

## Delight in Waiting

2 Samuel 4; Psalm 37

***“As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity...”*** (v. 9)

**Introduction:** There is a natural angst against waiting. Have you ever stood at a stop light and the cross walk button says “WAIT” each time you push it, so you push it more and more hoping it would speed up the process somehow, which only means the voice continues its annoying message: “WAIT, WAIT, WAIT”? We live in a **fix it world**, where we want problems to be solved, situations fixed, and pain subsided. Waiting can be excruciating.

But if you surveyed most of our lives and would ask about areas where the Lord has put us in His waiting room, the list would be long. We wait for **diagnosis** of mysterious ailments or symptoms with unknown sources. We wait for situations with our children or grandchildren to resolve themselves, without assurance that they will. We wait for God to reveal if there is a spouse for us in our future. We wait for answers about job inquiries, for housing availabilities, and for moving possibilities. The country is waiting for the outcome of an upcoming election and the deep implications therein. Waiting can consume, and cause a myriad of negative reactions.

Waiting puts us into obvious **tension**. It puts in a place where we will either trust there is something greater at play for our life or we will try to **take matters into our own hands**. We will look for shortcuts, demand unknowable answers, or do like Abraham in the OT and circumvent temporary childlessness by merely taking another wife (see Genesis 12 & 16), even though he was promised a large progeny. Today, young people would rather sleep or live together outside of marriage since it is deemed as more convenient, less consequential, and easier. When we take matters into our own hands, it is a recipe for **regret and anger** since it comes out of a place of **envy, worry, and fear**.

As we come back to the book of 2 Samuel, we once again focus in on the life and kingship of **David**, as he progresses from promise to fruition. When you think of **King David**, many descriptions may come to mind: *warrior, powerful, brave, great, passionate, sinful, or shepherd*. Each of these is an apt description, but one that is NOT often attributed to him: **waiting**. **David had to wait....a lot**. He waited to go to battle while he was tending sheep as a teen. He waited for Saul to run his course after being anointed king. He waited in Philistine land after having a bounty put on his head. And he waited after Saul finally died to unite the two parts of God’s people, Israel and Judah, for 7 years. There were clear moments that he could have taken matters into his own hands, **but that would have betrayed his trust in the LORD**.

### Quick Historical Context:

2 Samuel 1 & 4 create bookends to the beginning of David’s reign as king, a 40-year rule which started slowly the first 7. If you remember back to chapter 1, it began with the after effects of the death of **King Saul**, as an Amalekite tried to curry favor with David by reporting back to David that HE had killed Saul and was David’s champion! This elicited the proper response by David to execute the charlatan and then proceeded to publically mourn the loss of Saul and his dear friend Jonathan. For the next **5 years**, **Abner**, the commander of the armies of Israel (or Northern tribes) set out to consolidate the area that had been conquered by the **Philistines** (1 Sam. 31:7). After tipping the scales in Israel’s favor, Abner appointed Saul’s son **Ish-bosheth** as the new king, and he ended up reigning for two years (2 Sam. 2:10).

Along the way, there were civil war skirmishes between North and South, between Saul's descendants and David, between commander Abner and commander Joab, David's military leader. Several significant events took place from chapters 2 and 3:

- Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel after being pursued (2 Sam. 2:23) which built resentment and retaliatory anger between Joab and Abner
- As time went on, Saul's house got weaker and weaker and David's forces grew in strength (2 Sam. 3:1).
- Ish-bosheth made a calculated error in accusing Abner of sleeping with his concubine, which turned Abner to pursue peace and reconciled loyalty to David (2 Sam. 3:6-11)
- Abner was received by David and the two not only made peace but **made a covenant**, signaling a peaceful cessation of war and a possible unification of the two sides. (2 Sam. 3:20-21)
- Joab circumvented David's wishes and promise and found his revenge by killing Abner, avenging his brother's death (2 Sam. 3:27). This was truly the final blow to the leadership of the Northern kingdom, but David went out of his way to distance himself from the action. David was not simply trying to win a war but was attempting to unify a country. He was also attempting to set a **new culture, a new pathway of trusting the LORD rather than having a kingdom of rebellion, retaliation, and everyone doing what was right in their own eyes.** That is why he said the following:

**2 Samuel 3:36-37** – *“And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people. 37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's will to put to death Abner the son of Ner”*

David was NOT trying to win at all cost, and that is why he was willing to try to reconcile with his enemy, willing to wait, and willing to call out Joab and his brother, Abishai, for killing Abner: *“And I was gentle today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, are more severe than I. **The Lord repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!**”* (2 Sam. 3:39)

This sets the stage for the events of chapter 4, which close out these first 7 years and usher in a united front, a moving to Jerusalem (chapter 5), and a return of the Ark of the Covenant (chapter 6). So let us look at a similar situation that David faced in chapter 1, **more importantly his response, and more importantly than that, the REASON he responded this way.**

### **The Weakness of Saul's House Exposed (4:1-4)**

*When Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died at Hebron, **his courage failed**, and all Israel was dismayed. <sup>2</sup> Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of raiding bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon a man of Benjamin from Beeroth (for Beeroth also is counted part of Benjamin; <sup>3</sup> the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there to this day).*

<sup>4</sup> ***Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet.** He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. **And his name was Mephibosheth.**”*

Saul's once mighty reign and dynasty had reached its final crumble. When news came to Ish-bosheth that Abner had died, *his courage failed* which literally meant "**his hands dropped**". Abner was the real leader, the true muscle, the driver of what went on in the North, and Ish-bosheth proved to be a puppet on a string. There was no plan, no forward thinking, no great pivot for the people, and they were left *dismayed*, or more accurately, **terrified**.

Now, whenever information is given in a Biblical narrative, it is incumbent on the reader to ask the question, "*why was this included*", and demands the student to seek to resolve that question. First, we are introduced to two men with strange names (as are many in the OT!), **Baanah and Rechab**. As Dale Davis points out in his commentary:

*"The writer seems to give Baanah and Rechab a rather hum-drum introduction; they belonged to Saul and Ish-bosheth's tribe (Benjamin). However, even in this section, the writer implied a negative estimate of the two...for he wraps his non-committal, bare-facts introduction of them in pictures of a powerless puppet and a helpless cripple (Mephibosheth)...Whatever Baanah and Rechab do following this will hardly be heroic but in the class of a **junior-high ruffian who beats up 5 year olds**. Some subtle sarcasm is already seeping out of the text."*<sup>1</sup>

Love the sarcasm and the point is made clear. Saul's house is weak, and out of the weakness bullies arise. Bullies are usually the weakest, most insecure people who POSE as strong to cover their own fear. This will play large in the story as it plays out. The other question is: **why mention Mephibosheth?** The answer is it not only showed the weakness of Saul's house, but foreshadows the kindness of David in the future (2 Samuel 9) as he sought to take care of Jonathan's son and honor Saul's house. In these small but significant ways, David showed that **he actually trusted the sovereign hand of God**, where Saul would do so only when it suited himself.

### **The Weakness of Wicked Bullies Exposed (4:5-8)**

*Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ish-bosheth as he was taking his noonday rest. 6 And they came into the midst of the house as if to get wheat, **and they stabbed him in the stomach**. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. 7 When they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, **they struck him and put him to death and beheaded him. They took his head** and went by the way of the Arabah all night, 8 and brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron. And they said to the king, "**Here is the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life. The Lord has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring.**"*

Bullies do not fight fair. They pick on the little guys, never sizing up people their own size or ability. They are not trying to uphold justice or protect anyone, but rather opportunistic and fighting for their own gain. This is exactly what these two captains of Ish-bosheth's army decided to do. Now note that in Hebrew narrative and language, they will often make a statement of what happened, and then follow it up with another layer of what happened. Here, there was not two different attacks but two different descriptions of the same attack. It is clear from this story how they operated:

- **They killed their leader in a wimpy way** – They did not confront Ish-bosheth or face him man to man, but came into his house under a guise of an errand and stabbed him in his bed. Not to

<sup>1</sup> Dale Davis, "2 Samuel: Out of every adversity", p. 49-50.

simply leave him to die, they unceremoniously cut off his head to bring as a trophy to David, with whom they were going to try to make peace and with whom they wanted to get in good graces.

- **They posed as David's friend and supporter** – People with no conviction will go wherever the political winds blow, and these men were willing to jump ship when the battle turned. Not only did they stop their support of Ish-bosheth, but they were willing to tell David they were now FOR HIM. David had to see through this charade, since a person without conviction who turned on someone else will inevitably turn on you when the winds blow a different direction.
- **They claimed to be God's representatives** – Claiming to be God's instruments is nothing new but clearly audacious, since it reflects that THEY know God's mind, heart, and will. How many terrible things have been done in the name of the LORD, from persecution of political enemies, to wars being fought, to relationships ending. We hear politicians do this today, claiming to represent God's heart on issues of moral degradation, from abortion to a lack of prosecution of wrongdoing, all in the name of 'God's will'. Again, David saw through this, as we should, whenever it is pronounced.

#### **The Weak & Wicked Bullies Expunged (4:9-12)**

*But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, "**As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity,** 10 **when one told me, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news.** 11 **How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and destroy you from the earth?"** 12 **And David commanded his young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hanged them beside the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner at Hebron."***

And here concludes the bookend: just as the Amalekite met his end through the blade of David's servant, so these two bullies met death. There are a couple of key observations here:

- **This was more offensive to David than what the Amalekite did** – The Amalekite said he killed Saul at HIS request (which was not true, but that was beside the point), where these two killed a **righteous man**. Now, was Ish-bosheth a faithful and good man? Not necessarily, but remember, David was respectful of God's call on Saul's family, and it was clear that Ish-bosheth was killed for no good reason other than treason and treachery.
- **David killed and then displayed these men** (yikes!) – Why did David go so far as to cut off hands and feet and then display these men? Not only was it righteous indignation, but also another round of foreshadowing. Do you remember when something had their hands cut off in 1 Samuel? It happened in 1 Samuel 5, where the statue Dagon fell before the Ark, and its hands were cut off. This was another illustration that wickedness would not be tolerated and that the Ark would once again make its way back to the people of Israel, which will happen in ch. 6.
- **David lived his life with ACTIVE TRUST IN THE SOVEREIGN PLAN AND ACTION OF GOD** – One could almost excuse David if he took some delight in the death of Ish-bosheth, since it would have definitively ended the civil war and ushered in what he had been waiting for all these

years. Perhaps he did not have to commend these bullies, but did he have to kill them? No, the key verse in this whole chapter is in verse 9, as it reveals David's theology and practice:

***“As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity...”***

A simple statement packed with truth. This is **why** he was willing to wait, why he did not shortcut the process and take matters into his own hands. He believed that God was alive, that He was a redeemer, and that there was not one circumstance that God had failed. Think of that! David waited for YEARS, and even as the end was seen, he was STILL willing to extend grace to his enemy and not take the cheapened victory.

What drove David to think this way? What was the underlying truth that he banked on? I believe **Psalm 37 sheds some important light onto this**, as a commentary on this passage. Psalm 37 was written at the end of his life (*“I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread”* – 37:25). It is a Psalm of waiting on the Lord in the midst of hard circumstances where the wicked seem to be winning. It is a Psalm that makes truth statements to one's own mind, giving perspective and motivation to trust, even when it does not make sense. It is a Psalm that fights for **delight, peace, and rest** IN THE MIDST OF the waiting game, not after it is over. It is a Psalm that illustrates David's robust trust in the Lord, which set the tone for his life and kingdom. Let's quickly survey the first **9 verses** of this truthful take on trusting the Lord in the midst of waiting:

***Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!***

***For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.***

***Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.***

***Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.***

***Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.***

***He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.***

***Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!***

***Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.***

***For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.***

1. **David was clear that waiting can have negative effects** – The Bible is truthful and insightful into our condition as sinful humans. Waiting is a drag and can reveal OTHER sin struggles in our heart. Notice the recognition of these real issues:
  - **FRET NOT** – Waiting can reveal worry and fear. The fear of the unknown reveals our lack of control AND our misplaced trust in medicine or our own ability to fix things
  - **Be NOT ENVIOUS** – Waiting can play the wrong kind of comparison game, as we look at others who are NOT hurting like us and have everything they want, and we want their life!
  - **Refrain from ANGER and WRATH** – We direct our anger at others and at God Himself when we are out of control or simply tired of waiting through the pain
2. **David was clear that waiting required proper perspective** – Wrongdoers and evil ones who win now WILL have an end. They will fade, wither, and be cut off. No one gets away with anything. Exchanging ease in the present is a terrible deal if it costs us into the future. When we are

waiting on the LORD, it requires us to remember that God has a plan, He IS accomplishing His will in our life, and that is ultimately good in our life.

3. **David was clear that waiting required truth driven choices of obedience** – The importance of this CANNOT be understated. As redeemed believers in Jesus Christ, we are freed up to make choices in the MIDST of waiting, based on the truth of God’s Word and His character. Notice these ACTIVE obedient choices David made and calls us to make:

- **FRET NOT Yourself**
- **TRUST in the LORD; AND do Good**
- **DELIGHT yourself in the LORD**
- **COMMIT your way to the LORD**
- **TRUST in Him**
- **BE STILL before the LORD**
- **Wait PATIENTLY for HIM**
- **Wait for the LORD**

This is a power packed, action filled, choice driven list of commitments that we can make in the midst of waiting on the LORD. David knew and trusted God completely, and the end result was a trust that overflowed with delight. Not a delight that was created by better circumstances, but a delight that was embedded in His relationship with the LORD, which could not be taken away. David had the view that “Our God is in the heavens, HE does all that HE pleases” (Ps. 115:3). No power could overtake what God had planned – like Abner in ch. 2. No foolish decision could thwart what God was doing in David’s kingdom – like Joab’s murder in ch. 3. And no injustice could establish God’s kingdom for David – like the bullies of ch. 4. We can trust in the Lord because He is trustworthy, and ***“has redeemed our life from every adversity.”***