

## Bible Readings

### 2 Samuel 3:6-39 New International Version (NIV)

#### Abner Goes Over to David

<sup>6</sup> During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul. <sup>7</sup> Now Saul had had a concubine named Rizpah daughter of Aiah. And Ish-Bosheth said to Abner, “Why did you sleep with my father’s concubine?”

<sup>8</sup> Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said. So he answered, “Am I a dog’s head—on Judah’s side? This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends. I haven’t handed you over to David. Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman! <sup>9</sup> May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD promised him on oath <sup>10</sup> and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David’s throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba.” <sup>11</sup> Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him.

<sup>12</sup> Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David, “Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me, and I will help you bring all Israel over to you.”

<sup>13</sup> “Good,” said David. “I will make an agreement with you. But I demand one thing of you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come to see me.” <sup>14</sup> Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, “Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.”

<sup>15</sup> So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. <sup>16</sup> Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go back home!” So he went back.

<sup>17</sup> Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, “For some time you have wanted to make David your king. <sup>18</sup> Now do it! For the LORD promised David, ‘By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.’”

<sup>19</sup> Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole tribe of Benjamin wanted to do. <sup>20</sup> When Abner, who had twenty men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men. <sup>21</sup> Then Abner said to David, “Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.” So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

## Joab Murders Abner

<sup>22</sup> Just then David's men and Joab returned from a raid and brought with them a great deal of plunder. But Abner was no longer with David in Hebron, because David had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. <sup>23</sup> When Joab and all the soldiers with him arrived, he was told that Abner son of Ner had come to the king and that the king had sent him away and that he had gone in peace.

<sup>24</sup> So Joab went to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone! <sup>25</sup> You know Abner son of Ner; he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you are doing."

<sup>26</sup> Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern at Sirah. But David did not know it. <sup>27</sup> Now when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into an inner chamber, as if to speak with him privately. And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach, and he died.

<sup>28</sup> Later, when David heard about this, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the LORD concerning the blood of Abner son of Ner. <sup>29</sup> May his blood fall on the head of Joab and on his whole family! May Joab's family never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy<sup>[a]</sup> or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food."

<sup>30</sup> (Joab and his brother Abishai murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.)

<sup>31</sup> Then David said to Joab and all the people with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and walk in mourning in front of Abner." King David himself walked behind the bier. <sup>32</sup> They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king wept aloud at Abner's tomb. All the people wept also.

<sup>33</sup> The king sang this lament for Abner:

"Should Abner have died as the lawless die?

<sup>34</sup> Your hands were not bound,  
your feet were not fettered.

You fell as one falls before the wicked."

And all the people wept over him again.

<sup>35</sup> Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, "May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!"

<sup>36</sup> All the people took note and were pleased; indeed, everything the king did pleased them. <sup>37</sup> So on that day all the people there and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.

<sup>38</sup> Then the king said to his men, “Do you not realize that a commander and a great man has fallen in Israel this day? <sup>39</sup> And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruah are too strong for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!”

**Romans 12:17-21 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Sermon****The Problem with Revenge (2 Samuel 3:6-39 & Romans 12:17-21)**

19-July-20

We're continuing our series on 2 Samuel.

We're looking at 2 Samuel chapter 3 starting at verse 6 and then we'll look at Romans 12:17-21.

Please have your Bibles open.

Let me pray before we begin...

Let's pray...

**Intro**

*I heard on the news the other day of a family who hired a contract hit man to kill a 15-year-old boy.*

*The reason the family had the 15-year-old boy killed was for revenge because the 15-year-old boy's older brother was alleged to have killed a member of their family.*

*As it turned out, the older brother was found not guilty of killing their family member. It was in fact someone else.*

*So not only was their revenge wrong – but it was against the wrong person!*

(pause)

The trouble with revenge is - it consumes a person - it not only damages the person being paid back - it damages the person taking out the revenge - it makes that person all bitter and twisted.

As Mahatma Gandhi said "*An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.*"

In our **passage** this morning there are two **examples of revenge** - and at the same time - we are also shown a better way than revenge...

### Context

Before we go any further - let's **remind** ourselves of the **context**.

We left the story **last week** - where we had **2 Kings** in Israel.

[PowerPoint 1-Kingdoms]

Green portion - ruled by King Ish-Bosheth, Saul's surviving son - ISRAEL

Pink portion - ruled by King David - JUDAH

And as we said last week - **having 2 kings** was always going to be a **problem**.

Because **both kings** - **have a commander** of their **army** - who is **powerful** and **ambitious** - and **spiteful**

[PowerPoint 2-Judah versus Israel]

**Abner** - Saul's cousin - army commander for King Ish-Bosheth

**Joab** - David's nephew - army commander for King David

### Example #1 - Abner takes Revenge (2 Sam 3:6-19)

- We **pick up** the story in v6 where Abner has been strengthening his position.
- We **saw last week** that **Abner made** Saul's surviving son, **Ish-Bosheth** - King of Israel
- But now in v7 - King **Ish-Bosheth accuses Abner** of **sleeping with** Saul's **concubine** - a lady named **Rizpah**
- **Concubine** = *in polygamous societies - is a woman who lives with a man but has a lower status than his wife or wives.*

- Behind the **accusation** is that by **sleeping with Saul's concubine** - even though Saul's is dead - **Abner's action is seen as** - **making a bid for Saul's throne and a bid for power.**

### [PowerPoint 3-reaction]

- **Abner reacted angrily** to the accusation. It's not clear if this **accusation** is **true** or **false**
- Either way - **Abner's reply** to the accusation is **straight out revenge**
- See v9 - he **makes an oath** that he will do everything in his power to **ensure** that **David becomes king of all Israel** - just as God promised (1 Sam 15:28)

### Application

- If **Ish-Bosheth's accusation** is false - it **begs the question** how we should **handle a false accusation?**
  - **Getting angry and plotting revenge** over a false accusation is a **drastic overreaction**
  - Although I'm **sure** most of us - **get angry when we're falsely accused** - and I'm **sure** **all sorts of thoughts** fly through our minds
    - *'how dare they?'*
    - *'how can they lie about me like this?'*
    - *'I hope they get what's coming to them for being so wrong and lying about me?'* - and so on...
  - How should we **react?**
    - Make sure that we **don't get bitter** (Heb 12:15)

- **Surrender** our predicament to **God** - as our NT reading from Romans 12:19 says "It is mine to avenge, I will repay" says the Lord
  - And as Psalm 37:7 says - Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.
- If **Ish-Bosheth's accusation** is **true** - and **Abner did sleep with** the concubine **Rizpah** - then Abner's reaction is way **over the top!** He's **guilty!**
    - How should we react to an accusation against us -that is true?
      - We need to **own up** to our **sin to God** - as 1 John 1:9 says: **If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**
      - And we need to **confess our sin** to the **one accusing us** - as James 5:16 says - **Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.**

#### [PowerPoint 4-Abner's deal]

- Whatever the case, **Abner's mind** is made up on **revenge** - and he approaches David - v12 - to make an **agreement** - so that David can be King of all **Israel**
- David is **keen** to hear Abner's proposition but he **places a condition** on it
- David wants his **wife back** - that's **Michal**, Saul's daughter, whom David had won by **defeating 200 Philistines** (1 Sam 18:27) but Saul in a **jealous and angry** rage had **given Michal to another** man named, **Paltiel** (1 Sam 25:44)

- **David requests Michal** from King Ish-Bosheth and his **request is granted** - much to the **dismay of Michal's husband, Paltiel**, who was **sent packing by Abner**
- But note - we **need to question David's behaviour here though** - how many wives does David want? [**8 wives and 10 concubines**]. Is David just using Michal as a pawn - **having Saul's daughter** will strengthen David's claim to Saul's throne? Or does he **genuinely love her**? David is not completely innocent here.
- Meanwhile, nothing is going to **derail Abner's plan to take revenge on Ish-Bosheth**
- So, in v17-19 - **Abner negotiates** with the **elders of Israel** and with the **Benjamites** - to **agree to making David - King of all of Israel**

### David's way #1 - treats his enemy with kindness (2 Sam 3:20-21)

Which brings us to how David treats his enemy - verses 20-21.

Remember - **Abner is David's enemy** - he's from Saul's house - and remember **Abner is power hungry** - he had **originally crowned Ish-Bosheth as King** - and was **gaining power** - AND - **Abner will no doubt be hoping** to have some **prominent and powerful position** in David's Kingdom.

[PowerPoint 5-David kindness]

Nevertheless, **David treats Abner** - v20 - with kindness - and **prepares a feast** for Abner and his men - and David **agrees to allow Abner to make the deals necessary** with the rest of Israel - **so that David can become king**.

And then v21 - **David sends Abner off in peace**.

David could **legitimately** - have **arrested Abner** - even **killed him** - and then defeated King **Ish-Bosheth** - who would be **weakened** without his **army commander** - and David could **just have helped himself** to the kingship.

But David is a) **relying on God** to install him as king and b) **wants his transition to King of all Israel** to be a **smooth one** and as **peaceful** as possible.

### Application

In the same way that **David treated his enemy with kindness** - we need to do **likewise** - as the Apostle Paul says in our NT reading from Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, **live at peace with everyone.**

And Romans 12:20

"If your enemy is hungry, **feed him;**  
if he is thirsty, **give him something to drink.**

**David fed his enemy** and **sent his enemy in peace.**

The Apostle Paul says treating an enemy with kindness - will **heap burning coals on their head (still v20)**. In other words - our **kindness & goodness** will **surprise our enemy** - and **cause them to think about their behaviour** - and perhaps even consider that **there is a better way.**

(pause)

### Example 2 - Joab takes Revenge on Abner (2 Sam 3:22-27)

The **second example** of **revenge** is in 2 Sam 3 - **verses 22 to 27**

[PowerPoint 6-Joab's revenge]

- David's commander **Joab returns** in v22 - and when **Joab hears** in v23 that **Abner had come** to David and **David had treated** him with **kindness** - and **sent Abner away in peace**
- **Joab is not a happy camper**
- **We get an idea of how powerful Joab is here**
- **In the way that he speaks to David - the King -**
- **See v24 - Joab says to David - [What have you done? Look Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone?](#)**
- **As far as Joab is concerned - Abner came to deceive David - and spy on him - and Abner is not to be trusted**
- **Now remember - Abner had killed Joab's brother, Asahel, back in chapter 2. This happened in **battle** and wasn't deliberate on Abner's part - but self defense.**
- **Nevertheless, Joab is out for revenge on Abner**
- **Without David knowing - v26 - Joab called Abner back - and Joab and his other brother Abishai killed Abner.**
- **The revenge is complete!**

### Application

#### Why is revenge so wrong?

Because at the **heart** of the Hebrew and Greek **word** for **revenge** is the **idea of punishment**.

And **God** is the **One** who **reserves** the **right to avenge** and **punish** people - because His **motives** are always **pure** (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30) - as we just said **vengeance belongs to God**.

[With the exception of 1 Peter 2:13-14 - where Christians submit to the rulers that God has set over us because they are instruments for "vengeance of evildoers"]

It is **tempting** for us to try to **take on the role of God** and **seek to punish those** who **we feel deserve** it. But because we are **sinful creatures**, it's **impossible for us to take revenge** with pure motives.- like God'.

Even David, a "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14) back in 1 Samuel - **refused** to take **revenge** on **Saul**, even though David was the **innocent** party. Instead - **David submitted to God's command** to forego vengeance and **trusted** in **God**. **David says to Saul** in 1 Sam 24:12 "**May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you**"

**As Christians**, we are to let **God be the One to avenge**.

### David's way #2 - Leaves revenge to God? (2 Sam 3:28-39)

Which brings us to how **David handles Joab's outrageous revenge** on **Abner**. That's **verses 28-39**.

When **David hears** that **Abner** has been **killed** - v28

He **legitimately, as King**, could have had **Joab killed**

After all **Abner's death** was **cold blooded murder** - whereas **Joab's brother, Asahel's death** was in **battle and self-defense**

[PowerPoint 7-David's reaction]

But, **David** doesn't seek revenge on **Abner** - instead he **calls upon God** - to **curse Joab and his family** for the **blood of Abner** - **David leaves it up to God**

to deal with Joab - and he **calls upon God** to make Joab's family is to suffer with sickness (leprosy) or be disabled - or to suffer in battle- or go hungry. David is far from perfect here though.

Although he hasn't taken revenge on Joab - he still calls upon a curse on Joab and his family - rather than leaving the punishment, if any, to God - and simply asking God to deal with it.

### Application

Should we curse our enemies? What does Jesus say about this?

Jesus says in Matt 5:44 that we are to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

David showed his love for his enemy Abner in how he grieved for him.

David gave Abner a royal funeral and even made Joab put on funeral clothes and march in front of Abner's funeral procession.

And David himself walked at the back of the funeral procession - and wept aloud.

David even sang a lament - lamenting that Abner died a lawless death - lamenting that Abner died - not as though he was a prisoner of war or criminal - in fact - David says - Abner died at the hand of someone wicked - namely Joab.

David even fasted in grief- and such was the sincerity of David's grief - all the people knew that David had no part in Abner's death.

So, the story concludes with David - feeling weak because - he has to deal with his sister (Zeruiah) sons - Joab and Abishai - and having family members in

powerful positions is going to make it difficult for David as King - especially when the family members do the wrong thing but are very influential.

So just as David did with Saul - when David couldn't deal with Saul's evil actions.

V29 - David left it to God - May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds?

### Application

As we deal with injustice then

Let us - call upon God to bring about justice - not us.

### Jesus' Better Way (Romans 12:17-21)

Now - I don't want the message today to be - for us - to 'be like David'

Yes - in some ways David is a hero - and a type of Jesus

But - as we've seen - David isn't squeaky clean - he's sinful just like us

[PowerPoint 8-Rom 12]

In our NT reading from Romans 12:17-21 - the Apostle Paul gives us a better way than revenge

It amounts to being like Jesus [that's who we need to be like!]

And Paul tells us what that looks like:

See V17 - do not repay anyone evil for evil

2 wrongs never make a right

I know it's easy to react to someone's bad words - with more bad words

Or to want something bad to happen to someone who's hurt us.

And to do a fist pump when someone who has hurt us - has an epic failure

But all that means is we are sinning too.

By all means be angry

But as Paul says in Eph 4:26 - in your anger do not sin

Look at how **Jesus lived**.

Jesus - always separated the **person** from **their behaviour**

He **loved** the **person** and not **their behaviour**

And **His love** for the **person** - meant He **wanted** what was **best for them** - and that was - for them to **repent** and **be reconciled to God**

So, **Jesus wanted** the **person** to **change their behaviour**

If we answer a **person** who has **wronged** us or **hurt us** - with the same sin as **they did** - how will that **help** the **person change**?

Instead - as Paul says here in v18 - as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

That's how **Jesus lived** - at **peace** with **everyone**

Jesus set an **example of exemplary behaviour** for everyone to follow

Our kindness to **someone who hurts us** - will do more for the **person** who hurts us than any retaliation we may make.

**Jesus left revenge** to God the **Father**.

That's how **Jesus lived** - and that's how **He died**

As Paul concludes in v21

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Jesus was not overcome by evil** - and He didn't **retaliate**

Instead He **went** to the **cross** - and **overcame evil** there!

God the **Father** could have quite **legitimately** said to humankind - *'I've had a gutful or your continual disobedience and sinful hearts - I'll take revenge and I'll wipe the world out and walk away'*

But no - God the **Father** sent Jesus the **Son** on a **rescue** mission to overcome evil

The evil of those who cried out "**Crucify Him! Crucify Him!**" (Mark 15:13)

Was overcome by Jesus' good words on the **Cross** - "**forgive them Father for they do not know what they are doing**" (Luke 23:34?)

The sin that put Jesus on the cross - and the sin that was placed on Him (including our sin) - was overcome by the goodness of Jesus - to take the blame for us and take our punishment - and give us forgiveness

### Conclusion - The Opposite of Revenge is God's Grace

To finish up then

Our **society** often talks about and believes in *karma*

[From Hinduism and Buddhism - the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence, viewed as deciding their fate in future existences]

Simply - karma says - *'what goes around comes around - you get paid back for your bad behaviour'*

[PowerPoint 9-Grace]

But **God** doesn't operate on karma - otherwise we'd all be dead meat!

**God** doesn't operate on revenge.

He operates with **Grace!**

The **opposite** of revenge - is **God's grace** - **God's Undeserved favour**

Instead of getting **punished** for our **sins** - we get an opportunity to be **forgiven** and to live with God forever - if we care to believe in Jesus  
**Now** - If **God** is prepared to **offer us grace** - He wants us to **show** that same **grace to others**

Here's **some ways** we can **show grace** instead of **revenge**

- When **someone** is **harsh** or **unkind** with their words - remember - **Col 4:6**  
 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.
- When you **feel like paying someone back** for how they treated you - remember **Matt 5:7** - **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**
- When you don't **feel like forgiving someone** for hurting you - remember **Col 3:13** - **Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. AND remembering Matt 6:14-15 - <sup>14</sup> For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**
- And when you **feel like hating someone** for what they've done and **feel like getting even** - remember - **Matt 5:34** - **If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.**

(pause)

When we think about it - we are **in no position** to **point the finger** at **other people's sin** - let alone **take revenge** - as Jesus taught in John 8:7 - **Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone...**

Let's pray...