

The Trouble Maker in the Family – 2 Samuel 15:1-37

Introduction:

When David sinned against God he was warned that there would be consequences within his own family. The children do watch their parents and pick up from them their practices and values. The old saying contains a great deal of truth: “Children catch more than they are taught.” You can tell your children to be honest over and over again, but if they see their parents practice dishonesty they will rationalize that it is okay for them as well.

No doubt David told his children to follow the teachings of God, which include the Ten Commandments, but they saw their father break the commands in his own life. So his son, Absalom, chooses to go his own way and promote himself over the king, his father. Absalom causes the people to start doubting the ability of the king to govern them well. He stirs up trouble for one purpose: to promote himself.

How will David respond to this crisis? How will he discipline his son? How will he lead the nation when the threat is from within his family, and not some foreign army? This is the theme of chapters 15-18.

Absalom Establishes Himself – 2 Samuel 15:1-6

1. What does Absalom do to promote himself as someone of importance (v. 1)?
2. Verses 2-4 describe Absalom’s actions at the city gate. What is he doing? Why would he do this? Is he being totally honest, or is there some “false news” happening here? Note where the man questioned is from. Is this important?
3. What is Absalom doing in verse 5? Is this proper?
4. Verse 6 sums up what is the motive behind Absalom’s actions. What is his intent? Has he succeeded? (the phrase translated “stole the hearts” can also be translated “deceived” (Genesis 31:20).

The Conspiracy Grows – 2 Samuel 15:7-12

5. How long is Absalom allowed to undermine the leadership of his father (v. 7)?
6. What request does Absalom make of the king in verse 7? Why would he want to go to Hebron?
7. Absalom indicates in verse 8 that he wanted to go to Hebron for worship. What is wrong with that picture?
8. How does King David respond to the request of Absalom (v. 9)? Does he question him, or challenge his motives?
9. The intent of Absalom is revealed in verse 10. What does Absalom tell the people to do? What has been Absalom's intent all along?
10. In verse 11 we read of 200 men invited from Jerusalem who do not know about Absalom's intentions. Why would he bring them along?
11. In verse 12 we read that Absalom brings another person into his circle – Ahithophel. Who is he and why was it important he be brought into Absalom's camp? Why might he be upset at David?

David Flees Jerusalem – 2 Samuel 15:13-23

12. What message is delivered to King David (v. 13)? What does not seem right about this?
13. What does King David suggest those loyal to him should do (v. 14)? Why?
14. Verse 15 shows where the loyalty of the "servants" of David lies. Are they for the king or for his son?
15. Who does David take with him as he flees the city (v.16)? Who does he not take? Why?

16. In verse 17 we read that the king stops at the last house of the city, and in verse 18 we get a list of the people who pass by him. What is interesting about the list?
17. David has a conversation with Ittai in verses 19-20, and suggests that he need not follow David to the wilderness. What does David call Absalom in verse 19? Why does David suggest Ittai need not follow him?
18. What is the response of Ittai to King David (v. 21)? Have we heard that kind of commitment before in the scriptures (ie. Ruth 1:8-17)?
19. Who else was with Ittai as he passed by the king (v. 22)?
20. What do you make of the statement in verse 23 that “all the land wept aloud as the people passed by”?

The Ark of the Covenant – 2 Samuel 15:24-29

21. Who joins in with the procession of people leaving the city in verse 24? What is their role in Jerusalem? What have they brought with them? Why?
22. What is King David’s response to the gesture of the priests (v. 25)? What might this indicate as far as David’s understanding of the power of the Ark?
23. What is David’s attitude towards God in verse 26?
24. David also has a purpose in keeping the priests in the city: they can be informants for him about the plans of Absalom (vss. 27-28). Who does he suggest can get messages to him (v. 27)?
25. Zadock and Abiathar return to the city with the Ark of the Covenant. Though they will not be with the king, how does this act of obedience show greater commitment to David than traveling with him?
26. Where does David say he will wait for word from his informants before he moves on (v. 28)?

Leaving the City Behind – 2 Samuel 15:30-37

27. David had come down from Jerusalem in to the Kidron Valley, and now was ascending the Mount of Olives that faced the city. What is his attitude (v. 30)? What is the attitude of the people?
28. When David hears that Ahithophel has gone over to support Absalom, how does David respond (v. 31)?
29. Who comes to meet David on the top of the Mount of Olives (v.32)? What does his appearance indicate?
30. Why would David say Hushai would “be a burden to me” (v. 33)?
31. What purpose did David have for Hushai (v. 34)?
32. Who would be there to help Hushai (v. 35)?
33. How is Hushai described in verse 37?
34. Who was entering the city as Hushai arrived in Jerusalem (v. 37)?

Conclusion:

David’s son decides that he will be the next king, and he does not wait until his father dies. Absalom rallies the people behind him and leads a rebellion against the king. Sadly, David seems to have made enough mistakes that Absalom was able to exploit and gain a following. It appears a good number of the people are ready to follow Absalom.

However, there are indications that David also has a very large and loyal following. People were willing to risk everything for David. It is surprising that David simply abdicates the throne without a struggle. His attitude seems to be, “God gave me the throne, and I will keep it if God wants me to be king.”

Read Psalm 3, which was composed about this time, and see what motivated and shaped the thinking and actions of David.