

SO THEY FELL DOWN TOGETHER

2 SAMUEL 2:1 – 3:39

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~ King Saul was killed in battle in the previous leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God; so, one might assume David can finally take the throne and his problems are over. Unfortunately, David's problems are just beginning. Isn't it interesting that when we reach the place in life where we feel we have "arrived" at success – we find out life is so much more complicated and difficult in that place than it had seemed prior to achieving said goals? Well, that's certainly been my experience, friends. This is a very interesting section of Scripture to me; and, if you have your Bible, you'll want to turn here and read the full section of Scripture this report covers, after praying for wisdom, judgment and discernment. Then, read this report, and see if the Spirit of God speaks to your heart.

In our previous report, we witnessed the grief of David over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. David's mourning was genuine for both; and, with David's conduct towards Saul, I don't think there is any question about that; certainly not in reference to Jonathan. Jonathan and David were close friends. It seems as if Jonathan was a sort of John the Baptist to King David; Jonathan knew David was to be the next king of Israel and he pledged his full support and complete loyalty to him.

David is questioning God as we begin this report. Saul is dead, should David return to Israel now? We've seen David's lapse of faith in previous reports, when David ran away to Philistia and pledged allegiance to the King of Gad, for example. David wasn't inquiring of the Lord about those decisions back then. As a result, David nearly found himself fighting his own people Israel – and would have had to fight – if God had not intervened miraculously and prevented it. Even so, that episode in the life of David brings trouble again in this report. At least David is seeking the leading of the Lord again as we begin....

II

1 And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

~ God's covenant with David concerning an everlasting kingdom makes this one remarkable chapter in Scripture. The message from the Word of God from this point forward is contingent entirely on the promises God makes to David at this time. David is now learning to ask God for leading, and how to wait for an answer – and how to execute said commands when said answer is received. As we read on, we're reminded how David has two wives in addition to Saul's daughter at this time – and he will add a few more soon; but; friends, this does NOT mean God approves of polygamy. God has already commanded that the kings of Israel multiply not wives nor horses. God hasn't changed his mind. Everything we are about to read will later cause David chaotic family trouble and deep heart ache in his life....

2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.

3 And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabeshgilead were they that buried Saul.

~ Remember, David was down in Philistia – in Ziklag – and Hebron is not too far away; so, it seems God is telling David to move in a very commendable, diplomatic - but cautious way. God didn't tell David to go up with blazing saddles and arbitrarily seize control over the land. God instructs David to just quietly move back into Israel and make himself available when needed. That's God method, my beloved. When the time comes for God to use you – this is how He will instruct you to move. When David obeys God, and moves in God's revealed way, the tribe of Judah accepts him as their king. He has already been anointed king of Israel by

Samuel – but the reality of moving into the palace and onto the throne wasn't just that cut and dry, apparently.

David acts very wisely at this time in another way, too. See, the men who buried Saul were, naturally, loyal to Saul; so, David recognizes that, compliments them for it, and thanks them for their service out of respect for the office of king. We saw David had two opportunities to slay Saul and assume the throne a long time ago – but he didn't do that – because that wasn't God's way. That would have been David's way; and his men encouraged him to do it exactly that wrong way. Remember, they were sick and tired of running away from Saul and then letting him escape. David was actually risking a mutiny by placing the problem in God's hands – and God handled it. I find it interesting how this and other highly commendable acts by David are largely ignored by contemporary Christians recounting his life. We don't have people living up to the standards of David today; but we have myriad multitudes committing the same sins....

5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

8 But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

~ Saul had several sons, and without God's intervention – one of them would have been the rightful heir and successor to the throne of Israel at this time. Abner, the captain that had fallen asleep when he should have been guarding Saul in first Samuel chapter twenty-six, makes an immediate move to establish Ishbosheth as king. This marks the beginning of the tragic division of Israel into the northern and southern tribes; and becomes

permanent to the kingdom overall after the reign of Solomon, when Jeroboam leads another rebellion. After that incident, Israel will have two kings. A hairline fracture in Israel's unity develops at this time but lies dormant until the days following King Solomon. At this time, Israel is experiencing an interval of civil war between the northern tribes of Israel led by Ishbosheth and the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin led by David. Tragically, the only result of the infighting will be the complete and total depletion of the resources, spirit and energy of the entire nation....

9 And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.

10 Ishbosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

12 And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkathazzurim, which is in Gibeon.

17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

~ This was initially an effort to reach out with a diplomatic resolution regarding the divided kingdom. However, when one party is determined they will accept only one outcome, and the opposing party is equally and oppositely determined, negotiations can quickly become a waste of time. The “play” by the pool indicates it was an exercise in futility. It was also an attempt to trick David; but David is not a gullible and naive shepherd boy anymore. They’re dealing with a highly developed and rugged man of war; a veteran of many campaigns. David is prepared for deceitfulness and deception. He has spent at least the last decade hiding in caves and forests of the earth, running from Saul the entire time. That’s why David was prepared for immediate engagement in battle in verse seventeen – and he took the victory likely without effort. I think it was a sore battle for Abner – not David....

18 And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe.

19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am.

21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to

pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill.

26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

27 And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and threescore men died.

32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

III

1 Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

~ Internal strife is the condition of the nation Israel at the time in which we are studying. Civil war has ensued and is rapidly depleting the nation's resources and capabilities. While all of these problems are developing, God seems fit to tell us about the many wives David had. Polygamy was the biggest problem in David's life at this time; and Absalom, son of Maacah, will later lead a deadly coup attempt and rebellion against David. Maacah was the daughter of the King of Geshur; and back in first Samuel chapter twenty-seven verse eight, we read David went out of the land – and out of God's will – and how he carried on a war against the King in Geshur. David was in the wrong place doing the wrong thing altogether at that time – and, as a result, he is beginning to reap what he has sown. It won't end well.

Absalom was the one son David loved, apparently, more than any other of his children; and Absalom will be brutally killed by Joab in battle during Absalom's rebellion. We will see Absalom was David's only choice to become the next king of Israel – not Solomon. It broke David's heart when Absalom was killed. See, David didn't get by with the sin of taking multiple wives. Later, we also see another son rape a sister – one of David's other daughters – and then be killed by yet another son. That family was a mess, friends – because of David's sin of polygamy. God does not approve of, nor will He bless polygamy. Period. God will see to it that David does not get by in disobedience. You can just write that down because it is very, very important....

2 And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

3 And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmi king of Geshur;

4 And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital;

5 And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

6 And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to day with a fault concerning this woman?

~ Abner had crowned Ishbosheth king, remember; and now Abner is sleeping around with the king's dead fathers' harem. Abner is a tough, experienced older man of war, and Ishbosheth is a kid to him – so Abner tells Ishbosheth that, quite frankly, this is none of Ishbosheth's business. This is when Abner decides he will defect to David, too. Only when Abner is chastened by Saul's descendants does he begin to make overtures to do the right thing. That's very strange, because Ishbosheth was a child – he had no army – and as we read on, we see he was afraid of Abner. Things in the northern kingdom are in chaos at this time, and especially in the house of Saul. So, Abner begins another attempt to unite the twelve tribes. Personally, I don't think Abner was as interested in unifying Israel as much as he was interested in deflecting the shame of his peers looking upon him....

9 So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him;

10 To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba.

11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him.

12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

13 And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

14 And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

15 And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

16 And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

17 And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you:

18 Now then do it: for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that were with him a feast.

21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go , and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

22 And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

23 When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone ?

25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

26 And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not.

27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

28 And afterward when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner:

29 Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

31 And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier.

32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept .

33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

34 Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou. And all the people wept again over him.

35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down.

36 And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

39 And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

~ So, David is demanding his first wife, Michal, be returned by Abner as a condition of reaching an agreement; and contingent upon David accepting kingship over all twelve tribes. It is, actually, the treachery of Abner that

results in David being made king. You can't make this stuff up, friends. David had an extremely checkered past with women. That's one of the reasons God would not permit David to build a temple. All of David's suffering from here forward is a direct result of the sin that has entered his life through disobedience of polygamy and adultery. Even so, there was a faith in David's life that never failed. The one exemplary characteristic, above all else, was that David deeply desired a sincere and close relationship with God.

In the meantime, Joab never forgot how his brother had been slain by Abner; and, as soon as he had an opportunity, Joab murdered Abner. David, of course, didn't approve of this and he confronts Joab with the terrible deed. The interesting thing is what David said about the killing in verse thirty-three. David gave a strange epitaph when he asked "... *did Abner die as a fool dieth?*" Well, Abner had been in Hebron; and Hebron was one of the cities of refuge. That was one of the sixteen cities where a killer would have received amnesty, you will remember from Genesis and Leviticus. If Abner had stayed inside the walls of Hebron, he would have been perfectly safe from Joab; but, as we read on, Joab very quietly took Abner aside – which means he somehow tricked or enticed Abner to come out of the city. Joab likely said to Abner, "... *I just want to talk with you and see if we can make this right!*" Joab makes it seem like it would be nice for the two to get together and make amends; maybe fight some battles together, you know. That creates a perfect opportunity for murder – and Joab seizes said opportunity post haste. When Abner left the city of refuge, he made a fatal mistake. Today, the Lord Jesus Christ is our city of refuge for sinners.

God's evaluation of *YOU*, my friend who will not turn to Christ – and I don't care how high your IQ is, or how many doctorate degrees you possess – you are a complete fool in God's eyes. If the truth were told at many funerals today, the eulogist would have to say "... *another fool has just died!*" Refusing to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ as your place of refuge is foolish. That's what God says. Are you residing within your city of refuge today, friends? It is an idiot's mistake not to take advantage of the refuge God has so lovingly provided for us in His Son. Christ is the only place of refuge from our coming judgment. Everyone needs a city of refuge because *ALL* have sinned and *ALL* come short of the glory of God! The wages of sin is death,

my beloved. If you have never entered the place of safety in the Lord, I invite you to come to Christ today – right now – and trust Him as your Savior ~