



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 14:25-15:12

Topic

As part of his campaign to steal the hearts of the people and ascend to his father's throne, Absalom annually cuts and weighs his plentiful hair

Title

"Hair to the Throne"

Introduction

In the 1996 fantasy adventure film, *Dragonheart*, a young prince is mortally wounded. His mother takes him to Draco, a dragon, imploring him to save her son's life. To save him, the dragon gives him a piece of his own heart.

In the movies it's beneficial to share a dragon's heart. But in our real spiritual lives we must guard our hearts from that great dragon, the devil.

In verse six of chapter fifteen we'll see that David's son, Absalom, "stole the hearts of the men of Israel." He was a usurper, a rebel, and an insurrectionist who stole the hearts of men hoping to ascend to the throne.

Absalom can therefore be seen as a type of the devil who is a usurper, a rebel, and an insurrectionist who hopes to ascend to God's throne. Along the way he is out to influence men against God.

Absalom is also typical of anyone who lets the dragon steal a piece of their heart. It is here that we will see the main point of contact and application to our own daily lives.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 When You're Not Thankful To Your King You Let The Dragon Steal A Part Of Your Heart, and #2 When You're Not Satisfied With Your King You Let The Dragon Steal A Part Of Your Heart.

#1 When You're Not Thankful To Your King
You Let The Dragon Steal A Part Of Your Heart
(14:25-33)

Being thankful to God is an incredibly important subject in the Bible. It is more than just being polite when we address the Lord and saying "Thanks" in our prayers. It is a settled attitude of the mind and heart that approaches life by applying the truth that all things really are working together for the good for those who love the Lord.

In First Thessalonians 5:18 we are told to "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Commenting on this, scholar and Bible teacher D. Edmond Hiebert wrote,

"In everything..." is a duty that is not dependent upon gratifying circumstances. The preposition *in* (en) points to the circumstances of their thanksgiving, "in connection with everything," and everything makes the injunction all-inclusive... The Christian should meet adverse circumstances of life not with a spirit of stoic resignation but with a spirit of unflinching gratitude... When we realize that God works all things out for good to those who love Him and are yielded to His will, thanksgiving under all circumstances becomes a glorious possibility.

Pastor Don McClure uses the illustration of two friends who meet. One asks the other how he's doing to which he replies, "Pretty good under the circumstance." His friend then says to him, "What are you doing living *under* them?" It's a reminder that, as Christians, we are seated in heavenly places and have spiritual resources available to us to live far **above** our circumstances.

Looking at this another way, unthankfulness in the Bible is one of the key characteristics of the wicked.

- In the first chapter of Romans those who have rejected God are described by saying of them, “nor were they thankful” (v21).
- When describing the perilous last days the apostle Paul, in First Timothy 1:2, said, that men will be “unthankful.”

In both cases being unthankful is listed alongside other things we would consider heinous.

Here is what I am concluding. Being unthankful is far more serious than we might think. If I indulge myself in a lack of gratitude toward God, I am setting myself up for part of my heart to be stolen. I am entering the realm of Absalom.

2 Samuel 14:25 Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

2 Samuel 14:26 And when he cut the hair of his head - at the end of every year he cut it because it was heavy on him - when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels according to the king's standard.

Absalom was *People Magazine's* 'Most Beautiful Person' every year! His hair was something like Fabio's. “Two hundred shekels according to the king's standard” is about five pounds. Man! That's like a mane.

Which is interesting since, as we've said, Absalom is a type of the devil who is described in the New Testament as going about as a lion seeking to devour. Lion's have manes. The devil is also described in the Bible as a beautiful being, “perfect” until iniquity was found in him.

I always think of encountering the devil as a lion and being terrified, being attacked and torn to pieces. But Absalom is a better picture of the devil going about seeking whom he may devour. He devours with feigned kindness, with deceit, with lies.

The thing to note here isn't his good looks but the emphasis he himself placed upon them. This annual public ceremony of cutting and weighing his hair, for example, was pure vanity. It called attention to himself rather than to God Who had blessed him with his good looks. We are to point

people to the Lord. Beware of promoting yourself and of those who promote themselves.

2 Samuel 14:27 To Absalom were born three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a woman of beautiful appearance.

We need to be careful in ascribing motives, but it's interesting that Absalom named his daughter after his sister whom Amnon had sexually assaulted. It was a constant reminder to everyone that Absalom had acted to honor his sister when the king did nothing.

2 Samuel 14:28 And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king's face.

Absalom should have been punished for the premeditated murder of Amnon. The worst David did was shun him.

Was Absalom thankful that David spared his life? Nope! Not at all.

2 Samuel 14:29 Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

Far from being thankful, Absalom was demanding, thinking he deserved the king's favor when, in fact, he deserved the death penalty.

2 Samuel 14:30 So he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

2 Samuel 14:31 Then Joab arose and came to Absalom's house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?"

2 Samuel 14:32 And Absalom answered Joab, "Look, I sent to you, saying, 'Come here, so that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still." ' Now therefore, let me see the king's face; but if there is iniquity in me, let him execute me."

When Joab quit returning Absalom's calls, he had his servants set fire to his barley crop. It's an adult version of a temper-tantrum.

When I throw an adult temper-tantrum, I'm deep into being unthankful. I can excuse it all I want, but I am accusing God of not giving me what I think I deserve.

Absalom felt that the discipline of being shunned from palace life was too harsh for his crime of murder.

Absalom knew David would not "execute" him. He was manipulating David to get his way. It worked.

2 Samuel 14:33 So Joab went to the king and told him. And when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom.

As king, David ought to have carried-out the penalty prescribed by God's law for murder. As a father he wanted to show love for his son.

By the way, dads and moms, proper biblical discipline shows love for your kids! They are not exclusive. Each of your sons and daughters has the potential to grow up to be an Absalom without it.

Absalom was supremely unthankful that the king had spared his life. His heart was obsessed with its own agenda - to ascend to the throne.

All I want to do today is emphasize how important it is, in the Bible, to be thankful to God. At some point or other you will be in adverse circumstances. They are being allowed by God to give you the opportunity to be thankful, not *for* them but *in* them.

Maybe you're one of the rare individuals whose circumstances seem great all the time. You can show unthankfulness by being indifferent to God - taking it for granted that He's blessing you and living your life mostly selfishly, without much sacrifice in serving Him.

Be thankful. Sing in the midnight's of your life when you feel as though you are in the stocks, in a dark, dank prison. There's a power in thankfulness that is wonderful and contagious. It is Christlike.

#2 When You're Not Satisfied With Your King You Let The Dragon Steal A Part Of Your Heart (15:1-12)

Absalom was not only unthankful. He was not satisfied. Being restored to palace life wasn't enough for him. He had his mind and heart set on the throne. He set in motion a campaign to overthrow his father.

2 Samuel 15:1 After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

These were symbols of royalty. Absalom "provided himself" with these symbols. He made it look like he was the heir to the throne.

It is so hard for us to look past the outward appearance. **Anyone** can make themselves look like they are spiritual. If you are discerning, you can see through the outward trappings. Too often, however, Christians are gullible and trusting and are taken advantage of. They start following folks whom God has not raised-up, folks who have their own agenda.

There are 'Absalom's' who mean well but please be cautious of anyone who sets themselves up as an authority over you.

2 Samuel 15:2 Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city are you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel."

2 Samuel 15:3 Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you."

2 Samuel 15:4 Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice."

There is some talk by scholars that David was suffering an illness during this period of time. Psalm 41 seems to bear this out. If so, you see how crafty, how cunning, was Absalom in taking advantage of his father's weakness and using it against him.

When someone talks down another believer, points out their faults, they are acting in the spirit of Absalom. Don't do it. And don't be drawn away by those who come to you talking-down others. If the only way a person can make themselves look good is by making someone else look bad, that should be a warning to you.

Absalom always agreed with the people. That, too, is a huge red flag.

2 Samuel 15:5 And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him.

2 Samuel 15:6 In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Let me say this. It's easy to be the good guy. To be the person who always sympathizes. But that's not spiritual, is it? I always want to be the good guy; so do you. But sometimes you must speak the truth in love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

2 Samuel 15:7 Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the Lord.

2 Samuel 15:8 For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the Lord indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.' "

2 Samuel 15:9 And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.

The mention of "forty years" is difficult. For one thing, David's entire reign was only forty years. So it's clear that the writer doesn't mean that Absalom carried on like this that long. Some scholars explain it as a scribal error and say it should read "four years." Others say it describes the period of time from when Israel first demanded a king and Saul was chosen.

All we can say for sure is that Absalom didn't wait forty years to carry out his plan. What was his plan? To go to Hebron and announce that he was the rightful king. Absalom had been born in Hebron and undoubtedly had support there. It was also the place David was first acknowledged as king over Israel, so it had historic significance to all the Israelites.

Absalom pretended he was doing something spiritual, "paying a vow." It's easier than you might think to convince yourself, or to be convinced, that

your rebellion is really something spiritual. Most church splits occur because a person or a group is not satisfied with some aspect of the ministry. Rarely does it have anything to do with doctrinal error or sin. But no one ever says, "We're not satisfied so we are going to rebel against God's appointed authority and do what we think is best." No, they always make their departure seem spiritual, as if they are going back to Hebron where the real glory is.

Absalom said, "then I will serve the Lord." What is fascinating is that he *never* really served the Lord. He only served his own interests. His idea of serving the Lord was being the leader but it cost him nothing. He didn't earn it, certainly didn't deserve it.

2 Samuel 15:10 Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!'"

2 Samuel 15:11 And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything.

2 Samuel 15:12 Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city - from Giloh - while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.

Two hundred men, undoubtedly men of influence, would be pressured by circumstances to go along with Absalom's rebellion. It tells me that I can become an unwitting pawn in someone else's scheme if I am not careful. I always think I am so smart, so discerning, when, in fact, if I am not careful and prayerful I might be getting set-up as a rebel. Remember, the devil goes about seeking whom he may devour by deceit.

Ahithophel, as we will see in subsequent weeks, was disgruntled and as a result was open to a change of administration. Absalom played to his dissatisfaction. When dissatisfied people get together the results can be pretty devastating.

If you and I had been around in Israel during this time it might have seemed that God was raising-up Absalom to take David's place on the throne. Outwardly it made sense. David was sick, maybe dying. Absalom was an obvious choice. But we know (don't we?) that this is rebellion.

The people who Absalom was counseling and kissing were not satisfied with the king. Either he was too sick to see and hear their cases or he judged them in a manner they were not happy with.

Ahithophel was not satisfied with the king. And, of course, the leader of all this rebellion, Absalom, was not satisfied serving the king. Oh, he bowed down before him for a time - but only until he could make his move to take control of the kingdom.

The Rolling Stones made popular the idea that *I Can't Get No Satisfaction*. In our spiritual lives we tend to forget that our satisfaction must come from our relationship with the Lord. I must be satisfied with Him, with His love for me and His plan for my life. If I am, then I will address the circumstances I find myself in as coming from Him for my good and His glory.

The truth is I often get this idea of being satisfied backwards. I am feeling unsatisfied in some circumstance - my marriage, my church, my job, etc. I think that I must get satisfaction in order to have a better relationship with Jesus. I put the cart before the horse, as it were. I leave my marriage for another one; I quit my church for another one; I get the new job thinking it will satisfy me.

All the while the Lord is there asking me if I am going to be satisfied with **Him**, regardless that I think my circumstances could or should be better.

Dissatisfaction causes me to look at the world wrongly. It causes me to spiritualize my carnal thoughts and actions. I become Absalom.

Am I thankful? ***It's a command!***

1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Am I satisfied? By that I mean, is Jesus enough for me? Or do I demand a certain set of circumstances in order to 'feel' satisfied?

Unthankfulness and dissatisfaction give the devil his opportunity to steal parts of my heart. It gives him power over me that I really don't want him to wield.

Thankfulness and satisfaction guard my heart for Jesus. When I am practicing them as disciplines in my life, Jesus and I can go on supping together in the fellowship He created me for and saved me into.

