



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 20:1-26

Topic

Joab disembowels Amasa and leaves him wallowing in his own blood with his “entrails poured out on the ground”

Title

“Happy Entrails to You”

Introduction

The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has been rating movies since 1968. In 1990 the Rating Board began adding brief explanations of *why* a particular film receives its rating. Usually these explanations are generic and are overlooked by moviegoers but once in a while the language used can be more entertaining than the movie itself.

Here are some examples:

- Rated R for zombie violence/gore and language (*Shaun of the Dead*)
- Rated R for demented mayhem and torture (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Next Generation*)
- Rated R for grisly afterviews of horrific and bizarre killings (*Seven*)
- Rated R for an abundance of outrageous gore (*Dead Alive*)
- Rated R for graphic violence including scenes of dental torture (*The Dentist*)

Our text in Second Samuel would certainly carry an R-rating and the explanation would most likely read, “Rated R for disembowelment, wallowing in blood, and a beheading.”

It’s a violent episode in which David deals decisively with a rebel, an Israelite named Sheba, by sending his elite troops to put him to death.

What can we glean from the story devotionally? We who are believers in Jesus Christ are commanded to put something to death, to kill something. We are told in very graphic language to kill **sin**, to put **sin** to death.

One passage in which we find this is Colossians 3:5.

Colossians 3:5 Therefore **put to death** your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

You’re encouraged to kill sin, too, in Romans 8:13.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you **put to death** the deeds of the body, you will live.

Commenting on this, one Bible teacher said,

There is a mean streak in the Christian life. There is a violence. There is a militancy... It is a violence against the "flesh" or against "the deeds of the body" – **our** [own] flesh and **our** [own] body.

The flesh is what we are when rebellion against God and insubordination and hostility to God rule our bodies and our minds. So the way you put to death "the deeds of the body" is to strangle the air that sinful deeds breathe. Strangle the flesh. Cut the lifeline. Pinch the air pipe. Stop the blood flow. Sinful deeds must be killed before they happen... (John Piper).

The brutal story in Second Samuel chapter twenty give us an opportunity to discuss how we, as believers in the Lord, Jesus Christ, can put to death and kill sin.

I’ll organize my thoughts around two questions: #1 Are You Experiencing Setbacks In Killing Sin?, or #2 Are You Expecting Success In Killing Sin?

#1 Are You Experiencing Setbacks
In Killing Sin?
(v1-13)

The ten tribes of Israel were offended when the men of Judea took a prominent role in returning David to his throne after the conflict with Absalom ended. One man determined to lead them in a rebellion.

2 Samuel 20:1 And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: "We have no share in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!"

Your Bible might read, "a son of Belial," instead of "a rebel." According to the *Holman Bible Dictionary*,

[The] KJV interprets it as a proper name sixteen times, but modern translations translate it as a common noun, "worthless" or "wicked..." In Nahum 1:15... Belial appears to be the name of some specific malevolent power. In the New Testament the word occurs one time (Second Corinthians 6:15). There Paul the apostle declared the mutual irreconcilability of Christ and Belial, who thus appears to be equated with Satan.

We trace sin back to the Garden of Eden where Satan tempted Adam and Eve to rebel against God's authority and act independently. You might therefore say anytime we sin we, too, are the sons of Belial.

Sheba summarized the feelings of the Israelites by saying they had "no share in David" and no "inheritance." They were upset about how they were being treated - their "share" - and about their prospects for the future - their "inheritance."

Discouragement with your "share" as you journey home to Heaven is a breeding ground for sin. So is focusing on the here-and-now rather than on your future "inheritance" awaiting you safe in Heaven.

"Every man to his tents" was Sheba's rallying cry. It was a declaration of independence. Be your own king, rule your own "tents."

We can pitch tents in our Christian life. We might, for example, return to a habit or a behavior that Jesus has delivered us from. Now that we are stronger (or so we think) we can handle it, camp out there.

Certain character traits can be tents we've pitched if we say of ourselves, "That's just the way I am," and settle-in comfortably when, in fact, we are indulging our selfishness.

2 Samuel 20:2 So every man of Israel deserted David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king.

As Israelites they were expected to fall under the authority of their king. Their decision to rebel was a desertion.

Christians have been redeemed at great price - bought out of slavery to sin by the blood Jesus shed on the Cross at Calvary. We are expected to fall, to bow, under the authority of our King and Savior. Any decision to rebel, however slight, is a desertion.

2 Samuel 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.

Absalom had gone in to these concubines and sexually assaulted them as a sign to the nation of his rebellion against David. Because David had ignored Absalom's rebellion until it became something greater, many others suffered, starting with these concubines. Their lives were never the same.

My sin always affects others negatively. Especially if I allow it to go unchecked.

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

David had appointed Amasa to replace Joab as commander of his forces. It was a terrible idea from the start. Amasa had led Absalom's forces against David, and not very well.

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

Make a mental note that “Amasa delayed longer” than the “three days” David had determined. We’ll return to it in a moment.

2 Samuel 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."

2 Samuel 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.

2 Samuel 20:8 When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came before them...

David was stuck on this “three day” plan of action. If Amasa wasn’t going to act, David wanted to move without him.

Amasa heard that the troops were gathering and he met them.

2 Samuel 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.

Joab had been demoted but he was always ready for a fight. He was a warrior. He was also a murderer. And a crafty one at that. To put Amasa at ease Joab used the old *I-dropped-my-sword* routine. Amasa fell for it and assumed Joab was unarmed as he approached him to greet him.

2 Samuel 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.

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

Alright. I guess Joab was general again!

2 Samuel 20:11 Meanwhile one of Joab's men stood near Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David - follow Joab!"

2 Samuel 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.

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

“Rated R for disembowelment and wallowing in blood.” I can’t recommend Joab’s methods. I can’t even say Joab was a believer.

Let’s look at it like this. Joab understood that after “three days” he was to put to death the rebellion. To kill it. Amasa heard the same command from his king but he “delayed” while out trying to rally additional troops.

Whenever you read about “three days” in the Bible, what is it you think about? I think about the Lord rising from the dead on the third day. If we are looking for insight from this story about killing sin, about putting to death sin in our lives, then we need look no further than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is by His power that we put sin to death - **not by any other means.**

- Amasa was looking for additional troops. Maybe, too, he was busy trying to come up with a clever strategy to defeat Sheba. At any rate he ignored the “three days” in search of what he deemed would be more effective. Mean time the rebellion only grew stronger.
- Joab heeded the three days then went full on against Sheba, expecting to kill him.

Here’s the thing. If you survey the Christian landscape, most of the suggestions regarding putting sin to death involve some sort of behavior modification. We’re encouraged to change our outward behavior and we will thereby gain victory over sin.

Behavior modification is a recipe for disaster! Jesus didn’t rise from the dead so I could *reform* my outward behavior by my own efforts but in order that I might be *transformed* from within by His power.

One blogger put it like this: “Christian growth... does not happen first by behaving better, **but [by] believing better** - believing in bigger, deeper... ways what Christ has already secured for [us].”

I like that because it is biblical. The passages I referenced earlier, about putting sin to death, first tell us what to believe. We are to believe, to know, to “count,” to “reckon,” that when Jesus died, *we died with Him*; and that when He rose from the dead in resurrection power, *we rose with Him* in that same power. We are therefore empowered by the Spirit of God to put sin to death, to kill sin.

Look at it like this. You begin the Christian life by believing God for salvation. You are to continue in your Christian walk by the same principle - believing His promises. We walk by faith.

Let’s see how this played out.

#2 Are You Expecting Success In Killing Sin? (v14-26)

Joab had no plan other than that after three days it was time to obey his king and pursue Sheba and put him to death. Period.

2 Samuel 20:14 And he 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.

According to some of the scholars, the “he” in this verse who “went through all the tribes of Israel” refers to Sheba gathering men for his rebellion. Others, like Josephus, say it refers to Joab picking-up troops as he hotly pursued Sheba. Either way you get the idea that Joab was focused on killing Sheba after three days. He wasn’t looking for additional troops, but they joined him, seeing his passion.

2 Samuel 20:15 Then they 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.

2 Samuel 20:16 Then a wise woman cried out from the city, "Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.' "

2 Samuel 20:17 When he had come near to her, the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening."

2 Samuel 20:18 So she spoke, saying, "They used to talk in former times, saying, 'They shall surely seek guidance at Abel,' and so they would end disputes.

2 Samuel 20:19 I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?"

Siege warfare was brutal. Those besieged would suffer from starvation as their supplies were depleted. The besieging forces, once the city was breached, would show no mercy.

A wise woman called for parlay and she and Joab came to terms.

2 Samuel 20:20 And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy!

2 Samuel 20:21 That is not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." So the woman said to Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall."

2 Samuel 20:22 Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.

Rebellion over! Let's go home, "every man to his tent," but now in proper submission to the authority of the rightful king.

Joab waited three days then went after Sheba with the total expectation he would kill him, put him to death, and end the rebellion.

I've suggested that after three days Jesus rose from the dead and, since we are described as having spiritually risen from the dead with Him, we, too, should expect to put sin to death and end our rebellion.

A while back our Men's Morning Fellowship studied the Sermon on the Mount. Last season our ladies looked at the beatitudes in that sermon during *Apples of Gold*. Here's what I told the guys and the gals.

We are not told to live like this in order to be Christians. We are told that because you **are** a Christian, *you can live like this*.

It may not seem like much of a difference, but it really makes all the difference in the your walk with God.

I **can** put sin to death, I **can** kill sin, because of who I already am in Christ and because of what He has already accomplished on my behalf. I must believe “better... bigger... deeper...” **Then** I expect to put sin to death by His power.

We have some unfinished business at the end of chapter twenty.

2 Samuel 20:23 And Joab was over all the army of Israel; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites;

2 Samuel 20:24 Adoram was in charge of revenue; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder;

2 Samuel 20:25 Sheva was scribe; Zadok and Abiathar were the priests;

2 Samuel 20:26 and Ira the Jairite was a chief minister under David.

This is a historical note about David’s second administration cabinet members.

For our application I’d say that we, too, are called upon to administrate our lives. We do it every day by the choices we make.

Here is one such choice that puts all I’ve been saying into perspective.

Galatians 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

I can try to live out the Christian life, including putting sin to death, “by the works of the law.” I can try to do it by behavior modification, by the latest method or program being promoted in some book. I can try hard to reform.

Or I can do it God’s way, “by the hearing of faith.” I can “hear” what He says in His Word about me and then believe it (“faith”) and then walk in it because He rose from the dead and, when He did, **so did I**.

The Bible says that “the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). When I simply hear and believe the Word of God - the “hearing of faith” - the Spirit takes up the sword and kills sin, puts sin to death.