



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

SUCCESS AGAINST REBELLION • God Establishes His Kingdom Yet Again

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

2 Samuel 20:1-26

Second Samuel 20 is a short, yet stressful, episode for King David. A man named Sheba mounts a rebellion against David. David can't seem to catch a break! This is still another fulfilling of God's promise to not let evil depart from David's house. Joab, commander of David's army, despite his wickedness in past chapters and this one, secures safety for David once more by killing Sheba. Lead your group to focus on God's deliverance and protection rather than the negative (that David must endure another rebellion). It would be easy for us to read 2 Samuel and have a negative attitude, but God is always present, mercifully providing for David in the face of revolt and dire times.

The Rise of Sheba (20:1-2)

The Bible is a book that contains so many characters, and not many of them, on the whole, are called "worthless." Sheba is one who does get that dubious title. He seems like a loudmouth, stiff-necked man who doesn't know his right hand from his left. Despite David's might, integrity, passion for God and honor, Sheba declares, "We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel!" Evidently, there must have been some residual allegiance to Saul in the northern tribes. Remember, only when David became king of Judah did Israel split and go their own way. Now that the kingdom has been united for a while, we keep seeing mass withdrawals of support from David at various times. In chapter 20, Sheba tries to lead the northerners astray.

David Takes Action; Joab Kills Amasa (20:3-12)

David doesn't wait to act; he takes ten concubines and guards them. He never went in to the concubines again and it says that they "were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood" (v. 3). This might seem strange, but David wants to take extreme precaution so another problem doesn't arise like in 16:20-22. After this, David calls Amasa to gather the men of Judah together for battle. They had better be ready, David says, because "Sheba...will do us more harm than Absalom" (v. 6). Joab's men depart to pursue Sheba and Amasa comes to meet them. Now, if you recall, Joab hasn't been the most honorable commander lately. He murdered Abner (chapter 3), deceived David (chapter 14) and murdered Absalom against David's wishes (chapter 18). When Joab meets Amasa, he pretends to move in to greet him with a kiss but, instead, thrusts his sword into Amasa's stomach. He probably does this because Amasa is a threat to his leadership as commander of the army.

What's the Big Idea?

God continues to establish David's kingdom in the face of revolt and all manner of sinfulness. This passage shows God's heart to preserve His kingdom amidst human threats and lacking characters.

What's the Problem?

Because earthly situations can seem overwhelming, we doubt that God will follow through on His promises in hard times.



Sheba is Captured and Beheaded (20:13-26)

Following Amasa's murder, Joab moves on to pursue Sheba. He and the army are closing in when he meets a wise woman in the city of Abel, where Sheba is staying. The woman accuses Joab of trying to overtake King David, but he corrects her, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim...has lifted up his hand against King David" (v. 20b-21). The woman promises Joab the head of Sheba. She doesn't waste time – she goes right to the people of Abel and they cut off Sheba's head and throw it over the wall to Joab. Just as quickly as it began, the rebellion is squelched.

Conclusion

This compact chapter puts God on display as the hero. It shows God's heart to preserve His kingdom amidst human threats and sub-par characters. In spite of His promise to not let evil depart from David's house in 2 Samuel 12:10, He keeps His promise that David's house will continue forever (7:11-16). God works through good and bad to bring about His ultimate purposes and to display His ultimate goal – His glory. Help your students see the wonder of God's orchestrating power in our lives. Pray that this text reveals that He is faithful to keep His promises and we can cast ourselves upon Him to bring them to fruition. Finally, help them see the greater promise that God's kingdom is being built in us through Jesus' work on the cross and the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. God may seem distant and even absent in these chapters, but know that He is intricately and intimately involved to make His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

What's Our Response?

Rest in God's ability to establish His kingdom no matter what circumstances you may be up against.

What Are the Questions?

2 Samuel 20:1-26

LAUNCH

Share an example of God working in spite of yourself or the people around you.

EXPLORE

Read 2 Samuel 20:1-2.

1. Why do you think verse 1 describes Sheba as a scoundrel?
2. Describe the nature of Sheba's revolt.

Read 2 Samuel 20:3-12.

3. Why do you think David puts his concubines under guard?
4. In what way do these concubines suffer because of David's decision?

5. Summarize what happens in verses 4-7.

6. Summarize what happens in verses 8-12.

7. Why do you think Joab kills Amasa?

Read 2 Samuel 20:13-26.

8. Describe the stalemate depicted in verses 13-15.
9. How does this situation resolve itself?

APPLY

10. Read Psalm 2. How does this Psalm serve as a framework for understanding 2 Samuel 20 and for viewing all who stand against the kingdom of David's greater Son, Jesus Christ?
11. Read 2 Samuel 12:11-12. How do these verses shed light on David's motive for isolating his concubines, and how is this action an expression of one person's sin having fallout for others?
12. Read Daniel 7:13-14. What similarities and differences do you see between the triumph of David's kingdom in 2 Samuel 20 and the triumph of Jesus' kingdom described in these verses?
13. In what way do you see any of the following in your life: others suffering because of your sin (ala David and the concubines), verbal assent to God combined with foot-dragging (ala Amasa) or ugliness borne out of rivalry, selfishness or jockeying for position (ala Joab)?
14. Think about a challenging situation you're facing right now. How does the inevitability of God's kingdom give you hope in the face of that situation?

What Are the Answers?

1. He's rebelling against God's king.
2. He sways the northern tribes to reject David's authority over them.
3. He's likely protecting them against the threat of someone going into them in the same way Absalom did when he rebelled against David in 16:20-22.
4. They lived in seclusion till the day of their deaths.
5. David commands Amasa, his new commander, to call up the troops. When he's slow to execute David's order, David calls Abishai to deploy the king's personal guard against Sheba.
6. Joab attacks Amasa and kills him.
7. He likely kills him because he sees him as a threat to his power.
8. Sheba tries to hide in Abel Bethmaacah, and Joab's men besiege him.
9. A woman offers to eliminate Sheba in exchange for Joab sparing the city.
10. God preserves David's kingdom against Sheba, who revolts against him. He preserves Jesus' kingdom against all who rebel against it.
11. These verses remind readers that David has to take this action toward his concubines because of his own sin. But the concubines suffer the consequences in a life of isolation.
12. God preserves both kingdoms against all manner of threat and in spite of all manner of lacking characters, but Jesus' kingdom is everlasting and indestructible while David's kingdom eventually unravels in the hands of his descendants.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

So all the men of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 20:2