

Explore the Bible: Deposed

July 4, 2018

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for July 22 focuses on 2 Samuel 15:10-16, 24-30.*

As we watch this saga continue to unfold, we see the sad state of a family turning into a bitter rivalry. The prophetic words of Nathan have been taking shape through Absalom's rebellion, and as a fair warning to the reader, things will only get worse.

Even though Absalom returned to Jerusalem following the murder of his brother, it still took a while for him to see his father's face. Interestingly enough, we can see a comparison of Absalom to Saul in 2 Samuel 14:15-16; both were fine in appearance, and both would rival David.

Knowing that things will only get worse, how does knowing that David's own son would cause such animosity make us feel? Rivalry is one thing, but the break-up of a family is an even deeper pain to experience. As modern readers, we should prepare ourselves to listen and learn in spite of the tragic circumstances.

Entitlement (2 Samuel 15:10-12)

Robert Chisholm considers this story as an Old Testament comparison to the "Prodigal Son" account, labeling this section as "The prodigal son comes home in body, but not in spirit" (Robert B. Chisholm, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 250). While the son in the Gospel parable returns as a humbled man, Absalom returns cocky and cunning.

Ask your group: *What bothers you most about how Absalom went about his plan?* Everything was done in secret as he underhandedly planned a time to

gain his pronouncement as king, causing an upheaval for his father. His selfish ambition involved both the guilty and the innocent, and it only fostered his desires.

Currently, conspiracies gain focused attention. Political shows, such as *House of Cards*, show the gritty and ruthless nature of conspiracies. Corruptions are the subject of headlines. This is a topic that draws us in with both frustration and intrigue. *How do we respond to conspiracies? What emotions do these evoke in us as the audience?*

Fright (2 Samuel 15:13-16)

Perhaps David's response to flee seems a bit too easy and too quick a response. Yet, considering that David recognized his failure, we see his fear was validated. His sin cost him enough already, and there was no need stubbornly to remain just to be stripped of more than he already had lost.

The language of the "hearts of the men of Israel" being allied with Absalom shows the deeper commitment. The "heart" or "decisive will" would not be deterred. This means nothing David could do would turn their hearts. *Is this really such a hopeless situation?*

In a positive light, we see those allied with David continued to remain with him, even in fleeing the palace and Israel's capital, named for their king. David's own son turned against him, yet his servants remained. We do see some loyalty to the anointed king.

Flight (2 Samuel 15:24-30)

If this scene were to be acted out on the stage, one can imagine the depressing nature of what really took place. Be sure to notice David's words in verses 25-26. The king was leaving the very city he conquered for

Israel, knowing he might not return.

Ask your group to imagine themselves in this situation: *If you were in David's place, would you have done what he did? What would you have done differently?* One thing is for sure: David was leaving his fate in God's hands and not his own.

Something unique to consider is how the Mount of Olives is specified as a place where David exited Jerusalem, accompanied by those weeping. The same place where Jesus agonized going to the cross is the same place David's exile was mourned centuries earlier.

Conclusion

Being deposed is never something to be celebrated. For David, it meant shame, pain, and familial destruction. For the nation of Israel, it meant potential for hostility, certainly leaving the innocent citizens as the most vulnerable.

Only a few decades ago, U.S. President Richard Nixon faced shameful impeachment, and instead chose to resign. He is quoted as saying: "I have never been a quitter. To leave office before my term is completed is opposed to every instinct in my body. But as president I must put the interests of America first. Therefore, I shall resign the presidency."

In situations such as these, the only shreds of dignity left are well spent on the needs of others involved. David put his fate in God's hands, leaving his rightful place as king so no further cost would be spent. While it was shameful situation, we see trusting God in those situations leaves us with our best option.

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