

The Rebellion of Sheba

Call to Worship: Psalm 62:1-2

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 19:40-43

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 20:1-2

Hymn Insert- *Here I am to Worship*

Hymn #493- *Who is on the Lord's Side?*

Hymn #270- *The Church's One Foundation*

Introduction:

Last time, we saw that a new contention had begun to develop, when David had arrived at Gilgal, on his way back to Jerusalem. A heated dispute ensued between the men of Judah, and the men of Israel (the other ten tribes), because the men of Judah had failed to contact and invite the men of Israel along, when they had gone to escort the king, back over the Jordan River, and into the land of Israel. The men of Israel saw the actions of the men of Judah, as self-serving and ill motivated, evidencing a lack of concern for the part that the other tribes had in the king.

Needless to say, the dispute does not get resolved. In fact, we will see this morning, how a man named Sheba, of the tribe of Benjamin, takes advantage of the contention, so as to lead and foster a great rebellion among the men of Israel. And the potential for a great disaster springs forth, compelling David to quickly nip this rebellion in the bud, before a permanent schism ensues.

I. The Rebellion of Sheba

In verse 1, we are told, that in the midst of this growing dispute between the men of Judah and the men of Israel, "there happened to be there a rebel (lit. "a man of Belial"), whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite..."

The wording here is quite interesting, to say the least; like saying, "And there happened to be a lit match, right there, where all of the gun powder was being tossed all over the place." And so, the idea conveyed here, is that, there happened to be someone present, a rebel, who, having a wicked and rebellious heart, would have coveted such an opportunity to exploit such a contention for his own wicked ends. The lack of concern for unity and reconciliation among the opposing tribes, played right into the hands of this rebel, who had no real concern about the actual substance of the disagreement. Being from the tribe of Benjamin, we might also speculate

that he had never been favorable toward seeing the royal office move from Benjamin (Saul) to Judah (David). Needless to say, the man is referred to as a rebel ("a son of Belial") because his motives were ungodly and malicious.

And so, what does Sheba do? We are told that he "blows a trumpet;" that is, he summons the attention of the Israelites, so that he might take advantage of the moment of high emotion, and draw them into a rebellion. Notice his words, in the latter part of verse 1:

"We have no share in David, nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!" And so, Sheba craftily plays on the very accusations made against the men of Judah, as if to say, "We ought to have had ten shares in the king, but it is obvious, that this has been denied us by the King and his tribal lineage. Clearly, we have been rejected by them, and therefore, since we have been spurned and despised in this way, let us, in keeping with *their* actions, return to our own inheritance and be our own people."

And so, caught up in the emotion of an unresolved and growing contention, and therefore, vulnerable to the wicked and deceptive intentions of Sheba, the men of Israel forsake David and follow Sheba. Notice, in verse 2a, we are told, "So every man of Israel deserted David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri." Apparently, even those who had supported David, in the war against Absalom, joined Sheba, in this rebellion. And so, a severe, unresolved contention, became a substantial, materializing division. The powder and the water were mixed, and the concrete was preparing to settle.

Only Judah remained loyal to David. In verse 2b, we are told, "But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king." They continued to escort David back to Jerusalem, and they sustained their commitment and loyalty to him.

II. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

For the remainder of our time, brethren, let us then consider some relevant, concluding thoughts and applications:

1) Brethren, let us recognize that the devil is an opportunist, and that, with a heck of a lot of experience and time, in his pocket. He waits for just the right moment to pounce on those who are overly complacent, and ignorant of his ways. He is a real, live, active foe, who is hell

bent, most of all, on destroying Christ's church. No doubt, when we read about these "sons of Belial," throughout the Scriptures, we are meant to understand that there are rebellious servants of the devil, everywhere in the world, set out to destroy Christ's church, for their own self-seeking, malicious motives. Would they say, or necessarily know, that they are actually serving the devil. Probably not. In fact, they themselves are deceived, thinking that they are ultimately benefitting themselves, when in reality, they are pawns of the devil, contending with the far weightier and bigger issue of Christ's expanding kingdom. They are rebellious "sons of Belial." The men of Judah, and especially, the men of Israel failed to see this. They had opened the door for an ungodly opportunist to come in, and create havoc, chaos and rebellion.

In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter warns, "Be sober (self-controlled), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Brethren, there are two extremes: Relate every problem to the devil and fix all of your intention on him, or, act like he doesn't exist, because, after all, God is sovereign. The Scriptures give us the proper balance. And here, we are warned, to be mindful of his presence. Consider that he is an opportunist, waiting for the right moment to capitalize on human weakness. And unresolved contention/conflict, is the watering hole, whereby he pays frequent visits. In the context of relationship, and especially within the church, when there is contention, we would do good to exhibit great self-control; to "watch" vigilantly and prayerfully, ensuring that we are not the cause of his entry, into the gates of Jerusalem. He has his Sheba's on post, and he knows that he can gain most control, when we lack self-control, during moments of high tension and emotion, where we are less able to be on guard from his wicked wiles. Let's work together, putting out fires; indeed, further edifying one another and strengthening our ties, giving no place for the enemy to work his wicked schemes. If Christ is at the center here; if we are walking closely with Christ; if we are fostering a community of ongoing edification, humble exhortation, loving rebuke and encouragement, then the devil's schemes will be so obvious to us; they will be so exposed, that he will retreat, seeking a more opportune time.

2) Notice again, brethren, that although David had gone to great distances to foster unity in Israel; although he had absorbed their utter rebellion and treason, in their support of Absalom's conspiracy, seeking to bring about reconciliation and restoration, rather than vengeance, yet, a

contention erupted anyway. And this contention led to the present schism, which has come about, by the provocation of a wicked man. And so, David's design for unity; a unity, which he himself has invested much in, by way of personal humiliation and the absorbing of treasonous barbs, has taken a turn for the worse here. Things did not go according to plan, and more sorrow and grief have been added to the menu, for David.

Now, what's the point in my stating the obvious here? Simply this, brethren. We ought, like David, to strive, whole heartedly, to preserve the unity of God's people, even to our own hurt, if necessary. But, with all that said, sometimes, that unity will still be disrupted by means beyond your control. And so, what am I getting at? We ought to hunger for unity; we ought to strive for peace, as much as is within us, and we ought to do so, to our own hurt, at times. But, even then, we must be aware that ultimately, we, in and of ourselves, cannot secure a guaranteed unity among the brethren. That being the case, we must ultimately commit the health of the church to Christ, her head. And so, at the end of the day, if we have done all on our part to be faithful and to secure peace in the body; if we have done, "as much as is within us," to build Christ's church, we ought not to hang our heads in shame, if contentions still exist and/or arrive. I say this, because, if we set the success of our labors, merely, to a pragmatic tune; merely to the desired outcome, for which we are shooting, we will never persevere, when things go in another direction.

Know this brethren, it is indeed grievous to see disunity, schism and hardship in the church; and such things ought to grieve us, but all of your labors in the Lord, regardless of the pragmatics (the outcomes), are never, ever in vain. Fixing your eyes on Christ, the Author and Perfecter of your faith; the ultimate builder of the church, who will not fail, will enable you to endure every large wave of sorrow, which beats upon your labors. And so, to that end, let us persevere, doing our part to build Christ's church, and if a wall comes down, let us pick up the work tools, and prepare to rebuild again, even if it is for the hundredth time. Some of your own greatest growths spurts in the faith, will come, by your enduring such hardships, and continuing on, for the sake of Christ. And ultimately, in heaven, the perfect church will arise!

Here, David had to face, yet another contention; more labor, more grief, more expended energy, even though he had done everything (he tiptoed around all of the land mines), to keep the

peace. But, with the glory of God in view, and the constant reminder of the undeserved grace, which was constantly his in Christ, he pressed on, and he ultimately finished the race.

3) Lastly, if you are outside of Christ, this morning; if you are not a Christian, then you are presently a servant of the devil. You are, as a "son of Belial." And unless you are secure, in the safety of Christ, and under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, know that you are presently an enemy of God and His church. Are you comfortable being a tool of the evil one... young people, and old alike? Repent, and turn to Christ today, before it is too late; indeed, right now, and be saved!

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25