

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

Taught in Ambassador's Class of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California

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II Samuel 16:15-19:8, Lesson #33 - December 16, 1979

We have looked at David as a man of God and his quiet acceptance of the will of God. Today I want to look at God's acceptance of David.

David has now been humiliated and humbled by God and has accepted it. He has left Jerusalem and gone up the slope of the Mt. of Olives, being chased out of town by his own son. You will recall this is part of God's discipline for David's sin with Bathsheba. He was told the sword would never depart from his house and that the people who would cause the problem would be part of his own household. His son Absalom is the one causing the problem now.

When we pick up the story, David has prayed, "O Lord, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel as foolishness." Ahithophel, you remember, was David's greatest counselor, his own privy counsel, but also, unfortunately, the grandfather of Bathsheba the woman David violated. He has now joined forces with Absalom in order to get revenge upon David. He wants to see David's wives violated, and, in a moment, we will see he also wants to personally be the one to take David's life.

So David, going up this slope being disciplined by God, prays that God will thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel who counseled as a man of God and was an exceptionally brilliant man. God, in the midst of his discipline of David, chooses to honor David's prayer.

That is very helpful to me. It indicates that when we are being disciplined by God it is discipline, not punishment. Our earthly background is one of rewards and punishment. In the business world you behave yourself and you get promoted. You misbehave and you get fired.. You drive down the street at 25 miles an hour and the cop smiles at you. You go 35/40 and he pulls you over to the tune of 40 bucks. We carry that world attitude over into Christianity. We know from the Scriptures, though, that the law was not given for the righteous. It was given for the unrighteous.

The law does not apply to me at all when I am walking in the domination of the Spirit of God. I do not need the law of God at that point in time. Jesus Christ didn't. Jesus Christ wrote the law of God. The law of God describes Jesus Christ's personality, his character. He did not obey the law, in a sense, although he did. He fulfilled the law. It was fulfilled in his person. When I am walking in the light, in the life of Jesus Christ, totally dominated by the Spirit of God, I do not need, "Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife; Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength and thy neighbor as thyself." I don't need those rules because those are just normal for Jesus Christ.

The law was given for Adam. The flesh does need the law because the law is designed to restrain. It is designed to confine. It is designed to punish, in that sense, because the flesh is totally irresponsible. It is totally in rebellion against God. It cannot please God. We tend to carry this idea from the flesh over into our whole Christian experience. We think when we have done something in the flesh, which is sin and which is wrong, that God is out to punish us, that he has a big stick up there to hit us over the head. But we forget one thing. God punished already

in Jesus Christ. Christ bore the penalty of my sin, and God is at least as just as our present legal system which has a law of double jeopardy. I cannot be punished twice for my sin in the state of California or by the Government of the United States. Once I have served my time in prison, or whatever, I am free from that punishment forever. Even the Romans recognized that. When a Roman defied the law of Caesar, he was given a Bill of Particulars and thrown into prison. The Bill of Particulars was nailed to the door of his cell and when he had served his time for those very offenses, the Bill was stamped "Forgiven" and handed to him. He then walked out of that cell with a guarantee he could never again be incarcerated for those crimes, not even by Nero. The Romans weren't allowed to punish twice. How much more would God not punish twice.

So God is not in the punishing business. He is in the disciplining business, and that is a whole different ball game. It tells me that the God who is disciplining me is also loving me, that the purpose is redemptive not punitive. He is not trying to even the scales. He is trying to mold me and shape me like his Son. There is a positive aspect to it. The negative has been dealt with.

So as David is going up that hill being chased out of town by his own son as part of the consequences of his sin, he feels perfectly free to call upon God to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel. He still has a relationship with his God that is a father-son relationship, a child and its parent. That has not been severed even though he knows from Nathan the prophet that what is happening to him is because he willfully and deliberately violated Bathsheba and then hid his sin for a year and a half or so. I think it will be helpful if we can remember this as we go through this passage.

So starting with Chapter 16, verse 15, Absalom comes into Jerusalem having chased his father out. Hushai the Archite the friend of David, another great counselor, is sent by David to help God thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel. He goes to Absalom, lies and manipulates and claims he will serve Absalom just as he served Absalom's father. "I will serve whom Yahweh chooses, and since you are king, God has obviously chosen you [Which, of course, appeals to Absalom's ego] so I will serve you." Absalom lets Hushai stay. Hushai's sole purpose is to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel.

In verse 20, Absalom speaks to Ahithophel

II Samuel 16:20:

Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice. What shall we do?" And Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened." So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. And the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one inquired of the word of God; so was all the advice of Ahithophel *regarded* by both David and Absalom. Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight. And I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted and will terrify him so that all the people who are with him will flee. Then I will strike down the king alone, and I will bring back all the people to you. The return of everyone depends on the man you seek; *then* all the people shall be at peace. So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Here you see a godly man turned wicked by the bitterness of revenge. The advice of Ahithophel, up to this time, has been as the advice of God. It was the same as going to the priest who put on the Ephod and inquired of God. That is how godly Ahithophel was. But when David violated his granddaughter, the family name was insulted. You don't do that in the Orient. You don't make people lose face. And so this godly man begins to plot revenge. God warns in Scripture to never repay evil with evil but to always repay evil with good. It goes on to say, "'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." When you take revenge or get even with somebody, you are taking upon yourself the prerogative of God, the right of God, and God has restricted that right unto himself. There is no way you can repay evil with evil and retain your control over that evil. The evil will consume you. The moment you start taking revenge, the revenge will possess you. God says, "Never, ever repay evil with evil." "Be

not overcome by evil," is his warning.

This is what we see happening with Ahithophel. He now has two plans.

#1 Since his granddaughter was violated, he wants to get back in kind. David, when he departed Jerusalem, left ten concubines behind to keep house. He felt totally secure that they would be respected. Women weren't abused in a war in those days. Men were slain, but the women weren't. They were not considered participants. So he felt perfectly confident about leaving them. Well, not so with Ahithophel. He wants that revenge. He tells Absalom, which is good advice in one sense, "Go in to your father's concubines." Remember the heir to the throne always inherited the concubines of the father. "So, Absalom, make some public stand that shows you are the heir and that you are going to maintain that posture. Also, it will make you odious in the eyes of your father so all your followers will be totally committed to you. They can't ever go back to David. He will kill them." Remember how, on a pretext, Absalom lured 200 key men, key advisers to David apparently, key officials of his, down to Hebron from Jerusalem. As a result he so compromised them that they could never go back without losing their lives. Ahithophel is intent on compromising Absalom and his company so thoroughly that there can never be any reconciliation between them and David. Beyond that there is a corresponding desire, "David violated my granddaughter, so I am going to have his wives violated. He did it in secret. I am going to have it done on the top of the palace. [In front of all Israel just as God had said it would happen] I am going to destroy his name." Mind you, this is David's best friend, his closest advisor.

#2 "I want more than that in my revenge; I want personally to kill him. I want to lead the twelve thousand men, I want to go after David as he is fleeing and is tired and doesn't have his forces organized. I want to get him before he gets to the river. I want to kill him. If you let me do that, I will just kill David, and I will bring back all the people to you. But I want to lead." Notice! All personal pronouns here.

David has prayed to God that the good counsel of Ahithophel might be thwarted. He had just finished praying that when up comes Hushai the Archite, and there is the obvious answer to his prayer. Here is another man who is just as brilliant as Ahithophel. Hushai is David's friend. So instead of letting God do his work, David, thinking he is doing God a favor, begins to plot how to use Hushai, "Go back to Absalom, cozy up to him, pretend you are on his side and thereby thwart the counsel of Ahithophel." Now God doesn't have to stoop to deceit, only we do that. Hushai goes to Absalom, stoops to deceit, and God chooses to use him anyway. The tragedy, of course, is that David will never see what God might have done had he just left God alone.

And so Hushai is addressed by Absalom.

II Samuel 17:5:

Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say."

And Hushai begins reasoning with Absalom.

#1 "David is an experienced warrior. He is not fool enough to be out with the people. He will be in a ravine, or a cave. He'll be in some hiding place."

#2 "All his men are old time guerrilla fighters. This is their kind of fight. You go out to them in their territory, and they will butcher you. And the first time they pounce on you the rumor will come back that your men have been slaughtered. Then even the valiant will be sacred to death because they know your dad is a mighty man of war and his followers are fierce fighters. They are like a bear that has been robbed of its cub. They have lost face, and they are going to redeem their face at your expense." Absalom is a coward. Remember how he killed his brother Amnon? He didn't kill him himself and get revenge. No, Amnon, being the first born, was trained for kingship, and thus was a highly skilled warrior. So, when Amnon is drunk, Absalom sends his servants to kill him. Hushai goes on, "You go out and case all of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and raise an army, as many as the sands of the sea. Then this vast army, with you at the head, will come down on David and cover him like the dew covers the

earth. If he goes into a city, we'll pull the city down. We'll get him. But let's play it safe." This would appeal to Absalom because it does two things for him.

#1 It does play it safe.

#2 It gives him all the glory.

II Samuel 17:14:

Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the Lord had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, in order that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom.

It is intriguing isn't it? The counsel of Ahithophel was good. If Absalom had obeyed it, he would have killed David. It is exactly what they should have done to win the war. First of all declare your position, compromise all the people so they cannot return, move right on out and kill David, and Absalom would be king. and God himself called it "good counsel." It would have worked.

David thinks that his manipulations through Hushai the Archite is what caused the counsel of Ahithophel to be thwarted. God says in Scripture, "It was thwarted because I chose to have it thwarted." The sad thing is that David, by his manipulations, lost all the blessing of watching God do His thing for David's sake.

Another tragedy of David' manipulations. What does he fail to see that he might have seen if he had just trusted God? What would God have told David if God had done what God wanted to do, whatever it was? He may have used Hushai anyway, but if David had just stood back and watched God thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, what would it have done for David's relationship with God? Sure, it would have strengthened it, wouldn't it? It would have given him a sense that God was there in charge, that God was loving him.

Let me point out one thing. Don't ever sell God short. This world may be behaving in a manner that shows no respect for God and yet be fulfilling the exact plan of God. His plan is right on schedule.

I just read an article that someone put in my box. It was obviously written by a non-Christian, a philosopher, and he cited four books written by four major authors all of whom served time in Soviet prison camps, all four Marxist atheistic Soviet philosophers. The title of one book was Gulag Archipelago. I have forgotten the other names. It points out that everyone of these men in the confines of prison discovered freedom when they were totally stretched out, totally without hope or help, and with no way to save their own lives. When they clung to their ideals, what they knew to be right, "the inner voices" they called it, no idea what they were talking about as far as God was concerned, they discovered an interesting principle. If they would save their soul at the expense of their body, they would save both the body and the soul. And they all experienced the same thing. They cite circumstances where it was impossible for things to happen that happened. One of them was forty days out on the glacial ice. He didn't care about his body; he was going to hang on to what he believed to be right, and he got the inner strength and the inner walk to survive forty days on a glacier. On the other hand in every single case where the person tried to save his body, he lost both the body and the soul. Every single time they tried to live up to the light they had, what they thought was right no matter the expense to the body, they won. They didn't know how to call it God. They didn't want to call it God, but when they did what they knew to be right, it worked. When they lived up to the light that they had, it worked. In the most distressing circumstances, when all was lost, physically speaking, they discovered freedom. They were free from themselves. That is the greatest freedom in all the world. And it only came when they were totally wiped out physically and emotionally, and just clung to whatever light they had, to that light which they knew to be right. Everyone that did that found a freedom they didn't understand and an experience of joy and a great freedom of peace in the midst of those slave labor camps and under vile conditions. God is winning, my friends. He may lock up half the world in a slave labor camp, but he is freeing people while he is doing so. Don't ever look at the circumstances and think God is losing. These are atheists I'm talking about. They are not Christians. They are Russian philosophers brought up in an atheistic society. They can't even say the word God. One of them does, I think. I'm not sure he knows how to spell it even, but he says it. But

they discovered that if they lived up to the light they had and were willing to die for it, they would be free. It is a fascinating thing.

Comment from Class: How do you explain this without Jesus Christ. Is it because of the principles that are involved?

Bob's response: God has certain basic principles for all mankind. Now, if these men will keep on observing the principle they discovered, I am thinking God will lead them down the road to Christ. Scripture says if I live up to the light that I have, it is incumbent upon God to lead me on to further light. I wouldn't be surprised if these four philosophers end up being believers somewhere down the line. It is quite possible, you know. As a matter of fact in this very church there is an American man and his son who for some reason were in a slave labor camp in Siberia, way up in the boondocks. The father, who was a Christian, was going crazy in isolation. He was locked up for seven years in solitary confinement. You know what he prayed for in the uttermost reaches of Siberia in the midst of atheistic Russia; a Bible. Guess what happened. He was called into the commandant's office one day and handed a Bible. The commandant said, "I had to send all the way to West Germany for this thing," from Siberia to West Germany. Now this is the leader of a Communist slave labor camp in Siberia. His life is on the line for doing something like this. But he did it, and in that cell up there in Siberia that American man got his Bible. Someone would have had to crawl through the Iron Curtain to get it. Don't ever kid yourself that God's hands are tied. So I wouldn't be surprised but what these four philosophers, if they continue to do what they claim they have done, give up their bodies in order for their souls to survive, are going to become Christians. In fact one of them is talking about the New Testament and the Old Testament. So God locks up half the world. That is how he frees people. Remember the Biblical paradox. You have to die to live. You have to be in prison to be free. Sure it is screwy, but I didn't invent it. It is God's norm.

That is what is going on with David. When God disciplines, God loves. That is the height of his love. Hebrews 12 says so. "I discipline every son I love and I scourge every son I receive. It is a mark of my sanction and my love."

In this same vein China closed its doors to foreign missionaries, but they have a very thriving church. What happened all those years when the Bamboo Curtain was down? God was doing His thing just exactly on schedule. Don't ever sell God short. And don't manipulate him either. David didn't need the lying and cheating on Hushai's part. Hushai thwarted the good counsel of Ahithophel because God ordained that it should be thwarted, because he was going to deal with Absalom while he was disciplining David.

Hushai then immediately sends word to David to get across the ford of the Jordan, to get on the other side, which David does. He flees across the Jordan. Then in verse 23 there is tragedy.

II Samuel 17:23:

Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself; thus he died and was buried in the grave of his father.

This is the end result of a godly man who decided to be ungodly. His finish, too, is typical of suicide. He contemplates it. He makes his final settled decision. He goes very typically about his business, clam, cool and relaxed, gets his household in order, then takes his belt and strangles himself. If you have a suicide caller screaming to high heaven, that isn't the time to worry. It's when they call up and tell you they have a 32 caliber automatic, that it has a bullet in it and then begin to describe it very carefully, very calm, cool and collected. When they do that, it's time to be concerned. Once that decision is made, apparently a calmness comes over you. Ahithophel had the exact syndrome here. When he made the decision to kill himself, he went home, did his thing, and killed himself. That is the end of a man consumed by revenge whose advice had been as good as the High Priest according to God. Now it doesn't say anything about his eternal salvation. We are talking about his life on

earth, and God took him home. He turned from godliness to evil, and he, of all men being one of the wisest men of all Israel whose advice was as the advice of God, should have known the most about not doing something like this.

So David crosses over to the east side of the Jordan. Now he is in his territory. You recall David was on the east side of the Jordan when he conquered Syria in the north. Then, still on the east, he swept down and took Ammon and on south to Moab and Edom and wiped them out. So on the eastern side of the Jordan David has a solid block of people who owe him something. He has secured their land for them.

Also Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who were also on the eastern side of the Jordan, were some of Israel's greatest warriors. Because they made a bad choice and, instead of crossing into the Promised Land, decided to stay on the east side of the Jordan for the good pasture land, they had as neighbors the Assyrians, the Ammonites, the Edomites and the Moabites. So they were in constant conflict with them and developed into tremendous warriors. There is a note on that in I Chronicles.

On the east side of the Jordan David is joined by Shobi, son of Nahash of Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, Barzillai the Gileadite and Machir the son of Ammiel, some of the mightiest men on the eastern side of the Jordan. The Ammonites join his army and his battle. Here is that strange tie David has with the Ammonites. Apparently when David conquered the Ammonites, he must have put to death only those involved in the resistance, and when the Ammonites have a chance to get even with him they don't. They choose to join his side.

Now Absalom has to gather his army, come across the Jordan and fight on David's turf against people who know the lay of the land. The greatest warriors and the greatest generals are all with David. So God is quietly building up this powerful force.

David goes to Mahanaim, which is located in very rugged territory. He has the biggest force, the best warriors, the best generals, and he not only knows the local territory, but he can choose the site. So Absalom has to come to him. He has everything going for him, so, of course, he feels very secure, doesn't he?. Watch how God operates.

In Chapter 18 David numbers his people and divides them into three groups. He puts one third under Joab, one third under Joab's brother Abishai, and one third under Ittai the Gittite, the Philistine general, apparently one of their top men. God provides a Philistine general to help fight this thing. And then David sends them out to be a three prong pincer movement, which was typical of the fighting in those days. The three prong method was one up the middle, and two around the sides. As they go out, David begs for one thing.

II Samuel 18:5:

And the king charged Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom.

It is an amazing hold that Absalom has on David. It is far deeper than just the normal love. There seems to be a deep problem of guilt involved. David is deathly afraid of Absalom's loss, and, in just a moment, I am going to make a suggestion as to why I think this is.

They go out to battle. 20,000 of Absalom's men are involved, but the intriguing thing is that they fail mostly because of the topography, not because of David's army. God deliberately destroys them himself rather than through all the skilled men he has given David. More fall in the forest than fall by the sword. And the armies of Absalom are put to flight.

What is God trying to tell David? What is the loud and clear message that God is trying to send to David? David has this extraordinary army, brilliant generals, skilled fighters, everything on his side, but, as far as success in this battle is concerned, he could just as easily have used a small group of recruits. Yeah! God is going to put David on

the throne. David is God's anointed king, and God hasn't changed his mind. The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable. He is trying to tell David in the strongest language possible, "You are my king, and you are going to have your throne back. This part of the discipline is now over."

Unfortunately, God also has to deal with Absalom. The problem is Absalom is not in revolt against just David. He is in revolt against God. If you recall Deuteronomy 17 the #1 rule, out of 5 or 6, is, "I choose the king of Israel." So Absalom is not fighting David. Absalom is fighting Yahweh. He is in rebellion against Yahweh. So as David will not deal with his own son, God has to. If we won't judge our own children, God will judge them.

Meanwhile, Absalom on a mule, which the king's son rode in those days, trots through this extremely dense forest, goes under an oak tree and gets his head caught in a notch of the tree. The mule keeps on going and leaves him hanging between heaven and earth. Josephus tells us that his long hair got entangled in the branches. That is probably true. For some strange reason God mentions, prior to this, that he has long hair and is proud of it. God loves to take pride and use it as a tool. So there he hangs. He can't let go to untangle his hair or he will strangle. So he has to keep on hanging to keep his neck up, just swinging there back and forth. One of Joab's men sees him, goes and reports to Joab. Joab says, "Why didn't you kill him? I would have given you ten pieces of silver." The man replies, "I wouldn't have killed him if you had given me a thousand pieces of silver. You heard what David said. He told all three of his generals in front of all the people, 'Don't touch Absalom.' If I had touched him, you wouldn't have defended me, Joab. You would have acted as though I wasn't there." He knows old Joab. Joab says, "I don't have to keep listening to this nonsense," and he goes out and jabs Absalom with three spears, none of which kill him. That is kind of interesting because God had said, "the sword" will not depart from your house, not "the spears." Then Joab sends his aide-de-camp to hack up Absalom as he is hanging in the tree. They throw Absalom into a great pit and pile stones on him. The passage ends with the fact that they erect this great pile of stones over Absalom. Because he had no sons and wanted his name to continue, he had already erected this impressive pillar, The pillar of Absalom, outside of Jerusalem, and here he ends up in a criminal's grave. Criminal's were interred in a deep pit covered with a pile of stones, such as they did with Achan at Jericho [Ai] when God wiped him out. Then Joab immediately calls back his force. He doesn't want to cause any more bitterness than necessary.

Joab sends runners to tell David about the victory. Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok the High Priest, wants to be the chief runner. He has been running to David from Zadok in Jerusalem. He wants to run now and tell David the good news that they have conquered these people in these trees. Joab says, "No you don't. You do not run today, the king's son is dead." When David receives bad news he has a habit of killing the messenger. Remember the Amalekite who came to David saying, "Hey, I helped kill Saul when he was dying. I put him out of his misery." Off goes his head. And when Rechab and Baasah brought David the head of Ishbosheth, who was a rival for the kingdom after Saul's death, he had them killed. You don't go to David with things like that. He has a rather hot hasty temper. So Joab sends a Cushite, not a fellow with a name, just a slave. Although he starts first, Ahimaaz passes him and gets to the king before the Cushite. Ahimaaz won't tell the king that Absalom is dead, however, but the Cushite finally comes up and does tell David. Look at David's response in verse 33 of Chapter 18. I think this is a tip off.

II Samuel 18:33:

And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son!"

David's weeping is so intense that the people who won the victory feel ashamed. They slink into the city because of the grief of David, the guilt of David. May I make a suggestion as to why David feels such shattering guilt. This is not Scripture, you understand, but I think it is right. This is the first son of David's who has not been saved. I think this is the first one he has lost that he knows is truly lost. David really values eternal life. He really values his salvation. When he sinned against Bathsheba, remember, he said to the Father, "Don't take your Holy Spirit away from me." That wasn't loss of salvation. That was loss of empowerment. He went on, "And restore to me the joy of my salvation." He knew he was still saved. But now let's look at Amnon for a second. His crime

was a crime of passion. It was not premeditated murder. Yes, he violated his step-sister, but he did it in passion, and he hated and loathed himself afterward. That is why he loathed her. He was David's first born. His mother was Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, a godly woman. He was brought up undoubtedly in the fear of Jehovah. He was heir apparent to the throne, so he was trained in both war and worship. When he was murdered two years later, he had had plenty of time to repent and to sacrifice and to make things right with Jehovah, which he undoubtedly did. Chileab was the second son, apparently killed in warfare. Remember who his mother was? Abigail, the Carmelitess, the wife of Nabal, the godly woman who stopped David from butchering all the males in Nabal's household. Chileab was brought up by another godly woman, so he is with the Lord. Third son he lost was his first child with Bathsheba, the illegitimate child. What did David say about that third child? How sure was he of that child's salvation back three thousand years ago. He stopped mourning the moment the child died. He had mourned for seven days that he might get God to repent. When God didn't and the child died, he got up, dressed, shaved, ate breakfast and relaxed. His servants said, "You are out of your cotten-pickin' mind. [Free translation of the Hebrew.] You mourn, you weep, you won't touch food, then, when you find out the child is dead, you get up, dress, shave, worship, go out and eat breakfast. What's with you?" David said, "Well, God has made his choice. 'The child will not return to me, but I shall go to him.'" He knew that child was with the Lord. But, now, what about Absalom? Who was Absalom's mother? Maachah the daughter of Talmi the king of Geshur, a Syrian kingdom up north. David made a political marriage this time. He married a non-Jew, a Semite, but a non-Jew. They probably worshipped the Baals up there, an ungodly woman. She was the mother of Absalom and Tamar. Undoubtedly she brought her god with her, and Absalom grew up a pagan. You wonder why Solomon ends up with 700 wives and 300 concubines and all those shrines he built to pagan gods? He did you know. I Kings 11 is a tragic statement.

I Kings 11:1:

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love [A direct violation of the known will of God]...For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth [That is that horrible filthy goddess of fertility] the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. [To this god burned your babies in a flaming cauldron, fried them by laying live babies on red hot metal hands, a horrible thing] And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father *had done*. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

Who introduced paganism into Jerusalem? Solomon. Who built shrines to these repulsive pagan gods and goddesses in Jerusalem? Solomon. Who did he build them for? His wives. "Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods." Where did Solomon get the idea? From daddy who made at least one marriage alliance, that we know of, out of pure political expediency. He brought into his household Maachah the daughter of Talmi the king of Geshur, a pagan woman who worshipped the Baals of those filthy worship systems. Her son was Absalom, and Absalom was a pagan. He demonstrated his paganism by premeditated murder. He waited two years to kill his brother. He defied Jehovah and tried to kill God's anointed king, his own father, and he died in defiance, before repentance.

Do you see now why David might cry, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son!" How much does David value his salvation? More than life itself, doesn't he.

That is another reason why David is a man after God's own heart. He sees the invisible as being visible. He sees that life with God is more important than life down here, and his son is gone, lost forever, and without eternal life.

Because David knows his Lord so well, he would rather die and be with him if Absalom could still be alive with a chance to repent, but it cannot be. And painfully he knows deep in his heart that he is partially responsible. He married outside the will of God. He didn't raise his kid according to the will of God, and his kid died out of the will of God. "For God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance." I think that is the deep agony David went through.

Comment from class: As a man after God's own heart, it would appear David shared with God the revolt of Satan and the anguish that God felt when Satan fell.

Bob's response: There is a parallel there, because God did mourn the fall of Satan. The strongest Hebrew language capable of describing extreme anguish is describing God at the fall of Satan in Ezekiel 28. God loves Satan. He does not hate Satan. He hates everything he stands for, everything he does, but he does not hate any of his creatures, and Satan is one of his creatures. When Satan falls, as described in Ezekiel 28, he uses the strongest Hebrew language possible for extreme anguish, and God is the one extremely anguished. God, of course, does not have any guilt trip because Satan made a choice against perfect light. But David, I think, has a guilt trip here. He knows this son of his might have lived had he done things differently.

We look at David's outward actions and, frankly, he isn't doing too well. Then you look at David's heart. Last week it was acceptance. This week it is the value he places upon eternal life. He really understands the value of God's life lived in him, how much salvation really means. The first son, apparently, that doesn't make it quite tears him apart.

After the dreaded news about Absalom, David cries so much that the people slink into town as though they were fleeing from a losing battle. Then Joab steps in. Good old Joab. He may be a rotten, unscrupulous general, but he is an excellent general and very much a pragmatist. Joab comes to the house of the king and says, "You are bawling your heart out over Absalom when all these people risked their lives for you and you aren't concerned about them at all." When the message of the battle was brought to David by the two runners, the first question he asked was, "How did Absalom fare?" not "How did the people fare, but how did Absalom fare?" He is scared to death his son will be killed, and Joab tells him so in verse 5;

II Samuel 19:5:

Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who today have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines, by loving those who hate you [Absalom], and by hating those who love you [All your troops]. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, surely not a man will pass the night with you, [They were on the east side of the Jordan, a long way from home] and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now." [Those are pretty harsh words and actually only partially true, but this is what God uses to shake him loose] So the king arose and sat in the gate. When they told all the people, saying, "Behold, the king is sitting in the gate," then all the people came before the king [and he reunites the troops].

God uses an unscrupulous general to bring David back to his senses. But you see the beautiful thing about David. He really values the same things as God. He really values the things that are eternal and not temporal. He blows much of the temporal, but his value system is godly, and God looks upon the heart not upon the outward person.

Remember Moses? He considered the reproach of Christ more valued than all the riches in Egypt, for he was looking for the reward. It didn't happen down here. He didn't get into the Promised Land. But it sure happened up there.

Check your value system. How much do you value this world and the things in this world versus the things of the

Word of God, the other world, the things that last? Don't in any way judge your life upon your performances, your actions down here. Judge your life based on, "What was my attitude when I did that dumb thing? What was my real desire when I did that?" That is what God is doing right now. He is evaluating your attitude, your heart, not your performance.

Father, we thank you again for the way you reveal what you are really after, us, not our actions, not our performance, just us. You want us. You want to possess us. You want to hold us. You want to live in us. You want to dwell in us. You want to love us. You want every facet of our being, Father. You want to take us and use us to glorify Yourself. Thank you, Father, that it does not depend upon our actions or our manipulations or our intelligence or any of these things. It simply depends upon our desire, and all of us in this room, no matter whether we come from a background of a high education or low education, high IQ or low IQ, ghetto circumstances or silver spoon in our mouth, any and all of us can desire to be your man, want to have you as Supreme God and Lord of our life. Therefore, any of us and all of us can really be sons of the Living God. Thank you, Father, there are no distinctions in your kingdom. Thank you in Jesus' name.

Editor's Note: The lesson on II Samuel 19:9-20:26 is not available. I offer a summary here for the sake of continuity. (Helen DeCoursey)

The people of Israel question why David is not brought back to Jerusalem. So David sends to Zadok and Abiathar the priests and asks them to speak to the elders of Judah about why they are the last to bring back the king. He places Amasa as commander of the army before Joab. The men of Judah as one man send word to the king, "Come back." So David returns as far as the Jordan where Judah comes to meet him and bring him across. Shimei is among the group who goes to meet David and confesses he sinned against David. Abishai says, "Should not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" David says, "I'm king over Israel today, no man shall be put to death today." Then Mephibosheth also comes to meet David, and tells him he was deceived by his servant and that he is grateful for the kind treatment David has given him. So David divides Saul's land between Ziba and Mephibosheth, but Mephibosheth is willing to let Ziba have it all. Then Barzillai a Gileadite who sustained the king while he was at Mahanaim comes to escort David over the Jordan. David says, "Come along and I will sustain you in Jerusalem," but Barzillai is eighty years old and wants to return and die in his own city near the grave of his father and mother. There rises up a dispute between the men of Judah and the men of Israel. The men of Israel say they have more of a claim on David as they were the first to suggest the king be brought back. Then a worthless fellow named Sheba, a Benjamite, gathers the men of Israel saying, "We have no part in David" and they leave David and follow Sheba. Only the men of Judah stay with David from the Jordan to Jerusalem. David tells Amasa to call out the men of Judah in three days, but Amasa delays, so David tells Abishai to go after Sheba lest he find a fortified city and cause David more trouble than Absalom. So Joab's men, along with the Cherethites and the Pelethites and all the mighty men, go to pursue Sheba. Amasa comes to meet them in Gibeon. Joab is in uniform with a sword at his waist. As Joab takes Amasa by the beard to kiss him, he stabs him in the belly and he dies. Then Joab and Abishai pursue Sheba. They come to the city of Abel Beth-maacah and besiege it. A wise woman faithful to Israel makes a deal with Joab, "Don't destroy the city and I'll throw the head of Sheba over the wall.," which she does. Joab gathers his troops out of the city and ends up over all the troops of Israel. (December 26, 1999)

The final lesson in this series will be principles gained from our studies in the life of David.

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