

“Wisdom and Folly”
2 Samuel 10:1-7
(Preached at Trinity, May 26, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **2 Samuel** is the story of two halves of David's reign. The first half is a story of David's rise to power. It is a story of success, of faith and worship, of kindness. It is a testimony of a man after God's own heart. The second half is a story of failure and downfall, of sin and treachery. The second half is a story of the consequence of sin and it is marked by the decline of David's former greatness.
2. In **Chapter 9** we saw David as a man of grace and kindness as we witnessed his gracious dealings with Mephibosheth. As we begin **Chapter 10** we find David once again dealing graciously. **Chapter 10** serves as a transition to David's great downfall and reminds us how dangerous our life is. A life well-lived can suddenly turn if we are not cautious.
3. As the chapter begins some time had passed and David received news that Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had died and that Hanun, his son, had succeeded him. David sent several of his diplomats to convey his condolences to Hanun. It was a gracious act of diplomacy. A token of David's wise leadership. The word used in **Verse 2** is חֲסִדָּה. Once again, David is showing the kindness that flows forth from a gracious heart.
4. David gives the reason for this act of kindness:
"just as his father showed kindness to me."
 - A. This seems strange to us. We don't have the record of any act of kindness showed by Nahash. We do have the record of his barbarism.
This is the Nahash that we read about in **1 Samuel 11**. He demanded that the people of Jabesh allow him to gouge out their right eye as a condition of entering into covenant with him.
When Saul found out he sent his army and Nahash was utterly defeated. The defeat of his army was so complete that no two of them were left together.
 - B. It is not difficult to imagine Nahash sending some form of aid to David while David was fleeing from Saul. They may have made a covenant with one another which would explain the use of the word, חֲסִדָּה.

- I. We are to see David's wisdom while conducting his foreign policy
- A. David knew that kindness was the best policy when dealing with his neighbors
1. Solomon would later write
Proverbs 15:1 NAU - "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."
 2. It is never profitable to stir up strife
Proverbs 20:3 NAU - "Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel."
 3. William Blaikie wrote: "It is a happy thing for any country when its rulers and men of influence are ever on the watch for opportunities to strengthen the spirit of friendship. It is a happy thing in the Church when the leaders of different sections are more disposed to measures that conciliate and heal than to measures that alienate and divide. Men that like fighting, and that are ever disposed to taunt, to irritate, to divide, are the nuisances of society. Men that deal in the soft answer, in the message of kindness, and in the prayer of love, deserve the respect and gratitude of all."¹
- B. David's kindness was honest and genuine
1. David's reign was firmly established. He didn't need to flatter or deceive. This act of kindness was an act of loyalty towards a man who had shown David kindness. Loyalty is another translation for the word **חֶסֶד**
Proverbs 20:6 NAU - "Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, But who can find a trustworthy man?"
Proverbs 20:28 NAU - "Loyalty and truth preserve the king, And he upholds his throne by righteousness."
 2. There is behavior that is simply the right thing to do, not because it will bring us gain or recognition but because it honors our God.
 3. It is also true that we should not forget acts of kindness. The words "thank you" are often absent from our vocabulary. It is evidence of a sense of entitlement.
We shouldn't pretend that Nahash had become friends with David or Israel. David just recognizes the grace of showing gratitude.
 4. We often attend funerals out of respect for the deceased, even if we don't personally know the family. David was showing respect for Nahash and offering sympathy to the son who had lost his father.
- C. This is the behavior that should govern us
- Galatians 6:10 NAU** - "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
Romans 12:18 NAU - "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."
1. It is noble to spend our life doing good, and not just for the gain we may get from it. Our life and words should be a sweet savor to those around us.
 2. David had no idea how his good intentions would be received. His actions were not judged by the outcome but by the goodness of the act. Even when our actions are not well-received we have the comfort of knowing it is pleasing to God.

¹ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), page 147.

3. Calvin writes, "When it comes to doing good, let us not be too concerned about our own profit; let us not speculate in order to know what the outcome will be. Let us put it all back in the hands of God, since the outcome depends on him, and yet let us do what he commands us. Hence we must render good for evil, if it pleased him for someone to render us evil for good, and it seems that we have wasted our time, let us realize that he is still pleased with our service when we act this way."²
4. Our goal should be to honor God by keeping His Word. This is the source of true wisdom.

Psalm 119:98-103 NAU - "Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. ⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. ¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts. ¹⁰¹ I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word. ¹⁰² I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me. ¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

II. Hanun displayed the folly that is consistent with the people of this world

A. The corrupt heart can't imagine someone acting without an ulterior motive

1. Such a heart is always suspicious, always critical, always condemning of others. He is always passing judgment upon the actions and intentions of others. We call this a censorious heart.
Matthew Henry – "False men are ready to think others as false as themselves; and those that bear ill-will to their neighbours are resolved not to believe that their neighbours bear any good-will to them."³
2. He lacks discernment and is quick to cause schism.
Paul speaks of such calling him perverted, self-condemned sinner.
Titus 3:10-11 NAU - "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, ¹¹ knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned."
3. It is particularly harmful when it finds its way into the church where someone is constantly looking upon others with disdain, always condemning, full of pride and self-righteousness.
4. The princes of the Ammonites enflamed what was already upon the heart of Hanun:
2 Samuel 10:3 NAU - "Do you think that David is honoring your father because he has sent consolers to you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to search the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?"

² Calvin, John, *Sermons on 2 Samuel, Chapter 1-13, trans. Douglas Kelly* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992) page 450.

³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 452.

5. A corrupt heart will soon display itself through corrupt actions. Based upon his unfounded suspicions he set out to greatly humiliate David's men. First, he shaved half their beards. The beard was important to the ancient world as a sign of masculinity. And then, if that wasn't enough, he cut their garments as to expose their private parts.
- B. We must guard against a censorious, judgmental spirit
1. The chief fruit of our conversion is love – this should change everything
Romans 12:9-10 NAU - "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.* ¹⁰ *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*"
 2. 1 Cor. 13:1-7 speaks much on this:
 - a. **Verse 5** - "it does not seek its own"
 A judgmental heart is almost always a selfish, proud heart
 - b. **Verse 5** - "does not take into account a wrong suffered,"
 KJV is a much more literal translation here and gets to the heart
 "thinketh no evil" - οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν
 - (1) A critical spirit is the disposition to think evil of others. It puts everyone under the cloud of suspicion.
 - (2) The hyper-critical person is continually judging others. They tend to overlook the good and focus only on the negative.
 - (3) They continually question the motives of others. They seldom put themselves in the position of others.
 Old proverb: "Don't judge another man until you've walked a mile in his shoes."
 Everyone has to fall into their narrow standard, which they believe is the only right way.
 - c. **Verse 7** - "believes all things" – In other words, love brings us to think the best of others, even when they don't think exactly like you do. Even when their families don't look exactly like yours. Even if they say or do something that offends us, love causes us to give them the benefit of the doubt.
 3. Hanun distrusted everyone.
 - a. He possessed the same hardness of heart that brings men to question the kindness of God. They despise and humiliate His servants and continue to wage war against Him.
 - b. While the goodness of God should lead the lost man to repentance, he instead dismisses it and looks upon God with suspicion.

III. Hanun's foolish folly resulted in great loss

A. His actions brought war with Israel

1. A heart of suspicion will only lead to division and strife.
Notice, Hanun geared up for war because they "saw that they had become odious to David"
 - a. Again, this was the result of his suspicious, judgmental heart that led him to think the worst of David.
 - b. It never occurred to him that perhaps his best approach was to ask David's forgiveness for his rash behavior. The proud man will not humble himself and confess his sins.
This is true of sinners refusing the gracious offer of the Gospel.
2. David's first response was to restore the dignity of his disgraced men
 - a. This was a show of class by David.
 - b. Good leaders are always aware of the feelings of others. A man's dignity is important and should be protected. Even when discipline is necessary it is best done in private. This is important for parents to remember in raising their children. Discipline doesn't mean disgrace.
3. Notice, even as David called his nation to war, it wasn't his first reaction. David went to war only after Hanun and his armies arrived for battle.
4. The war resulted in the utter destruction of the armies of Hanun.
2 Samuel 11:1 NAU - "Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem."

B. The foolishness of Hanun also resulted in his alienation from his allies

2 Samuel 10:19 NAU - "When all the kings, servants of Hadadezer, saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Arameans feared to help the sons of Ammon anymore."

C. Ultimately, his hardness of heart kept him from God. A hard distrusting heart is simply putting on display hardness towards God. In the end Hanun lost everything.

How different it might have been if Hanun had graciously received the kindness of David. How different it might have been if Hanun had confessed his foolish behavior and asked for David's forgiveness. But foolish men seldom do the right thing.

Conclusion:

1. A censorious, judgmental, critical heart will only serve to make you odious in the eyes of others. It will gnaw at your soul and make you bitter.
2. Pray that you might demonstrate the heart of David in this passage. A heart of kindness and graciousness.
3. And if you've discovered that you have this censorious heart in your own bosom, the first step towards ending this or any other sin is humble confession and repentance. May we guard against the heart of Hanun who doubted the kindness and forgiveness of David in our own failure to trust the kindness of God.

Richard Phillips – “So it is with unbelieving men and women who know they have sinned against God. Instead of confessing their sins and seeking mercy from god’s throne, in which case he has promised to forgive them and restore them to his blessing, they harden their opposition to God’s Word and Christ’s servants, hopelessly waging war against an omnipotent divine power.⁴

⁴ Philips, Richard. *2 Samuel, Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2018, Page 193.