

November 15

Scriptures: Read 2 Samuel 18

Key Verse: “Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!” (2 Samuel 18:28)

Overview

David, a brilliant military strategist, immediately organized his men into three battalions, each commanded by an experienced and brave warrior: Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. Ittai was a Philistine from Gath who, for some unknown reason, had joined David’s forces with 600 of his own men (15:18-22). Ittai was probably a worshipper of the true God of Israel who had left the idol worship of Dagon. In his beautiful words of faithfulness and commitment to David, he expressed that the God of Israel lives (15:21). Ittai probably became friends with David while David was living in exile among the Philistines in Gath (1 Samuel 27:2-3). He became one of David’s most loyal supporters.

Since Absalom’s target was his father, David’s followers did not want him to go out on the battleground. They wanted him safe and protected behind the walls of Mahanaim. David truly loved his son, and before his men went to fight, he ordered them not to harm Absalom. Joab, however, disregarded David’s order; possibly he was afraid that if Absalom were taken alive, David would be too gentle with him, as he had been in the past. But Absalom deserved death, not only for being a rebellious son (Deuteronomy 21:18-23), but for attempting to steal his father’s throne. Joab was cold-hearted and rebuked the man who obeyed David’s words by not killing Absalom when he saw him hanging with his head caught in the tree. Without mercy, Joab cruelly murdered him and signaled that the battle was over.

David was more concerned about his son than the result of the battle. He asked both messengers if there was shalom (in the Hebrew text) “peace” to the young man Absalom (18:29, 32). Ironically, Absalom, whose name has the word meaning peace in it, did not sow peace during his lifetime; and therefore in death he also met with no peace.

The second Cushite messenger brought the news of Absalom’s death, possibly expecting David to rejoice; but David was brokenhearted, wishing he had been the one to die rather than his beloved son. He was torn between his role as a king and his role as a father. He possibly felt the fault was his for not disciplining Absalom nor taking the time from his heavy schedule while Absalom was still young to instruct him in the ways of the Lord. He surely thought that it was partly due to his sin with Bathsheba for which he was being punished by God, and for being a bad example to his sons. Could it be that all these problems in the life of David had their root in the evil of polygamy? David desired Bathsheba to include her as one of his many wives. Amnon lusted after his half sister, Tamar, who was a full sister of Absalom, the children of another wife of David. And Absalom proclaimed his kingship by taking ten of David’s concubines.

Absalom’s well-planned revolution came to an end which was planned by God. Sin against God will never lead to success, but rather ultimate defeat and death (Romans 3:23). All of Absalom’s dreams for his own glory and his own kingdom came to a crashing end as his handsome body was thrown into a deep hole in the ground and covered with many stones. With Absalom’s defeat, it was clear to all that God had chosen David to remain as the king of Israel.

Prayer

Lord, grant that we may be exercised in deep prayer for our children while they are living and not like David who waited until it was too late to make a difference in Absalom’s life.