



“REASONS TO REJOICE”

*“Your Words were found, and I ate them,
and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Jeremiah 15:16*

I and II SAMUEL Lesson 21

We ended our lesson last week with David being publicly disgraced by his son Absalom. His “friend” Ahithophel had become Absalom’s counselor, and Hushai was acting as a spy, hoping to help David out of this mess. (Sounds like a soap opera, doesn’t it?) Unfortunately, it’s real life, with real people and real feelings. Alexander Whyte says that, “David at his best, as at his worst, is one of ourselves.” We can relate to every feeling David has (at least I can!). Let’s read on and see how this drama continues.

- 1. Read II Samuel 17:1-29. Briefly describe what’s happening in this chapter. What would you title it? What new characters are introduced? Are they allies or enemies of David?*
- 2. Explain Ahithophel’s counsel. What did he want Absalom to do?*
- 3. Did Absalom think it was good counsel?*
- 4. Explain Hushai’s counsel.*

5. *What argument did Hushai use concerning David's men?*

6. *For what reason did Hushai tell Absalom to go to battle himself?
What was he appealing to?*

7. *What did Absalom and the elders of Israel think of Hushai's counsel?*

8. *According to verse 14, which was the better counsel for Absalom to follow for victory? Who intervened?*

9. *How was this an answer to David's prayer in II Samuel 15:31?*

God can turn any counsel into foolishness, can't He? He can use anyone to speak His truth, or intervene in a situation.

10. *How does the fact that God intervened on David's behalf encourage you? (Can man's plans be thwarted? Can God's?)*

Hushai appealed to Absalom's vanity when he gave him counsel, and he fell for it, hook, line, and sinker. Hushai predicted great glory for Absalom if he personally led the battle. He encouraged him to develop a big army to ensure victory. Praise God that He is in control, and He's protecting David.

We'll end here for now. Tomorrow we'll find out what happens to these spies. I hope they get away, don't you?

Memory Verse of the Week: “Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.” Psalm 63:7

Second Day

Practice your memory verse. Are you rejoicing in the shadow of His wings?

Absalom took Hushai’s counsel, which caused a delay while he got his army together. This gave David time to get supplies, as well as his own army, ready for combat. The spies were supposed to tell David and all his men to cross over the Jordan

1. *Read II Samuel 17:1-29 again. Who were the spies acting on David’s behalf?*
2. *Oops! They were seen. What did they do?*
3. *How did God intervene again?*
4. *Where did David go to escape?*
5. *Who became Absalom’s captain? Who was he?
(Read 1 Chronicles 2:16-17.)*
6. *What friends did David meet? How did they help him?*

I read that “each of these men had good reason not to help David. Shobi’s people, the Ammonites, were David’s enemies. Machir from Lodebar had done his share by taking in Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth (II Sam. 9:4-5). And Barzillai was 80 years old. He could have considered himself retired and sent someone younger (19:32).” These men came to David’s rescue in his darkest hours. I’m sure David hadn’t expected this show of kindness. Our acts of hospitality can minister to people in a way that we would never imagine. Sometimes it can change their life.

- 7. Has God ever sent you a friend to show you extra kindness and hospitality at a time that you desperately needed someone?*

- 8. How would you define hospitality? Do you practice it? Name some practical things you can do to extend gracious hospitality to others.*

- 9. These men brought relief to David and the people for “they were hungry, weary, and thirsty in the wilderness.” God supplied their needs. Do you feel like you’re in the wilderness? What are your needs? Do you trust God to provide for you?*

- 10. What happened to Ahithophel? Why do you think he did it?*

It's interesting that Ahithophel put his household together before he took his life. We don't really know what was in his heart, but we can guess that he felt that his job was coming to a close, since Absalom had shunned his counsel. I wonder if he also knew that the counsel Hushai gave Absalom was in David's favor, and would backfire in his face. Did he wonder what David would do to him for betraying him? For whatever reason, he seems to know the end is near. He's the Judas in our story

11. *Of the friends that came alongside David, who offered him spiritual support? Who risked his life for David? Who gave him material support? God uses many people to support us and meet our needs. Is there someone that you can offer spiritual support today? Do you have any friends that need material support? How about a friend who just needs to know that you will be there for them forever? Ask the Lord to show you how you can be a support to the friends in your life.*

We'll see you tomorrow. David's heart breaks further in our next chapter as his son is killed. Remember how he mourned for Saul, even though Saul had been trying to kill him? How much more he will mourn the loss of his own son, the deceiver that he was.

Third Day

What's your memory verse? How does it speak to your heart?

1. *Let's read II Samuel 18:1-18. Write the facts. (Yuck!) What's the main point?*

2. *What three men does David make captains?*
3. *Why doesn't David go to battle with his men?*
4. *What command does David give the captains before they go to battle?
What did he mean?*

A great civil war takes place in the woods of Ephraim, which was thought to have treacherous terrain, apparently including large pits (vs 17). David's men seem to easily overthrow the army of Israel. Not only were David's men better trained as fighters, God was on their side. David seemed to be confident of that, trusting that God would give him the victory. His only concern seemed to be the safety of his son.

5. *What happened to Absalom in verse 9?*
6. *Why didn't the man that first saw Absalom kill him?*
7. *Who killed Absalom? Why? How?*

Joab blew the trumpet, which let everyone know the battle was over.

8. *Instead of being buried in the elaborate tomb he built for himself in the King's Valley, where was his grave?*
9. *Does it surprise you that Absalom had erected a monument of himself?
Why or why not?*

What a picture this story conjures up in our minds. A grown man, hanging by his head, (possibly his hair), legs kicking and arms flailing. What a sight that must have been. Absalom's hair was most likely one source of his vanity. It's interesting that God uses the very thing that puffed Absalom up to bring him down (Proverbs 16:18). We, too, get "caught" by the sins in our heart, don't we? If we love money, God often uses it to humble us. If we are overly concerned with what people think of us, we sometimes are brought down publicly. Yes, our strongest asset can become our biggest downfall. We have nothing to be proud of, or be vain about. Absalom was a prideful, vain, clever man. He disgraced his father publicly, and, at least in this case, what goes around, comes around. Job 20:5-7 says, "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is for but a moment. Though his haughtiness mounts up to the heavens, and his head reaches to the clouds, yet he will perish forever like his own refuse." Sounds like Absalom, doesn't it?

II Samuel 18:18 says that Absalom built the monument because he had no sons to carry on his name, but II Samuel 14:27 says that he had one daughter and three sons. It is possible that his sons died before him, leaving him with only a daughter, who would not be able to carry on his name.

10. *What are some ways that we make "monuments" of ourselves without actually erecting a statue?*

11. *How can our strength be our weakness, and our weakness be our strength? (Give Scriptures for your answer if possible.)*

12. *What is one of your strengths? How are you using it for His glory?*

William Blaikie said this: “It is said by Jewish writers that every by-passer was accustomed to throw a stone on the heap that covered the remains of Absalom, and as he threw it to say, ‘Cursed be the memory of rebellious Absalom; and cursed forever be all wicked children that rise up in rebellion against their parents.’”

13. *What kind of child were you? Were you a rebellious child growing up? Are you still? Have you ever asked your parents for their forgiveness for rebelling against them?*

14. *What could, and should, David have done to prevent this all from happening?*

Tomorrow we’ll see how David reacts to the news of Absalom’s death. For now, ask the Lord to keep your heart from the sin of pride. Ask Him to use your strength for His glory, instead of being so proud of that strength that it becomes your weakness.

Fourth Day

Are you learning your verse? Are you rejoicing in Him?

In our lesson yesterday, Joab killed Absalom, going against the king’s strict orders. Was he just tired of Absalom’s tricks? Did he think it would make the king happy? Did he just act impulsively, getting caught up in the moment? Maybe he believed that Absalom’s death was the only real way to end this civil war and protecting this nation from ruin. We don’t know why Joab took matters into his own hands, but we know the first man showed wisdom in obeying the king’s orders.

1. *Read II Samuel 18:19-33. What facts do you find? What is your first impression of this section? What’s the main point?*

2. *Why do you think Ahimaaz wanted to be the messenger? (See II Samuel 15:27, 35; 17:17-21)*
3. *Who did Joab send instead? Why?*
4. *Who got there first anyway?*
5. *While all this was happening, what was David doing?*
6. *What was the first question David asked both of the messengers? What does this tell you about him?*
7. *What was the attitude of the Cushite when he told David the news?*

There are a few different opinions on why Joab didn't want to send Ahimaaz with the news. Some feel that Ahimaaz really didn't know the whole story, so he wouldn't be able to report all the news. But Ahimaaz had been David's messenger before, and maybe he felt a certain loyalty and was anxious to do it again. Some believe that Joab thought the bad news should come from a foreigner, rather than a personal friend, in case David's anger was aroused. David didn't have a good record of receiving bad news (II Samuel 1:11-16; 4:5-12). It is possible that Ahimaaz did know the news, but got scared and, because of his friendship, evaded the question. Ahimaaz also had a good reputation for bringing good news, and perhaps Joab knew that the king would see Ahimaaz and assume that the report was good, which is exactly what David did, according to verse 27.

Ahimaaz was fast, and he took a different route. The Cushite went straight across the mountains from the woods to Mahanaim. Ahimaaz made

a detour, coming down into the Jordan Valley, and then following the high road through it, and then up the path to the city. Ahimaaz may have been a marathon runner. In fact, I think I saw him at the Boston Marathon last April. He runs fast, but he sure dresses funny! (Just kidding!)

- 8.** *How did David receive the bad news? What two words does David repeat over and over?*

David is heartbroken over the news. His only concern seemed to be his son; not any details concerning the other 20,000 men that were killed. At that moment, he was a dad. As mothers, our hearts go out to him. Even though our kids often rebel, and sometimes want nothing to do with us, we never stop loving them. David “found no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezekiel 33:11). His weeping and wailing must have echoed through the palace. This is probably one of the saddest chapters in the Old Testament.

William Blaikie suggests three reasons that David’s grief was so overwhelming: (1) The loss of his son. With all his faults, he still loved him. (2) The terrible fact that Absalom died in rebellion without expressing one word of regret, without one request for forgiveness, without one act or word that would be pleasant to recall in time to come. (3) The fact that in this rebellious condition he would have to pass before the judgement of God. What agony to a Christian’s heart to think of the misery of a loved one dying without pardon.

There are many of you that have lost children, or other loved ones, and felt the grief that David is experiencing. May the God of all comfort fill you with His Spirit, and may you sense His presence in a powerful way while you grieve. God heals the broken hearted (Psalm 147:3).

- 9.** *Is there anyone in your life, maybe from your past, that you need to make amends with? Ask the Lord for wisdom on how to do it and what to say. Our lives on earth can end any minute; make sure that you’ve patched up any grievances you have with anyone.*

This is a sad note to end on, but death is never easy. Although the death of people we love is heart wrenching, we can be thankful that God put those people in our lives, even for a short time. Their lives give us a “Reason to Rejoice.” Lord, thank you for allowing them to touch our life.

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory. How does it minister to your heart?

Today we’re going to look at a few Psalms that David wrote during this time. It’s a blessing that the Holy Spirit put these Psalms in the Word so we can get a peek into David’s heart during the difficult times in his life.

- 1. Read Psalm 62:1-12. How does it relate to what David was feeling as Absalom was trying to take his throne? What are some verses that specifically tie this Psalm to that time period?*

- 2. What does David say about God in this Psalm?*

- 3. What does he say about himself?*

- 4. What do you think is the main point of this Psalm? In a few words, what is the heart of what David is trying to say?*

- 5. Read Psalm 63:1-11. What phrases minister to your heart?*

6. *What is David's main point?*

7. *How did David turn a wilderness experience into a worship experience? (What phrases show us that?)*

In review of the two chapters we studied this week, I'd like to quote a paragraph in Charles Swindoll's book about David because he paints a vivid picture of the sadness of this chapter. He writes:

"As the sun set that evening, David's mournful wail drifted through the city, like a plaintive toll of a funeral bell. And it tolls today as a somber warning to all of us. David's grief calls to the spouse allured by the fantasy of a secret affair, to the parent drawn to a busy life that leaves no room for the children, to any person tempted to exchange his or her future for the fleeting pleasures of sin. Are the selfish choices that we so casually cast to the wind worth the whirlwind that waits to strike us and those we love?"

If you've begun to veer into the path of carnality, thinking that you can do what you want and God's grace will cover your tracks, stop and think again. Although grace cancels the debt of sin, it doesn't necessarily cancel the consequences of sin. God's forgiveness is sure, but so is sin's harmful fallout. Ask yourself, 'How many innocent people will suffer in the wake of my sin?' How David wished he had asked himself that question before he called for Bathsheba. Sadly for him, the warning came too late. But for us, it may be just in time."

8. *Are you contemplating doing something, or making some decision that you know is not right, according to the Word of God? Will you stop and ask yourself how many people will suffer in the "wake of my sin"?*

***"Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name."
Psalm 63:4***