



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 10:1-19

Topic

King David's ambassadors are humiliated when the Ammonites (quote) "shave-off half of their beards... and cut-off their garments at their buttocks"

Title

"Be Shaved & Buttocks"

Introduction

Operation Auca was an attempt by five Christian missionaries from the United States to bring the gospel to the Huaorani people of the rainforest of Ecuador. The Huaorani, also known by the pejorative Aucas (a modification of *awqa*, the word for "enemies"), were an isolated tribe known for their violence, against both their own people and outsiders who entered their territory. With the intention of being the first Christians to evangelize the previously uncontacted Huaorani, the missionaries began making regular flights over Huaorani settlements in September 1955, dropping gifts. After several months of exchanging gifts, on January 3, 1956, the missionaries established a camp at "Palm Beach," a sandbar along the Curaray River a few kilometers from Huaorani settlements.

Their efforts came to an end on January 8, 1956, when all five - Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian - were attacked and speared by a group of Huaorani warriors.

Among Christians the men are considered martyrs. Among nonchristian anthropologists their initial contact is criticized as having opened a door to the Gospel which led to the eventual deterioration of the native culture of the Huaorani.

Their story is an extreme example of the kind of spiritual tension that Christians face everyday. We are tasked by Jesus with bringing the Gospel to the whole world. While for some that means people like the Huaorani, for most of us it means our family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. We will definitely meet with opposition. We probably won't be martyred and the end of a spear but often we are treated poorly, even shamefully, and humiliated.

Nevertheless we press on as ambassadors for the Lord knowing that one day the opportunity for the nonbelievers we encounter to be saved for eternity will come to an end. Jesus will return and all those who have rejected Him will be consigned to eternal punishment.

When He does return, we will have already been resurrected or raptured and will return with Him. No longer ambassadors, we are described in the Book of the Revelation in that return as being "the armies of Heaven" (19:14).

Our text in Second Samuel also features ambassadors and armies! It can illustrate for us what it means to be ambassadors who anticipate returning as the armies.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 As An Ambassador You Need The Courage To Be Humiliated, and #2 As An Army You Need The Patience To Be Vindicated.

#1 As An Ambassador You Need
The Courage To Be Humiliated
(v1-5)

Let's get some perspective on humiliation. We don't mean that we act in weird ways to bring shame upon ourselves. It doesn't mean we have to dress funny, or live in poverty. It's not something we go out of our way to bring upon ourselves.

Christian humiliation means you are willing to endure whatever consequences might befall you as an ambassador tasked with sharing with others, especially nonbelievers, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It requires courage, spiritual courage. The five men martyred by the Huaorani tribe were humiliated. Do you think of them as weak? As being shamed? No; they were Christian heroes of faith.

Let's take a look at the ambassadors in our text.

2 Samuel 10:1 It happened after this that the king of the people of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place.

2 Samuel 10:2 Then David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me." So David sent by the hand of his servants to comfort him concerning his father. And David's servants came into the land of the people of Ammon.

In the preceding chapter we talked a great deal about David desiring to show the kindness of God. His actions spoke of God seeking to show kindness to every member of the human race by extending His grace and mercy to save them.

The emphasis in this chapter is on David's servants acting as his ambassadors extending his kindness. In them we see ourselves as the ambassadors of David's greater Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, Who has sent us out with the Good News.

What is that Good News? It is that God has made a way for lost mankind to be saved. Born dead in our sins, we are born-again when we believe in Jesus Christ, in His dying on the Cross as our sacrifice and substitute.

Going to the Ammonites was no easy mission. The king of Ammon who had died, Nahash, had been a cruel enemy to Israel. Probably when David was a fugitive hiding from Saul, Nahash had aided him in some way in order to oppose Saul. There was no solid evidence, however, that Nahash's son, Hanun, would want to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

It was an *Operation Auca!* The ambassadors were sent directly in to enemy territory with nothing but their testimony about David's intentions.

2 Samuel 10:3 And the princes of the people of Ammon said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you? Has David not rather sent his servants to you to search the city, to spy it out, and to overthrow it?"

Hanun was hurting. His dad had died. When someone around you is hurting you feel it is a good time to show God's love. Often God uses you to comfort others with the comfort you've received from Him. But sometimes your talk about God and His love is resented. God is blamed for the loss, for the tragedy, for the suffering.

The Ammonites were paranoid that their city walls would be breached. They didn't want anyone to upset their lifestyle - especially the religious Israelites. Just so, people in the world act to defend their lifestyles. They have some idea - usually incorrect - that accepting Jesus into their lives will ruin all their fun and future hopes. They're a little paranoid of the Gospel.

2 Samuel 10:4 Therefore Hanun took David's servants, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away.

Regarding beards in the Old Testament one author states the following:

The Bible tells us that a man should have a full, untrimmed beard, while trimming the hair on the head to an acceptable length. Much of this centers on the verse in Leviticus 19:27 which should be translated: 'You must not shave or cut the corners of the hairs of your head and you are not to trim [mar or clip off] the edge (corners) of your beard.'

It's interesting to note that not a few modern movements among Christians which want to put you under various strict Old Testament rules for living nevertheless simultaneously teach that facial hair on men is unacceptable. It shows you that those who claim you must live according to the Law pick and choose which parts of the Law suit their own preferences.

Wear your hair and beard however you like. It's cultural, not biblical. Only be careful that your habits don't offend and stumble other believers, or detract from your ability to share about Jesus.

As far as the cutting of their garments to mid-buttocks, most likely they cut the outer robe leaving their undergarments intact. Still this was like walking around with your underwear exposed. Who does that!

I guess we can credit the Ammonites, then, for starting the current trend of men and women purposely exposing their underwear!

2 Samuel 10:5 When they told David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return."

We need to regroup from time-to-time. I like to think of our meetings here at the church as times to regroup as we come together from our various humiliations to receive encouragement from the Lord. One thing I would mention, though, is that it's easy for us to *only* want to get together and literally 're-group,' hanging-out only with our group. Let's stay outreach-oriented in our thinking and planning.

David's ambassadors had the courage to go out among the enemy, in enemy territory, and offer the kindness of their king. They were willing to die making the offer. They did not die but were greatly humiliated.

Am I saying we need to be willing to die? As an end result, Yes. By the way: A lot of people are willing to die in place of others, are they not? All of our emergency services folks, and our military, put themselves in harms way for others, for strangers. Why shouldn't we be willing to do the same for a much greater cause?

But here's the key. What we need to do is simply die to self and live for the Lord. As we look to Jesus, to His example of humiliation, we are in awe. He left Heaven, came to earth as a man, humbling Himself. Then, as God the Father's ambassador, He died on the Cross - bearing its shame in order that you and I might be saved.

That's not the end of the story! God highly exalted Him for His work. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

If we look to Jesus as our example, dying to ourselves to serve Him, then we will be supplied with the courage to be humiliated. The rest is up to the Lord in terms of who we encounter and how they might react to humiliate us.

#2 As An Army You Need
The Patience To Be Vindicated
(v6-19)

Christians are frequently compared to soldiers in the New Testament. The emphasis in our text is on one particular and vital aspect of being in the army of the Lord. **We need the patience to stand our ground, being humiliated when necessary, knowing that one day our King will return to vindicate us and make everything right.**

2 Samuel 10:6 When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, the people of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand foot soldiers; and from the king of Maacah one thousand men, and from Ish-Tob twelve thousand men.

2 Samuel 10:7 Now when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men.

2 Samuel 10:8 Then the people of Ammon came out and put themselves in battle array at the entrance of the gate. And the Syrians of Zoba, Beth Rehob, Ish-Tob, and Maacah were by themselves in the field.

2 Samuel 10:9 When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he chose some of Israel's best and put them in battle array against the Syrians.

2 Samuel 10:10 And the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai his brother, that he might set them in battle array against the people of Ammon.

2 Samuel 10:11 Then he said, "If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you.

2 Samuel 10:12 Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what is good in His sight."

2 Samuel 10:13 So Joab and the people who were with him drew near for the battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him.

2 Samuel 10:14 When the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai, and entered the city. So Joab returned from the people of Ammon and went to Jerusalem.

Did you notice something about this battle? Something missing from the description of it?

No actual fighting is recorded! Joab “drew near for the battle against the Syrians and they fled before him.” Then “the people of Ammon... also fled before Abishai...”

The Israelites took their stand and their enemies fled. As Christians we are to take our stand, to stand on the ground of victory won at the Cross, and watch as our enemies flee.

Our problem is that we have a different idea of victory than the Lord does. We want to interpret it as *physical* victory while so often the victory is *spiritual*. We often want circumstances to *end* while Jesus gives us strength to *endure* them.

One of the great passages of the Bible on this is the end of Romans chapter eight.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Romans 8:36 As it is written: "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE KILLED ALL DAY LONG; WE ARE ACCOUNTED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER."

Romans 8:37 Yet in all **these** things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

Romans 8:39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There's a whole lot of "things" in those verses that I want no part of! But it is in them, enduring those "things," standing my ground by faith, that I am more than a conqueror.

One of the things that encourages me to endure, to take my stand, is that I know my King is coming and will one day vindicate me. The enemies I have victory over will be ultimately destroyed.

Vindicate doesn't mean *vindictive*. It's not a matter of revenge. It means *to regain possession, under claim of title of property through legal procedure, or to assert one's right to possession*. As we will see, the Lord is returning to take fully and finally all that He won on the Cross.

David illustrates that for us in the remaining verses.

2 Samuel 10:15 When the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered together.

2 Samuel 10:16 Then Hadadezer sent and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the River, and they came to Helam. And Shobach the commander of Hadadezer's army went before them.

2 Samuel 10:17 When it was told David, he gathered all Israel, crossed over the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in battle array against David and fought with him.

2 Samuel 10:18 Then the Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, and struck Shobach the commander of their army, who died there.

2 Samuel 10:19 And when all the kings who were servants to Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore.

The Syrians gathered for the fight. David and his armies answered the challenge and defeated their enemies. This time casualties and spoils of the battle are carefully listed.

Notice something else? While we know that there was fierce hand-to-hand combat that involved each and every soldier, the writer (under the influence, of course, of the Holy Spirit) is careful to say “**David**... gathered all Israel... **David** killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, and struck Shobach the commander of their army...”

It's worded as if David alone fought and won the battle.

When we return with Jesus, that is *exactly* what occurs! In Revelation chapter nineteen, where we are described as His armies returning with Him, the Lord alone fights. It's the Battle of Armageddon and Jesus destroys all who are arrayed against Him.

We won't even be properly dressed for battle! We will be wearing white robes!

Let me give you the future timeline, compiled from a literal reading of the Bible.

- Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Forty days later He ascended into Heaven. He said He was going there to build us our heavenly homes and that He would return for us.
- Meantime Jesus commissioned every Christian to go out sharing the Good News. He warned us we'd be humiliated, be treated as He was, but we are to see it as an honor to be in such company as the Lord and His martyrs through the ensuing ages.
- Meanwhile Jesus and later His apostles and prophets promised that He would be coming imminently to resurrect and rapture believers from off of the earth. It could, it can, happen **at any moment**.
- When we are removed in the rapture, a time of trouble will ensue upon the earth like nothing that has ever happened before. It's called the Great Tribulation and lasts seven years. We're safe in Heaven, in our resurrected bodies, while the earth is being judged and prepared for the return of the King.
- At the end of the Great Tribulation, that's when Jesus comes back in His Second Coming and we come with Him as His armies. On earth the armies of mankind are warring in the Middle East, gathered in the Valley of Megiddo. When the sky splits apart and they see Jesus, they muster against Him.
- It's not much of a battle, the Battle of Armageddon. The Lord destroys His enemies by the word of His mouth.
- Then Jesus sets-up the Kingdom of God on the earth. It will be a time of refreshing and restoration that lasts one thousand years. We will be there ruling and reigning with Jesus.
- At the end of the thousand years, human beings who were born on the earth during that time will mount one final rebellion against God. It is unsuccessful.
- Then, at the very end of the current historical timeline, the Lord will raise the dead who have died throughout the centuries having rejected Jesus

Christ. All nonbelievers will be judged and sent to their eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire, which is what we call Hell.

- Afterwards God will create a new earth and new heavens and we and all believers from all time will live forever. Every tear will have been wiped away, no sin or suffering will be present. It will be glorious.

That is what we mean by “vindicated.”

Put that way, I think we can be patient, can we not, as the army of the Lord?

This is the time for ambassadors. As we close I'd like to give you God's job description for His ambassadors.

At the end of Second Corinthians chapter five the apostle Paul said plainly, “we are ambassadors for Christ” (v20). Then immediately in chapter six you read the following.

2 Corinthians 6:3 We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.

2 Corinthians 6:4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

2 Corinthians 6:5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

2 Corinthians 6:6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

2 Corinthians 6:7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

2 Corinthians 6:8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

2 Corinthians 6:9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;

2 Corinthians 6:10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Go and show the kindness of God that has appeared to all men.