*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 9 - 14

David and Absalom

**Monday, August 9 2 Samuel 13:1-22**

*“Amnon Rapes Tamar”*

Nothing will be the same after David’s sin with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah. Amnon’s rape of Tamar is but the beginning of a downward spiral for David who is reaping publicly, through his family, the consequences of his sin. Amnon, Tamar and Absalom are all children of David. Amnon’s offense is sexual in nature, which ensures that the specter of David’s own crimes is never far beneath the surface of this episode. As we say in English, “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” or “like father like son.”

The problem for Amnon is that he cannot have the woman he desires. But, his friend offers a “solution.” Following Jonadab’s advice, Amnon feigns illness and draws Tamar into a trap. Tamar’s impressive speech desperately raises numerous objections and shows her to be a woman of integrity. Amnon is not to be deterred. He overpowers her and forces himself on her, leaving her a desolate woman. David, father and king, is furious but does nothing, and Absalom now hates his brother Amnon deeply because of what he had done to his sister.

*For better or for worse, Lord, our lives influence others. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 10 2 Samuel 13:23-39**

*“Absalom kills Amnon”*

The final note of hatred in the previous section warns us that this is not over. Absalom is disciplined and patient when it comes to revenge. He waits two years before setting a trap for Amnon. Not unlike David’s murder of Uriah, Absalom’s execution of Amnon involves cold-blooded intrigue and secrecy. Absalom’s motive for murder is revenge for what happened to his sister, and perhaps it is also a means of political gain. Amnon is the oldest of David’s sons and the presumptive crown prince in line to inherit the throne. Thus, his murder clears the way for Absalom to lay claim to the throne. Sadly, the prophecy of Nathan against David is already coming to fruition: “The sword will never depart from your house” (12:10).

A brief report is given of the ensuing three years. Absalom is forced into exile in Geshur, where he receives the hospitality and protection of his grandfather on his mother’s side. As was the case with Tamar, David is incapable of administering justice in his own family. Eventually, David is ready for Absalom to come home.

*Nourishing hatred in our heart, Lord, leads to lasting damage. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 11 2 Samuel 14:1-20**

*“The wise woman of Tekoa”*

The approach of Joab relies on the role of the king as the one responsible for establishing justice in the land. Just as Nathan’s parable in 12:1-4 was given to elicit a judgment from the king, so the wise Tekoite woman’s ruse evokes David’s judgment. In both cases, the king’s pronouncement turns out to be a self-indictment.

As supreme judge of the nation, David must have felt an obligation to avenge Amnon’s death as required by law, even though Absalom is the crown prince. Keeping Absalom safely tucked away in Geshur saved David from any unpleasantness and makes it possible for him to avoid taking action. Knowing of David’s love for Absalom, Joab makes arrangements to persuade David it is acceptable to bring Absalom home. David needs to be made aware than inaction on his part is no longer a good strategy. Once he makes the judgment that the Tekoite woman’s son will be spared, it suddenly becomes realistic to consider an exception in the case of his own son.

*You seek reconciliation with us, Lord, and we are to seek it with one another. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 9 - 14

David and Absalom

**Thursday, August 12 2 Samuel 14:21-33**

*“Absalom returns”*

The result of the Tekoite woman’s audience with David is a changed situation. Once David places the woman’s only remaining son under royal protection, David is forced to reconsider his own position on Absalom. David relents, and Absalom is allowed to return to Jerusalem. But, David refuses to see his son, and while a somewhat forced and formal reconciliation eventually takes place, the seeds of animosity between father and son are left to take root. The long delay in restoration will leave its mark on Absalom.

Absalom’s impressive appearance is emphasized, turning our thoughts to Saul’s height and David’s manliness as kings of Israel. The physical characteristic of full, thick hair is an important detail that the narrator hopes we will remember. His manipulative and violent treatment of Joab further warns us of a ruthless side to Absalom that does not bode well for the future. Absalom goes unpunished for the murder of his brother, and David’s refusal to discipline his son will soon come back to haunt him.

*It is always best, Lord, to address relational conflict as soon as possible. Amen.*

**Friday, August 13 2 Samuel 15:1-12**

*“Absalom steals the people’s hearts”*

The theme of these verses is the summarizing statement that Absalom “stole the hearts” of the Israelites. Our English use of “heart” may mistakenly lead us to read this phrase as connoting warm fondness, implying that Absalom had the ability to attract the affections of the people of Israel. But in this context, this is not a positive or even a neutral idiom. The “heart” in Old Testament Hebrew is often the seat of one’s intellect as well as one’s emotions. Thus, rather than win the affections of the Israelites, Absalom stole their minds – that is, he deceived or duped them.

Absalom begins building support for his rebellion against David by means of three strategies. (1) He acquires a chariot and horses with a personal escort of fifty men, accessories normally the privilege of the king. (2) Absalom assumes the position and role of judge for the people, which ordinarily was the function of the king. (3) Absalom begins to receive anyone coming to him – not as a crown prince but as the king himself. After four years of building his base, Absalom is now ready to instigate open rebellion against his father.

*Give us wisdom, Lord, that our enemies may not deceive us. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 14 2 Samuel 15:13-37**

*“David’s retreat”*

David wisely understands that he will need time to organize his forces and prepare for a defense against Absalom. His route takes him from the royal palace out of the city, down into the Kidron Valley and “toward the desert,” which implies across the Mount of Olives. Though fleeing for his life, David’s popularity among the country citizens is apparent by the loud weeping as he and his entire entourage cross the valley.

David considers the loyalty of those risking their lives to go with him and evaluates the combat readiness of his troops. Meeting several people along the way, the conversations he has with them work together to portray David’s reactions under fire. He has several decisions to make with regard to the ark, whether to fight his son or accept permanent exile, and how to respond to the news that his most valued counselor has defected to Absalom. David calmly works through his grief with resolve and wisdom, always with a righteous deference to God’s will. He is a man of great faith, but also of great planning and strategy.

*Even in our darkest times, Lord, you are with us to guide us. Amen.*