

## **Bible Readings**

### **Old Testament Reading**

#### **2 Samuel 20:1-26**

#### **Sheba Rebels Against David**

**20** Now a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bikri, a Benjamite, happened to be there. He sounded the trumpet and shouted,

“We have no share in David,

no part in Jesse’s son!

Every man to his tent, Israel!”

**2** So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bikri. But the men of Judah stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

**3** When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines he had left to take care of the palace and put them in a house under guard. He provided for them but had no sexual relations with them. They were kept in confinement till the day of their death, living as widows.

**4** Then the king said to Amasa, “Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself.” **5** But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him.

**6** David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba son of Bikri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your master’s men and pursue him, or he will find fortified cities and escape from us.” **7** So Joab’s men and the Kerethites and Pelethites and all the mighty warriors went out under the command of Abishai. They marched out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bikri.

**8** While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Joab was wearing his military tunic, and strapped over it at his

waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheath. As he stepped forward, it dropped out of its sheath.

<sup>9</sup> Joab said to Amasa, "How are you, my brother?" Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. <sup>10</sup> Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, Amasa died. Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bikri.

<sup>11</sup> One of Joab's men stood beside Amasa and said, "Whoever favours Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab!" <sup>12</sup> Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the middle of the road, and the man saw that all the troops came to a halt there. When he realized that everyone who came up to Amasa stopped, he dragged him from the road into a field and threw a garment over him. <sup>13</sup> After Amasa had been removed from the road, everyone went on with Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bikri.

<sup>14</sup> Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel Beth Maakah and through the entire region of the Bikrites, who gathered together and followed him. <sup>15</sup> All the troops with Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth Maakah. They built a siege ramp up to the city, and it stood against the outer fortifications. While they were battering the wall to bring it down, <sup>16</sup> a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab to come here so I can speak to him." <sup>17</sup> He went toward her, and she asked, "Are you Joab?"

"I am," he answered.

She said, "Listen to what your servant has to say."

"I'm listening," he said.

<sup>18</sup> She continued, "Long ago they used to say, 'Get your answer at Abel,' and that settled it. <sup>19</sup> We are the peaceful and faithful in Israel. You are

trying to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why do you want to swallow up the LORD's inheritance?"

<sup>20</sup> "Far be it from me!" Joab replied, "Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy! <sup>21</sup> That is not the case. A man named Sheba son of Bikri, from the hill country of Ephraim, has lifted up his hand against the king, against David. Hand over this one man, and I'll withdraw from the city." The woman said to Joab, "His head will be thrown to you from the wall." <sup>22</sup> Then the woman went to all the people with her wise advice, and they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bikri and threw it to Joab. So, he sounded the trumpet, and his men dispersed from the city, each returning to his home. And Joab went back to the king in Jerusalem.

### **David's Officials**

<sup>23</sup> Joab was over Israel's entire army; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethites and Pelethites; <sup>24</sup> Adoniram was in charge of forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; <sup>25</sup> Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; <sup>26</sup> and Ira the Jairite was David's priest.

## **New Testament Reading**

### **Ephesians 4:1-6**

#### **Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ**

**4** As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

## Sermon

### The Importance of Unity (2 Samuel 20:1-26 & Ephesians 4:1-6)

01-Nov-20

It would be great to have your Bibles turned to 2 Samuel chapter 20.

There's an **outline** - if you want to take **notes**.

Let me **pray** before we begin...

Let's pray...

## Intro/Context

- We left things **last week** where **David** had been **reinstated** as **King** after his son's, **Absalom's**, **rebellion**
- But we're **left with the impression** that things are not quite right
- The **10 tribes of Israel** in the North - are **jealous of** David's home tribe, **Judah** (2 tribes with Benjamin thrown in)
- See the last verse of **chapter 19** - the **10 tribes** of Israel **say**:

### [PowerPoint 1]

We have ten shares in the king; so, we have a greater claim on David than you have. Why then do you treat us with contempt? Weren't we the first to speak of bringing back our king?"

But the men of Judah pressed their claims even more forcefully than the men of Israel.

- Basically, the **tribes** are **fighting over** **David** - and the **10 tribes** **feel mistreated** by **Judah** and the tribe of **Judah** **pushes** its claim on **David** even further

- **Disunity always leads to trouble**
- And as we hit **chapter 20** - more trouble erupts

## **A. DISUNITY ALWAYS LEADS TO TROUBLE**

So, my first point this morning is: *Disunity Always Leads to Trouble*

[PowerPoint 2-Trouble]

Sheba rebels (vv1-2)

- See vv1-2
- The **trouble begins with** a fellow called **Sheba**
- He is described as a **troublemaker**

*The Hebrew word for troublemaker [beliyaal] means: wicked, evil, ungodly, worthless, good for nothing.*

- **Sheba's rebellion** against David - is **surprising because** **Sheba** is from the tribe of **Benjamin** - this tribe usually sides with David's tribe of **Judah**
- Sheba's **rebellion** is **based** on 3 principles:
  - 1<sup>st</sup>, He **denied David's sovereignty** as King - by saying the people have no share in David - basically saying **David has no right to rule over him or the 10 tribes**
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>, He **denied David's credentials** - suggesting David's humble beginnings as a **son of a humble farmer, Jesse, wasn't the right credentials for a king**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup>, He **decided to go his own way** and **encouraged everyone else** to do the same - by saying '**every man to his tent**'
- Although he intended to go his own way

- V2 - **all the men of Israel** [that is the 10 tribes] **deserted David** and followed Sheba
- Whereas David's own tribe, **Judah**, remained loyal to him
- **Disunity always leads to trouble**

## **B. DISUNITY ALWAYS HAS CONSEQUENCES**

My second point is: *Disunity always has consequences*

[PowerPoint 3-Consequences]

David's response to concubines (v3)

- See v3
- **David** is still trying to **deal** with the **consequences** of the last rebellion by his son, **Absalom**
- Remember how **Absalom** had **slept** with **David's 10 concubines** (2 Samuel 16) - well now here - in verse 3 - **David kept** these 10 women in **confinement** -
- Even though not their fault, the **women** had been **defiled** by Absalom so **David** could no longer sleep with them, and they could not be offered to other men in **marriage** as this **might** have **been dangerous** for the **state** and David's position. Therefore, **sadly**, they **lived as widows** until their death.
- This was a **consequence** of both **David and Absalom's sin**; and it shows how a **person's sin** can also have **consequences** for **innocent parties**.

David's response to Sheba's Rebellion (vv4-7)

- David now has to **deal** with **Sheba's rebellion**

- See verses 4 to 7
- **David orders** the commander of the army, **Amasa**, to **muster** the men of Judah for battle in **3 days**
- Now remember **Amasa** is **commander** of the army because David decided, last week 2 Sam 19:13) to appoint Amasa as commander **instead of Joab** - because **Joab** had been personally involved in killing **Absalom**
- **Amasa** being **commander** is another consequence of the **disunity** caused by Absalom's rebellion
- And **Amasa's** appointment is not a **wise one**
- See v5 - he **dilly dallies**
- Perhaps because he's still **harbouring support** for **Absalom** - and **hoping** this **latest rebellion works**
- When things don't happen quickly enough
- **David orders** Joab's brother, **Abishai**, to take David's men and **pursue Sheba**
- **David's tactic** is to not delay in dealing with this latest rebellion
- As David says in verse 6
- **Sheba's rebellion** has the **potential to do Israel** more harm than **Absalom's rebellion**

### Joab kills Amasa (vv8-13)

- As **David's men** accompanied by **Joab's men** **pursue Sheba**
- They are **finally joined** by **Amasa** in verse 8
- But **Joab** has an old **score to settle** with **Amasa**

- **Amasa had replaced Joab** as commander of the army - and **Amasa had been Absalom's commander**
- **Joab is tremendously loyal** to **David** and to the **cause of Israel** - yet he is **also ruthless, vengeful and vindictive** - **no one crosses Joab and gets away with it**
- See v9-10
- **Joab greets Amasa by his beard** - apparently a **friendly gesture** in the **culture** -
- But Joab has a **dagger** in his **other hand** and **stabs Amasa** in the **belly** - and his **guts spill on the road**
- Amasa lies dead on the **road** - and **all the men are stopping to have a look**
- **A bit like cars stopping to have a sticky beak at road kill on the Freeway**
- So **Amasa is dragged** to the **side of the road**
- And the **pursuit of Sheba continues** with **Joab now in charge** of the **army**
- **Disunity always has consequences**

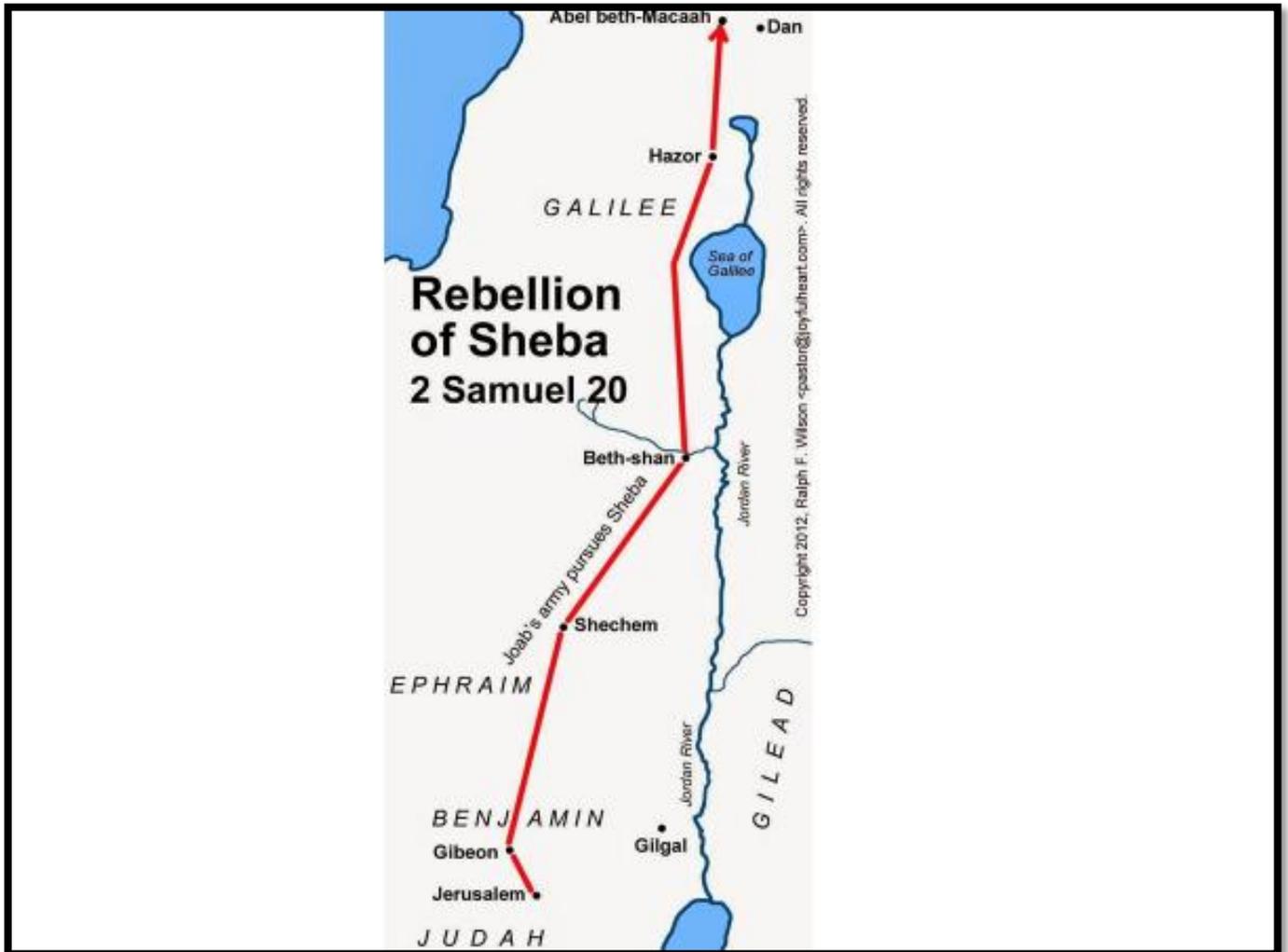
### **C. DISUNITY HAS TO BE DEALT WITH**

My third point is: *Disunity has to be dealt with*

[PowerPoint 4-Dealt with]

- David has already identified that this **rebellion has to be dealt with** in v6 - when he said - **Sheba's rebellion will cause more harm than Absalom's rebellion**

## [PowerPoint 5-Map]

Wise solution to Sheba's rebellion (vv14-22)

- Meanwhile **Sheba's** rebellion amounts to him **passing through all the tribes of Israel** and ending up right up north in a place called **Abel Beth-Macaah** [Abel means grassy, Beth-Macaah means House of Pressure]
- It's a kind of **weird rebellion** - as **Sheba spends most of his time running away!**
- But the point is **Sheba's rebellion has to be dealt with**
- And because he's fled to this city - **Sheba has put the city of Abel Beth-Macaah in danger** of being attacked by David's army

- The **army** is ready to make a **siege** on the **city**
  - Thankfully a **wise woman** in the city - **explains to Joab** - that the **city** has a great reputation in Israel of being a **city** that is **peaceful** and **faithful** and **full of wisdom**
  - The **woman** comes up with **quick solution** - the **people** of the city will find **Sheba** and **cut off his head** and **throw it over the wall** of the city to Joab
  - And that's exactly what happens
- [PowerPoint 6-Dealt with]
- Disunity must be dealt with

### David's Administration Team (vv23-26)

- The **disunity** was only able to be **dealt with** because David had a **great team** - see verses 23 to 26
- Amongst that team is **Joab** - and as much as **Joab** is a **loose cannon** - he is a **good military leader** and **loyal to David**
- And it's notable that **David** also has his **own personal spiritual adviser** - like a **chaplain** - called **Ira**
- How important is **spiritual advice** and **guidance** in our lives!
- The **greatness of David's kingdom** was not built on **David's abilities alone**. He knew how to **assemble** and **lead an effective team**
- And it was this team that **dealt with disunity**

### APPLICATION

- Now we're not in the same position as King David

- We don't have a **military setting** that we live in
- And we don't need to fight with an army to stop a rebellion
- But we can still suffer the same problem of disunity
- The **Apostle Paul** - in many of his **letters** to the various **churches**
- Identified **disunity** as a **big problem** in the **churches**

So, I want to give us **5 things which are Unity Killers** - **5 things that will cause disunity in any church - even ours...**

[PowerPoint 7 - 5 Unity Killers]

### 5 Unity Killers

- The great **American evangelist** and preacher, **Dwight L Moody** [1837-1899] said:

*"I have never yet known the Spirit of God to work where the Lord's people were divided."*

- **Disunity hinders the Spirit's work** in the church and **damages the church's witness to the world** - **people looking in from the outside at a church that is divided and arguing amongst themselves** - won't be interested in joining us
- **Unity in the body of Christ** isn't something to be **taken for granted** nor taken lightly. It's a **gift from God** made possible by the cross of Jesus and made effective by the working of the Holy Spirit.
- **Unity** isn't something, we create, but it is our responsibility to guard it.
- So, here's **five things to guard against**:

[PowerPoint 8 - 1. Everything about you]

### **#1 - Making everything about you**

Here's a reality check: The church doesn't exist to make you (or me) happy; it exists to glorify God.

The way to maintain unity is to think of others as more important than yourself and to make the mission of seeing lives changed by the gospel as more important than personal preferences or comfort. It's not about you, or about me.

We've seen in 2 Samuel - there were many occasions when people made it about themselves - like David, Absalom, Joab, Sheba and so on.

[PowerPoint 9 - 2. Secondary things]

## #2 - Fighting over secondary things

We argue and fight in the church over some really dumb things. We argue about things that, from a heavenly perspective, don't really matter all that much.

Like: stain glass windows, colour of paint, which coffee or milk we use etc.

Like #1, arguing over secondary things is an indication of self-centeredness.

What's required for maintaining unity is less "self" and more "centeredness" on what really matters.

As Richard Baxter [Puritan 1615-1691] said: "In necessary things, unity - in doubtful things, liberty - in all things, charity."

[PowerPoint 10- 3. Gossiping]

**# 3 - Gossiping**

There's a reason **James said the tongue is a fire** (in James 3:6). Consider the damage it can do to a church.

**Gossip and other sins of the tongue** have absolutely no place in the body of Christ.

**Gossip is a cancer in the body of Christ** that, if not removed, will destroy the fellowship.

In my time at St. David's, people have left because of gossip.

The problem of gossip is a problem of the heart, and so the correction needs to happen in the deepest recesses of the heart.

A heart problem isn't corrected by a resolve to hold your tongue. It takes nothing less than the Holy Spirit changing attitudes, leading to genuine repentance, which then opens the way for unity to be restored.

[PowerPoint 11 - 4. Refusing to forgive]

**# 4 - Refusing to forgive**

**Bitterness and resentment are poisons.** Unforgiveness poisons the soul and it poisons the body of Christ.

The church, by nature, is fellowship built upon forgiveness.

What does that mean, practically speaking?

17th-century Puritan Thomas Watson said forgiveness looks like this:

*We don't seek revenge when someone offends us, we wish them well, we grieve at their calamities, we pray for them, we seek reconciliation, and show ourselves willing to come to their aid. That's what forgiveness looks like, and that's what it takes to maintain unity.*

We've seen in 2 Samuel - there were **many occasions** when people refused to forgive and looked for revenge - like **Absalom**, and **Joab**.

[PowerPoint 12 - 5. Jesus]

### **#5 - Taking our eyes off Jesus**

This last one is the **most insidious** of all the **threats to church unity**.

REPORT THIS AD

In the book, *The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer wrote: *"Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So, in the same way, one hundred worshipers meeting together, each one looking towards Jesus, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be"*

Here's a **story I came across recently**, which **illustrates the point**:

*A lady went to her Minister and said. "I won't be attending Church anymore."*

*He said, "May I ask why?"*

*She said, "I see people on their mobile phones during the service, some are gossiping, some just aren't living right, they are all just hypocrites."*

*The Minister gently said, "Ok... But can I ask you to do something for me before you make your **final decision?**"*

She said, "What's that?"

He said, "Take a glass of water and walk around the Church twice and don't let any water tip out the glass."

She said, "Yes I can do that."

She came back and said "It's done."

He asked her 3 questions:

1. Did you see anybody on their phone?
2. Did you see anybody gossiping?
3. Was anybody living wrong?

She said, "I didn't see anything because I was so focused on this glass, so the water didn't tip out."

He told her, "When you come to Church, you should be just focused on Jesus just like that, so that you don't fall. That's why Jesus said 'Follow me.' He did not say follow Christians. Don't let your relationship with Jesus be determined by how others relate with God. Let it be determined by how focused YOU are on Jesus."

## THE ANSWER TO DISUNITY

### Strife for Unity (Ephesians 4:1-6)

- I hope we can see that disunity is a problem

### [PowerPoint 13-Answer heading]

- And that the answer to disunity is to do the opposite to those 5 things
- That's the point the Apostle Paul makes in our NT passage from Ephesians 4:1-6 - please turn there now

[PowerPoint 14-Answer details]

- See v1 - Paul calls us to live a life worthy of being a Christian
- As Christians we are **ambassadors for Jesus**
- The Great Reformer, **Martin Luther**, says this - answer all temptations like this: "*I am a Christian*"
- So v2 - we are to be **humble, gentle, patient [long suffering], bearing with one another**
- I hope we can see that **makes things not about us - but makes us other person centred**
- **V3 - the key verse**
- Make every effort to **KEEP** the unity of the Spirit
- How? through the **bond of peace**
- **Jesus bought peace between God and humankind - by paying for our sins on the cross**
- So, Paul's argument is **we have some common bonds we share**
- V5 - We are **one body of Christ** - just different members of that one body
- We have **one Spirit** we share - the **Holy Spirit** - living inside each Christian
- And we have **one Hope** - the **Hope of eternal life in Heaven**
- And v6 - we have **One Lord** - our **Lord Jesus**
- We have **one Faith** - **faith** in our **Lord Jesus' death and resurrection**
- And one **baptism** - which is the **visible sign** of being **part of God's family** and having our **sins washed away**
- And we have **one God** - who is over all

- When we focus on all these amazing things, we have in common
- Paul's argument is that we should be able to keep in unity as a church family
- Because we're all on the same page - Jesus' page!

Let's pray...