

The Life of David

David Defeats Ammon and Syria

2 Samuel 10:1-19

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Scripture

God called David to be king over his kingdom on earth. God promised David that his throne shall be established forever (*cf.* 2 Samuel 7:16). After David defeated the surrounding nations, he began to experience peace in his kingdom.

In 2 Samuel 9, David extended kindness, that is, *hesed* or steadfast love, to the son of his dear friend Jonathan. The kindness was received and the receiver experienced great blessing.

In 2 Samuel 10, David once again extended kindness, that is, *hesed* or steadfast love, to the son of a friendly neighboring king, who had died. That kindness was rejected and the rejecter experienced great blood shedding. That is what we will study today.

Let's read about David defeating Ammon and Syria in 2 Samuel 10:1-19:

¹After this the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place. ²And David said, "I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me." So David sent by his servants to console him concerning his father. And David's servants came into the land of the Ammonites. ³But the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Has not David sent his servants to you to search the city and to spy it out and to overthrow it?" ⁴So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. ⁵When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return."

⁶When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David, the Ammonites sent and hired the Syrians

of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob, 12,000 men. ⁷ And when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the host of the mighty men. ⁸ And the Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the gate, and the Syrians of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the open country.

⁹ When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Syrians. ¹⁰ The rest of his men he put in the charge of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed them against the Ammonites. ¹¹ And he said, "If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. ¹² Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to him." ¹³ So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. ¹⁴ And when the Ammonites saw that the Syrians fled, they likewise fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ But when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. ¹⁶ And Hadadezer sent and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the Euphrates. They came to Helam, with Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. ¹⁷ And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan and came to Helam. The Syrians arrayed themselves against David and fought with him. ¹⁸ And the Syrians fled before Israel, and David killed of the Syrians the men of 700 chariots, and 40,000 horsemen, and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there. ¹⁹ And when all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became subject to them. So the Syrians were afraid to save the Ammonites anymore. (2 Samuel 10:1-19)

Introduction

On March 10, 1974, Lt. Hiroo Onada was the last World War II Japanese soldier to surrender.

Onada had been left on the island of Lubang in the Philippines on December 25, 1944, with the command to “carry on the mission even if Japan surrenders.” Four other Japanese soldiers were left on the island as Japan evacuated Lubang. One soldier surrendered in 1950. Another was killed in a skirmish with local police in 1954. Another was killed in 1972. Onada continued his war alone.

All efforts to convince him to surrender or to capture him failed. He ignored messages from loudspeakers announcing Japan’s surrender and that Japan was now an ally of the United States. Leaflets were dropped over the jungle begging him to surrender so he could return to Japan. He refused to believe or surrender.

Over the years he lived off the land and raided the fields and gardens of local citizens. He was responsible for killing at least 30 nationals during his 29-year personal war. Almost a half million dollars was spent trying to locate and convince him to surrender. 13,000 men were used to locate him.

Finally, on March 10, 1974, almost 30 years after World War II ended, Onada surrendered his rusty sword after receiving a personal command from his former superior officer, who read the terms of the cease-fire order. Onada handed his sword to President Marcos, who pardoned him. The war was over.

Onada was 22-years-old when he was left on the island. He returned a prematurely aged man of 52. Onada stated, “Nothing pleasant happened in the 29 years in the jungle.”

Like Onada, many people are fighting a lonely battle against the God who is offering reconciliation and peace.¹

¹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2001/april/12977.html>.

We see that vividly illustrated in today's story. David extended kindness to Hanun and his offer was rejected.

Lesson

Second Samuel 10:1-19 shows us a rejection of kindness.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Kindness Is Offered (10:1-2)
2. Kindness Is Rejected (10:3-5)
3. Kindness Is Redressed (10:6-19)

I. Kindness Is Offered (10:1-2)

First, kindness is offered.

Second Samuel 10 opens with these words, **“After this the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place. And David said, ‘I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me.’ So David sent by his servants to console him concerning his father. And David’s servants came into the land of the Ammonites.”**

I would like to make two observations.

First, the word that is translated as **“loyally”** twice in verse 2 is the same word that is used for “kindness” in the previous chapter (in verses 1, 3, and 7). It is the Hebrew word (*hesed*) that is usually translated as “steadfast love” and it is used in the sense of “an unflinching kind of love, kindness, or goodness; often used of God’s love that is related to faithfulness to his covenant.” That is then the word that connects these two chapters. In both instances, David was extending *hesed* to a son of someone whom he knew.

Second, **Nahash** was **king of the Ammonites** who had **dealt loyally** with David. We don’t know when Nahash had extended *hesed* to David. However, now that Nahash had died, David wanted to extend *hesed* to Hanun, Nahash’s son, for the *hesed* that

had previously been extended to David by Nahash.

So, David offered kindness to Hanun, as we read in verse 2a, **“I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me.”** He sent emissaries to **Hanun**. This is similar to the president of the United States sending a delegation to a foreign country for the funeral of that country’s leader. It is an expression of support, condolence, and kindness.

David’s offer of kindness foreshadows the offer of kindness by his Greater Son, Jesus. Jesus came to this earth with an offer of kindness to all people. It is an offer of “an unfailing kind of love, kindness, or goodness; often used of God’s love that is related to faithfulness to his covenant.”

Some years ago, my wife Eileen and I received an offer for a fabulous vacation. We showed up to the appointed place and then had to sit through a two-hour presentation on buying into a time-share vacation package. Some of you have probably had a similar experience, haven’t you?

Well, Jesus’ offer of kindness is by far the best offer ever extended to anyone. He offers to anyone who will accept it eternal life, that is, life with God and not in hell for all eternity. More than that, Jesus offers an abundant life right now, that is, peace and joy with God every moment of every day. It is the most amazing offer.

So, I ask you, have you accepted Jesus’ offer of kindness?

II. Kindness Is Rejected (10:3-5)

Second, kindness is rejected.

Verse 3 says, **“But the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Has not David sent his servants to you to search the city and to spy it out and to overthrow it?”** The **“princes of the Ammonites”** may be a reference to Hanun’s brothers or, more likely, to the

commanders in the Ammonite military. Clearly, they did not believe that David's offer was sincere. They believed that David's intention was, as they said, **“to search the city and to spy it out and to overthrow it.”**

Unfortunately, **Hanun** followed their misguided advice and **“took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away”** (10:4). In the culture at that time, that was a terrible humiliation for the men. Prisoners of war were sometimes stripped naked and paraded through the city of the conquerors. This was not quite the same. Perhaps Hanun was thinking he might send a message to David that if he tried to do anything to Hanun, this is what might happen to the rest of David's army.

In verse 5, we read, **“When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, ‘Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return.’ ”** David knew what a terrible embarrassment this was to his emissaries, and so he had them stay at **Jericho** until their beards had grown and they could return home without shame.

The rejection of David's kindness points us again to the rejection of Jesus' kindness. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (*cf.* Luke 19:10). Jesus came so that people “may have life and have it abundantly” (*cf.* John 10:10). Speaking to the Jews, Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:39–40).

The Seattle Times runs a daily section call “Rant and Rave.” It invites readers to share examples of good and bad behavior and positive and negative encounters in their community. The raves are frequently descriptions of generosity and kindnesses experienced and witnessed—they're often uplifting and touching. Here's an example: “For the Men's Warehouse employees who helped my developmentally disabled son have the senior prom he'd dreamed

of, and for his teachers who made it all happen. It was a night he'll never forget!"

The rants, on the other hand, often describe careless, rude, or unscrupulous deeds or situations. A rant caught my eye recently: "To the guy in the VW who flipped me the bird, mouthed obscenities through the glass and then sped off when I was knocking on his window to let him know his tire was flat."²

That act of kindness was rejected. But the consequences of that rejection are not terribly serious in the entire scheme of things. The driver may have shredded his tire and may have had to buy a new tire and pay for a wheel alignment.

On the other hand, it is a very serious matter to reject the kindness of Jesus. You may think to yourself, "I have not rejected Jesus. I simply have not made a decision yet whether to repent and believe the gospel." Friend, you don't know when God will call your number. You may be in a car accident today and, unexpectedly, find yourself standing before God. It will be too late then to take any action. The Bible says, "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Let me urge you not to reject the kindness of Jesus.

III. Kindness Is Redressed (10:6-19)

And third, kindness is redressed.

By using the word "redressed" I mean "compensation for a wrong or grievance."³ David offered kindness. And that offer of kindness was rejected by Hanun. So, David set out to take action.

The rest of chapter 10 shows us that there were two battles. One former military man, now a Bible commentator, notes that this was a very significant military campaign in the Old Testament.

² <https://ayearoflivingkindly.com/2015/01/20/rejecting-kindness/>.

³ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

When the Ammonites saw that David was going to take action against them, they mustered their own forces and hired 33,000 mercenary troops, mostly from Syria to prepare for war against Israel. David learned what Hanun was doing and so he sent his military commander, Joab, and the entire Israeli army to fight against Hanun and the Syrian mercenaries.

When Joab arrived in the country of the Ammonites, he found his army in the middle between the Ammonite army on the one side and the Syrian confederates on the other side. Joab, who was a very gifted military leader, divided his Israeli army. He selected his best soldiers to fight with him against the Syrian confederates, and ordered the remainder of the Israeli army to fight under the leadership of his brother Abishai against the Ammonite army, who were in the city.

The Joab said to Abishai, **“If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come and help you”** (10:11). This was a great strategy that is still used today. Then Joab spoke very important words, **“Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to him”** (10:12). Joab recognized and affirmed that God was in sovereign control of the outcome.

With those words, Joab told his soldiers to march forward into battle. However, as soon as the Syrians saw Joab and his army advancing toward them, they turned and fled before him. They were, after all, mercenaries and they were in it for the money and not to lose their lives! They had heard about David’s powerful army conquering all his neighbors. When the Ammonites saw that the Syrians had fled, they turned and ran away from the city before Abishai could so much as shout, “Charge!” So, with both the Ammonite and Syrian armies heading for the hills as fast as they could, Joab and the Israeli army decided not to lay siege against the city and they returned to Jerusalem.

Then the Syrian king, Hadadezer, undoubtedly chagrined by the humiliating display of his own army, mustered them again. He added additional troops from the Syrians beyond the Euphrates. He gathered his entire massive army at Helam. This time David led his entire Israeli army to fight against the Syrians at Helam. David won a decisive victory against Hadadezer. Verse 19 says, **“And when all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became subject to them. So the Syrians were afraid to save the Ammonites anymore.”**

There is no question that David put right what was wrong. His offer of kindness was rejected. Hanun foolishly decided to humiliate David. So, David redressed Hanun’s rejection of kindness. What is interesting is that Hanun was aware of David’s massive and vastly superior military power. He could have come to his senses at any time and asked David for forgiveness. But, foolishly, he did not do so. And, as a result, tens of thousands died.

David’s redressing of his kindness that was rejected teaches us that Jesus will redress any rejection of the kindness that he offers. Everyone who rejects Jesus’ kindness will regret it. There is an eternity after this life. Every person will spend eternity either with Jesus in heaven—and later on the new earth—or with Satan in hell. My dear friend, Jesus will redress any kindness rejected. Do not be the one who suffers this.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the account of David defeating Ammon and Syria in 2 Samuel 10:1-19, let us not reject the kindness of Jesus to us.

Eugene Onegin was written by a Russian author named Alexander Pushkin. It has become a classic Russian novel in verse. The story is about Onegin who meets an innocent young girl in the

countryside. The girl, Tatyana, writes him a letter, offering him her love. Onegin does not reply. When they meet again, he turns her down. The letter was touching, he tells her, but he would soon grow bored of marriage to her.

Years later, Onegin enters a St. Petersburg party and sees a stunningly beautiful woman. It is Tatyana. But she is now married. Onegin falls in love with her. He tries desperately to win her back. But Tatyana refuses him. Once, the door was open. She had offered him her love. Now it is shut.⁴

People find it easy to reject Jesus now. Like Tatyana's letter to Onegin, his offer is touching. Many people believe that they will be happier without such a commitment. They worry he will cramp their style, so they move on with life and leave him in the spiritual countryside.

One day, the Bible warns, we will all see Jesus in all his glory, our eyes painfully open to his majesty. Those who have rejected Jesus will know in that moment that all their greatest treasures were nothing compared with him, and they will bitterly regret that decision. But it will be no more unfair than Tatyana's rejection of Onegin.

Friend, if you accept Jesus now, you will live with him forever in a fullness of life you cannot imagine.

But, if you reject him, he will one day reject you, and you will be eternally devastated. The choice is ours. Amen.

⁴ Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2019), 219.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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