

DAVID SURRENDERS TO THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE

2 Samuel 13:1-15:37

Key Verses: 15:25-26

Then the king said to Zadok, "Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him."

Tragedy struck David and his family. His daughter was raped by one of his sons. That son was murdered by another son. Then the murderer son rebelled against his throne. As we learned from last week's passage, David sinned and God forgave him when he repented from his heart. But his sins set a motion that couldn't be stopped. He had to pay for the consequence of his sins. However, in this difficult time, David did not blame God for the divine discipline. At the lowest point in his life, David trusted God and surrendered himself to him. May God help us to learn from David how to acknowledge God and surrender ourselves to him in times of good and bad!

I. TRAGEDY STRIKES DAVID'S FAMILY (13:1-15:12)

After David had committed the sins of adultery and murder, God sent his servant Nathan to tell David, "Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own" (2Sa 12:10). The events described in today's passage are fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy to David. David repented his sins and God forgave him. But the sins began to bear bad fruit in his family. The influence of his sin on his family was direct and extensive.

First, Amnon disgraces his sister Tamar (13:1-21). Look at verses 1-2. *In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David. Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.* Verse 1 begins with the phrase, "in the course of time,"

implying a link between this event and David's sin. It says that Amnon fell in love with Tamar his half sister. It was more of infatuation than true love. If you really loved someone, you would not hurt the person. But that's what Amnon did.

Amnon was King David's oldest son. He should have set good examples for his younger brothers, but he became a slave of his lustful desires. To some people, his infatuation with Tamar might appear to be a genuine love. But the things he did to her only proved that it was just lust.



Lust and passion can make a man erratic and unstable. Lust was not the only problem that Amnon had. He had a bad friend. Instead of befriending men of faith, Amnon hung out with a deceitful cousin, Jonadab, who played Satan by feeding Amnon's pride and passion. He reminded Amnon that he was the

king's son and urged him to do what he felt like doing. There is a graphic description of deception and rape in this passage that should be rated R. It makes us feel uncomfortable to read. After the sex, Amnon's so-called love turned into intense hatred. Verse 15 says: *Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, "Get up and get out!"* Ignoring her plea, Amnon abandoned Tamar. He disgraced her. Her life was ruined. She became a desolate woman (20). But he couldn't care less.

When we hear the stories of people's sins like that of Amnon's, what is our reaction? We may feel sick to the stomach like when we read about the Sandusky child molestation trial that is going on now. We may ask, "How could a human being do such a despicable thing to another human being?" But we learn that we must see our sins in the same light. We must know how equally offending our sins are to God.

When the bad news came to David, what was his reaction? He was furious. But he didn't do anything to Amnon. Why? No doubt Amnon's sin reminded David of his own sin of adultery. We commit sin for momentary pleasure, but we have to suffer the consequence for a long time. It is not just we that suffer, but many people around us have to suffer as well. If a father has an affair and a child out of wedlock and then repents his sin, he still has to suffer the consequence of it even after his sin is forgiven by God. Moreover, his wife, his children, the other woman, and the child from her all suffer because of his sin. God forgave David, but the influence of his sin was spreading to his family. Still there was a spiritual meaning to this event. God's punishment of David was not only punitive but it had a purpose of convicting his heart. It was redemptive. Through hearing about the unspeakable thing that was done to his daughter by his own son, David came to realize more deeply how offending his sin was to God. God's love for us is deeper than we ever realize.

Second, Absalom murders his brother Amnon (13:22-39). What was Absalom's reaction when he heard that his sister was raped and disgraced by his half-brother Amnon? Look at verse 22. *Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.* He never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad. Why? Was it because he was a forgiving person? On the contrary, his silence was deadly. His hatred toward Amnon was so deep that he remained silent. For two years, he harbored grudge and hatred toward Amnon, looking for an opportunity to kill him. Yesterday, a man was sentenced to life in prison for killing a man for his 50-year old grudge. Can you imagine what was in Absalom's mind as he sharpened the knife of revenge every day for two years? It certainly was eating at him. His hatred for Amnon grew like a cancer in his heart. It is not healthy for us to harbor grudge against someone like that. It is better for us to confront the person for his sake and ours. Most of all, we should go to God and ask him to have the courage to forgive and find peace in him. But Absalom did not do that. He was silently hatching up a plan to kill his brother. Amnon probably sensed this and was watchful of Absalom. He didn't let his guard down. But Absalom selected a festive time to carry out his plan to kill Amnon.

Absalom had Amnon killed by inviting all of the king's sons to a sheep-shearing party at Baal Hazor. He ordered his henchmen to kill Amnon when he was in high spirits from drinking wine. Jonadab took sadistic pleasure in these things. Absalom went to his maternal grandfather and lived in exile. He fled and went to the king of Geshur and stayed there for three years (37-38). King David mourned for the death of his son Amnon. He wept bitterly (36). But he was also sorrowful for losing Absalom. Verse 39 says: "And the spirit of the king longed to go to Absalom, for he was consoled concerning Amnon's death."

Third, Absalom's return and his rebellion against his father David (14:1-15:12). Look at verse 1. *Joab son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart longed for Absalom*. Despite all the tragedy that Absalom had caused, David was sad because his beloved son was not with him. He was concerned about Absalom. It was true love. The whole nation was unhappy because the king was unhappy. David's heart longed for his son Absalom. He knew that Absalom should repent, but he still longed for him. Knowing the king's heart, Joab decided to "change the present situation" (20). He did not seek God's help; he hired an actress to tell David a story that would persuade him to restore Absalom. David recognized Joab's hand in this, but he agreed to let Absalom return. However, he would not grant him an audience. He would refuse to see Absalom's face for two years.

Why did David care so much about Absalom but fail to discipline him when his son needed? I think Absalom was so much like David himself, charismatic, able and handsome. Absalom could have been a very good king. But he lacked inner character and maturity. He hung around with bad crowds. The most important difference between David and Absalom was that David repented his sins but Absalom did not.

So Joab brought Absalom back to the king. The situation had been changed, but Absalom was not changed. He was unrepentant. He pushed Joab to help him restore his relationship with the king, but not because he loved his father. Joab's human solution turned out to be a disaster. Repentance before God and his forgiveness is the best solution. Instead, Absalom became a politician.

What did Absalom do to steal the hearts of his people? Absalom's loyalty was neither to his father or the nation. He had ambition for power. He used his God-given resources for a wrong purpose. He was very handsome. His hair was lush and heavy. He should have used the qualities to glorify God. But he didn't. He dressed and acted like a crown prince. He stood by the city gate and listened to the grievances of the people who came into the city to see the king. He sympathized with each person and promised that, if he were in power, he would see that justice was done. He would say to them, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you. If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice." He acted just like a modern politician with full of campaign promises. He was no different from those who shake people's hands and kiss their babies, and then when the election is over, they could be seen nowhere near them. Absalom used his privileges as a prince to steal the hearts of

the men of Israel. He certainly had charisma and he was popular among people. But he stole their hearts for his own ambition. He was a politician, not a shepherd.

Absalom had a plan to grab his father's throne. He had never repented of killing his brother Amnon. After waiting patiently for four years, he decided to act. Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD." He sounded like a very spiritual man. He wanted to fulfill a vow to the Lord. But it was just a pretext to stage a *coup d'état*. Absalom projected himself as a spiritual man, but in fact, he was a man of human ambition and pride. Like King Saul, he had a form of religion but he had no personal relationship with God. David said to him, "Go in peace." So Absalom went to Hebron, accompanied by 200 naive men of Israel. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the political ploy. They didn't know what he was up to, but when he proclaimed himself king, many of them joined him. His conspiracy gained strength when Ahithophel joined him because this man was a brilliant political and military strategist (16:23). The number of people joining Absalom's rebellion kept on increasing.

II. DAVID SURRENDERS TO THE LORD (15:13-37)

Absalom's rebellion against his kingdom was an event that was very hard for David to endure. He and his loyal men had risked their lives to fight against many enemies to establish the kingdom of Israel. Now one of his own sons wanted to take the throne away from him. But as we will learn, David did not view this as a mere political power grab by Absalom. Instead, David carefully searched for God's will in this. He did several things to show that he surrendered himself to the Lord through this ordeal.

First of all, when David learned of Absalom's conspiracy, what was his immediate response? Look at verses 13-14. *A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword."* Why did David decide to flee from Absalom? Why didn't he stay put in the fortress of Jerusalem and fight against the rebel forces? After all, Jerusalem was called the fortress that "even the blind and the lame" could defend (5:6).

Any betrayal is painful, but when it is done by one you love very much, it is doubly painful. That is what David experienced. But it wasn't just David. Absalom's rebellion was a time of testing for everyone. David decided to leave Jerusalem rather than subject his people to a blood bath in the city. He became a fugitive again, this time running away from his own son. Many Israelites abandoned David at this point, except for his officials who were loyal to him and some foreigners. Among them were Ittai the Gittite and his army. David said to Ittai, "Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom" (20). David called his rebellious son King Absalom!

Ittai the Gittite was from the city of Gath, the former Philistine city to which David escaped during his flight from King Saul. Apparently, David had a good relationship with the Gittites. Ittai and his men had arrived in Jerusalem recently (David

said “yesterday”). David told him not to follow him as he was running away. He didn’t know what lay ahead of him. He didn’t want Ittai to wander about with him. He said, “Go back, and take your countrymen. May kindness and faithfulness be with you” (20). But Ittai’s response was very impressive. He said, “As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be” (21). Wow! Ittai pledged undying loyalty to David. His pledge of allegiance reminds us of what Ruth said to Naomi: “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried” (Ru 1:16-17). I pray that all of us may be faithful and loyal to our Lord Jesus even when we face uncertainty for our future.



So David set out with his family to leave Jerusalem (except for the ten concubines he left behind to take care of the palace). Among his followers were many foreigners including 600 Gittites (18). Look at verse 23. *The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by. The king also crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the people moved on toward the desert.* The people saw the injustice in David’s flight. They wept aloud as he and his followers moved toward the desert, not knowing if and when he would return to Jerusalem.

Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city (24). The kingdom of Israel that David established was a theocratic kingdom. God was in the center of the government. And naturally the priests and Levites assumed that the ark of God would go with David. But this is another thing David did to surrender himself to God. Let us read verses 25-26. *Then the king said to Zadok, “Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, ‘I am not pleased with you,’ then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.”* The ark of God symbolized the presence of God among his people (1Sa 4:21). The Israelites often marched behind the ark when they went to war. But David told them to take the ark back into the city. If he found favor in the Lord’s eyes, God would bring him back and let him see the ark and his dwelling place again. David expressed his faith in God’s sovereignty and his surrender to the Lord.

David cared about the ark of God more than anything. Do you remember how David danced like a little child when the ark of God was finally brought to Jerusalem? But now, he wanted to say goodbye to the ark. We can understand how terrible he felt to do this. He said, “If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it.” Right now, he couldn’t say anything more. He couldn’t ask anything more from God. Sure, it seemed unfair to be kicked out of Jerusalem after working so hard to establish it as the city of God. But he was not bitter towards God. He didn’t kick and scream as he

was leaving the city. Instead, he surrendered himself to God. He quietly accepted God's discipline. This quiet act of David spoke loudly about his trust and faith in God. It was like him saying, "Lord, this is very difficult for me to endure. But I know you love me. You forgave me after all I had done. I know you have not abandoned me. Help me to receive this discipline and become a better servant of yours."

Hebrews 12:5-7 read: "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?" May God help us to learn to surrender ourselves to God as David did! May God help us to know that he disciplines us not because he doesn't love us, but because he loves us!



David also sent Zadok back to Jerusalem along with his two sons and Jonathan son of Abiathar (27). He said to them, "I will wait at the fords in the desert until word comes from you to inform me" (28). So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there (29). But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up (30).

Meanwhile, David heard that Ahithophel had joined Absalom. This was bad news because David knew that Ahithophel was a shrewd advisor with keen political insight. So David prayed that God would turn his counsel into foolishness (31). His prayer would turn out to be important as God would answer it (17:14). David also sent his friend Hushai back to Jerusalem to pose as an advisor to Absalom in order to frustrate the advice of Ahithophel. Hushai accepted this dangerous mission. David was retreating and he was sorrowful, but he hadn't given up the hope of returning to Jerusalem.

In today's passage, we learned that God forgives our sin when we repent before him, but our sin can still cause many people to suffer. Most of all, we learned that David humbly surrendered himself to the Lord's discipline. May God help us to believe that "the Lord disciplines those he loves"!