

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Afternoon

Date Hymns Read: Genesis 37:20-31 Text Genesis 37:20-22, 26-31

Series: Joseph Title: Reuben's Double-mindedness toward JosephS

In reading these words regarding Ruben's role in plotting against Joseph, one might think that Ruben should be commended, applauded for his intervention.

Ruben has been viewed as Joseph's deliverer, intercessor to plead his case before his brethren.

It appears that Ruben has repented of his wrong doing by the actions, **he rent his clothes** and therefore Ruben is filled with godly sorrow, and is now working to help Joseph **but I am not convinced**.

In taking Ruben's own words in **verse 30** "***the child is not and whither shall I go?***" these words indicate that Ruben was acting for himself not Joseph.

His motivation was self centred, how this effect him.

According to **1 Chronicles 5:1** Ruben due to his sinful actions, and transgression against his Father, resulted losing all the birth right privileges and blessing of the first born son,

Years later, at Jacob's death bed when gathers his 12 sons he has a word for each son, he said to Ruben, in **Genesis 49:3-4** "***Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: 4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.***"

The word translated **excel** involves the idea of having or gaining preeminence. Jacob is saying **thou shalt not excel**,

Reuben lost all effectiveness and influence. He hid his sin, a cover up, but never sought forgiveness.

Solomon said in **Proverbs 28:13** “**He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.**”

Reuben's failure to excel is stated by his Father as “**Unstable as water...**” *Ruben's unsteadiness is highlighted in the passage before us by his inconsistencies, his weakness, lack of power, lose influence and ineffectiveness with his brethren and how they view him.*

*In thinking about Ruben we can apply the words of spoken by James in **James 1:8** “**A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.**”*

The word **double minded**, is one word in the original it means **wavering, back and forth**. He is caught between two, never settled.

What is the result of this action or doublemindedness, he **is unstable in all his ways.**”

The word **unstable** mean **restless, tossed about, to stagger.**

Ruben is unstable as water, as said by His Father and double minded among his brethren, and towards Joseph.

What a lesson there is believer, are there inconsistencies, double mindedness, wavering towards our heavenly Joseph, the Saviour, in Christian living.

Or do we try to cover sin up, make excuses, ignore failings, get hostile toward others, who point such weakness out.

The sin of double mindedness must not be covered up by self, rather it must be cleansed by the washing of the Scriptures and Saviour's precious blood.

Lets consider Ruben's double-mindedness concerning Joseph

I FIRST THE EVIDENCE OF RUBEN'S DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS TOWARDS JOSEPH

Joseph has come to his brethren and now its time to put into action what they have conspired against him. **Reuben was apart of the deceitful plot against Joseph.**

Ruben's words of **verse 22** "**Let us not kill him... Shed no blood...**" sounds good, and right.

Ruben heard something that was wrong, wicked, and then he put a stop to it, though he was still part of the plan.

It seems that Ruben does not want to fully go through with their wicked plan. It appears that Reuben's words, sound hopeful and helpful to Joseph, **Let us not kill him, Shed no blood...**

But after these words we would expect Ruben to say let's call it a day, we have said to much, we got a bit carried away concerning Joseph.

But instead, Reuben says in the rest of **verse 22** "**Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.**

He does not want to go through with the whole plan only part, Ruben is on the fence, half in and half out.

Rueben is putting to his brethren, Im not saying we shouldn't do anything against or carry out some of the plan, im just saying don't shed his blood, but still cast him into the pit.

Then in **verses 23 -25**, when Joseph comes into the immediate presence of his brethren ***they strip Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;***

24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. 25 And they sat down to eat bread... this includes Ruben.

Ruben does not want to slay his brother Joseph, but will still persecute him, mock him, slander dishonour him, cast him into the pit yet Ruben is quit content thinking I've done alright Joseph is still alive,

Therefore we see he is unstable as water, his double-mindedness, his indecisiveness, inconsistencies.

It is noted and marked by the other brethren as we will see.

Ruben's life had been marked by his own father and now we see it play out before his family concerning Joseph.

Therefore, men and woman, Learn our lives, are a written epistle read and known of all men.

All our double-mindedness, wavering, inconsistencies, indecisiveness, indecisions, are in open view in public and private. Among those who see you the most.

There is no hiding, all is before God. **Hebrews 2:13** ***"all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."***

This was the evidence, when God called Elijah to Mount Carmel, because the nation of Israel were double-minded, they thought they could serve God plus the false prophet Baal, and still know the blessing of God.

1 Kings 18:21 ***And Elijah came unto all the people, and said how long halt ye between two opinions?***

This word **halt** does not mean **to stop and think**, but it means **going between two, to waver**. The idea is repeatedly changing one's position – swinging back and forth, to be hesitant. One minute this and then the next that.

The picture can be seen by the action of a little bird, hopping between two branches, very indecisive about just where to be. If it keeps on doing this, it will never have a nest.

Is there one today, halting betwixt two, you are jumping back and forth from honouring or dishonouring our heavenly Joseph.

Allow me to say, as one man did, ***when we have to think twice about doing right we are to close to doing wrong.***

Is there evidence in your life last week, today of double-mindedness. Christ said in **Matt 6:24** ***“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.***

There is no neutral ground. Christ also said in **Matthew 12:30** ***“He that is not with me is against me.”***

Therefore, believer, make Christ your all, seek to honour Him fully. Set the Lord before you.

There is not a just man upon the earth who doeth good and sinneth not. Only Christ is without sin and perfect.

Therefore, He calls His people for cleansing and then to fully follow Him. Abandon the I, me, myself, and to serve Him.

II SECOND, THE EXTENT OF RUBEN'S DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS TOWARDS JOSEPH.

It seems from the reading that there is a period of time or separation between Ruben and his brothers, whether he leaves their presence to do something, go somewhere, or they leave him, we don't know, but it is clear for a time he is not with them, because of all that takes place between the end of **verses 25-28**, Ruben is not present.

As Ruben is absent, to him nothing has changed, he thinks he's saved Joseph.

He's trying to act the leadership position he lost. He thinks he is exercising the right and role of the first born. He is taking back or giving to himself position, power, privilege, praise and pre-eminence.

Ruben has the mind set my brothers have listened to him, agreed, they have taken on board what was said, cast him pit and somehow he will find his way back home.

But his absence, Judah gives another suggestion, to sell Joseph, make money.

Notice, they never waited for Ruben, or asked for his input because like before he would try to change the plan to suit himself. Ruben does not even come into their minds.

How can we say this, because Joseph is sold, and in **verse 29** ***Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit...***

Ruben's double-mindedness caused him to lose effectiveness and influence with his family. They didn't listen to him, consult with him, wait for him, he was inconsistent, ineffective,

unstable, they viewed him as weak and powerlessness, having no authority, no credibility.

We see this in **Genesis 19**, when Lot a justified sinner, yet took his family to live in Sodom and Gomorrah to live in the tents of wickedness. God was going to destroy the city because of its sin against him.

In Grace and mercy God sent messages to tell Lot to flee the place and take his family. **Genesis 19:14** ***“And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.”***

While scripture teaches lot was justified, yet his life was a mockery, when he called on his family to flee danger, obey God, he was ineffective, weak, he was a stumbling block.

Here is the extent of double-mindedness. Reuben’s brethren did not listen to him.

Therefore, men and woman, to have influence, power with man we need power with God. We need the blessing of God, like Joseph we need the Lord with us. Like our Saviour we need the power of the Spirit upon us.

III THE EXPRESSION OF RUBEN’S DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS TOWARDS JOSEPH

verse 29 ***...behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.***

Usually the renting of clothes is an expression of sorrow, mourning, grief and distress.

For instance, verse 37 ***“And Jacob rent his clothes,*** he sorrows and mourns thinking Joseph is dead. Or when Job’s

children died, Job 1:20. Or Ezra grieves or distress over of the nation's sin Ezra 9:3. Ezra 10:6 Ezra ***“..mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.”***

Now any true expression of grief and sorrow over wrong doing certainly must impact self, I must be grieved, because I have grieved God.

That is true distress over sin, I'm aware ive failed my Saviour, and need forgiveness.

However, Ruben may be distressed, sorrowful but it is not over sin against his brother, or grieving over wrong doing, sin against God. He has not even grieved his part in the plan. He is not seeking forgiveness.

Rather, its how this will effect his success, position or appear to his father. He is distressed grieved because he didn't get his way, his brothers did listen, his own plan has failed.

It is interesting during the trial of Christ in Matthew 26:65 ***“Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.”***

The High priest is distressed, grieved not because Christ is on trial, or falsely accused rather because Christ continued proclaiming the victory of the gospel, and His glorious return, saying in verse 64 ***ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”*** He is grieved because people are listening to words of Christ. Pilate and his wife could see Christ had done nothing wrong.

Therefore, this is a carnal mourning, a sorrow that is false, grieving over wants, jealousy, selfish gain.

Such distress, grieving, Paul said in **2 Cor 7:8-10** “**the sorrow of the world worketh death**”,

(Christ spoke of true sorrow over sin, a gospel mourning in **Matthew 5:4** **blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted**. The mourning, distress, and grief which Christ speaks is spiritual, it is grief of soul. it rises up out of the heart and soul because of sin. It is godly sorrow over one's sin and also the sin, other believers and society.)

We see the true expression of sorrow, distress and grief, when Christ vied the sin of Jerusalem **Luke 19:41** “**and when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it.**” the highest expression is seen at Cross, as Christ died the just for the unjust.

True distress of sorrow over wrongdoing and sin, is that I have grieved God, sinned against Him.

You long to be forgiven. My thoughts, and actions didn't please Him, only then will you find comfort in Christ's forgiveness.

IV FOURTH THE EXPLANATION OF RUBEN'S DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS TOWARDS JOSEPH

As already highlighted, Ruben's double-mindedness is explained, here is the reason for all his weakness and inconsistencies, **verse 30** **and I, whither shall I go?** Ruben was not acting to help Joseph, or stop his brothers from sin.

But Ruben was acting for his own benefit. How I am going face my Father? how is this going to effect me?

But allow me to close by saying in all our double-mindedness, inconsistencies, as in Rubens case, God providently overruled working through Ruben to accomplish his will.

That does not excuse Rubén's sin, and double-mindedness, but it shows, God in grace and mercy turned the brother's evil into Joseph's good.

God who is sovereign over all, can bring good out of disobedience. He over rules the failing and works of men for His glory. As Ruth was saved, even though Elimelech and Naomi wrongfully went to Moab.

But always remember, It is never right to do wrong in order to do right.

God works despite our double-mindedness. While God chooses to advance His cause by His own people, yet His cause does not depend upon His people. Our failings, and stumbling will hinder our growth in grace, but never God Glorifying Himself, building His church.

If He it pleases Him, He can bring triumph and trophies of sovereign grace out of our tragedies. Despite our works of weakness He can turn them into sovereign works of power.

Come believer seek to Lord and His ways.