

"THE SAME OLD STORY"

I. Introduction

- A. As we watch sin playing its way out in people's lives, one thing that becomes clear that sin is not very original.
 - 1. Just think of how many times you have seen someone going down a certain path and then said to yourself, 'Oh, no. Not again.'
 - 2. We usually have a pretty good idea of where sin is going to end.
 - 3. We keep seeing the same old story being played out over and over again.

- B. We see the predictable trajectory of sin here in 2 Samuel 20.
 - 1. Though David has returned to Jerusalem and reclaimed his throne, all is not well.
 - 2. The same problems that have brought trouble to God's people in the past arise once more.
 - 3. It is the same old story, a story of rebellion, treachery, and death.

II. Rebellion

- A. Our passage begins by telling us about the rebellion instigated by this man named Sheba.
 - 1. Notice how this follows immediately after the conflict between the northern tribes and Judah at end of chapter 19.
 - 2. As we noted last week, that argument was petty and prideful.

3. Israel was upset because Judah made arrangements to escort the king back to Jerusalem without letting them in on it.
 4. It was wrong of Judah to do that, and they should have admitted as much and sought reconciliation with their brothers.
 5. Instead, they spoke fiercely to the men of Israel, pouring gasoline on the fire.
 6. On the other hand, the men of Israel also betrayed a degree of haughtiness when they said that they had "ten shares" in the king compared to Judah's one.
 7. It would have been better if the northern tribes had overlooked Judah's offense and focused on the fact that the king was being welcomed back to the holy city.
 8. Instead, the quarrel that ensued set the stage for the rebellion that is described here.
- B. Sheba was a Benjaminite.
1. He had loyalties to his kinsman Saul.
 2. He is described here as "a worthless man."
 3. The Bible doesn't pull any punches, does it?
 4. This is the way it describes those who rebel against the Lord's anointed.
 5. As it says in Psalm 2, the Lord laughs from his throne in heaven at those who take counsel against him and his King.
 6. He holds such people in derision.
 7. We need to remember that this is also how God would view us were it not for the grace that he extends to us in Christ.

- C. Sheba instigates his rebellion by blowing his trumpet and saying to the northern tribes, "We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel!"
1. Notice how Sheba blows things way out of proportion here.
 2. Who ever said that the northern tribes had no portion in the king?
 3. The men of Judah had not said that.
 4. While they did not handle the situation well, they never told their northern brothers to get lost.
 5. Sheba's exaggeration is a tactic that we all have a tendency to employ from time to time.
 6. Think of the child who responds to his parents' denial of one particular request by saying, 'You never let me do anything!'
 7. Sheba was saying the same sort of thing here.
 8. He was saying that if he could not have things his way, he wanted no part in Israel.
 9. So he threw a fit and incited others to join him in seceding from the union.
- D. This brings us to verse 3, where we are told how David dealt with his concubines, who had been defiled by Absalom.
1. This information may seem somewhat out of place, but it is included here for a reason.
 2. It shows how both David's and Absalom's sin had devastating effects on other people's lives.
 3. These ten women had previously been wives of a sort to David.

4. And while we have noted before that this arrangement was not in accord with God's design for marriage, this was not something that God chose to confront at that point in the outworking of his plan of redemption.
5. Because of David's and Absalom's sin, these ten women would have to spend the rest of their days essentially living as widows.
6. Here is an example of how the sins that one person commits have a ripple effect on those around him.
7. All the more reason why we should be so grateful that we have a Savior who has come to bind up the brokenhearted.

III. Treachery

- A. When David learned of Sheba's revolt, he instructed Amasa, the new commander of his army, to assemble the men of Judah within three days time.
 1. For some reason Amasa delayed doing this, and David ended up handing things over to Joab's brother Abishai.
 2. Note that David passed over Joab yet again, even though the troops are referred to as "Joab's men" in verse 7.
 3. David is obviously not over the fact that Joab disobeyed his orders about Absalom.
- B. Nevertheless, David's decisions did not deter Joab, who went out with his brother's troops.
 1. And when Amasa caught up with them, Joab was the one who greeted him.
 2. He went up to Amasa and took hold of his beard so that he could welcome him with the customary greeting of a kiss.

3. But then he used the sword that was in his other hand to slaughter Amasa.
 4. The writer calls our attention to the fact that Joab grasped Amasa's beard with his right hand.
 5. This is a significant detail.
 6. The right hand was the hand that was used for battle.
 7. By using his right hand in this greeting, Joab set Amasa at ease and made him an easy target.
 8. This also tells us that Joab's actions were premeditated.
 9. This was no crime of passion.
 10. He planned it out ahead of time.
- C. The writer then says that Joab immediately moved on, leaving Amasa lying there on the road wallowing in his blood.
1. In other words, this is business as usual for Joab.
 2. This is Joab's modus operandi.
 3. When someone is in his way, he kills them.
 4. He did it with Abner and Absalom, and now he does it with Amasa.
 5. Joab never rebelled against David, but he did not submit to him either.
 6. He disregarded the will of the king and did things as he saw fit.
 7. This too is a form of rebellion

IV. Death

- A. Once Amasa is out of the way, Joab resumes command of the troops, a fact that the writer points out by telling us in verse 13 that the troops went on after Joab to pursue Sheba.
1. After going through all the tribes of Israel, presumably to muster up support, Sheba arrived at the city of Abel of Beth-maacah.
 2. This was in the far north of Israel, twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee.
 3. While Sheba's call to arms was initially met with an enthusiastic response, at this point he is only being followed by the men of his own clan.
 4. They have barricaded themselves inside this city, and Joab is on their heels.
 5. How do you think this story is going to end?
- B. When Joab arrives on the scene, he proceeds to do just about what we would expect him to do.
1. He has his men build a siege mound and directs them to start battering the wall to bring it down.
 2. But then something happens.
 3. A wise woman calls out to Joab from inside the city and starts reasoning with him.
 4. She points out that this is a city with a rich heritage in Israel.
 5. It is the home of peaceable and faithful Israelites like herself.
 6. Why is Joab going to destroy this Israelite city?

7. Joab responds with an ironic denial, saying, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! That is not true."
 8. Now, those words may seem a little inconsistent with what we know about Joab, not to mention with the fact that he was laying siege to the city and hammering away at its walls.
 9. Nevertheless, Joab was at least persuaded by the woman's words to look for some other way.
 10. He told her that if they gave up Sheba, he and his troops would withdraw.
 11. Those terms sounded reasonable to the woman, so she made the arrangements with her neighbors and they promptly tossed Sheba's over the wall to Joab.
- C. This all happens so quickly that it is a bit anticlimactic.
1. Imagine what would have happened if that wise woman had never called out to Joab from the wall.
 2. Joab and his troops would have eventually torn down the city wall and slaughtered a lot of people.
 3. How do you think such an action would have been received by the northern tribes?
 4. It would have stirred up even more division.
 5. Yet in God's providence, that disaster was averted and Sheba's rebellion was quickly put down.

V. Conclusion

- A. This story stands as an example of God's restraining grace.

- B. The reason why sin doesn't lead to the predictable outcome in every instance is because God does not let sin run wild.
- C. When he deems it best, God uses all sorts of things, like a woman reasoning with a brutal man from the top of a city wall, to divert people from following through with their sinful intentions.
- D. What a comfort it is for us to know that it is the Lord, and not evil, that is in control of this world.