

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Trials³”

Second Samuel 16:1-14

Introduction

Our text will tell of two events along the path of David’s flight from his rebellious son. They were two trials on top of, and in the midst of, his already painful suffering.

Sometimes we misrepresent the Christian life when it comes to trials. We tend to explain them as if they occasionally dot the path you are walking. You’re going along fine; then a trial comes along; you learn its lesson only to return to a smooth path until the next trial.

Like David, you can have trials on top of, and in the midst of, other trials. Your whole life might be one long trial, with many other trials along the way.

Pam has MS. She receives literature from the MS Society about living with MS. In a recent issue, they made a point that, just because you already have MS, it doesn’t mean you can’t get other diseases – like cancer!

How do you handle trials on top of, and in the midst of, trials? We’ll learn two things from David: #1 Put Your Further Trials Into Probability, and #2 Put Your Further Trials Into Perspective.

#1 Put Your Further Trials Into Probability (v1-4)

After Bathsheba’s child was born to David, Nathan the prophet related to David a story of how a rich farmer who owned thousands of sheep stole a little pet ewe lamb from a poor farmer – his only one – and butchered it.

David, thinking he was being asked to judge an actual case, vowed that the cruel rich man would be made to pay back four-fold for his sin.

Nathan then boldly pointed out that the story was a parable of David's own sin of taking Bathsheba from her husband, Uriah, and having him murdered. **David was the cruel man!**

David confessed; repented; and was forgiven. But he was required to pay back four-fold for his sin:

1. First – Seven days after his confession, the child born died.
2. Second – David's son, Amnon, lusted after and eventually raped his own half-sister, Tamar. It was what David had essentially done to Bathsheba.
3. Third – Absalom, the full brother of Tamar, began plotting the murder of Amnon and killed him two years later. This is essentially what David had done to Uriah, Bathsheba's husband.
4. Fourth – After a series of events, Absalom plotted a revolt against his father, forcing David to flee Jerusalem

We are in that portion of Second Samuel that describes David's failed relationship with Absalom; and with Absalom's rebellion and attempt to take-over the kingdom. At first, David was forced to flee.

Fleeing, he encountered Ziba:

2 Samuel 16:1 When David was a little past the top of the mountain, there was Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine.

You remember Mephiboseth? He was the crippled descendant of Saul's to whom David should unmerited favor. Rather than killing him as a potential heir to the throne, David saw to his welfare. Mephiboseth sat and dined at David's table everyday. Ziba was one of the servants David had assigned to serve Mephiboseth. This was going to be good news – or so David might have thought.

2 Samuel 16:2 And the king said to Ziba, "What do you mean to do with these?" So Ziba said, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who are faint in the wilderness to drink."

Wonderful! Help from Mephiboseth had arrived – or so David might have thought.

2 Samuel 16:3 Then the king said, “And where *is* your master’s son?” And Ziba said to the king, “Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.’”

That hurt! It was like being knifed in the back. Ziba reported that Mephiboseth was going to make his own power-play for the throne, as the rightful heir of Saul. After all that David had done for Mephiboseth, it seemed so cruel.

And it was... Or at least it would have been, *had it been true!* Ziba was lying to David. You will learn later on that Ziba left Mephiboseth behind to make it look like his master no longer supported David.

Hear all sides of a matter before you receive anything as factual. David was mistaken. So will you be unless or until you hear everything you need to hear.

2 Samuel 16:4 So the king said to Ziba, “Here, all that *belongs* to Mephiboseth *is* yours.” And Ziba said, “I humbly bow before you, *that* I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!”

David acted on the information he had at the time and rewarded Ziba’s supposed loyalty as opposed to Mephiboseth’s reported treason.

Probability is the word that summarizes what we learn here about further trials. By that I mean two things:

1. Number One – You should know that there is a very likely probability that you will have further trials; trials on top of trials; trials in the midst of your trials. It will help you from becoming overwhelmed and thinking that you just can’t take any more.
2. Number Two – There is a very high probability that further trials can be disguised as blessings. Ziba’s arrival, with supplies, was timely and seemingly helpful. It was a ruse; a deception.

You have an enemy who hates you and will do anything to destroy you. The devil doesn’t follow any rules of engagement – except the

boundaries God sets. He will hit below the belt; he will kick you while you're down; he will sucker-punch you; he will stab you in the back.

If you get discouraged at any time during this study... Go immediately to verse fourteen and memorize it! Hope is at the end of these things – even in the midst of them.

#2 Put Your Further Trials Into Perspective (v5-14)

David next encountered Shimei:

2 Samuel 16:5 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came.

2 Samuel 16:6 And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

2 Samuel 16:7 Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue!

2 Samuel 16:8 The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!"

Think of Shimei as a heckler. And give him credit for his courage! David was surrounded by his mighty men – who did want to act:

2 Samuel 16:9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!"

This was before the First Amendment and free speech! Abishai's response seemed reasonable.

2 Samuel 16:10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

David had a much different perspective on Shimei's verbal abuse. He understood that the Lord was allowing it to happen.

Your trials... Your further trials... Even though it is hard to understand – the Lord allows them to happen. If you can hold to this perspective, it puts everything else into proper perspective.

Listen how reasonable David is as he explains to his men why they should not kill Shimei.

2 Samuel 16:11 And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now *may this* Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him.

First of all, David’s problems with Shimei were nothing compared to his own son’s rebellion against him.

Sometimes you need to put trials into a much larger and more realistic perspective. I know something small can be a big concern to someone; but at some point you need to be real.

It’s like a child overreacting to a slight injury. It’s not a good idea to baby them; or to spoil them.

2 Samuel 16:12 It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day.”

A second perspective is that, since God is allowing the further trial or trials, He is using it for His glory and your good.

David expected something good to come out of his trials. So should we. The ‘good’ is often spiritual in nature. It is our drawing closer to God. It’s not the end of the trial, but our enduring it with His grace.

2 Samuel 16:13 And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust.

Third – Look how David’s response put Shimei into perspective:

1. Shimei was wrong because David actually treated Saul and his family with great love and graciousness.
2. Shimei was wrong because David was not a bloodthirsty man. It is true that he was a man of war, but not a bloodthirsty man.

3. Shimei was wrong because David did not bring Saul and his family to ruin - Saul himself brought the family to ruin.
4. Shimei was *right* that the LORD had brought this upon David, but not for any of the reasons Shimei thought.

Perspective may not be everything – but it’s a lot when dealing with further trials. Your perspective will keep your head above water when the enemy comes in like a flood.

Conclusion

This portion of Scripture ends on a comforting note:

2 Samuel 16:14 Now the king and all the people who *were* with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there.

David was not without hope or comfort. God allowed comfort to find him, even if it was in the small things. David was able to *receive* the comfort because he was at peace, knowing God was in control of Israel.

G. Campbell Morgan wrote, “This is a radiant illustration of the deep and inward peace given to any man who is living in fellowship with God in motive and desire.”

- being changed to bring change -