

25. The Book of 2Samuel—14:24-15:12

“The Danger of Partial Forgiveness”

(1/8/17)

2Samuel 14 is a continuation of the events of chapter 13. (Explain)—

I. The Rape—13:1-19

II. The Revenge—13:20-39

III. The Return—14:1-33

(Review chapter 14)

2 Samuel 14:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ And the king said, "Let him return to his own house, but do not let him see my face." So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king's face.

So, David allows for Absalom's return—but when he comes home he refuses to see his son.

This is going to lay the groundwork for the next few chapters which deal with the rebellion of Absalom against his father.

But first, the writer gives us some information about Absalom personally—

2 Samuel 14:25-27 (NKJV)

²⁵ Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

²⁶ And when he cut the hair of his head--at the end of every year he cut *it* because it was heavy on him--when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels according to the king's standard. ²⁷ To Absalom were born three sons, and one daughter whose name *was* Tamar. She was a woman of beautiful appearance.

It could be that the Holy Spirit included a description of Absalom here in the narrative to help us understand that his striking good looks helped him, in part, to steal the hearts of the people to follow him in his rebellion against his father David.

People are drawn to good looking people—I saw this proven in an experiment where good looking and plain people were stranded on the side of the road to see if people were more inclined to stop and help good looking people as opposed to those who were more ordinary in appearance.

It was no contest—by far people stopped to help the good looking more than they did to help the plainer looking ones.

2 Samuel 14:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king's face.

²⁹ Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

So Absalom has been back in Jerusalem for two years and during that time David has refused to see him.

And even though the king was his father he couldn't just walk over to his house and drop in on him—especially since David had given orders to Joab, who was his general and chief body guard, that Absalom was not to be permitted to see his face.

So, after a couple of years, Absalom has had enough of this and sends word to Joab (twice) to come and talk with him in the hopes that Joab would go to the king on his behalf and get him to reverse his orders so that he, Absalom, could see him again.

However, for whatever reason, Joab gives Absalom the cold shoulder and won't respond to his messages to come to him so they can talk—so Absalom decides to force the issue—

2 Samuel 14:30-31 (NKJV)

³⁰ So he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. ³¹ Then Joab arose and came to Absalom's house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?"

Absalom tells him, *"What was I supposed to do? I asked you to come to me twice and both times you ignored me so I figured if I set your field on fire that would get your attention and you'd get your butt over here."*

Spurgeon said that sometimes God will get our attention by setting our "barley field" on fire—
"He, knowing that we will not come by any other means, sends a serious trial—he sets our barley-field on fire, which he has a right to do, seeing our barley-fields are far more his than they are ours."

2 Samuel 14:32 (NKJV)

³² And Absalom answered Joab, "Look, I sent to you, saying, 'Come here, so that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? *It would be better for me to be there still.*" ' Now therefore, let me see the king's face; but if there is iniquity in me, let him execute me."

In other words Absalom tells Joab, *"Why did my father send for me if he was only going to continue to banish me from his presence—I would have stayed with my grandfather in Geshur if I'd have known that."*

He continues, *"Now therefore, let me see the king's face; but if there is iniquity in me, let him execute me."*

In chapter 13 when we said that Absalom *murdered* his half-brother Amnon for raping his sister Tamar—that's not how Absalom saw it.

It was true that he had his servants execute Amnon—but in his mind, it was a righteous act of retribution in standing up for his sister's honor.

Amnon had violated his sister and then refused to marry her (which would have been the right thing to do—Deut.22:28-29) and so Absalom reasoned that the righteous punishment for such a horrendous crime was death.

2 Samuel 14:33 (NKJV)

³³ **So Joab went to the king and told him. And when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom.**

As we're going to see—this probably amounted to *“too little, too late.”*

I personally believe that over the last couple of years, Absalom's feelings toward his father for refusing to see him has gone from a mild animosity to seething hostility to full-blown hatred.

And this became the catalyst that eventually led to Absalom plotting to overthrow his father and take the throne from him.

When David decided to include conditions to his son's return home by offering him partial forgiveness—he inadvertently planted the seeds of hatred and rebellion into the heart of his son.

J. Vernon McGee—

“God had not forgiven David halfheartedly. God did not say, “Well, I forgive you, but we will not have fellowship any more. I will not restore to you the joy of your salvation.” When God forgives, He forgives completely. You and I are admonished: “And be kind one to another,

tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). Has God forgiven us? Yes! How are we to forgive others? The same way that God does. David should have forgiven Absalom [as God had forgiven him]. He is setting the stage for rebellion...He will live to regret it."

Another pastor had this to say—

"God forgives you unconditionally. As far as the east is from the west, that's how far away your sins and iniquities are (Psalm 103:12). Once you have confessed, your sin is forgiven and forgotten...God forgave David that way. The problem is, he doesn't forgive his own son with that same unconditional gracious forgiveness. This created in Absalom a spirit of bitterness that festered within him for five years.

Dad, do you have a son that feels alienated from you. Embrace him and say, "I forgive you even as I have been forgiven time and time again." You might need to discipline and chasten him, even as our heavenly Father disciplines us. But you must forgive him unconditionally. If you don't, you will find rebellion brewing within his heart."

IV. The Rebellion—15:1-18:18

A. Absalom's Coup

2 Samuel 15:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. ² Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city *are* you from?" And he would say, "Your servant *is* from such and such a tribe of Israel." ³ Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case *is* good and right; but *there is* no deputy of the king to hear you." ⁴ Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." ⁵ And *so* it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him.

Look, when I said earlier that David's partial forgiveness of his son led to Absalom's coup—I'm not trying to lay the fault of Absalom's rebellion entirely on David.

I personally believe that Absalom was as selfish and opportunistic as they come—a classic narcissist and demagogue.

One author defined a demagogue as, “*One who advances his own interests by affecting a deep devotion to the interests of the people.*”

Absalom was short on character and intelligence—but he made up for it by being a shrewd and skilled politician.

He knew how to butter people up by telling them what they wanted to hear and get them on his side.

Of course, it always helps if a demagogue is handsome and charming—as was the case with Absalom.

And if you add his long, flowing, luxurious hair to the mix—he was an Old Testament ‘Fabio’!

And as such, I think that Absalom had grown up with and had gotten used to everyone singing his praises—how he was the most handsome prince in all the land—maybe in all the world!

I believe that this all fed into Absalom’s pride and narcissism—it fueled his feelings that he really deserved to be king, and that nobody could lead the nation as he could.

And so, when David didn’t roll out the red carpet for him when he came home (he was a righteous guy for killing a rapist!)—well, it didn’t *plant* the seeds of rebellion into Absalom’s heart—it simply *watered* the seeds that were already there and they began to grow.

And when they were full-grown it produced the rebellion we read about in 2Samuel 15.

Narcissism, demagoguery and political savvy are a dangerous combination in anyone who wants to be in leadership—especially political leadership.

These qualities can be used by the devil to ‘wow’ and ‘enamor’ the gullible masses into choosing leaders that they feel are *for* them—when all the while the only ones these kinds of leaders are for are themselves.

In truth, these corrupt leaders only look at the people they pretend to care about as ‘useful idiots’—those that can be used as tools to accomplish their objectives.

And what are those objectives? —personal glory, power and wealth.

Newspaper editor H. L. Mencken’s defined a demagogue as—“*One who preaches doctrines he knows to be untrue to men he knows to be idiots.*”

Up to this point, Absalom had concealed his ambitions to be king—but now he feels the time is right to begin to put his rebellious plot into action.

First, he gathers to himself an impressive entourage of fifty men with horses and chariots to accompany him wherever he went.

In this way, he started to take on the appearance of a king in the minds of the people (a form of psychological conditioning).

But that wasn’t all he did, he stood at the main gate of the city and stopped those going in and pretended that he really cared about them.

As they would bow to him as a prince in Israel—he would raise them up, and give them a kiss as if to say to them, “*Don’t bow to me—I’m no better than you.*”

This gave people the sense that Absalom was ‘one of them’—a real ‘man of the people’!

Further, he would ask if they were coming with some kind of legal problem they needed one of the judges or the king himself to resolve.

He practically accused his father of being corrupt in matters of justice—as when Amnon raped Tamar and David did nothing to punish him.

He said to the people, **“Your case is righteous, but don’t expect to get justice from my father’s administration. It’s too bad that I’m not the judge of the land (king)—I would give people like you real justice.”**

Because of all of this we read in v.6—

2 Samuel 15:6 (NKJV)

⁶ In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

One of Absalom’s most diabolical attributes was that—he had the patience of the devil!

He was really good at waiting patiently for the right moment to pull the trigger on his plans—as we saw in how he waited two full years to carry out his plan to kill Amnon for raping Tamar.

2 Samuel 15:7-10 (NKJV)

⁷ Now it came to pass after forty years [the proper number is probably ‘four years’ based on the readings in Syriac and Arabic translations, Josephus, and some Hebrew manuscripts] that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD. ⁸ For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.' " ⁹ And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. ¹⁰ Then Absalom sent spies

throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!' "

Absalom's plan was to use Hebron as the capital of his new kingdom—why Hebron?

Well, primarily because Hebron was his hometown, the town he was born and grew up in—which meant he had a lot of support there.

But more importantly, Hebron had been the capital city of Israel before David moved it to Jerusalem.

When David moved the capital to Jerusalem, the men of Hebron no doubt felt slighted—and so Absalom capitalized on their discontent with David by using Hebron as ground zero for launching his new kingdom.

However, verse 10 tells us that Absalom had been quietly gathering support all over Israel and had prearranged that when word got out that the trumpet had been sounded in Hebron (a sound that accompanied coronation)—all his loyal supporters were to immediately join him there.

2 Samuel 15:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything.

Absalom knew that, to add legitimacy to his coup he had to give the appearance that he had the support of many of Israel's top leaders.

So, he invited two hundred of them, who knew nothing of what he was planning, who simply thought they had been invited to a religious feast that Absalom was conducting to fulfill a vow he had made to the Lord.

Like a true power hungry demagogue, Absalom didn't care who he used to accomplish his goal of seizing power—even if it was God Himself!

Absalom committed treason under the guise of worship—he knew that the *appearance* of spirituality and 'honoring God' would work in his favor by counteracting any suspicion.

Although, let me say this—it is possible—perhaps likely—that Absalom did all this *feeling* spiritual and in God's will.

One pastor rightly pointed this out when he said,

"Men in Absalom's place often deceive themselves with words like this: 'Lord, You know we need new leadership. Thank you for raising me up for such a time as this. Guide me and bless me, O Lord, as I endeavor to do what is best for Your people.'"

Divisive people almost never see themselves as divisive. They see themselves as crusaders for God's righteous cause and often believe God's hand is upon them. This is especially a problem when many will only believe a person is divisive if they were to admit they are divisive."

2 Samuel 15:12 (NKJV)

¹² Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city--from Giloh--while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.

Ahithophel was David's trusted advisor and a good friend—why, then, did Absalom think that Ahithophel would turn against David and join up with him in his cause?

Many people don't know this but—Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather.

I believe that Ahithophel had come to deeply resent David for bringing so much pain and turmoil into his family.

How that he not only committed adultery with his granddaughter—but then had her husband killed so he could have her as his wife.

Absalom knew that he could use Ahithophel's bitterness to his own advantage by wooing him to join his cause against David.

I'm sure that, because of his bitterness toward David, Ahithophel had convinced himself that Absalom would be a much better king—a decision that he (Ahithophel) would come to regret.

One commentator said,

"I point this out to show you the danger of allowing bitterness to take root within your soul. It will lead to your destruction. Ahithophel obviously never dealt with this matter of David. So he defected from David and we'll see him siding with Absalom and ultimately dying (he hung himself), so upset was he by the situation. May the Lord keep us from any type of unforgiveness or bitterness. Like Ahithophel, we'll find ourselves "hung up", if we don't deal with it directly."

But, Ahithophel's defection from David really hurt him—he described his feelings in Psalm 41, *"Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."* (Psalm 41:9).

There are many lessons we can learn from this section of Scripture—

The danger of partial forgiveness on the part of David; the pride and opportunism of Absalom; and the unresolved bitterness of Ahithophel.

Paul the apostle said that the things in the O.T. were written for our learning—a wise man or woman learns from the mistakes of others so they don't make the same mistakes or commit the same sins in their own lives.

God willing, we will continue our study in 2Samuel next week.