

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 9A
SECOND SAMUEL
CHAPTER 15**

INTRODUCTION

Betrayal is part and parcel of daily life. This might be a cynical perspective of life but if we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that it is true. Betrayal is very painful for it speaks of a broken trust. But when it comes from your own son, the pain is many times worse. There is no winner in such circumstances. Everyone loses!

Chapter 15 and the first part of chapter 16 give an account of one of the most painful experience in David's life, namely his son's betrayal. Absalom, his son whom he brought back from exile and house arrest, rebelled against him and led a *coup d' etat*, which prematurely ended his rule for a while. David had to bear the alienation of his people, the curses of his subjects, the defection of his trusted advisors and the humiliation of his wives.

Throughout history, individuals driven by the lust for power and pleasure had committed many terrible deeds. They clamoured and by deceit worked their way stealthily into the circle of trust. At the right moment, they would strike like a poisonous adder. Much harm had been done to the cause of Christ when people pretended to advance His kingdom but actually sought to promote their own selfish goals and build their self-

importance. The most despicable ones are not those outside the church but those who dress themselves in the garb of religion and betray the LORD God who has entrusted them with His sheep.

This lesson is divided into two parts: the rebellion of Absalom and the exile of David.

COMMENTARY

**Absalom Steals the Hearts of the
People—15:1-6**

Absalom had regained David's favour. He was now the natural heir apparent after the death of Amnon his elder brother. David had not said anything to disqualify Absalom.

Absalom wasted no time in creating the air of a ruler. He prepared the finest chariots and horses, and 50 men to run before him as he moved in the streets of Jerusalem. It was a magnificent sight of an unblemished popular figure amongst his people. Daily he rose early to show his keenness and diligence. He would station himself beside the way of "the gate". The gate was the place where official business was conducted. Here the citizens came from far and near to have their grievances heard. They would be brought to the king as in the case of the widow of Tekoa (14:4). No self appointed judge would be tolerated or accepted. By placing himself in such a strategic position, Absalom would ask and hear everyone who came with their complaints. He told them that their complaints were good and right but there was no one whom the king had deputised to hear them. Then he added that if he were made the judge in the land, everyone could go to him and he would do him or her justice

(v.3, 4). With this, Absalom made every complainant hopeful and happy. His claim that the king did not deputize anyone to hear them was aimed to sow discord. This was an abomination in God's sight. Had not David heard the case of the widow of Tekoa? And when anyone came and did Absalom obeisance, he would receive him with a handshake and a kiss.

Absalom made it known that he was the people's man, that he cared for them and would give them a better life. This is like pastors who call themselves "people's pastor" rather than "godly pastors". Therefore with flattery, fair speech and kisses, he "stole the hearts" of the Israelites.

Absalom was a master politician who had an impressive public image. He had a flair for publicity, moving around in magnificent chariots attracting attention and applause. The heir apparent appealed to the people at their level to be their champion. He understood that people in general are guided by self-interest. Absalom took advantage of the shortcomings of David's government. He manipulated and played on the feelings of the people. Where there was no problem, Absalom created one and magnified it. No one would have any suspicion as to his devious motives.

The reality was he made no judgments at all, especially difficult ones. He simply claimed that he would be a good judge and that if he were king, his government would be caring and just. These were lofty ideals and he used them as a means of manipulating the people, getting power and establishing his reputation.

Absalom Revolts against David —15:7-12

The starting point of this period of 40 years was not revealed to us. It could not be from Absalom's birth for he was born in Hebron some considerable time after David had begun his reign (2 Sam 3:3), much less from the time of his vow made, or of his return from banishment. It could not be from the beginning of David's reign for he reigned 40 years. It could be from the time of David's election or designation to the kingdom (1 Sam 16:13). Perhaps it was a reference to the time when David was anointed by Samuel.

Forty years had passed since David was anointed king in Bethlehem by Samuel. Absalom under the guise of godly piety asked David's permission to make his way to the royal city of Hebron to pay his vows which he had made while he was in Geshur. He wanted to make a thanksgiving offering to the LORD for being restored to his father and for his return to Jerusalem. Absalom used the name of the LORD three times (v.7, 8) so David did not suspect any foul motive. He could have asked Absalom why he had chosen Hebron instead of Jerusalem. Absalom could explain to David that Hebron was important to him because it was his birthplace (2 Samuel 3:2-3). But Hebron was also the place where David began his reign in Israel. Once again, unsuspecting David played into Absalom's hand.

Absalom lied to his father. He had posted his secret messengers in all the tribes of Israel. At the appointed time when they hear the sound of the trumpet (Hebrew, *sopar*, ram's horn), each of them was to declare that Absalom reigned in

Hebron (v.10). In the meantime, Absalom made his way to Hebron with 200 men from Jerusalem. These men unsuspectingly accepted Absalom's invitation to Hebron. One of them was David's trusted counsellor, Ahithophel the Gilonite, who was then in Giloh.

Absalom clearly manipulated these men. They were unaware of the insurrection which Absalom had planned in Hebron. The presence of the 200 men and Ahithophel would give an outward stamp of approval when Absalom was announced as the new king! So it was done. The conspiracy was strong and successful. The masses began to increasingly look to Absalom as their king. Absalom's momentary success could be attributed to several factors. David had forgiven him and restored his favour towards him. The people could be dissatisfied with David's preoccupation with personal matters and his failure to sufficiently administer justice. Ahithophel had defected to Absalom. Some of Saul's supporters were still at large and waiting for this moment, preferring the son to the father. Absalom's charisma and public relations contributed to his success.

David Runs for His Life — 15:13-18

David learned of his son's revolt from a loyal messenger. Without hesitation, David immediately called for an evacuation of Jerusalem. He was suddenly awakened to the reality that Absalom would not spare him and his supporters. At the same time, David did not want to have a war in Jerusalem that would subject the people to violence, death and hardship (v.14). In this respect, David displayed greatness in sparing his people the ravages of a civil war.

David's servants who served him in his courts were ready to do whatsoever David instructed. These were his court officials and his household servants. These men were incapable of protecting him. He took with him his family including his wives but left 10 of his concubines in Jerusalem. These concubines would be better off with Absalom. Ironically, most of those who supported and went with David were foreigners – Cherethites and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites who numbered 600 men that came from Gath. They passed before the king—like a passing out parade. They were no match against the armies of Israel that had defected to Absalom.

Ittai a Loyal Friend—15:19-23

One of the Gittites who passed before David was Ittai. He had not been long in Jerusalem. David felt that it was not fair that he should go with him. The future was uncertain. David told him to return to his own people with all his brethren, and that he might be blessed with "mercy and truth" (v.20). Ittai answered David, "*As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be*" (v.21). David's thoughtfulness was commendable and showed him at his best even in times of stress. Ittai, a mercenary soldier, left no doubt as to his loyalty to David. He swore twice, once in the name of the LORD and then in the name of his master. He meant every word of his pledge. Ironically, his loyalty was in contrast to Absalom who had received so much undeserved kindness from his father. It was a shame and a disgrace. David was moved and allowed Ittai and his men and family to go with him. The whole entourage made their way

eastward down the Kidron valley towards Mount Olives. As they passed, the people wept audibly at the turn of affairs.

Zadok and the Levites Loyal to David—15:24-30

Zadok, Abiathar and the Levites also threw their lot on the side of David. They were ready to share David's banishment. They brought with them the Ark of the covenant of God from its Tabernacle in Jerusalem. David immediately told Zadok to carry the Ark of God back to the city. David reasoned that if the LORD should favour him, He would bring him back to Jerusalem again. But if the LORD "have no delight" in him, then let the LORD do what "seemeth good" to Him (v.25, 26). David's words to Zadok indicated his faith and submission to God and His will. He was not superstitious that the Ark should be with him in exile. He would not use God but he would submit and let God do as He pleased.

David commanded Zadok to return to Jerusalem with Abiathar and their sons. In Jerusalem, they could be of more help to David by informing him of events happening there. Zadok and Abiathar obeyed and returned to Jerusalem with the Ark of God. While David trusted God completely, he did something to help himself. God's sovereignty does "not stifle but releases human resourcefulness and ingenuity". David and his supporters went up Mount Olives. They wept as they climbed the slopes. David covered his head, walked barefooted as did all the men with him. From Mount Olives, they could look down on Jerusalem. It was a touching scene. Many years later, the Lord Jesus Christ would be at the same spot

looking down as He walked into the city weeping.

Ahithophel the Back-Stabber — 15:31-37

Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba, whose father was Eliam, the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite. He had served as David's most trusted friend and counsellor. He was a man with a very keen mind and sharp-wit.

One of David's men told him that Ahithophel had defected and joined the conspirators with Absalom. David straightaway prayed to God: "O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (v.31). David expressed his feelings in his psalms when he heard that Ahithophel had turned traitor: *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me (41:9); For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance (55:12, 13).*

PRACTICAL VALUE

Absalom was wicked. He had turned around and bitten the one that had fed him, and showered him with love, grace and mercy. Betrayal is the worst form of ingratitude.

Absalom's rebellion against David was more than a rebellion against a king. It was a rebellion against the LORD's anointed. David was God's appointed king to the throne of Israel. He had gone against God by his action against his own father. Similarly rebellion against the appointed pastors, elders and

deacons in the church is a rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church (John 5:23; Luke 10:16). These are the LORD's anointed. If there are grievances and dissatisfaction, the Lord Jesus Christ has mapped out a way to resolve them. Politicking and secret manoeuvring to garner support among the leadership and members of the church, like what Absalom did to his father, is morally wrong. People should be discerning and alert to avoid being manipulated and used by others for their selfish gains.

Rebellion against senior pastors by younger pastors is like the sin of Absalom. The younger pastors who dared to fight against God's anointed will not escape God's judgment but will be punished accordingly.

In times of troubles and tribulations, we know who our true friends are and who our foes are. A lesson for us is to remain a true friend to someone in trouble and in need. God help us.

AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 2 Samuel 15:1-12;

Psalm 3:1-8.

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 15:13-18; Galatians 6:7-10.

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 15:19-29; Philippians 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

Thursday: 2 Samuel 15:30-37; Luke 19:41-44.

Friday: 2 Samuel 15:1-37.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
2 Samuel 15:1-6	
2 Samuel 15:7-12	
2 Samuel 15:13-18	
2 Samuel 15:19-30	
2 Samuel 15:31-37	

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that a “people’s pastor” is a godly pastor?

5. What is revealed about David’s relationship with God in the midst of all these events (15:25-26)?

2. What was Absalom’s modus operandi in his rebellion? Why was it so successful?

3. What are some ways to rebel inside Calvary Pandan? Which, in your opinion, will be the most effective?

4. What was the contrast in the attitude of Absalom and Ittai, the foreign soldier, towards David? What lesson can we learn?
