

# Choose this Day Whom you will Serve

The Rise of David Pt.3  
2 Samuel 2:1-10 7-5-2009

Summary: This passage contrasts God's way (David) and man's way (Abner and Ish-Bosheth). God's way is led by those who love and seek and obey God's will, who are affirmed by God's people, and who have a pastor's heart. (David gives a clinic on leadership.) Man's way is led by those who follow God's way only when it suits them (Don't lose heart when you face opposition). Loyalty is not a virtue in itself. Loyalty to men is evil when it is in conflict with loyalty to God. We are all living in Jabesh Gilead. The Lord's Anointed has sent us a letter: "I'm the King; be strong and follow Me."

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**2 Samuel 2:1** In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The LORD said, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered. **2** So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. **3** David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. **4** Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. When David was told that it was the men of Jabesh Gilead who had buried Saul, **5** he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead to say to them, "The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. **6** May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this. **7** Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them." **8** Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-Bosheth son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim. **9** He made him king over Gilead, Ashuri and Jezreel, and also over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel. **10** Ish-Bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David.

## Introduction

At the beginning of 2 Samuel Israel is in a state of ruin. The whole nation had lived most if not all their lives with Saul as the king and very few could even remember a time when Saul was not king. And now Saul is dead. Jonathan is dead. Israel is defeated. The Philistines are in control. And now that the dust has settled, and Saul's body has been recovered and buried, the people of Israel look around at each other and say, "Now what?" What is going to become of this decimated, ruined nation? Well, things are about to get worse. Israel has some glorious days in her future, but not before she travels through a very dark valley. Israel is about to plunge into a long term civil war that will drag on for many years.

## God's Way: David

The writer begins by taking us back to Ziklag where David is. And it all starts out in a very hopeful, promising way. David inquires of the Lord – which introduces us once again to the most important mark of a godly leader.

## **Marks of a Godly Leader**

### *Love of God's will*

**2 Samuel 2:1 In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The LORD said, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?"**

The very first thing David does is seek God's will. He seeks God's will because he loves God's way. And the reason I say that is the most important mark of a godly leader is because there is no way worth following other than God's way. If you are going to follow someone's leadership, follow someone who loves God's will so much that he makes it the only pursuit of his life. That is David. And God is pleased with that, and He honors it. Unlike Saul, God responds to David and gives him the guidance he seeks.

**1 ... David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered.**

That is about six or eight miles south of 470 and Santa Fe – down near Sedalia. So David goes to the most important city in Judah – way down south. And it is not just for a visit.

**2 So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 3 David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns.**

The mention of the wives and families shows that it was a permanent move. God told him to go and he went – no questions asked. That is another mark of someone who truly loves God's will. A lot of people are praying for God to reveal His will to them, but you can tell if someone really loves God's will by what they do when it is revealed. God says go to Hebron and David goes to Hebron.

**4 Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.**

Now we're talking. *Finally* David is king! When God put an end to the life of Saul it was for the purpose of turning the kingdom over to David.

**1 Chronicles 10:13 Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD and even consulted a medium for guidance, 14 and did not inquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.**

God anointed David king way back in 1 Samuel 16, and now, after 15 chapters of David living in caves as a fugitive, there is a crown on his head. Granted it is only one tribe at this point, but at least David is the king over someone – even if it is only in the south at this point. After a long civil war David will become king over all of Israel (ch.5).

I think it is safe to say that nobody in Scripture has a tougher time gaining the throne than David. For Saul, Samuel anointed him, the people rallied around him, he led them in one victory, and he was in. For Solomon, David said some words on his deathbed and when David was done talking...

**1 Kings 2:12 So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.**

For other kings it is a handful of verses at the most and they are in. But the greatest king of all, the man chosen by God and held up by Scripture as the standard against whom all kings were measured, God's choice for the throne – it takes him 20 chapters.

### *Stay busy*

We have talked before about how David is a good example of what it means to wait for the Lord. But he is also a great example of staying busy while he waits. David did not sit around waiting for the crown to drop out of the sky onto his head before he started doing what God had called him to do. As much as possible he does the work of a king even if he did not have the title or the official position. He serves Saul; he fights valiantly as a soldier and commander for as long as he can until Saul drives him away. And even when he is on the run he is rescuing Keilah, fighting Philistines, fighting Amalekites, protecting the people, supplying the people with wealth, providing leadership where he can. He is earnest about doing the work, and lets God worry about when he gets the title.

There are people in the church who would like to be in leadership, but they are not doing any leading right now. There are people who are not doing any ministry at all because they are waiting for everything to fall into place. People like that show that they do not really have a heart for the work.

But David had a heart after God's own heart. And God's own heart is a heart that is earnest about the work of His kingdom. Aren't you glad 1 Samuel 16-31 aren't just blank pages? In fact, wouldn't you say David is just as great a hero in 1 Samuel before he is king, as he is in 2 Samuel after he is king? If anything he is a greater hero in 1 Samuel. David was active because he loved the will and way and purposes of God.

### ***Affirmation by the Godly***

So for 10 years and 16 chapters David has been faithfully doing the work, and now, finally, he is crowned king of Judah. Now think about this – David is anointed by God in 1 Samuel 16 and anointed by the people of Judah years later in 2 Samuel 1. When did he become king – in 1 Samuel 16 or 2 Samuel 1? It was in 2 Samuel 1. And when did he become king of the rest of Israel? It was in...

### **2 Samuel 5:3 When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron ... they anointed David king over Israel.**

When the narrator summarizes David's reign, he starts counting the years not from 1 Samuel 16 where God anointed David, but from these two events where the people anoint David.

What should we make of that? Does that mean God's anointing did not really do anything and what is really determinative and effective is the anointing of men? No – if we learned anything in 1 Samuel it is that that is not true. The work of man without the blessing of God gets nowhere. And the purposes of God absolutely cannot be thwarted.

### **Lamentations 3:37 Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it?**

If a human being tries to do something that God has not decreed, it will not happen. We will see that in the next few chapters, where Abner uses all his political and military power to make Ish-Bosheth king. And it does not work, because no one can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it.

And yet, the fact remains, that God's anointing of David as king was not fulfilled until the people recognized it.

That shows us an important principle about how God calls a person into leadership. First God calls the person, then He does whatever work He wants to do on that person's character, and then He brings His people to the point of recognizing His call, and it is only at that point that the person receives the official position of leadership.

When the people anointed David as king they were not making him king. They were recognizing the fact that God was making him king. It is God alone who calls a person into leadership, but that person does not receive the position until his calling is recognized by the people

There is a summary of this process in Acts 13.

### **Acts 13:2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.**

Notice, the Holy Spirit had already called Saul and Barnabas prior to this, but now He tells the church to recognize that calling and officially set them apart for the work. That is what ordination is. When we ordain

someone we do not make them a leader - we only affirm that God is making them a leader. However, that affirmation carries weight. It is not until the people of God affirm the calling that the person is placed into the official position. Just as David did not become king until the people crowned him.

There are some people who do not want to jump through any hoops or go through any process of evaluation. They just say, "God's calling is all I need." What they do not realize is the proof of God's calling is the work God does on the hearts of His people to recognize and affirm that calling.

### *Willing followers*

And one of the reasons for that is because of the importance of the willingness of those who are being led. The submission of the church to its leaders is a function of their submission to the authority of Christ Himself – the Head of the Church. And one of the amazing things about Jesus Christ is, He does not force our submission. He wins our hearts. If anyone has the right to force submission it is the Lord. But He doesn't, because that is not the kind of submission He wants. He forces submission from the rest of creation – from the wind and the waves and the stars – they have no choice. But from us He desires a much better kind of submission – the submission of love.

We hear about tyrants in various places in the world who force the people to submit to their rule. The people hate them, but they have to knuckle under because of the threat of punishment. But that kind of submission would not display the glory of God.

It might show His power, but it would not show anything about His goodness. For His goodness to be on display it requires countless people from every tongue, tribe, nation, and people to willingly, eagerly, joyfully obey Him. When we fear Him and we desire to obey Him more than we desire riches or comfort or fame or pleasure or anything in this world, that puts both His power and His goodness on display in a profound way.

Islam was spread by the sword – convert or die. But Christianity is spread by the cross – the message of a God who died for you. God did not come down and put a gun to your head. He wooed you and showed you His goodness and love and opened your eyes to His beauty until your heart filled up with love for Him. That is true of 100% of all true Christians. There is no Christian who does not really want to follow Christ – otherwise he is not a Christian.

In fact, that is one of the promises God the Father made to the Messiah in the Psalms.

**Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ...3 Your troops will be a freewill offering on your day of battle."**

God is saying to His Son, the Messiah, "Those who follow you will all do so willingly – by their own free will."<sup>1</sup> God designated a special offering that was actually called the freewill offering, and the promise to the Messiah was that His followers would be a freewill offering in the sense that they would eagerly, willingly follow Him. And David was a model of that as the prototype messiah. The people followed him willingly.

### *A Shepherd's Heart*

So what are the marks of a godly leader? If you want to know who to follow, follow the man or woman who loves the will of God, and who has been recognized by the saints as one God has called as a leader. And third, a godly leader has a shepherd's heart. God has appointed David not just as a ruler over the people, but also as a pastor (shepherd – in both Hebrew and Greek the words for shepherd and pastor are the exact same word and mean the exact same thing). And God called David not only to be the king, but also the pastor of God's people – the shepherd.

**2 Samuel 5:2 The LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"**

David is their shepherd, so the main thing David is after is not power, but the spiritual wellbeing of the people. And you can see that in the very first thing he does as king of Judah.

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<sup>1</sup> Contrary to the claims of some of our more extreme Calvinist friends the term "freewill" appears 33 times in Scripture.

**4 ...When David was told that it was the men of Jabesh Gilead who had buried Saul, 5 he sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead to say to them, "The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. 6 May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this. 7 Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."**

The first people David contacts are the people of Jabesh Gilead. These people are the founders and presidents of Saul's fan club. Nobody on the planet is more pro-Saul than the people in Jabesh Gilead – not even Abner or Saul's own son, Ish-Bosheth. No one else risked their lives to retrieve Saul's body to give it a decent burial. It was the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead. So David goes right to the heart of Saul country and gives them this message. And three things really stand out about this message.

#### *David's loyalty to Saul*

First, it is yet another passage that shows David's loyalty to Saul.

**5 ... "The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. 6 May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness**

He praises them for their love for Saul. David has a special love for them because of the kindness they showed Saul. He was nothing like those leaders who sweep into power and make their first order of business the punishment of the supporters of the prior regime. David is just the opposite – he thanks them and blesses them because he really did love seeing the Lord's anointed honored.

#### *The Desire to Deliver God's Grace to the People*

Secondly, this message shows David's love for the people. He wishes them the best thing anyone could ever wish for anyone – blessing from the Lord. And that gives us insight into the sort of relationship David wants to have with the people.

**6 ... and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this.**

The same as what? What favor is he talking about? Look back at the first part of the verse.

**5 ... "The LORD bless you for showing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. 6 May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness**

He just said, "The LORD bless you and show you kindness and faithfulness." That is what David wants God to show them and that is what he intends to show them. David is going to act toward them like God acts when He shows favor.

That should be the goal of every spiritual leader – to be the expression of God's love to the people. People who want to be pastors mainly because they want to run the organization are not fit to be pastors. You are fit to be a leader only when you have such love for the people that you are driven by the desire to be the means God uses to bless the people.

#### *The Politics of Peace*

So in this message David sends we see David's loyalty to Saul, we see the love David had for the people, and third, we get some insight into David's political style. It shows us a very strong, very bold, and yet very peaceful approach. David has a lot of military might, but taking over by force seems to be the absolute last thing on his mind.

**7 Now then, be strong and brave, for Saul your master is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.**

The word translated **brave** is the same word translated **valiant** in 1 Samuel 31, where it says that all the valiant men of Jabesh Gilead went and took the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan (1

Sam.31:12). So David is saying to them, “You know the courage and valor you showed when you recovered the body of Saul from the Philistines? You need to continue to show that same courage and strength now. It’s going to take that kind of courage and strength to follow me now as king.”

He does not actually say all that in so many words – but it is clearly implied. That is why he says, **Saul your master is dead**. Obviously he does not say that to give them information. I am sure they noticed he was dead when they buried his bones. What he is saying is, “Look – Saul is gone and the leadership and protection you received from him, I’m in a position to offer that to you.”

And so David calls on them to be strong. We found last week that it is appropriate to grieve over a loss. But after you have grieved the time comes when you need to gather up your strength and press on toward the next thing God has for you. Satan will try to lock your neck in a backward looking position, so you live the rest of your life in despair over your past. But the time comes when you need to leave the past in the past and turn your face back around toward the future because God has something else coming. And it takes a certain measure of courage and strength to do that. But it is worth doing, because what God has coming next is good. What God had next was the reign of David, which was far better than that of Saul.

## Clinic in Leadership

I love these little leadership clinics that we get from David from time to time. Every one of us is in a position of spiritual leadership because we all have influence over someone. Maybe it is mostly just your family, your children, a few friends, a couple people at work, some kid at school, but no matter who you are, someone is influenced by you. We are all in some position of spiritual leadership, and so we can all learn from these little leadership seminars we get from David. Want to be an effective spiritual leader? Seek God’s grace for the people you influence. Pray hard for the people you lead and do everything you possibly can to get the Word of God into their hearts. Seek to be the conduit of that grace. A true spiritual leader is not content just to have grace come to the people – he or she wants to be the one to deliver that grace. Encourage them. David praises them for what they did. We do not hear of anyone else giving them any recognition for that – only David – the one who you might expect to be most threatened by it. But when you love someone you will strive to strengthen and encourage them.

And the way David encourages them is by calling them to excel in an area where they were already strong – the area of courage. That is what they were good at. So David recognizes that, and then gently moves them from looking at the past to looking at the future and calls them to use that strength and courage for what they are facing now.

People will be much more responsive to your leadership when you call them to do things that fall within their area of strength. When someone is always pressing you in an area where you are weak – like if you are a terrible reader and they are harping on you to read more all the time, or you really struggle in social situations and they are always wanting you to go out and become an extrovert- when leaders make you feel like you are just blowing it unless you change into a whole different personality type, that is discouraging. But when you as a leader can identify an area of strength in someone, and call them to serve God in great ways in that area, and you show them how they could use that strength in the thing they are facing right now, that emboldens and encourages and strengthens. When you do that people feel like, “Yeah, I can do that. In fact, it even sounds kind of fun!” Obviously we want to help our people shore up their weaknesses and make some progress in areas where they falter, but if you place the main emphasis on their strengths they will be encouraged instead of defeated.

That is hard to do when their weaknesses are in areas where you are strong. The things that come more easily to you seem like they should come easily to everyone. And so the temptation is to push everyone to do better at the things you do well. But a good leader will work hard to discern a person’s gifts and abilities, and focus mostly on encouraging him or her in those areas. Most people have an idea of where their strengths are, but they don’t know how that can be used to improve their prayer life, or their devotions, or how it can be used in ministry. So they need you to show them.

And other people do not even know what their strengths are. Certain things come more easily to them, but they have not noticed yet that those things do not come that easily to everyone else. So they need you to show them that that is their gift.

A good spiritual leader will seek God’s grace for people above all, and will desire to be the one to deliver that grace, and will work hard to encourage and strengthen.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11 Encourage one another and build each other up**

## **Man's Way: Abner and Ish-Bosheth**

So up through verse 7 we see God's way – shown to us by David's example. And up to verse 7 things are going great - smooth sailing. But when you are serving God the sailing is never smooth for very long. One thing about God's way – if you follow that way you can always be assured that people will oppose you. And sure enough, in verse 8 here comes the storm.

**8 Meanwhile, Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-Bosheth son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim.**

This is the first we have heard of Ish-Bosheth. At the end of 1 Samuel it sounded like all Saul's sons had died, but it turns out there was one left.

**9 [Abner] made him king over Gilead, Ashuri and Jezreel, and also over Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel.**

How much power and influence did he have over all those areas? Probably not much, given the location they picked for their capital. Mahanaim was about 37 miles northeast of Gibeah. So if you think of Saul's palace being here at I-25 and 104<sup>th</sup>, Mahanaim was way out I-76 between Keenesburg and Wiggins. And if that sounds to you like it is way out in the boondocks, you are right – it is. Anything on the east side of the Jordan was the boondocks at that time. You almost get the impression that the areas over there on the other side of the Jordan were kind of forgotten half the time. And this is as far from Philistine territory as you can get. If you think of the Philistines as being in Mexico, this would be like setting up your capital in Alaska.

And it was not only way out in the boondocks, but it was probably a defensible place. I say that because it is where David went many years later when he was running for his life from his son Absalom.

## **Opposition**

So, predictably, the plot thickens. David's path to becoming king of the rest of Israel is not going to be any smoother than his path to becoming king of Judah was. He has got some opposition to deal with now. The nation of Israel is about to be plunged into a long, bloody civil war.

No matter how clear God's call on your life is, expect opposition and do not be discouraged by it. When godly people resist you, listen to them, and see if they have a sound biblical reason. But when ungodly people resist you, do not take that as a sign that you should quit. Rejoice that you are considered worthy to suffer for Christ, and move ahead with courage – just like David said to the people of Jabesh Gilead.

Some people are so fragile in their commitment to obey God's call on their lives that the slightest opposition comes up and they quit. One person says a discouraging word, and they resign from that ministry. But if you love the God who called you to your work you will not be deterred by opposition. The great works of God are so often done through men who face stiff opposition.

**1 Thessalonians 2:2 With the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.**

In the pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus) where Paul is training church leaders, he has a lot to say about dealing with opposition.

**Titus 1:9 [a leader in the church] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**

Be strong and refute those who oppose the work of God. But do so gently when possible.

**2 Timothy 2:25 Those who oppose [the man of God] he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth**

When you face opposition, do not give up. Just gently teach those people from God's Word and pray that God grants them repentance. But do not let them slow you down. If you are doing what God called you to do, the time will come when they will be shamed by God for opposing it (Tit.2:7). In fact, if you are being obedient to God the very fact that they oppose you is a sign that they will be destroyed.

**Philippians 1:27 Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then ... I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, fighting as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God.**

And if it seems like too much for you, and you do not feel like you can handle the opposition, just look to the example of Christ.

**Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, ... 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

## **Good and Bad Loyalty**

Now, if you want some insight into the heart of Abner, take a look at what happens when Ish-Bosheth offends him later on:

**2 Samuel 3:9 May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely, if I do not do for David what the LORD promised him on oath 10 and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah**

He knew full well that Yahweh had promised that David would reign over the entirety of Israel, and yet here he tries to fight against that. He is just like Saul – he cares nothing about God's will.

He is the opposite of David. David deeply desired God's way and sought it; Abner did not care about God's way. David had a shepherd's heart toward the people; Abner did not hesitate to lead them away from God when that suited his purposes. David wanted to be a tool to deliver grace to the people; Abner used the people as a tool to get what he wanted.

Abner was, however, loyal to Saul. Abner was the leading political figure in the north at this time, but instead of trying to make himself king, he puts a descendent of Saul on the throne. Abner and David were both loyal to Saul, but in very different ways. David's loyalty was a function of his loyalty to God. Abner's was a loyalty to a man. That kind of loyalty is a terrible thing.

It is important that we understand that loyalty, in and of itself, is not a virtue. That is a very important principle to understand, because if you think there is something inherently virtuous about loyalty for the sake of loyalty Satan can hold you in all kinds of bad situations. You see this all the time in bad churches. Someone is going to a terrible church where their family is not being fed, they do not have the fellowship they need to grow in grace, it is an unhealthy situation, but they will not leave that church because of a sense of loyalty. They say, "I want to be a part of the solution, not a part of the problem" and they think the problem is people leaving, and so they just stay there in a dead church – as if the longer they keep the doors of that church open the better. And they sacrifice their own spiritual wellbeing, and the spiritual wellbeing of their family just out of a sense of loyalty. They have been a part of that church for years and years, and they feel a sense of obligation to stick it out.

I am not saying you should bail out on a church just because times are a little tough. People who leave a church just because they suffer a few setbacks, or struggle with finances or something – that is not a good reason to leave a church. But if God's Word is not being faithfully preached, or it is being preached in such a shallow way that your family is not being fed, or there is more spiritual harm than good – when that happens then you are faced with a situation much like the people in Jabesh Gilead. Are you going to be loyal to men or to God? When the people you have been following for the last 40 years drift off the path and start to pull away



from God's way like Abner is doing here, are you going to remain loyal to them or are you going to remain loyal to God?

Sometimes people say, "But I need to stay here to help fix the problems." Fine – if you have that much influence in the church, and your presence there has a high probability of turning that church around, great. Stay there and fix it. But if they are not responsive to your influence, you need to ask, am I going to be loyal to man or to God? For 40 years in Israel loyalty to God meant loyalty to the house of Saul. But now loyalty to God means leaving the house of Saul and following the house of David. David himself was loyal to Saul, because he was God's anointed. But Saul's son Ish-Bosheth is not God's anointed and so David does not have one bit of loyalty to him.

One thing we learn in the letters to the churches in Revelation 2-3 is that even the best of churches can go bad. That means the day could come when Agape Bible Church goes bad. And if that ever happens – if we ever begin to water down the gospel or we drift away from our commitment to the authority of God's Word, LEAVE! Do what you can to call the church to repentance, but if there is no response – get out of here as fast as you can and don't look back. Do not ever forget that your loyalty belongs to God, not men.

And that same principle applies in other relationships as well – especially dating relationships. You start dating someone, you fall in love, then that person starts drifting away from Christ or influencing you in a negative way, but you wouldn't dream of breaking up because you feel a sense of loyalty to that person. Or maybe it is a political party that you have been a part of a long time. Or maybe it is a club or some organization; Or maybe a certain group of friends at school; Or maybe your marriage. I am not saying you should get a divorce if your spouse is not following God, but I am saying you should not follow your spouse in disobedience. You say, "I love you and I honor you and it pains me to have to say this but I will not follow you in disobedience to God. I will be right there by your side in every other area of life, but I cannot and will not follow you in disobedience to God." We all live in Jabesh Gilead in 2 Samuel 2.

God's king is still small and relatively weak at this point. He has one tribe following him, and he does not even have enough power to control his own generals. Abner controls 11 tribes and has all the connections and power. And the writer of Samuel lays both of them out in front of us so we can see that there was a clear choice to be made – God's way or man's way. And the people knew that. We already saw that Abner knew it. Abner knew full well that God's way was David. And the people knew it too. Flip ahead for a second to chapter 5, where David finally becomes king of all of Israel at the end of the civil war.

**2 Samuel 5:1 All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "... 2 In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"**

Everyone knew that God had promised the kingdom to David. Everyone knew that was God's way. The question was not, "Is God's way with Abner and Ish-Bosheth, or is God's way with David?" They knew God's way was with David; the question for them was, "Are we going to be loyal to God or loyal to man? Are we going to follow God's strange, scary, iffy, dangerous, way, or are we going to stick with what seems to make good sense? Are we going to remain loyal to our own tribe and our tradition and follow the Benjaminite from the house of Saul, or are we going to follow God's man from down south?" They knew full well what the choice before them was, and here in chapter 2 the writer is setting up the question – which way are the people going to go. In the first half of the chapter we see David and his way, and Judah follows him. Then we are introduced to man's way – Abner and Ish-Bosheth. And the question is, which way is the rest of Israel going to go? There is no recorded response from the people in Jabesh Gilead. He does not tell us immediately which way they chose. That is going to be seen as the story unfolds in the chapters to come.

## **Conclusion: Living in Jabesh - *"Choose ye this day whom you will serve"***

But for now we are in chapter 2. Everyone one of us is living in Jabesh Gilead in 2 Samuel 2. We are faced with the choice between the Kingdom of the Lord's anointed (which is still in mustard seed form in many ways) and the kingdom of man (the world). Both want our loyalty. We have received a letter from the Lord's Anointed saying, "Do not let the small beginnings fool you. I am the new king. And I want to be the conduit for God's grace and blessing to pour into your life. Follow Me." And at the same time the kingdom of

this world is shouting at us to follow them. Satan says, "Don't follow the Lord's Anointed. You will have to give up all the things that make you happy and give you security. Put your hope in your job or money or relationships or something in this world. Be loyal to this world."

**Benediction: Joshua 24:14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. ... 15 choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, ... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."**