

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

June 12

MONDAY

Joab sounded forth the retreat. Abner trekked through the night to get home. Joab also headed home, minus the 19 men and his brother Asahel who had died. There was some consolation that 360 of Abner's force had been killed. They buried Asahel in Bethlehem and then headed back to Hebron.

READ: II Samuel 2:29-32

I'm imaging the funeral of Asahel. Would it not have included a lot of praise for his bravery? And maybe testimony of his courage? Unspoken, yet in the back of everyone's mind, would have been the words of Abner concerning the wastefulness and foolishness of such killing. You know what would be great? A funeral service where there's no silent thoughts of waste and foolishness - only thoughts of a life well lived and one which was useful to the Lord, and a few remarks about the wisdom of living for Him. Let us live with that moment in the back of our minds.

TUESDAY

There was constant war between the two kingdoms. Gradually, David's side grew stronger while Asahel's side (the family of Saul, that is) grew weaker. In Hebron, David took some more wives and had six sons born to him: Amon, Chileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithream. (Mon, Chilli, Abs, Doni, Shep, & Ithy, as David surely nick-named them)

READ: II Samuel 3:1-5

We are told that David's house (meaning his family and kingdom) grew stronger while Saul's grew weaker. As if to prove it, six sons, born to David's wives while he resided in Hebron, are listed. We will meet these sons again later in David's story. But consider this: the listing of these six sons is solid evidence to support the claim that his family is growing stronger. Are you growing strong in the Lord? If you say "yes", what's the evidence? There will be some. A changed life? Evolving priorities? Different loves? An increasing desire to know the Lord? What exactly is the evidence?

WEDNESDAY

There was war between David's forces and the kingdom of Ishbosheth, Saul's son. General Abner was the commander of Ishbosheth's army. A capable leader, he was the main reason Ishosheth could stay in power. One day, King Ishbosheth accused Abner of inappropriate behavior with one of his father's former official wives.

READ: II Samuel 3:6-7

We see the foolishness of Ishbosheth. He was on the throne because of Abner, yet he is quick to find fault with him. We don't know the nature of his accusation and whether or not there is any truth to it, but we see here how God's purposes are served by all mankind. God's in control! All that's going on in our world today fits in perfectly with God's purposes. As we read about the war zones around the world, we do not rejoice in news of yet more dead American soldiers. We do not have to approve of the President's policy which keeps us at war. But we do not have to despair either. God is still in control! His purposes for the ages, as well as His purposes for you and me, are still being carried out. He is King of kings. That means, the King over all kings.

THURSDAY

Abner replied angrily to the king, asking if he did not deserve better, having clearly demonstrated his loyalty. He told the king that if it had not been for him, most certainly, David would be king of all Israel by now. Hearing Abner's angry reply, Ishbosheth was too afraid to challenge him on

this issue again. But Abner, surely realizing that his days of power and influence in Ishbosheth's regime were over, wrote a note to David offering to make a deal and unite the whole country behind him.

READ: II Samuel 3:8-12

Abner is a perfect example of the natural man, motivated by his own well-being. First, spurred by his own ambitions for position and power, Abner was zealous for Ishbosheth. But now, eager for personal revenge, he supports David. He was a slave to his sinful desires. Sometimes we forget what a difference God has made in our lives! We are no longer slaves to sin, but alive unto God; we are his servants. What a great motivation we have to live for Him!

FRIDAY

David responded to Abner's offer to defect with his own terms: Abner must first send Michal (Saul's daughter as well as David's wife) back to him. Saul had prevented them from being together. Evidently, advised to do so as part of Abner's plan, David wrote a letter to Ishbosheth, re-stating this demand. Michal, in the years since being separated from David, had remarried to a man named Paltiel. Learning of David's demand, Ishbosheth sent for her, evidently planning on sending her back to David.

READ: II Samuel 3:13-15

Abner's offer was a calculated one. He had a plan and it included David contacting Ishbosheth directly and demanding the return of his wife. Ishbosheth had already lost his key general - it would be a really bad time to antagonize his enemy. God's work is so amazing! This chain of events all started with Abner's affair with one of Saul's concubines. That was not a good thing, of course, but God used it to bring about His purposes in other areas: in David's personal life and in the enlargement of the nation Israel. Just think what God might be doing with your life today!

SATURDAY

At David's demand, Ishboseth ordered Michal to come to his palace (from where he plans to send her on to David). Paltiel, Michal's present husband, completely distressed, followed along behind her. Abner meets them and ordered Paltiel to return home. While this was going on, Abner secretly communicated with various influential people throughout Israel exhorting them to recognize David as the true king of all Israel. He reminded them that the Lord had said to Samuel (and Samuel had declared it to all) that it was through David that He would lead Israel to victory over the hated Philistines.

READ: II Samuel 3:16-18

Abner demonstrates a technique of Satan. He tries to use the Word of God to his own advantage. Abner encourages the leaders of Israel (certain that the public at large will follow him) to remember what God has said about David, and therefore to recognize him as king of all Israel. What a weasel! If he really believed this, why had he almost single-handedly put Ishbosheth on the throne? The truth is, he did not believe nor seek to obey what God had said. He simply used God's Word for his own selfish desires. Here's the lesson: just because someone throws around Bible terms doesn't mean that he speaks truth. The better we know the Word ourselves, the better we can discern such things. We need always to ask God for His wisdom.