

THANKLESS, REBELLIOUS ABSALOM

– JULY 4. – 2 SAMUEL 18:1-15. –

THE STORY OF ABSALOM – HOW DIFFERENT FROM HIS FATHER – HIS WASTED OPPORTUNITIES – HIS CONTEMPTIBLE END AS A TRAITOR AND DISOBEDIENT SON WHO SOUGHT HIS FATHER'S LIFE – THE BOY THE FATHER OF THE MAN – THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS – THE CHILD WHAT THE PARENTS MAKE HIM – EUGENICS NOT SUFFICIENT.

**"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right."
– Ephesians 6:1.**

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is

To have a thankless child!"

OUR Study of today discusses the death of Absalom. It is sufficiently explicit without comment. It will be of value to us, however, to look backward along the life of this young prince and to note some of his failures. In the first place, he was not well-born. His mother, King David's wife, was the daughter of a heathen king nearby. His mother may have been beautiful, probably was; for the Scriptures indicate that Absalom was a beautiful boy, a beautiful young man, having a fine, courteous manner and being a popular idol. He had the disadvantage of being a member of the royal family and not being required to labor with sweat of face.

Absalom is first brought prominently to our attention by his murder of his half-brother Amnon, to avenge his sister's honor. For this he fled to the protection of his grandfather. He was thus still further removed from any good influences associated with his father and with the true religion. After several years' absence, his

father, who had never ceased to love him and mourn him, was induced to invite Absalom back to Jerusalem – where for two years more, he declined to receive his son into his presence. All of these influences were unfavorable to the young man, but none of them can excuse his treachery to his father, Israel's king.

ABSALOM'S CONSPIRACY

There were judges throughout the Land of Israel for the deciding of the ordinary causes of discontent; but when their decisions were unsatisfactory, appeal was made to the king as to a superior court. King David was busily engaged in preparing the materials for the Temple, which was not to be built until after his death. This may to some extent have hindered him from his work for the people as a superior judge, so that some of their cases, as in every superior court, were delayed of a hearing – tediously, it seemed to those impatient for desired results.

We are not sure, however, that there was anything lacking on King David's part as respects the administration of justice. We merely know that his crafty son, Absalom, made himself very popular. He was very gracious to the people, very familiar with them, always ready to hear their complaints; and he answered them very cunningly, expressing sorrow for their delay, and saying, Would that I were king! It would be different! Thus by deception, by intrigue, by falsehood, we read, he "stole the hearts of the people" from his father. The people really began to think that if they had such a man for a king, they would be immensely better off. They seemed to have overlooked entirely the fact that God was the King of Israel; and that, as the Bible says, King David merely sat upon the Throne of the Lord. – 1 Chron. 29:23.

Absalom was spectacular, a beautiful prince, with long, wavy hair. He rode in his chariot; and before him were fifty swift runners, his heralds. The thoughtless people admired this; and,

apparently, at least one wise man was drawn away by the infectious infatuation of this glitter.

Absalom knew of his father's religious sentiments, which apparently he did not at all share. He realized that he would not probably be his father's choice for a successor; and that the time for a new king was not so very far off, as King David was becoming aged. Following Satan's course of ambition and disloyalty to God, Absalom became disloyal to his father. He recruited an army, proclaimed himself king, and did the matter so quickly and so thoroughly, with the sympathy of so many people whose hearts he had stolen, that King David and his regular army and the loyal ones of his court were obliged to flee for their lives. Our lesson recounts the battle which was fought between the superior forces of Absalom and the smaller forces of King David, who, however, were better trained soldiers. The victory came to King David. Absalom was slain, notwithstanding David's urgent request of his soldiers that they should not kill the young man, his son.

What a contrast we have here between the man after God's own heart and the man whom the people admired – the flashy, the showy, the ambitious, the deceitful, the intriguing, the rebellious, who sought his father's life! The man of God, notwithstanding his weaknesses, which were acknowledged and repented of, had a heart of loyalty to God, true as the needle to the pole; and he had a sympathetic love for his son which found expression in that notable dirge, "O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!"

A VERY IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE

The human will is wonderful, so that we might almost say that each boy is responsible for his own career. Our expression, a self-made man, is therefore not far wrong.

This, however, does not excuse the parent whose duty it is to see that a proper child is born into the world, reasonably gifted – not merely outwardly beautiful, but conscientious, just, loyal to God and to the principles of righteousness. Nor does it excuse the parent from giving the child proper conceptions of life, proper instruction; for the Scriptures say, "Train up a child in the way he [R5700 : page 170] should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." – Proverbs 22:6.

It seems pitiful indeed that, with all the preaching and teaching of centuries, so few parents realize their obligations toward the children they bring into the world. So few fathers realize that they are the protectors and caretakers of their wives and of their off-spring; and that not only is it their duty and privilege to select a noble, conscientious wife to be the mother of the family, but it is also their duty to place her under favorable conditions during the period of gestation, and generally to assist her to keep her mind and her heart pure, loving, noble, loyal to God and to righteous principles, to the intent that their child may be well birthmarked, of noble character – less seriously marked and blemished with sin than would otherwise be the case. Well do the Scriptures declare that the people perish for lack of knowledge. – Hosea 4:6.

True, we have eugenics thrust upon our attention everywhere; but to what purpose? Important as this teaching is in respect to health and proper choice of a life-companion, it sinks into insignificance in comparison to the principle we are noting; namely, that the mind of the mother during the period of gestation is stamping and impressing, favorably or unfavorably, the character of her child. It of course would not be possible for a mother to produce a perfect child; but with her own ideals high and true and unwavering, fixed upon things pure, noble and good, we know beyond question that her child would thus be greatly benefited both physically and intellectually, and also morally. On

the other hand, as we have pointed out in the PHOTO-DRAMA OF CREATION, the perfect mother, Eve, could and did mark her son Cain with a jealous, unhappy disposition, which eventuated in his murdering his brother.

