

King David

Déjà vu

2 Samuel 20

August 25, 2019 am

HDBC

Déjà vu. That feeling that you've already experienced what you are experiencing now. How many of you would say you've experienced it? It's a French phrase that literally means ***already seen***. David experienced some real ***Déjà vu***.

He has survived one attempt to drive him from the throne, but storm clouds were forming on the horizon. Absalom's rebellion would not be the last one David faced. There are always someone ready to take a leader's place, even by force. **As contentious as our political situation is, I'd take it over bloody coups any day! Next time you complain about the vicious verbal attacks in our political process just be thankful that they are verbal and not physical!**

We are, by nature, selfish. That's why the first line in Rick Warren's book, ***The Purpose-Driven Life*** is so important. ***It's not about you!*** He's right. It's not about you or me. It's about Jesus and His kingdom.

That is a struggle for me! There is within me a craving, a longing to serve self; to do what I want to do; to do what feels good to me; to act and react in a way that serves me! Now, here's the problem. That inclination which is a result of my sinful nature is the exact opposite of what God has called me to be and do. It drives me in one direction, while the Holy Spirit leads me in the other direction. So, there is a war that rages within me.

Selfishness is **relentless**. It never gives in or gives up. It just keeps coming.

Selfishness is **deceptive**. It can be very difficult to diagnose.

Selfishness is **demanding**. It doesn't ask nicely. It demands.

Selfishness was on display in Saul when he sought to kill David.

Selfishness was on display in David when he took another man's wife.

Selfishness was on display in Amnon when he assaulted Tamar.

Selfishness was on display in Absalom when he sought to overthrow David.

I'm seeing a pattern here. And it is not just in David's life. It is seen throughout the pages of the Bible and the pages of human history. It started in the Garden of Eden and will continue until the end of this present age and the kingdom of God comes in all its fulness. The next recorded event in David's life offers more evidence of this reality. 2 Samuel 21.

The chapter divides neatly into three sections. Three specific acts that were all centered around another crisis for King David. Each one points to the natural inclination of sinful people to **serve self**.

1. Rebellion (1-2)

So, this worthless fellow, Sheba, called for another revolt against David. He simply blew the trumpet and announced that he and his followers had no part with David. In essence, he was saying, "he's not our king and we don't have to follow him." The people of Israel (the tribes to the north) immediately joined with him. Judah (the tribes in the south) remained loyal to David.

Already we see a precursor to the division of the nation that would come after Solomon's death. There was already a division between north and south. They saw life differently. They had different loyalties. And they seemed to love to fight. Once again David had to deal with a civil war.

It is difficult enough to face enemies from without. But David also had to deal with violent resistance from within. This certainly must have been worse than facing external foes. What Does Sheba's rebellion say to us about self?

Sheba's rebellion reminds us that **Self . . . demands to be in charge.**

Sheba did not like having someone else in authority over him. He wanted to be his own boss. Self is just like that. Self, demands to be in charge. It takes an incredible amount of self-discipline for us to yield to another.

2. Revenge (3-12)

David called for Amasa to rally the army and put down this rebellion. He gave them three days to get prepared (4). Amasa delayed and did not make the deadline. So, David turned to Abishai and his brother, Joab. They quickly began to pursue Sheba. When Amasa heard that Joab and Abishai were already in pursuit of Sheba, he took his men and quickly joined them.

Remember that Amasa was chosen by David to replace Joab. There was already an rivalry between those two. So, we should not be totally surprised by what happened next. You can **read it in 20:7-10**.

Wow, this is a graphic description of a violent act of revenge. Joab was never afraid to get his hands dirty. He had killed Absalom, even though it meant ignoring David's specific orders. Now, he assassinated David's commander in chief. Joab was a man who was completely driven by **self**! He yielded to no one, doing only what he wanted to do, regardless of the consequences. What can we learn about selfishness from Joab?

Joab's action reminds us that **Self . . . desires to get revenge**

Self not only demands to be in charge, but it desires to get revenge, to retaliate, to hurt those who have hurt it. It is very difficult for self to forgive to show grace, to let an injury go without responded in like manner. Whether the injury is minor or major, self's first thought is to hit back, to return fire!

Amasa's dying body lay in the middle of the street causing everyone to stop and look. A soldier called for all who were loyal to "David and Joab" to come and pursue Sheba. But the people kept staring at the bleeding Amasa. Finally, a soldier dragged his body into the brush to die. When he was out of sight the people were shaken from their stupor and continue to go after the Sheba. That brings us to the third act in this bloody rebellion.

3. Reaction (14-22)

Sheba found shelter and safety in the city of Abel Beth-maacah. The army of Joab surrounded the city, besieged it and even built a siege ramp against it. Do you know what that tells me? It tells me that this city knew Sheba was there and they were willing to protect him. He was their man. They were unwilling to give him up and they were unwilling to let Joab's army in to take him. It was a stand-off of major proportions. The two sides had staked out their positions. This was the alamo!

However, things quickly deteriorated for Sheba. As the people of the city realized what was going to happen they became concerned. One of their leaders, described as a **wise woman**, (16) asked for a meeting with Joab.

She described herself as being a trusted leader who had experience in working through disputes between people. The negotiation was simple, to the point and successful.

The woman: Please don't destroy our city.

Joab: Hand over Sheba and we will leave your city along.

The woman: We will toss his head over the wall.

Joab: OK. That should do it.

She talked with the city leaders and they made a quick decision. They found Sheba, executed him and tossed his head over the wall. Problem solved. What can we learn about selfishness?

This city's reaction reminds us that **Self . . . determines to play it safe**

One could argue that the city was simply being loyal to David. I disagree. If they had been loyal to David they would have turned over Sheba to Joab on day one. They protected him for days, even weeks, while the army surrounded and besieged their city. They protected him while Joab built a ramp that would allow the army to breach the wall and destroy the city. Only then, when their lives were threatened did they give Sheba up. They acted in a self-serving manner. We learn that **self** will always **determine to be safe**.

This does not sounds so bad. But it is. Self-protection is not the goal. We are called to serve God first and to think of others second. Football legend Gayle Sayers communicated this in his book, ***I am Third***. God comes first, others come second and ***I am third***.

Sheba's rebellion reminds us that **Self . . . demands to be in charge**.

Joab's revenge reminds us that **Self . . . desires to get revenge**

This city's reaction reminds us that **Self . . . determines to play it safe**

So, the next time you sense within yourself a demand to be in charge . . .
Be aware that self is at work.

The next time you sense within yourself a desire to get revenge . . .
Be aware that self is at work.

The next time you sense within yourself a determination to play it safe . . .
Be aware that self may be at work.

What did Jesus say about self?

*If anyone wishes to come after me, let him **deny himself**, take up his cross (**die to self**) daily and follow me.*

Here's something I have observed in myself . . . and in others. It is often easier to be unselfish when the **big opportunities** are there and more difficult to be unselfish when the little, seemingly insignificant opportunities are there. Jesus would have us be unselfish in both.