

DEPOSED

2 Samuel 15:10-16, 24-30

When we see bad behavior, we can ignore it, we can get angry, we can respond with similar bad behavior, or we can take action that will lead to repentance, restitution, restoration, and reconciliation. Any choice except the fourth option will result in the “bad behavior” becoming worse and will end up in destruction of all the good and positive aspects that define our lives. This principle applies to individuals, families, churches, local governments, and beyond.

Is it possible to reverse the course of pending events and wind up with a different outcome than what can be described as going from bad to worse? Consider the situation in which David and his family found themselves following the tragic events of all that happened with regard to Bathsheba and Uriah. An attempt was made to cover up or ignore the bad behavior but God chose to confront David. Even though David repented and was forgiven a series of events was set in motion that would fulfill the prophetic words: “the sword will not depart from your house.”

As we know from the historical accounts, things did go from bad to worse with Amnon’s despicable behavior and the vengeful retribution carried out by Absalom. We might wonder if anything could have been done by anyone that would have allowed the prophecy to be fulfilled without the outcomes being as bad as what actually happened? This may have been a situation where the scenario was set and nothing could have been done until all the events happened. Could Amnon have repented and have tried to make things right with Tamar? Could Absalom have forgiven Amnon and not have ordered his murder? Could Absalom have repented and followed a path that would have led to restoration and reconciliation with David? Once David put his “house” on this road, were there any exits or was the outcome predetermined? David apparently had a free-will choice that he made before he decided to have Bathsheba come for a visit. Here we see that once a choice was made, then the options available for other choices were severely limited.

As we know, David failed to take any action with regard to either Amnon or Absalom for their bad behavior and Absalom apparently lost any respect he had for David and decided that he would be a better choice to be king than his father.

Absalom would have made a good modern-day politician. He was all into “image.” Absalom created a public persona in which he took on a role of judge and counselor for the downtrodden people. He would sit in a public place and listen to the issues of the people. He acted friendly to everybody and told everyone what they wanted to hear. He told those who were bringing an issue or claim to King David that no one was available in the court of David to hear their case. There was, no doubt, truth in the charge he made against David of negligence in his judicial and other duties. Ever since his great sin, the king seems to have been stunned into inaction. After they told Absalom their story, he would tell them that he would certainly rule in their favor if he were the judge. He carried out this campaign for about four years. He was so charming he stole the hearts of the people. He did not really earn their admiration since all his words and what he did was just a sham. He really did not care for the people. He simply wanted to use them for his own purposes.

Entitlement – 15:10-12

¹⁰ But 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 is king in Hebron.’ ” ¹¹ Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem,

who were invited and went innocently, and they did not know anything.¹² And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom. 2 Samuel 15:10–12 (NASB95)

After four years Absalom had gained enough supporters that he was ready to overthrow the government of his father. He used the ruse of going on a religious retreat in Hebron (which was about twenty miles away) so he would not arouse suspicion in David. The rebellion was well organized and carefully planned. Absalom had even infiltrated the top levels of the government and had supporters among David's top advisers. Ahithophel who was said to be the grandfather of Bathsheba was an example of this support. Some have thought that Ahithophel held resentful feelings toward David because of the way David had treated Bathsheba and Uriah.

With the absence of external threats and the focus of most of the people being on local issues, there was little visible evidence of leadership from David. This lack of leadership was evident in the way the murder of Amnon by Absalom was handled. Absalom had become somewhat of a local hero among the people in spite of what he had done. Apparently, the support for making a change in the government was stronger in the areas away from Jerusalem.

While most of the people living in Jerusalem were clueless about an impending rebellion, many were supportive of Absalom and when he announced that he was going to Hebron to pay a vow with a peace offering he had 200 men who went with him since a peace offering involved a significant feast for the family (and friends) of the one presenting the offering. These people were invited to go and had no idea that Absalom was going to announce that he was going to depose David and set himself up as king of Israel.

Absalom had prearranged that undercover agents who supported the rebellion be scattered throughout the land of Israel. These were to announce to the people in the various towns that Absalom was now the king and was ruling in Hebron. Apparently, this bold announcement caused many to start supporting Absalom rather than David.

Fright – 15:13-16

¹³ Then a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." ¹⁴ David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise and let us flee, for otherwise none of us will escape from Absalom. Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword." ¹⁵ Then the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king chooses." ¹⁶ So the king went out and all his household with him. But the king left ten concubines to keep the house. 2 Samuel 15:13–16 (NASB95)

While David was reigning in power, his real enemies would not dare to oppose him, but Absalom's revolt gave them what appeared to be a great opportunity to resist the king and get away with it. It was a time of sifting the true from the false.

We are not told how much time elapsed from the time the group went to Hebron until word got back to David that the people of Israel were supporting Absalom in the revolt. Some have speculated that some of the 200 men who went from Jerusalem to Hebron left and returned to Jerusalem when they figured out what was actually happening and one of them brought the message to David.

When word came to David that Absalom was leading a revolt, he immediately left Jerusalem to avoid a battle there. He was concerned that many innocent people might be hurt. There was no way to know how large an army Absalom might have, but David knew that Jerusalem did not have adequate defenses even though the palace compound where David and his family lived was well fortified.

There are many different ideas as to why David did not choose to make a stand against the rebel forces rather than simply give up and leave. It could have been that he did not want to

have to fight against his own son. It might have been that he feared that Jerusalem would be destroyed even if his forces won. It was probably true that they did not have time to make preparations to withstand a long siege that might have resulted. It also could have been that David saw that what was happening was simply a fulfillment of the prophecy of Nathan and that to resist what was happening would be to resist what God was doing. If this final option was the reason, then David was not giving in to Absalom but was giving in to what he identified was the hand of God.

Obviously, not everyone had abandoned David. Those who were identified as his servants were ready to go wherever he went to do whatever he requested them to do. Among these servants that were staying with David were a group of men who had joined forces with David when he was in exile in Gath of the Philistine area when Saul was still king. These loyal supporters of David were described in verse eighteen as “the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath.” Since these were not Israelites, David thought they might be safe when Absalom’s forces captured Jerusalem and David encouraged them to return to Jerusalem. They wanted no part of that since they were seriously committed and devoted to David.

David left behind ten concubines to look after the palace. We learn later that David also sent his own supporters to pretend loyalty to Absalom so that he could get inside information and maybe even have a chance to give Absalom some bad advice.

Flight – 15:24-30

²⁴ Now behold, Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar came up until all the people had finished passing from the city. ²⁵ The king said to Zadok, “Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the LORD, then He will bring me back again and show me both it and His habitation. ²⁶ “But if He should say thus, ‘I have no delight in you,’ behold, here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.” ²⁷ The king said also to Zadok the priest, “Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace and your two sons with you, your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. ²⁸ “See, I am going to wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” ²⁹ Therefore Zadok and Abiathar returned the ark of God to Jerusalem and remained there. ³⁰ And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went. 2 Samuel 15:24–30 (NASB95)

The idea of taking the ark of the covenant with those who were leaving Jerusalem was probably influenced by what had been done in earlier times in which the presence of the ark on the field of battle was an inspiration for those doing the fighting. It was almost as if they thought that the presence of the ark was a good luck charm. Apparently, David did not believe that the ark would magically bring him victory.

It was good that the high priest and the Levites remained loyal to David and this was likely a source of encouragement for David who wanted to be submissive to the Lord. Since David was thinking that the events that were unfolding were part of Nathan’s prophecy he had resigned himself to accept God’s will for himself.

As one commentator put it, it was David and not the Lord who was going into exile, so David sent the Ark back to Jerusalem where he was convinced it belonged since Jerusalem was God’s choice for the center of worship and government for His chosen people. The real question in David’s mind was “did he belong in Jerusalem?” At this point in his life he was full of questions and doubts and that situation was the outcome of sin in his life.

There were two phrases David used to describe relationships with the Lord. The first was a desirable one which is stated as “find favor in the sight of the Lord.” The second one is stated in the negative and would be something to avoid. We see this in verse twenty-six in which the

Lord would say “I have no delight in you.” These two may simply be stating the same idea in two ways.

The combination of the words “find favor” is found in four places in the KJV Old Testament and it could be alternately translated as “to attain grace or acceptance.” In three of the references the person is simply desirous of this benefit but in Proverbs 3:3-4 we see what is needed to “find favor” with both God and man. Verse three is the required condition: “Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.” In verse four we see the results: “So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.” Obviously, David had failed to consider mercy and had not followed truth (the Lord’s commands) when he sinned. Even though he had repented and had been told that the Lord had forgiven him, he was still uncertain of his relationship with the Lord. He apparently did not know if he was standing in God’s favor. This situation may be a problem even with Christians today. We know that Christ died for our sins and if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This kind of doubt is not good and can hinder our walk with the Lord and our availability to be used in His kingdom work.

We know many things in which the Lord does not delight or take pleasure such as unfaithfulness and disobedience. Those things in which the Lord does delight are fairly obvious: From Jeremiah 9:24 we find “I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things.” Psalm 147:11 tells us that “The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.” John Piper observed “God approves of what is right. He rejoices in our thinking and feeling and doing what is right.”

David’s questioning whether or not the Lord delighted in him would be understandable if he had not repented and confessed his sins. What may have been of concern to David was his passiveness with regard to dealing with the sins of his family members that following in the aftermath of his unfaithful behavior.

There was probably another practical reason to send the ark back and that was to have Zadok and Abiathar stay in Jerusalem since these priests would logically be with the ark. David needed some loyal supporters to be Jerusalem to keep him informed of what was happening when Absalom came into the city. The question to Zadok “Aren’t you a seer?”, more probably means ‘Aren’t you an observant man?’ David set a place where a messenger sent by Zadok could meet him to provide an update on what was happening in Jerusalem.

The route David and his supporters took in leaving Jerusalem was first to cross the Brook Kidron which was on the way to the Mount of Olives. Many commentaries have noted the similarity of this path with that taken by Jesus and His disciples following the Last Supper. Just as David had resigned himself to whatever outcome the Lord wanted, so also Jesus came to the same point as He stated, “Nevertheless, not My will, but Your will be done.”

Just as the people who followed David were sorrowful as they left Jerusalem and uncertain about the future, the band of disciples who followed Jesus out to the Garden of Gethsemane were sorrowful and uncertain when they heard the message that Jesus was going away. David was as uncertain of the future as his people were, but Jesus was certain of the outcome and could give confident assurance that God was still in control and He knew that He did find favor with the Father and that the Father did delight in Him.