

April 15

2 Samuel 19 & 20

Hi everyone! Klint Bitter here with another Project 4:4 daily accelerator. Today is April 15th.

We read 2 Samuel 19 and 20. It all starts off with Joab rebuking the king. David is caught in a cycle of extreme grief even though he has successfully retained the throne to Israel. He had squashed yet another enemy which had, this time, risen from within.

David's grief is understandable. He's lost a son. Surely only people who have walked that dark road could truly understand this type of grief. The pain David is displaying is deep and it is real. I think this is one of the reasons David has become such a beloved character. There are many biblical characters that experience highs and lows. With David, it seems that you really feel his triumphs and his valleys with him. He feels close, somewhat identifiable.

It seems the manner of his sons' death only presses David's wound deeper. Perhaps he was also grieving the 'legacy' Absalom had left. Absalom had left a damaging mark on the family and on the nation. Thousands were now dead. A kingdom risked division and confusion. A family had experienced a deep betrayal.

It's easy to presume that part of David's grieving comes from him also feeling some responsibility here. He had raised this boy into a man. He had accepted him back into the city and restored his royal favor after he'd killed his own brother. David was wise, surely he knew the character of his son. Maybe, in David's response to Absalom's death, we're seeing evidence of a convicted conscience. Whatever the case, David's sorrow is deep. The king would not be allowed to grieve for long...the pressure of being king would soon overtake the reality of being a father.

Joab again enters the scene. I don't know about you, but I kind of like Joab. I know it may not be a popular view to hold as he's portrayed with a few admirable traits and several which are "less than admirable".

Say what you will, but Joab has been pretty consistent. He's been loyal to the king. He's been an independent thinker – not merely swallowing the orders/decrees handed down. He's acted in ways he thought were right. (again, not always...he's a flawed character).

But, I especially like what we see from Joab here: he marches right into king David's mourning and unloads some pretty harsh words. Imagine what that room felt like when Joab landed those words: you must care for your scheming, murderous, rebellious son more than the men who were loyal to you; men who fought for you and died for you. It must have been dead silent. You know...that kind of awkward tension.

I love this picture of Joab saying the difficult things when there are big things at stake. The guy had guts. I can't help but be reminded today of some difficult conversations I need to have. There's a lot of value in standing up to say difficult things in tough situations. It's a challenge to put aside my fear of other people's response; my fear of how it will affect my relationship with that person. There's an encouragement here for you and for me to be people who speak truth in difficult times. Though, perhaps a little more tact and grace than what Joab used, will make our tough conversations a little smoother.

If you read, you know how the story goes: Joab's speech gets David to wake up, take care of his people and start the journey back to Jerusalem. Along the journey home, David runs into a couple key characters. We see a gracious, forgiving king as David chose to spare Shimei who had earlier been hurling stones and insults at the king.

Then, David runs into Mephibosheth. I don't know if you caught this in the reading earlier, but Mephibosheth's servant, Ziba, had cared for David and his entourage while they were leaving during the uprising. Ziba also passed word along to David that his master had betrayed the king. In our reading today, we have Mephibosheth saying he was tricked by the servant. We don't get to the bottom of that story as David's ruling is a bit indecisive. Maybe David wasn't sure who was telling the truth, so he ordered them to divide the property. Maybe he couldn't let go of Ziba's kindness showed to him.

Finally, upon returning home, there's another uprising. Some saw the confusion of the nation and fresh "wounds" to the king's image as an opportunity to separate Israel from Judah.

This rebellion is squashed hard and fast. Scripture recounts for us – pretty graphically – how Joab and his men put this uprising to an immediate death.

If you'd like to dig a little deeper, take a look at the relationship between Israel and Judah. As you search that out, it will build some understanding of the division of the kingdom that took place later when the sons of Solomon are in leadership.

With that, this is Klint Bitter encouraging you to live by the Word of God. Be blessed today!