
WHEN LEADERS FAIL

1 Chronicles 21:1-13

Ezekiel, Oghenekaro

Everything rise and fall on leadership. This saying is very true and correct. Many a time when we speak about leadership it is easy to look up and say, “*he is referring to the elders or the bishops*”. We all can agree in the context of the church, the elders or the bishops are the officially appointed leaders but this is not always the case. A leader is anyone who influences others...

Let me paint a scenario. I was travelling sometime ago at the airport, someone fainted and immediately, some persons ran to the scene to help. I remember one among these persons asking everyone to please give the man some space and immediately they obeyed and he also requested someone should help the man to relax properly and still they obeyed. Remember, they never knew him before this incident, but they were obeying his instructions and eventually they were able to salvage the situation before medical personnel came to the scene. This is what we call situational leadership. They were never members of a team or friends but situation brought them together and all they did was to obey the unappointed leader who they trust and believe he knew what he was doing. So you can see that leadership is not necessarily one that

is appointed but anyone who can influence others.

Similarly, as parents we are leaders in our own right and space and whatever we do greatly impacts the ones we lead consciously or unconsciously. we are going to consider the story of king David whose action have grave consequences on those he led.

David’s Failure (1 Chronicles 21:1-8)

The chapter begins with Satan standing against Israel and stirs up king David to number the children of Israel.

- David instructs Joab and his commanders to count the Israelites and let him know how many there are.
- But Joab tries to prevent David from doing this – Look at verse 3. “*May the Lord add to his people a hundred times as many as they are!*” Joab immediately puts the blessing on God. Does it really matter how many persons we have? God is the one who has made Israel what it is and God will be the reason for the people’s continued blessed condition. Joab also notes that

doing this will bring guilt on Israel.

- Although we cannot find a specific command where God said that the people were never to be numbered. But based on Joab's answer, Joab sees that this is an act of pride. It appears that David wants to revel in the greatness of his rule by counting how many belong to his rule. This is about personal glorification.
- David overrules Joab's objection and the command goes forth (21:4). This is often how temptation goes. We are tempted and we know we should not do this. But we cave into our desires and do what we ought not to do anyway.
- The count happens revealing that there were 1,100,000 men in all Israel and 470,000 in Judah. But Joab did not count the tribes of Levi and Benjamin because this command was so detestable to him. Not only was this command repulsive to Joab, what David did was evil to God and he afflicted Israel.
- **God Afflicted Israel because of what David did.** We were not told how God afflicted Israel. But for the moment there is a strong point that is being made about sin that we must recognize and admit. Sin has consequences and those consequences affect more than just yourself. What David has done has affected all of Israel. We just do not want to look at our sins in this way. We want to pretend that our sins do not hurt anyone. If we are willing

to admit that there are consequences for our sins, then we pretend that our sins only hurt ourselves. This is one of the biggest lies and greatest deceptions that Satan puts into our minds. We are not hurting anyone and our sins is not a big deal. But what David has done has affected everyone in Israel.

We need to see that our sinning does the same thing. The consequences of our sins have ripple effects on people we know and do not know and last longer than we can ever imagine. We can read this account and wonder why David's sin afflicts all of Israel. Brethren, that is what sin does. Your sin affects your spouse, your children, your parents, your extended family, your friends, your church, your co-workers, your acquaintances, and people you do not know and people who may not yet be born.

Sexual immorality is the sin that just keeps on giving you far-reaching, timeless consequences. A man said his mother cheated on his father which led to divorce. A sin committed 40 years ago continues to have consequences and pain to this day. It still affects the man and his family. It has affected his children. It affected the church and other churches. It affected friendships. A sin like sexual immorality lies and tells us that no one is getting hurt when in fact everyone is getting hurt.

Sin is like taking a large rock and casting it into the middle of a lake. You will watch the ripples go all the way until they reach the shore of the lake.

The most powerful ripples are right at the impact point. But the ripples keep going and going and going.

Now I want us to observe David's response to his sin in verse 8. David confesses to God that he has greatly sinned and that he has acted foolishly. David does not deny what he has done. David does not say, "What is the big deal?" David understands the gravity of his sin and pleads to God for forgiveness. David understands that he immediately needs the forgiveness of God for himself and for what he has done to his people.

Sin's Consequences

David (1 Chronicles 21:9-15)

I want you to notice that just because David was seeking forgiveness from God did not make all the consequences for his sins disappear.

- **Getting Right With God does not erase consequences** - Getting right with God is the most important thing you can do in your life. But please understand that getting right with God does not mean that the consequences and outcomes from your prior decisions will disappear.
- **Your guilt will be removed** - but you will still have the problems that come from those decisions. In the case of David, he was placed in a unique position.
- **Actions begat Consequences** – God allows David to choose what the consequences will be. He

must choose between three years of famine, three months of devastation by the sword from your enemies, or three days of plague on the land destroying every part of Israel. Please consider that there is not a good answer. These are all very severe consequences for David's sin. So what would you choose? I want you to notice how David chooses because it continues to reveal his heart and his understanding of God.

David said to God, "I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into human hands." (1 Chronicles 21:13 NASB 2020)

Please think about how David thinks about our Lord. These are horrible consequences. But here is what he knows. He will put himself in God's hands because his mercies are very great. Being in the hands of God is far better than being in the hands of people. Do we think of God in this way? I think we might have grown up being taught that people are more merciful and kinder and that God is wrathful and torches people for blinking wrong. David understands that we have a God whose mercies are very great. The best place for him to rest his life is in the hands of God. Now what we are told next is going to show this amazing mercy of God.

In verse 14 we see the Lord sending a plague on Israel and 70,000 people die from it. Then God sends an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the Lord saw it, he relenting concerning the

disaster and told the angel to stop. The point where the angel stops was at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Now here is the big question. Why did the Lord stop? Why does the Lord not fully carry out the consequences for the sin of David and the sins of Israel (cf. 2 Samuel 24:1)? Our first answer to this question is the great mercies of God. But why was it here and why was it at this moment that God stopped the plague against Israel?

Eli – Generational Curse 1 Samuel 2:12-4:22

- First, the failure of Eli reveals what parents should not do as they rear their children: Do not regard God's commands lightly (2:27-29a). Do not honor your children above God by excusing or justifying error in their lives (2:29b). Do not become party with a child's sin (2:29c). Do not lightly accept your parenting

duties because what you do with your child will have a dramatic effect on others (2:30-36).

- Second, the dreadful failure of Eli emphasizes the need to use the parenting principles of Elkanah and Hannah: Realize that a child is a gift from God and brings a great duty. Realize the urgency to implant spiritual values in young and tender hearts

Achan – Joshua 7

One man sinned by stealing the things that were forbidden by God. He made the children of Israel to die in battle and worst, he lost his life and the entire family who were not there when he stole the item.

Remember, you may not bear the consequence of your sin alone. A spouse may contract HIV or any deadly disease and make their partner suffer the consequence of their action.

Summarising Thoughts

- Do not rationalise sin. It has far reaching consequences. It may not affect you alone.
- Listen to wise counsel as they may save a generation
- Do not take God's commands lightly.
- Do not honour your children above the Lord; if they sin, do not allow excuses to justify them.
- Do not become party with a child's evil deeds like in the case of Eli
- Do not accept lightly your parenting role; the way your children are trained will have a drastic effect on many.