

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

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

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II Samuel 14, 15, 16, Lesson #31 - December 2, 1979

Beginning today we will look at the faithfulness of God in two different ways. God is very faithful to love us and perfect us. He is also very faithful to discipline us. Absalom's revolt against his father David is a picture of God's faithfulness both ways. This week we will see a picture of God's faithfulness in disciplining us. He will not just let us go. He will always take us through difficulties and deliver us out the other side a different person. This morning we will see the faithfulness of God in dealing with the areas of our lives with which we ourselves will not deal.

It came up this morning out in the sanctuary. The Judgment Seat of Christ is designed to deal with the areas in our lives with which we will not deal. In I Corinthians 11 Paul, writing to the Corinthian Christians, referred to the defaming of the Lord's table and the resulting judgment. He goes on to say, I Corinthians 11:31, "But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world." God will do whatever is necessary down here in order to save us from being condemned with the world. He will not let us stay in the state the world is in, a state of condemnation, living like the world. It doesn't mean you lose your salvation. It means that God demands repentance now! Before you go to be with the Lord, if you are a believer, you will repent of whatever sin you have been holding back from God. God never loses any battles. That is one of the fun things about being God; He always wins. If we would only get through our noggins that God is going to win in these areas of our lives which we hold back and that he won't quit until we repent of them and give them up, how much easier it would be. It is pretty dumb to fight a battle you know you are certain to lose, that God has promised you will lose, that there is no way you can win! This faithful, loving God is determined he will win in the areas of our lives that are destroying us. He doesn't just do some God type of discipline either. He always takes the area which we demand for ourselves, a little stronghold, and uses it to bring us back, to turn us around. Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." The Greek says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, or laughed at, whatever man sows, that very thing, that very thing where he is mocking God, he shall also reap." God will take the very stronghold we demand for ourselves, and he will use that to bring us around.

We are going to see that now with David. David, of course, sowed the seed of lust in taking Bathsheba as just a fly-by-night affair. Then he took her as his wife to deceive the people of Israel and also with an intent to deceive God. Then along with lust and deceit, he added the murder of Bathsheba's husband. So into his life David has brought lust, deceit and murder. Now, since God is going to make David a man after God's own heart, and, if Galatians 6:7 is true, if whatever we sow that very thing we shall also reap, God is going to have to deal with David in the areas of lust, murder and deceit to bring him around. That is exactly what he does.

We saw last time in Chapter 13:1-20 that David's son Amnon, his first born, first out of his loins, the pride of his life, who, according to the Septuagint translation, had never been punished, raped his step-sister Tamar. Lust! Do you remember how he did it? Deceit! He deceived David into having Tamar sent to him in his bedroom. He engaged his own father as the agent in this deceit

The tragedy is David did not discipline Amnon but let him get away with it. David got very angry, the Scripture tells us, but that is as far as he went. This, then, begins to appear in the eyes of those about him that David plays favorites in dispensing justice. So people see that their own king, chosen of God and anointed of God to uphold God's law, is playing favorites.

There is a priority pyramid gleaned from I Timothy. Top priority is the Lord, next is your wife, next in order of importance are your children and last is your ministry, your job or whatever else. If these get out of kilter, you are not fit to handle the household of God because you haven't handled your own household.

David's first responsibility was not to his children; It was to his Lord. He was anointed of God to be God's minister, God's visibility, God's ruler to maintain the law of God [among other things]. So he had his priorities fouled up and instead of God, he allowed his family to be his first priority.

The tragedy, of course, was David's failure to insist Amnon marry Tamar, an unbetrothed virgin, and stay married forever as God's law required. In that event Absalom would never have killed his step-brother for raping his sister if his step-brother had been the husband of his sister. So David's tragic failure to follow through in what should have been his first priority, i.e., to be God's man, God's king, God's anointed, set up the murder of his own son. So, in the eyes of the people, it is pretty obvious David dispenses justice based upon favoritism.

Then we see in Chapter 13, verse 20 to the end of the chapter that Absalom, brother of Tamar, step-brother of Amnon, next in line to the throne after Amnon, is presented with a wonderful opportunity. With one fell swoop he can revenge the rape of his sister, whom he loved, and also eliminate the fellow in front of him in line for the throne. What a superb opportunity to accomplish his purpose and also to become a hero in the eyes of the people.

Remember, the culture at that time was geared to revenge. It was expected. If someone violated someone in your family, you were expected to revenge yourselves. God even made room for that. When you murdered a person, you raced to a city of refuge. They held a trial to determine whether your act was premeditated or just happened in a fight. If premeditation was determined, you were delivered into the hands of the avenging family outside the gate of that city. Under the law of God, the family took vengeance and were allowed to kill you. It was honorable to take vengeance as long as you stayed within the rules. It was expected to take vengeance as long as you stayed within the rules [This was long before Jesus Christ came.] God took the cultural situation and put rules on it so no one got hurt that shouldn't get hurt, but he didn't cause an upheaval of the whole cultural system.

Getting back to Absalom, taking advantage of the harvest time festival, which was a common celebration, Absalom convinces David to allow all his sons to come down to the field near Ephraim to attend Absalom's festival, all his sons including Amnon. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Absalom promptly murders Amnon.

Again David metes out no punishment, and Absalom races up to his grandfather the king of Geshur. That kingdom is totally under David's control, and, if David wants Absalom delivered up for justice, all he has to do is go take him. He doesn't. Absalom stays there three long years. In the eyes of the people, of course, Absalom is not a criminal. He is a hero for avenging the rape of his sister, something David should have done. What the king should have done, Absalom did. So popularity begins to shift from David to Absalom. Absalom is more just than king David who plays favorites.

So we come to our lesson today which begins in II Samuel 14. Absalom stays in Geshur three years, afraid to come home. Apparently during this time, in an attempt to get back into Jerusalem, he sends Joab his general to make overtures to David. You can't become king of Israel if you are out of favor with the present king and in exile up in Geshur. So when the direct approach fails, Joab, the unprincipled general who doesn't mind killing people who get in his way, i.e., Abner, son of Ner, or Amasa later on, or Uriah the Hittite to get something on David, decides on a little deceit. Joab can see, "If I can get a hold on David like the hold I have now on Absalom, I will have leverage on both the king and the heir apparent." That is what is known as "job security." It would also make him the leading general of all Israel. So Joab sends a woman from Tekoa, [David's territory] a "wise" woman [the word also means "cunning"] to plead with David. She says, "I have two sons who were fighting in a field. One killed the other. Now the whole family '...has risen against your maidservant, and they say, "Hand over the one

who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed..."I will be left without a seed. My husband is gone. This is the last coal we have and my husband's name will be removed from Israel." David says, "Don't give it a thought. I will take care of it." It is unpremeditated. Then the woman goes a little farther. She needs more than that. She says, "If there is anything wrong with letting my son loose, let the blame be on me not upon you." David says, "Don't worry about it. No one will touch you even if something is a little bit wrong." Finally she says, "Please don't let the avenger of blood get him no matter what." And David says, "I vow to you before the Lord 'not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground.'" She's got him now. David without inquiring of the Lord says, "I don't care what he has done, don't worry about it." Now even if the act was premeditated, David is trapped. Having made her point, the woman then says, "Well, then why 'does the king not bring back his banished one?' "If you will let my son go free and the will of the people is for Absalom, then why can't he come home?" David, being no dummy, says, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" She says, "Yes. You are a wise king, aren't you?"

Instead of disciplining Joab and because he longs for Absalom, David tells Joab, "Bring back the young man Absalom." Old Joab prostrates himself and is very effusive about how much he loves the king and what a wonderful thing this is. Joab goes to Geshur and brings Absalom home, but unfortunately for Joab, David says, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face."

Two years Absalom sits in Jerusalem without seeing the face of David. He is probably arousing the sympathy of the people, too, since he did what David should have done. David will not give him a full pardon and again sows the seeds of his own destruction. He has brought Absalom back without any real punishment and has allowed himself to be deceived without any rebuke to Joab.

Beyond this we see another problem. People like kings to look like kings. Starting with II Samuel 14:25 we see Absalom in town still not allowed to see the king, but the people can sure see him.

II Samuel 14:25:

Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; [He is a hero of the people] **from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him.** [He is the "Mr. Universe" of the day. He is exactly what you would want a king to be, Just!. And beyond that he has this Macho image] **And when he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut it, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels** [That should be 20 shekels, about 2/3 of a pound, a lot of hair] **by the king's weight.**

In the culture of that day a full head of hair signified a strong virile man. It was a symbol of power, virility and masculinity. When you gave yourself to the Lord as a Nazarite and, as long as you were a Nazarite, you were not to shave, cut your hair or touch wine or strong drink. the longer your hair grew the more it indicated you were God's man. It served as a symbol of a virile man of God. When Samson let his head be shaved, he lost his touch with God. He lost his virility, and he got himself blinded.

So Absalom, in the eyes of the Jews, looks like a king.

II Samuel 14:27:

And to Absalom there were born three sons, [Apparently they all died in infancy according to chapter 18] **and one daughter whose name was Tamar, she was a woman of beautiful appearance.**

What do you think naming your daughter Tamar would do for your popularity with the people? "Oh, how much he loved his poor sister. He is living in desolation in his house because she was violated and David never took care of it. What a tremendous fellow Absalom is." Quietly David continues to sow seeds of his own destruction.

Do you notice something that is conspicuous by its absence all through here? Why is David being deceived? What is David failing to do each time some major issue comes up? Right! He never inquires of the Lord. The tabernacle

is just a few blocks away; the priests are there; the Ephod is there. It would be very easy for him to inquire of the Lord. Instead he lives out of his emotions, his feelings. He does not seek the Word of God, the facts of faith, but instead uses the feelings of a loving and indulgent father.

Why do you think David is so afraid his sons won't like him? I'll give you a "Roe Sanctified Theory." You see this in life all the time. I believe it was because David felt rejected. He was a child of Jesse's old age by possibly his second or third wife. He wasn't even considered a son when Samuel asked for Jesse's sons for the anointing. David wasn't brought in. He was just a shepherd out on the hill. His brother's looked on him with disdain. He was the last of the litter. He was much younger than the rest of them. Joab, his general, was the son of his sister so apparently there was a large age gap between all the other brothers and David. He was a Johnny-come-lately, an after thought. He had been short-sheeted his whole life. He probably hated his father. What is god's warning when you hate? Romans 12, "Never repay evil to anyone. Leave vengeance to me," he says, "or do not become overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." When you harbor evil, it possesses you. You start by harboring it, but pretty soon, it is there and you are part of it. David apparently had this struggle in his life, and it was something he never dealt with. So he creates the seeds of his own destruction.

At the end of chapter 14 Absalom is welcomed back into David's presence where he prostrates himself before the king and is kissed by David.

In Chapter 15 Absalom begins making eyes at the throne. He is now heir apparent, as far as he knows, but David could live to be quite old. Considering the fact that Absalom was David's third son and that David had at least 10 wives and 19 sons, that we know of, plus a number of daughters, you can see Absalom isn't getting any younger. So he would just like to speed up David's aging process, on a rather permanent basis.

This was not unusual in those days. One of the great queens of Egypt, Queen Hatshepsut, who was probably the one who pulled Moses from the bulrushes, reigned as queen regent for her son. Her husband died when her son was an infant. When her son came of age she refused to relinquish the rule. She had done such a remarkable job as queen that no one could throw her off the throne. We now know from the hieroglyphics that she instituted vast building projects. Her son Thutmose III finally helped her along to the hereafter. So it was not unusual to displace your parent if they got in your way. It went on all the time in the courts of that age. Thutmose plastered over all the hieroglyphics and inscribed his own. If it hadn't been for time wearing off the plaster, we would never have known that she had ever been on the throne. Now we know that much of the building credited to Thutmose III was actually Hatshepsut's.

So Absalom making eyes at the throne was not unusual for the time. Now beginning in Chapter 15, verse 1 we see Absalom at his best. David's problem with the people right now is that he has not shown justice as a man of God, as God's king, should have. Absalom may be wicked, but he is no dummy, "How can I get to David's throne? I know, through his partiality, his injustice." If you don't put God first and be God's man, you lay yourself open to your enemies, and God will use them to bring you back. He does that here.

II Samuel 14:33 We see that David, influenced by Joab, calls for Absalom who arrives and prostrates himself before the king.

II Samuel 15:1:

Now, it came about after this [After David welcomed Absalom back and finally restored him which took approximately five years during which time Absalom gained in popularity with the people. Then look what he does] **Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men as runners before him. And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way to the gate;** [All the business transactions were done at the gate of the city] **and it happened that when any man had a suit to come to the king for judgment,** [In other words, when anybody felt oppressed or had a wrong done to them, they brought a suit, So all the wronged, all the people who felt oppressed, would come into the city to the king for judgment.] **Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?"** [Here is our first opinion poll] **And he would say, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." Then Absalom would say to him,**

"See, your claims are good and right, but no man listens to you on the part of the king." Moreover, Absalom would say, "Oh that one would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has any suit or cause could come to me, and I would give him justice." [Talk about the shaft] **And it happened that when a man came near to prostrate himself before him** [which you had to do before the king] **he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.** [Remind you a little of baby kissing politicians? Three thousand years ago! All men were treated as his equal. He was not the prince. He was their equal. Equal of the down-trodden. That is good political stuff. Don't talk about the rich. Talk about the poor and the tragic and the oppressed.] **And in this manner Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment, so Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel.** [A brilliantly planned political campaign]

When was the last time David fought? How many years have gone by do you think? This warrior king has not been leading his people. Now we see horses and chariots. Chariots in the Bible are always weapons of war. The king and his sons rode mules. When Christ came into Jerusalem as the King prophesied in Scripture, he came on an ass. Mules, asses were animals of peace. Chariots and horses were weapons of war. God had told the Israelite kings, "I will be your chariots. I will be your horses. You are not to multiply horses or chariots like the nations about you. I always want you at a disadvantage in any fight. I want you totally inadequate so no one will ever get the impression you delivered yourselves. Therefore, you are not allowed to have Sherman tanks. I will be your Sherman tank."

Psalms 41 and 55 seem to indicate that David was going through some kind of disability or some deep illness about this time. Apparently he was really suffering, so he was anything but a virile king.

Then we see Absalom deliberately placing himself at the city gate presenting himself as a kingly person and quietly sandbagging his father. He waits for every person with a complaint and, of course, the only ones bringing complaints were those feeling badly about the justice system., feeling they were being dealt with unfairly. Each one he quietly wins for himself, "Oh, that I were judge. I would give you justice." Four years he spends quietly winning the hearts of all Israel. He very intelligently asks each petitioner, "What tribe are you from?" Very interesting parallel to our own system. Anyone today trying to win the presidency wants to be very sure to make every state that can help them. So does Absalom. Incidentally, as we will see, he has a superb campaign manager, a man named Ahithophel who is the most brilliant counselor in all of Israel. Ahithophel is David's personal, private counselor and his personal, private friend and the greatest mind in all Israel. Another interesting fact; guess who Ahithophel's granddaughter is? Bathsheba.

So Absalom makes sure he covers all the tribes and gets equal representation in them all. It is a brilliantly conceived campaign, and it hits David's one weak spot, justice. Absalom finally builds up a constituency throughout Israel.

Four years Absalom deliberately deceives David. Surely in four years, though, David must have caught on. What does that say David is doing to himself? He's deceiving himself. He doesn't think Absalom could possibly be that wicked, not the son he loves. He doesn't want to see what is going on, what is happening. He doesn't want to think, after indulging him all his life, loving him, forgiving him, bringing him back into full favor, that Absalom would do something like this. He doesn't want to see it. And so not only is David deceived, but David is self-deceived.

II Samuel 15:7:

Now it came about at the end of forty years [make that four years.] **that Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed to the Lord, in Hebron. For your servant vowed a vow while I was living at Geshur in Aram [Syria], saying, 'If the Lord shall indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.'" And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.**

What does that say about Absalom's spiritual training? Absalom is using his religion to further his own ends. He has no concept of the righteousness of God. He deliberately lies to his father, "I made a vow when I was in Syria,

that if I got back I would go down to Hebron and pay my vow to Yahweh," the God of the Covenant, Jesus. Interesting side note, Hebron was Absalom's birthplace and prominent to the tribe of Judah. It was also David's headquarters for 7 years before he moved to Jerusalem which was of the tribe of Benjamin. When he moved his headquarters, all the perks, all the offices, all the staffs, all the money, all the economics involved in having the capital in your town disappeared. David probably made lots of enemies moving from Hebron to Jerusalem, out of Judah up to Benjamin.

II Samuel 15:10:

But 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 is king in Hebron.'" Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem, who were invited and went innocently, and they did not know anything. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh, [which is south of Hebron. He was down there on some pretext] while he was offering the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom.

Absalom needs some support, some integrity, something to make a revolution look good. He can't have a revolution with just a few conspirators. He needs what looks like public support. So, being crown prince, he invites two hundred influential men to go down to Hebron with him while he pays a vow.. They accompany him "innocently." The Bible says, "They did not know anything." and unexpectedly Absalom starts a rebellion. There they are two hundred influential men of the city, probably high up in the capital, compromised. Absalom suddenly has what he needs on his side, integrity. Ahithophel is also down there with the excuse of offering sacrifices. So the stage is set.

The conspiracy increased in strength probably again because of David. I Chronicles tells us David had instituted a centralized kingdom. Instead of the tribes enjoying the old tribal freedom they used to have, they were represented by governors who reported to David in Jerusalem. The tribes, to a large degree, lost all their local tribal rights. They were even required to supply certain things to the king and his staff each month. So the tribes' resentment toward the centralized kingdom added to the strength of the group with Absalom. David is suddenly caught, now, with a real rebellion. We will pick that up next time.

I want to slow down a little bit and pick up Ahithophel's thinking. II Samuel 16:20, the final blow of this whole situation. Remember we had lust and murder. We get lust and murder again.

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 [this was the roof of the palace], 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.

Ahithophel has been a very godly man for a long time, "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." What do you think has happened to Ahithophel? What happens when you begin to harbor that little seed of bitterness? It just quietly festers and fester like a cancer until one day it metastasizes and spreads throughout your whole being. You are no longer godly. You are now ungodly. It was typical in that day for the heir of the throne to get his father's concubines. Ahithophel knows how much David loves, forgives and will forget so he has to make very certain that Absalom is totally odious to David. If David loves and forgives Absalom even for this rebellion, Ahithophel's neck is going to come a cropper. So he wants to destroy the relationship between father and son so it can never be repaired. Therefore, he advises Absalom, "Set up a tent on the top of the palace in the sight of all Israel and rape your father's concubines whom he has left to keep the house,

and all Israel will hear you have made yourself odious to your father." Pure filth from a godly man, but his life is at stake, and he doesn't care anymore. He has been possessed of evil, and he hasn't dealt with it

That isn't even enough. How about his dearly beloved friend David to whom he has been a godly advisor all these years?

II Samuel 17:1:

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;

What happened to that love?

Comment from class: It didn't take long for Nathan's prophecy to come to pass.

Bob's response: Exactly right.

II Samuel 12:9

Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, "Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give *them to your companion*, [One who is near to you is the idea of the word. Absalom his own son] **and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, [Remember he walked around on the roof of the palace at nightfall, He spotted her at nightfall and took her at night, but God said, "I'm going to spread this in front of all Israel in broad daylight"] **but I will do this thing before all Israel and under the sun."****

That was the prophecy for David's future after his sin with Bathsheba, murder, lust and deceit. Reminder, "Whatsoever a man sows, that very thing he shall also reap." David's beloved first born Amnon rapes his own step-sister. His beloved third born Absalom, now heir to the throne and whom even after the rebellion David wanted kept alive because he loved him, tries to kill his father. His dear, dear counselor Ahithophel who has been like the voice of God to him wants to personally shame David's name in front of all Israel. He has been waiting a long time for this. David took Bathsheba and was married to her for a year before God came into the act. Then it was two years before Absalom killed Amnon and three years in exile for Absalom. That is six years. Then two more years while Absalom is in Jerusalem. Ahithophel has been waiting eight years to get David, all the while giving David advice and being his friend and closest advisor. Eight years Ahithophel waits to defame David's name, see his wives raped and personally get to kill him. "I want him for me."

Do you see the tragic interplay here? The willful choices of afflicted men still work out for the glory of God and the fulfillment of prophecy. God is faithful, "Whatever a man sows, that very thing he shall also reap." Fortunately God is also loving, and he is faithful to whom He loves.

Next week we will see his faithfulness and love to David. He does not abandon his own. He may give you a good sound spanking, but he will never abandon you.

Father, we thank you so much for your love and grace and mercy to us. We thank you for your faithfulness too, Father, that you will not let us go nor will you let us live in our sin, that you do whatever is necessary to bring us out of that that we might not have to face your judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ that we might deal with it down here. You want us to present ourselves

before our Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ pure and holy and blameless and spotless in love as you have predestined us in peace and love. So we thank you for your faithfulness down here, Father, to deal with those very areas that are strongholds in our lives and take the very strongholds, Father, and make them work for you, and we thank you more than that for your faithfulness to love us the whole time and bring us out the other end of the tunnel. Father, we thank you so much that as we walk through that Valley of the Shadow of Death we shall fear no evil for Thou art with us in the midst of your judgment you have us by the hand. Thank you, Father, in Jesus' name.
Amen

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