

Keeping Your Perspective In Times Of Trouble

Franklin Church of Christ
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January 2, 2005
PM Worship

Introduction:

For years when I read the history of Israel, I viewed transfers of power as if they happened immediately. A king died, everyone knew who was to be the next king and it just happened. That is not the case. If a king died without firmly establishing the reign of his son, there was trouble. There were often periods of turmoil while the throne was up for grabs, even when God himself had declared who should be the next king. When Saul died in battle in **I Samuel 31**, the nation was left kingless. Most people knew God had promised the throne to David. Saul had known it (**I Samuel 28:17**). Jonathan had known it (**I Samuel 23:17**). Abigail, who at the time was simply a citizen of Israel, was aware of it (**I Samuel 25:30**). Abner, who spearheads the campaign against David, knew it (**II Samuel 3:18**). Yet, despite this knowledge, there was great turmoil. In **II Samuel 2:8-9**, instead of allowing the kingdom to simply pass to David based upon God's promise, Abner, the commander of Saul's army, set up Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, as king. Turmoil ensued for two years. All of this trouble occurred because too many people lost their perspective in this time of trouble. We also face troubled times; perhaps loss of a loved one, lay off from a job, family turmoil, or perhaps even trouble among brethren. To keep greater trouble from occurring, we must maintain proper perspective. Examine some of the characters in this story to learn common pitfalls for losing perspective and how to maintain the proper one.

Discussion:

- I. Abner: Perspective altered by loyalty to a man.
 - A. Abner had been the commander of Saul's army (**II Samuel 2:8**). This was a position of honor that would have been pleasing to God. It was a position that honored, followed and protected God's anointed. Even David recognized Saul as God's anointed and wouldn't lift a finger to harm him (**I Samuel 24:10; 26:11**).
 - B. Abner lost perspective during this troubled time. Abner was aware of Saul's statement and David's reply in **I Samuel 24:20-22** (cf. **II Samuel 3:18**). But, when Saul died, Abner continued in his position of loyalty to a man: Saul and his family. Instead of allowing the kingdom to come to David as God planned and purposed, Abner appointed Ish-bosheth king over Israel (**II Samuel 2:8-9**). Thus, this one man's unswerving loyalty to Saul and his family caused the majority of this trouble, turmoil and division.
 - C. Loyalty to a friend is a good quality. It is part of love as taught in **I Corinthians 13:7**. But our loyalty to God must always supersede any loyalty we have to men. Jesus demonstrated this in **Matthew 10:34-37**. Our devotion in these relationships must never cause us to turn from God's promises, plans and purposes as Abner did. While Saul was king, it was Abner's job to honor, follow and protect Saul. When Saul died, he should have kept his mind focused on God's plan and turned to David as God's anointed. Could he have still honored and protected Ish-bosheth out of respect for the former king? Of course. Even David respected and honored Saul's family (**II Samuel 1:17-27**). However, to make Ish-bosheth king in the face of God's decree was a loss of perspective. Eventually, it led to Abner's death (**II Samuel 3:27**).
 - D. How easy it is to do this today. I have seen Christians led into error because of their devotion to men. Perhaps a family member, parent or child, went into error and the Christian followed behind because of devotion to family. Perhaps an elder or preacher espoused error, and Christians followed with them because their loyalty was to a man. Whatever the case, we must be loyal to God over men (**Acts 5:29**).
- II. Ish-bosheth: Perspective altered by the fear of a man.
 - A. Interestingly, Ish-bosheth was not leading this play for the throne; Abner was (**II Samuel 2:8-9**). Ish-bosheth, however, was perfectly willing to follow. While no specific passage relates Ish-bosheth's knowledge of God's promise to David, he surely did. After all, Jonathan had known and Saul's commander had known. It stands to reason Ish-bosheth was also aware. Why then did he go along with Abner's plan? He was afraid of Abner (**II Samuel 3:11**). He allowed his fear of men to warp his perspective. Instead of submitting to David according to God's promise, he followed along with Abner's plan. In the end, it led to his death (**II Samuel 4:6-7**).

- B. Jesus told us not to fear men, but fear God (**Matthew 10:28**). At worst, Abner could kill Ish-bosheth. But, God could kill Ish-bosheth and cast him into hell for his disobedience. We must remember this. Don't let people bully you into denying the truth or not standing on your convictions. The worst they can do is kill you. Rather, fear God.

III. Joab and Abishai: Perspective altered by seeking revenge.

- A. In the beginning, Joab and Abishai may have had proper perspective. They followed David and the plan of God. However, in the midst of this turmoil something occurred which skewed their perspective. Abner killed their brother Asahel. Abner had not wanted to kill Asahel, but Asahel kept pressing the battle. In self-defense, Abner slew him, even while seemingly trying to avoid the death, striking him with the wrong end of the spear (**II Samuel 2:19-23**).
- B. Joab and Abishai no longer served David to accomplish God's plan, but to accomplish revenge. When Abner eventually came over to David's side (**II Samuel 3:17-19**), Joab and Abishai were so caught up in revenge they killed him anyway. They destroyed the man who had the greatest ability to unite the people under David because they were no longer concerned about God's plans for the kingdom. They were concerned about avenging the blood of their brother. While the Bible does not tell us of Abishai's death, it does show that this loss of perspective led to Joab's (**I Kings 2:5-6, 31-34**).
- C. We must not lose perspective through desire for revenge. Remember Paul's statement in **Romans 12:19**. Vengeance is reserved for God and we must leave it to him. Yet it is so easy to allow past wrongs to alter our perspective, causing us to battle men when we should be working together. Focus on God's plan and purpose as revealed in His word and do not get caught up in vengeance on those who have attacked you in the past for whatever reason. Despite what has happened in the past, or even what your present relationship is, remember our battle is never with flesh and blood, but against Satan. Even when other men are opposing the will of God, our purpose is not to battle them, but to convert them.

IV. Rechab and Baanah: Perspective altered by seeking a material reward.

- A. These two play a very little part in the greater turmoil. However, as the conflict is winding down, after Abner had been killed and Ish-bosheth had lost courage, these two men step in.
- B. They wanted a reward. So, they conspired against the one they claimed as king and killed him (**II Samuel 4:5-8**). Materialism and reward had governed these men. This skewed perspective did nothing more for them than cause their own deaths (**II Samuel 4:9-12**). They were finally serving the right man as king, but their skewed perspective rendered their service unacceptable.
- C. How easy it is to get caught up in the things of this world. How easy it is to lose perspective and start focusing on the rewards that seem to make life easier. How easy it is to focus on houses, cars, clothes, gadgets, etc. We must not be distracted by the things of this world, but focus on the things of God (**Colossians 3:2**). We may be serving the right God, but if our perspective is skewed by material things, our service will be unacceptable.

V. David: The only man whose perspective was bound by the plan of God.

- A. David stands as a shining example through this whole problem as one whose perspective was governed by God's will. David was not sinless. He did lose perspective at times. But throughout this turmoil, David's character was impeccable. He would not stretch out his hand against God's anointed. However, he would become king according to God's timetable. When Saul, Abner and Ish-bosheth were killed, he did not rejoice, but mourned.
- B. Far from leading to his death, David was vindicated before the people and made king over the nation (**II Samuel 3:36-37; 5:1-5**). There was no magic formula for keeping proper perspective. David simply trusted God's promises and trusted God to work out His plan, His way. David refused to get in the way by doing his own thing, he simply obeyed God.

Conclusion:

I don't know what troubles you face in your life, but I do know this. If you keep your perspective governed by God's will, you will have success. Everything else will lead to your death—spiritual death. Leaning on God, being governed by His will leads us through all things no matter how troublesome. Where is your perspective?