

After God's Heart

“Dealing with Criticalness”

II Samuel 16:5-13

Introduction

- Last time I shared two weeks ago – I told you about the first time I ever taught a study on this stage, the night Tom Frazee saved me from embarrassment of the toilet paper– well the Lord was determined to do a work of humbling in my heart that night – again the series was called, “Postcards of the NT”
 - For a few weeks some of us slackers from youth ministry were allowed to have one Sunday Night to teach a one chapter book from the NT
 - And my assignment for Philemon
- And as soon as the study was announced and I was given my assignment, I began to prepare
 - I listened to every study I could find on the book, I read every commentary at the Calvary Vista library on the subject
 - I spent hours typing out my message, looking at the connection between Philemon and us as believers and Jesus and Paul
 - And as I taught that night, I felt like I have done a pretty good job – people laughed, they cried a time or two, the Lord was really moving

After words a lady in our congregation pulled me aside and said “that was good tonight”

- I don't really know if you are going to be a pastor, but you should really think about a career as a motivation speaker - Now she may have meant that as a compliment - But to me, in my mind a motivation speaker was a fat guy sweating a lot who spoke to business men about selling more cell phones or something

I was hurt, I felt really put down

- And I think that is something we all experience from time to time
 - We run into those that feel free to share their hearts with us no matter how hurtful or critical the material is
- We all experience putdowns
 - But how we deal with them is so important in our Christian lives

In our text today we see David going through something very similar and we see him putting up with a putdown

- context – Absalom has taken over the city of Jerusalem
 - David is fleeing for his life
 - And this man by the name of Shimei comes out to yell at David as he is leaving the area

Shimei means “into what is famous”

- And that is who he was one who was, up on the latest gossip, the latest events
 - Shimei heard that David was going through a ruff time and he decided to capitalize
- Shimei's family had some history with David and he was a relative of King Saul and in his mind David had put down his family's dynasty
 - He threw rocks at David and then began to give his interpretation of why David was going through was he was going through
- Being very critical of the King of Israel

Now how David responded to this is very interesting to me and I believe it teaches a great deal about maturing in putting up with putdowns in our lives

- I want you to note 3 things David did and that I believe really blessed the Lord if you are taking notes this morning

Dealing with Criticalness – II Samuel 16:5-13

#1 – He looked up – II Samuel 16:9-10

- As soon as this pipsqueak Shimei starts to criticize David, one of his generals Abishai says – why are you talking this way to the King
 - David let me remove this man's head from his body
 - And David responds not with what we all would be tempted to respond with – David doesn't respond with – go for it, kill him
- David looked up and said – the Lord has ordered this, the Lord has allowed this – and the thinking in David's heart was – maybe God is trying to teach me something
 - Maybe God has a lesson for me in this

David at this place in his life understood, God was in all things in one way or another, and he responds to this one who was coming against him with patience not violence – David is maturing

- This was not always how David had been
 - Remember back in I Samuel 25 when a man named Nabal dared to challenge David – David and his men were protecting his herds and when they needed some food and supplies, Nabal said no way, who are you rebel? – David said 'what did you call me, say to my face, and he told his men grab your swords boys, lets get him
- If it wasn't for Abigail stepping in and reasoning with David – David would have killed every male

You see earlier David was a fighter, defending himself, fighting for his rights

- But now he has matured and realizes, God has ordered this for some reason in my life, I need to take a minute to see what it is

Listen friends, - anytime you are put down, it could not have come forth without the Lord allowing it

- remember Job, all the affliction he faced, it was at the hand of the enemy, but..
 - nothing could happen without the Lord allowing it to be so
 - that was the way it was with Job, that is the way it is with you

Now why would a God that loves me allow that - why would He allow someone with a critical spirit to speak to me in that way, to say such hurtful things?

- listen – it is not to destroy you – but to develop you

Norman Vincent Peale said – **“We as Christians are more willing to be destroyed by praise, than to be saved by criticism” – Norman Vincent Peale**

- And that can be so true
 - We are willing to march to our deaths so to speak as long as people are applauding us
 - than to hear a valid criticism – one the Lord has allowed to surface

The Lord is often wanting to teach you something in the criticism, even if it was wrong

- when that lady said to me, you're really not a pastor, I didn't learn to much tonight, but maybe you want to try motivational speaking
 - It was hard to hear, and hopefully it wasn't really true
 - But remembering this story we are looking at this morning and being exhorted by my pastor years before on how to respond to criticism biblically, I prayed it in – Lord what do you want to teach me in this?
- And I realized that at that time in my life it was really important to me that I was funny or moving when I would speak

And some of you say, that is important to us too, I know, it helps tremendously

- But I was more concerned that people were moved emotionally than learning spiritually

- And for me it wasn't a really good Bible study if people just learned some deep truths
- For me it was good if they were entertained and had a good time
- And God used her comment that night to do a work in my heart, that I hope blesses you this morning
 - I love it when people laugh and are moved
 - But it is more important to me, that you hear the Word and are changed by the experience
- That was developed in my heart through criticism

And as people put you down, I encourage you to first look up

- Lord what are you trying to share with my heart through this?
 - What are you trying to work into my life through what this person is sharing?
 - They might be off, but they are a vessel and I want to learn

Dealing with Criticalness – II Samuel 16:5-13

#1 – He looked up – II Samuel 16:9-10

#2 – He looked around – II Samuel 16:11

- After looking up and considering, maybe the Lord was trying to teach me something even in this criticism that is off base, the next thing David does is look around
 - He takes an honest look at what is happening in his life
- Abishai wants to kill Shimei, but David says to Abishai, my own son wants to kill me, of course this guy, who is a relative of Saul wants to kill me, its understandable

What is David doing?? – Please get it because it is key to dealing with criticism

- David is realizing that though this man is off in his criticism of Him, and it was off – please understand that
 - Shimei believes somehow that David overthrew the kingdom of Saul
 - And of course if you have been paying attention that is not what happened at all
- David wouldn't touch Saul even though he had been given two opportunities to do just that
 - David was waiting for the Lord to deal with Saul
 - But Shimei has made up his own ideas and drawn his own conclusions as people often will do
 - And then he is going to criticize and condemn David

But what does David realize in this moment?

- David realizes that in reality it was his sin with Bathsheba that led to a loss in his ability to discipline his kids, which led to a loss of control with his children, which led to Amnon raping Tamar which led to Absalom killing Amnon, which led to Absalom's rebellion
 - God is not punishing David for overthrowing the kingdom of Saul like he is being accused
- But what David understands is the reality that what I am experiencing is actually far less than I deserve – because I have done some many other things – actually and totally

But David realizes this man is off in his criticism, but actually his criticism is far less than I really deserve

- and this may be hard for some of you to hear, but that may be true for you as well

The reality is whatever someone is saying about you, even if it is off, it is probably not as bad as you deserve, if you are really being honest

- I mean what if every thought from you for last week, every action, every desire and intent of your heart was put up here on the screen for everyone to see
 - Would there be any of us sitting here who would say, “roll the tape, My life is an open book”
- I would guess not – if you knew that's what was happening next Sunday – you would skip that Sunday and all Sundays from now on

- And I just remind you because maybe someone is accusing you of a motivation you didn't really have
- Maybe someone is accusing you of an attitude that is really just a misunderstanding
- Even if that is so and you are completely innocent in what they are accusing you of
 - It is probably true that if everything you have ever done or thought was known, that accusation or that critical person's comments would probably be the least of your worries – amen?
 - Am I just preaching to myself again? – It's okay I need these sermons but maybe one or two of you can relate to what I am saying?
- David is being unfairly criticized, but instead of loping the guys head off
 - David looks up
 - David looks around, and thirdly...

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The final thing David did in dealing with Shemi's criticism of his life is David looked ahead, he looked toward the future

- Realize – God may be trying to teach me something – are you Lord?
- After looking around and realizing – even if this guy is off, I have killed people, I have committed adultery, what this guy is saying about me it less than I deserve
- Finally David thought – if I am merciful instead of fighting back – maybe God will be kind to me for going through this trial

Now why would David think that about the Lord?

- Because David understood that God is a Father
 - He is a Father, and think that through for a minute, in your own family those of you who are parents or grandparents
 - I know my kids are sinners, but if one of you choose to point it out to me, especially in a spirit of criticalness, not love, well then you will not find a real accepting ear with me
 - Maybe when people meanly criticize your kids, you think, well they are little monsters, but that is not the way I think
 - I love my kids and when people come and say – hey I love your kids too, have you notice this about Haley or Jonathan or Aleah? – well even that is hard to hear, but I receive that because it is in love
- But if someone says meanly – he wasn't paying attention, little A.D.D. like his Dad – honestly my first response – maybe you are just boring?
 - I know it's wrong – I know I should be more mature - But that is my kid – I am their father, and I love them

And here is the point – if you are going to be critical of them, even though I know they deserve worse, well I am going to go to them and say – that guy has been mean to you – do you want some ice cream

- and again, our Father in heaven isn't petty, He has much more fortitude to deal with things than I do
 - but David still believes and I do too
 - if I take the criticism and don't lash out, but look up and look around – that my Father may have some reward or blessing because He loves me and His heart hurts when His kids are treated critically

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount

“Blessed are you when they persecute you and revile you, and say all kinds of evil against you.... Rejoice and be exceedingly glad (why)... great will be your reward in heaven” – Matthew 5:11-12

- you see friends, the Lord does not just reward and work in our lives due to our service, He also rewards and works in our lives due to our suffering
 - David could have loped off his head, and we can respond with anger of our own
- But we need to not just look up, and realize God is trying to teach us something, we need to not just look around, and realize no matter what is being said, I probably deserve worse
 - We need to look ahead as well - I need to look ahead to the future, I can react, it may make me feel better, but what about eternity? – is this something I can absorb for the King of kings and let Him turn it into reward for all of eternity
- Lord this person is just a person, and maybe a vessel of you, but help me to not fire back but to listen and learn and to trust, you will eventually make all things right

Now some of you in here say well that is a neat study– Shimei– the tool of God to teach deep lessons, I think I have found my calling in the body of Christ

- God has given me the gift of criticalness, and I need to share it with people all around me
 - oh not a good idea friends
 - it doesn't end well for Shimei
- He went from throwing rocks, and then throwing dirt – he has basically turned into a big league manager getting upset at an umpire after he has been ejected
 - But understand it is worse than that, to kick dirt toward someone was saying – I wish you were dead – I wish you were buried and I am burying you symbolically right now
 - Shimei had a critical spirit

And over and over again in the Word we are warned against having a critical spirit This is why we are not to give place to a critical spirit

- But why if it does good things in people hearts?
 - Because of what it does to you

First of all Shimei will eventually need David, the man he is being so critical of – He will need his grace in the future

- in chapter 19 we read of David and Shimei's next meeting

On Wednesday night we will see this story in its entirety but after Absalom's rebellion is put down, and Absalom will be strung up, (really a hair raising story you need to be here for this Wednesday Night)

- after Absalom's death, David is coming back triumphantly to Jerusalem and who does he meet on the way back?
 - Shimei – and Shimei has to eat some humble pie – chapter 19:19 if you want to look ahead

“Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart.” – II Samuel 19:19

- just kidding, King Buddy – didn't mean a thing my friend – ha ha
 - And once again Abishai, David's right hand man, now let me kill him, David
 - And Shimei's life is in the hand of David

And friends, this is so often the way it is, the one you are critical off, listen to me - you may need his or her grace in the future – the old saying what goes around comes around sometimes seems to be true

- that lady who felt I should try a career in motivational speaking continued to go to Vista for a few years after that Sunday night, and I eventually became the youth pastor when Scott Cunningham left and her kid grew up and was in our youth ministry

- and she called me one day and said, I need to disciple my son, I need you to pour into him, he is going crazy
- And I will be honest with you, my first thought was – well ‘disciple’ and ‘pour into’, that sounds like stuff you need a pastor for, not a motivational speaker
- But it taught me a great lesson for my life

You never know what the future holds, you will someday need that person’s grace who are cutting down – And Shimei is lucky David was mature, or he would have been dead

- Yet some of you who struggle with being critical may be still thinking, well it seemed to work out well for Shimei, nope, one more passage concerning Shimei in the scripture - I Kings chapter 2

David is giving the Kingdom to Solomon and he charges Solomon all these wonderful things, and then verse 8,

“And see, *you have with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord, saying, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’ Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood.*” – I Kings 2:8-9

- Wow David – how do you really feel?
- And this is the point for those of you who struggle with being critical
 - We need to learn today how to deal with criticism
 - But we also need to learn to not be those that are so critical of others

Because even though God may use you to do a work in someone through your criticalness – you are not an instrument of the Lord, but of the enemy

- And someday – you are going to need that person’s grace and I pray that they will be merciful to you
 - And yet even then – if you hold on to your critical spirit someday it will destroy you

Doctor David Fink – dealt with 10,000 cases of people who complained of being stressed out and uptight

- And he realized in his findings that there was one common denominator in each of them – and it wasn’t diet or drugs or abuse

It was each of them had a tendency to be critical of others and it produced a stress in their own life

- Another psychiatrist was working with an American Indian who was having recurring dreams – every Tuesday night he dreamed he was a wigwam, (that is like a hut for those of you who aren’t up on your native American culture), every Tuesday Night I dream that I am a wigwam and every Thursday Night I dream that I am a TP – the Psychiatrist sat back and thought a while and said, well it is very obvious what your problem is – you are simply two tents – two tents (too tense), wigwam, TP, never mind – my jokes are good no matter what you say – don’t be critical of my jokes - ☺

But in reality Too tense - that is exactly what happens when we let a critical spirit take hold – we think we are letting others have a piece of truth but in reality it is us who are suffering and if not repented off, it will destroy you – it will church family

- if that has been your tendency in the past week, to be critical of your boss, or if you have been critical of your parents, or of your kids, or of your spouse, of your teachers or the government
 - repent – confess that sin, I am becoming like Shimei – Lord help me let this go, to let your love for me cover a multitude of sins – not just my sins but sins done to me that I am being critical of

How do I do that? One more thing this morning...

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#4 – We need to look to Jesus – I Peter 2:21-22

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;” – I Peter 2:21-23

- Peter says we need to look to Jesus
 - Who by the way has forgiven you so much
 - Whenever I start to struggle at being bitter and critical, I start to remember how much I have been forgiven by God
 - Attitudes that I have had toward Him, actions I have done willfully against Him – and yet He still loves me and forgives me
 - When I consider that, it is so much easier to let offenses perceived or other wise, to just let them go
 - I need to look to Jesus and what He did for me
- But we also need to look to Jesus in how He dealt with people being critical of Him

Peter says He suffered, He was reviled, but did not revile in return

- Our tendency is to be like the old David – and fight back and defend ourselves
 - But listen to me church that in the end it will get you no where

Solomon said, “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.” – Proverbs 10:19

- James, Jesus’ half brother said, be quick to hear and slow to speak
 - That is what Jesus did – that is what we need to do – but what about my rights

The Spirit filled life is not an emotional demonstration, it is ego extermination – it’s not a demonstration of my rights and my way – it’s to let all of that be crucified with Christ

- I am not seeking my own, to be blessed by others, I am to be a blessing to others
 - I am not seeking to be understood, I am seeking to understand others
 - I am not seeking my rights and my way
 - I am trying to pour into others, just like Jesus did
- And yes – people will hurt you
 - Yes people will disappoint you
 - But precious ones – God is doing a deep work within you
 - And as you cling to Him and let Him work – great will be your reward in heaven!