

Why Revolutions Are Usually Evil

2 Samuel 4:1-12

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 6-2-2012

Introduction

I've titled today's sermon, "Why Revolutions Are Usually Evil." I don't think most of you are planning to stage a revolution, so you might wonder why this topic would even be relevant to your family. But it is. The same principles that led to the French Revolution are principles that flow very naturally from our children's hearts and are constantly at work in family, church, and society – unless God's grace subdues them. I've seen some of those principles at work in the RNC convention this past week. And as we will be seeing, the actions of Rechab and Baanah were revolutionary – in an ungodly way. They took on the character of the French Revolution rather than the American Revolution. Those two revolutions were poles apart. Most of our founding fathers despised the Jacobites of the French Revolution. And it is one of the reasons why I prefer not to even call the American Revolution a Revolution. That term, though it can be appropriate, has been far too closely linked to the radical revolutions that have been spawned by France.

Most of you are homeschoolers, so I'm sure you have studied the French Revolution and understand its implications. It was one of the top ten (maybe even one of the top five) most influential events in modern history. And the principles espoused by the revolutionary thinkers of that time have found their way into most of the over 200 revolutions that have taken place since 1789. Their slogan sounded pretty catchy – "liberty, equality, fraternity or death!" But their concept of liberty was not defined by God and it led to the enslavement of millions of people in France, and multiplied millions in the communist countries that were influenced by their humanistic ideas of liberty. How you define a term makes all the difference in the world. Their concept of equality was not defined by God, and it led to leveling numerous countries into economic oblivion. Their concept of fraternity fought against the necessity of conversion, and it's graceless concept has led to genocide after genocide. The only part of their phrase that really worked out was "death," and there has been plenty of death that has flowed from the revolutionary concepts that were systematized in France in the 1700s.

But as we will see, even though Rousseau and Robespierre systematized these ideas, and even though revolutions have been mostly a modern invention, the revolutionary spirit has always been natural to the

human heart and so it can happen anywhere. When you parents settle a dispute over a toy by making your children share their toys equally, and treating their gifts as if they communal property, you have bought into one of the revolutionary principles spawned by Robespierre and the French revolutionaries. You may not have thought of it that way, but it really is the same. And the negative fruit that flows from those attitudes are not good. That's a socialistic equality and fraternity. And we need to teach our children to respect private property. When you allow your children to sass you or perhaps you treat them as equals in order to be friends with them, you are raising little revolutionaries. That looks more like the wisdom of Rousseau and Robespierre than it does the wisdom of Proverbs. When you are too tired to act as a judge and righteous arbiter for your children's disputes and you tell them "Leave me alone, stop being a pest, and work out your own problems", you are siding with Rousseau over against David. There are many ways in which Americans have rejected the principles upon which the American Revolution was built and have adopted the evil principles of the French revolution, and most Revolutions that have followed. So even though you are not Marxist guerillas in some African country who need to be called to repentance, this is a passage that gives principles that our children need to understand and embrace. We are going to look at three revolutionary murderers, and try to isolate the difference between David's fight for God and the revolutionary fight for something else.

I. The revolutionary slaughter of Abner

And one principle that I haven't put in your outlines is that revolutions tend to breed never-ending revolutions. The revolutionary slaughter of Abner bred the revolutionary slaughter of Ishbosheth. A revolutionary overthrow of a tyrannical government in Africa not only ushers in new tyranny, but it makes people long for another revolution. And this is one of the reasons why David treated the revolutionary tactics of the Amalekite, Joab, and these two revolutionary brothers in chapter 4 so seriously. It had to be stopped; something else needed to be modeled. He modeled the kind of government that would enable Judah to be stable for hundreds of years – even when believers were not ruling, whereas northern Israel (at least after Jereboam) bought into at least some of the principles of Robespierre and seemed to have one revolution after another. Sometimes the kings weren't even on the throne more than a year or two. Northern Israel vacillated between a tough strong guy who imposed stability at the loss of freedom to fearful military coups that weren't much better. There were some

conservatives in Northern Israel who brought back smaller government, but not many, and it usually didn't last.

A. Overturning the rule of law, or enforcing the rule of law? Why was one revolutionary act of revenge more troubling to Israel than hundreds of deaths from war? (v. 1)

Let's start with verse 1:

2Samuel 4:1 When Saul's son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and all Israel was troubled.

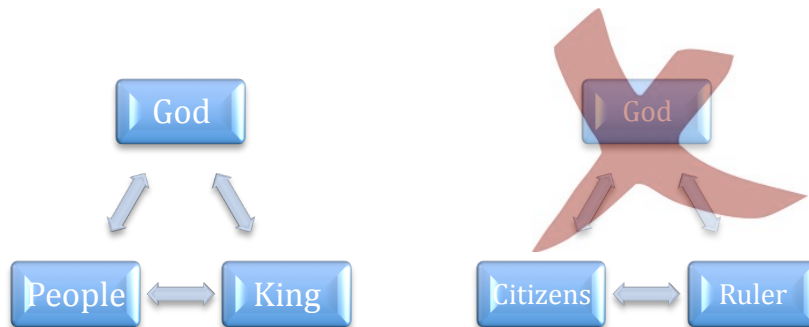
Why was one revolutionary act of revenge more troubling to Israel than hundreds of deaths over the previous seven and a half years of war? Well, you could chalk it up to the fact that Abner was such a great military leader that it would be hard to replace him. But there is more to it than that. We will see in a future sermon that there were plenty of military men in the north who could have led Israel quite effectively. What was frightening was the way this death happened in the previous chapter. The killing of Abner showed that Joab was willing to break a treaty, violate his own constitution, defy God's law, ignore the wishes of his commander in chief, and destabilize society in order to get his personal revenge. That *is* scary. It leaves everything in society unsettled – much like modern Zimbabwe.

And this is one of the fundamental differences between the American Revolution and over 90% (by my count) of the Revolutions that have flowed from the ideas of Robespierre. The American Revolution was standing upon law and seeking to enforce covenants and law, and it was really the Brits who were acting as the revolutionaries, not the Americans. The Brits were the ones who were overturning the charters of the colonies. It was Parliament that was usurping powers they didn't lawfully have. It was Parliament that was taxing what was not theirs to tax, violating common law principles, ignoring the Magna Carta, etc., etc. Read the Declaration of Independence sometime and you will see that it is an argument that the Brits are the lawless revolutionaries and the Americans are the lawkeepers who are lawfully separating. It's an apologetic for why the war and the separation was lawful.

And this is a critical divide between non-Reformed people like Norman Geisler and Reformed people like Francis Schaeffer in their writings about the War for Independence. In his book, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, Geisler argues that the American War for Independence was a wicked revolution and that martyrdom and decimation would have been preferable to rebellion. He says, "The American Revolution Was Not

Just... It is not possible to justify the American Revolution.”¹ He argues from a total misunderstanding of the earlier chapters of 1 Samuel that we have already looked at. On the other hand, Francis Schaeffer argues the Reformed view that the War for Independence was a lawful war and that American magistrates were duty bound to resist British tyranny. That’s quite the opposite position – they were duty bound to resist; they were serving God by resisting Britain. He correctly argues that the Colonial cry, “resistance to tyrants is obedience to God” was Biblical. And, by the way, the other rallying cry during that war was, “We have no king but Jesus.”

But if you don’t understand the Reformational teaching on resistance to evil, you will not have the balance that avoids both the dangers of dictatorship on the one hand or the dangers of mobocracy on the other hand. Francis Schaeffer appealed to the central doctrine of the French Reformers that there was a two-way covenant. The Huguenots were the French Reformers. Their view of the twofold covenant crystalizes the difference between the Huguenot Wars against French tyranny and the Robespierre type wars against French tyranny. Both hated tyranny, but if you look in your outlines, you will see the Reformed view of civil government in the first picture and the French Revolutionary view of civil government in the second side to that picture.



The Reformed view of civil government sees not only a covenant between the citizens and the king, but there is also a covenantal responsibility between the king and God and between the citizens and God. The king enforces the law of God against citizens who violate God’s law, but the citizens (through their representatives) have a duty to enforce the law of God against the King who overthrows God’s law. It’s not a one-way street. Because God’s law is in the equation, there are checks and balances. The American War for Independence can be justified as the enforcement of

¹ Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), p. 254. See discussion in the whole chapter on “Civil Disobedience.”

God's law against a tyrannical government in Britain if you buy into the left chart because both the King of England and the Parliament of England had broken covenant with God and the colonies. They had broken their contract.

In contrast to that left hand chart, Rousseau and Robespierre threw God out of the equation and made the covenant between the rulers and the people. That sounds nice until you realize that the ruler sets up all the rules and the people who put that ruler in place through revolution have no recourse to oppose his tyrannical rules. And once that happens, there is nothing to stop absolute tyranny from happening. The French Revolution, which called for liberty, equality, fraternity, or death" executed over 40,000 people with the guillotine, killed 300,000 by firing squad, drownings, and other methods, and ended up being responsible for the deaths of millions over the next 25 years. And actually, we could count the deaths of the past century, which has most fully lived out those revolutionary principles, and has seen the murder of hundreds of millions under communism. Why? Because governments make up their own laws; they do not submit to the law of God. It is a terrifying thing to see any government (including our own) rejecting accountability from people or God. Citizens feel helpless. There is nothing to appeal to. Apparently, at the recent RNC meetings, even Robert's Rules of Order no longer apply. Usually bureaucrats at least follow that – or give the illusion of following those rules. But you see, when revolutionary principles get adopted to deal with emergencies, there is no safety, and like Israel in verse 1, you need to be troubled. *You need to be troubled.* If Joab could kill Abner during a time of peace, after a treaty had been signed, then nobody was safe from the revenge of David's forces. Now, I have spent more time on the first point to set the context for all of the other points.

B. Destabilization of social order or godly use of social order? Why would captains engage in a coup? (v. 2)

Verse 2 (and in your outlines, I should have put this under Roman numeral II, but we will deal with it now):

2Samuel 4:2 Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of troops. The name of one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin. (For Beeroth also was part of Benjamin,

It is often asked, what kind of civil officer is necessary to call citizens to overthrow the government? Here are two captains of Israel's army. Would they count? Could you have a military coup? And the Reformed answer has been, "No." It's got to be some executive leader, whether president, governor, mayor, or sheriff (to use American terminology). And by the way,

just because an executive officer calls you to war does not make it justified. Luke 14 and many other passages give other principles that need to be considered. And Junius Brutus' book, *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*, does a masterful job of showing the exegesis for this Reformation position. I've already dealt with that at length in a couple of sermons, so I won't re-cover that material again.

But this brings up another basic difference between the lawful resistance of the American Revolution and the storming of the Bastille, which France still celebrates as Bastille Day. The American war did not destabilize society or overthrow the lawful forms of government, whereas Bastille day (and the years that followed) did. The American war was authorized by many executive officers from county to colony heads, whereas Bastille day was citizens taking the revolution into their own hands. It got coopted pretty quickly by thugs (and you see *that* happening over and over – worse people fill the vacuum left by the overthrown tyrant). It was every man doing that which was right in his own eyes. Now, if a lower magistrate – say a prince of Benjamin – had sent these officers to kill Ishbosheth after a lawful call to war, that would be different. But there was no call to war, since a peace treaty had been signed, and there was no executive officer that had authorized these captains to engage in the assassination, the Bible would treat it as wicked. To fail to follow the Bible's clearly laid out chain of command and clearly laid out separation of powers and clearly laid out separate jurisdictions is to destabilize society. Everything is up for grabs. In fact, most guerilla warfare in the last century has had the goal of *deliberately* destabilizing the society. It's part of the Marxist tactic. And in the next four years, if Obama wins, you will probably be seeing it employed more and more.

When you see people who thumb the nose at legitimate authorities that God has established, whether those authorities are parents, husbands, church officers, or civil officers, they exhibit a revolutionary spirit. But it is not a revolutionary spirit for Congress to impeach a president, or for a President to ignore unconstitutional laws established by a Congress, or for a Court to declare a law to be unconstitutional – if it is indeed unconstitutional. It is not a revolutionary spirit for a wife to appeal to the church session to discipline her husband for spousal physical abuse. That is a proper line of appeal and interposition.

Understanding civics and church government is really important if you want to protect your liberties. It may sound like a boring topic, but it is critically important. Don't neglect it in your homeschooling. Most

homeschoolers probably don't have a clue as to what is revolutionary and what follows the genius of our founding fathers. They have no Biblical way of judging. I have seen liberties erased in various churches because a pastor was not acting under authority. But if you were to ask the members whether this was tyranny or not tyranny, they wouldn't know how to do it. But on the other hand, I have also seen churches destroyed by Rechabs and Baanah's taking matters into their own hands and undermining authority in a revolutionary way. And revolutionary attitudes and actions occur within families. These are principles that can be universally applied in human behavior.

C. Confiscation and redistribution of property or protection of property rights? Why did the Beerothites have to flee? (v. 3)

Verse 3:

2Samuel 4:3 because the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there until this day.)

Who were the Beerothites? If you look it up in a Bible Dictionary, you will see that Beeroth was a city of Gibeon, and the Gibeonites were Canaanites who embraced the God of Israel in the book of Joshua. They joined the church. They became part of God's covenant people. *But*, because of the color of their skin and their ancestry, they weren't always treated well. And what happens in revolutionary times? Minorities suffer. That's what has happened in the Republican Party, isn't it? The voice of minorities is no longer heard. What happened in the 1992 Los Angeles riots? Minority shopkeepers got pillaged. What happened during the 1994 revolutionary attacks of Hutus against Tutsis in Rwanda? Ethnic minorities and other weak citizens were killed and their wealth was confiscated.

So what happened is that the Benjamites late in the reign of Saul or early in the reign of Abner had confiscated the territory of Beeroth from the Gibeonites. It wasn't lawful; it was revolutionary. Many Gibeonites died, and David later had to right this horrible wrong. He hung some of the descendants of Saul who were guilty - and that turned away God's anger at a violated covenant. Anyway, the survivors fled eighteen miles west from Beeroth to Gittaim. They were uprooted, and there was a massive redistribution of wealth, and because these two captains are now from Beeroth, it appears that they were the beneficiaries of some of that redistribution. That's what happens when revolutionaries like Abner are in control. R. J. Rushdoony said, "If the law discriminates against the weak

because they are weak, and the strong because they are strong, then it ceases to be law and is an instrument of oppression.”²

This highlights yet another stark contrast between the American Revolution and the French Revolution that happened a little over a decade later. France engaged in massive theft and redistribution of wealth. They did it of course in the name of the poor and downtrodden. But very few of those poor and downtrodden were really helped. Everybody suffered in that massive social upheaval. Most of the revolutions since that time have done much the same, with officers of the armies and friends of the new dictator being the main beneficiaries of the redistribution. While it is true that the British confiscated territory from the Americans, the Americans steadfastly refused to do so. Revolution is grounded in envy whereas God gave governments to protect private property. That’s why I find it a bit offensive to call the American War for Independence a Revolution, even though I sometimes do so myself by convention. But we need to make sure that our views of wealth and property follow the views of the French Reformers, not the French revolutionaries.

D. Individuals lost in the sea of “we the people” or protection of individuals? Why this interruption of the story with the story of Mephibosheth? (v. 4; contrast David’s actions in chapter 9)

Point D outlines another distinctive by which to judge revolutions. Does the end result of the philosophy protect individuals or are individuals lost in a sea of “we the people.” For France’s Revolution, everything was theoretically done for “the people,” but the individual’s rights got lost in the sea of the people. I don’t have time to develop this theme, but I believe it is in part why the story of Mephibosheth is introduced here. Commentaries are puzzled by this sudden insertion of supposedly “irrelevant material”, but I believe it is not irrelevant, and that it not only introduces a person that David will later bless with his own personal resources, but it stands in stark contrast to the socialistic wealth inherited by these captains of Beeroth. Mephibosheth and these two men are being juxtaposed deliberately. In Revolutionary governments there are always winners and losers. In God’s economy, everyone is treated equally whether he is a Mephibosheth cripple or an unknown citizen. So let’s read verse 4.

2Samuel 4:4 Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a son *who was lame in his feet*. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from

² R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 532.

Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

Abner didn't think much of Ishbosheth, but he thought even less of Mephibosheth. He was essentially discarded. And we will see that David later restores what Abner had taken from him. I would assume that his lame feet kept him from being a threat and kept the line of Jonathan alive.

II. The revolutionary slaughter of Ishbosheth

A. Premeditated murder or premeditated patriotism? What is the significance of being killed in bed? (v. 5)

But let's quickly look at six principles that can be found in the murder of Ishbosheth by the two revolutionaries, Rechab and Baanah. Verse 5 says,

2Samuel 4:5 Then the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out and came at about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who was lying on his bed at noon.

The only thing that I will point out here is that their trip was over 40 miles, which means that they had plenty of time to think and plan this assassination. It was clearly premeditated. So the question is, was it a premeditated murder or premeditated patriotism? In our discussions of the principles of resistance a few months ago, we saw that the assassination itself was not the problem. The problem would have been whether it met all the Biblical criteria that would take it from murder to a legitimate act of resistance to tyranny. And of course, the Reformed position would be that this was *not* legitimate. It was premeditated murder. Tyranny by itself cannot justify a private citizen or a military leader assassinating the head of a country without authorization. We've already seen that in 1 Samuel.

That's not to say that tyrants aren't guilty of murder. They can be. And they should be tried for war crimes after a war is finished. But you don't answer the tyrannical declarations of sovereignty by a state with the equally lawless declarations of the sovereignty of the individual. Rushdoony rightly said, "Not surprisingly, the assertion of the sovereignty of the state, a humanistic concept, led in the 18th and 19th centuries to a counter-assertion, the sovereignty of the individual, again a humanistic principle."³ Both the nation and the individual must be seen as under God and judged by God's law, and in submission to God's representatives. Only God has absolute sovereignty, and only he can define lawful resistance.

³ Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 502.

B. Violation of private property or legitimate act of war? Why does the author spend so much time mentioning the private property? (vv. 6-7)

The next point asks whether verses 6-7 represent a legitimate invasion of a home or whether it is a violation of private property. They say,

2Samuel 4:6 And they came there, all the way into the house, [So there is a violation of private space] *as though to get wheat*, [That is deception and subterfuge] **and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.**

2Samuel 4:7 For when they came into the house, [Why repeat that again?] **he was lying on his bed in his bedroom; [In other words, he was not a combatant; but notice again the emphasis on this being a private place - a bedroom] **then they struck him and killed him, beheaded him and took his head, and were all night escaping through the plain.****

Now, there are actually a number of principles in those two verses that I could have drawn out, but I'm only going to highlight one – invasion of personal property and privacy. Is it legitimate for army captains to unilaterally do this? Obviously in a lawful war you can kick the enemy's door in and kill him. God authorized that over and over again in the Old Testament. But this was not time of war. Everyone knew that Abner had negotiated a peace treaty with David. Some people might appeal to Judges 3, where Ehud went into the king's private summer chamber, locked the door, and killed Eglon, the king of Moab. But the two situations were quite different. Ehud was the leader of the executive branch of Israel. He was authorized to declare war, and he was authorized to do a preemptive first strike attack, and he was authorized to assassinate the enemy, who had conquered Israel and was a foreign occupying force. But that's totally different than this chapter's situation. These were two unauthorized military officers entering private property without permission of either the government or the owner of the property.

Now, you might believe that there really isn't a Biblical doctrine of privacy. But there is. Exodus 22:2-3 gives you Florida's castle doctrine. And God clearly teaches in 1 Kings 21 that this sanctity of your property from invasion applies even to kings. (so Joel, you are absolutely right.) Even kings may not invade your property or kick down your door without very clearly defined exceptions given in the law. When you study it, the Bill of Rights is a Biblical document, and might also be called a Bill of Restrictions for the government. So there is a Biblical castle doctrine.

This would make the broad powers of the Patriot Act and NDAA unlawful because they give the government the right to spy on every conversation, to invade every home with surveillance, to break down any door on mere suspicion, and to kill American citizens on mere accusation. These new powers were foreign to our American nation and resemble powers that King George had and that Revolutionary France exercised. So our own government is adopting revolutionary principles in fighting against revolutionaries. It's a dangerous place to go. You don't answer lawlessness with more lawlessness, but that is exactly what America is doing in their war against terrorism and their war against drugs. Both are unconstitutional and lawless.

In our first War for Independence, our founding fathers were so upset with British quartering of their troops in people's houses, and their confiscation of weapons, violations of Habeas Corpus, and snatching people away from their families and secretly carrying them off to Britain to be tortured, that they instituted Amendments 1-6 to the Constitution. Citizens need to study and understand the rights that are embedded in that document. They are there because our founding fathers hated the revolutionary principles of the Jacobites of France. In France, you could go to the firing squad because of an anonymous tip – no court trial, no facing of your accusers, and no Habeas Corpus. A soldier could come into your home and shoot you, just like Rechab and Baanah did.

C. Unprincipled revenge or legitimate vengeance? (v. 8) Why the mention of Saul's descendants? (v. 8)

The next question that I ask is, "Was this unprincipled revenge or legitimate vengeance?" In verse 8 the two revolutionaries claimed that this was indeed God's vengeance:

2Samuel 4:8 And they brought the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul your enemy, who sought your life; and the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants."

How do you tell if this was unprincipled revenge or was truly God's vengeance? Romans 13 says that the government is duty bound to be God's minister of vengeance but quickly adds that the magistrate is subject to God's laws. So it's not an issue of whether vengeance is allowed. It is. But one implication of Romans 13 is that if God's laws are violated in the execution, by definition the execution cannot be God's vengeance. It would be an insult to God's justice to call it His vengeance.

Now, applying that to our passage, if Israel had still been at war, it might have been different, but the whole army knew that hostilities had ended and a peace treaty had been signed by Abner. So this can no longer be judged by wartime ethics. It must be judged by peacetime ethics. I can't give you all the checks and balances that the Bible gives on what is allowable in war and what is allowable during time of peace, but let me give you a tiny sampling of things that show that Rechab and Baanah violated God's laws. I've already mentioned the castle doctrine, but I'll give you five more. And to make it easy on them, let's assume that Ishbosheth was a notorious war criminal. David says that's not the case – that he was a righteous man. But let's assume the worst of Ishbosheth.

1. First principle: Given Abner's peace treaty, Ishbosheth could not be executed for his war crimes without a trial. Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 17 say that a king could judge national issues (like David did), and lower issues could be assigned to lower judges.⁴ I

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1. ⁴ *elders of the town or city* which dealt with contracts, family issues, protection of patriarchal interests, and local disputes (Deut. 19:12, 21:3,6,19; 22:15; 25:9; Ruth 4:1-12; etc.). They were also on occasion involved in investigating charges brought against a person from another jurisdiction before handing him over (Deut. 19:12 in context with Numbers 35:12,24-25). They also worked hand in hand with judges on occasion (Deut. 21:2). Rushdoony comments: "...the elders of the city whose functions are seen in the law in reference to five types of law: (1) blood redemption, (Deut. 19:12); (2) the expiation of murder by an unknown culprit (Deut. 21:3); (3) the judgment of incorrigible delinquents and criminals (Deut. 21:19); (4) cases of defamation of virgins (Deut. 22:15); and (5) protection of the family and its local, patriarchal interests. The law in each case requires discernment and judgment but does not permit discretion. The elders of the city thus constitute an extension of family government, protection and defense. Clearly, a very different conception of the city is in evidence here. In the bible, the community is a collection of families with a common faith, and its basic government is one which concerns itself with family life." (*Law and Society*, p. 657)
 2. *appointed judges* (another form of eldership) which dealt with extraordinary contractual issues (Ex. 21:6), tort law (Ex. 21:6,22; 22:8,9; etc.), capital offenses (Ex. 21:22-23; Numb. 25:5; etc.) and any criminal matters and disputes that couldn't be resolved at the local level (Ex. 21:22; 22:8-9; Deut. 16:18-20; 19:17-18; 25:1-3; 2 Chron. 19:5-10; etc.). Notice that there could be appeal to these appointed judges from the judgments of the city courts: "Whatever case *comes to you from* your brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances..." (2 Chron. 19:10). Rushdoony comments: "the judges constitute still another form of eldership. The judges and their courts act in connection with disputes (Deut. 19:17-18; 25:1-3). Matters beyond the jurisdiction or solution of the elders of the city are referred to the judges, who sit with a priest, who provides judgment, not on the case at hand, but on the laws of God pertinent to the case (Deut. 17:8-11). These elective judges (Deut. 16:18-20) have a certain amount of investigative power in the court with respect to the testimony of witnesses (Deut. 19:16-19). In the case of an unknown murderer, the judges acted in concert with the elders of the city (Deut. 21:1ff) and the elders of the country (Deut. 21:2)." (*Law and Society*, pp. 657)
 3. elders of tribes (Deut. 31:28; 2 Sam. 19:11; 1 Kings 8:1; 12:16; 2 Kings 23:1; 2 Chron. 10:16). These elders primarily represented the tribal interest against the national interest, but they were also a part of the appeals process (Deut. 1:15)
 4. "elders of the people" or elders of the country whose functions were much broader than judicial (Numb. 11:16; 1 Kings 8:1; 20:7,8; 1 Sam. 3:17; 2 Sam. 5:3; 17:14-15; 2 Kings 6:32; Jer. 26:17-24; etc.). These elders were also a check and balance against ungodly tyranny from a central government. Jeremiah's life was rescued because of the interference of such men (Jer. 26:17-24). Issues of national interest would come before this Sanhedrin. Rushdoony comments: "...the elders of the people or the elders of the country. These elders constituted the general government and made up the national assembly, later known as the Sanhedrin, a council of seventy plus the governor, king, or, under the Romans, the high priest acting as a governor. Their creation is cited in Numbers 11:16; their powers included the declaration of war (1 Kings 20:7,8), negotiations by lesser councils with other tribes of Israel (1 Sam. 3:17), and the like. They ratified

- have some Biblical passages in my notes (Ezra 7:26; Ecc. 8:11; implied in Matt. 5:25) that indicate that a trial could lawfully be a speedy one, but a fair trial is guaranteed to anyone accused of a crime of any nature.
2. Second, the trial had to be public or "in the gates." And I have a bunch of Scriptures that show that (Deut. 16:18; 17:5; cf. Deut. 21:19; 22:15; 25:7; Amos 5:12,15; Zech. 8:16). And the execution needed to be public rather than private. And I have several Scriptures that show that (Lev. 20:2; 24:14; Numb. 15:35; Deut. 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24). This prevented the civil government from turning the court into an intimidation machine. It also made the government accountable to the people. But secret trials and secret punishments were against God's law. They were against the two-fold covenant. These two officers violated those laws.
 3. Third, when a person pled innocent, the case had to be established with a minimum of two witnesses, and in some situations, three (Deut. 19:15). There couldn't be less than two and a judge couldn't require any more than three. The minimum of two protected the accused and the maximum of three kept judges from letting the guilty off the hook by raising the minimum to five or six or whatever he wanted.
 4. Fourth, the witnesses were supposed to bring the case to court, to be the prosecution, and to be involved in the execution if it was a capital crime. (Ex. 23:1-9; Num 35:20; Deut. 17:4-7). If witnesses couldn't prove the charge, then judgment has to be left to God (Numb. 5:12-31). And I've got several Scriptures to prove that principle.

and made possible a king's rule (2 Sam. 5:3), and were the ruling body (2 Sam. 17:14-15). We find these elders working with Elisha against the king (2 Kings 6:32), and, later, interfering in the trial of Jeremiah (Jer. 26:17-24). Thus, the office retained great power even in the times of the monarchy.

"The functions of the elders of the people were (1) to represent the people in the covenant and in the proclamation and government of the law of God (Ex. 19:7; 24:1,9; Deut. 27:1; 29:9; 31:9; Josh. 8:33; 24:1; II Kings 23:1). They were to see to it that God's law governed the land and the people. (2) The elders of the people appointed a leader, governor, or king (1 Sam. 8:4; Judges 11:5-11). (3) These elders declared war (Josh. 8:10; II Sam. 17:4-15; 1 Kings 20:7). (4) They conducted political negotiations and made pacts and agreements (Ex. 3:16,18; 4:29; Numbers 16:25; II Sam. 3:17; 5:3). (5) They performed some sacred ceremonies, as in the Passover (Ex. 12:21), communion (Ex. 18:12), and in witnessing sacrifices (Lev. 9:1). (6) They acted in times of national crisis as an aid and consenting witness to God's prophet (Ex. 17:5-6), in seeking God's mercy through repentance (Josh. 7:6; 1 Chron. 21:16). It was the elders of the people or of Israel who met in the city square next to the city gate (Deut. 21:19; 22:15; 25:7; Ruth. 4:1ff; Lam. 5:14). Their deliberations were thereby to be open to both God and man." (*Law and Society*, pp. 657-658) [In my judgment, none of the references in the second to last sentence relate to the elders of the country, but as the texts themselves say, to "the elders of the city." Nevertheless, the general jurisdictional categories Rushdoony has given appear to be correct. The elders of the people often sat in the gate with the king. pk]

5. Fifth, the privilege of defending yourself in court was always accorded the accused (Deut. 1:16-17; 17:9; John 7:51)

Those five and other principles indicate that what Rechab and Baanah did was a clearcut violation of God's law. Even terrorists have certain rights. Obviously if they admit guilt, they can be immediately executed. But rights don't disappear simply because a person is a suspected enemy. The revolution in France, and most of the Revolutions since that time have shown that they lacked these Biblical restraints. In contrast, British soldiers who molested Americans got a fair trial even during the heated days leading up to the War. If you want a Christian civilization, you must promote Biblical principles of jurisprudence. The kinds of things that are beginning to happen in America smack more of Rechab and Baanah than they do of David.

***D. Following human reason or implementing divine guidance?
What is the significance of David's words? (v. 9)***

The next principle is the issue of divine guidance versus human reason. Verse 9:

2Samuel 4:9 But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity,

David's first principle was not the sovereign individual, human rights, human desires, values, or goals. His first principle was God. He took an oath under God. He knew he was accountable to God. Our nation understood that at one time. That's why our national motto was "In God we trust," and why our pledge has "one nation under God." In a Readers Digest article, Alexander Saul wrote,

I have spent well nigh fifty years working on the history of the Russian Revolution. In the process I've collected hundreds of personal testimonies, read hundreds of books, and contributed eight volumes of my own. But if I were asked today to formulate as precisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some sixty million Russians, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat the phrase, 'Men have forgotten God.' What is more if I were called upon to identify the principle trait of the entire Twentieth Century I would be unable to reflect anything more precise than this statement, 'Men have forgotten God.'

For Thomas Paine (whom most of our founding fathers did not like), resistance to tyrants was the assertion of the individual's sovereignty. For most of our founding fathers, their motto was, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." David was not a revolutionary. And someone might say,

“But neither were Rechab and Baanah. They appealed to God. They said, ‘**The LORD has avenged.**’ So how do we distinguish between those who follow human reason and those who follow divine guidance? It isn’t by claims. Both sides claimed to be following God. These two men claimed that they were applying God’s vengeance. Presidents use God to justify ungodly wars. There have even been bloodthirsty revolutions that have claimed to do it in the name of God. Some of the revolutions in South America and in Africa have been spawned by Liberation Theology – and the fruits have been horrible. So how can you discern humanism versus divine sanction? You don’t do it by reading Norman Geisler’s book on Ethics. He rejects Biblical law as being relevant to governments and adopts instead a nebulous concept of natural law. But that’s why he thought the American War for Independence was an ungodly and unjust war. Apart from the law of God, you have no way of knowing if any resistance to tyranny is just or unjust. You cannot get away from that. It’s either God’s law or it is humanism. And unfortunately, Geisler opts for humanism in civil government. There really are no other options – it’s God’s law or man’s law. R. J. Rushdoony said,

... godly obedience is the best ground for resistance to evil, in that it stands primarily in terms of a higher obedience to God and therefore is in obedience independent, and in resistance to tyrants, obedient to the higher authority of God.⁵

This is a key distinction between most Revolutions and the American War for Independence. The American War was characterized by obedience to God’s law – “Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God” – whereas France was characterized by rebellion against authority and the elevation of the sovereign individual. Some of you have read Thomas Paine and other advocates of the sovereign individual. It is a scary philosophy, and it has led to bloody revolutions where individual rights have been stripped. James calls God’s Old Testament law the “Perfect Law of Liberty.” It is the only source of lasting liberty.

E. For mercenary advancement or for God’s glory? Why does David liken this to the Amalekite’s actions? (v. 10)

The next principle can be seen in verse 10:

2Samuel 4:10 when someone told me, saying, ‘Look, Saul is dead,’ thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag—the one who *thought* I would give him a reward for *his* news.

⁵ Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 198.

The implication was that these men were just as mercenary in their desires for reward and advancement as that Amalekite was. And while some ungodly revolutionaries have sometimes sacrificed a lot (and you can admire them), many revolutionary leaders have used such dupes just as the revolutionary figure Abner, used Ishbosheth and anyone else that he could. In contrast, the men who fought the American War for Independence knew that they might be signing their death warrants and the loss of everything that they had when they signed the Declaration of Independence. But they loved liberty enough to make such sacrifices. They said, “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Did that mean that everyone who joined the American War for Independence had such self-sacrificing motives as David had? No. The story is told of a man who was dressed in civilian clothing and riding past a group of soldiers during the American War for Independence. He saw the leader of the group of soldiers shouting instructions, but making no attempt to help his utterly exhausted soldiers whatsoever. When the rider asked why he was not helping, the leader retorted with great dignity: “Sir, I am a corporal!” The stranger apologized, dismounted, and proceeded to help the exhausted soldiers. When the job was done, he turned to the corporal and said, “Mr. Corporal, next time you have a job like this and not enough men to do it, go to your commander-in-chief, and I will come and help again.” It was none other than George Washington. He was acting like David tended to act, and his actions were a rebuke to this corporal. A servant heart will often, though not always, spare you from ungodly revolutionary attitudes in family, church, and state.

F. Unauthorized killing versus authorized execution? Why does David call these men wicked and Ishbosheth righteous? (vv. 10-12a)

Look at verses 10-12:

2Samuel 4:10 when someone told me, saying, “Look, Saul is dead,” thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag—the one who *thought* I would give him a reward for *his* news.

2Samuel 4:11 How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?”

2Samuel 4:12 So David commanded his young men, and they executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged *them* by the pool in Hebron.

And I'll stop reading there. But one objection that people might bring is that David should not have executed these men without a court trial. Was he any different from Rechab and Baanah? But there isn't a single law that I have cited that David broke. No trial was needed since these men had admitted to killing Ishbosheth in cold blood. We aren't told if they said more, or if David got that information from a bit of cross examination, but David somehow knew that they had killed Ishbosheth in his bed. It's not in their speech that is recorded here. So there is obviously more to their testimony and/or more to David's questioning that is not recorded. But even what is recorded was enough to make those men self-convicted as having broken God's law. They were guilty of murder, and no lesser punishment that capital punishment is allowed for murder.

But that means that we must be extremely careful in our philosophy of self-defense as well as in our philosophy of war. If you are going to use any weapons (whether inside or outside the army) you need to know what is legitimate killing and what is not. David called these men wicked based on their violation of God's law, and he called Ishbosheth a righteous man. And, by the way, he didn't call Ishbosheth a righteous man because he was without any guilt in seizing power or during the war. He was declaring Ishbosheth righteous in his capacity as a judge; in his capacity of what came before him. As far as the court was concerned, there was nothing in Ishbosheth's life that could justify the killing. So he is pronounced judicially righteous and they are pronounced judicially wicked. Without God's law you can't make such pronouncements. And that is why it was such a tragic judicial revolution when Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes unconstitutionally threw out Christian Common Law from the courts and replaced it with evolutionary law. Christian Common Law is still in our constitution – in amendment VII. But the courts ignore it.

This means that America has had an ungodly revolution in how courts function, an ungodly revolution in how the executive office is run, and an ungodly revolution in the legislature. Modern civics has been more influenced by the French Revolutionaries Rousseau and Robespierre than they have been by the French *Reformers* such as Beza, Coligny, Mornay, Languet, and Daneau – authors you should get familiar with. According to John Adams, the second president of the United States, those five French Reformers (along with Scottish Reformers such as Rutherford, who wrote *Lex Rex*) had a profound influence upon the discussions that led up to the War for Independence. They understood the Calvinistic doctrines. Abraham

Lincoln, on the other hand, bought into the Jacobite ideas of Revolutionary France.

And the title of Rutherford's book says it all – Lex Rex (the law is king). The Bible would describe King George and the English Parliament as ungodly revolutionaries when both said the opposite - “Rex Lex” – the king is law. When any man becomes the law, it is a revolution against God's government. That is true whether the man is the sovereign individual, a theologian like Geisler, or whether the man is a king. Rex Lex is a rebellion against Christ's kingdom. And Samuel Rutherford risked his life when he wrote the opposite: Lex Rex – God's law is king, and kings are judged by it. This is what Christians have to get back to. If we are to overturn the humanistic revolutionaries that are destroying our nation, we must convince the church to pick up the mantle of our founding fathers and to say, “Lex Rex” – God's law is king; no king but Jesus; resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.

III. David distinguishes his reign as non-revolutionary by respecting governmental jurisdictions, both past (v. 12b) and present (chapter 5)

Because God's law was king for David, he was able to navigate the treacherous waters of these early chapters of 2 Samuel. He reconciled northern Israel by clearly distancing himself from lawless, revolutionary behavior. And he reconciled himself to northern Israel by showing that he cared about justice to one individual. His non-revolutionary approach to civics enabled him to respect governmental jurisdictions.

He respected those jurisdictions by taking care of bad actions in the past. Verse 12 goes on to say, “**But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner in Hebron.**” That was an act showing that he had intended to honor the peace treaty that Abner had signed. And in the next chapter he respects the already established authorities in northern Israel. He didn't try to merge them into jurisdictional units that he could control. Instead, he honored localism and won the right to be honored by them. The approach of the French Revolution was the opposite - it used force, deceit, terror, and manipulation to try to control a country that Robespierre had savaged, and it was divine irony that he got beheaded on the same guillotine that he had so murderously used.

Conclusion

Until the church as a whole understands the distinctions between lawful civics and revolutionary civics, we won't make a lot of progress in

advancing liberty in America. And I'm sorry, but neither major party understands the difference. There are a few Republicans who do. Let me end by quoting Peter Hammond on the fruit of the French Revolution. He said,

The tools of the French Revolution were: dis-information, propaganda, the subversion of language, malice, envy, hatred, jealousy, mass murder and foreign military adventurism as a diversion to distract the masses from the failure of government. [Wow! Sounds very similar to a lot of what goes on today. We haven't progressed quite as far, but we are on that slippery road. Hammond continues:] These tools have been implemented by more modern revolutionaries: Vladimir Lenin, Trotsky, Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro, Che Guevare, Patrice Lumumba, Nicolai Ceausescu, Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh and Robert Mugabe.

The French Revolution was the prototype, which was followed by the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the Cambodian Revolution, the Vietnamese Revolution, the Ethiopian Revolution, the Mozambiquan Revolution, the Angolan Revolution, the Zimbabwe Revolution and many others. In every case they proved that yesterday's revolutionaries become tomorrow's tyrants and dictators.

In other words, Thomas Paine's call to Revolution is not the answer. It will just lead to never ending revolutions. Tyrants never look like tyrants at first. They seem like liberators. They promise liberty, equality, fraternity, or death. But it always leads to a culture of death. In Proverbs 8:36, the Wisdom of God's Law says, "All those who hate me love death."

I hope this sermon helps to inform you on what is needed in America. We need Reformation, not simply a change in parties. It is time to promote the French Reformational writers and their Biblical principles of resistance to tyranny. Those are the principles that have produced the longest lasting peace and prosperity that planet earth has ever seen. But we also need to make sure that we are not borrowing any French *revolutionary* principles in family, church, or state. Put off revolution; put on reformation. Amen.

Why Revolutions Are Usually Evil

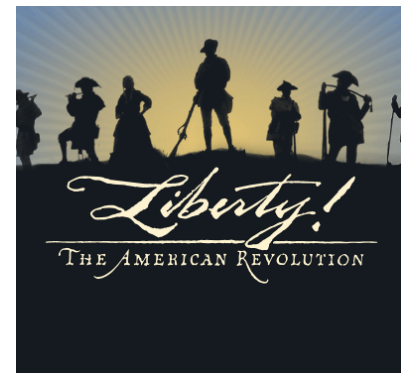
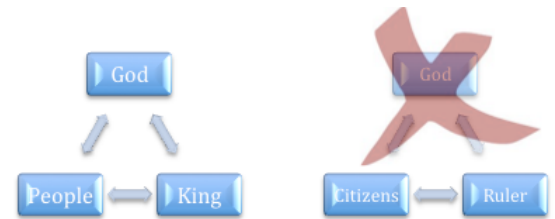
2 Samuel 4:1-12

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 6-2-2012

Introduction

I. The revolutionary slaughter of Abner

- A. **Overturning the rule of law**, or enforcing the rule of law? Why was one revolutionary act of revenge more troubling to Israel than hundreds of deaths from war? (v. 1)
- B. **Destabilization of social order** or godly use of social order? Why would captains engage in a coup? (v. 2)
- C. **Confiscation and redistribution of property** or protection of property rights? Why did the Beerothites have to flee? (v. 3)
- D. **Individuals lost in the sea of “we the people”** or protection of individuals? Why this interruption of the story with the story of Mephibosheth? (v. 4; contrast David’s actions in chapter 9)



II. The revolutionary slaughter of Ishbosheth

- A. **Premeditated murder** or premeditated patriotism? What is the significance of being killed in bed? (v. 5)
- B. **Violation of private property** or legitimate act of war? Why does the author spend so much time mentioning the private property? (vv. 6-7)
- C. **Unprincipled revenge** or legitimate vengeance? (v. 8) Why the mention of Saul’s descendants? (v. 8)
- D. **Following human reason** or implementing divine guidance? What is the significance of David’s words? (v. 9)
- E. **For mercenary advancement** or for God’s glory? Why does David liken this to the Amalekite’s actions? (v. 10)
- F. **Unauthorized killing** versus authorized execution? Why does David call these men wicked and Ishbosheth righteous? (vv. 10-12a)

III. David distinguishes his reign as non-revolutionary by respecting governmental jurisdictions, both past (v. 12b) and present (chapter 5)

Conclusion

