

Second Samuel Chapters 2-3 - John Karmelich

One of the things I regularly preach is, "Start one's day in prayer asking for God's guidance, then try to make the best decisions one can given the situation at hand"! In effect, that is what we see David do as he'll become king over all of Israel in a matter of chapters. Just because he's seeking God doesn't mean life goes smoothly. He's got his problems just as we have ours. Obviously, God doesn't say make a left turn here, then a right as we go through life! God desires a relationship with Him by regular reading of His word and prayer for guidance. Then we go through our day making the best decisions possible. We can assume He's guiding us all the time. As I was taught, "Live as if God is doing nothing and assume He is guiding us all the time!" That's the essence of these two chapters!

Let me lay out these two chapter for you and ask, "So you thought your situation is tough?" David asks God to guide him as he leaves the Philistine town, he and his men (and their families) lived in about 16 16 months! David prays and God says go to a (Jewish) city in the area. Again, sometimes it's obvious what God wants us to do and sometimes we just have to pray and make good decisions! The next thing we read is in effect how the Israelites are dealing with the war defeat (last chapter)! We read that some Israelites capturing the last Israel king's (Saul) dead body from their enemy to give him a proper burial. David praises that, as one of many gestures we read over the next few chapters, as he works his way to becoming king over all Israel. Remember Israel is divided into twelve "states", one after each of their 12 tribes. Judah is David's tribe and they make him their king. The lead general of Saul's army, names the only surviving son of Saul as the king over the other tribes! That means David had to deal with the kingdom being divided! I don't know why the other tribes followed Saul's son after the war loss! I bet it was common knowledge that Samuel anointing David as the next king, but I guess people don't want change that easily so the rest of the tribes followed Saul's son (named Ish-bosheth). The text tells us he was king for two years.

Again David had to react to situations the best he could. The next thing we read is a battle between the forces of Ish-bosheth (thank God for cut and paste!) versus some of David's men in battle. First we had a "draw" of 12 men dying from each side. Next came a full-scale battle with David's side winning over Saul's forces! We then get introduced to David's three nephews (all brothers). One of the three led the forces for David and we'll read a lot about him (Joab) over the rest of the book. Another of those three made a serious effort to kill Saul's top general and let's just say he got killed for his effort! The battle of Israel (my nickname) continued until it was called off after Joab's forces was winning big time. What's stated is the casualty count was about 20 times worse for Saul's side then David's!

This leads us to Chapter 3. The first thing we read of all things in effect is that "David had lots of sex" as we read of six sons born to six different women that David was married to! Was it wrong for David to have all those wives? Yes (why do you think his son Solomon had a 1,000 wives?) "It is what it is!" David still paid for his faults as we'll read in later chapters. The point is David's a man after God's heart not because he was perfect but because he sought God for guidance through his life!

Speaking of "sex": the story moves back to Saul's side. Abner the head general of that side, slept with a concubine (think of a wife with less rights) of that king. It was a way of assuming power! The king did chew him out for that and Abner replied in effect, "I've been your father's right hand man and I put you in power, so get off my back!" He reminded Ish-bosheth that God wanted David to be the next king for all of Israel so once again, "Your highness, once again, get off my back!"

Meanwhile Abner knew he was losing the war. He decides he is going to "jump ships" and switch over to David's side. Abner knew the prophesy of David being the next king. When David finds out what is his only condition is that he take Ish-bosheth's sister who Saul promised to David as a wife! Obviously sex is an underlying theme of these chapters as if David needs more wives! In reality, I suppose David wants to gain popularity among Saul's supporters and taking her as another wife would help. Besides it was a promise made to David probably a decade earlier to be fulfilled.

Anyway Abner (if the names confuse you, just remember Abner dies in this chapter) the top general of Saul's side formally defects to David. We read they had a big banquet in Abner's honor figuring that is the end of that war! Of course, life is always full of twists and turns!

Remember Joab, the head general for David's side? He finds out about Abner's defection. He is either mad about him killing his brother or worrying about a rival to be head general. Joab kills Abner when it's not war time! David doesn't put Joab to death because he's too popular a political leader, but David does throw a nice funeral for Abner and publically insults Joab for what he did! The final verses are in effect a dirge in Abner's honor and the story will continue in the next two chapters.

OK John, nice "game of thrones" saga. We get that David made the best decisions he could during that time and besides having lots of sex dealt with problems the best he could. How does any of this affect our lives? We're not kings nor do we have problems similar to this in any way shape form! That's true but the underlying issue is we want to use the time God gives us to be good servants as the main thing I suspect most of us desire when we get to heaven is to hear "well done good and faithful servant". Do I make a lot of mistakes? Of course, just as David did. He was still a man after God's own heart in spite of those many mistakes (multiple wives was a sin) that David made.

That leads back to you and me. As I said to start this lesson, as Christians we pray for God to guide us as we use our lives to glorify Him. That in essence is our reason for living. Of course, there are family issues, work issues and problems we must deal with, but like David we pray for wisdom and trust God to guide us to make the best decisions we can at any given moment. Could our decisions lead to bigger problems? Of course, God never promises life will be easy for following Him, just that He'll guide our lives and work it out for His glory. The "how" is His problem. Ours is to make the best decisions that we can given whatever the situation is in front of us. Obviously, a lot of things are beyond our control. We can't fix what we can't fix. The only thing we can control is our attitude through any situation! So therefore, I pray for guidance and realize I can't change, as I try to make the best decisions I can while accepting that I can't change the past.

Hope all that encouragement helps as we each deal with our own struggles in life. Do I get frustrated at times and complain about things? Yes, it's called being human. Then I remember there is a God, He is in charge and I am here to serve Him no matter what happens. Anyway, a big hug from me as we work to serve Him with our lives. In Jesus name, Amen!

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! If you'd like you can read the rest or stop now. Either way, I'm grateful for you reading this. To see the other one, click on one of the two links on this web page. Thanks again, John