



## “The Absalom SINDROME”

-2 Samuel 15-

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Things had not gone well for Absalom now for a very long time. That’s important for us to grasp in this story. Look at where we find Absalom in 2 Samuel 15. He did not get there overnight, nor are his actions a *reaction* to one event or simply a “bad day.” Multiple events of his life seemed to have cumulated to now create the “perfect storm.” His situation is a result of everyone failing to do what should have been done. David, Ammon, Jonadab, Ahithophel...certainly Absalom, *everybody* it seemed had “dropped the ball,” and now we are here. At the door of manifest. The fruition of a whole series of overt avoidance.

There were 6 stages that lead Absalom to this point.

1. First there was the **original wound** back in 2 Sam 13.1-19 – Amnon, David’s son thru Abigail, Absalom’s brother, rapes his sister Tamar and then casts her out. Absalom at this point does nothing, when he should have moved definitely and immediately. His father David the king also does nothing about this incestuous violation of his daughter Tamar. Most likely because he has somewhat of a guilty conscience because of his own similar action with Bathsheba some years before.
2. (2 Sam 13.2-33) **The attempt to rectify.** David does not act to discipline Amnon in any way so Absalom stewes about this offense for 2 years and finally conspires to kill his brother *and he does so*. What we see herein is a classic passive-aggressive situation! Absalom was, *at least at that time*, a man with a strong sense of justice, or perhaps it was all far less vigilante justice as it was the result of a personal issue...just pure hatred and revenge due to his own wounding over this event. This wound had festered for 2 years unhealed. Finally Absalom takes matters into his own hands and with his men kill Amnon in vengeance for raping his sister. Now Absalom is a *murderer*. To punish the *rapist* he becomes a *murderer*. That’s some fine logic...
3. 2 Sam 13.34-39 **The festering wound.** Absalom flees to his grandfather – the king of Geshur and lives there for 3 years. Absalom...seeking support and solace does what we all inevitably do in such situations, and that is seek out a sympathetic soul to support us in our personal cause. Most the time it doesn’t matter who, and we have proven thus in our reach ‘far and wide’ to find that support, even amongst those we barely know or do not know at all that share our animosity and hatred for a third party. Just someone who will tell us that our actions are righteous and justified. But “time does not heal all wounds” and Absalom’s separation from his father only causes his wound to get even worse. Now new emotions have joined the fray...things like *bitterness and anger*.

4. 2 Sam 14:1-24 **The rejection** – David allows Absalom to return to Jerusalem to his own house but not to *his* house nor to *his* company! David goes only “half-way” in making this right, which ultimately just aggravated the issue. Such half-way actions *always* aggravate the situation! This compounds the pain as now Absalom has **two** wounds now – the second being that he is rejected by his father.
5. 2 Sam 14:33 **The festering continues with no reconciliation** Absalom pushes...even via some schoolboy violence, to get into his father’s house and his father’s graces. Absalom was becoming popular with the masses because of his charisma and his handsome appearance. Finally David allows his son to come into his presence but only on a formal level, not in a real familial way. This all would naturally leave Absalom still “wanting” and unsatisfied. Absalom had an “itch that couldn’t be scratched” and it was starting to have ingrained and obsessive effect.
6. 2 Sam 15:1-12 **The conspiracy begins. The final blow...** Finally after he has his moment with his father, with no real reconciliation or redemption, Absalom moves in his flesh...which is *all he has left*, to conspire and betray his father, and **get through force** what was not being given to him through patient allegiance.

Absalom had a wounded spirit. Proverbs 18:14 says “*The human spirit can endure a sick body, but who can bear a crushed spirit?*” The book of Hebrews describes the destructive power of bitterness and an unhealed wound and how it destroys not just ourselves but those closest to us – Hebrew 15:15-16 “*Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.*”

But it seems that Absalom at least *felt* that he had nowhere to go and no one to turn to. What was Absalom to do? When life and situations leave us wounded, and life, people and situations are hard to live with, we have to know what to do with that pain and angst or we will find ourselves in Absalom’s shoes. Bitterness will find root in our lives and we will be consumed like a cancer. Along the way in this journey we will hurt many people that we love and we will drag down in hatred people that we hold in animosity maybe even *years* after the fact. People who probably don’t even remember the event, and have moved on in their lives, and are living in joy and peace now. It is just us *alone* that remains on the battle field...fighting ghosts and warring invisible demons that exist only in our heads and in our past...

The answer is this: we must take “all our stuff”, *our anger, all the reasons we are hurt, what people did to us, how we were mistreated, how we were betrayed, how we failed and all of it* – and leave it at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ. That may sound clichéd, but the truth of this remains. Unless we give it all to Christ, we are in essence holding out on our Savior and Lord. Our life as born again believers belong to HIM now. And holding out on God simply reflects an unthankful heart and a lack of understanding of just what redemption and forgiveness means for us! We are “keeping back” something that we believe to be ours and ours alone, even if it is our anger, bitterness and vengeful spirit. Such therefore stands “before God” and is an idol. These issues can cost us our eternity!

**1 Jn 3:15** says “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

**1 Jn 4:20**, “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

**1 Jn 2:11**, “But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

Because Absalom did not deal with his heart on these issues, the ‘darkness’ took over and consumed him and his life. His actions were not simply immoral and they were certainly more than ‘shortcoming sin.’ His actions were those of conspiracy and much planning. He *contrived* these events...thought them out and planned their execution. Absalom had somewhere...and at *some point*, decided that he was justified in his actions via any and every method. He had been *wronged*, after all! He thought he was justified and was righteous. But such justification was not the case! Today we have online social media slander, revenge through property and material damage, drive-by shootings, road rage, spousal abuse and innumerable social attacks through gossip, lies, and innuendo. The methods and avenues endless.

I know a lot of folks who claimed, and *some yet claim*, to be Christian that have kept the hot embers of bitterness and revenge alive for years, *some now for decades!* Their overt spewing hatred of course excludes them from the faith no matter what verbal affirmation they make. But what is so sad is that *again*, they are the only one left on the battle field. Everyone else had gone home and went about living their lives. For us there is no war. The war is over. But for these other folks, “bitterness is like a Twinkie”...You can unwrap that thing 20 years from now and it is just as sweet and yummy...

This anger and bitterness is eventually and universally their downfall. Every time it has the same affect...it “*eats them up like a cancer.*” I have seen it practically drive people crazy...consume their lives, cost them marriages and family relationships, destroy vocational livelihoods, and steal all the joy and beauty of the life that God has given us. They become dangerous to themselves and others around them, and end up being on security watch lists.

Absalom would appear to have gotten his revenge in this chapter, but in a few chapters we will see that things like this are so often an illusion and victory can indeed be fleeting. Because “*what he meant for evil, God meant for good.*” And in the end, the winner will be who the winner always is: **Jehovah God**. You can’t “beat the house....”

For David, the end result will be a very different picture than that of Absalom. We read in Psalms, that which we know as the “exile Psalms.” Through those writings one cannot help but see that despite the persecution and difficulty he endured, he was able to find a greater trust in God. He came to a great conviction that no matter how crazy things are and how he might emotionally feel under the weight of such, the Lord was still on the throne. God was still in control. (Note Psalms 3 and 4)

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How was Absalom's approach to enacting revenge and gaining power similar to the way people attempt to do this in modern times? What image did he craft for himself?
2. Do you personally know someone who is in a similar situation as Absalom in the issues of anger and bitterness? How is it playing out in his/her life?
3. What was Absalom trying to do with the positioning of himself at the gate of the city each morning and the subsequent conversations he would have?
4. When people started to bow to him because he was the crown prince, he reached out his hand and stopped them, pulled them to himself and kissed them. How is this heart and action similar to Judas in the garden with Christ? What is each trying to prove by their actions?
5. How did Absalom gain position and prestige so quickly? Is their behaviors and practices that make some leaders vulnerable to such coups?
6. Absalom reinvented himself. He built an image that would take him to where he wanted to go. Why does image hold so much sway with the general population? How does this play out in politics, entertainment, and social/business decisions and interactions?
7. Does this chapter serve as a warning and/or a wake-up call for the local church today? How so?
8. What do we see in Ittai ("it-tah'ee") in vs 21. "*He said to the king, "I vow by the LORD and by your own life that I will go wherever my lord the king goes, no matter what happens — whether it means life or death."* **SUPREME LOYALTY**. How important is such a trait today? To us as a church? To you as an individual and potential friend?
9. David's story is full of potential danger. What lessons do you expect that he will learn about himself, his God, and other people in the weeks and months to come in the story-line?
10. David endured a lot of suffering in his life so far. What do you think all that suffering accomplish?  
(*Does that change the way you think about suffering and trials in your own life?*)