

## Disastrous Consequences of Rebellion

### 2 Samuel 20:1-13

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-4-2014

#### Introduction

A few years ago when the Congress and Senate were ramrodding Obamacare through without anyone even having read the bill, the press interviewed Democratic representative Alcee Hastings. And speaking off the cuff for the House Rules Committee, he said,

There ain't no rules here, we're trying to accomplish something. . . .All this talk about rules. . . .When the deal goes down . . . we make 'em up as we go along.

Lovely. And exactly right. What many commentators pointed out at the time was that even though it was supposedly a gaffe and not intended to come out that way, it is true of what happens all the time – the Congress is lawless. But it's not just the Congress. It's the general populace. When we get to chapter 24 we will see that God doesn't let the populace off the hook for the sins of state. People think that is not fair, but God punishes the populace for failing to resist the sins of the state. We are not victims here in America. DC is lawless because America is lawless – including the church. We should not be surprised.

And it's interesting that the advertising industry has picked up on this. They tend to have their finger to the pulse of what is happening in culture. And when you see advertising agencies recommending that companies appeal to the spirit of rebellion, you know it has to be quite pervasive, because they wouldn't do it if it didn't make money.

And I will give you just a tiny sampling of advertisements. Burger King had the slogan, "Sometimes you gotta break the rules." Last year Outback Steakhouse started an ad campaign with the slogan, "No rules. Just right." Don Q Rum states, "Break all the rules." Columbia House Music Club ("We broke the rules"), Red Kamel cigarettes ("This baby don't play by the rules"), or Woolite ("All the rules have changed"), or Neiman Marcus ("No rules here"). In an anti-smoking ad, they appeal to this rebel spirit by saying, "Think. Act. Rebel. Quit smoking." Marie Claire clothing ("Be a rebel."). And you could go on and on.

In Douglas Goodman's book, *Consumer Culture*, he writes about this drift toward advertising toward rebellion. Sometimes it is so obvious that it is hilarious. For example, he pointed out that the clothing manufacturers

© Copyright 2014 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to individuals to download, print, or distribute this sermon on paper or electronically, provided that each reprint bears this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission. All rights reserved.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

tried to highlight rebellion against last year's fashions (p. 54). In one part of his book he said,

Advertisements that promote rebellion, mock authority, and promise a mass-produced non-conformity are now ubiquitous. [That means they are everywhere.] For example, one of the main targets of the counterculture's and feminists' critique of consumer culture was the cosmetics industry, which was taken as the epitome of artificiality and conformity to mass-produced standards of beauty. However, hip consumerism has revamped these commodities as signs of ironic artificiality, defiance, and nonconformity. A case in point, one company, significantly named Urban Decay, offers cosmetics with names like Plague, Demise, Rat, Roach, and Asphyxia.<sup>1</sup>

And I won't go on, but the point is that when advertisers recognize rebellion to be part of the warp and woof of our culture, then it is a subject we cannot just quickly pass over. Instead, we need to be aware of how it works, and we must constantly be on guard against it.

Last week we looked at the first two verses of this chapter, which form an introduction. They are verses that help us to recognize the character of rebellion. It doesn't always appear to be rebellion. Sometimes it masquerades as Patriotism, as it did in this chapter.

**I. How to tell the difference between godly resistance and ungodly rebellion (vv. 1-2) (Last week)**

Let me quickly list the ten telltale signs of rebellion that we examined last week in the first two verses. And I might as well list the eleventh one from the previous chapter as well. We saw that there are danger signals when a movement is fueled more by emotion than it is by substance; when it is spontaneous rather than carefully planned out; when it is led by ungodly people who are compounding the problem with lawless means and lawless methods. Fourth, we saw there is danger when it breaks with a known entity to follow an unknown entity, where you simply have to trust his promises. Too many freedom movements around the world are jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire; they are resisting a rebel with the help of a rebel. Fifth, there is danger when you can't figure out much substance beyond the soundbites; or when the leader presumes to speak for the population rather than speaking for God's law (that's a democracy, not a republic); or when the person wants to lead against leadership and wants to authoritatively resist authority; or when it leverages party loyalty rather than principle; or when it is characterized by envy and desires the redistribution of wealth; or when it appeals to individualism rather than to the covenant (that's always

---

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Goodman, *Consumer Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2004), p. 55.

dangerous); or finally, when it has no transcendent basis for resistance or for loyalty.

But now we get to the consequences of such rebellion. And quite honestly, it is a chapter that is really no fun to read about. It probably made you feel a little bit uncomfortable when I read it. Most sermons skip right over chapter 20 because it's not a feel-good chapter. But that's the point really, isn't it? God deliberately made this chapter to be ugly in order to help us to hate all rebellion and fear the consequences of it. And this passage outlines at least a dozen evil consequences.

## **II. The disastrous consequences of rebellion**

### ***A. Collateral damage – David's family (v. 3)***

The first evil consequence is collateral damage, and in this case, collateral damage to David's family. And it is often the family that gets hurt the most by the debris of culture's explosive rebellions.

Now, since verse 3 is perhaps the most difficult of the verses to understand in this chapter, we will spend quite a bit more time on it. First of all, I want you to keep in mind that the word "concubine" in verse 3 is not a synonym for a mistress. When I was growing up, that's what I assumed that it meant. But it does not. A concubine was a wife, with two differences. She was first of all a wife by contract rather than by covenant. And second, a concubine was a wife who did not have inheritance rights. Other than those two things, she legally had all the other rights of wives. Intimacy with a concubine with any other person than the husband constituted adultery and received the same penalty as adultery with other wives. The procedures for divorce were exactly the same, with the exception that she had limited ability to sue for inheritance. Now, let me hasten to say that it was sinful to have more than one wife (Deuteronomy 17 is quite clear on that), but it was not illegal. And if you were married to a concubine, you owed that wife certain things. That's why this is such a strange verse. As one commentator said, "The information about the ten concubines seems bizarre for contemporary readers."<sup>2</sup> And it does. Why did God include it? And why did David do it? Hopefully my explanation will make sense. But whether or not you buy the interpretation that I will be giving you this morning, I think you will agree that these women were clearly suffering from the collateral damage of the rebellion of many people, including David. Look at verse 3.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p. 605.

**2Sam. 20:3** Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.

There is debate on exactly what is going on here. Brueggemann claims that the Northern tribes were traditionalists who wanted the king to have only one wife, like Saul did, and that this was David's attempt to appease them and try to win them back. I think that is a ridiculous interpretation; it is definitely the weakest of the theories that I have read for a number of reasons. First of all, Saul had both a wife and a concubine. I don't know where they got the idea that he set the standard for the traditional monogamy. Second, getting rid of ten concubines and keeping his other concubines and wives in no way would satisfy monogamists. And thirdly, the rest of this chapter does not show any appeasement policy. There is no appeasement whatsoever in it. So I have checked that theory completely off my list.

A second interpretation that two commentators have given is that this is David's *repentance* for having married more than one wife. They rightly recognize that polygamy was a sin, and they say that David was not trying to appease anybody; he is just repenting before the Lord. I see no evidence whatsoever for that interpretation. The only evidence that Pink gives for this theory is that no concubines of David are mentioned after this chapter. And while that is true, we know from chapter 19:5 that there were other concubines than these ten. Furthermore, there is mention of other wives, and there is also the horrible situation of Abishag, the bed warmer, in 1 Kings 1. No. I don't buy that. I think David was totally blind to the sin of polygamy his whole life. It was one of the culturally respectable sins that people tended to be blind to back then. And besides that, you can't please God by ditching your responsibilities to a wife after having sinfully married her. God says that you are stuck, and you need to minister to her needs. So I don't buy the idea that this was repentance. He doesn't do the same thing for his other wives – only the wives whom his son had had sexual relations with. So that theory does not wash.

Others suggest that David considered them to be defiled by another man, and that he shunned them out of abhorrence; that this was an emotional reaction. They say that he couldn't stand the idea of being with someone whom another man had touched. But that doesn't make sense out of his marriage to Abigail or his marriage to Bathsheba. And it doesn't really fit the theme of the chapter that the author is crafting.

Bergan claims that David is showing special care and consideration for women who had been hurt and abused by his son. And while I think that is true, it still does not explain why he shut them up in seclusion. Why not be around them and minister to them and be friends to them? So while there is an element of truth there, I don't think it *fully* explains the situation.

I think the best explanation goes back to chapter 16. Absalom's actions with these women in chapter 16 were identical to the royalty succession actions that occurred in pagan nations. In pagan nations around Israel, when a new king would take over, he would marry the wives and concubines of the previous king as a sign of inheriting the kingdom. In other words, Ahithophel was not just advocating rape. That would not have symbolically shown anything other than his hatred for his dad. There would be no *legal* claim through rape. In fact, it would have accomplished the opposite – it would have demonstrated to the whole public that he was worthy of the death penalty. They would have turned against him. It would make no sense to do that in such a public way.

Instead, I believe that Ahithophel was advocating that Absalom publically take the concubines as his own – in other words, marry them – and thus the public nuptial tents, since marriage was a public ceremony. And that interpretation perfectly fits Nathan's prophecy in chapter 12 that this future tragedy would parallel David's taking Uriah's wife as *his own wife*. Just as he had done, so would be done to him. So that's the first of several hints that Absalom actually married them as concubines.

And if that is true, then Deuteronomy 24 kicks in. That verse says that when a woman marries a second man, she may not go back to the first husband, or the land will be greatly polluted. Jeremiah 3 says the same thing. That presumes divorce of course, which we are not told had happened, so this is only a theory. But if it is true (and to me it seems the best of all of the theories), it makes sense out of three additional facts that we have in verse 3: it makes sense of 1) why David would believe it be unlawful to go into them, 2) yet (secondly) also feel heartbroken and want to provide for them in some way, but not as a husband, 3) and (thirdly) it would also explain why the text would call them widows. Verse 3 says that they were "living in widowhood." They could only be widows if their husband was dead. Absalom was dead, not David. So it is my belief that David is in the heartbreaking situation of being forbidden by God's law to remarry these women. But he still felt an obligation to them. So this was his best attempt at mending a horribly tragic situation for which there was no good solution. He could not be friends with them because they were not lawfully his wives any

more. But they are so hurt by this turn of events that they need to be cared for.

But whichever theory you take, you can see that David's rebellion with Bathsheba brought harm and heartbreak to his family. Bill Arnold's commentary says,

... the book's very structure invites us to see the troubles in David's family and kingdom as the natural consequences of David's sin committed in chapters 10-12. David's private and personal sins are linked in a cause-and-effect continuum with subsequent sins within his own family, which eventually explode into public rebellion and national tragedy.

... David reaps in this narrative what he has sown in chapters 10-12. That much is clear. But what of Tamar and David's ten concubines? Why must they also suffer the punishment? As we have noted elsewhere, we should avoid confusing what are the natural consequences of sin with actual punishment for sin... The Old Testament honestly faces the sad fact that others suffer when we sin.<sup>3</sup>

And I think that last sentence is at the heart of why God included this verse. "The Old Testament honestly faces the sad fact that others suffer when we sin." This would not have happened if David had not committed the sin of polygamy in the first place. It would not have happened if he had not committed adultery. It may not have happened if he had not covered his sin by killing Uriah. And there were subsequent failures on the part of David's raising of his children, coddling of Absalom, etc., that eventually led to Absalom's rebellion. When rebellion is not immediately repented of, seeds are being planted plans they are being watered, and though the harvest is in another season, the spiritual laws of harvest say that you will always reap what you sow and that the harvest will always be greater than what you have sowed. David ruined one woman's life; Absalom ruined ten women's lives. It was a much greater harvest of pain. God includes this very ugly chapter to motivate us to hate rebellion, to recognize the laws of harvest, to not plant the seeds of rebellion in the first place, and if that is too late (because we have already done so) to repent and pluck up those plants while they are still young.

So point A should really be two points: there are laws of harvest that will eventually catch up with us when we rebel, and second, the family often gets the bad end of the stick when there is rebellion. That's even true of state rebellion. You can probably think of dozens and dozens of ways in which the family has been eroded by the state's lawless rebellion against God. Health and Human Services has just put out a manual that is filled with

---

<sup>3</sup> Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 608-609.

proposed regulations that would undermine the family and enable them to take children away from the family. And if we want to preserve the family into the next generation, we must do everything we can to oppose the rebellion of our culture against God's Law Word.

***B. Siding with the lesser of two evils – rebel Amasa is rewarded with leadership (v. 4)***

But let's look at eleven other ugly things that rebellion had produced in this chapter. Verse 4 says,

**2Sam. 20:4** And the king said to Amasa, "Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself."

Here's the question: why on earth would David turn the army over Amasa? Amasa had proved himself to be a rebel. He was dangerous. He had tried to take David's life. And just to see how dangerous Amasa was, he had been the general under Absalom over the armies of both the south *and* the north. It would have been so easy for Amasa to strike a deal with the northern tribes. Why would David trust a rebel with so much power?

Well, it's not that David trusted him. It's that David felt more fear of Joab than he did of Amasa. It's sort of like the Republican establishment getting rid of their grassroots Tea Party support. Without the grassroots, they are finished, and so it may seem odd to us that they willingly alienate them. But they feel threatened by the grass roots, and so they support RINOs who will even further alienate the Tea Party people.

Do you remember Joab's threat? Look at chapter 19:5-7.

**2Sam. 19:5** Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, "Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines,

**2Sam. 19:6** in that you love your enemies and hate your friends. For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well.

**2Sam. 19:7** Now therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now."

He was basically threatening his own rebellion. And of course, Joab had been a rebel for quite some time, ignoring David's commands, working behind his back, and doing what he thought best for the party. And he felt done-in that David didn't appreciate his loyalty. And he was loyal in a sense.

You can say that much for Joab, though he was about ready to bail on David after having been underappreciated for so long. Earlier, when David had tried to get rid of Joab, he couldn't. Joab was too strong for him. But David succeeded (or at least he thought he had) in chapter 19. Look at the message he sent to Amasa in chapter 19:13.

**2Sam. 19:13** And say to Amasa, “*Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you are not commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.*”

He has basically fired Joab, even though Joab had proved to be far more loyal. If it wasn't for Joab, David would have been finished long before. But David couldn't control Joab, and he preferred a new rebel to a rebel he couldn't control. And it really is crazy when you think about it. But when rebellion against God's law begins to grow you see these kinds of anomalies happening: rewarding rebels with leadership, siding with the lesser of two evils; making a covenant with those on the other side of the isle. It's nuts! But it is part and parcel of the pragmatic approach necessitated by the kind of lawless rebellion that was described last week. As long as there is rebellion against God's law in DC, don't expect much better policies.

### ***C. Cynicism and Demotivation – passive resistance (v. 5)***

A third thing that you see is demotivation and passive resistance. Verse 5.

**2Sam. 20:5** So Amasa went to assemble *the men of Judah*. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him.

What caused his delay? There are two theories. As Kenneth Chafin words it, “It isn't known whether Amasa was not able to enlist the men needed in the time allotted or whether he may have been trying on his own to take advantage of the situation to continue Absalom's revolt.”<sup>4</sup> So, some think it was either active or passive resistance<sup>5</sup> on the part of Amasa, while others think that it was passive resistance on the part of the population, who were not too eager to go to war again.

And you can understand why both theories would make sense. Think of it in terms of modern politics. The establishment Republicans want to have their cake and eat it too: they like the money and the new members that Ron Paul and the Tea Party have brought in, but they don't want them in

---

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Chafin, *1,2 Samuel* (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1989), p. 369.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, speaks of a passive resistance that “...reflects a failure to obey, probably reflecting a deep policy disagreement.” *Interpretation: Samuel* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), p. 330.



power because they can't control them. They are too much like Joab. So where do they go? They support traitors like Amasa who have never shown any loyalty – the kind of people whom the Tea Party newbies are absolutely disgusted by. And this leaves the proverbial Amasa, Joab, and the general population frustrated and demotivated. With the things that Boehner and the other RINOs are for, it's pretty hard to get the general populace excited about going to battle. Two of the consequences that happen after a rebellion has produced new rebellions is cynicism and demotivation. When there are no transcendent principles that are bigger than us to give us vision and energy, there is nothing people are willing to die for. In fact, they feel like bailing.

***D. Expediency – being forced to trust rebels to deal with rebels (v. 6)***

Verse 6 speaks of expediency as another disastrous consequence.

**2Sam. 20:6** And David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he find for himself fortified cities, and escape us.”

David is beginning to panic that Amasa may be turning out to be a traitor, and he tries to get Abishai (Joab's brother) to work for him. He can't really ask Joab anything because Joab was fired and he is no longer on good terms with David. Joab knows that David doesn't like him and has tried to get rid of him on several occasions. So David asks Joab's brother to lead. David is being forced to trust a rebel (Abishai) to deal with a rebel (Amasa) who is supposed to have dealt with a rebel (Sheba). What a mess. Expediency takes the day, rather than principle. And don't feel sorry for David. He has created some of this mess, and God had guaranteed that exactly this kind of thing would happen as part of the prophesied laws of harvest in chapter 12.

***E. Mixed coalitions – rebel Abishai is more loyal to rebel Joab (v. 7)***

In point E we see the re-formation of coalitions within the party. Aggravating as it may be, it is going to end up being Joab who is running the show once again. Even though David has given the assignment to Abishai, notice who leads – it's Joab:

**2Sam. 20:7** So Joab's men, with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, went out after him. And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

Joab knows how to get a job done, and David needs him. But we are going to see that even though Joab has an intense loyalty to the

“Republican” *party* (so to speak), he plays dirty in order to win. Why? He’s a rebel at heart. And we’ve already seen in the past that Abishai is too. Abishai knows which side of *his* bread is going to get buttered, and he stays loyal to Joab, the real power behind the scenes. So David is really stuck. When rebellion is pervasive, it is hard to know whom to trust. You end up with compromise, mixed coalitions, and pragmatism.

***F. Pretended loyalty – both Amasa and Joab have some pretense (vv. 8-9)***

Notice next the pretended loyalty of both Amasa and Joab to each other in verses 8-9. The text says,

**2Sam. 20:8** When they *were* at the large stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa came before them. Now Joab was dressed in battle armor; on it was a belt *with* a sword fastened in its sheath at his hips; and as he was going forward, it fell out.

**2Sam. 20:9** Then Joab said to Amasa, “*Are* you in health, my brother?” And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.

Joab is pretending to hold no grudge against Amasa (even though Amasa took his job). He let’s his main sword fall to the ground to give Amasa a sense of no danger (while presumably hiding another one somewhere),<sup>6</sup> greets him like a friend, kisses him like a friend, holds his beard with his right hand, which would be a sign of non-aggression – no weapon in his right hand. But it is all pretense. It’s all a game. And Amasa himself is willing to be kissed. Pretense. Pretended loyalty. It’s the stuff of which nauseating politics is made even today.

But we saw last week that since rebellion is lawless, you will never know if loyalty is true loyalty or whether it is fear of retaliation, greed, or something else that motivates people to be friendly. In France, even the dedicated leaders like Robespierre ended up being executed. There can be no trust when rebellion is at the heart of resistance. Which just reinforces once again why we need to put off all ten principles of rebellion that we looked at last week.

***G. Treachery – rebels are motivated to get rid of the competition (v. 10)***

Verse 10 shows the actual act of treachery. Friendship with the right hand and a stab in the stomach with the left hand.

**2Sam. 20:10** But Amasa did not notice the sword that *was* in Joab’s hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and

---

<sup>6</sup> This is the view of Tatum, *The Preacher’s Commentary*, p. 191 as well as Coffman, *Commentaries on the Bible*.

he did not *strike* him again. Thus he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

When you use the lawful approach to resistance that David had advocated most of his life, people who disagree can still trust each and work with each other. But during times of rebellion against God's law there is constant jockeying for position. Rebels are motivated to get rid of the competition. *They* can't trust because they themselves are not trustworthy. Anything that is even remotely a threat will be eliminated. And we are seeing this played out in both the Republican and Democratic parties. They are cannibalizing each other, all the while smiling smiles of friendship. And both parties are passing policies destructive of the church and family.

You might be skeptical that Christians could ever be persecuted and killed in America. But if you think that way, you are thinking in terms of the old Christian law order where there could be mutual respect even when there is disagreement. We still have the remnants of that. But the further away from Biblical thinking that our nation drifts, the more our nation will look like other rebellious pagan nations. There is no room for dissent in China. There is no room for dissent in a Muslim country. Even in an enlightened country like Germany, there is no room for dissent or competition in the free market of ideas, as can be witnessed by the persecution of homeschoolers there. If the Lord does not turn our rebellious nation around, it is just a matter of time before those in power try to get rid of us if we have any push back. It's just the way rebellion works. It's one of the inevitable consequences.

#### ***H. Redefining loyalty (v. 11)***

In verse 11 we see a redefining of loyalty. Keep in mind the last characteristic of rebellion from last week's sermon. Since rebellion substitutes something *finite* as a ground for loyalty rather than something transcendent, the very concept of loyalty becomes perverted and idolatrous. It just becomes party principle. Rebels tend to emphasize what they are *against* because what they are *for* is not very energizing; it doesn't stir people's hearts. But since the principle of loyalty is still so important to the human heart, being against something is not enough, and people feel compelled to call for loyalty, even if it sounds hollow. Usually it is a call to loyalty to the party. But compared to what our founding fathers pledged their fortunes and lives to, these modern calls for loyalty seem a bit lame. Verse 11:

**2Sam. 20:11** Meanwhile one of Joab’s men stood near Amasa, and said, “Whoever favors Joab and whoever *is* for David—follow Joab!”

This is astounding! The whole group has just witnessed Joab’s treachery, deceit, and cold-blooded murder, and yet this man still has the audacity to ask everyone to be loyal to Joab. And notice that Joab’s name comes first. I think that is significant because Joab has now become the real power behind the scenes. David is thrown in there as an afterthought.

But it is so sickening to witness what Joab has just done, that this call to loyalty seems hollow. And he has the audacity to stand beside Amasa’s writhing body and call for loyalty. This guy is one audacious fellow! But we have modern politicians who do the same thing. After a candidate has proved that he is not prolife, and after it is clear that his votes will leave the blood of murdered babies on his hands, the Republican party calls us to forget differences and say, “If you are for the Republican party you will vote the party line.” Uh, uh – not me. That’s about as sickening to me as it would be if the RNC was standing beside Amasa still wallowing in his blood, and asking me to get excited about Joab.

These are the kinds of horrible consequences that happen when Christians refuse to bring God’s Law Word into politics. We embrace the law or we embrace rebellion. Those are the only two options that Psalm 2 holds out to civil governments: kiss the Son of God in total submission to His laws or be counted as a rebel and perish. That’s New Covenant; Psalm 2 is quoted by the New Testament as applying to our time. So if you want a guarantee of the disaster we are facing as a nation, read Psalm 2. It guarantees that if our nation does not once again embrace God’s law, we will be smashed. But in any case, keep this principle in mind – when rebellion flourishes in a culture, loyalty becomes perverted; it becomes idolatrous.

### ***I. Dehumanization (v. 12)***

And when politics becomes so dehumanized and so devoid of principle that you can have a man like that, even unbelievers have a hard time getting motivated. They are stunned by the hypocrisy and the evil.  
Verse 12:

**2Sam. 20:12** But Amasa wallowed in *his* blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still [and they stood still because even those hardened soldiers were stunned by the callousness of it – but oddly, the man is puzzled. He must have been one hardened dude. Anyway, it says that when he saw that they all stood still], he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted.

Let's take the first and the last part of that verse. Rebellion can lead people to do things so horrible that even the general populace is stunned and horrified. The people couldn't move on. They were sickened. They stopped in their tracks. The 1973 Roe v Wade abortion ruling in the Supreme Court had that impact. America was stunned at the level of rebellion that the courts had engaged in. We can actually kill babies and still have people standing by their corpses and say, "We need to be loyal to the American dream"!!? It was horrifying at that time. And I knew even pagans who were against that ruling. But they didn't do much. They just stood still with sickened stomachs not knowing what to do. They were just like these soldiers. But it did take the wind out of their sails.

### ***J. Whitewashing the horrifying aspects of rebellion (vv. 12-13)***

But what happened next? The media whitewashed it, removed the ugliness of it from the public eyes, and tried to keep people from seeing the gut wrenching nature of abortion. And then most of the population was able to move on. And that's what happened here. The soldiers were able to move on once the most offensive and visible aspects of what had happened were put out of sight. Let's read verses 12-13.

**2Sam. 20:12** But Amasa wallowed in *his* blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted.

**2Sam. 20:13** When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

It's hard for people to embrace the implications of rebellion when they first appear in all their ugliness. It stops them in their tracks. But when a white sheet is drawn over the ugliness of rebellion, people eventually move on and don't resist it. The gut-wrenching ugliness of the 60's sexual revolution was sanitized with peace symbols, flowers, and music. The gut-wrenching ugliness of abortion in the 70's was sanitized with redefinitions of terms and speeches of compassion to women and pointing to the ugliness of rape and incest. And eventually the public moved on. The gut-wrenching ugliness of homosexual behavior in the 80s was sanitized as love, sensitivity, justice, and equal rights. Now we are seeing people trying to sanitize pedophilia, bestiality, polygamy, and other things. We even had the Democrats refusing to allow an amendment to sexual orientation that would keep pedophilia criminalized. They refused to allow that amendment. And you and I stand by this horrible ugliness with our stomachs churning, and we

wonder how Joab and his men can do this? But the media helps them. They cast a sheet over even the ugliness of that and move on. It's just how rebellion works. The ugliness is covered until people are desensitized to it, and eventually even the ugliness itself is embraced.

The head of Pure Life Ministries once shared how initially he was very offended with hard-core pornography and homosexuality, but as he got accustomed to Playboy and Penthouse he started branching out into other materials and actions until things that would have previously horrified and sickened him eventually became attractive to him. Like Joab, he had come to the place where he could do the ugly thing himself and not be bothered in the least. That's just the way rebellion works. If it is not repented of, it becomes easier and easier to become more and more rebellious. God has crafted this ugly chapter to shake us out of our lethargy and make us cast off all rebellion and to submit our hearts unreservedly to God. And if our nation does not repent, Psalm 2 is guaranteed to take place. It is a prophesy of our times, and it says,

Psa. 2:10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

Psa. 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

Psa. 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish *in* the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

And how do we put our trust in Him in the civil realm? Verses 1-2 of that Psalm tell us – by not being ashamed of Jesus in the public sphere, by advancing his laws in culture, and by being bound by Sola Scriptura in the civil realm. Our nation has cast off the bonds of Sola Scriptura, and Psalm 1 identifies it as a rebel nation fit to be smashed to pieces by Christ's rod of iron. Nothing but grace can avert it. Pray! Pray! Brethren, pray!

### ***K. Rebellion spreading (v. 14)***

Point K. Verse 14 indicates that when rebellion is not dealt with, it spreads to others.

2Sam. 20:14 And he [that is, Sheba] went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel and Beth Maachah and all the Berites. So they were gathered together and also went after *Sheba*.

Abel was about as far north as you could get in Israel. Sheba was retreating from David, but in the process trying to raise an army of rebels. So the rebellion was spreading to others. Commentators point out that it didn't spread as far as he had hoped. But it did spread.

And rebellion always spreads when it is not dealt with. Within a family, it spreads to the other family members. Within a church, it can spread to and poison many. Within a nation, you have witnessed the way the homosexual movement – which is the ultimate in rebellion – has spread to virtually every nook and cranny of our nation. It was a tiny, tiny minority that advocated homosexuality, but by not being resisted, it eventually came to be embraced and celebrated in America. It has influenced corporate America, the courts, the political parties, the schools. It's supporters are now everywhere. But it spread because Christianity itself has become a rebel against God's laws and did not have the will to resist. In fact, the church itself is being infected with these ideas.

### ***L. Destruction – an entire city endangered by rebellion (v. 15)***

Verse 15 shows one last consequence. Because this city did not deal with rebel Sheba in an appropriate fashion, the whole city (including the men, women, and children) were in danger of being destroyed.

**2Sam. 20:15** Then they [that is, Joab and his men] came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart. And all the people who *were* with Joab battered the wall to throw it down.

There are many other examples in Scripture and outside of Scripture that show the nasty and destructive consequences of rebellion – yet also the blindness of the people who rush into it. Some people actually know the consequences, and they don't care. They are so committed to rebellion that they will rebel even if it means that they will ruin their lives. Others suffer simply because they were too passive. I would dare say that most people in that city didn't ask Sheba and his army to stay. But neither did they complain about it or resist it. And because of their passivity, they suffered the consequences of the city's stupidity, just as we suffer from the stupidity of the nation, our state, and of our city. When we are a passive people, in a sense we deserve it.

## **Conclusion**

Last week we outlined rebellion in the courts, in the executive office, in the Congress. We saw rebellion in the church and in the family. Rebellion has become so ingrained in American culture that it is hard to row against the current.

And what is weird is that these various forms of rebellion masquerade themselves as freedom, liberty, initiative, rights, and being authentic. For example, feminism very rightly pointed to institutional evil that had hurt

women, and their goal was to free women. What they may not have realized was that their rebellious methods have absolutely destroyed the family in America. Actually, some of the radical feminist leaders did realize it and had as their written goal to destroy the family. They were at least self-conscious. But chauvinism can be just as rebellious against God's law order and just as destructive. We are not talking about siding with one part of creation against another part of creation. We are talking about radical submission to God when we resist institutional evil. Ultimately, all rebellion can be boiled down to sin. James I. McCord said,

Sin arises out of mistrust. Man is afraid to trust the divine destiny and to accept his limits. The rebellion that follows is a decisive act of repudiation, a trusting of self over against God.<sup>7</sup>

Which means, that if we are to successfully avoid rebellion, we must walk by faith. It will take faith to do things God's way when there is institutional evil in the family. We want to rebel because that is the easy way, but God calls us to live by faith. It will take faith to do things God's way when there is institutional evil in the church. And it will take faith to do things God's way when there is institutional evil in our culture. But we can obey Psalm 2 and kiss the Son and submit to Him long before longest institutions do. That's where it starts. It starts with you in me in submission to God's word. May it be so Lord Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cited by Bob Kelly in, *Worth Repeating* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), p. 314.



## **Disastrous Consequences of Rebellion**

### **2 Samuel 20:1-13**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-4-2014

#### Introduction

- I. How to tell the difference between godly resistance and ungodly rebellion (vv. 1-2) (Last week)
- II. The disastrous consequences of rebellion
  - A. Collateral damage – David’s family (v. 3)
  - B. Siding with the lesser of two evils – rebel Amasa is rewarded with leadership (v. 4)
  - C. Cynicism and Demotivation – passive resistance (v. 5)
  - D. Expediency – being forced to trust rebels to deal with rebels (v. 6)
  - E. Mixed coalitions – rebel Abishai is more loyal to rebel Joab (v. 7)
  - F. Pretended loyalty – both Amasa and Joab have some pretense (vv. 8-9)
  - G. Treachery – rebels are motivated to get rid of the competition (v. 10)
  - H. Redefining loyalty (v. 11)
  - I. Dehumanization (v. 12)
  - J. Whitewashing the horrifying aspects of rebellion (vv. 12-13)
  - K. Rebellion spreading (v. 14)
  - L. Destruction – an entire city endangered by rebellion (v. 15)

#### Conclusion

(Next week – a wise woman’s amazing role in averting more disastrous consequences.)