



## Putting Away the Past

### – You Can Learn to Put the Past in its Place

- When I was in seminary, I was 1000 miles away from my family.
- That meant that I made a lot of trips back and forth for holidays, summer breaks, and other special events. (When I could save enough money)
- .
- On one of those journeys I was riding in the front seat of a friend's car when he looked at me and said, "Let's switch drivers."
- I assumed he meant that we would pull off at the next exit and find a place to stop the car and exchange places. Apparently in his mind that would have taken far too much time.
- His proposal, which he assured me he had done many times, was to exchange places *while driving*.
- Being the smart yet adventurous theological student I was at the time, I readily agreed. And believe it or not, we were able to perform that trick without even slowing down our speed. **What could go wrong?**  
In the middle of the switch, going down a mountainside on an interstate highway at a rather high rate of speed, when you hit a bump.
  - your knee hitting the steering wheel.
  - The car would then started spinning in circles, and on some revolution, you slammed into a guardrail.
- **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?).**
- The problem is that your car is a multifaceted wreck. There is the obvious damage to the body, and there were also questions about the engine, the transmission, and other components.
- Of course, resolving a multifaceted problem requires the involvement of several different skill sets.
  - A body guy could deal with the dented fenders, but he did not know anything about transmissions.
  - A engine guy could check the motor, but you would not want him trying to spray paint the body. A multifaceted problem requires a multi-faceted solution.
- Did you know that that same principle is true of your past?
  - It would be a significant mistake, biblically speaking, to view this area of your life as if it is one big lump...
  - to begin to make sense of all of this, let me invite you to open your Bible to the book of 2 Samuel chapter 16 - **Finding Hope in Growing from Your Past ...**

### Two extremes when considering the past:

- **Those who Believe the Past Is Everything** - Today's choices are not your fault because you are being ruthlessly driven by forces from your past which you can't understand, nor are they your responsibility.
- but on the other hand are...
  - **Those who Believe the Past Is Nothing.** The abuses and failures of the past have nothing to do with your choices today.

- now, “the past is everything people” tend to discuss this topic as if its exclusively negative...like we’d all be better off if we could walk through a contraption like the x-ray machine at an airport, except one which would erase all our memories. **THE PROBLEM IS**
- I. When You Need Strength and Confidence** [we see that in the example of David].
- II. When You Need Encouragement and Balance** [we see that in the example of Job]...
- III. When You Need the Ability to Forgive** [Jesus parable in Matthew 18 about forgiveness].
- IV. When You Are Struggling with Pride and the Need to Repent** [Moses’ words to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 9:7 and Jesus’ words to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2]...
- so those who want to talk about the past as if its exclusively negative, and we’d all be better off without it, need to see that biblically speaking, that’s not true...your past can be one of your best friends.
  
- What about those who believe the past is nothing by pointing out that **Your Past Can Be One of Your Greatest Enemies...**
- Scripture teaches at least 6 ways that can be true...
  - **I. Unanswered Questions**...(in the sense that you’ve never taken the time, or found the courage, to ask them)...**II. Unwise Choices**...(which inevitably become part of who we are)...**III. Unaddressed Hurts**...**IV. Unsolved Problems**, **V. Unconfessed Sin**...**VI. Unlearned Lessons**
  - We must consider whether you had aspects of your past that fit any of those descriptions...
  
- now, hopefully we’ve convinced you that this is an important issue because of all we’ve seen that the Scripture has to say about it already...
- here’s what we’d like to emphasize today...**You Can Learn to Put the Past in its Place...**
  - but please keep this in mind...your past is like that multifaceted car wreck...
  - you have to learn to distinguish between aspects of your past that are truly different...
    - in the time we have remaining, let’s think about **4 biblical categories to organize the events of your past.**
  
- now, before we look at this passage, it might be helpful to explain where this is going...
  - we all have memories, or events from our past, that can be troubling in a variety of ways unless they have been properly addressed...
  - but they’re not all alike...
  - so this morning, we’re going to study 4 different kinds of past events...
  - and then we’re going to encourage you to play the mental equivalent of the “grand prize game”...
- is anyone here old enough to remember the grand prize game?...it was on the children’s show Captain Kangaroo...
  - and at the end of the game they had a series of buckets...and each child was given a ping pong ball, and he/she had to try to get the ball in the right bucket...
  - that’s what we’re doing with your memories...with the events in your past that may have never really been handled...
    - they have to be sorted...they have to be put in the right buckets...then we can start applying the appropriate principles to the appropriate events...

- again – our purpose this morning is to examine Scripture to find 4 biblical categories to organize the events of your past.

### I. The Innocent Past When You Responded Well.

- We'll break that terminology down further in a few minutes, but let's get this story on the table first...
- when we open the Bible to II Samuel 16, we have truly come to....

#### A. A low point in David's life.

- the previous chapter explains that one of David's own sons, a man named Absalom attempted to overthrow his father and steal the kingdom for himself...
- you can see how he did it by looking at the first few verses of chapter 15 – **READ 15:1-6**
- so here you have David's own son behaving in such a despicable way...
- but then it gets worse...**READ 15:7-12**
- now, the next verses explain that David chose to flee Jerusalem with his family and his main supporters to try to escape the coup that was being orchestrated by his own son...
- and to get a flavor for how painful this was, look at **2 Samuel 15:30 - And David went up the ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went.**
- now, just when it appeared that things could not get any worse, we turn the page on chapter 16...and we find the appearance of...

#### B. A cursing critic.

- **READ 16:5-8**
- now, are you picturing what that must have been like for David?...
- you're already dealing with the pain of your own son betraying you, and now you have this man cursing you and throwing rocks on you and saying that Absalom is justified in his actions and this whole situation is your fault.
- now, if you know the story of David, you know that he always had some mighty men around him...[if you want to see the details of that group, you can read I Chronicles 11—it is a fascinating story...]
- but one of David's friends steps up at this point and makes...

#### C. A tempting offer.

- **READ 16:9-10**
- now please tell me, what would you have done at that point?...your son has betrayed you, you're dealing with the pain of all of that, coupled with a whole range of emotions including anger, disappointment, rejection, and fear...
- and then this guy starts cursing you and blaming the whole situation on you --- this is turning out to be a really bad day...
- and then one of your friends offers to go "take off the head" of this "dead dog..."
- sounds like a pretty good idea to me, how about you?...
- but listen to...

#### D. A godly response.

- **READ 16:11-14**
- see, even at a point where David had been treated in an incredibly sinful fashion, by both his son and now Shimei, he still saw the sovereign hand of God in all that was occurring...and because of that he refused to sin in return....
- now, that's enough information to help us understand these four categories...

- we labeled this one...the innocent past where you responded well...
- now [and this is a point at which we need to work on this very carefully, to understand these four buckets...], let's try to understand that terminology...
- why four buckets?...[four different categories of events in the past?]...
- here's why...
  - some of our memories involve times we were sinned against...
    - that falls under the heading of suffering, or trials, either because a particular person directly sinned against us, or just the hardship and heartache that comes from living in a sin cursed world...
    - that's what we mean by the innocent past...innocent in the sense that you did nothing to initiate that problem...
  - innocent in that no one would say that she was somehow responsible for what occurred in the sense that she brought that on herself...
  - so in that way, it was her innocent past...
  - you can't say that Shimei's choices [cursing and throwing rocks at the king], were David's fault...that's what we mean when we say that that event was part of David's innocent past.
- now on the other hand, we all have plenty of memories that don't fit in that category because they occurred because of our own sin...we'll see several examples of that in the Scripture in just a moment...and if we wanted to, we could close our Bibles and just have a little personal story time and we'd be able to fill the rest of the day with illustrations from all of us that fit under the heading of "the guilty past" ...
- so those two categories are pretty clear—the innocent past, and the guilty past...
- well, if you're trying to make sense of this – what's the obvious question?...
  - why are there more than 2 buckets?...
  - the answer is – our memories don't just involve...what occurred, or what happened to us...
  - they also involve...how we responded...that's how we went from 2 to 4...
- What about a woman who is hit by a drunk driver?...she did absolutely nothing to bring on that attack...
  - but here's an important question – is that the end of the story?...no, there's also the matter of how she's going to respond...
  - now let me ask you another question...is the response out of her control?...is she a helpless victim of her circumstances who can only respond in a monolithic and preprogrammed way?...do all victims of drunk driverst respond in exactly the same way because they have no other choice?...
  - a third question is...is the place of the woman's heart in whatever happens next passive, or active?...
    - is she off the stage, passively fulfilling whatever fate has preprogrammed her to do?...
    - or is she on center stage, where the true nature of her worshipping heart is about to be revealed?...
  - now, those are loaded questions, that for a few here may bring some rather strong and raw emotions to the surface...
  - but I think we would all agree with this point – the tragedy was not the end of the story...there was also her response to it...
- now, with that in mind, especially if you like doing crossword puzzles or other word games, you can actually figure out the rest of the outline this morning...

- we already talked about the innocent past where you responded well...[that's what we see in David and Shimei – he was mistreated and he still responded in a way that pleased God..]
  - the second bucket then would be, the innocent past where you responded poorly...you didn't bring the event on, but what you did next certainly displeased God...so there's that person's initial sin, and your reactionary one...
  - the third bucket would be the guilty past [you initiated it] where you responded well...[you turned it around -- we'll explain that further in a minute...]
  - and then the fourth would be the guilty past where you responded poorly...also known as, striking out twice...
- now, here's what we need to do at this point...pick up a ping pong ball...do you have some memories that fit into the category of the innocent past where you responded well?...I imagine we all do...and while we'll study in subsequent weeks how to handle such occurrences more thoroughly...
- for our purposes today, you could say...and thank God that he allowed me to respond well...
  - in many cases, it was probably hard...there was a side of you that wanted to say to Abishai – sure, go take off his head – let's respond to mistreatment with murder...but by God's grace you resisted the temptation to return evil for evil...and my guess is right now, you're really glad for that...
  - if bucket #1 exists, it is only because of the sustaining grace of our God...
- now, we can start identifying and filling the other buckets more quickly...

## II. The Innocent Past When You Responded Poorly

- these are times when you didn't do anything to bring on the initial mistreatment or pain...someone else did something to you...but you certainly got your pound of flesh in return...
- turn back to 1 Samuel 18 to see a pitiful example of this category...
- this story begins before David became king...and if you know your Bible history, that would mean that the king of Israel prior to David was...King Saul...
- and there are numerous examples in David's life where the person who was sinning against him, in ways that were completely unprovoked, was Saul.

### A. Saul's wickedness.

#### - READ 1 Samuel 18:20-21...

- please keep that phrase "snare to him" in your mind, because that certainly comes true before this story is entirely over in ways Saul would have never imagined...
  - but lock on now to that phrase "the hand of the Philistines may be against him"...
  - the Philistines were the perpetual enemies of the nation of Israel...
  - and verse 25 explains the full nature of Saul's plan...
  - **1 Samuel 18:25 - Saul then said, "Thus you shall say to David, 'The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.' "** Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.
- the point is – Saul intended to kill David --- who could possibly go out and kill 100 of their enemies?...

- if you know the story, you know that David and his men went out and killed 200 of Saul's enemies... **1 Samuel 18:27 - ...So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife.**
- I have to summarize these next events quickly for sake of time...but David's marriage to Michal begins well—she actually saves his life when Saul and his men try to kill him by lowering him down on a rope and crafting a look alike in his bed...
- but while David is on the run for his life, Saul gives Michal to another man... **1 Samuel 25:44 - Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.**
- now, let's come up for air for minute...this is clearly another example of David's innocent past...Saul tries to have him killed by insisting he take the life of 100 Philistines before he can marry Michal, and then he gives Michal to another man while he has David on the run...
- what's important to note is that the book of 1 Samuel ends with silence on this issue...
- you would have no indication at all that David is thinking about what Saul did to him...but he is...and it is amazing how this aspect of his past pops back up...and his response shows that he's been stewing on this one for a long time...
- here's what happens...in the book of 2 Samuel, Saul's power is waning, and David's is on the rise...it is becoming apparent that David is going to become the next king...so you have all these defections as people line themselves up with the guy who looks like he's going to be the next king...

#### **B. Another tempting offer.**

- **2 Samuel 3:12 - Then Abner sent messengers to David in his place, saying, "Whose is the land? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you."**
- now I realize that if you're not familiar with OT history, you might read that and say, so what?...
- students of Scripture would be shocked by that statement...one of Saul's key guys was defecting and offering not just his own services, but to bring all his people with him...
- and from a military or strategic perspective, you'd say...do it David...
- but before David agrees, he makes a very strange request...it's time to settle a score...

#### **C. An ungodly response.**

- **2 Samuel 3:13 - He said, "Good! I will make a covenant with you, but I demand one thing of you, namely, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me."**
- now look what happens next...READ 14-15...
- now, you could argue all day long that David had the right to do that because "her had her first"...as if we talking about an argument about a baseball mitt between 2 10 year old boys...
- but David had absolutely no reason to break up this family – he had everything he could have possibly wanted – and this begins/confirms a tendency in David to use women in whatever way he wanted...
- and if you're not sure you agree with me on this...factor in the next 2 verses...

**- 2 Samuel 3:15-16 - Ish-bosheth sent and took her from *her* husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. But her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” So he returned.**

- now, here’s the point – we have 2 very clear examples of what could be called David’s innocent past...significant problems that he faced because of the sinful treatment of others...
  - Shimei’s cursing and rock throwing...and Saul’s attempt to kill him and giving his wife to someone else...
  - but David’s response illustrates how/shy those events have to be put in two separate buckets...
    - in the first example, he responded to his innocent past well...he prevented Abishai from murdering Shimei...
    - in the second example, he responded to his innocent past poorly...he ruined a marriage that was going well simply because he wanted to settle a score...
      - and by the way, time just doesn’t allow us to do this thoroughly...but if you study the remainder of Michal’s relationship with David...it is a pitiful story...that ends with Michal mocking David because for dancing for joy in front of the maidens of Israel, and David in turn mocks her...saying...
- **2 Samuel 6:22-23 - “...but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished.”** [in other words – I will have sexual relations with them, not you] **Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.**
- now, why is this so important?...the answer is that some people talk about their past as if it’s all one big lump...
  - I grew up in a dysfunctional family...I was in an abusive relationship...
  - but often when people tell their story, it’s as if they aren’t even on the stage...
  - they were just passive victims who had no control over the way they responded...
- and that is where the Word of God can help bring clarity and organization to our pasts...
  - it’s not automatic that when I’m sinned against I always responded properly...
  - and in those times when I didn’t, and my part of the equation has never been addressed, that can be a significant ball and chain that hinders a person from moving forward...
- so now we have 2 buckets...and I would encourage you to think about the times where you were sinned against...but carefully separate those events into the 2 categories we’re exploring...
  - the innocent past where you responded well...
  - but also, the innocent past where you responded poorly...[perhaps you’ve spent so much time thinking about how the other person was wrong that you’ve not given proper attention the things you need to clean up...]
- now these other 2 buckets ball into place much easier...

### **III. The Guilty Past When You Responded Well.**

- are we keeping the buckets straight...
- the guilty past – that’s when you started it...
- but “responded well” in the sense that you caught yourself and handled it before matters got worse...
- here’s another example from the life of David...you could call it...

#### **A. A disrespectful act.**

- there's no real gentlemanly way to explain how this story unfolds, but Saul is chasing David and...
- **1 Samuel 24:3 - He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself...**
  - there was no indoor plumbing...what Saul didn't realize was...
- **1 Samuel 24:3b - Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave.**
  - can you picture this – you and your men are hiding in the cave...and Saul walks in...
  - of course David's men have their way of interpreting that...
- **1 Samuel 24:4 - The men of David said to him, "Behold, *this is* the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'"**
  - his men even get all spiritual about it – kill him and the problem is solved...
- David instead chooses to...**1 Samuel 24:4b - Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly.**
  - now, you might say – that's not that bad—how is David guilty there?...
  - David would disagree with you...

#### **B. A quick and humble response**

**1 Samuel 24:5-7 - It came about afterward that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe. So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed." David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way.**

- there's a great example of David doing something that he believed was wrong...it was his guilty past...but at least he didn't make matters worse...he quickly and humbly made it right...
- now there's our third bucket – do you anything to put in that one...
  - again, if you do – why did you humble yourself and handle it quickly? [by God's grace]...
  - [develop – the gospel – it requires the power of Christ to handle our failures well...]
- now, regrettably, there's one more bucket...and we will come back to this event again...
- [by the way – if you're a bit frustrated that we're bouncing around David's life...we're planning a more systematic study of his life this fall...]

#### **IV. The Guilty Past When You Responded Poorly.**

- the low point in the king's life involved his relationship with Bathsheba...

##### **A. A lustful act.**

**- 2 Samuel 11:2-5 - Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."**

- David's guilt is undeniable...but the way he handled it became even worse...



## B. A treacherous response.

- 2 Samuel 11:24-27 - **“Moreover, the archers shot at your servants from the wall; so some of the king’s servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.”** Then David said to the messenger, **“Thus you shall say to Joab, ‘Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another; make your battle against the city stronger and overthrow it’; and so encourage him.”** Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. *When the time of mourning was over*, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. **But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD.**
- It is true that eventually David repented...but it was months and months afterward...and because he responded to his guilty past in a way that was equally and in many ways even more sinful, the consequences he had to pay were severe...
- and if you have events today that fit into that bucket – it would be wise to deal with them quickly before the damage spreads any further...

