

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Oct. 9

MONDAY

After four years passed (*that's the number we read in the NIV and probably the correct one*), Absalom asked David if he might leave the palace and go to Hebron in order to honor a vow which he had made to the Lord. He explained his vow to David and hearing it, David joyfully granted him permission.

READ: II Samuel 15:7-9

How excited David must have been to learn of Absalom's keen interest in serving the Lord even to the point of making a vow. Joyfully, he consented to Absalom's request to go to Hebron to fulfill his vow. By the way, Hebron was a Royal City - the very city where David had been proclaimed King years before. Absalom's plan is clear. What is also clear to us is the depths of Satan's efforts to work against God and bring down His people. He would bring us down today! How desperately we need to seek God and trust Him in all our ways! He is able to keep us from falling!

TUESDAY

At the same time, Absalom sent secret couriers across the land. It was their job to prompt the citizens of the land to support Absalom's claim to the throne. He took 200 men - who, it seems, had no clue of what lie ahead - with him from Jerusalem. Absalom sent for Ahithophel, David's key counselor, who happened to be in a nearby city. And more and more people gathered themselves around Absalom.

READ: II Samuel 15:10-12

Is not the end of verse 12 a sobering word? *He sent for Ahithophel...while he offered sacrifices.* Making a pretence of offering sacrifices to the Lord, what Absalom is really doing is plotting! He contacted a former advisor of his father, and offered him an important post in his soon-to-appear reign. While busy at the altar, his heart was far from it. We can all associate with that, can we not! Active in prayer, active in Bible study, active even in conversation about Godly things, yet our heart is not always in it. Help us, Lord, to remember that it is not sacrifice or any other activity which you desire - it's always the heart that longs for you!

WEDNESDAY

A messenger reported to David everything that was going on, and David, fearing an coup attempt from Absalom, and fearing for his life, ordered that his supporters leave Jerusalem with him immediately. Leaving only ten concubines behind, the king and all his men fled the palace and went to a safe spot in a secret place.

READ: II Samuel 15:13-17

Receiving news of what Absalom was up to was a major shock. David hastily ordered a retreat from Jerusalem. He took his household and loyal guards. The text tells us that he did so to spare the city. It captures our attention that David could have run for his life shouting, "Everybody for himself!" and everyone would have understood that. Instead, he arranged for the safety of his household and loyal troops. At a moment of unparalleled personal danger, David sees to the needs of his family and others. Maybe this part of David's story is recorded in the Bible so that we can learn and profit from it? What do you think?

THURSDAY

Besides his personal servants and the 600 loyal troops from Gath, the people of the land where he was hiding - the Cherithites, the Pelethites, and all the Gittites - also supported David. He confronted one of the Gittite commanders, Ittai by name, who was following him. David told him that while he appreciated his support, that he might be on the run for awhile, and therefore Ittai should take his forces and return to his own kingdom.

READ: II Samuel 15:18-20

David seems to be testing Ittai here. He suggests that Ittai not go with him. For his part, Ittai replied with words of great loyalty: *where my King is, whether in life or death, there I shall be.* In other words, even if David's side should lose the fight for the crown, you are my king and I will serve you, and serve you always! Wow!! *Here I stand*, Martin Luther stated; *I'll not be moved.* How about us today? How are we expressing our determination follow the Lord, and keep on following?

FRIDAY

Though instructed by David in the previous verses to return to his own country, Ittai told the king that he was determined to stay with no matter what. Hearing this brave and loyal reply, David agreed to let him, his family, and his men stay with him. David and his forces crossed the river and headed out into the wilderness to hide and regroup. With many good citizens of the land accompanying him, some cry over their beloved King's sad situation.

READ: II Samuel 15:21-23

Ittai pictures for us loyalty. *Whether in life or in death*, Ittai said, he would stay with David. A loyal servant follows through adversity. Genuine loyalty is more clearly seen in that dark moment! Lord, thank you for people whom you have brought into my life! Lord, allow me to be loyal to them and loyal to You.

SATURDAY

Surprising everyone, Zadok the priest (and many other priests) showed up with the Ark of the Covenant! They set it down on the banks of the Jordan until David's forces crossed. David ordered Zadok to return the Ark to Jerusalem, telling him that he thought God would allow him to return there, as well.

READ: II Samuel 15:24-26

David clearly expresses his convictions this way: whatever God does, that's fine with me. That could simply be David acknowledging the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. But it's more than that! It's David response to that power, wisdom, and goodness. "Here I am Lord. I trust You and Your ways completely, so do whatever You want with me. Whatever you do is good, and I willingly accept it." May David's words be mine and yours today!

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