

“Michal Returned”
2 Samuel 3:12-16
(Preached at Trinity, September 2, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. I pointed out last time that Abner was nothing more than a pragmatist. As long as his actions achieved his goal it was to be approved. With such a heart there are no absolute standards for behavior.
2. Abner put Ish-bosheth on the throne not because he was convinced of the moral justification for it but because it advanced his desire for personal power. The important thing for Abner was achieving the desired end.
For the pragmatist, if a technique or course of action has the desired effect, it is good. If it doesn't seem to work, it must be wrong. Pragmatism rejects the notion of absolute right or wrong, good and evil, truth and error.”¹
3. Most people tend to think this way today. As long as a person is sincere, as long as his motives are pure, and he has good intentions his actions are to be approved.
4. As we continue in **Chapter 3** Abner has defected from Ish-bosheth to David. He sent messengers to David promising to deliver Israel under the throne of David. Abner thinks he is in charge of the situation, but we quickly learn who has the power. David sets the terms. David is pleased to make covenant with him under one non-negotiable condition:
2 Samuel 3:13-14 NAU - "He said, "Good! I will make a covenant with you, but I demand one thing of you, namely, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me." ¹⁴ So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."
5. To understand this, we need to go back to **1 Samuel**. In **Chapter 17** Israel was at war with the Philistines and the Philistines had put forth their champion Goliath. David was too young to be in the army but had arrived to bring provisions to his older brothers. He arrived in time to hear the taunting words of Goliath.
1 Samuel 17:22-25 NAU - "Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. ²³ As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard *them*. ²⁴ When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid. ²⁵ The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."

¹ MacArthur, John, *Ashamed of the Gospel*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993) page xii.

1. David defeated Goliath and removed his head. He had a right to claim the promise of King Saul:
 "And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."
2. David's riches did not materialize. He was forced to hide like a fugitive and vagabond from the face of Saul who continually sought his life.
3. As far as his family being free from taxes, it made little difference since they could not live under Saul for fear of their lives. David had to move them to dwell among the Moabites just to assure their safety.
4. Now, regarding the promise of Saul's daughter, David should have received Merab, Saul's daughter but Saul reneged on the promise and gave her to another. Saul later promised David Michal, but only in order to entrap him.
1 Samuel 18:19-21 NAU - "So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife. ²⁰ Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. ²¹ Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today."
5. When Saul saw that Michal loved David Saul saw it as an opportunity to entrap David so he promised to give her to David in exchange for a dowry that Saul presumed would result in David's death. David fulfilled the demand and Saul was forced to give her to David. Learning of Saul's plan to seize him Michal helped David to escape. It would be the last time David saw his wife. Saul gave her in marriage to Palti.
1 Samuel 25:44 NAU - "Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim."
6. None of these promises made to David were fulfilled. We should note that we have no record of David complaining about his rights being violated. He remained content on the promises of God. Once again, we see David as a type of the One who would come after him.
Isaiah 53:7 NAU - "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth."
 We should strive to imitate this heart of meekness and humility.
6. There are some important considerations here. David sent to Ish-bosheth demanding his wife to which Ish-bosheth agreed.
2 Samuel 3:14-15 NAU - "So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." ¹⁵ Ish-bosheth sent and took her from *her* husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish."
 - a. Ish-bosheth recognized the superiority of David which is why he so readily handed his sister, Michal over to him. But why didn't Ish-bosheth relinquish the throne to David. He surely knew, like Saul, that David was God's anointed. Like Abner, his pride prevented him from submitting to David. He had grown up in the house of a king and he wasn't willing to relinquish it to David.

- b. Why didn't Ish-bosheth and David try to come up with a more humane solution. It had been over 15 years and Paltiel obviously loved Michal deeply and judging Michal's later attitude towards David, she loved Paltiel as well. Our hearts are stirred at the sad picture of Paltiel following in tears as the soldiers led his wife away.
- c. Why is David interested in this after so many years had passed? David had six other wives by this time.
 - 1. There were surely some political advantages. It would strengthen his position by having Saul's daughter as his wife. In addition, after Israel's recent defeat by the Philistines resulting in the death of their king, it surely wouldn't hurt for David to remind them of how he and originally acquired Michal by killing 200 Philistines. This would also help dispel any concerns over David's apparent defection to the Philistines.
 - 2. It isn't likely that David was demanding Michal as an act of vindication upon the house of Saul for robbing him of this wife.
 - 3. We shouldn't discount David's chief motivation. He had never stopped loving Michal. She was his first wife and his first love.
- 7. We have to question whether Paltiel knew Michal was David's wife. It's possible that Saul had manipulated Paltiel into marrying his daughter. Or he may have been complicit in the arrangement. But again, Paltiel and Michal apparently had a good marriage and Paltiel loved his wife deeply. Suddenly, without provocation soldiers came and wrenched his wife from his arms. Abner was not about to allow Paltiel to interfere with the scheme and commands Paltiel to return – most likely upon the threat of death.

2 Samuel 3:16 NAU - "But her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go, return." So he returned."
- 8. The situation makes us think about the marriage/divorce situation that is so common today. Just because the civil government approves a divorce doesn't mean it is approved in God's sight. The new relationship is an adulterous affair. But are we to recommend annulment of the new marriage in order to restore the original? This is what we are witnessing in this passage.
- 9. There is much about this passage that leaves us asking questions, questions that remain unanswered. But there are some implications we can glean from the passage.
- I. The actions of men, good and bad, can have a lasting effect upon future generations.
 - A. Scripture and modern history is filled with examples of excellence that left behind an excellent legacy upon future generations.
 - 1. We have Abraham and Moses and Joshua. We have Ruth and Esther. Hebrews 11 offers testimony to the lives of people whose faith shines forth as an example of confidence before God.
 - 2. David shines forth as an example of a man after God's own heart, who although he was a man plagued with the sins we all battle, he walked with God.
 - 3. We have the NT saints – Paul and Peter, James, and John.
 - 4. We can move to modern times – the church fathers, the reformers, Jonathan Edwards, Spurgeon, missionaries like Judson and Carey. Even more recent, men like R.C. Sproul who recently departed from this life.

5. And add to these names the millions of unknown saints who faithfully walked with God
 - Faithful parents who lived as examples of faith and righteousness
 - Faithful employers, teachers, pastors
- B. Sadly, we also have endless examples of those whose lives brought misery long after they left this earth. The words of our Lord ring loudly:
- Matthew 26:24 NAU** - "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."
1. We've already see the sad effect Saul's life had upon his sons. His sin resulted in their deaths.

1 Samuel 28:18-19 NAU - "As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day. ¹⁹ "Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me."

1 Samuel 31:2 NAU - "The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul."
 2. Now we come to this sad scene with Michal and Paltiel.
 - a. Over 15 years before this Saul tore Michal from David. She loved him and he loved her. Because of Saul's determination to kill David he did not dare return to claim his wife, so David had to face the bitter sorrow. And surely the news that someone else had married her must have only added to his grief.
 - b. Now we come to the marriage of Paltiel and Michal. They loved each other and all by all indication they had a good marriage. This sad scene was of Saul's creation. Saul wrenched Michal from the arms of David. And now it is being repeated with Paltiel. What cruelty Saul had done and what sorrow it left upon the lives of others.
 - c. And we are going to see that the relationship with David and Michael is never the same. Their former love has passed away. And God closed her womb. This was all fruit from Saul's life.
 3. What effect is your life having upon the future, good or bad? Consider the big picture. Consider the kingdom. Sacrifices today can have a huge effect upon the future.
 - What effect is your life having upon this world?
 - What effect is your life having upon your family?
 - What effect is your life having upon the church?

II. Was it the right thing for David to demand the return of Michal?

A. David had the right to reclaim his wife

1. This was not a violation of the Law of God. The Law denied a man the right to divorce his wife and the remarry her after she had been with another man.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 NAU - "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house, ² and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's *wife*, ³ and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, ⁴ *then* her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance."

But this was not the case here. David had not put away his wife. He was reclaiming what was his.

2. The author doesn't give us insight as to Michal's feelings in this, but it would appear she loved her second husband. The scene we'll see later helps to confirm this.

Although the author doesn't mention Michal in this, we cannot dismiss her wickedness in turning her heart to Paltiel.

Calvin – "Michal had another husband who was by no means legitimate. She could by no means excuse herself by saying she had been forced to do it. She should rather have died a hundred thousand times than consent that such shame be done both to her and David, who had been a faithful husband to her. Moreover, she should have recognized that such action would bring contempt on the honor of God, whom she should have held greater esteem than all the husbands in the world."²

3. It would surely seem that some attention should have been given to the effect this decision would have upon the lives and home of this couple and their marriage of 15 years.

The question here is not the legality of David's actions but rather the virtue of giving up his rights for the sake of another.

4. What we find lacking here is any indication that David sought God's mind in this. David's demand seems quick without any attention given to praying about what God would have him to do

B. How are we to know the right thing in such matters?

1. Do we give the greater weight to our own feelings? Are there times when God would have us take the loss and not claim what is rightfully ours.

1 Corinthians 6:7 NAU - "Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?"

² Calvin, John, *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992) pages 266-267.

2. How are we to know the right course of action? We search the Scriptures and pray. David wasn't in violation of the Law. He was within his rights to demand Michal's return. But just because we are within our rights, should we always demand our rights? David disregarded the feelings of Paltiel. We'll see this same disregard in **Chapter 11** when David he robbed Uriah of his wife and then had him killed.
Nathan told David: "he took the poor man's ewe lamb"
David had six wives and would acquire many more.
2 Samuel 5:13 NAU - "Meanwhile David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron; and more sons and daughters were born to David."
Paltiel had but Michal whom he deeply loved.

III. As we consider Paltiel, his past had finally caught up with him

- A. We must not dismiss the sin of Paltiel in having David's wife
 1. We aren't told to what degree Paltiel knew of David's marriage to Michal. It would be difficult to imagine he knew nothing of it. He spent many years in possession of that which did not belong to him.
 2. Paltiel married Michal and built a good marriage, but it was a marriage built upon sin, sin that finally came back to his great grief.
 3. William Blaikie – "Connections formed in sin must sooner or later end in suffering; and the tears of Paltiel would not have flowed now if that unfortunate man had acted firmly and honourably when Michal was taken from David."³
- B. Our past sins will often catch up with us.
 1. If we insist on holding onto our sin we will surely suffer loss and it will result in great sorrow.
 2. You hear of people who commit a crime in their youth (perhaps murder or armed robbery) and then go on to build a life, they get married and have children and grandchildren, and then their past catches up with them. I saw one case where a man shot and killed two police officers when he was 23 year old and he wasn't caught and convicted until 50 years later. He had married, had children and grandchildren.
 3. There is a recent case in the news of a pastor of a mega church who had an inappropriate affair with a high school student 20 years ago. It took 20 years but it finally came home and destroyed his ministry.
 4. We must repent early, lest our sin causes us great sorrow. Even if we manage to keep our sins hidden our whole life we will surely suffer loss and will be consumed with great sorrow.

³ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), page 45.

Conclusion:

1. This is such a sad story. Sad for David who had the wife of his youth taken away and given into the arms of another. We are not told of David's tears 15 years before.
2. But now we witness the terrible grief of another when soldiers arrive unexpectedly and take his wife from him.
3. Sin is always tragic and always results in misery. It always results in misery. It makes the gift of our Father all the more wonderful as He removes the curse of sin.

Revelation 21:3-4 NAU - "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."