

2 Samuel 15:1-12

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[0 : 00] Bible is going to be to 2 Samuel 15, 2 Samuel 15, we're going to confine ourselves to the first 12 verses, 2 Samuel 15 verses 1 through 12, 2 Samuel 15 verses 1 through 12.

You know, I kind of joke, I know we're on a Sunday night, whenever Carrie and I are out of town and we're visiting other churches, I get to experience the back row Baptist thing. I get to slide in or I go in the balcony and we go do all that stuff and we try to get away from everyone.

Last year we were at Oak Cliff, which is where Tony Evans pastors, we were in Dallas and they were doing a pastor and pastor's wife thing. It was a Wednesday night service, am I correct, dear? And so I assumed, because we were at what was called the Kingdom Leaders Summit, it's just pastor and pastor wives, that's all it's there, not that many people in there, but the pastors were in the sanctuary and the pastor's wives were in this area over here hanging out with Priscilla Schreier and the other sister, Crystal.

And so Carrie was getting fed over here, well, I assumed it would just be the pastors. So I sat in the very front, actually third row back, I'm sitting right there. There's a few of us in there, it's good. And let's be honest, I stood out anyway because of where we were at.

[1 : 14] You know, I was asked why a white pastor went there, they were finally welcoming. But then I realized that it was actually men's night, Wednesday service, so it was open up to the community. And when they told us to turn around and pray for one another, I turned around and to fellowship and pray for one another, I turned around and there was a man in scrubs and he didn't know me from anybody.

I'm standing out like a sore thumb. He looks at me and goes, brother, I need you to pray for me. My nephew just got shot in the street. So I'm like, here I am, right in the middle of Dallas. You know, there you go, this pastor from Forttrace. Yes, sir, let's pray.

So, you know, I was with the good crowd and they were on the front row and that's where I was at. It was at a good time. I had a good time, I had a good time fellowship. It scared me a little bit, Ms. Myrtle.

I was a little too close to the front, but it was a good crowd, it was a good crowd. So, all right, let's get right into the text together. Continuing the account, all right, this is the account of Absalom. It started all the way back in the 13th chapter and we know where Absalom has a sister, Tamar. Tamar is taken advantage of by her brother. Absalom conspires for two years and ends up killing that brother. Absalom flees. Really, we need to understand in the middle of this historical kind of darkness, okay, that every bit of what is taking place rests entirely under the sovereign hand of God, okay?

[2 : 39] It almost seems like at times when we open up passages such as these, we think that God is out of control or not uncontrolled, that everything is really outside the will of God, outside the hand of God.

These things are taking place as a direct result of the prophetic utterance from Nathan to David that these are the consequences and wages of his sin. Nathan had told David that trouble would arise from within his own house.

Well, it arises in the man Absalom who at this point, and we'll really see that trouble begin to take fruition, at this point is king to be.

So, he is the third born of David. He has killed Amnon, his brother, who was the first born. Evidently, the second born of David died early because he's never mentioned again after his birth, and Absalom is the heir to the throne.

So, he's here. And we've noticed, looking at it together the last couple of Wednesday nights, that the one glaring thing that's going on in Absalom's life is no one is checking him in his sin.

[3 : 42] He has unchecked sin, right? He has plotted and, you know, come up with the murder of his brother. David knew about it, did nothing. He brought him back. David told him to stay over here.

He burned Joab's field to get Joab's attention. Nobody did anything. There's no confrontation over sin. No one's called it out. David knows it. He's aware of it, and he's just let it sit.

The reality we saw, that unconforted sin or unchallenged sin will always bring forth what we begin to see tonight, and it is, we're going to look at the shadows of rebellion.

The shadows of rebellion that we see in the first 12 verses, after verse 12, we have the fleeing of David, leaving Jerusalem. We'll get into all that later on together. But we really begin to see what it looks like for rebellion to take root, and what rebellion looks like on the very front end.

Now, we need to understand these things, because what we see happening in Absalom's life is the same way, the same characteristics that we see the enemy of our soul dealing with us, right? And because ultimately, disobedience is open rebellion against a holy God.

[4 : 47] So what happens in the garden, when Adam and Eve took from the tree, Eve took, she ate, she saw that it was, or Eve saw it, she looked at it, took it, ate it, and gave it to Adam who was with her, is this is not just disobedience, this is rebellion.

And that's rebellion from a holy God, and it always starts kind of in the shadows. And so we'll read the first 12 verses. It says, And when a man came near to prostrate himself before him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.

In this manner, Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel. Now it came about at the end of 40 years that Absalom said to the king, Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord in Hebron.

For your servant vowed a vow while I was living in Geshur in Aram, saying, If the Lord shall indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord. The king said to him, Go in peace.

So he arose and went to Hebron. But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes to Israel, saying, As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, Absalom is king in Hebron.

[6 : 31] Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem, who were invited, and went innocently, and they did not know anything. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel, the Gilanite, David's counselor from his city, Gilo, while he was offering the sacrifices.

And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom. Here we see the shadows of rebellion. Now I have to note for you, depending on the translation you read, verse 7, some say four years, others say forty years.

More than likely, and we have to interpret this passage the right way, it is after a span of four years. Forty is found in the majority of the original text. Four is found in a couple others.

The Septuagint has four others. It's not a major issue. And how we interpret it, is this the fortieth year of Absalom's life? Because it clearly is not forty years after he comes back to Jerusalem.

So these events take place chronologically four years after he comes back. So when we're looking at it, studying it, we would use the number four, because that is how many years it's been since he came back.

[7 : 40] So four years later. Okay. I know that's just kind of a side note, but I also know that in reading it, some read four, some read forty, and you say, oh, well, there's incongruity with Scripture, and that's not the case.

So we also need to understand, I don't want to cause doubt here, but in translations of Scripture, sometimes scribes, Hebrew numbers are very close to one another, and you have what you call scribal errors in numbers.

Okay. It doesn't mean the text is wrong. It doesn't mean anything in the text is wrong. But there are scribal in numbers. There are differences there. But either way, it's either the fortieth year of Absalom's life, but it's not forty years after he came back, because that just would, the math doesn't work there.

David is no longer alive forty years later. But anyhow, we're looking at the shadows of rebellion. What it looks like for rebellion to take root, and what it looks like before it really comes to full fruition. Because this is really the same things as it looks like in our own life. And we understand, again, it says, now, it came about after this. After this, David sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan's declaration of the consequences of that sin, the unchecked sin that is allowed to reign and live in Absalom's life.

[8 : 55] This is now five years after Absalom had sinned. No one has said a word to him.

Everybody knows about it. Everybody understands it. Everybody knows what's going on, but nobody's caught him to account.

No prophet has stood up. No one has declared anything. God has allowed these things to continue, because we begin to see David getting the fruit of his labor and sin. And we know that though we have forgiveness and restoration with a holy God, Psalm 51, the other psalms connect to that, we also know there are consequences and calls for our sin.

And one of those is what's happening with Absalom. Grand narrative in this event, I'll tell you, we find the turning point in all of this event that, let's see, Warren Wiersbe tells us you meet three kings in the passage.

You meet Absalom, the false king. You meet David, the true king. And you meet Yahweh, the reigning king, right? You meet the reigning one. There's this grand narrative that takes place here in the 17th chapter.

Ahithophel gives advice. And depending on how that advice is taken, really determines what happens in David's life. Okay, so Ahithophel, we'll see later on, and just as we continue to study, is very instrumental.

[10:13] Ahithophel also, if you found his New Testament counterpart, is Judas Iscariot. That is, he forsook the king, and in forsaking the king, he ended up taking his own life. I don't want to ruin it for you, but Ahithophel leaves.

When his advice is not taken, he goes out and commits suicide, takes his own life. So we see the counterpart in Judas Iscariot. We see a number of things that are going on here. One of the grandest things that we see is that in the midst of this judgment, in the midst of this rebuke, David trusts the Lord.

Next time we're together and we look at David fleeing, you'll see that they want to take the Ark of the Covenant with David, and David says, No, leave the Ark in Jerusalem, for if God desires for me to come back, then I will come back and see it where it's supposed to be.

So we see the humility of David. These things come upon him because of his sin, but we don't want to diminish him either, because even in the midst of that rebuke and correction and judgment, he's still trusting that God is in control.

He's still trusting that God is faithful, and we'll see him through it. He is fleeing just like he fled during the time of Saul. So here's the difference between David being a man after God's own heart and not losing his right to the kingdom, as opposed to Saul having it removed from him.

[11:24] It's a big difference in the two individuals and how they respond, and the response is how they respond to their sin. But let's get back to our text, because we begin to see this rebellion, and if we're not careful, we'll see this rebellion taking place in our own life.

The first thing we see here is self-promotion. Self-promotion. It says that Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses and men as runners, 50 men as runners.

It says Absalom provided for himself. Rebellion really begins with the seed of self-promotion.

It is self-promotion to its fullest that leads to rebellion against a holy God. That is a concern for self, looking at self, wanting to exalt self, and we see this taking place, because here is Absalom, who is really fooling himself.

He has three sons. Those three sons probably die in their infancy. None of them grow up to bear his name. Later on, Absalom erects a pillar in his own name, in his own image. He makes this pile of heaps, so that everybody will remember who he is.

[12:33] His hair is so weighted, that he cuts it and sells it every year. He's vain. Everybody loves him. He's popular. He has great appearances. But now you also need to understand that Absalom has royalty in his blood on his father and his mother's side.

Not only is David his father, but his mother is the daughter of the king where he had fled to, the king of Geshur. So he has royalty running through his veins on both sides.

And in that, he has begun to be a little bit self-conceited. And in that, he begins to be a little bit self-promoting. The one thing that we see here is that Absalom takes for himself horses and chariots and 50 men to serve as runners.

What Absalom does is he presents himself as king, though he is not king. He gets a chariot, gets horses, and he rides through town with men going before him, declaring, here comes Absalom.

Now that's what the king was supposed to possess. That's what was supposed to take place for the king. But Absalom is taking the place of the king without being king.

[13:46] Now we understand David becomes king because the people love him. David is a hero before he is ever made king. Saul has slain his thousands. David has slain his tens of thousands.

Remember? The people love David for what he did for them. One thing that we see is that Absalom doesn't do anything for anybody else. There's no sacrifice. There's no giving.

There's no... Everything that Absalom does is he does it for himself. So we see that rebellion begins with self-promotion. He is exalting himself.

He is lifting up himself. Others are drawn to him because of his popularity, because of his looks, because of his position. Others are enamored with him because, just like Saul, he looks good on the outside.

Externally he's okay. But internally what he's doing is he is making sure that everybody sees him. He makes sure that everybody knows him. It is self-promotion. And we need to be careful here because anytime self begins to promote itself, it is taking the place of another.

[14:46] Self-promotion is a very dangerous ground to stand on. And Absalom is doing that because he is making sure that he's putting himself in a position that he really has no right to. When Adam and Eve took the tree, they promoted themselves and made themselves the authority in their own lives.

And this is one of the things that we understand, the enemy attacks. The enemy always comes to us with this air of self-promotion. All sin is ultimately a decision that what I want to do is better than anything I am told that I should or should not do.

It is always self-promoting. And we understand this because Absalom starts his rebellion by first of all magnifying his appearance and magnifying his look and magnifying his popularity among the people.

And we need to be careful here because that is the beginning of rebellion. The second thing we see is also subtle doubt. Self-promotion is often followed by this subtlety of doubt.

The enemy of our souls operates in a land of half-truths and subtle doubts. Satan doesn't often come to us with an out-and-out lie.

[16:04] We see the first thing that he does in Scripture, if we follow a scriptural interpretation, the law of first mention, the very first thing that Satan does, the very first thing he says is, Has God said?

And he begins to implant and impart this thing called doubt in the mind of the people of God. And it's a subtle doubt. God had not said that you shouldn't look at it.

God said, Just don't take and eat of it, right? But Satan says, Has God said you shouldn't look at or take or treat? And he begins to create this doubt because he says, In saying that, God knows that when you eat that, you'll become like he is, knowing good and evil.

And it's this doubt of the goodness of God. And all rebellion really is a subtle doubt. It is this doubting and this assumption.

It is the assumption that someone else could do better than what is already being done. And it is the doubting of the goodness of the one who's ultimately in control.

[17:08] Now in Absalom's life, this takes place because it says he used to rise early in the morning and go to the gate that was on the way to the gate to the king. So he's right outside the king's palace.

And this, again, is another challenge to us because quite often the enemy that opposes us is often up before us. We need to understand that. Absalom would arise early and go to the gate to meet the people on the way.

Some have said, historically, if you read some of the Psalms of David at this period, it appears that David may have been physically sick during this time and therefore would have limited his ability to be out in the community.

He appears through some of the Psalms that he wrote during this season of his life that there's a physical illness. And therefore, what we see is Absalom is really capitalizing on David's illness and is taking the time while he can.

The enemy knows the opportunity. And here the enemy presents himself early in the morning. And he comes with this subtlety that causes a seed of doubt to take root.

[18:15] Because as he's standing at the gate, he's meeting the individuals who come in and he's asking them, where are you from? And they would say, oh, we're from here. He said, oh, well, that's a good place to be from. That's a wonderful place. And notice that everybody that comes, he agrees with them.

And what he is doing is he's talking to them about their case because the people are coming. And the assumption is that David doesn't have time to hear your case.

The assumption is that the king will not hear your case and judge it righteously. But the author of 2 Samuel in chapter 8 has already told us that David judged his people with fairness and righteousness.

We have already been told through the author of 2 Samuel that David made it his practice to set his judge among his people and offer righteous judgment.

We also find in the chapter that precedes this that the widow from Tekoa comes and stands before him. So evidently, there is an audience before the king. But the assumption that Absalom is making is that, oh, well, you can't get to the king.

[19 : 20] The king doesn't have time for you because the king doesn't think that you're worthy of his time. The doubt is that what I'm trying to bring before the king will not be accepted before the king.

because I assume that the king will not hear my case. And all of this starts with the enemy. See, doubts arise in our mind because the enemy sets in the way and tries to cause an assumption that God doesn't have time for us.

Tries to cause this assumption that my matter that I'm bringing before the throne room of heaven will not find an audience. Yet scripture tells us that we can come boldly before the throne through Jesus Christ who is the lamb.

the enemy in the way is Absalom who's creating this subtle doubt. That all, and I love this subtlety, again, it's this half truth.

Absalom says, oh, that one would appoint me to be judge. Now, Absalom does not say, I wish someone would make me king because the moment he says, I wish someone would make me king, he is treading on dangerous ground.

[20 : 24] because when he begins to say, someone needs to make me king, now there's anarchy in the kingdom. What Absalom says is, I wish someone would make me judge.

Now, that's a subtle way because the reason it's so subtle is because the king was the judge. And the only way to be made judge was to be king.

Now, he wasn't saying out and out, I want to be king, but what he was saying is, I should be king.

because the only way to be the judge of the people would be the king over the people.

But in this subtlety, he's not saying something that would cause them to stand up and take notice.

He is saying it in a way that appeals to their flesh. And he is saying that I agree with you, what you're doing is wrong.

Be careful when everybody says every argument we have is right. Notice this because everybody that comes to him goes, oh, your cause is good, you're right, I would agree with you, if only I was judge. Josephus writing of this, Josephus is the Jewish historian, who's a non-believer Jewish historian alive at the time of Christ, alive after the time of Christ.

[21 : 30] Josephus in his writings in his book of antiquities speaks of this historically looking back on it and said that the people that Absalom was talking to were people that left the presence of the king, many of them people who had come from the presence of the king and the king had decided against them.

So therefore, he said, oh, well, if I was judge, I agree with you, you're doing right, I would agree with your cause because it's an appeal to the flesh. Everybody he met, he said, oh, it's a good place to be from.

Everybody he met, oh, your case is right. And then when they would attempt to bow down and do homage to Absalom, he would capture them, he would pick them up and he would give them a kiss, he was returning them a favor.

And it says, and he stole their hearts. Why? Because rebellion begins in the hearts of the people.

Any rebellion we have against a holy God first takes root in our heart.

It's a heart issue, not a life issue. It's not a practice issue. And here we see that the enemy is going after the heart of the people, not necessarily the mind of the people.

[22 : 34] There are some things that he could have said that mentally they would have taken notice of, but he was careful not to say those things because he was aiming at their heart. And the best way to aim at their heart is to say, well, you're right, you're good, I appreciate you, where you're from is right.

And every bit of this was self-promoting and subtle doubts. He begins to implant seeds of doubt of the goodness of the king. This king who they all revered, this king whom they had all loved, this king who was reigning in prosperity like they had never known, this king who they tell us in the eighth chapter was judging with righteousness and fairness, this king who had reigned holy at this time up until his sin now begins to be doubted.

And it's because the enemy is standing in the way. So we see self-promotion, we see subtle doubt. The third thing that we see in this shadow of rebellion is a separated people.

Absalom here. Now, we stand amazed because these things were taking place right outside the palace of the king and yet no one says anything. If some Bible translators are right and it's during a time of physical illness of David, then we can understand why.

If David is healthy, we don't understand why he doesn't go out and confront him other than the reality that sin has remained unchecked up until this time, so why would anything like that change? But then we begin to see in verse 7, now it came about at the end of 40 or four years that Absalom said to the king, so he took his time, right?

[24 : 11] Absalom's not a man of haste. He's a man of patience and nothing else. For two years, he plots the murder of his brother. For three years, he waits to go see the king's face. For another four years now, so we're nine years removed from his brother's death, he is planted doubt, planted doubt, planted doubt.

Rebellion is not an overnight matter, right? People fall away from the Lord and rebel against the Holy God, not overnight, but because they allow subtle doubts to creep in time and time and time again, and the doubt in this area and the doubt in this area and the doubt in this area and those doubts begin to take root and over a number of years, those doubts begin to grow and then they begin to bear the fruits of rebellion and they separate people from the good king.

This is exactly what is happening here. He says, he comes to the king and says, please let me go and pay my vows that I have vowed to the Lord of Hebron. For your servant has vowed a vow while I was living in Geshur and Aram saying, if the Lord shall indeed bring me back to Jerusalem then I will serve the Lord.

So he gives a pretense of piety. Absalom here uses the Lord as an excuse and it is a pretense of piety that he is going to do this vow.

Hebron is a very instrumental and a very important city. It is where David is from and is from the clan of Judah. When David does come back the people of Judah are one of the last to welcome him back and he rebukes them.

[25 : 33] The reason he rebukes them is because Absalom began his rebellion in Judah. Hebron had been the seat of the kingdom until Jerusalem was taken captive and it was moved to Jerusalem.

Hebron is a very instrumental place among the people of the nation. It was there that the king was coronated at first. It was there that he was made king over the land and it is there that Absalom the enemy would go back and do the same thing.

But what he does is he leads a number of people away because it says on this pretense of piety this pretense of offering sacrifices he declares he sends out spies to all the people and says that when you hear the trumpet blow you shall declare or know that Absalom is king.

And since four years of doubt have crept in everybody is waiting for this moment everybody except for David and his counselors and his friends and we will see that later. And it says that Absalom took with him 200 men.

It's amazing it took 200 men from Jerusalem but it says that they were invited and went innocently and they did not know anything. So we see there are 200 innocent individuals being led away with Absalom as well.

[26 : 35] When the rebellion starts Hebron is also a walled city so they're caught in the walls of that city and these 200 innocent individuals will be a very big part of open rebellion.

Hebron is just caution to us be careful who you follow because these were following someone they thought was going to do a good deed to the Lord and was really walking in rebellion.

These followed him into that city and unbeknownst to them became a part of this rebellion. We see the first thing once doubt takes root the first fruit of that doubt is a separation of people.

Go back to the garden. The enemy comes and promotes himself. Why does Satan come into the garden to begin with? It is self-promoting right? The whole reason the tempter tempts Adam and Eve is because he's being cast out of heaven.

We have to go read it in the book of Ezekiel Ezekiel 38 and he's been cast out of heaven because of pride self-promotion now. He's trying to exalt himself. He comes to the pinnacle of God's creation which is mankind.

[27 : 47] He begins to cause doubt to rest in their minds and their heart. This doubt causes them to sin and this sin separates them from the presence of a holy God because when God comes to commune with them they are hiding amongst the trees.

Rebellion leads to separation and these people are moved away from the true king, the good king who is David and now they're over here and the rebellion is going to take root.

It's going to start outside of the presence of the king. They're separated people. The last and final thing we see is that it's a strengthened cause. There are people who will strengthen it.

There are people who will fuel the fire. Once Absalom gets there it says in verse 12 he gets to Hebron he's offering the sacrifices. The sacrifices more than likely were a part of the king's coronation.

So it's kind of the he is becoming king the sacrifices are there. It says in verse 12 and Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilanite David's counselor.

[28 : 48] This Ahithophel will be very instrumental. But what you need to understand is this is David's trusted counselor. Just kind of just telling you what's going to happen.

He's going to give good advice but thankfully because of the friends of David they don't listen to that advice and David's life is spared. So you have David's counselor now joining willfully joining the rebellion.

Some will tell you that Ahithophel was more than likely the mastermind behind all of it. He was the one who was encouraging Absalom. He was the one that was waiting on the invitation to come back.

And we ask ourselves why? Well Ahithophel is Bathsheba's grandfather. grandfather. David's great sin was committed against his granddaughter.

And ultimately David's plotting and scheming led to the death of his granddaughter's husband Uriah. So we begin to see how sin affects more than one person.

[30 : 01] David's counselor is Bathsheba's grandfather. Bathsheba's grandfather Ahithophel is involved in the rebellion. He will ultimately take his own life because his advice is not followed.

But in joining the rebellion with Absalom, Ahithophel is actually turning his back on his great-grandson Solomon.

sin affects a number of people. We don't know if maybe there was some animosity between Ahithophel towards David because of this sin, because of the action he took against his granddaughter, or if it's because he did not follow his counsel.

Either way, we know that he willingly joined the rebellion and therefore strengthened the cause of Absalom. and the scripture tells us and the conspiracy was strong.

Why? Because the king's counselor is now a part of the rebellion. The conspiracy was strong for the people increased continually with Absalom.

[31 : 08] Absalom. Unfortunately, the enemy always finds a willing multitude to join him in his rebellion. The good news is on the other side of that, once we get into verse 13, David also has those who stand with him.

And they will make all the difference moving forward. But here in this shadow of rebellion, we see that the cause is strengthened. And it's strengthened because a multitude of people are willing to join.

A multitude of people have had enough seeds of doubt cast in their mind and their heart. And a multitude of people are willing to follow thinking that there surely is a better king. Application.

Application is pretty straightforward. We have an enemy who tries to operate in the shadows. And in the shadows, he's very self-promoting. In the shadows, he begins with the subtlety of doubt.

And in that doubt, it begins to separate us from the true king. He's strengthening his cause, and he's doing it on a daily basis. And ultimately, the desire of the enemy is open rebellion against a holy God and a rightful king of kings.

[32 : 07] Lord of lords. The question is, is where does the loyalty in our hearts stand? When we read these texts, it seems like God is not in control, but ultimately, all of this is part of the sovereign purposes and plans of God.

God will bring these things to account, and there will be a day of reckoning, because the true king will always be on the throne. And we see it recorded for us in 2 Samuel 15, verses 1 through 12. These are the shadows of rebellion which start with Absalom. Let's pray. And when we'll be dismissed, we're done early. I ran over this morning. I gave it back to you this evening, okay? So let's pray. Lord, I thank you so much for this day. I thank you for your faithfulness to us. I thank you for your goodness. We thank you, Lord, that even when it appears that all things are out of control, Lord, you are ultimately in control.

We thank you for your word. We thank you for the assurance that we have in it. Lord, we know that as we open up portions of the Old Testament, at times it can be confusing, at times it can be discouraging.

[33 : 12] But, Lord, may we look to you, the author and the perfecter of our faith. May we look to you, the one who's ultimately on the throne, that though the rebellion may seem strong, God, we know that the king on the throne is even stronger.

Lord, we pray that you walk with us through this week, that we would bring you glory and honor through our actions, that our every decision would be God-honoring and Christ-glorifying. Give us the words to say to those that we encounter and give us the desire to live a life for your honor. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. And amen. Amen. Amen.