

Waiting on the Lord's Purposes

Text: 2 Samuel 4

Introduction: Hear the words of David in Psalm 37...

*Trust in the Lord, and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.
4 Delight yourself in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
5 Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.
6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.
7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;*

We're not aware of any specific circumstances that precipitated David writing this Psalm, but we do know that David had many experiences throughout His life that taught him the importance of trusting the Lord and waiting on the Lord. In fact, as we have seen and will see today, the circumstances surrounding David's elevation to the throne in Israel required him to trust the Lord while waiting on the Lord.

Perhaps you, in your life, have experienced circumstances where you had to wait on the Lord. Maybe because the Lord wasn't acting fast enough to suit you, you were tempted to charge ahead and take matters into your own hands. Maybe you did move forward and experienced the consequences for your unwillingness to wait on the Lord.

The truth is that we all need David's counsel in Psalm 37. We all need to learn to trust in the Lord. We all need to learn to be still before the Lord. To wait patiently for Him.

I think 2 Samuel 4 will show us the importance of waiting on the Lord and His purposes. It's one thing to hear David's counsel in Psalm 37. It's another thing to observe his life in 2 Samuel 4.

Go ahead and turn in your Bible to 2 Samuel 4 if you haven't already. It's on page 240 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave. If you haven't yet gotten one of the 1-2 Samuel Scripture journals, I apologize that we are out. I have ordered a few more, and they should arrive this week.

(Read 2 Samuel 4...Pray)

I want you to see this morning that **while we wait on the Lord, we can trust Him to accomplish His good purposes.**

We know that the Lord's purpose was for David to rule over all Israel. He was anointed as king by Samuel all the way back in 1 Samuel 16. But David's path to the throne has been a looong and winding road.

And as we come to 2 Samuel 4, David is still not the king of all Israel. He's the king in Judah. But Saul's son Ish-bosheth is the king of the rest of Israel. The situation is really a mess.

Last time we saw that Ish-bosheth's right hand man Abner had determined to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul to the house of David. But before he could make that happen, David's right hand man Joab murdered Abner. And that's where we pick up the narrative this morning.

Things are a mess. David is still not the king of all Israel. And we're left wondering, "How will the Lord accomplish His purpose of elevating David to the throne in Israel?"

There's a lot of uncertainty in Israel. But I want you to see first that...

I. The Lord is never uncertain (2 Samuel 4:1-4).

A. Ish-bosheth is uncertain though, isn't he? Look at verse 1. (Read vs. 1)

1. We were first introduced to Ish-bosheth in chapter 2 when Abner made him king over all Israel.

2. We said then that Abner was the one calling the shots. He was the one in charge. Ish-bosheth was merely along for the ride. We might say that Ish-bosheth was Abner's puppet.
3. Now, Abner is dead, and Ish-bosheth doesn't know what to do.
4. The ESV says that "his courage failed." The Hebrew literally says "his hands dropped."
5. Without Abner, Ish-bosheth was lost. He didn't know what to do. I wonder what he knew of what had happened to Abner. Surely, he must have assumed that David had been involved. He probably feared that David would now come for him. What would he do? The commander of his army was dead.

B. But Ish-bosheth wasn't the only one who was uncertain, was he?

1. Look at the rest of verse 1: "his courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed."
2. One commentator says that "terrified" may be a better rendering (Woodhouse, 128).
3. I think it's really difficult for us in 21st century America to imagine what the people of Israel must have been experiencing at this time. Our government is certainly dysfunctional, but it's also pretty stable. We have a system of government that lends itself to stability. We have three co-equal branches of government. A system of checks and balances. We have elections and lines of succession should something happen to our leaders.
4. Things were far from stable in Israel. And the people were understandably afraid. Abner had been killed at Hebron. Rumors were probably swirling about what had happened. Did David have him killed? Ish-bosheth, their king, was a coward. Would David and his men come for him? Would David and his men come for them? So much fear and uncertainty.

C. Whenever there is a void of leadership, someone is always ready to step into that void.

1. Sometimes it's someone who has no business leading anything. Maybe they're not competent. Maybe they have poor character. Perhaps they have some kind of agenda they are hoping to further. Usually, the agenda is their own personal advancement.
2. In verse 2 we're introduced to two men who were captains of raiding bands under Ish-bosheth. Their names were Baanah and Rechab. And they were eager to step into the leadership void left by Abner's death.
3. More about them in a moment.

D. Because first, the narrator gives us a note about Jonathan's son Mephibosheth in verse 4. (Read vs. 4)

1. We're going to hear more about Mephibosheth when we get to chapter 9, but we might wonder why the narrator includes this note about Mephibosheth here in chapter 4 when nothing else is said about him in the chapter.
2. It seems that what the narrator is doing is showing us just how bleak the leadership picture was in Israel and just how weak the house of Saul really was.
3. After Ish-bosheth, Mephibosheth was the only surviving descendant of Saul who could possibly assume Israel's throne. And that simply wasn't possible for Mephibosheth. Israel needed a king who could defend her against her enemies. And due to his disability, Mephibosheth would be unable to do that.

The author wants us to feel the uncertainty and the hopelessness of the situation in Israel. But the uncertainty and hopelessness in Israel is a reminder to us that God is never uncertain. He is always at work. He always knows exactly what He is doing. And He is always accomplishing His purposes.

This seems like a good place in the narrative to remind us also that...

II. The Lord doesn't need our help (2 Samuel 4:5-7).

A. But that didn't stop Rechab and Baanah from trying.

- 1. Look at verse 5. (Read vs. 5-6)**
- 2. Ish-bosheth was the only person standing between David and the throne in all Israel, so Rechab and Baanah removed that obstacle by murdering Ish-bosheth in his sleep.**
- 3. Now, there's a lot we don't know about all that led up to this act. You'll remember that Abner determined in chapter 3 to "transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel." And he had started to take actions toward that end until he was deceived and murdered by Joab.**
- 4. Now, perhaps Rechab and Baanah see themselves as taking up Abner's mantle. They will be the ones to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel.**
- 5. We saw in chapter 3 that Abner's motives for transferring the kingdom to David were less than noble. And that certainly seems to be the case here with Rechab and Baanah as well.**
- 6. The author gives us a bit more information about their actions in verse 7. (Read vs. 7)**

B. We know that David himself has resisted every opportunity to take matters into his own hands and try to help God out.

- 1. On two occasions in 1 Samuel, David had the opportunity to intervene and take Saul's life. But he recognized Saul's place as God's anointed and refused to act sinfully to elevate himself. He trusted God's timing. He was committed to waiting on the Lord.**
- 2. Then when Saul died in battle, David mourned. He didn't try to manipulate the situation to elevate himself. He trusted the Lord. He waited on the Lord.**

C. Now, I do want to take a moment to highlight the complexity of God's purposes here in 2 Samuel 4.

- 1. We should understand Ish-bosheth's death as a sinful act by Rechab and Baanah. David is going to make that clear in verse 11. It was murder. Rechab and Baanah were wrong to kill Ish-bosheth.**
- 2. But we can also recognize Ish-bosheth's death as the judgment of God on him. Remember that in chapter 2 we said that Abner and Ish-bosheth were resisting God's purposes when Abner made Ish-bosheth king over all Israel. David was supposed to be Israel's king. Abner and Ish-bosheth knew that. Yet, they resisted God's purposes, elevated Ish-bosheth, and now Ish-bosheth experiences the consequences for his sin against God.**
- 3. The same thing could be said about Abner's death at the hands of Joab in chapter 3. Joab was wrong to deceive and murder Abner. But Abner's death was also the judgment of God on him. He had sinfully acted in his own interests rather than according to God's purposes. And ultimately, he paid the price for his sin.**
- 4. There's something else that is happening here in 2 Samuel 4 and the chapters that precede that highlights the complexity of God's purposes. God IS clearing the way for David to become king. Saul is dead. Abner is dead. Now Ish-bosheth is dead. But we need to see what is happening with spiritual eyes. From the perspectives of Rechab and Baanah, they were the ones clearing the way for David to become king. But in reality, it was God sovereignly accomplishing His purposes even through the sinful actions of sinful men.**
- 5. I wonder if that reminds you of another prominent time in Israel's history when God sovereignly used the sinful actions of sinful men to accomplish His purposes. It was read for us this morning during our Scripture reading in Acts 2. Peter was preaching on the Day of Pentecost, and he said to the crowd, "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23). The people who killed Jesus were lawless men doing an exceedingly sinful act. Namely, murdering the Son of God. But through their sinful act,**

God was accomplishing His purpose of sacrificing Jesus to reconcile us to Himself. All without bearing any guilt for that sin Himself.

6. That's hard for us to understand. Hard for us to fathom. Hard for us to wrap our minds around. We tend to see things as either/or. Either man was responsible, or God was responsible. But God is not limited by our inability to understand. He's sovereign. He always does what He wills. And He's good. He always does what is right. And that's true whether we understand it or not. Which means that while we wait on the Lord, we can trust Him to accomplish His good purposes. He doesn't need our help.
7. "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!" (Rom. 11:33).

That leads right into my last point...

III. The Lord will accomplish His purposes (2 Samuel 4:8-12).

A. After murdering Ish-bosheth and cutting off his head, Rechab and Baanah brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron (vs. 8).

1. And here is what they said to David, "Here is the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life. The LORD has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring" (vs. 8b-c).
2. This scene in verse 8 certainly reminds us of the events of chapter 1 when the Amalekite sojourner brought news of Saul's death. There the Amalekite sojourner brought Saul's crown and armlet to give to David. Here the sons of Rimmon bring Ish-bosheth's head. This is certainly more gruesome, but the point is the same. The king is dead, and the way is now cleared for David to become king.

3. Notice that Rechab and Banaah presented the relationship of Saul to David as "your enemy." There is certainly a sense in which they were right. Saul had tried to kill David on multiple occasions. Saul certainly viewed David as his enemy. But David refused to view Saul that way. David viewed Saul as God's anointed.
4. Notice also that the sons of Rimmon attribute their actions to the Lord. They say, "The LORD has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring" (vs. 8c). As we've said already, Saul's death, and now even Ish-bosheth's death, was the judgment of God on Saul and his household. But that does not mean that Rechab and Banaah had acted in a way that was faithful to the Lord and in accord with His commands. They had blatantly violated the sixth commandment. There was nothing God-honoring about what they had done.
5. Yes, it was God's purpose to judge Ish-bosheth. Yes, it was God's purpose to elevate David to the throne in all Israel. But God did not need Rechab and Banaah to take matters into their own hands and try to accomplish His purposes prematurely. The Lord didn't need their help. Like David, they should have waited on the Lord. They should have trusted the Lord to accomplish His purposes.

B. We see David's response to Rechab and Banaah beginning in verse 9.

1. (Read vs. 9-11)
2. David's response was clearly not what Rechab and Banaah were expecting when they brought the head of Ish-bosheth to him.
3. David had experienced the providential hand of God throughout his life to this point. The Lord had redeemed his life out of every adversity. David had reason to wait on the Lord. He had reason to trust that the Lord will accomplish His purposes. He had experienced it many times throughout his life.

4. We can trust the Lord for the same reason that David did. We know of His faithfulness in the past. And if He has been faithful in the past, He will be faithful now and in the future as well. He has accomplished His good purposes in the past. And He will continue to accomplish His good purposes for His glory and our good.
 5. David then confronts Rechab and Banaah very directly for taking matters into their own hands and acting in disobedience to God and His commands.
 - a. He tells them of what happened with the Amalekite sojourner when he came bringing news of Saul's death (vs. 10). David had him killed at Ziklag as an act of justice for murdering God's anointed. Even though the Amalekite had not actually killed Saul. He just lied and told David that he had.
 - b. Then in verse 11, David refers to Rechab and Banaah as wicked men. They killed a righteous man in his own house on his own bed. Don't misunderstand what David was saying here when he refers to Ish-bosheth as a "righteous man." He's not so much making a moral judgment of Ish-bosheth as he is of these two men who killed him. Compared to them, Ish-bosheth was righteous. There was no reason for them to do what they did. What they did was murder him in cold blood. Their actions against Ish-bosheth were unjust.
 - c. One of the things that I wrote in my notes this week is that David demonstrates a strong sense of justice here. He understands right and wrong. He's able to see the situation with moral clarity. That sense of justice will certainly falter in significant ways in the years to come, but at least here in this text, David's sense of justice reminds us of the importance of God's people having a clear view of right and wrong based on obedience to God and His commands.
 - d. We live in a culture that talks a lot about justice. I think that's a good thing. Some Christians like to deride justice talk, but I think that's a serious mistake. It's true that the world around us doesn't have a clear view of what justice really is. Things get labeled as justice issues that really have nothing to do with justice. Things get labeled as just that are really unjust. But that doesn't mean we can throw away the idea of justice. God is a God of justice. He cares about right and wrong. And we should too. This is especially true for those in positions of leadership like David. It's why character matters so much for those who lead. How can a person lead in a way that is good and right if they don't have a clear understanding of right and wrong and a strong commitment to doing what is right?
6. David speaks about what is just in verse 11, but then in verse 12, he takes action to execute justice. (Read vs. 12)
 - a. Because Rechab and Banaah had murdered Ish-bosheth the king, their judgment was swift.
 - b. They deserved punishment for their sin against Ish-bosheth, and that is exactly what they received. The wages of sin is death.
 - c. We learn here something that is very clear throughout the Bible, that not all killing is the same. There's a clear difference here between the actions of Rechab and Banaah in taking the life of an innocent man while he was asleep in his home and the actions of David in ordering the execution of two men who were guilty of murder.
 - d. Rechab and Banaah acted outside of God's commands and murdered Ish-bosheth. David acted as God's agent for good as king by punishing Rechab and Banaah for their very serious sin.

7. **But notice also the mercy David showed to Ish-bosheth. Here was a man who had prevented him from serving as king of all Israel as God intended. Yet, he treats him with mercy and grace by burying his head in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.**

Conclusion: So, what is it that we are supposed to take away from a passage like this? I said at the beginning of the sermon that **while we wait on the Lord, we can trust Him to accomplish His good purposes.**

It has been a long time since that day in Bethlehem when Samuel came to the house of Jesse and chose David from among his brothers and anointed him as king. Since that time, David has had many opportunities to take matters into his own hands and try to speed the process along so he could fulfill God's clear purpose for him. But in every instance, David has waited on the Lord. He has trusted the Lord to accomplish His good purposes.

Others have encouraged him to do otherwise. Others have tried to take matters into their hands. But David has remained patient and faithful, trusting the Lord in all things.

Goshen, God doesn't need our help. He will accomplish His purposes. He often chooses to use us in accomplishing His purposes, but He is not dependent on us.

And He certainly does not need or want us to act sinfully to try to advance His kingdom. Too many Christians convince themselves that they can advance God's kingdom by unrighteous means. You cannot. God will accomplish His purposes. We can wait on Him and trust Him.

Evil may surround us, but our God is in complete control. He will always do what is right. And He will do so in His time and according to His purposes.

So, while we wait on the Lord, we can trust Him to accomplish His purposes.