

Stones, Curses, and Character: www.Shimei.com

Pastor Randy Booth — 06-18-06

“Neil Postman writes in his book, *Technopoly*: “...most people believe that technology is a staunch friend. There are two reasons for this. First, technology is a friend. It makes life easier, cleaner, and longer. Can anyone ask more of a friend? Second, because of its lengthy, intimate, and inevitable relationship with culture, technology does not invite a close examination of its own consequences. It is the kind of friend that asks for trust and obedience, which most people are inclined to give because its gifts are truly bountiful. But, of course, there is a dark side to this friend. Its gifts are not without a heavy cost. Stated in the most dramatic terms, the accusation can be made that the uncontrolled growth of technology destroys the vital sources of our humanity. It creates a culture without a moral foundation. It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make human life worth living. Technology, in sum, is both friend and enemy.”
[*Technopoly, The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, (Vintage, 1992) p. xiii]

I. INTRODUCTION

A. New Applications of God’s Word.

1. The Internet, as a new technology, has presented some new challenges to the world, and especially to the Church.
2. Technology enables men to do things faster, bigger, and with less effort.
 - a) In and of itself, most technologies are neither good nor evil.
 - b) On the other hand, the men who make use of them are good or evil.
 - (1) The printing press can disseminate truth or lies.
 - (2) Explosives can move mountains or wipe out cities.
3. While the technology might be neutral—men are not.
 - a) Now, instead of a gossip being able to ruin a reputation in a local community, the world-wide-web can now spread malice to the globe.
 - (1) This gives a man a megaphone with which he can sin.
 - (2) All you need is a keyboard and a service provider.
 - (3) One recent hack proudly announced that he had reached 3,000 new people in one month.
 - (a) So, is this a good thing?
 - (b) Does the multiplication of sin make this a better world?
 - b) And we must remember, for gossip and slander to do its murderous work, there must also be recipients.
 - c) It takes two to tango, and it takes two to gossip.

- d) We now have millions who feed regularly on this degrading roughage.
 - (1) There is a term for those who do this—they are called “lurkers.”
 - (2) I trust that none of you are engaged in this form of gossip.

B. Anonymity.

1. Add to this the insidious factor of anonymity, and the evil doers have found a new dark alley from which to appropriate.
 - a) From a distance stones can be thrown and cowards can hide.
 - b) Even when names are used, there are many who will vent their spleens in cyberspace who would never have the courage (or foolishness) to do so to another man’s face.
2. Admiral Lord Nelson once remarked that “every sailor is a bachelor when beyond Gibraltar.”
 - a) This was a statement about anonymity, something that was quite rare in even just a few generations ago.
 - b) Nelson knew that once his sailors moved beyond the bounds of the British Empire, beyond society’s systems of morality and accountability, they underwent a transformation.
 - c) Every man became a bachelor and sought only and always his own pleasure. [<http://www.challies.com/archives/001850.php>]
3. Os Guinness remarks that in the past “those who did right and those who did not do wrong often acted as they did because they knew they were seen by others. Their morality was accountability through visibility.” [<http://www.challies.com/archives/001850.php>]
4. Our society values anonymity.
 - a) There are many who feel that anonymity is a right and one that is to be closely guarded and protected.
 - (1) Those who use technology may have noticed the influx of tools designed to protect the anonymity of the Internet user.
 - (2) The latest versions of web browsers come with tools designed to erase all trace of what a person was doing while browsing the web.
 - (3) Other tools allow a person to be untraceable to others as he travels various web sites.
[<http://www.challies.com/archives/001850.php>]
 - b) Now, since technology constantly changes, we must evaluate what lies behind its abuses and apply biblical principles to these new circumstances.
 - (1) While the Bible does not specifically address the Internet, it does address the nature of men.

- (2) The Bible recognizes that there are different kinds of men—some honorable and some not so honorable.
5. Doug Phillips recently wrote: "...fatherless cultures produce men who do not understand honor, and therefore relate dishonorably to fathers, employers, pastors, and, most importantly, to God the Father. In fact, cultures dominated by prodigal fathers produce men and women who actually view dishonorable conduct as a virtue."
[http://www.visionforum.com/hottopics/blogs/dwp/?archive=/2006_05_01_index.htm#114794472421008569]

C. The Characters of Men are Proven Over Time.

1. All men sin; they sin with their minds, their bodies, and their tongues.
2. But give a man enough time and opportunity, and he will prove what kind of man he really is.
 - a) He can run, but he cannot hide from himself, and he certainly cannot hide from God.
 - b) *"Be sure, your sins will find you out."*
 - c) *"You will reap what you sow."*
3. The stories of the Bible are not given simply to entertain us with good stories.
 - a) The characters of the Bible are still with us..
 - b) The stories are given to teach us about God and men, about good and evil, about blessings and curses, and about life and death.
4. Today, I want us to consider the historical account of a man named Shimei.
 - a) This story will certainly not address all the problems that are manifesting themselves on the web,
 - b) But I think it will give us some insight as to what we can expect to unfold in the cases of those who think they can throw dust up in the air and unjustly attack other men.
 - c) Their fifteen minutes of fame will not have a happy ending.

II. WWW.SHIMEI.COM

A. A Benjamite Accuses and Insults David.

1. When David was forced to flee Jerusalem during an attempted coup by his own son Absalom, Shimei, thinking that David's days as king were over, vented his rage at David—which David humbly submitted himself to.
 - a) He thought David was vulnerable.
 - b) He thought David was down.
 - c) And so now, Shimei was ready to kick and kick (from a distance, of course).

“Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came.⁶ And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.⁷ Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: ‘Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue!’⁸” The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!” (2 Sam. 16: 5-8).

2. This man had nursed a grudge against king David ever since king Saul’s death.
 - a) He clearly blamed David for the death of Saul, and now, David’s throne had been taken by Absalom, and Shimei was determined to ‘rub David’s nose in it’ as we might say today.
 - b) Of course, his limited knowledge of the matters, coupled with his bitterness, arrogance and presumption led him to false conclusions that he proclaimed loudly and publicly.
 - (1) In fact, there is a huge difference between what we know and what we have heard.
 - (2) David had accomplished more in a week than this man would in a lifetime.
 - (3) But Shimei could only twist the truth and found every fact to confirm his perverted view of David.

“Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, ‘Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!’¹⁰ But the king said, ‘What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, ‘Curse David.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’”¹¹ And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him.¹²” It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day.”¹³ And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust.¹⁴ Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there” (2 Samuel 16:9-14).

3. David’s loyal men saw the incredible injustice being heaped upon David.
 - a) They had the power to crush him, and in fact, that’s what they wanted to do.
 - (1) They considered him to be a “Dead Dog.”
 - (2) It would be harder to be lower than this.

- b) But David understood an important principle:
 - (1) Not every thing that can be done, should be done.
 - (2) Not everything that can be said, should be said.
 - (3) There is a time and a place for everything.
- c) David saw beyond the moment, beyond the injustice, beyond the aggravation—
 - (1) He saw the providential hand of the Lord.
 - (2) He understood that God was the ultimate dispenser of justice and that in time the blessings and the curses would come.

B. David's Restoration.

1. During a battle between the armies of David and Absalom, Absalom was killed and David was restored to the throne.
 - a) Absalom (and therefore Shimei) had a reversal of fortune.
 - (1) The circumstances had dramatically changed and Shimei, being the weasel that he was, knew it was time for him to sing a different song.
 - (2) Being the brave man of principle that he was, he knew that it was in his best interest to kiss up to David.
 - b) And so, as David traveled back to Jerusalem, Shimei humbled himself before the king and apologized.
2. David was incredibly gracious to Shimei, but David was not stupid.
 - a) He was not blind to the danger that Shimei continued to present until the next opportunity to participate in an overthrow of David.
 - b) David comprehended the character of this man and he knew that character would eventually manifest itself again.
 - c) Give men time and opportunity and they will show the world who they are—give them enough rope and they will hang themselves.

“And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, who was from Bahurim, hastened and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. ¹⁷ There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over the Jordan before the king. ¹⁸ Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan. ¹⁹ Then he said to the king, “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. ²⁰ For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.” ²¹ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, “Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD 's anointed?” ²² And David said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries to me today?

Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?”²³ Therefore the king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” And the king swore to him” (2 Sam. 19:16-23).

3. David, pleased to be restored to the throne, was merciful.
 - a) His men were still ready to swiftly remedy the problem with a sword.
 - (1) Yet David held them back once again.
 - (2) David was not going to let the likes of Shimei ruin the joy of his celebration.
 - b) Bitter men are not content to destroy themselves, they always seek to defile others.
 - (1) But David was wise—David was above this and refused to allow this man to rob him of what God had given him.
 - (2) Again, David was no fool.
 - (3) He was not deceived by the kind of man Shimei was; but David was a bigger man.
 - (4) Grace is a powerful force!

C. David’s Warning.

1. Despite the insistence of many of his true loyalists to do so, David refused to kill Shimei –
 - a) But when the time came that David was about to die of old age, he warned his son and successor Solomon about the danger that Shimei’s opposition continued to present to the throne of Israel which had been chosen directly by The Lord.
 - b) Unlike his father David, Solomon was not a warrior, but like his father David, Solomon was no fool when it came to political reality.
2. Words have consequences.
 - a) Just before his death, David held a counsel with his son, Solomon, who now reigned instead of David, and he charged him concerning Shimei.
 - b) *“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.’⁹ 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” (1 Kings 2:8-9).*

3. There was a strategy that was shared between David and Solomon.
 - a) These men knew the words of Moses: “*Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them.*” (Deut. 32:35).
 - b) Solomon bided his time and simply allowed the treacherous Shimei to create the circumstance for his own lawful elimination.
 - c) He placed him under house arrest.
 - d) It wasn’t long before Solomon called for Shimei and effectively confined him to Jerusalem: “*Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, ‘Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there anywhere.’*³⁷ “*For it shall be, on the day you go out and cross the Brook Kidron, know for certain you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head.*”³⁸ *And Shimei said to the king, ‘The saying is good. As my lord the king has said, so your servant will do.’ So Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days*” (1 Kings 2:36-38).
 - e) Solomon isolated the big mouth to limit his influence.
 - (1) As long as Shimei kept his word and stayed confined to his narrow circle, Solomon left him alone.
 - (2) But Solomon knew this arrogant man; he could neither keep his word nor close his mouth.

D. Shimei Breaks the Agreement and is Executed By Solomon.

1. God takes our words very seriously.
2. “*Now it happened at the end of three years, that two slaves of Shimei ran away to Achish the son of Maachab, king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, ‘Look, your slaves are in Gath.’*”⁴⁰ *So Shimei arose, saddled his donkey, and went to Achish at Gath to seek his slaves. And Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath.*⁴¹ *And Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had come back.*⁴² *Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, ‘Did I not make you swear by the LORD, and warn you, saying, ‘Know for certain that on the day you go out and travel anywhere, you shall surely die’? And you said to me, ‘The word I have heard is good.’*⁴³ *Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD and the commandment that I gave you’*”⁴⁴ *The king said moreover to Shimei, ‘You know, as your heart acknowledges, all the wickedness that you did to my father David; therefore the LORD will return your wickedness on your own head.’*⁴⁵ *But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever.’*⁴⁶ *So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died. Thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon”* (1 Kings 2:39-46).

3. After three years of dwelling safely in Jerusalem, Shimei traveled to Gath to bring back two of his servants who had run away from him.
 - a) He successfully completed this act and probably thought he had got away with it.
 - b) But he was seen and the news reached king Solomon. Once again Shimei had to stand before Solomon and be judged. Shimei was well aware of what kind of man he was.
 - (1) He was not sick or crazy, he was evil.
 - (2) And the bad guys always loose.
 - c) Solomon carried out his former promise and had Shimei killed—dire consequences because of words.
 - d) Solomon would later write: *“Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity. Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God”* (Eccl. 8:10-13).
4. How often we hear a torrent of words from people who know nothing about some matter.
 - a) For example, people are often ‘convicted’ of a crime by the media, or by gossip, when the Police have held them for questioning.
 - b) The wise person will only speak of that which he knows.
 - (1) *“The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit”* (Proverbs 15:2-4).
 - (2) *“He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor. A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and brings down the trusted stronghold. Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles A proud and haughty man —‘Scoffer’ is his name; he acts with arrogant pride”* (Proverbs 21:21-24).
 - (3) This is something that Shimei would have been wise to observe.
 - (4) *“A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow”* (Proverbs 25:18).