

ABSALOM'S AND SHIMEI'S REBELLION

BIBLE TEXT : II Samuel 15:1-17; 16:5-14; 18:1-33; 19:16-23; Psalm 3:1-8

LESSON 241 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head" (Psalm 3:3).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Samuel 15:1-17 (KJV)

¹ And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

² And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so*, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel.

³ And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.

⁴ Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

⁵ And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh *to him* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

⁶ And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

⁷ And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron.

⁸ For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

⁹ And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Absalom's Treachery in Winning the People

1 He is an attractive prince,

2 Samuel 14:25-26 (KJV)

²⁵ But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

²⁶ And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because *the hair* was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

2 He is vain and ambitious in character, II Samuel 15:1-4

3 He is deceitful and unprincipled in conduct, II Samuel 15:5, 6

II Absalom's Plot to Attain the Throne

1 He uses duplicity in his journey to Hebron, II Samuel 15:7-9

2 His plot is laid throughout Israel, II Samuel 15:10-12

III David's Humiliating Flight from Jerusalem

1 David departs from Jerusalem, II Samuel 15:13-17

2 Shimei curses David, II Samuel 16:5-14

IV The Victory for David; and Absalom's Death

1 David mobilizes his forces and pleads for Absalom, II Samuel 18:1-5

2 Absalom has a fatal mishap and loses the battle, II Samuel 18:6-18

3 David grieves for Absalom upon news of the victory, II Samuel 18:19-33

4 David shows clemency to Shimei upon his return, II Samuel 19:16-23

5 David trusts in God, Psalm 3:1-8

NOTES:

A Handsome Prince

"In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (II Samuel 14:25). But the wise brother of Absalom said, "Beauty is vain."

Men may be swept away by the outward appearance of a person, as the heart of Israel was by Absalom, but "the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). Beneath the grandeur and pomp of this beautiful prince, who rode his ornate chariot down the crowded street while fifty men cleared the way before him, God could see abominable pride. Behind the embellished greeting was the kiss of a Judas. "Oh that I were made judge in the land," were the words of this office-seeking, hand-shaking, vote-stealing politician.

Duplicity

With a deceitful heart and a pretense of paying a vow unto God, this vain prince went to Hebron to wrest the kingdom from his God-chosen and divinely-anointed father, David. How easily fooled were the people of Israel! "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres," said Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees of His day,

¹⁰ But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

¹¹ And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, *that were* called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

¹² And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

¹³ And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

¹⁴ And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

¹⁵ And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants *are ready to do* whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

¹⁶ And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, *which were* concubines, to keep the house.

¹⁷ And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

2 Samuel 16:5-14 (KJV)

⁵ And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

⁶ And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left.

"which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." Such was the condition of this son who murdered his brother and sought to slay his own father. Oh, the vanity of a smooth exterior when we come to stand before the almighty God! "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," said a people once whom God pronounced "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Driving down the highway in a luxurious custom-built automobile and clothed in a costly suit of clothes, many a sinner may think that he is doing very well, only to realize too late that his stock in trade will bring him nothing but eternal damnation. A man "clothed in purple and fine linen" awoke one day tormented in the flame of eternal hell. Oh, the folly of seeking the tinsel of this world while neglecting the soul!

The Flight of David

With fair words and flatteries Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. No doubt for years his cunning mind planned the betrayal of his father. David seemed unmindful or blind to the actions of his overindulged son. What a contrast between Absalom and David! Absalom, mid the blowing of bugles and fanfare, declared himself king in Hebron. "And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up" (II Samuel 15:30).

The priests and Levites bearing the Ark of the covenant of God started out with David's company, but David said, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (II Samuel 15:25, 26). In the affair David seemed to feel that the Lord was punishing him for his past sin. When Nathan the Prophet brought the message of the Lord to David the words were, "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house" (II Samuel 12:11). With humility and resignation David accepted the punishment as from the Lord. How few men there are like David — willing to take reproof!

Shimei's Shameful Conduct

As though the grief of losing the kingdom and the betrayal by his favored son were not enough, Shimei, of the house of Saul, cursed David and cast stones at his company. The brave warriors who were with David would soon have put an end to his maledictions, but David restrained them with, "So let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" He then added, "Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day" (II Samuel 16:10-12).

Could not such humility on the part of David warrant the words of Peter? "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (I Peter 2:19, 20).

⁷ And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:
⁸ The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou *art taken* in thy mischief, because thou *art* a bloody man.

⁹ Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

¹⁰ And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

¹¹ And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this* Benjamite *do it*? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

¹² It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

¹³ And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

¹⁴ And the king, and all the people that *were* with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

2 Samuel 18:1-33 (KJV)

¹ And David numbered the people that *were* with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

² And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's

The Death of Absalom

After a journey of more than sixty miles from Jerusalem, David organized his defense into three divisions and set captains over thousands, which shows that a sizable army went with him out of Jerusalem. Twenty thousand fell at the hands of David's servants that day, but the leader of the revolt, Absalom, met with a strange fate. "Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away." It has been said that the things of this world, like Absalom's mule, run away and leave us when we need them most.

David's Grief

The great love that David had for his rebellious son is shown in his words upon hearing of the death of Absalom: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (II Samuel 18:33).

Shimei Repents

When the victorious armies of David started the return trip to Jerusalem, who should meet them first but Shimei, the man who had cursed the king bitterly. He fell down before David in humble repentance. Although Abishai, one of David's generals, justly clamored for the life of Shimei, the king turned to Shimei and said, "Thou shalt not die."

We are reminded of the mercy of God to those who have sinned against Him all their days until driven by necessity to call upon His name and then to hear Him say, "Thou shalt not die." Think of that great love of Jesus, who while He was being nailed to the cross cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Although great was the compassion of David, it could not compare with that of the Son of God who died for His enemies.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What were some of the flaws in Absalom's character?
- 2 How did Absalom display his vanity?
- 3 In what way did he use duplicity?
- 4 Do you think it was necessary for David to flee from Jerusalem?
- 5 Who was Shimei?
- 6 Had he any right to say that the blood of the house of Saul was on David?
- 7 Was there any kinship between Abishai and David?
- 8 Can you see the hand of God in the death of Absalom?
- 9 What indication is there of the size of the company that went with David?
- 10 What points in this lesson bear out the fact that David was a man after God's own heart?

brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

³ But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now *thou art* worth ten thousand of us: therefore now *it is* better that thou succour us out of the city.

⁴ And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

⁵ And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, *Deal* gently for my sake with the young man, *even* with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

⁶ So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

⁷ Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand *men*.

⁸ For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

⁹ And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that *was* under him went away.

¹⁰ And a certain man saw *it*, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

¹¹ And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest *him*, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would

have given thee ten *shekels* of silver, and a girdle.

¹² And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand *shekels* of silver in mine hand, *yet* would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none *touch* the young man Absalom.

¹³ Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against *me*.

¹⁴ Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he *was* yet alive in the midst of the oak.

¹⁵ And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

¹⁶ And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

¹⁷ And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

¹⁸ Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which *is* in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

¹⁹ Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies.

²⁰ And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.

²¹ Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the

king what thou hast seen. And Cush
bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.

²² Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?

²³ But howsoever, *said he*, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.

²⁴ And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

²⁵ And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he *be* alone, *there is* tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

²⁶ And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold *another* man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

²⁷ And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He *is* a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

²⁸ And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed *be* the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

²⁹ And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was*.

³⁰ And the king said *unto him*, Turn aside, *and* stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

³¹ And, behold, Cush came; and

Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

³² And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man *is*.

³³ And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

2 Samuel 19:16-23 (KJV)

¹⁶ And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which *was* of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.

¹⁷ And *there were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.

¹⁸ And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

¹⁹ And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

²⁰ For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.

²¹ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD'S anointed?

²² And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I *am* this day king over Israel?

²³ Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king swore unto him.

Psalm 3:1-8 (KJV)

¹ LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many *are* they that rise up against me.

² Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is* no help for him in God. Selah.

³ But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

⁴ I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

⁵ I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

⁶ I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about.

⁷ Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

⁸ Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing *is* upon thy people. Selah.