

Reading Schedule for November 27 – December 3, 2017

Last week was Thanksgiving and we were thankful that God was showing his favor to David as he became king of all of Israel. There was victory after victory, and his leadership was well established among the people. You could say that his professional life looked really good. But that is only part of the story. One of the most important things in our lives is our personal connections with family and friends. David's family was a disaster. That is what we get to read about this week.

November 27 – 2 Samuel 12: "Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul."' (v.7) This has to be the crucial point in David's understanding of his own sin. Nathan needed to be very wise in how he spoke to the king. God led him so that David would finally understand his hidden sins and how devastating they were to the Lord God. David had lived in denial for around a year. It is amazing to me that God was gracious to David, even though he didn't repent until his sin was exposed. Not all was good though, because David would lose his son as a consequence of his sin. There are many aspects of this chapter that are worth contemplating. Nathan also teaches us the importance of confronting someone because you love them and want the best for them. I am stirred by that truth as well. What truth are you stirred by in this chapter? Why?

November 28 – 2 Samuel 13: "When King David heard all this, he was furious." (v.21) There is not very much about this chapter that I want to comment on. It appalls me. But the Bible does not shrink back from the reality of life and sin. What happened to Tamar and the continuing results are very sad. The revenge is also ugly and absent of God's direction. But this verse about David being furious, and ultimately not doing anything, is the most upsetting to me. David had opportunity to speak into this situation and to confront behaviors that were contrary to God's will. What these adult children needed was tough love. This is a sad story, but if David had been more forthright, it could have been different. Do you agree? How do you respond to this dark chapter?

November 29 – 2 Samuel 14: "Absalom lived two years in Jerusalem without seeing the king's face." (v.28) I don't mean to harp on the same theme time after time, but David does not really restore Absalom, he just lets him return to Jerusalem. There is no question in my mind that Absalom had a father-wound. His behaviors became very ugly, as we will read tomorrow. Without his father or anyone else to keep him in check, he did most anything he wanted to do as the King's son. Undoubtedly he was very impressive, as he was said to be a very handsome man. As I said, even adult children need direction and discipline. David's aloof approach to parenting is the worst kind of parenting possible. It is not surprising to me that Absalom rebelled. What do you think? What stands out to you in this chapter?

November 30 – 2 Samuel 15: "A messenger came and told David, 'The hearts of the people of Israel are with Absalom.'" (v.13) This statement is hard to believe. We all think so highly of David. But maybe he was also aloof from the people. He does not want to have a civil war in Jerusalem where many people would be harmed and even killed. He is aware of innocent inhabitants, and would flee to protect them. It seems like a positive approach, but again, it would not have had to happen this way. David had an unusual way of showing his children that he cared for them. In a roundabout

way, he probably also left because he didn't want anything bad to happen to Absalom. It is hard for me to find something positive about this turn of events. Honestly, I am quite disappointed with David. I am sure there have been times when I needed to be forthright and I wasn't. Maybe that is why it stirs my heart. How do you respond?

December 1 – 2 Samuel 16: "So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." (v.22) I am not trying to make this an R-rated focus to the story, but I am trying to reveal the fact that Absalom fulfilled Nathan's prediction that another man would sleep with David's wives. This would be a part of the consequence of David's sin of adultery. There is actually a connection to what this meant in that day. To sleep with any of the king's wives or concubines was to make a claim of the throne. But this would not be honored by God, nor would the people respect Absalom for doing so. The people wanted a godly leader, and this would make it clear that Absalom was an undisciplined man. But it also shows that the lust of David would trickle into the lives of his sons, and continue to cause sexual devastation in his family line. We talked about Adam's sin being passed down. Well, this is a case in point. Don't you agree? What are you learning from this sad scenario that David lived as a middle-aged man?

December 2 – 2 Samuel 17: "So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle." (v.11) Why would Absalom listen to Hushai's advice? Not only was he respected, but it played into Absalom's pride. He could defeat his dad with all of his armies loyal to him. This chapter plays out like a modern day drama. There is a sense of conspiracy and spying out. The story is so complicated that I almost suggested to you that Absalom listen to Ahithophel. But actually Hushai won Absalom's approval. He's the one who spoke into Absalom's pride. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction." How do you understand the sin of pride? The New Testament tells us that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. How do you respond to the complexity of this chapter? What stands out to you?

December 3 – 2 Samuel 18: "The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: 'O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!'" (v.33) I am interested in David's response to the devastation, along with Absalom's death. Why would David be so upset over the death of his rebellious son. I think he would realize that in part he was responsible. David had remained aloof and Absalom rebelled all the more. David thought he could trust Joab and his officers, but they are the ones who ultimately killed Absalom, and this was obviously even more upsetting to him. He really wanted to have a meaningful relationship with his son. He loved him. He knows that he was an absent father who did not shape the direction of his talented son very well at all. Why would this storyline be the outcome in David's life as a father? I actually think that God was trying to get David's attention and those who followed him, to show how multiple wives and sexual promiscuity with concubines was grievous to the Lord God. What are your thoughts? How do you respond to this sad story?

Prayers: Pray for our journey through December, that we might worship fully, spend less, give more and love all.