup>18</sup> She continued, "Long ago they used to say, 'Get your answer at Abel,' and that settled it. <sup>19</sup> We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD's inheritance?"

<sup>20</sup> "Far be it from me!" Joab replied, "Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy! <sup>21</sup> That is not the case. A man named Sheba son of Bicri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I'll withdraw from the city."

The woman said to Joab, "His head will be thrown to you from the wall."

<sup>22</sup> Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bicri and threw it to Joab. So he sounded the trumpet, and his men dispersed from the city, each returning to his home. And Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem.

<sup>23</sup> Joab was over Israel's entire army; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; <sup>24</sup> Adoniram was in charge of forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; <sup>25</sup> Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; <sup>26</sup> and Ira the Jairite was David's priest.

### **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:**

The pursuit of a narrow selfish agenda will always be worthless in the eyes of the Lord.

## **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***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. 475-476) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books***

#### 2. THE REESTABLISHMENT OF AUTHORITY (CHAP. 20)

20:1–3. The contention between the Israelite and Judean delegations at Gilgal became so heated that a **Benjamite** by the name of **Sheba** announced a revolutionary movement against **David** and led the Israelites to desert the king. David and the Judeans then continued their homeward journey **to Jerusalem** alone. Once there, **David** reasserted his monarchical claims by, among other things, regathering his harem (cf. 15:16). **He provided for them, but** remained sexually aloof because they had been appropriated by his son Absalom (16:21–22).

20:4–10. The first matter of state was urgent. It was clear to **David** that he must overcome the rump movement that had been initiated by **Sheba** at Gilgal. So he ordered **Amasa**, his new commander (19:13), to reorganize the army **of Judah ... within three days** so that Sheba might be brought to heel. **When Amasa** was unable to do so in the allotted **time ... Abishai**, at David's command, took his own personal elite troops (cf. 18:2) and set out for the North (20:7). On the way they met **Amasa** at **Gibeon**, about five miles north of Jerusalem. **Joab**, though having been demoted and replaced by **Amasa**, was present. Pretending to greet **Amasa** warmly, **Joab** killed him with his **dagger**. Thus **Joab** gained revenge for his loss of rank. What is particularly heinous is the fact that **Joab** and **Amasa** were cousins, sons of two of David's half sisters (1 Chron. 2:16–17). Again, then, the prophecy of Nathan came to pass: "The sword will never depart from your house" (2 Sam. 12:10).

20:11–22. **Joab** at once took command as though nothing had happened. **The troops** were stopping in **the road** to look at Amasa's corpse. So heartless Joab **dragged** Amasa's body to **a field and threw a garment over him**, without bothering to bury him. Summoning reinforcements, **Joab** marched as far north as **Abel Beth Maacah** (four miles west of Dan and north of the Sea of Kinnereth) through the territory **of the Berites** (site unknown). There he found **Sheba** safely ensconced behind **the city** wall, apparently prepared to face a long **siege**. While attempting to batter down **the walls** Joab was contacted by **a wise woman** from **the city** who yelled over the wall that she wanted to talk with him. She told **Joab** of her own fame as a purveyor of wisdom (v. 18) and then asked why he was destroying her **city** which had always been loyal to Israel. The city, as **a mother in Israel**, was a prominent one.

To this **Joab replied** that he was not attacking **the city** itself but only wanted **Sheba**, the rebel who had presumed to lead Israel away from its **king**. If she would assist in delivering Sheba **over** to him, he would end his siege. Soon **the head of Sheba** was thrown over the wall to **Joab**. Successful in his mission, Joab stopped the siege and returned to **Jerusalem**.

20:23–26. Apparently David tolerated Joab’s assassination of Amasa for **Joab** appears in this list of **David’s** royal administrators. Joab **was over Israel’s entire army**. **Benaiah son of Jehoiada** was leader of David’s special troops, **the Kerethites and Pelethites** (see comments on 8:15–18). Benaiah eventually replaced Joab at the beginning of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 2:35; 4:4). **Adoniram** (Heb. “*Adoram*”) **was in charge of** conscripted **labor** gangs, a position he retained in the government of Solomon. (In 1 Kings 4:6 and 5:14 the Heb. has “*Adoniram*,” a longer form of his name.) **Jehoshaphat ... was the recorder** (or chronicler). **Sheva** was official scribe, evidently having succeeded Seraiah (2 Sam. 8:17). **Zadok and Abiathar** remained as chief **priests**. Finally **Ira the Jairite** was David’s special minister, having succeeded the king’s own sons in that capacity (see comments on 8:18 for the meaning of *kōhēn* in 20:26, usually rendered “priest”).

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

***Sheba’s Revolt (20:1–26)***. The conclusion of this section concerning David’s troubles appropriately ends with yet another rebellion. Sheba, a Benjamite, led an insurrection against David. The tribe of Benjamin, the kin of King Saul, had a long-standing feud with David as evidenced already by Shimei (16:7). Now fueled by animosity against Judah, Sheba seized the opportunity to rally the men of Israel to support his coup.

Amasa’s slowness to attend to the rebellion forced David to appoint Abishai and Joab to deal with Sheba. When Amasa finally joined Joab’s campaign, Joab greeted him with a treacherous kiss and then thrust his sword into Amasa’s belly. Meanwhile, Sheba took refuge in Abel Beth Maacah, where the Judahites besieged the city. The people of Israel must have been skeptical of Sheba’s chances for success. A woman of the city convinced its citizens to offer the head of Sheba to Joab, thereby averting the city’s massacre and ending the schism.

The author concluded this section with a brief report on David’s bureaucracy. This final listing of David’s officials is similar to 8:15–18 with two important differences. There is no mention of slave labor in David’s earlier administration, and also David’s sons are absent.

***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.***

### **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 20). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

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