

“Counterfeit Reconciliation”
2 Samuel 14:21-33
(Preached at Trinity, September 8, 2019)

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. As we've seen, David's sin with Bathsheba left his house and his kingdom in moral and spiritual emptiness. David now lacked the moral high ground to rule with justice and righteousness.
2. David's actions towards his children were governed more by fatherly affection than by moral integrity. Fatherly affection is good, but it becomes sinful when our affection usurps our affection for God; when God's Law is set aside as the result of our love of our child.
 - A. Too often a parent can have a blind spot for his children, willing to overlook even the most grievous sins.
 - B. William Blaikie says of David: "David's love for Absalom was a fondness that led him to wink at his faults even when they became flagrant, and (he) desired to see him occupying a place of honour and responsibility for which he certainly was far from qualified."¹
3. As we came to **Chapter 14** we read that Joab perceived that David's heart was now "inclined" toward Absalom. In other words, his grief over Amnon's death had become less intense and his outrage towards Absalom had cooled. He was now longing to be reconciled with his son.

Joab sees this in David and devises a plan to bring Absalom out of exile. Don't forget this is largely a family situation. David is Joab's uncle. His mother, Jeruiah is David's sister. Absalom was Joab's cousin. This may explain Joab's familiarity with the King.
4. Joab enlists a wise woman from Tekoa. The woman spins a tale that was sure to tug upon David's heart as a father. David was the king. He was the magistrate, so she comes to him with a fictitious story under the guise of pretending to seek his judgment upon her situation.
5. The lady quickly compared her situation with David's. Since David showed mercy upon the widow's remaining son, should he not be convicted of his need to do the same for his own son? In fact she argued that it was the right thing to do—
 - That it was the rightful course of justice for the people of God
 - That was God's will—the rightful course that God would take.

2 Samuel 14:13-14 NAU - "Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, *in that* the king does not bring back his banished one. ¹⁴ "For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him."

¹ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), pages 214-215.

6. But the widow's story was deceptive. It was vastly different from the situation with Absalom.
David was willing to be persuaded. He wasn't thinking spiritually. His mind was not being instructed by the Word of God.
- a. It was later that David would write:
Psalm 119:103-106 NAU - "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, *sweeter* than honey to my mouth! ¹⁰⁴ From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. ¹⁰⁶ I have sworn and I will confirm it, That I will keep Your righteous ordinances."
 - b. But at this point David was being led more by fatherly feelings than by the Word of God.
7. David allowed Absalom to return after three years in exile. He returned, but there was no reconciliation. He was not allowed to come before his father, the king.
- a. Perhaps David was hoping to see some sign of remorse, some sense of owning to the great crime he had committed.
2 Samuel 14:24 NAU - "However the king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face."
2 Samuel 14:28 NAU - "Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face."
 - B. There was nothing in Absalom that hinted of repentance.
8. Absalom was a hardened sinner. He was proud and arrogant. Perhaps he believed he would return to Jerusalem and find immediate reconciliation with his father. But he did not. There was no access to his father's presence, no reconciliation, no peace. He was still banished from the presence of the king.
9. But Absalom was not content with merely living in Jerusalem. He had higher plans. He had his eye upon the throne. This may have been at least partly on his mind as he removed his chief rival, Amnon.
Absalom could not hope to gain the throne as long as he was alienated from his father.
Verse 29 - So he sent for Joab to demand a presence with the king. But Joab ignored him, and then a second time, and then a third.
Absalom then shows more of his soiled character by burning Joab's field.
10. Joab then arranges for Absalom to come to his father, David. Absalom comes and bows before David with his face to the ground as a sign of honor and respect and David draws near and kisses Absalom. It is a touching reunion and Absalom and David are now reconciled. Or are they? Has anything changed?
He was still a guilty man, a common criminal.
11. Joab believed he could bring about the reconciliation of Absalom and David through his scheming, but it was void of the Law and Gospel.
It was nothing more than a counterfeit reconciliation, for immediately Absalom puts his plan into action to overthrow the king. What was missing in Absalom's reconciliation?

- I. It was void of the demands of the Law's justice
- A. Joab expected reconciliation between Absalom and David without the demands of justice.
1. Absalom's problem was not unlike the problem of all humanity – sin resulting in alienation.
When Adam sinned he was exiled from the Garden. More important, he was exiled from God. With sin came alienation from God.
Isaiah 59:2-3 NAU - "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear. ³ For your hands are defiled with blood And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness."
 2. When Absalom sinned he went into exile because he was justly condemned. His heart was enflamed with the passion of anger and hatred towards Amnon and with premeditated malice he put him to death. He deserved the penalty of death.
- B. There was nothing in this plan of reconciliation that ended in justice
1. Absalom only desired reconciliation so he could further his ambitious plans. There was no remorse, nor any regard for his father.
This is the course of most men. They want heaven without reconciliation. There is no desire for God, only a desire to satisfy themselves.
 2. Then we witness the desire of David to be reconciled with his prodigal son. But his son was a criminal. He had invited a criminal to dwell in peace at Zion.
 3. There was nothing that hinted at the satisfaction of the Law.
 4. We only have a rebellious murdering son seeking the favor of his father without dealing with his sin. He was still guilty and still stood condemned by the Law.
Genesis 9:6 NAU - "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."
Deuteronomy 19:12-13 NAU - "then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. ¹³ "You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you."
- II. It was void of the Gospel way of reconciliation
- A. Absalom's reconciliation was void of the heart renewal demanded by the Gospel
1. Absalom remained a rebellious criminal. He still had murder on his heart. He was unchanged.
Matthew Henry rightly observes: "Three years Absalom had been an exile from his father-in-law, and now two years a prisoner at large in his own house, and, in both, better dealt with than he deserved; yet his spirit was still unhumiliated, his pride unmortified."²

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 460.

2. He was ambitious and self-willed. He saw others as pawns to serve him. Even his own father was expendable.
 3. He didn't come humbled and broken. He came proudly making demands. We can see this his proud, self-absorbed attitude when he didn't get his way with Joab. He set his field on fire and destroyed his crop in a callous disregard of Joab or his possessions – a disregard of the Eighth Commandment.
Absalom had no regard for the Law.
 4. Absalom comes making his demands and setting his terms for reconciliation. This is what fallen men do. They demand that God receive them on their terms.
 - a. Some insist on unconditional reconciliation – that God should just simply receive them and pardon them. Most people fall into this category. They believe they are deserving of heaven.
 - b. Some insist on gaining God's favor based upon their good intentions or their good actions. Many believe it doesn't really matter what religion you follow as long as you are sincere.
 - c. The truth is God sets the terms for reconciliation
- B. Absalom's reconciliation was void of repentance
1. The Gospel demands owning our sin, confessing it and turning away from it in sorrow
 2. Absalom was still impenitent. It has been at least five years since Absalom had killed Amnon.
There was still no remorse, no sorrow that he had murdered his brother. More serious, he felt no sense of the condemnation of the Law of God. He felt no remorse at having turned from God's holy command, from God's way of obedience.
 - a. He makes the audacious claim of innocence:
2 Samuel 14:32 NAU - "Now therefore, let me see the king's face, and if there is iniquity in me, let him put me to death."
 - b. Absalom is actually insinuating that he has been treated unjustly. Fallen men do this daily as they complain of their situation in life. They are insinuating that they are being treated unjustly and are deserving of better.
They are deluded into believing they are worthy of this temporary season of peace wrought by the mercy of God.
They abuse God's forbearance that He has given so that they might have time to repent.
 3. Absalom sought cheap forgiveness.
God's way of forgiveness is through sincere repentance by the sinner. We have none of this with Absalom.
 4. It wasn't a repentant son who returned from exile. It was an unrepentant murderer.
 - a. Compare this to the Parable of the Prodigal Son
Luke 15:18-19 NAU - "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."

- b. Or of David's penitent heart after his adultery with Bathsheba
Psalm 51:2-4 NAU - "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
 And cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my
 transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against
 You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your
 sight, So that You are justified when You speak And
 blameless when You judge."
5. Amazingly, Joab and David submitted to Absalom's demands. But the
 reconciliation that resulted was nothing but a false display that denied the
 demands of the Law and the sweet forgiveness of the Gospel.
- C. Reconciliation and peace with God cannot begin until the problem of sin is
 removed
1. The problem with Absalom is that although he had returned to Jerusalem
 and entered into the presence of the king, his legal status had not changed.
 Nothing had been done about his guilt. Justice had not been served.
 2. The excellence of the Gospel is that God has satisfied the Law's demands
 through His Son. The Gospel satisfies God's justice.
 3. God's anger has been appeased—His wrath and curse removed
 - a. Harmony has been restored.
 - b. The redeemed man is no longer God's enemy
Colossians 1:21-22 NAU - "And although you were formerly
 alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, ²² yet
 He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through
 death, in order to present you before Him holy and
 blameless and beyond reproach--"
- D. Surely, we can compare David's boundless love for Absalom with God's love for
 sinners.
1. David loved Absalom with a father's love willing to overlook the sins of
 his child.
 2. But God's love demands reconciliation which He has fully accomplished
 through Jesus Christ. It demands atonement and satisfaction. None of this
 was fulfilled in the life of Absalom. There was no true reconciliation.
 3. A.W. Pink wrote: "This aged parent, driven from his home, humiliated
 before his subjects, stricken to the very depths of his heart by the
 murderous hatred of the son whom he had forgiven and honored, loving
 this worthless and devil-driven youth with an unchanged devotion, that
 sought to save him from his just and impending doom."³

³ Arthur W. Pink, *The Life of David*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), page 169.

Conclusion:

1. The woman of Tekoa falsely supposed that God would restore without repentance.
2 Samuel 14:14 NAU - "Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him."
 - a. She supposed that God's love would trump His justice and that restoration could come apart from dealing with God's justice.
 - b. Any plan of reconciliation that disregards the Law's demand for justice and the Gospel's plan of dealing with sin will only result in a false reconciliation.
2. The kiss of David implied that Absalom had been restored to the favor of his father. But notice the text doesn't tell us that Absalom came to his father but to the king. There are no tears of a father over the return of his son as in the Parable of the Prodigal son. It was much more sterile and official. There was no confession, no justice, no reconciliation. There was no Gospel grace of forgiveness and peace.
3. To read **Chapter 14** one might conclude, "The wages of sin is prosperity and success." One might presume that given enough time all faults will be forgotten. After all, Absalom murdered his brother and after the passing of 5 years he has received the kiss of favor from the king and is now about to pursue his plans for success.
 - A. But we know the rest of the story. The wages of sin is death. Despite all of the scheming, Joab would thrust the killing blow.
2 Samuel 18:14 NAU - "So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak."
 - B. And the ultimate end is sure – Absalom had to face the ultimate King of kings and will face the ultimate judgment. He will find no reconciliation, only perfect justice.
4. God's only plan for reconciliation is through Jesus Christ who came into the world to rescue exiled sinners by shedding His own blood. He suffered the just penalty that our sin deserves. We are restored to a right relationship with God. Reconciliation is accomplished.
5. The Gospel gives us the good news. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.