

## **ABSALOM'S REBELLION.**

– AUGUST 23. – 2 Sam. 15:1-12. –

**Golden Text – "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."  
– Exod. 20:12.**

IN this account of Absalom's rebellion there are several important lessons to thoughtful minds. (1) First of all we notice in Absalom the sin of disrespect to parents. The experience and wisdom of riper years are, when heeded, the safeguards of youth, and specially in the case of parental experience and wisdom, which parental love is ever desirous of utilizing for the benefit of sons and daughters, to protect them from the ills of life of which they have learned either by experience or observation. Youth, alas! too often disregards this divinely provided safeguard until by and by it learns its folly by bitter experience. The hopefulness of youth naturally gilds the future with glory; and, with ardent spirits, undisciplined, unrestrained and self-conscious, it plunges into new schemes, sanguine of the success of its theories until, by and by, its bright visions fade before the stern realities of life.

So it was with Absalom; and so it is with every youth who disregards the commandment of the Lord, "Honor thy father and thy mother;" and again, as expressed by the Apostle, "Children obey your parents." The duty to "honor" parents, however, extends far beyond the obligation to obey them, which specially applies to childhood, and not to mature years. The duty of honoring parents extends from the cradle to the grave, and when the last honors are paid to the lifeless forms of parents they should still hold an honored place in the archives of memory. Nothing is more beautiful in youth than preferment and deference to riper years, and specially to old age. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man." – Lev. 19:32.

(2) We notice in Absalom the sin of disrespect to the God of his father, which was but the natural result of his lack of love and confidence in his father. He entirely ignored the facts that the kingdom was the Lord's, and that the Lord placed whom he would upon the throne, so that his youthful ambition plotted not only against his father, David, but also against God, who had anointed David to be king, and who also promised to establish his throne and to indicate his successor, and to subdue all his enemies. In his rebellion Absalom vainly thought not only thus to outwit his father, David, but also the Almighty Jehovah. How vain and foolish! what reckless folly! And yet, how many have repeated this folly, and few of the sons of men have paused to consider how puny is the arm of flesh when lifted in defiance of the Almighty!

(3) We see how political intrigue stole the hearts of the people and made the cause of Absalom temporarily very prosperous, so that "the conspiracy was strong and increased continually with Absalom." But every successful step of the plot was only bringing the young man nearer to the height from which he must eventually fall. So it is in the temporary success of every evil device: the much sought elevation only adds force to the final disaster. In this view it is manifest that the truest friendship to the wayward is resolute, wise and well-planned opposition, which no flattery or political craft can overcome. Such friendship is seldom appreciated except by Him who reads the heart, though it does sometimes turn the sinner from the error of his way and save a soul from death. For such service how necessary is great sobriety, patience, faith, hope and love! especially in any efforts to assist fellow members of the prospective body of Christ, who are now on trial for eternal life and in the race for the prize of our high calling, lest any, becoming wayward, should fail of the grace of God.

(4) We observe the progressive course of evil – how the sin of ingratitude and dishonor to a father brought on ambition and defiance of God; how this led to unscrupulous political intrigue, flattery and lying; and finally to a bold and wicked plot which was treason alike to

the king and to God. In all this Absalom was cultivating that haughty spirit which goes before a fall.

While thus noting the course of Absalom and its lessons to the young, there is also a hint of wisdom for parents which they would do well to heed. The example of David to his children was not a faultless one: the sins of his youth and of his later years yielded a most undesirable harvest. Not only had he violated the law of God in multiplying wives to himself (Deut. 17:14-17), but he had further transgressed by taking some heathen wives, the mother of Absalom being the daughter of the heathen king Talmi, king of Geshur in Syria; and the children of a polygamous household, living apart from their father with their several mothers, were necessarily almost without a father's influence and care, so that Absalom was brought up under the influence of a heathen mother and apparently with little reverence or respect for the true God.

The sin of Amnon for which Absalom slew his brother was one deserving of punishment, and yet in view of his own sin with the wife of Uriah how could David become the avenger? The crime doubtless caused him sorrow and tears and bitter reflections upon the past, all of which he recognized as part of his own penalty but, remembering his own folly, he could not punish the offender. **[R2025 : page 198]**

In the slaying of Amnon, whatever purposes of selfish ambition or personal hatred may have mingled with his indignation, Absalom was avenging the crime against his sister with only a lawful vengeance, the prescribed penalty being death. To David, who loved all his children, this was a terrible blow, and Absalom, fearing his indignation, fled to his maternal grandfather where for three years, unrecalled by his father, he remained, under the influence of that heathen land, no doubt restive under unfavorable conditions, with no indication of any favorable turn of affairs and chafing under a sense of injustice, since in avenging his sister he had merely executed the sentence of the Law (Deut. 27:22; Lev. 20:17); and, brooding over his misfortunes and magnifying

all the faults and weaknesses of his father, it is no matter of surprise that the spirit of rebellion strengthened; for in the absence of any expression of his father's interest in him, how could he [R2025 : page 199] know of his heart yearnings? And when after three years he was permitted to return to the land, still he was not permitted to see his father's face, nor to know of his continued love for two more years.

It is not, therefore, surprising that the experience of these five years fastened upon the mind of Absalom the conviction that his father no longer loved him or considered his interests; and this feeling rankling in his heart, he prepared to set at defiance his kingly authority, and in the fire of his youth, the self-consciousness of early manhood and his now dominant ambition, he also recklessly ignored the divine authority.

This attitude of David toward his son was a great mistake on the part of David, the realization of which when it was too late to rectify it doubtless greatly deepened the grief which was subsequently expressed in the bitter and tearful lament, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee. O Absalom, my son, my son!" For five years David had allowed the hard side of his nature to thoroughly conceal his tender emotions; and not only so, but in all that time he had been neglecting his opportunities for exerting a godly influence upon his son, and that at a time when he most needed such influence, and instead of which he was surrounded with the influences of a heathen land. It was a dear price for David to pay for his resentment, and in the light of his son's highest interests it was certainly very poor policy. Yet how often is the mistake of David repeated by fathers! Many seem to forget the temptations, trials and inexperience of youth, and so fail to be gracious, considerate, forbearing and studious of their highest interests. Kind, generous, self-forgetful interest will follow the son long after childhood has matured into manhood, and will make parental counsel very potent long after parental authority has ceased.

There is probably no time in life more fraught with danger than when the young birds leave the home nest and launch out to try their

own wings and to carve out their own fortunes. And if they can go with a father's and a mother's blessing; if every rebuff and misfortune they meet from a hard, cold world elicits home sympathy and prayers and loving encouragement; if father's house is felt to be the place of refuge in case of a sudden disaster; if they feel that loving forbearance there offsets the hard knocks of experience outside, what a power is there for good! It certainly is not a wise father that will long permit any pride of dignity or stiff reserve to forego the privileges of his position for the blessing of his offspring.

Parents should heed well this lesson, that the bitter lament of David over a son whom kindness, forbearance and loving counsel and sympathy might have saved, may not be theirs; and in every relation of life let us all see to it that love not only exists, but also that it is made very manifest.

In verse 7 the word "forty" evidently should be "four." It is believed to be a transcriber's error.

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