*DEVOTIONS*

July 24 - 29

*David (Part Two)*

**Monday, July 24 2 Samuel 13:1-39**

*“David mourned many days for his son Amnon”*

God’s covenant promises to David in 2 Samuel 7 is the spiritual highpoint of David’s life. Then, David’s abuse of power resulted in adultery and murder, and threatened the promises of the covenant. The narration of David’s sins in chapters 10-12 begin the gradual descent from the heights of chapter 7, and nothing will be the same after David’s sin with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah.

Amnon’s rape of Tamar and its consequences precedes the story of Absalom’s rebellion (chapters 15-18), and the intensely personal events of this chapter provide the necessary backdrop for the public events recorded later. But these chapters also force us to look back constantly at David’s own sexual indulgence and, by subtle implication, draw a causal connection between his own sins and the sins of his family. “In short, because of his behavior in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, the David of the second half of 2 Samuel is a man reaping publicly, through his family, the fruit of his hidden sin.”

*While you forgive, Lord, there are still consequences for my sin. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 25 2 Samuel 15:1-37**

*“Absalom stole the hearts of the Israelites”*

The key to Absalom’s successful rebellion against is father, David is found in the statement that he “stole the hearts” of the Israelites. Our English use of “heart” may mistakenly lead us to read this phrase as meaning warm fondness, implying that Absalom had the ability to attract the affections of the people of Israel. But in this context, that is not the case. The “heart” in Old Testament Hebrew is often the seat of one’s intellect. Thus, rather than win the affections of the Israelites, Absalom stole their minds – that is, he deceived or duped them.

Absalom builds support for his rebellion by means of three deceptive actions. (1) He acquires a chariot and horses, with a personal escort of fifty men. Since such accessories were normally the privilege of the king, he is claiming kingly status. (2) He assumes the position and role of judge for the people, and his accusatory language implies that David is no longer fulfilling his responsibility to provide justice for the people. (3) He begins to receive anyone coming to him – not as a prince but as if he were already king.

*Guard my heart, Lord, that I may not be deceived by those who oppose you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 26 2 Samuel 18:1-33**

*“My son! My son Absalom!”*

The war to determine who will be king in Jerusalem takes only one battle on a single day (vv. 6-8). The chapter briefly describes preparations for the battle and the quick end of hostilities, but Scripture is more interested in the personal aspects than in the military details, so the chapter is dominated by the specifics of Absalom’s death and the emotional impact it has on David.

The account of the two messengers running to David slowly builds suspense as we are forced to wait for David’s reaction. Ahimaaz appears to have been genuinely ignorant about the specifics of Absalom’s death. When he is forced to “stand aside” and wait for the Cushite to deliver the vital piece of missing information, we as readers are also left waiting for the moment when David learns of Absalom’s death. We may have anticipated at least an ambivalent response: David rejoicing because of the military victory but melancholy because of the death of his rebellious son. But there is no joy – only grief. In his response we see David as more father than king.

*Heal the pain experienced by parents, Lord, because of rebellious children. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONS*

July 24 - 29

*David (Part Two)*

**Thursday, July 27 2 Samuel 19:9-39**

*“So the king started back to Jerusalem”*

Though David’s men have won the battle and Absalom is dead, the conflict is far from settled. Absalom’s rebellion tapped into legitimate complaints against David. While the pro-David voices point out that he was the one who defeated the Philistines, and it is not likely that the nation will find a better ruler, David realizes he can never rule effectively in Jerusalem without broader support. He stresses his kinship with his people and offers to make Amasa the general of the Israelite army, presumably addressing complaints about Joab’s leadership. David’s strategy works, and he is brought back across the Jordan River and escorted to the city of Jerusalem.

On his way back, we read of three encounters. First comes Shimei, who is anxious to make amends for his severe cursing of David. David’s mercy to Shimei is a picture of a true anointed one. Then David meets Mephibosheth, the grand-son of Saul, whose loyalty to David has been questioned. Again, David acts with kindness. Lastly, David encounters the aged Barzillai, who had supported David during his crisis, and rewards his loyalty.

*As you remained true to David in spite of his sin, Lord, you remain true to me. Amen.*

**Friday, July 28 2 Samuel 22:1-51**

*“David sang this song to the Lord”*

The song in this chapter is virtually identical to Psalm 18, and is known as a “song of thanksgiving” though it is also a “royal psalm.” At the heart of thanksgiving psalms is typically a story of deliverance or salvation, which here is summarized in the brief historical introduction in verse 1. The song can be summarized by the key words that recur in its stanzas and give the overall hymn a unified theme: “rock” and “save/deliver.”

“Rock” is a common description for God in the Old Testament. Referring to God in this way is similar to our “solid as a rock” or to the metaphorical ways we use “mountain” to mean stability and strength. The four occurrences of “rock” in the song are concentrated at the beginning and end, and emphasize God as David’s protector and savior, as well as the uniqueness of God’s goodness. The other key word is the verb “save/deliver” and its related noun “salvation.” David celebrates the assurance that God can be trusted to rescue him and deliver him from certain death.

*As you were David’s rock, Lord, so you are my strength in times of trouble. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 29 1 Kings 1:28 – 2:12**

*“Solomon succeeded David as King”*

Quietly conveyed in this story is a conviction that the will of God is being worked out behind all the scandals and human schemes. The elevation of Solomon may be contrary to what people expected. Adonijah was handsome, confident, and influential. He is just the kind of person we would choose to rule over us. He had become first in line to the throne, and he tried to impose his will and achieve kingship in his own way. He tried to seize the throne for himself.

History would not be dictated by human will, however. God’s promise to David would not be fulfilled by the priority of birth or by personal ambition. God’s promise would be fulfilled in God’s own way, through one whom God had chosen for reasons that may not be revealed to humanity. This is what one learns, too, from other stories in the Bible. God’s promise to Abraham, for example, would be fulfilled, not by Ishmael, who was born to Abraham by Hagar, but only through Isaac, whom God had chosen. Divine election is a mysterious thing.

*Humanity believes itself to be in charge, Lord, but your people know better. Amen.*