

2 Samuel 15
March 3, 2024

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What are ways that power-hungry people steal it from those who have it? [Let people engage]

Transition: In today's text, we see that Absalom has a strong ambition to be king. And he is conniving. He knows he has to have the support of the Israelites, so he finds a way to usurp his father's position as king by "stealing the hearts of the men of Israel." If you really pay close attention, you'll see the WAYS Absalom went about taking the kingship from David. Let's begin.

BOOK:

Absalom's Conspiracy

15 In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. ² He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." ³ Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." ⁴ And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice."

⁵ Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. ⁶ Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

⁷ At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD. ⁸ While your servant was living at Geshur in Aram, I made this vow: 'If the LORD takes me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.' "

⁹ The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he went to Hebron.

¹⁰ Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.' " ¹¹ Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the matter. ¹² While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing.

David Flees

¹³ A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."

¹⁴ Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword."

¹⁵ The king's officials answered him, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king chooses."

¹⁶ The king set out, with his entire household following him; but he left ten concubines to take care of the palace. ¹⁷ So the king set out, with all the people following him, and they halted at a place some distance away. ¹⁸ All his men marched past him, along with all the Kerethites and Pelethites; and all the six hundred Gittites who had accompanied him from Gath marched before the king.

¹⁹ The king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland. ²⁰ You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us when I do not know where I am going? Go back and take your countrymen. May kindness and faithfulness be with you.”

²¹ But Ittai replied to the king, “As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be.”

²² David said to Ittai, “Go ahead, march on.” So Ittai the Gittite marched on with all his men and the families that were with him.

²³ The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by. The king also crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the people moved on toward the desert.

²⁴ Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city.

²⁵ Then the king said to Zadok, “Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. ²⁶ But if he says, ‘I am not pleased with you,’ then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.”

²⁷ The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Aren’t you a seer? Go back to the city in peace, with your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan, son of Abiathar. You and Abiathar take your two sons with you. ²⁸ I will wait at the fords in the desert until word comes from you to inform me.” ²⁹ So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there.

³⁰ But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered, and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up. ³¹ Now David had been told, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” So David prayed, “O LORD, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.”

³² When David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him, his robe torn and dust on his head. ³³ David said to him, “If you go with me, you will be a burden to me. ³⁴ But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; I was your father’s servant in the past, but now I will be your servant,’ then you can help me by frustrating Ahithophel’s advice. ³⁵ Won’t the priests Zadok and Abiathar be there with you? Tell them anything you hear in the king’s palace. ³⁶ Their two sons, Ahimaaz son of Zadok and Jonathan, son of Abiathar, are there with them. Send them to me with anything you hear.”

³⁷ So David’s friend Hushai arrived at Jerusalem as Absalom was entering the city.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Let's ask the Lord to help us walk with Him as king all day long in our lives. Let's worship Jesus as king in every facet of our lives and to live to make His worth as king known among our circles of influence.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (2 Sam 15). Victor Books.

II. The Reactions of the People (15:1–37)

While David was reigning in power, his real enemies would not dare to oppose him, but Absalom's revolt gave them what appeared to be a wonderful opportunity to resist the king and get away with it. It was a time of sifting the true from the false.

A. David's friends (15:13–37).

Leaving Jerusalem was a wise move for David, for it would not have taken much force to make him a prisoner in his own palace. Note that the Gentiles in his army, led by Ittai the Gittite, were

loyal to their king. Undoubtedly these men had stood with David during his trying years of exile. The two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, also started to follow their king, but David sent them back to the city. This in itself was a step of faith, for David was trusting God to give him victory and return him to his throne. David did not make the mistake Eli's sons made when they rashly took the ark into battle (1 Sam. 4–5); he sent the priests and the ark back to Jerusalem. Of course, the priests could spy for him and send their sons with information. Hushai was also sent back to the city to pose as an ally of Absalom; his counsel could change that of Ahithophel. It is a sad picture as David and his small army flee the city and cross the Kidron River. It reminds us of our Lord Jesus as He was rejected in Jerusalem, left the city, and crossed the Kidron to pray in the garden (John 18:1). The "Judas" in David's situation was his former friend Ahithophel; perhaps Ps. 55:12–15 was written at this time. Psalms 3 and 4 were composed during this rebellion, and in them we see where David was putting his faith.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). 2 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, p. 471) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

1. ABSALOM'S CAPTURE OF THE KINGDOM (CHAP. 15)

15:1–6. Absalom's first move to achieve his purposes of revenge was to make himself conveniently available (**by the side of the road leading to the city gate**, with his **chariot** and **50 men**) to hear the complaints of the citizens. Cleverly he insinuated that **the king** was too busy to hear them and that David had not even provided lesser judges to adjudicate their cases. **If only** he were chief **judge ... Absalom** said, he would listen to one and all and deal impartially in every matter. **Absalom** showed the people great affection by kissing them when they came **to bow ... before him**. Thus he gradually gained the support of the masses.

15:7–12. One day, feeling that his popular support was overwhelming, **Absalom** requested and received permission from **the king to go to Hebron**, allegedly to pay **a vow ... to the LORD** which he had **made** while in exile in **Geshur** (cf. 13:37). For **4 years Absalom** had been weaning the people away from David. (The "4 years" appears in the Lucian recension of the LXX and the Syriac version [Peshitta], but the Heb. has "40 years," a figure which might refer to an event early in David's life, perhaps to his own anointing at Bethlehem, 1 Sam. 16:13.) Now the time was ripe for revolution. When **Absalom** reached **Hebron**, the very center of the Davidic dynasty, where David had begun his reign (2 Sam. 3:2–3), Absalom announced his usurpation of power (15:10). The **200 men** who **accompanied him from Jerusalem** were ignorant of his plans. Apparently they were won over as was **Ahithophel ... David's** own chief **counselor**.

15:13–23. News quickly reached the capital that **Absalom** had effected a coup and that all was lost. **David**, convinced of the hopelessness of his cause and anxious to spare **the city** from destruction, made his plans to depart and head east for the Transjordan. He left behind **10** housekeeping **concubines**. **The people**, including **600 Gittites** (faithful men who had followed him from Gath in Philistia when he was pursued by Saul; 1 Sam. 23:13; 27:2; 30:9), fled with David. He tried to persuade his Philistine mercenary officer, **Ittai** of Gath, to remain behind since he had nothing to fear from **Absalom**. **But** to his credit **Ittai** refused, preferring to honor his commitment of loyalty by joining **the king** in banishment.

15:24–29. **Zadok and Abiathar**, the two chief priests, were sent **back to Jerusalem** by David. He knew that if it was God's will for him to return as king, he would do so. Hence there was no need to keep **the ark** away from the sanctuary. After all, it was David and not the Lord who was going into exile. Besides, the priests' two sons (**Ahimaaz**, Zadok's **son**, and **Jonathan**,

Abiathar's **son**; see the chart "The Ancestry of Zadok and Abiathar," near 8:15–18) could carry to David any revelations which God might give their fathers.

15:30–37. **David** and his loyal supporters in the meantime made their way east across the Kidron Valley and **up the Mount of Olives**. His **covered** head and unshod feet indicated his depth of despair. To make matters worse **David** discovered that his trusted adviser **Ahithophel** had joined Absalom's cause. To contravene **Ahithophel's** effectiveness David recruited **Hushai**, a friend who asked to accompany the king on his way, and persuaded him to **return to** Jerusalem and attach himself to Absalom's court as a counselor. His mission would be to contradict the **advice** of Ahithophel and to communicate Absalom's plans to **Zadok and Abiathar** whose **sons** (cf. v. 27) in turn would relay them to David (cf. 17:21; 18:19). David then continued in his flight, but **Absalom** took firm control of **Jerusalem**.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 128-129). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Absalom's Coup (15:1–37). Four years later the crown prince mounted an insurrection against the king by taking the king's place in the eyes of the people. Ironically, David's kingdom almost collapsed as a result of his own mishandling of his subjects rather than external threats. Absalom began to play the role of king. He had a private standing guard and functioned as final arbiter of judicial cases. Absalom stole away the hearts of the people, and he attempted to steal the kingdom from David. At Hebron, where his father had been declared king, Absalom's coconspirators acclaimed him king. Among their ranks was David's political advisor, Ahithophel.

Joined by a small but loyal contingency of Kerethites and Pelethites, David fled across the Kidron Valley toward the desert. He left behind his royal harem. Ittai the Gittite and his six hundred mercenary soldiers (Philistines from Gath) went with David. David sent Zadok and Abiathar back to Jerusalem with the ark of the Lord. David knew that the ark belonged in the house of God. He believed that if God so desired, he would return one day to see the holy place of the Lord. The two priests, as prophetic seers, could aid David by learning of Absalom's plans and inquiring of the Lord in his behalf. Also, David countered the wisdom of Ahithophel by ordering Hushai the Arkite to remain in Absalom's service in order to confound the coup's strategy.

Tatum, S. L. (1972). *2 Samuel*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (pp. 187-188). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Absalom's Conspiracy (2 Sam. 15:1–37)

The passage—Absalom secured a personal bodyguard for protection and for appearance. He set about to undermine his father's throne. He sought popularity by claiming to have personal interest in those who found difficulty in getting to see David. He told every man that his claim was right and that if he were king, he would hear him and grant his wish. When a man would bow before him, he would kiss him and make him feel important. Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Claiming he wanted to go to Hebron to worship, Absalom secured permission to leave Jerusalem. Secretly he had arranged for those who wanted to make him king to meet him at Hebron. The conspiracy was strong, and the numbers with Absalom increased.

David fled Jerusalem. He did not want the city to be destroyed in battle. He left only a few of his servants to care for the household. His faithful servants went with him.

The loyalty of Ittai the Gittite is best described in his own words in verse 21: “As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for life or for death, there also will your servant be.”

David insisted that the ark of God remain in the city of Jerusalem. He trusted God to bring him back if it was his will. One of the saddest passages in the Bible is the description of David’s leaving Jerusalem, weeping as he went. He was barefoot and had his head covered.

As David was leaving Jerusalem, Hushai agreed to return to Jerusalem to keep David informed of things he might hear there concerning Absalom’s strategy.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Samuel 15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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