

OFFENCES COULD CAUSE INJUSTICE

By pastor Adauto Rezende

David is known in Scripture as a worshiper, poet, prophet, and the greatest king in the history of Israel. However, shortcomings went further than the adultery and murder narrated in the first book of Samuel chapters eleven and twelve. He was indirectly responsible for the death of 85 priests including Ahimelech, as well as all the inhabitants of Nob, their city. Lying to the priest, in his desperate escape from Saul, caused the slaughter of the entire priestly families in Node as pointed out in the Scriptures:

- ✓ David went to Nob, to Ahimelek the priest. Ahimelek trembled when he met him, and asked, "Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?" David answered Ahimelek the priest, "The king sent me on a mission and said to me, 'No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.' As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place." I Samuel 21: 1-2
- ✓ "Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." "Yes, my lord," he answered. Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?" Ahimelek answered the king, "Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? 15 Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of his father's family, for your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair." But the king said, "You will surely die, Ahimelek, you and your whole family." Then the king ordered the guards at his side: "Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me." I Samuel 22: 12-17

In addition to the incidents mentioned above, likewise, David, being carried away by his own feelings, acted unjustly toward the son of Jonathan.

I. THE KING WAS SPIRITUALLY IN DEBT TO THE SEED OF SAUL FOR TWO REASONS:

- a) His covenant with Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:2, 20:42)
- b) His oath to Saul (1 Samuel 24:20-22)

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II. AFTER HIS KINGDOM WAS ESTABLISHED THE REMEMBRANCE OF THESE COVENANTS CAME TO MIND – 2 Samuel 9:1-13

- *“David asked, “Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” II Samuel 9: 1*

It is important to note that he does not speak of the oath he vowed to Saul, but only out of his love for Jonathan (who had saved his skin a few times).

III. DAVID'S DILEMMAS

a) He could not fail to fulfill his covenant with Jonathan

b) He could not fail to fulfill the oath he swore to Saul

Knowing these oaths, to get rid of any curse proceeded by the non-observance of his promises he worked to make things right, however, the context shows that he did it in a religious duty, and never, in an act of love.

IV. FULFILLING THE PROMISE

- *“When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, “Mephibosheth!” “At your service,” he replied. “Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.” II Samuel 9: 6-7*

It is important to note in the context of the entire narrative that:

a) Mephibosheth ate at David's table, but we do not know whether the king had fellowship with Mephibosheth

b) The king did not know Mephibosheth's heart, which is later revealed in relation to David.

V. THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM.

David is on the run from his son Absalom, who took the kingdom in a coup. Meanwhile, Ziba, Saul's former slave, and now Mephibosheth's servant came to meet him:

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- “When David had gone a short distance beyond the summit, there was Ziba, the steward of Mephibosheth, waiting to meet him. He had a string of donkeys saddled and loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred cakes of raisins, a hundred cakes of figs and a skin of wine. The king asked Ziba, “Why have you brought these?” Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride on, the bread and fruit are for the men to eat, and the wine is to refresh those who become exhausted in the wilderness.” The king then asked, “Where is your master’s grandson?” Ziba said to him, “He is staying in Jerusalem, because he thinks, ‘Today the Israelites will restore to me my grandfather’s kingdom.’” Then the king said to Ziba, “All that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.” I humbly bow,” Ziba said. “May I find favor in your eyes, my lord the king.” II Samuel 16: 1-4

This event exposed David's heart. Without hearing or inquired Mephibosheth, he immediately gave his judgment:

- a) He deprived the son of Jonathan of his inheritance (David did not give anything to Mephibosheth, for his possessions were inheritances from his father Jonathan).
- b) He placed the slave Ziba, as master of Mephibosheth.
- c) He put Mephibosheth's life at great risk as to the evil traitor Ziba could easily have killed him.
- d) He broke his covenant with Jonathan and, in particular, his oath to Saul.

VI. WHAT DOES THIS EPISODE HAVE TO DO WITH YOU?

Like David, you can have the conviction of your covenants done before God, and mechanically fulfill your vows, your promises, etc., however, as David did, you could do with egoistic reasons, and devoid of love. Remember that God will test your real motivations.

There are other characters in the Bible who have fallen into the same error. Look at the lives of:

- Orpah - She told Naomi, her mother in law “I am with you.” However, by her actions it were just empty words.

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- Peter - told Jesus that he would never deny him, a few hours later he did it three times.
- John Mark - Possibly told Paul and Barnabas, "You can count on me. We are together" However, when trouble came, he left them, and returned home.
- And many others would say - "I'm helping my brother financially, I'm looking after my marriage, doing my best, to my spouse." Yet, it is just empty words.

THE CAUSES OF DAVID'S BEHAVIOUR

- "David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel—I will celebrate before the Lord." II Samuel 6: 21

In the episode above, when answering to his wife Michal, daughter of Saul, apparently the king was struggling inwardly about the past. It appears that there were in his heart, bitter memories of Saul's persecutions, threats, and assassination attempts against him, and, on the other hand, he couldn't deny the humility, love, protection, and servant character of Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father, who loved David and would consider him as his best friend.

The constant struggle of the flesh against the Spirit, narrated by Paul:

- ✓ *"I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want." Galatian 5: 16-17*

THE WICKED ZIBA

After Absalom's death, when David was returning to Jerusalem, Ziba went to meet him:

- "With him were a thousand Benjamites, along with Ziba, the steward of Saul's household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed to the Jordan, where the king was." II Samuel 19: 17

Consequently, adding to Ziba's deception and to David's resentments, Mephibosheth became easy prey and the villain of the story.

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It is important to mention that our grudges will cover and obstruct the divine gifts in our lives, and we ended up acting like fools, unable to discern right from wrong. Due to such spiritual contaminations, we blindly believe in slander, gossip and, lies against people we don't want in our midst.

We believe in ten lies from a slanderer, and we don't admit one truth from a righteous person.

VII. THE TRUTH EXPLAINED

- “Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson, also went down to meet the king. He had not taken care of his feet or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, “Why didn’t you go with me, Mephibosheth?” He said, “My lord the king, since I your servant am lame, I said, ‘I will have my donkey saddled and will ride on it, so I can go with the king.’ But Ziba my servant betrayed me. And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king. My lord the king is like an angel of God; so do whatever you wish. All my grandfather’s descendants deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, but you gave your servant a place among those who eat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the king?” II Samuel 19: 24-28

The text is clear and revealing about Mephibosheth's behavior with three information:

- a) Through his suffering, and self-punishment, due to the king’s fate, thus, proving his love for David.
- b) Through his physical disability, well known to David, disabling him from quick movement, therefore, he couldn’t follow the King in his running from Absalom.
- c) Through the king's ability, as the Lord's anointed, to judge correctly, fact mentioned by Mephibosheth in verse 27

VIII. DAVID'S STUBBORNNESS

- “The king said to him, “Why say more? I order you and Ziba to divide the land.” II Samuel 19: 29

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The king honored a liar, and a slanderer, when he gave 50% of Mephibosheth's inheritance to the slave and lowered Mephibosheth's status, as he promoted Ziba to the same level as his former master.

IX. THE HEART OF THE SON OF JONATHAN

- “Mephibosheth said to the king, “Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has returned home safely.” II Samuel 19: 30

Mephibosheth explains to David and Ziba that:

- a) He didn't care about his wealth, but the important thing for him was seeing the king's back to his throne.
- b) In his gesture he said: “Although you mightn't believe it, my king, but I love you as my father had loved you. When you look at me, remember Jonathan, your friend, and never Saul, your enemy.”
- c) My joy is to know that you will rule this nation again, as the Lord's anointed.

CONCLUSION

The story ends without knowing if Mephibosheth won David's heart, however, it reveals a hero and two bandits, the first being Mephibosheth, and the others David and Ziba.

Who are you in this story?

To God be the glory!