

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 49

WALKING IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Selected Passages

Introduction

Because of his tragic season of moral compromise, David needed shelter and support. Personally, he was awash in guilt from his adultery and murder. Domestically, his family had been devastated by death, rape, revenge and rebellion. Politically, he was losing control of his kingdom as his ambitious son Absalom manoeuvred himself into power. To meet David's needs, God provided him not just one friend but a 'grove' of faithful supporters.

Read 2 Samuel 15: 12-16; 18-32; 32-37; 16: 1-4

Take some minutes to reflect on the selected passages

- From the passages above, what can you say about David as a "man of God" especially 2 Samuel 15: 14, 25, 26?
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As Absalom's strength increased in Hebron, David moved to keep innocent people from becoming involved. So David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "We must get away at once if we want to escape from Absalom..." (2 Samuel 15:14). He did not want Jerusalem, the city of God that he had built to become the scene of battle. Any recovery of his throne must not involve the city nor its inhabitants when he personally was guilty.

At a deeper level, David refused to try and manipulate God to get him out of his difficulty. David's experience taught him that he had forfeited any claim on God, and he refused to try and use the Almighty for his own purposes. He told Zadok, "Take the Covenant Box back to the city... (15: 25-26).

- Each of David's friends offered him a different kind of shelter. They encouraged him in unique ways. What did Ittai give? Zadok and Abiathar? Hushai, Joab, Shobi, Machir and Barzillai?
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- Which of them can you use as a model as you help your friend?
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Imagine that you are a successful president of a Big Corporation. After a falling out with your son, he forms a rival company and begins stealing your clients. One day, your staff tell you that all your customers have closed their accounts and the company is bankrupt. A few days later your creditors attach liens to your property and bank accounts. You are left penniless. But ruining you is just the beginning; your son had determined to kill you! Now you must run for your life.

- If this were happening to you, what feelings would you be dealing with?
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- How did David cope with his son's betrayal and rebellion? (cf. 2 Samuel 15: 26,30, 31).
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- What kind of character is Mephibosheth? Compare and contrast him to Zibah? (2 Samuel 16: 1-4)
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Read 2 Samuel 16: 5-8, 10-12, 15-23; 17: 1-2, 5-10, 14-15

- What would you say about David in the way he reacted to Shimei taking into consideration that David still had an army with him and Shimei had only his wits? (vv. 10-12)

- What do you make out of Ahitophel's advice in 2 Samuel 16: 15ff?

- If an adviser's counsel is contrary to God's word how should we treat the advice?

- How do you see God's providence in the way he frustrated Ahitophel's counsel in 2 King 17?

The Pursuit is Over

Read 2 Samuel 18: 9-17

- David must be an incredible man or shall I say one who merits to be called a man after God's heart. What character traits does David exhibit in his advice as to how Absalom should be treated?

- How can we do this in our day to day relationship?

Conclusion

Absalom entered Jerusalem, stole his father's concubines, amassed an army and marched out to fight against the old king's loyal forces. As they moved into battle positions, David gave explicit instructions to his captains for his sake to deal gently with Absalom. He was not vindictive. He did not call down the wrath of God on his rebel son.

In his younger days David had been tempted to be vindictive. He had set out in anger to destroy Nabal and all his household over a small matter of a few roasted sheep. Abigail had saved him from that, and he had learned his lesson well. He did not rejoice in the unsought death of his rival but seemed to hope to the end that Absalom would change.

In the face of possible disaster, David's character showed through. All his previous experiences came to his aid, and he displayed that meekness that Jesus said inherits the earth.

He knew what it was to be forgiven and his hands were outstretched like the gracious father, welcoming back his prodigal son.