

The King's Kindness Despised

Text: 2 Samuel 10

Introduction: Last time we were in 2 Samuel, we talked about the kindness of the king. Specifically, the kindness of King David to Mephibosheth who was the disabled son of David's close friend Jonathan.

King David sought out someone to whom he could show kindness for Jonathan's sake, and he found Mephibosheth. Instead of treating him as an enemy or a threat, David welcomed him, restored him, and set him at his own table. 2 Samuel 9 is a picture of undeserved grace received in humility.

But as we turn the page to chapter 10, we move from kindness received to kindness despised. The same king extends the same grace. Yet this time, it is despised. Instead of receiving kindness, Hanun responds with suspicion, pride, and outright insult. And the tragic result is conflict, humiliation, and ultimately judgment.

Go ahead and turn in your Bible to 2 Samuel 10 if you haven't already. It's on page ____ in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we invite you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read 2 Samuel 10...Pray)

As we consider 2 Samuel 10 this morning, I want to urge you to **receive the kindness of the king in repentance and faith rather than rejecting it in pride and unbelief.**

2 Samuel 10 ultimately serves as a warning to us. Because as we look at the beginning of the chapter, we see...

I. The king's kindness extended (2 Samuel 10:1-5).

- A. The author of 2 Samuel sets the scene for us in verse 1.
(Read vs. 1)

1. When we read the words "after this" in English, we immediately think about chronology. But it's likely that the author of 2 Samuel is thinking more thematically. In fact, it's most likely that the events of 2 Samuel 10 took place prior to the events of 2 Samuel 8.
2. But it is certainly true that 2 Samuel 10 follows 2 Samuel 9 thematically. Both chapters are about the kindness of King David. In 2 Samuel 9, David extended his kindness to Mephibosheth, and it was received. And here in chapter 10, we're going to see that David again extends his kindness. But this time it is rejected.
3. The setting is that the king of the Ammonites has died. And Hanun his son has risen to the throne in his place.
4. The king of the Ammonites who died was Nahash. Prior to this, the only time he shows up in the narrative of 1 and 2 Samuel is in 1 Samuel 11. Nahash and the Ammonites attacked Jabesh-gilead, and King Saul and the people of Israel defeated Nahash and the Ammonites.
5. But now, Nahash has died, and Hanun his son is the new king.

B. David apparently hears of Nahash's death and desires to show kindness to Hanun his son. (Read vs. 2)

1. The ESV translates David's words, "I will deal **LOYALLY** with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father has dealt **LOYALLY** with me."
2. The word in Hebrew is *hesed* and it does have that connotation of loyalty. But translating it that way masks the connection with chapter 9 where the same word is translated *kindness*. Other English translations translate it as *kindness* both in chapters 9 and 10.
3. We don't know what David meant when he said that Nahash had showed kindness to him. It is possible that when Saul was seeking to kill David, Nahash had provided him with some kind of protection or assistance. But we can only speculate. We really don't know.

4. What we know is that now that Nahash is dead, David wants to show kindness to his son Hanun on Nahash's behalf. Which is very similar to chapter 9 where David showed kindness to Mephibosheth because of his father Jonathan.
5. We noted in chapter 9 that David could have viewed Mephibosheth as a threat to him, but instead he showed kindness to Mephibosheth. And if that was the case in chapter 9 with Mephibosheth, that is especially true here in chapter 10 with Hanun. The Ammonites were an enemy of Israel. David could have viewed Nahash's death as an opportunity to subjugate a longtime enemy of Israel. It wouldn't necessarily be surprising to us to read that David led Israel to attack and defeat the Ammonites before the new king could establish his reign.
6. But that's not what David did, is it? Instead, David sought to comfort Hanun following the death of his father. David sought to show kindness to Hanun the Ammonite.

C. But sadly, Hanun did not receive David's act of kindness as Mephibosheth had done. (Read vs. 3)

1. The "princes of the Ammonites" were likely military men. In fact, other translations refer to them as "commanders" of the Ammonites.
2. They completely misinterpreted David's intentions. They asked Hanun, "Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father?" Instead, they suggested, "Has not David sent his servants to you to search the city and to spy it out and overthrow it?"
3. Hanun's commanders were conspiracy theorists. They saw in David's pure intentions an ulterior motive. John Woodhouse writes, "They displayed an attitude that poisons too many human relationships. Distrust prevents us from seeing good intentions for what they are. We are prone to suspicion. Sometimes, of course, suspicion is justified, but when it makes us incapable of

seeing the goodness of someone else's words, actions, or intentions much harm is caused" (Woodhouse, 270).

4. And that's exactly what we're going to see in the rest of the chapter. Much harm is caused by these commanders and their suspicious, prideful attitudes toward David and his servants.
5. David's motives were pure. He truly was seeking to honor Nahash and provide comfort to his son Hanun. That's what the text tells us was his motive.
6. I wonder if you've ever wrongly assumed that you knew the motives of another person. Rather than giving someone the benefit of the doubt, you assumed the worst, and it turned out that you were wrong.
7. As Christians, we are supposed to be people of the truth.
 - a. We don't want to be gullible and ignore the fact that we live in a fallen world where people do sometimes have wrong motives and seek to cause harm to others. That can be dangerous both to ourselves and to others.
 - b. But we also don't want to be suspicious people who think that others always have some kind of ulterior motive where they are seeking our harm even when their outward actions demonstrate kindness. An attitude of suspicion is poisonous to peaceful living.
 - c. We don't want to be gullible or suspicious. Instead, we want to be discerning. Jesus said that we should be "wise as a serpent" and "harmless as a dove" (Matt. 10:16). We need to ask God to give us wisdom. To make us discerning.
8. Hanun was not discerning. He fell prey to the suspicious attitude of his commanders. He despised David's kindness and responded with hostility. Look at verse 4. (Read vs. 4)
 - a. David's servants came to show kindness to Hanun. But instead of receiving David's kindness to him, Hanun abused David's servants.

- b. In that day, a man's beard represented his dignity. We see that reflected in Leviticus. To have your beard forcibly shaved was deeply humiliating. And Hanun did not just shave their beards, he shaved half of the beard of each. He left them looking ridiculous.
 - c. And not only that, but also, he cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips. Likely shaming them by exposing their private parts.
 - d. I think it's hard for us to fully grasp the humiliation these actions would have caused to David's servants.
9. David had sought to show kindness to Hanun upon the death of his father, but Hanun foolishly responded by despising the kindness of King David.
10. We see David's kindness on display again in verse 5. This time toward his servants. (Read vs. 5)
- a. They were humiliated. And they had been humiliated while following the command of David their king.
 - b. So, what did David do? He made provisions for them to be restored before returning to public life. He covered their shame.
 - c. I won't belabor the point too long here, but perhaps this reminds us of what the Lord Jesus has done to cover our shame. Of course, our shame has not been caused by our obedience to Him but rather by our disobedience. We have acted shamefully in rebellion against Him. But He has made a way for the shame caused by our sin to be covered by His blood.

So, we've seen the king's kindness extended. Next, we see...

II. The king's kindness rejected (2 Samuel 10:6-14).

We've already seen this to some extent, but it becomes the major focus of the verses that follow.

- A. The text says, "When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David" (vs. 6a).
- 1. It's important to note here that to this point David has not done anything in response to Hanun's shaming of his servants. He has shown kindness to his servants. But he has not retaliated in any way or even given any indication that retaliation is on his mind.
 - 2. We might say that David has been "slow to anger."
 - 3. But the Ammonites understood the seriousness of what they had done. We don't know to what extent they had actually become a stench to David, but that was their view of the situation. They felt sure that David would retaliate against them for shaming his servants.
- B. So, what did the Ammonites do?
- 1. Keep reading in verse 6. (Read vs. 6b)
 - 2. Rather than attempting to make things right with David, the Ammonites escalated the situation further. They gathered an army.
 - 3. Again, the text gives us no reason to think that David is the aggressor here. David was a mighty warrior. He was certainly not beyond going to battle on Israel's behalf. But through the end of verse 6, there's no real indication in the text that David is thinking about attacking the Ammonites.
 - 4. He only assembles his army in verse 7 after he hears that the Ammonites have already assembled their army and even sought outside help from the Syrians. The Ammonites are the aggressors. They are escalating the situation. And David is responding.
 - 5. It should have been clear to Hanun and the Ammonites at this point that they had completely misinterpreted David's actions in sending his servants to comfort him. But it seems clear that it never occurred to them to come to David and confess their mistake. To seek his forgiveness. To receive his kindness. Instead, they prepared for battle. (Read vs. 8)

C. And in response, Joab, the commander of David's army, prepared his men for battle as well (vs. 9-10). (Read vs. 9-10)

- 1. Joab was last mentioned in chapter 8 as the commander of David's army, but it was in chapter 3 that we saw Joab murder Abner who had been the commander of Saul's army.**
- 2. Here we see Joab acting at David's command in the interest of the nation as they face this aggressive action by the Ammonites.**
- 3. His brother Abishai seems to be his right-hand man. Perhaps you remember Abishai from earlier in the narrative as well.**

D. In verses 11-12, we find Joab's speech to Abisha. (Read vs. 11-12)

- 1. Joab first explains the strategy.**
 - a. Joab would take a group of men and array them against the Syrians. And Abishai would take a group of men and array them against the Ammonites.**
 - b. If Joab and his men needed help, Abishai and his men would come to their assistance. And if Abishai and his men needed help, Joab and his men would come to their assistance.**
- 2. Next, Joab encouraged Abishai to be strong and courageous.**
 - a. The text doesn't tell us anything about what either Abishai or Joab were thinking or feeling. But you can imagine that there must have been some trepidation about what was about to take place.**
 - b. Joab did what any good leader would do in this situation. Prepare himself and his men, not just physically, but emotionally and psychologically as well.**

3. Joab then reminds Abishai of what is at stake.

- a. He says, "Be of good courage, and let us be courageous FOR OUR PEOPLE, and FOR THE CITIES OF OUR GOD."**
- b. They are God's people living in the land that God had given them, and they are now facing an attack from God's enemy the Ammonites.**
- c. Joab turns his attention and that of his brother to the Lord.**

4. Notice also the source of their strength and courage.

- a. Joab said, "May the LORD do what seems good to him" (vs. 12b).**
- b. Joab trusted the Lord. He had no way of knowing for sure what would happen. But he trusted the Lord.**
- c. He didn't know what the Lord would do, but he knew that the Lord would do "what seems good to him."**
- d. We're reminded this morning that the Lord always does what seems good to Him. And because He is good, what seems good to Him is always good. What seems good to us isn't always good. But what seems good to the Lord is always good. We can trust Him. He is worthy of our trust and confidence. The Lord is good, and He always does what is good.**

E. And what was the result of Joab's courage?

- 1. Look at verses 13-14. (Read vs. 13-14)**
- 2. What was the result? The Ammonites and Syrians fled before them.**
- 3. Apparently, no blood was shed. The enemy fled.**
- 4. Still, there are no acts of aggression on the part of David's men. All of their actions to this point have been defensive. The aggression has been on the part of the Ammonites, and now they have fled.**

5. **They've been the objects of David's kindness and patience, but sadly, to this point, they have still rejected the king's kindness.**

And they will continue to reject the king's kindness as we see in the rest of the chapter...

III. The king's victory secured (2 Samuel 10:15-19).

A. The focus here in the rest of the chapter shifts from the Ammonites to the Syrians.

1. **The Ammonites had hired the Syrians to help them because they feared what David might do to them in response to their having shamed his servants.**
2. **Now the Syrians are involved, and they are not too happy about having been defeated by Israel. So, the text says that they "gathered themselves together" (vs. 15). They regrouped. They prepared to again come against Israel.**
3. **Look at verse 16. (Read vs. 16)**

B. David got word of what was happening and again gathered his men for battle (vs. 17). (Read vs. 17)

1. **Notice that this time David doesn't send Joab to command Israel's army. David goes himself.**
2. **And what was the result? Look at verse 18. (Read vs. 18)**
3. **Previously blood had not been shed. But this time, blood was shed. And a lot of it.**
4. **You remember back in chapter 8 we were told that "The Lord gave victory to David wherever he went" (8:6, 14). That's exactly what we see here.**
5. **And verse 19 records the result of Israel's victory. (Read vs. 19)**
6. **The earlier defeat at the hands of Joab caused the Syrians to regroup. But this time their response is different. This time it's full surrender.**

7. **We'll have to wait to see what happens with the Ammonites. That's the connection between chapter 10 and what follows in the chapters to come. But what we're told here is that the Ammonites were now on their own. The Syrians were afraid to come to their aid anymore.**

Conclusion: So, what do we make of a chapter like this? On the one hand, these events from the reign of David are recorded here in 2 Samuel because they actually happened as they are recorded.

God is fulfilling His promise to David. He is making for David a great name. He is cutting off all his enemies from before him. He is protecting Israel from violent men and giving them rest from all their enemies. 2 Samuel 10 is a reminder that God always keeps His promises.

But I wonder if perhaps this chapter might also serve as a spiritual mirror for us. See, the kindness David extended to Hanun. And the tragic rejection of that kindness. Points us forward to a far greater King and a far greater kindness.

See, God has extended His kindness to us through David's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true King who came. And He came with the purest of motives. To seek and save sinners like you and me.

And yet, just like Hanun, the human heart is naturally suspicious of God's intentions. In pride, we think we know better. Rather than receiving the kindness of the King, we reject His kindness in pride and unbelief.

The good news is that God is patient. He is slow to anger. He does not immediately give us what we deserve. He gives us opportunity to turn to Him. To receive His kindness in repentance and faith.

The Bible says that God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

And just as David and his men eventually secured victory, so has Jesus secured a greater and final victory through His cross and resurrection. The battle has already been won. The King's victory is certain. His enemies will not stand. His kingdom will not fail.

The question is: How will you respond to the kindness of the King?

Will you receive His kindness in repentance and faith? Or will you reject Him in pride and unbelief?