

The Long-Term Consequences of Sin

2 Samuel 15 & 16

Key Bible Texts

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Key Bible Verse(s)

“And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” (2 Samuel 15:6)

Background to the Study

After Absalom had his brother Amnon murdered, he was exiled from Jerusalem, though David longed for him. Joab, David’s general, noticed this and persuaded David to allow Absalom’s return. However, two years passed before Absalom confronted his father. Eventually, Joab urged a reunion, and David welcomed Absalom back into the royal household.

By this time, David was aging, having achieved many military victories, but rising prosperity caused unrest among the people. Discontent over high taxes and troop recruitment led to a decline in David’s popularity. Absalom, noticing this discontent, saw an opportunity to claim the throne for himself. A handsome man with charm, he won the hearts of the people, promising fairer treatment if he became king. With his chariots, horses, and entourage of fifty men, he captivated the citizens of Jerusalem.

Bible scholars suggest that the phrase “after forty years” in verse 7 refers to David’s anointing as king. It is believed that Absalom spent four years gaining the people’s confidence and planning his revolt. He initiated his insurrection in Hebron, the original seat of David’s kingdom, and persuaded David’s trusted adviser, Ahithophel, to join him. Ahithophel, resentful of David for the wrongs done to Bathsheba, may have had personal motives for his betrayal.

As David fled Jerusalem, he likely recalled Nathan the prophet’s warning that the sword would not depart from his house. With Absalom seizing the throne, David was met on the Mount of Olives by Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who provided him with provisions. During his flight to Bahurim, David encountered Shimei, a member of Saul’s house, who cursed him and cast stones, unjustly accusing David of bloodguilt. Though his warriors were ready to retaliate, David restrained them, viewing the insult as part of God’s chastisement.

Meanwhile, Absalom took control of the throne, and Hushai, pretending loyalty, greeted him. Absalom’s adviser, Ahithophel, suggested he make a bold statement against David by publicly sleeping with ten of David’s concubines, which Absalom did. This act not only fulfilled a vile desire but also

symbolized his claim to kingship, as taking a conquered king's wives was seen as a declaration of ownership. However, it was an abominable act under God's Law, warranting death. Some believe Ahithophel's advice was motivated by revenge for the wrongs done to Bathsheba, his granddaughter.

TESTIMONIES FROM OUR DAY

Several years ago, a new neighbour moved into a house by the river near ours. He and his wife seemed social and generous, often inviting couples over for barbecued steaks or hot dog roasts. In cooler weather, we enjoyed lovely sit-down dinners prepared by his gracious wife. Our neighbourhood is close-knit, and it appeared that this couple entertained everyone around.

However, after about six months of their hospitality, our neighbour began asking for favours. He flattered the elderly man across the street, a blacksmith, who willingly helped him until he could no longer work. After that, the "benevolent" neighbour stopped visiting him. Subsequently, he accused another neighbour of theft and cheated yet another out of several hundred dollars. It became clear that this "social and generous" man had selfish motives.

Similarly, Absalom, David's son, pursued his father's throne through deceitful methods. He flattered and favoured the people of Israel to win them away from David, patiently employing these tactics for years before ultimately committing treason against his father.

While kind deeds and words of appreciation can be blessings, we must remember that God sees our hearts and knows our motives. It is essential to ensure that our desires align with pleasing God and advancing His purposes. We should ask God to examine our motives and help us live in a way that is pleasing to Him.

A Closer Look

Question 1

What actions did Absalom take to convince the people that he would make a better king? II Samuel 15:1-6

Question 2

When confronted with his sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah, David acknowledged it and wholeheartedly repented. God forgave him, opening the way for him to begin life anew. Using 2 Samuel 13:28 and 15:2-4,10,14, contrast Absalom's behaviour with that of his father.

Question 3

How do you think David's relationship with God was strengthened during this time of crisis? II Samuel 15:25-26,30-31

Question 4

What lessons can we learn in our Christian walk as we compare the actions of Absalom and David?

Question 5

In chapter 16, we read of Shimei's verbal tirade against David. How did David respond to the insults and curses heaped upon him? What lesson can we learn from his attitude? 2 Samuel 16:5-14

Question 6

How can we be sure that we are responding to difficult circumstances as God wants us to?

Take Home

If our motives are right, and we have a genuine love for our fellow man and for God, we will always esteem others better than ourselves and not use devious ways to get ahead in this world. When trials come our way, let's look to God. Remembering that He cares about us and will bring us through.