

The Sword From Your Own House
2 Samuel 15
July 22

After David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, Nathan the prophet declared to King David, "The sword will never leave your house" (2 Sam. 12.10). The "sword" of the father's legacy of sins against the husband and wife nearly destroyed David's family. Ammon raped his sister Tamar (2 Sam.???), Absalom killed his brother Ammon and rebelled against his father. Ironically, the name "Absalom" means "father of peace," yet Absalom nearly destroyed David's reign.

What lessons may twenty-first believers learn from Absalom's rebellion?

First, the passage teaches us about the danger of refusing to reconcile (2 Sam. 14.12-15.6).

After killing his brother Ammon, Absalom fled from the king's court for three years. The interposition of David's advisor Joab moved David to allow his exiled son to return to Jerusalem. When Absalom returned to Jerusalem, he lived in the capital city for two years and never saw his father's face (2 Sam. 14.28). David's trusted aide Joab helped Absalom come before the presence of King David. Absalom bowed in homage to his father. 2 Samuel 14 concludes with the words, "The King kissed Absalom" (2 Sam. 14.33). 2 Samuel 15.1 describes Absalom's response, "After this, Absalom got himself a chariot, horses, and fifty men to run before him." (Years later, Absalom's younger brother Adonijah with support from David's commander Joab and priest Abiathar followed the same public display of rebellion (1 Kings 1.5-8). After years of exile and not being allowed to see his father even though he lived in the capital city, Absalom launched his rebellious attempt to take the kingship from David. Ahitophel, probably Bathsheba's grandfather, supported Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 15.31).

Absalom undertook six actions to promote himself as king. First, he acted with royal pomp as he rode his chariot through the streets of Jerusalem with fifty-man entourage going before to attract an audience. Second, he stationed himself at the city gate, a phrase that resonated in an ancient culture like our phrase "the Halls of Justice." Third, he listened to the complaints of people that felt they needed justice in personal legal matters. Fourth, he told every man seeking justice "your claims are good and right (v.3). Fifth, he publicly let it be known that David was responsible for the failure of justice (v. 3). Sixth, he declared that he would be a good judge (v. 4). As a result, Absalom "stole the hearts" of the people.

Second, the passage warns readers of the dangers of not "understanding the times (2 Sam. 15.7-16). At a particular moment in Israelite history, the Bible describes men from the tribe of Issachar as men "who understood the times and knew what Israel should do (1 Chron. 12.32). David neither understood the times nor his own family. Absalom approached his father with a request for permission to travel to Hebron to offer sacrifices. The city of Hebron has numerous historical connections to key events in Israelite history that should have warned David. Hebron was Abraham's home and burial spot of Sarah, a city of refuge, the location at which Samson picked up the city gates and moved them, as well as Absalom's birthplace (2 Sam. 3.2-3) and

the location where David received anointing as king (2 Sam. 2.4). As one scholar commented, "Go in peace opened the way for Absalom to war!" Absalom's plot included the recruitment of David's trusted advisor Ahithophel, most likely Bathsheba's grandfather. Thus, prominent members of Bathsheba's family joined the revolt against David. The conspiracy grew, and an unnamed person informed David of Absalom's success, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom" (2 Sam. 15.12). David and his supporters fled.

Third, the passage affirms the importance of trusting God (2 Sam. 15.24-30). David fled from Saul; now he flees from Absalom. As he fled, however, David sought God. During this flight from Absalom, David wrote Psalm 3. In the Psalm, David modeled a believer's response when we are at our wit's end. First, David focused on the truth of God (Ps. 3.3). God is a shield of protection. Second, David cried out to God for help (Ps. 3.4). Third, David experienced the sustaining power of prayer (Ps. 3.5). Fourth, David celebrated God as the deliverer (Ps. 3.8).