

Tireless Hope in a Weary World

2 Samuel 20

Hebrews 12:3 - *Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow **weary** or **fainthearted***

Introduction: This world is a weary place. Perhaps it feels that way because we are in the end of the school year with all of its activities, but the common refrain heard from families is that we are stretched thin, like butter spread across too much bread. But weariness is not simply the result of busyness or lack of sleep, but something deeper. We look at the world around us and it continues to ramble on with the vanity as it always has – like the kind of vanity that believes schedules will lighten up at some point. We have wars around the globe, and rumors of others on the horizon. In a globalized era of communication, we are highly aware of human suffering, and it still shocks us what humans will do to each other. We put our hope in economic policies or political changes, but these tend to swing from decade to decade. We look at the church and the numbers have come in low, with church attendance consistently down, 40,000 missionaries who have left the field since 2000 without equal replacements, seminaries closing, and young people disinterested.

Now the weariness we feel is nothing new, nor is it unexpected. Jesus told His disciples, who were asking for signs of His return (which they thought was going to be in their lifetime):

Matthew 24:4-8 – *“See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and **they will lead many astray**. And you will hear of **wars and rumors of wars**. See that you are **not alarmed**, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be **famines** and **earthquakes** in various places. 8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains”*

This has always been true, but we know it will ramp up toward the end of this age and the return of Christ (see 2 Tim. 3:13). The cultures of the world are always *de-volving*, and any talk of *progress* typically is an outlet of rebellion against God and the glorification of self. Technology has not been the answer, though it was seen as the magic bullet by many. Globalization did not solve every problem, and nationalism will not either. Better economic policies, security, and the value of the dollar not only will not last, but they cannot solve for the weariness of our soul or the world itself. In **2 Tim. 3:1-5**, we read about the reality of the trend of this world, and Paul said it clearly: **“But UNDERSTAND this, that in the last days there WILL COME times of difficulty.”** This is a sure promise, a clear reality, and necessary caution.

Because of this truth, it is our passion and responsibility here to prepare you to live a life of joy in the present and hope in the future. It is why we DO NOT engage in **political debate**, since politics are an instrument used by God to help people, but was never designed to be an answer. It is why we do not major on helping you make more money, since we know **economic realities** are not ultimate. It is why we do not teach about **safety and comfort**, since both of those things, though desired, are fleeting and never promised by God in this life. No, our goal is that every person here today and everyday would be **reconciled to God through Jesus Christ**, that you would believe, repent, and ask for forgiveness, turning from the course of this world and embrace Christ as your all-consuming, all—satisfying, glorious means and end of worship. It is here, and here alone, that we find **courage and motivation** to live fully and passionately in a weary world, seeing clearly that life here is passing away:

2 Corinthians 5:6-19 “So we are always of **good courage**. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of **good courage**, and **we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord**. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we **make it our aim to please him**. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

Now you may be asking, *what does this have to do with David and 2 Samuel?* We conclude a stage of David’s life that he felt the rod of reproof from the Lord, and it can feel like a wearing experience. In chapter 20 we have scenes that we have seen before: *rebellion, murder, heartache, and a lack of unity*. David comes back into his city, but the only trumpet that is heard is that of a worthless man who tried to rally people against him. The first people recorded that David meets are those who were abused by his son. His supposed friend and general kills his own cousin, and a wise woman is forced to cut off the head of enemy to stave off destruction. *Wearying*. But herein lies the glimmer of hope that will one-day burst forth into a climactic burst of victory. Through all the weariness, repeated and predictable hardship, bad choices, and deceptive leadership, **God remained faithful to His promises**. We look at Israel and see a people that God had every reason to jettison, but He does not. We can see ourselves and see the same thing. **God is faithful to us, to save us, sanctify us, and preserve us with an inheritance that is secure for us one day**. We know that God will establish His reign, rule, and kingdom on this earth, and we will see and experience true rest and comfort. Until then, we walk **courageously and hopefully, tirelessly walking in Him in the midst of weariness**.

Let’s look at **three scenes** of a weary return for David into Jerusalem, in a kingdom that now had the makings of division, which was sure to come in two generations.

Weary Return to Rebellion and Brokenness (1-3)

*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!”

² *So all the men of Israel withdrew from David and **followed Sheba** the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem.*

³ *And David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the **ten concubines** whom he had left to care for the house and put them in a house under guard and provided for them, **but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood.***

We’ve seen this scene before. When David left Jerusalem under the treacherous hand of his own son, he was berated by Shimei (2 Sam. 16), a loyalist of Saul. As David returned to Jerusalem, he was called out by another rebellious Benjaminite (Saul’s tribe). One would think there would be a parade, confetti, and noise makers marking the event, but instead a single trumpet blared through the air. **Sheba** was a *worthless man*, a scoundrel, wicked, or useless man, who nonetheless felt emboldened to act like those in the past and glory in disunity and do what was right in his own eyes. He actually gained a bit of a following, having the **men of Israel**, those of the Northern tribes, actually following him.¹ This caused the men of Judah to provide loyal protection, and they followed David all the way into the city. This is a sharp contrast to 2 Samuel 5, where David came to Jerusalem in a unified nation and to the acclaim of foreign nations.

¹ This was most likely a subset of the whole, made up of the group that was arguing at the end of chapter 19, rather than the whole of the 10 other tribes.

But this return was also the scene of a sad scenario. The 10 concubines that David left as he fled had been intentionally and audaciously sexually abused by Absalom on the roof of the palace, as both a fulfillment of God's consequence given for David's sin and under counsel as a point of no return. It is of NOTE that when David returned to the city, *this was the first and only group mentioned*. We have discussed and read much of the consequences of David's actions with Bathsheba, but the sad reality of his concubines (*a secondary wife without the legality of marriage*) were they were to **live as widows** from that time on, without the comfort of marriage, the intimacy of a spouse, or the joy of having more children. Though David cared for their needs in the palace, they were nonetheless set aside for the rest of their lives.

This consequence started as far back as 2 Samuel 5:13, where David ***"took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David."*** When David was unwilling to conform to God's commands and instead went with **cultural norms**, it created far reaching and NEGATIVE consequences. Taking many wives and concubines was culturally ACCEPTABLE but not Biblically PERMISSABLE, and whenever we take matters into our own hands, negative outcomes are sure to follow. This is a huge principle and cautionary tale for all of us today. *What areas of our lives are we taking our cue from culture rather than Scripture? What have we justified as acceptable when the Bible is clear about the contrary? Where have we justified something because "everyone is doing it" rather than conforming to what God has called us to?*

Weary Return to Murder and Underhanded Ways (4-13)

Then the king said to Amasa, "Call the men of Judah together to me within three days, and be here yourself."⁵ So Amasa went to summon Judah, but he delayed beyond the set time that had been appointed him.⁶ And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he get himself to fortified cities and escape from us."⁷ And there went out after him Joab's men and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men. They went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.⁸ When they were at the great stone that is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened on his thigh, and as he went forward it fell out.⁹ And Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.¹⁰ But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand. So Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died.

David knew he had to deal with **Sheba** and couldn't stand idly by as he spewed rhetoric and gained a following. Swift response was needed, and this kind of rebellion needed to be squashed. So he commissioned **Amasa** to quell the uprising. You'll remember Amasa was a relative but also one that had lead the military for **Absalom** against David. But David had replaced **Joab** with Amasa as a type of olive branch to the mutineers and as a punishment to Joab for killing Absalom. But Amasa seemed to be either inexperienced or incapable of following David's orders, and delayed too long. So David turned to **Abishai** (not Joab) to get to Sheba before he could hole himself up to a fortified or walled city and wait them out. As they got to **Gibeon**, Amasa finally caught up. This is where Joab once again stepped into the forefront of the narrative.

Now, for context, you'll remember that Joab was David's general, but he had a history of "less than upstanding decisions". He was the one who killed **Abner** in cold blood, the one who had been Saul's general and who David explicitly had said he did NOT want killed (2 Sam. 3). He also killed **Absalom** when David had explicitly said do NOT kill him (2 Sam. 18:5). *Do you see a pattern?* Now David had placed Amasa in charge, but that did not work for Joab.

As Amasa came to the city, he saw Joab, who motioned for him to come over and reached out to give him a brotherly and normal hug. As he approached, his sword fell to the ground (which, by the way, if you come to give me a hug and a deadly weapon falls to the ground, I'm probably going to pass on that hug!). He kept the sword in his defensive hand (left) and reached out to grab the beard of his target with his right, and as Amasa came in for an embrace he was met with the cold steel of a forged blade, a mortal wound that did not require a second blow. This led to Joab's troops unceremoniously casting the body out of the road, and continuing on their campaign, pledging their loyalty once again to Joab.

In some ways, Joab sums up this time of David's life. Joab was a **pragmatist**, one who got the job done no matter the cost nor the corner he had to cut. The murders he carried out were not fair fights but done in the shadows, or of a man hanging in a tree, or one who thought they were just hugging it out. His loyalties were particular, but did not reach the level of God-fearing integrity but rather of family advantage. He would speak the truth to David, but only after killing his son. He would almost dare David to replace him or deal with him, and David did not have the strength to actually bring that action about. It was not until Solomon took the throne that he dealt with Joab after he had supported another coup by **Adonijah** (1 Kings 2:28). Joab had to account for his actions by being put to death, but even then he tried to find a legal way around it by holding the horns of an altar (1 Kings 2:28). Solomon cut through the legalese and simply condemned him to pay for his crimes.

We are at our best when we function in integrity rather than pragmatism. Just because something works does not mean it is good, and just because we find a loophole in the system does not mean we should use it. Just because we can manipulate our spouse to get what we want does not mean its good or helpful. Just because we can circumvent the law in our business does not mean we should. Just because we can lower Biblical standards to get more people into the church does not mean that pleases God. We want to be part of a culture who embraces doing the right thing regardless of outcomes and willingly do hard things when the shortcut is much easier. We should not be a people who look for the path of least resistance, since following Jesus requires a narrow path that is hard, and few people find it (Matt. 7:14).

Weary Return to Hollow Victories and Unwise Ways (14-26)

*And Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to **Abel of Beth-maacah**, and all the Bichrites assembled and followed him in. 15 And all the men who were with Joab came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah. They cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart, and they were battering the wall to throw it down. 16 Then a **wise woman** called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, 'Come here, that I may speak to you.' " 17 And he came near her, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your servant." And he answered, "I am listening." 18 Then she said, "They used to say in former times, 'Let them but ask counsel at Abel,' and so they settled a matter. 19 I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the heritage of the Lord?" 20 Joab answered, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! 21 That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba the son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David. **Give up him alone, and I will withdraw from the city.**" And the woman said to Joab, "Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall." 22 Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. **And they cut off the head of Sheba** the son of Bichri and threw it out to Joab. **So he blew the trumpet**, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.*

We come back to the pursuit of Sheba, and we find that he must not have found many supporters, because he fled all the way up to the northern tip of Israel to the fortified city of **Abel of Beth-maacah**. A

few things about a fortified or walled city: 1) Because of the fortifications and typically built on top of a hill or mountain, it was an arduous and time-draining task to conquer it. 2) Techniques included tunneling, catapults, or siege (which would wait out the resources within the walls), but most often it required building a **siege ramp** (like this one at the fortress of **Masada**), with dirt and rocks painstakingly piled up so that it would reach the wall and either climb over it or maneuver a battering ram to knock it down. This would often come at a high loss of life and time. 3) This would mean destruction of the city itself.

As the siege ramp was being built and the weapons of war were being gathered, an unnamed but **wise woman** (because, aren't you all?!) from the city stepped in with common sense. She wanted to talk to whoever was in charge, which in this case was Joab. She questioned why they were destroying a faithful, long-standing, and loyal city of Israel! We are a city that has been a source of wisdom and has a long heritage! Why are you rising up against your own brothers! At this, Joab was willing to be reasonable, and if they gave up Sheba alone, they would withdraw from the city, no questions asked. At this, the wise woman did what she needed to do. She went back into the city, found Sheba, and sent his head over the wall to the attacking forces! Not sure what the application is on Mother's Day, but this was a woman who knew how to get things done and was willing to do what was necessary, no matter the cost.

At this, Joab blew a **trumpet**, signaling the end of the conflict, battle, and section, bookending the trumpet blown by Sheba. But this chapter ends in a weary way. Another battle, another death, another rebellion, and another return to Jerusalem for Joab, going back and acting like everything was fine, though it was far from it. The final verses of the chapter recap the leaders of David's renewed administration, bookending chapter 8, with the addition of Adoram who was in charge of the **forced labor**, an issue that was needed for building but would be exploited by **Rehoboam** (1 Kings 12) later on. But make no mistake, this chapter ends with a thud, not advancing a kingdom but rather mitigating sinful realities and feeling like it is caught in a never ending cycle.

Do you ever feel that way? More than just physically weary, but a spiritual dryness or thought that you are merely moving from one problem, hard circumstance, or disappointment to the next? We work, plan, show up on Sunday, get older, hope everything works out (and doesn't), rinse, and repeat. Is that all we are destined for? The resounding answer: NO! So what do we do in our weariness?

1. **We WAIT on the Lord to combat weariness:**

Isaiah 40:30-31 *"Even youths shall faint **and be weary**, and young men shall **fall exhausted**; ³¹ but they who **wait for the LORD** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they **shall run and not be weary**; they shall walk and not faint."*

2. **We KEEP moving forward in serving others:**

2 Thessalonians 3:13 *"As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good"*

Galatians 6:9-10 *"And let us not **grow weary of doing good**, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."*

3. **We COME to and CONSIDER Christ:**

Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

Hebrews 12:3 *"Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, **so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted**"*

What is the remedy for weariness? What is the motivation for tireless hope? It's that Christ is preparing IN US and FOR US to be with Him forever, to get rid of this tent of a body and give us bodies built for eternity (2 Cor. 5:1-5). That this world that is groaning under the curse will be renewed and redeemed (2 Peter 3:10). That the world system that is corrupt will be renewed. That the eternal weight of glory we will experience will be beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:17). This chapter began and ended with a trumpet blast, but there is one coming that will signal the RETURN OF CHRIST (1 Thess. 4:16) a final trumpet where the dead will be raised and we will be changed (1 Cor. 15:52). This is the hope we cling to, and hold fast to the reality that everything else is part of God's preparation for us to be with Him.