

Civil War In Israel: David v Ish-bosheth

II Samuel 2

Outline

- 1-4a | David made king over Judah
- 4b-7 | David blesses the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul
- 8-11 | Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, is made king over Israel
- 12-17 | Civil war breaks out; Ish-bosheth's army is severely beaten, first in a battle of champions then further on the battlefield
- 18-23 | Abner is pursued by Asahel, who is killed by Abner after he warned Asahel
- 24-29 | Joab and Abishai, Asahel's brothers, pursue Abner who in turn convinces Joab to halt the bloodshed
- 30-32 | Casualty numbers: 20 from David's men, 360 from Ish-bosheth's men; Asahel is buried in Bethlehem

Reflections

After David finishes his lament for Saul and his sons, he inquired of the Lord regarding whether he should go up to the cities of Judah and the Lord answers in the affirmative, in particular to the city of Hebron. Upon arriving, David is made king over Judah. David also honors the men of Jabesh-gilead for retrieving the bodies of Saul and his sons.

The rest of the tribes seek to establish Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's remaining sons, to be their king and to continue his royal line. This separation remains for seven and a half years, with David reigning over Judah in Hebron.

At this point, Ish-bosheth's general, Abner the son of Ner, assembles the Israelite army at Mahanaim and David's general, Joab the son of Zeruiah, assembles the men of Judah and they meet at the pool of Gibeon. Abner proposes a contest of champions as a means for settling the dispute and Joab agrees. Twelve men from each side are paired up and they each kill their opponent, resulting in the place being named Kelkath-hazzurim or "the field of swordedges."

Then the army of Judah pursue the army of Israel. Asahel, one of Joab's brothers, pursues Abner, who in turn kills Asahel after being warned and told to pursue someone else so that Abner wouldn't have to kill him. Asahel refused and is killed. Finally, Abner convinces Joab to halt the pursuit and the killing of their fellow brothers. When the casualty numbers are totaled: 20 of David's men and 360 of Ish-bosheth's men had been killed.

This bloodshed could have been avoided if the men of Israel had followed the wishes of the Lord, who had taken the kingdom from Saul and given it to David but instead they did what was right in their own eyes and sought to make Ish-bosheth king in Saul's stead.

How often do we seek to defy the wishes of God and do what we think is the right thing? What is usually the result? Nothing good. Of course, there are times when it is hard to determine what the Lord would have us do right away. How can a believer then aid himself in the process of determining the wishes of God in order to walk with God in his daily life?

George Whitefield, in his sermon "Walking with God"¹, offers these practical activities for believers as a means of maintaining their walk with God.

- Reading of God's Word
- Secret Prayer
- Holy and Frequent Meditation ("Meditation to the soul is the same as digestion to the body.")

1 Whitefield, George. "Walking With God: Genesis 5:24." *Sermons of George Whitefield*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009. 1-14. Print.

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- Watching and noting God's providential dealings in their lives
- Watching and noting God's Spirit in their heart, in conjunction with God's Word
- Maintaining the ordinances of God in regular church attendance
- Keep company with those who wish to walk with God as well

I'll close with this quote from his sermon in which he urges his listeners to continue growing in their walk with God.

Only give me leave to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and to beseech you by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, to take heed to yourselves, and walk closer with your God than you have in days past: for the nearer you walk with God, the more you will enjoy of him whose presence is life, and be the better prepared for being placed at his right hand, where are pleasures forevermore. Oh, do not follow Jesus from afar off! Oh, be not so formal, so dead and stupid in your attendance on holy ordinances! Do not shamefully forsake the assembling yourselves together, or be so tightfisted or indifferent about the things of God. Remember what Jesus says of the church of Laodicea, "Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Think of the love of Jesus, and let that love constrain you to keep near unto him; and though you die for him, do not deny him, do not keep at a distance from him in anywise.

Lord God, keep us close to You as we seek to know You better and the many blessings that can come from knowing You, our Creator and the Maintainer of this present life, the King of the Universe. Thank You Lord for the many blessings You give us each day and help us to honor You in our daily lives. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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