

The Ugliness of Sin

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 June 2015

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 0 0] turn back to second samuel chapter 20 and reading at the beginning again now there happened to be there a worthless man whose name was sheba the son of bichri a benjaminite and he blew the trumpet and said we have no portion in david and we have no inheritance in the son of jesse every man to his tents o israel and so on if you were in two minds as to whether to go down to back this evening and you decided to stay here i'm tempted to say that you made the wrong call because this is one of the most ugly chapters in the whole bible and it presents us with sinfulness in all its ugliness in fact there's no getting away there's hardly any glimpse of anything good in this chapter whatsoever but we're quite used to that having gone through some of the chapters we've already gone through in the life of david we're quite used to the how unpredictable we are how proud we are how lustful we are and how how ugly we are inside not on the outside god's not concerned with what we are on the out with what we look like on the outside god is concerned with what we are on the inside and what this chapter does and i'm as tempted to skip over it as anyone else it's the one of these many chapters that you might read as part of the story of joe of david and you don't dwell very much on it you don't ask well what is this verse is saying to us when amasa is wallowing in his blood and when it goes into the the vivid details of how joe joab killed him you don't tend you don't tend to want to hang about very much and to ask too many spiritual questions you don't see very much about you don't very much see very many spiritual lessons in this chapter at all and yet it's there in god's word it's part of the bible and we force ourselves to read it because god has chosen to include it in the bible first of all because it happened it's his story his story is the story of his people israel and how he dealt in his own providence with his people israel and yet even included in his story are events which really turn our stomach they literally turn our stomach because they are so horrific but then what is the point of trying to mask that's what we do isn't it we try and sanitize sin we try and change the terminology of sin we try and pretend it's not as bad as the bible tells us it is because we find it much easier to think the best of ourselves rather than the worst of ourselves and sometimes we have to be just confronted with the bare facts of what we are inside and that's what this chapter does like it or not you can point the finger at somebody like job and say i'm not like that but job was a me job was a you he was a human being he lived at a particular time in history in a particular culture and no doubt he was brought up in

a particular way but he was a human being and no matter how technological and advanced the human race is the human race will always remain the same and we'd be foolish to pretend otherwise don't think for a moment that because we live in a world that appears and prides itself to have advanced in our civilized thinking that somehow we've changed at root we are at root what this chapter describes people as and so when we come to a chapter like this awful as it is we're looking in a sense in a mirror we are privileged people because we live in the new testament we live at a time where we know that christ has fulfilled everything that the new the old testament looked forward to and so we live in the new covenant the covenant in which in which revenge is replaced with forgiveness in which the judgment that we read about here in the likes of of sheba and joab has been replaced with the better way the fulfilled way that jesus came to bring and yet nevertheless a chapter like this is vital in our understanding for for who we are and we are very foolish to pretend that we are otherwise and maybe the lord will one day show you the ugliness of your own heart in fact i hope he does because it's only when god shows us the horror of what lies beneath that i can then run to jesus for forgiveness because that's what we need this is like we saw before with the awful chapter of amnon and tamar we saw such an absence of god in the chapter that we we had to we had to long for the gospel and that's what we do again here in this chapter we long for the gospel the god of peace to send his son into the world to bring peace amongst people and that's what he did when jesus came into the world he the angels announced that on earth was now peace

amongst those on whom his favor rests but meanwhile i want us to see ourselves to see the human race in all its ugliness and i want us to see first of all the ugliness of division within god's people because although although we're looking at a chapter that describes the world to us remember that this is god's kingdom a people a 10 the tribes of israel that god had chosen to be different from every other nation in the world and if we think this is bad you ought to have seen the way that other people behaved at the time the nations that surrounded israel we couldn't even read the kind of stuff that would take place in other nations this is god's kingdom and i'm not trying to make any excuses by the way this behavior should never have taken place but particularly amongst a people who god had blessed and chosen to be his own and that's what makes it so bad these people should have known better they should have always kept in mind that who brought them together and who made them what they are was the lord and they were there for the purpose of glorifying and enjoying him and yet pride gets in the way and rebellion gets in the way now what had happened here was you'll remember that in the previous chapters absalom had rebelled absalom was david's son he had rebelled against david and that had resulted in david having to leave jerusalem and spend a while many many miles away until absalom had come to kill david but but in the providence of god

absalom had got his head caught in a tree and joab had killed him david was now coming back but what had happened was that while david was in exile it was the time remember that there were 11 tribes if you take out levi you take out the tribe of levi there were 12 tribes of course in israel but you were allowed to take out levi because the levites were scattered all over the land so that's why you're left with 10 tribes and judah judah was the tribe that david belonged to and while david was in exile it was the 10 tribes not his own tribe that asked him to come back that wanted first for him to come back to jerusalem and he had to in exile send a letter to his own tribe and say to them why are you not asking me to come back now it seems that from there there arose a tension between the 10 tribes and judah and you get that tension at the very end of chapter 19 all the men of judah answered the men of israel because the king is our close relative why then are you angry over this matter now that may appear to you to be a incidental conversation but what is happening here is that the seeds of dissension are being sown the seeds there's trouble rumbling under the surface is boiling under the surface and there is tension arising between the tribe of judah and the other 10 tribes and in actual fact this tension is not going to go away it actually it's going to result in a complete division once solomon comes to the throne solomon was david's son and he was the next king of israel and what once he had died there was a there was a permanent or an indefinite decision division within the tribes of israel which resulted in the northern kingdom which were the 10 tribes and the southern kingdom which was judah so what's happening here is the very beginning of what's going to be a centuries-long division in israel what you're witnessing here is the very beginning of that and the strange thing is it shouldn't have happened it all happened so unnecessarily but then again division happens unnecessarily unnecessarily so often sometimes there are big issue but big issues but if my guess is correct that very often the times when the issues are big are very seldom most divisions occur unnecessarily over trivial issues this could have been sorted out with the right kind of reasoning but in but what happened was the tensions personalities were allowed to get in the way so that when david is almost home and dry he's almost back into jerusalem when all of a sudden you really think that after all these chapters of rebellion and and and david having to live as an exile and coming close to death itself that when he actually eventually comes back you're almost you're tempted to sigh a sigh of relief and yet it doesn't happen because another yet another rebellion occurs and it's this man sheba sheba obviously saw his opportunity he knew the tension that was taking place that that there was between the 10 tribes and judah and he saw just how fragile everything was and he took his chance and he stood up and he said we have no portion in david and we have no inheritance in the son of jesse every man to his tents o israel

in other words he was once again staging yet another rebellion against god's chosen king and like i said before with absalom in so doing he wasn't just rebelling against david he was rebelling against god this was a spiritual act of rebellion this was sheba standing up to god and saying i don't want your king i want to go my own way i want to do my own thing i want to be the the i want to determine my own destiny and that is what sin is when we turn around to god and when we say i don't want you in my life i don't want your laws i don't want your word i don't want your king i don't want your messiah i don't want jesus i will not have this man to reign over me i'm not going to be reigned over by anyone i'm going to live my own life because that's what freedom is now it's one thing when that

happens outside of the church it's another thing when that happens in the kingdom of god this man if he had god's interests at heart and god's glory at heart then he should have sought to use his skills to bring about the peace of israel there's a very important principle here we tonight as god's people are the israel of god that's what the new testament calls us and whilst we're not a kingdom in the sense that david was the king we in another sense we are we have david's son reigning over us as god's kingdom the church in the world and what that does is it places the same responsibility on you and on me as god's children to use every resource and every skill and every opportunity to seek the peace and the well-being of god's kingdom and when we fail to do that and when pride gets in the way and when we stand up and when we claim our own rights then we run the risk of dividing god's kingdom every one of us is commanded to preserve and to work for and to and to strive after the peace of the fellowship of god's people wherever we are and whatever congregation we are because it is as christians work together and live together in harmony and in peace and enjoy and worship together that the world outside gets to see the reality of our faith jesus said by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another and that is we can be the best speakers in the world and the best apologists in the world for the christian faith but if the world cannot see the reality of what we believe in the church and if the church is fraught with one faction here and another faction there this one standing up for this cause and another one standing up for that cause and each one of the fact then the world is not going to see the reality of her and it starts with our own congregations where we are our fellowships and how well we work at our own relationships with one another once again there is a reminder of our responsibility to maintain the unity of this what is it paul says to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace will you please make sure that you play your part in maintaining the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace otherwise there is the ugliness of division well there's also the ugliness of abuse because after sheba decides to stage his rebellion and decides to go up go his own way and to take as many men as followed him we're not entirely sure how much of a rebellion it was we read in verse 3 that david the scene changes and that david eventually comes back to his own house in jerusalem and the focus is on 10 women nobody knows their names they were david's concubines they had been david's concubines a concubine was a kind of a half servant half wife i'm not entirely sure how it worked and it certainly was never god's plan for mankind god's plan for mankind was one man one woman in the bond of marriage end of story it's very simple but somehow or other even amongst god's people they had got it wrong they had strayed from god's original intention in creation even david himself got it wrong he had several wives and he also had several concubines who lived in the palace and they were kind of servants kind of wives there were 10 of them and some people suggest that the reason that there were 10 was that each one represented one of the other tribes of israel so that by having a concubine from reuben or a concubine from gad or a concubine from asher then the interests of each tribe would be served and they would have a kind of love representative with david now i'm not sure if that's true or not but i've heard it suggested that that's the reason why he had 10 in any case what had happened was when absalom came into the palace he forced himself on he sexually forced himself on each of the concubines in order to make his mark within the palace it was a horrendous thing to do it was an act of wickedness for absalom to do that but interestingly it was exactly a fulfillment of what god had predicted in any case when david fell and when he had committed adultery with bathsheba but now these women david could not resume the relationship that he had with these women before and so we read in verse 3 that he put them he left them to care for the house and put them in a house under guard and provided for them but he did not go into them so they were shut up until the day of their death living as if in widowhood that reminds us of tamar doesn't it remember that all again the ugly chapter that we saw before tamar who was raped by her half-brother and again her fate was to be left in a house by herself isolated from everyone else and that was the way we presumed that she lived the rest of her life well these poor concubines were in exactly the same position they were confined to a life of isolation he made sure that they were well cared for that they were clothed and fed and that they all their needs were met but they were confined and that they had to live in isolation for the rest of their lives

[20 : 15] again the ugliness of sinfulness in which some people become the victim of other people's sinfulness there are hundreds of people thousands of people all over the world this evening and i'm sure that there are people here with us this evening who you are the victim of someone else someone else's wrongdoing and sinfulness in some way may not be anything anything like what these concubines had to endure and yet you have been consigned to perhaps a

scarring that you'll never forget memories that you will never forget of past events that have stayed with you for the rest of your lives your life and have affected you in ways that you never imagined and you know you're never going to get over it and it was through no fault of your own i'm sure there are ways many ways in which you could react to to your circumstances you could become bitter you could become resentful you could become cynical about life you could yourself do things end up doing things that you know are going to hurt other people almost as a kind of a revenge tactic there are various ways in which you can you can respond to your own circumstances but let me suggest this that there is a god who knows and there is a god who sees and he knows all about your life and you can turn to that lord and you can trust in him and you can come to know him through faith in jesus christ and you can discover a companion a friend who sticks closer than a brother and a friend who sent his son into the world to bind up the broken hearted there are many ways in which we can become broken hearted not just through death but through betrayal and through violence and through abuse and through badness we live in a bad world in which we do bad things and other things other people can do bad things to us and here are these widows who knows who knows who knows who knows how they responded and how they reacted to their loneliness and to their life that was determined for them they were in a sense prisoners they were never able to marry anyone else they could not resume a relationship with david because his own son had had slept with them and that was them they were in limbo through no fault of their own the ugliness of abuse and then there's the ugliness of pride we've touched on it already in this chapter the pride in which in which joab comes to amasa now amasa remember he was absalom's commander-in-chief and when david decided he was going to return to israel when the rebellion had fallen as a political tactic david had sent word to amasa and he said i want you to meet my commander-in-chief instead of joab now that was in order to unite the kingdom it was a political it was a political master stroke in order to unite the kingdom but joab of course you can just imagine

job was is a strange character i wish i had time this evening to do a proper analysis on joab job was a ruthless and a violent man if you had asked him do you ever want to be king of israel joab would say no i'm having too much fun as it is i have complete job satisfaction because all my needs are met i have power and i can see the result of my actions right away if he had been king he would have had to be too diplomatic it wasn't a diplomatic bone and door job's body job's language was one of ruthless violence all the time and joab knew that the position he had as commander-in-chief was the position that he coveted and wanted and wanted to hold on to and when it was threatened in any way joab was going to pull out all the stops and do anything he could to re-secure that position that's exactly what he did when david tried to replace him with amasa and he went to him and he deceived him into thinking that he was his friend went to him as if to kiss him and ended up murdering him on the spot the ugliness of pride the pride that in violent human beings can turn into violence in order to get what it achieves remember what what jesus said jesus said you have heard it said that you shall not murder but i say to you that if you hate your brother and that's where it begins when we wish that other people didn't exist people that threaten us people that get in the way that's how sin works and it often comes into relationships we have to ask the lord for the spirit of of of peace and forgiveness towards those who are around us and then lastly as we come to the close of the chapter and i know i haven't gone through this verse by verse and i've said to you before that i wasn't going to do that with any of the chapters and i know that there's probably much in the chapter that gives rise to many questions but these can be left till another time but i want to finish this evening by looking at the very end of the chapter where joab catches up with sheba amasa wasn't able to gather an army and then joab killed him and then joab and abishai his brother they pursued sheba with their men and they came to a town called abel where they laid siege to that town and the people of the town and particularly this wise woman who seems to have had more sense than most of the people in this chapter she sees the opportunity and she knows that there is only one hope of saving her town because joab will stop at nothing in order to get to kill his man even if it means flattening the town of abel and so they sieged it until the why the wise woman asked for terms from joab and she said are you joab and he answered i am and she said to him listen to the words of your servant so joab gave her his ear and she managed to persuade him to allow her to persuade the people to find sheba who was hiding in the town and to put him to death to throw his head over the wall and that would be the end of the rebellion joab agreed that if that would happen he would as far as he was concerned he'd be satisfied and off he went home

again and that's what happened that was the end of it the end of the sheban rebellion and you're asking well where is light in this chapter where is there any hope where is there god how can you how can you detect can you perceive god's hand alone at all in this chapter well i'm going to just suggest to you one slight glimmer just one slight glimmer of what would ultimately be god's revelation in the gospel and that's where the wise woman comes to an agreement with joab that the one would die for the many that's the situation she was in she knew that either she would make it her business to have sheba put to death and that was what would have happened to him anyway because that was the the penalty for rebellion or the alternative was that joab would come in with his army and he would kill everyone it was either everyone die or one die you remember that this became a story in israel it became part of god's word to israel within israel so is there any surprise then that when we come to john chapter 11 and the words of caiaphas when he is faced with a dilemma that is similar in which he's afraid that all of his people are going to be killed by the romans unless he takes this one troublemaker whose name is jesus of nazareth and puts him to death instead of the many but even although he said that for political reasons we know that god's intention in his plan was one die for the many that's the principle that underlies the gospel itself that instead of you and i dying as the penalty for our sin which is what we deserve god sent his own son to give his life sheba's life was taken from him and sheba died for his own rebellion his own sin but the son of god when he came into the world he laid down his life no one took it from him he laid down his life in order to pay the penalty of sins that he never committed and yet he was made guilty for in order for us to be set free from sin and to be forgiven the one dies for the many that's the only light i see in this chapter and yet what a light it is it's just a glimmer just a faint glimpse that stretches all the way through the rest of the bible and into the new testament and into the message of the gospel today that jesus laid down his life for us that he who knew no sin jesus was made to be sin for us in order for us to have the righteousness of god in him do you know that principle in your own life have you come to embrace that one son of god the son of david and the son of god who was sent into the world as our messiah so that by his death his voluntary death at calvary the many could be set free in fact they could have everlasting life do you have that everlasting life you can have it this evening right now you can have everlasting life you can possess it right now by coming to trust in the son of david for ourselves jesus of nazareth as our messiah and as our lord let's bow our heads in prayer our father in heaven we ask that you will speak to us clearly of jesus the jesus who came into the world not to hide in this world but to lay down his life teach us what that means and bring that death to us in in clarity and in power afresh this evening for we ask in his name amen we're going to sing in psalm 86 and it's the traditional version of the psalms it's on page 341 and it's verse 12 we're going to sing four stanzas psalm 86 verse 12 the tune is evan it's on page 341 oh lord my god with all my heart to thee i will give praise and i the glory will ascribe unto thy name always psalm 86 verse 12 to 15 and we'll stand to sing oh lord my god with all my heart to thee i will give praise and i the glory will ascribe unto oh lord my god with all my heart to thee i will ascribe unto thy name always psalm 86 verse 12 to 15 and we'll stand to because thy mercy toward me in great less doth excel and thou delivered as my soul out from the lowest hill oh god the proud again me rise and violent men have made that for my soul have sought unto thee before them have not said but thou art full of pity lord a god most gracious long suffering and in thy truth and mercy and in thy truth and mercy plenteous now may the grace of our lord and savior jesus christ the love of god the father and the communion and fellowship of the holy spirit rest on and abide with each one of you both now and always amen and thank you and thank you for vagyis■s your host and we still have my faith in my heart to feel goodident which can