

## 09-24-17 – Conflict with a Rebellious Son

### 2 Samuel 13-18

A father had a rather strong-willed son. On the way to the store he kept telling the child, “Sit down and buckle the seat belt.” But the little kid just kept standing in the seat. Again he said, “Sit down and buckle the seat belt.” And after a time or two more the boy was convinced he had better sit down or disaster would strike. So he slipped down onto the seat, snapped the seat belt closed, and said, “Daddy, I’m sitting down on the outside, but I’m still standing up on the inside.”

We had a similar incident with our grandson, Ethan, when he was about 3 years old. My family came up from Va. for a visit. We met at a restaurant. Ethan was in a child’s seat at the end of the table. He kept asking and insisting that he get out of that seat and be able to go to other areas of the restaurant. We insisted that he stay put. When it was time for UB to leave and go back to work, he passed next to Ethan, who put up his hands to say good-bye. Brian pick him up from the chair, and Ethan said to all, “See, I’m out.”

Just as God promised, David’s name was and is famous. He was a great king, a skillful warrior, a giant killer, and had the courage to lead his men in battle. If you visit Jerusalem today, you can see monuments erected in his honor. *“Jerusalem is, above all, the ‘City of David.’”* We know he was a great musician and poet. Thousands of years after people are still being blessed by his psalms. In them he shares his many wounds and introduces us to God’s amazing grace. *“His broken heart has healed the hearts of many.”* (Lutzer, p. 151)

We remember David for his many great feats. The author says this, *“But we do not remember David as a successful husband and father. It’s not just that he sinned with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah, but his sons were undisciplined, disloyal, and rebellious. His wives were unhappy, and upset with his favoritism. David could manage his kingdom; he could not manage his family.”* (Lutzer, p. 151)

**2 Sam. 12:10-12 – “... And now, because you treated God with such contempt and took Uriah the Hittite’s wife as your wife, killing and murder will continually plague your family. This is God speaking, remember! I’ll make trouble for you out of your own family. I’ll take your wives from right out in front of you. I’ll give them to some neighbor, and he’ll go to bed with them openly. You did your deed in secret; I’m doing mine with the whole country watching!”** (MSG)

David’s family began to unravel, exposing his failures.  
What were David’s weaknesses as a father?

## He Displayed Anger without Action –

Fast forward a few years...

David's firstborn son was Amnon, who was murdered. He committed a gross sexual sin – guess we need to pick up where Pastor John left off last week... Tamar was a beautiful daughter of another one of David's wives. Amnon was the half-brother and was crazy about Tamar. Amnon planned to be ill and needing Tamar to bring him food. When she did – long story short – he raped her. If that wasn't bad enough, afterward, he despised her. Isn't this often the case with forced sexual issues and rape? His lust turned to disgust!

**2 Sam. 13:15 - No sooner had Amnon raped her than he hated her—an immense hatred. The hatred that he felt for her was greater than the love he'd had for her. "Get up," he said, "and get out!"** (MSG) This full story is found in 2 Sam. 13:1-21. This was the reader's digest version.

At this time, a virgin would wear a long sleeved dress.

**2 Sam. 13:18-19 - She was wearing a long-sleeved gown. (That's how virgin princesses used to dress from early adolescence on.) Tamar poured ashes on her head, then she ripped the long-sleeved gown, held her head in her hands, and walked away, sobbing as she went.** (MSG)

Here's a key ingredient... **2 Sam. 13:21 - King David heard the whole story and was enraged, but he didn't discipline Amnon. David doted on him because he was his firstborn.** (MSG)

We, as parents, sometimes play favoritism with our kids. We may not realize it; we certainly didn't intend it, but it happens. David was guilty of this iniquity.

Why didn't David do something about this injustice? Why not stand up for Tamar if not against Amnon? Why the silence? He was angry, but he didn't do anything about it, and he was king.

A couple of years later, Absalom (Tamar's brother) schemed how he would avenge Tamar's mistreatment. He had his servants kill his half-brother, Amnon, while they were shearing sheep. So, Absalom murdered Amnon by proxy just as David had done to Uriah – the scene repeated.

**2 Sam. 13:24-28**

When David heard of the news of his son's murder...

**2 Sam. 13:31 - The king stood up, ripped his clothes to shreds, and threw himself on the floor. All his servants who were standing around at the time did the same.** (MSG)

Amnon committed sexual sin and Absalom committed murder. Sound familiar? These were the major sins that David had committed earlier. David wasn't disciplined for these, so he didn't discipline his sons either. He displayed anger without discipline.

*“Guilt, insecurity, and twisted priorities are often the culprits that keep fathers from exercising their God-given responsibilities.” (Lutzer, p. 156)*

*“Remember Eli, a man who was by all accounts a faithful, sensitive priest? Yet, though his sons were greedy and immoral, he did nothing about it.” (Lutzer p. 156).*

**1 Sam. 3:13 - He knew what was going on, that his sons were desecrating God’s name and God’s place, and he did nothing to stop them. (MSG)**

*“David was paralyzed by his own failures. The powerful king who could subdue pagan armies was helpless as he watched the strife within his own family.” (Lutzer, p. 156)*

### **Reconciliation Without Forgiveness –**

Absalom fled to Geshur, where he stayed for a few years. David’s heart was grieved and he longed to see his son. **2 Sam. 13:39 - The king finally gave up trying to get back at Absalom. He had come to terms with Amnon’s death. (MSG)**

*“David was caught between his duties as a king and his natural instincts as a father. The result was indecision and compromise.” (Lutzer, p. 157).*

Joab, David’s General, knew the king longed to see his son, so he concocted a scheme to get David to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem. However, David placed his son under house arrest, so that he was never given permission to visit the palace to see his father.

**2 Sam. 14:24 - But the king gave this order: “Absalom may go to his own house, but he must never come into my presence.” So Absalom did not see the king. (NLT)**

For two full years Absalom lived in Jerusalem without seeing his father. He was feeling very neglected, so he did what any seriously rebellious son would do. He would pull off some serious offense to get his dad’s attention. So Absalom burned down Joab’s grain field. Joab questioned Absalom, who said he wanted David to give him full rights as his son.

**2 Sam 14:32 - And Absalom replied, “Because I wanted you to ask the king why he brought me back from Geshur if he didn’t intend to see me. I might as well have stayed there. Let me see the king; if he finds me guilty of anything, then let him kill me.” (NLT)**

As most rebellious sons or even daughters, they are highly intelligent and can reason things out well inside themselves. I know this from experience.

So Absalom reasoned that his father would not kill him, or he would have done that already. It had been 5 years since the murder of Amnon. David moved Absalom closer to him to Jerusalem to be near him. This showed Absalom that David was willing to compromise. Because of this, Absalom felt he could ask for full rights as prince without acknowledging any wrongdoing. Quite brazen, but well thought out. You can see how his brilliant mind worked.

What should David have done? We don't know, but we know what he didn't do... He didn't discipline his son; he didn't execute the Law against his son, even though he was a murderer; and he didn't leave him in Geshur until he can crawling back like the prodigal son.

*"Forgiveness was neither requested nor given. The king received his proud and unrepentant son back into full son-ship without requiring so much as a single statement of confession... David, when needing to exercise discipline, was needlessly indulgent; when he needed to be forgiving he was often harsh... He was keenly aware that Absalom's sin resembled his own."*

(Lutzer, p. 158)

*"The seeds of rebellion grew in Absalom's heart because he was restored without displaying a submissive spirit."* His rebellion grew into more serious plans and acts...

*"His ambitions would lead to gross immorality, a plan to kill his father, and eventually to his own untimely death. David's weakness continued to show."* (Lutzer, p. 159)

### **Sentimentality without Strength**

Rebellion can be a self-promoting and dangerous characteristic. Absalom appointed himself a judge and intercepted law cases that were supposed to be brought before the king.

**2 Sam. 15:2 - He got up early every morning and went out to the gate of the city. When people brought a case to the king for judgment, Absalom would ask where in Israel they were from, and they would tell him their tribe. (NLT)**

He would listen and then tell them how much better off they would be if **he** were king of Israel.

**vs. 6 - Absalom did this with everyone who came to the king for judgment, and so he stole the hearts of all the people of Israel. (NLT)**

Over 4 years he won over many to the point that he declared, **"When you hear the trumpet sound, cry out loud, 'Absalom is king in Hebron!'"**

Here we have the unrepentant heart of a rebel.

In all this we also have to remember that David was under divine judgment. Nathan, the prophet, predicted that God would raise up evil against David out of his own house (12:11).

This rebellion and a series of events that followed caused David to flee the city for his life. David believed all these tragedies were by the hand of God against him for his sin. Shimei, Saul's relative, followed the procession throwing stones and cursing David.

**2 Sam. 16:11 - Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "My own son is trying to kill me. Doesn't this relative of Saul have even more reason to do so? Leave him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to do it. (NLT)**

But this was David's prayerful cry as he fled the city...

**Ps. 3:1-4 - O LORD, I have so many enemies; so many are against me. So many are saying, "God will never rescue him!" But you, O LORD, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high. I cried out to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy mountain. (NLT)**

Absalom stormed the city and took his father's women and had sex with them on the roof of the palace. This was a sign to his followers that there would be no reconciliation between Absalom and David and that he had taken over the throne of David in Jerusalem. This also fulfilled the prophecy of Nathan ...

**2 Sam. 12:11 - This is what the LORD says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. (NLT)**

A major revolt took place. In David's fatherly heart of compassion, he order that no one harm Absalom. This was not wise, but compassionate. Absalom's head got caught on a fork in a tree limb and the mule he was riding kept on going. Absalom was hanging by his head from the tree, but he was not dead, YET. Joab pierced him with three spears in the chest and killed him.

The war was over. When David heard that Absalom was dead, he began period of deep mourning. David cried,

**2 Sam. 18:33 - The king was overcome with emotion. He went up to the room over the gateway and burst into tears. And as he went, he cried, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son." (NLT)**

No matter how rebellious, parents still love their children. David was grieved at the loss of Absalom. This was the third prong of God's promised judgment against Dave for his sin.

## Father and Son

David knew the kingdom belonged to God not him. This was a huge benefit for him. Absalom, like Saul thought the kingdom was his and would do anything to keep it. David trusted in God to do what is best in spite of his own desires. God honored him. David completely submitted to the will and purposes of God.

Notice the contrast between this father and son. David was willing to accept anything God had in store regarding his life and the kingdom. Absalom only wanted to eliminate all opposition, because he was obsessed with possessing the kingdom. How could a father and son be so opposite – spiritually. The rebellious son could not tolerate rebellion in anyone else. David could honestly make this statement...

**2 Sam. 15:25-26 - Then the king instructed Zadok to take the Ark of God back into the city. "If the Lord sees fit," David said, "he will bring me back to see the Ark and the Tabernacle again. But if he is through with me, then let him do what seems best to him." (NLT)**

At this late stage in David's life he was drawn into civil war against his own rebellious son. His officials would not let him enter the battle personally. (ch. 18). David maintained the resolve that whatever God had planned was fine with him. This type of resolve took many years for David to acquire – years of God's working in his life through experiences and prayer. The passive father had become a broken father – totally dependent on God. Isn't that what He wants in all of us?

Many of us have had or now have dealings with a rebellious child. We had ours for sure. We tried in our own strength to correct, discipline, punish, and threaten, but nothing changed him. Finally, we got to the point where had to ask him to leave our home. We were united; we prayed about it; we resolved this was needed, but it didn't make it easy. Like David, we loved him and wanted the best for him. We didn't sever any ties, but he just couldn't live in our home. We offered to help him in any way to find a place, fix up the place, buy him anything he needed to be able to live in that place, and we did. He graduated college and had a job. It was time to be on his own. In our case, it worked out well. He did fine on his own and excelled in his field. The best part is that he became closer to us than ever before and still is.

Whatever you have gone through or are going through now or will go through is all part of God's plan to grow your faith and dependence on Him. We can grow through conflict. David did over many years, and so will each of us. Trust God in the worst times as well as the good times. He is working in your life. Someday you will see His hand in all of it if you remain in Him.