

Short Sighted Plans

2Samuel 20:1-26

In my first week of Bible College one of my top priorities was to find a job to earn enough money to pay rent, buy food, and continue on in school for my second semester.

Thankfully, I was able to find employment fairly quickly at a company that refurbished industrial machines.

My job was to clean all the grease, grime, and old paint off the machines in preparation for a new finish.

I confess it was not the most exciting work in the world but the hours were somewhat flexible and there was lots of work to keep me busy for the foreseeable future.

Shortly after I started they hired someone else. I can't remember his name, but he was a fairly decent fellow and he was quite meticulous at the cleaning aspect of our job.

He also made a rather memorable mistake one day.

Our boss had encouraged us to jump on the forklift and teach ourselves how to drive it.

I was a little slow to get around to that because I was busy at my task and I was a bit apprehensive to get on a machine at work it with no instruction and no supervision.

My co-worker on the other hand jumped at the chance and he drove the forklift on a regular basis moving machines in and out of the shop.

One day he took a trip outside and a few minutes later came back in the shop with a rather worried look on his face and he explained that he had managed to get the forklift stuck in the mud outside.

Now the right thing to do would have been to go tell the boss and ask him what to do next.

Instead of doing that my co-worker hopped on the second forklift in the shop and headed outside presumably to pull forklift number one out of the mud.

I thought that was a bad idea but he didn't ask my advice and he didn't take any time to think things through.

Sadly for him, he ended up returning a few minutes later announcing that both forklifts were now stuck in the mud.

Needless to say the boss was not overly thrilled at the situation.

He wasn't so upset about the first one getting stuck, but he was not happy about trying to solve the problem without him and getting the second one stuck.

After making his displeasure known he went to his office, called a tow truck and eventually the forklifts made it back into the shop.

Had my co-worker just taken a moment to consider the situation he might have avoided making things worse, but he was so locked in to fixing it without the boss finding out he got himself into more trouble.

[That can happen sometimes can't it. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where we have a hard time seeing past our immediate situation and so we come up with short sighted plans that do more harm than good. That is what we find in our text this morning **2Samuel 20:1-26**. We find some people who are primarily concerned about short term things. That is something that can easily happen in our lives and this text has some important warnings and lessons for us about short sighted plans. One of the things we can see here is a character trait that can blind us to the bigger picture. We see here that...

Point #1 – Being easily offended can make us short sighted. (Verses 1-2)

Often the most immediate reactions to the feeling of being mistreated seek an immediate solution rather than considering the big picture.

The beginning of chapter twenty is closely connected with the end of chapter nineteen.

Having survived the rebellion of his son Absalom, David is on his way back to Jerusalem and men from the tribe of Judah as well and men from the ten other non-Levitical tribes referred to here as 'the men of Israel' come out to meet him.

The two groups get into an argument with each other about who will get the honour of escorting the king to his home.

The men of Judah argue that they should be the ones to bring him back because David is from their tribe.

The men of Israel argue that they 'have ten shares in the king' meaning they make up the majority of the nation so they should have the greater share of the honour.

Chapter nineteen ends by saying, "the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel".

Meaning Judah got their way in that moment.

That opens the way for the man we meet in **verse 1** of chapter 20.

The big thing to note about Sheba is that it says here he is a 'worthless man'.

That phrase translates a Hebrew word 'belial' which means that he is worthless in a moral sense.

This is the kind of guy who would try and twist any situation to his own advantage without any regard for what is right and good.

We are also told that he is from the tribe of Benjamin, which is the tribe of Saul the man who was king before David and it seems pretty clear from the book of 2Samuel that there were still a good number of people from that tribe who thought they should control the throne of Israel.

Notice again what he says after he gets the attention of the people with a trumpet blast!

He says to the men of Israel, “We have no portion in David, no inheritance in the son of Jesse.”

That is a pretty big pendulum swing from ‘we have ten shares/portions in the king’.

He is basically saying, ‘if we don’t get the honour of taking the king to Jerusalem then we have no part in his kingdom at all.’

He calls the men of Israel to their ‘tents’ which is likely a call to war.

Now look at the response in **verse 2**.

When it says ‘all the men of Israel’ that means all the men of Israel present for the purpose of escorting the king not all the men from all the ten tribes.

All the representatives from those ten tribes abandon David and follow this morally bankrupt man named Sheba.

Why are they so easily persuaded? The answer that makes the most sense is that they are offended that Judah won the argument between them.

Is it really that big of a deal?

Had David been unjust to them in the past and treated them like second class citizens?

Quite the opposite, David had brought them a great deal of peace and prosperity throughout the majority of his reign.

On top of that they had just witnessed the LORD providentially deliver David from his enemies and now they are thinking of picking a fight with him!

Why? Simply because they were insulted by the tribe of Judah.

That is pretty short sighted.

[Imagine two men standing on a plank half of which is hanging over a cliff with one man on the overhanging portion and the other on the land portion. Now imagine the two men are arguing over who owns the plank and the man on the overhanging portion is so upset by the argument that he tells the other man to get off the plank.]

Most of us can probably see how ridiculous and short sighted that is because it will lead to the man falling down the cliff, but if we are honest we can act in fairly similar ways.

I confess I struggle with being easily offended at times.

More than once I have wanted put in my letter of resignation, more than once I have wanted to walk away from people and never see them again, more than once I have wanted to make big changes because I am upset in the moment.

Have you ever felt like that?

Now how many times has acting on those feelings turned out to be helpful and God glorifying?

I can tell you in my life it never has!

[Praise God for His grace this morning. If you are like me and have people in your life that can speak some wisdom into your life and help you see past temporary offenses to see a bigger picture thank the LORD for that. Those people are gifts in our lives and they are used by God to spare us significant consequences. We can see what those consequences are like from all kinds of examples in the bible. Here we can see it in the life of David which shows us this second lesson, that...]

Point #2 – Being short sighted can have lasting effects. (Verse 3)

When our actions are based primarily on what is right in front of us it can lead to long term consequences.

While the majority of this chapter deals with the failings of others, we are also reminded in verse three of some ill-considered choices that David had made as well.

Let's read **verse 3** together and then consider the bigger context to see how it fits in to the flow of the narrative.

Concubine is not a word we use on an everyday basis anymore.

The bible uses the word to describe a woman who is legally bound to a man but who does not share the same legal rights in terms of authority and inheritance that a wife would share.

We already know that David was way off the mark in terms of God's design for marriage because he had multiple wives and the fact that he also took to himself ten concubines adds to that picture.

There is more here though than David's excesses in marriage, there is also a clear reminder of his failure with Bathsheba.

When the prophet Nathan comes to confront David for his grievous violation of God's law, he tells David that what he has done in secret, will be done to him publically.

That is what happens when Absalom has control of Jerusalem.

He takes these ten women, left behind by his father, and he takes them to himself on the roof of the palace for everyone in the city to see.

Once that had happened, it would have been seen as improper to have the concubines return to the palace as though nothing had happened.

While they are cared for and protected, they are essentially shut up in a house to live out their days as though they are widows.

David's short sighted choices had cost him dearly and in long lasting ways.

At least three of his sons had died, one of his daughters had suffered greatly, and these women are forced to carry

the consequences of the sin that was committed against them for the rest of their days.

It is an enduring mess and it can all be traced back to David making choices for immediate self-gratification rather than the big picture of God calling a people to Himself.

[I think of this like getting a scar. A few of the scars are from poor decisions I made on the work site usually because I didn't want to take the time to do things in a safer manner. Anybody else have some scars like that? You know the thing with scars is that they stay with you.]

God is gracious beyond our understanding. David experienced that when the LORD told him that his sins were forgiven.

That is the good news of the gospel. That Jesus died on the cross to pay the debt of all our sin.

Listen, every single one of you can live in the hope of eternal life because God will forgive you if you put your trust in Christ.

Often times though sins on this side of eternity will leave some scars and have some lasting effects.

Sometimes families are broken beyond repair, if lives are lost that doesn't go away, people in prison can be saved by Jesus but they still need to serve out their sentence, sometimes careers cannot be recovered, and the list goes on.

[That should give us great concern about the choices we make from day to day. We should be striving to be thoughtful and show concern for how the decisions we make in the present are going to effect our lives and the lives of those around us in the years to come. Sadly as this text continues we meet some more people who seem concerned primarily with immediate things rather than the big picture and they reinforce the foolishness of short sightedness because they show us that...]

Point #3 – Being short sighted often leads us into evil. (Verses 4-13)

When our greatest concern is chasing after the here and now we can very easily set aside God's will in order to gain what we think we need in the moment.

Verses 4-5 tell us about a nephew of David's named Amasa.

For personal and political reasons the king had decided to remove Joab, who was also David's nephew, from being the commander of the army and replace him with Amasa.

Dealing with this new rebellion is an opportunity to make the switch but for reasons we are not told about in the text Amasa has trouble keeping the timeline.

Because of the urgency of the situation another nephew of the king, Abishai, is called upon in verses 6-7 to take the best available soldiers and pursue Sheba before he can really get organized.

By the time Abishai is leaving Jerusalem Joab has figured out what is going on.

No doubt rumours had circulated and no doubt Joab already had a sense of David's dissatisfaction with him.

It would not have been hard for Joab to figure out that he is being replaced.

Not surprisingly, even without a commission from the king, Joab goes along with his brother Abishai to pursue Sheba.

When they get to a place called Gibeon, Amasa meets them there.

Now if Joab had been thinking big picture, he would have submitted himself to Amasa as the new leader of the army.

But as he had done a number of times before in his life, here he cannot see beyond his self-seeking ambition of the moment.

Verses 8-10 describe how he greets his cousin with a kiss, a sign of friendship and brotherly love which he uses to conceal wicked intentions.

Seemingly, without a second thought Joab takes Amasa's life and leaves him lying in the road.

Now look with me at **verse 11**.

Presumably, this young man is speaking to the men Amasa had gathered together. Notice here how he begins and ends his thought with Joab.

Do you see how Joab is promoting himself back to being the commander of the army?

There is a problem, however, and that is the people, probably the people Amasa had gathered, see him lying in the road and stop likely wondering to themselves what had happened.

What had happened was Joab committed the most serious of crimes against his cousin because of envy, greed, and selfish ambition.

Instead of acknowledging that though this happens instead (**verses 12b-13**).

Another short sighted choice. Instead of dealing honestly with evil, he tries to hide it and cover it up.

That may work with people like it seems to here, but listen, that never works with the LORD.

The God who knows when a sparrow falls to the ground sees this evil and will call these men to account.

Joab seems only able to see his position and power and cares little about God, His laws, or His judgment.

Matthew Henry describes him in this passage as a man whose “conscience has been seared by a hot iron.”

[That is what can happen when we can’t see past the end of our nose. We end up not caring about who we hurt, we think little about being accountable to the LORD, and we feed our sinful desires more and more. If are blind to the bigger picture that is the road we are going to travel down, but hopefully we can see this last lesson from our text this morning instead. Hopefully we all realize that...]

Point #4 – Wisdom prevails over short sightedness. (Verses 14-26)

The LORD plans and acts with eternity in mind and so while it may be tempting to only consider the immediate, it is far better to think long term.

We can see the Sheba’s plans unraveling in verses 14-15.

After having travelled through all the territory of the northern tribes he is only able to add the ‘Bichrites’, which were his closest relatives, to those who joined him from verse 2 and it is not at all certain that those guys stuck with him.

It is not all that surprising that he would have a tough time finding recruits considering all the men of Israel who had fallen in Absalom’s rebellion.

In his short sightedness he has failed gain the support he assumed he would get.

Being relatively few in number he tries to find protection in a city only Joab is very experienced at waging wars against cities and he goes right to work.

At this point it is looking pretty bleak for Sheba and the inhabitants of the city.

Then we read this in **verses 16-19.**

It is interesting that the writer does not record this woman’s name for us, she is simply called ‘a wise woman’ and that is likely intended to emphasize the value of wisdom.

I love the courage she displays here.

She is most likely calling to Joab from the city wall and it would have been very easy to mistake her for an attacker.

What if Joab had considered her calling to him to be a trap?

Despite the risk she goes after and gets an audience with Joab.

She reminds him of the good history of the city, how it has been a source of wisdom for people, and on account of its wisdom has been life giving to the nation.

She concludes with this question, “Why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?”

She makes this about more than brick and mortar, she makes this about the covenant promises of God.

In her wisdom she is trying to get Joab to see the big picture and she succeeds and is able to work out an arrangement where Sheba will be dealt with and the city will be spared.

Her wisdom brings Sheba's plans to an end sparing the kingdom further bloodshed and her wisdom prevails over Joab's preparations to destroy an entire city over the rebellion of a few.

Verses 23-26 then give us this summary.

Commentators will tell you that this serves a marker to close this section of the book.

It does that for sure and it also clearly shows us that David is still on the throne after everything that has happened.

Why? Because the LORD is upon His throne and working out His plans according to His wisdom.

The mention of Benaiah in verse 23 also points us to the future. He is the one who will bring retribution to Joab for his murderous ways.

While he may think he has gotten what he wanted, like all short sighted people, he ends up in destruction.

Why? Because God's wisdom always prevails in the end.

The mention of Adoram who serves all the way to the reign of Rehoboam reminds us of God's patience.

Ahilud the recorder, most literally translated as the 'causer of remembrance' is used to preserve a record of God's faithfulness to His people.

The mention of Zadok, Abiathar, and Ira remind us of David's need to seek after the wisdom of the LORD.

In what seems like just a list of names we can see how God's wisdom prevails over short sighted foolishness.

[When Jesus gave what is likely His most famous sermon which is full of Godly wisdom he concluded it by saying that failing to apply it to our lives would be like building a house on the sand but doing what He said would be like building a house on a solid rock. When the houses are first built they look the exact same, but through time and adversity the short sighted method is destroyed and the way of wisdom remains standing.]

Let's be people who desire a house on the rock.

Let's be people who try and see the big picture of God's eternal kingdom.

Let's be people who are long suffering rather than easily offended.

Let's be people who are concerned about the long term consequences of our choices.

Let's be people who by God's grace are pursuing holiness rather than surrendering to evil.

Doing these things will lead us down the path of wisdom, the way that leads to life.