

Introduction: Motives of the human heart are important. David's son Solomon was given a proverb about the emotions of the heart that motivate behavior: Above all else guard your heart, for it affects everything you do (Proverbs 4:23, NLT). A professor at Calvin College wrote a book to encourage and exhort people to have good hearts and motives, its title is: *You Are What You Love*. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, IF we love Jesus with all that is in us, seeking Him in the Word by the Spirit, we will become more and more like Him. But, IF we love the things in this world, we will become more worldly and estranged from God. Jeremiah warned people who continue to live for themselves, and not God: The heart is deceptive and who can know it (Jeremiah 17:7-9)? *** Jesus put it this way: The good man out of the good treasure in his heart produces good; the evil man out of the evil treasure ... produces evil (Luke 6:43-45). David said: A broken and contrite heart, You will not despise (Psalm 51:17). *** The apostle Peter said that those who suffer because they are motivated to love and serve Jesus by using the gifts and strength they have received from God, should praise God (in their suffering) because they bear [Jesus'] Name, and God will get the praise (and glory, 1 Peter 4:7-17). *** Bottom line: All we do and say should be motivated by a desire to bring glory to God. At the end of our lives this will be all that matters. *** In today's story from the life of David, we find Abner doing the right thing from a wrong motive. We will soon see the harmful consequences to him. *** David's psalm declares the wonders God did to bring His people out of Egypt and into the land He told Abraham would be their inheritance (Genesis 15:13-21), and tells of His sovereignty over all creation. These are more than enough motivation to praise Him. *** We're now ready to find life-changing truths from our passages.

I. As David prevails against Saul's son, Abner is rebuked for violating Saul's concubine, so he meets with David to turn all Israel to his rule. (2 Samuel 3:1-21)

- A. In a protracted war, David gains the upper hand; when Saul's son rebukes Abner for violating his father's 'wife', Abner vows to turn all Israel over to David. (*Verses 1-11*)
1. Then the war between the houses of David and Saul was lengthy, David proceeding (in) strengthening (himself); Saul's men going (on) weakening. (*Verse 11*)
Protracted war: It has been seven years, most of David's reign in Hebron (chapter 2, verse 11).
 2. David fathered six sons, in order: Amnon by Ahinoam, Chileab by Abigail, Absalom by Maacah, Adoiah by Haggith, Shephatiah by Abital, Ithream by Eglah – all born in Hebron. (*Verses 2-5*)
Six sons by six wives: The six wives are mentioned without comment. Leaving aside adultery, Yahweh explicitly told Moses that His kings must not take many wives (Deuteronomy 17:17)!
 3. Then it happened, while there was war between the houses, Abner was making himself strong in the household of Saul. (*Verse 6*)
Abner: Some people seek to advance themselves when the people they serve are facing defeat.
 4. Rizpah had been Saul's concubine; then he (Ish-bosheth) said to Abner: why have you come in my father's concubine? (*Verse 7*)
Saul's 'wife': By taking the dead king's wife, he is putting in a claim to be king (1 Kings 2:19-22).
 5. Then Abner was very angry over Ish-bosheth's words and said: Am I a dog's head of Judah? Today, I (am acting loyally) to your father's family, not letting you encounter David's (strong) hand; and you charge me with iniquity over the woman? (*Verse 8*)
Abner: Abner's defensiveness is causing him to be angry when he is rightly accused of doing wrong. His defense is he can do what he wants because he is loyal to Saul and Ish-bosheth.
 6. Thus God will do to Abner, and more, if what Yahweh swore to David, I will do: Transfer the kingdom from Saul's house and to raise up the throne of David over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba. (*Verses 9-10*)
Transfer support: Abner is right that Yahweh has already chosen and anointed David king (1 Samuel 16:1-13). But Abner is motivated by anger and does it to spite the man who corrected him!

Motives matter

7. And he (Ish-bosheth) could not answer a word to Abner because he feared him. (*Verse 11*)
Abner's power: Abner has power to intimidate Saul's weak son; but, not over what will soon happen to him.

Application: We must determine to never be angry when we are rebuked for a sin of which we are guilty. David called it a kindness when he was rebuked by someone righteous (Psalm 141:5).

- B. When Abner meets with David, David requests that Michal be returned to him as his seventh wife; after they celebrate the agreement with a feast, Abner is sent away in peace. (*Verses 12-21*)
1. Then Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf to say: To whom is the land? Make a covenant with me and behold! My hand (is) with you to turn all Israel to you. (*Verse 12*)
Abner's offer to David: Abner follows through on his threat to Ish-bosheth, sending his representatives to make David king by a covenant with the people.
 2. And he (David) said: Good, I will indeed make a covenant with you; but, one thing I will require: You will not see me unless you bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me; then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth to say: You must give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed at the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins. (*Verses 13-14*)
David's request: David demands Abner's king to give him his first wife, who loved him. Because he risked his life to win her (1 Samuel 18:20-28), he may have loved her. But, how much does a man love any one of seven wives above the rest?
 3. Then Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband Paltiel; then her husband went with her, weeping; then Abner said to him: You must go and return, then he returned. (*Verses 15-16*)
Ish-bosheth: Ish-bosheth sends her from her second husband back to her first husband violating the spirit of what Yahweh told Moses (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Abner is harsh to the grieving husband. The king and his general are acting on some combination of pride, fear and an unnatural desire for personal glory!

Motives matter

4. Then Abner had a word with Israel's elders: As, in times past, you have sought David as king over you all, and now you must do (it), because Yahweh said to David: By the hand of David, My servant, he will save my people Israel from the Philistines and all their enemies. (*Verses 17-18*)
Abner quotes Samuel: Abner quotes Samuel to these elders, just as he did with Ish-bosheth.

With wonders, Yahweh gave the land to His people

5. Abner also spoke in the ears of Benjamin; then Abner went to tell David at Hebron all that was good in the eyes of Israel and all Benjamin. (*Verse 19*)
Abner gives David good news: Before going to David, Abner made a point of getting full agreement from Saul's tribe. Only then did he go to Hebron to tell David all Israel wants him as their king.
6. When Abner came to David at Hebron with twenty men, David made a feast for Abner and all the men; then Abner said to David: I will arise and go and I will gather to my lord, the king, all Israel, and they will make a covenant (that) you rule over all your heart desires; then David sent Abner away, then he went in peace. (*Verses 20-21*)
Feast for Abner: Abner brought two elders from each tribe. David graciously made a feast for them to celebrate the re-unification of Israel.
Abner's pledge: Abner pledged to gather all Israel whom the elders represented to fully establish David as king. David sends him away in peace. But Yahweh does not give peace to those with self-serving motives. We will soon see the consequences to Abner of his mixed motives, because ...

Motives matter

Application: We must be willing to acknowledge that we have sometimes acted with mixed motives. Therefore we must seek to avoid this in the future through God's Word and in our prayers.

II. The God of creation should be praised by the people He chose and brought from slavery into the land. (*Psalms 135:3-14*)

- A. The God of creation chose Israel as His people. (*Verses 3-7*)
 1. You all must sing to Yahweh because Yahweh (is) good / You all must sing to His Name because (He is) pleasant. (*Verse 3*)
Praise Yahweh: There are two great reasons for the people of the covenant God to praise Him. First, He is good. Second, He is also pleasant, delightful and beautiful in every way.
 2. Because Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself / Israel (He chose) as His (treasured) possession. (*Verse 4*)
Israel chosen: The worshippers remind themselves they were chosen by God to faithfully obey all His instructions to be a shining example to all people around them.
 3. Because I truly know Yahweh (is) great / and our Adonai (is) from (above) all gods. (*Verse 5*)
Adonai-Yahweh: The covenant God has strongly made Himself known as great; and, the God who rules His people is distinct from, and greater than, the spirit beings He created.
 4. Whatever delights Yahweh, He has done / in heaven, on earth, in the seas and all the deeps // (He is) making to ascend vapors from the end of the earth / He made lightning for the rain / (He is) bringing forth the wind from His storehouses (treasuries). (*Verses 6-7*)
Delight and control: Yahweh delights in His non-living creation and what He does in the three spheres of land, air and water. He has full control over climate and weather. He is the only one hundred percent accurate 'weatherman'.
- B. With wonders in Egypt and Palestine, Yahweh gave 'the land' to His people. (*Verses 8-14*)
 1. He smote the first-born of Egypt / from man (*adam*) to beast // He sent signs and wonders into your midst, Egypt / (doing them) in Pharaoh and all his servants. (*Verses 8-9*)
Wonders: Yahweh performed ten miraculous and wonderful destructive natural events on all Egyptians, from the king to the least, even on the animals.
 2. He smote many nations / and slew mighty kings // Sihon, king of the Amorites / Og, king of Bashan / and all the kingdoms of Canaan. (*Verses 10-11*)
Smite and slay: After forty years, Yahweh then killed the kings and people of nations to the northeast of Egypt on behalf of His people,
 3. He gave their land as an inheritance / an inheritance to His people Israel. (*Verse 12*)
Gave land: Yahweh fulfilled His word to Abraham through a series of miraculous wonders!

With wonders, Yahweh gave the land to His people

4. Yahweh, your Name (is) forever / Yahweh, Your memory from generation to generation. (*Verse 13*)
Everlasting: All Yahweh's past wonderful miracles on behalf of His people are memorials to encourage faith in Him for all future generations.
5. Because Yahweh will judge (to vindicate) His people / and He will have compassion on His people. (*Verse 14*)
Compassionate judge: God's compassionate judgment is fully realized in Jesus Christ who gave His life to give forgiveness, salvation and reconciliation to all people who come to Him with faith in His saving work, and surrender to Him in obedient faith for His demonstrated love for them.

Application: We must all determine to always do what is right in God's eyes. We must act with a righteous and true motive, being children of God who walk in truth (John 1:47).

Motives matter

Conclusion: As David prevails against Saul's son, Abner is rebuked for violating Saul's concubine. So, with mixed motives, he meets with David to turn all Israel to his rule. The God of creation should be praised by the people He chose and with wonders He brought them from slavery into 'the land'.

Motives matter