

The Absalom Spirit, part 1

2 Samuel 15:1-6

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 10-6-2013

Introduction

This chapter describes a remarkable, but in some ways, a puzzling takeover of the kingdom by Absalom. And when you see puzzling, unexplainable criticism, envy, hatred, bitterness, rebellion, or other things don't make sense, it's wise to start looking under the surface to see if there is anything demonic that needs to be prayed against. This week and next week we are going to look at what scholars speak of as the Absalom syndrome, or (since it is demonic in its origin) they will speak of it as the Absalom spirit. And I've titled it that, because what is going on in this chapter really is demonic in its origin. And it very much applies to modern American politics as well as to modern American churches. And since it is very easy to see this in politics, I am going to focus on how this syndrome can be found in the church worldwide. In fact, many scholars believe that in current American churches, the most destructive demonic influences are the spirit of Jezebel (which, if you wanted one word to summarize it would be behind-the-scenes control – though the book of Revelation identifies a bunch of other things with her), then there is the spirit of Ahab (which especially deals with a leader's manipulation, coalition building, and politics in order to stay in power), and then there is a spirit of Absalom, which seeks to undermine and take away power in ungodly ways. Now obviously there are many other demonic spirits at work, but as we pray for Revival and Reformation in the church at large, it is very important to understand these three demonic forces.

There are many different manifestations of the Absalom syndrome, but let me tell you a true story about a large church that was destroyed by a young Absalom so that you can a little bit of a feel for how this works. The pastor of the church was very well liked and respected in the community. He had started the church and had been there for twenty years. It had grown to about 1000 members. And at one point the board wanted to minister more effectively to the youth, so they hired their first youth pastor. He was a very talented young man, and the pastor liked him a lot. After he had ministered for a while, he was looking for more challenge and the pastor encouraged the board to promote him to some other ministries. Later, the youth pastor wanted more authority, and became an assistant pastor. Not long after that,

© Copyright 2013 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to individuals to download, print, or distribute this sermon on paper or electronically, provided that each reprint bears this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission. All rights reserved.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

he wanted more authority and asked if he could start a Saturday night worship service that he would be responsible for by himself and see if he could more effectively reach more people who were not coming on Sunday morning. The pastor and the other elders thought that was a great idea, and let him start the meeting. The problem was, that as the Saturday night group started growing, he encouraged those people to make Saturday night their only church meeting. The pastor and board didn't know that, but it became the only church service for some.

Then the young man attended Sunday morning worship and started recruiting people to go to the Saturday night meeting, using subtle criticism and praise. We later discovered that his praise went something like this: "You seem really hip, insightful. You seem like a person who really should be in authority and I could use you to help me build the Saturday night program. The pastor and elders support me, and I think the church could use some fresh blood in leadership. I see potential in you. We've got some programs that I think you ought to consider." Of course, he didn't tell the pastor or leaders that he was doing this. Everything looked hunky dory. So he was involved in recruitment to the Saturday evening services by using similar methods to what we will be considering in this passage.

Saturday evening became bigger and bigger, and because it was largely growing at the expense of Sunday morning, the Sunday morning services became smaller. And that in turn led to criticism that the pastor must be losing members because he is not doing enough. Well, he had been working his tail off, but he worked even harder.

At one point, along with some appreciative comments, the youth pastor told the senior pastor that there have been a number of people who have requested to be able to meet on Sunday morning, and since his service was so much smaller, he was wondering if they could switch places and have his worship service on Sunday morning and the pastor's on Saturday evening. The pastor felt very queasy about this, but since the elders by this time were largely on board, and because he saw this guy as a possible replacement for him in the future anyway, he decided to go along with it. He didn't want to look like he was pridefully holding on to things. So he agreed.

Then at some point the young man had a special meeting and talked to the elders and some money-givers and some others and convinced them that if they were to reach out effectively to young people, they needed to ask the senior pastor to retire. And there were Ahithophels in the congregation who were very effective spokespeople in this movement.

The senior pastor realized too late what was happening, and even though there was a huge contingent that supported him, he realized it would create a huge split and a big fight would ensue, and it might destroy the church. So, like David, for the sake of the church's health, he left, he gracefully retired, and is now working in missions in Europe. He's got a sweet attitude about it, but realizes that this young man had shown signs of the Absalom syndrome right from the beginning. Anyway, God is sovereign, and He used this Absalom conspiracy to get the senior pastor into a very effective ministry in Europe. So that worked together for his good.

But the story is not over. God never blesses the Absalom spirit. The results of it are an endlessly troubled church, and often the death of the church. This church died within six years. Here's the weird thing – if this man had been humble, had not had selfish ambition, but had served the church faithfully and been loyal to the current leadership, he would probably have become the senior pastor in time anyway, but in the process he would have had a strong and loyal church. But because he accomplished his goal through the Absalom syndrome, he ended up destroying the church and losing everything. Reason? Absalom's breed other Absalom's. It never prospers long term.

And it grieves me that so many churches in America are troubled by the same demonic strategies that were behind Jezebel, Ahab, and Absalom. I think this is what completely tore apart D. James Kennedy's church and his seminary. In your prayer life for the church in America, please don't neglect prayers against these spirits. So let's dive into the text and look at a few characteristics that help to identify Absaloms.

I. Often comes from those that we love the most (v. 1a) returning your good with evil (cf. 13:25-33)

The first principle is that the undermining of a David often comes from those whom the leadership loves the most and has invested in the most. It is clear that David deeply, deeply loved Absalom. Even after Absalom dies, he grieves over him. He really wanted the best for him. David showed mercy on Absalom in the previous chapter because he loved him. Joab stuck his neck out on Absalom's behalf in chapter 14 (and it was risky to do so), and what does Absalom do to Joab in return? When Joab won't return his calls, Absalom has Joab's crops destroyed. He is only grateful so long as Joab can continue to be used.

Though we will see that an Absalom knows how to schmooze and pretend love and pretend to care for leaders, it is all self-serving and any

leader can be expendable if he doesn't help Absalom advance with his ambition. But when you look at the tragic Absalom stories in America, you will see many Davids and Joabs who have given a man a chance, and have invested hugely in their Absalom, only to be stabbed in the back.

II. Rooted in pride (v. 1) yet tries to give the illusion of humility (v. 5)

But the second point shows that the Absalom spirit is rooted in pride and takes advantage of pride. And there is a relationship between points I and II. David Rhodes once said, "Pride... flourishes in good soil: The danger of pride is that it feeds on goodness." Well, he has experienced a great deal of goodness, favor, and second chances from others. But it didn't matter how good David and Joab had been to Absalom, pride simply multiplied and gave soil in which the Absalom syndrome could take root.

And the interesting thing about the Absalom syndrome is that the pride of the Absalom is always masked with an illusion of humility. In fact, on all these points you will see that it starts off exceedingly subtle. It's so subtle that it is hard to put your finger on it, but you know something smells wrong. There is definitely something wrong with verse 1:

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

There is pride written all over that, but he could claim that he is not praising himself. People could think that he is following Proverbs 27:2, which says, "Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth." Well, that's what is happening with these 50 men. He doesn't have to say anything good about himself. He gets others to do it for him, and he does so all through this passage. And he makes sure that he does enough humble-looking things, that his pride does not get in the way of progress. Look at verse 5:

2Sam. 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.

He pretends to be a man of the people; an ordinary man. Most people wouldn't dare to be that familiar with a prince, and a possible heir to the throne. Yet, when they would bow down, he would say, "Oh no. Don't bow down." He would lift them up, embrace them, and kiss them. So he was giving a pretense at being a humble, common man.

Yet the inspired record tells us that it wasn't really another man praising Absalom in verse 1. He was the one who provided himself with

chariots and horses and fifty men to run before him. He longs for recognition, praise. That's one of the keys of an Absalom – he longs for recognition and praise. He wants to be someone. He doesn't want to just be in the shadows. He's the kind of person who when he sees someone else praised has to insert, "Yeah, I could do that." When conversation is about the spectacular things that someone else has done, he has to bring the conversation back to himself, and if he can't do that, he has to tear down the other person. But it is all rooted in pride.

III. Self-indulgent (v. 1) yet tries to give the illusion that he is completely devoted to God (14:26), a hard worker (v. 2a), and is self-sacrificing (v. 2). So his selfish-ambition is disguised as service.

Point III - It is clear that Absalom was self-indulgent. Verse 1 speaks of chariots (plural). How many chariots would Absalom need? Really. How many horses? Does he really need 50 servants just to run before him and prepare the way for him? It just gives a tiny hint at his luxury and self-indulgence.

Yet that is camouflaged to some degree by the constant image of his Nazarite long hair that is spoken about in chapter 14:26. That's a well-cultivated image that is designed to portray him as completely devoted to God as a Nazarite. "I've given everything I have to God." Right? It's sort of like some of these TV preachers who have a couple jets, several homes, and live in absolute luxury, yet they try to give the impression that everything they have they has been devoted to God.

Another thing that masks the self-indulgence is industry. Rarely will you find a lazy Absalom. Verse 2 says, "Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate." He was up at the crack of dawn, ready for work. There was no laziness in Absalom. In fact, one of the reasons Absaloms are so effective in undermining leadership is that they give the impression that they can outwork anyone. And the rest of verse 2 shows that he worked with the people constantly. Notice the "whenever" in verse 2.

"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.'"

To be doing that whenever there was a lawsuit meant that he was really working hard to win the hearts of the people. In effect, his selfish ambition was disguised as service. It looks the opposite of selfish ambition. "Here's a hard working guy. He cares about the kingdom. He's a real

servant.” And this is the image that virtually all Absaloms have – that they are the best servants of the people. This is what makes it so difficult to expose an Absalom. You look like a *jerk* when you call *him* on the carpet. “How dare you criticize such a talented, hard-working, self-sacrificing man?” You won’t likely be able to expose such a one with ordinary means. You will have to pray that God will supernaturally expose such people or judge them.

IV. A people person – affable, fun to be around, mixing it up, drawing people into his circle (vv. 1b-6)

The fourth characteristic of this dangerous Absalom is that he is a people person. He’s affable, fun to be around, mixing it up with everyone in the church and making them feel good. He is the kind of guy who can easily draw members into his confidence and into his circle of influence. Not all Absaloms are affable. I met a couple of really snarky ones in the PCA. But my understanding is that most of them are. And you can see this all the way through verses 1 through 6.

In verse 2 he shows interest in where they are from, and in verse 3 showing sympathy with their problems. He’s a caring guy. In verse 4 he claims that he really wishes that he could help them. They feel like he is identifying with them. In verse 5 he is so gracious. He is a people person, and if you even dared to suggest that he was dangerous, there would be a bunch of people who would take offense on his behalf. You can bet your bottom dollar that you would be the one in trouble, not him. This makes an Absalom extremely tough to oppose. Sometimes you can get Absaloms to repent if you deal with them early on, but it is tough.

V. Opportunistic of any hurts, controversies, problems (v. 2-3) – He acts like he really cares about the people and how they are suffering under the poor leadership.

The fifth characteristic that we see in this section is that Absaloms are opportunistic. They can smell a hurt, or a controversy, or a problem a mile off, and they are right there to sympathize and to become co-complainers. In verse 2 he is looking for the opportunities to find hurts, and what better place to do that than in the gates of the city. That was the place for the appeals court, and where judgment usually was administered. That’s where people would go to appeal an injustice that had happened to them.

But before anyone could even get to David, Absalom would sideline them, tell them that there is no one to hear their case, and commiserate with

them. And they believed him because he was the king's son – he ought to know. And so, instead of David being able to deal with the problems, the problems are all being discussed behind his back. And because He doesn't know about the problems he can't deal with the problems, and the perception is created that he is a do-nothing king; a king who really doesn't care about the problems that the people are going through. But it is Absalom who creates that environment where the criticism of the king seems legitimate.

And of course, it is human nature to like to have a shoulder to cry on. It's human nature to like to complain. But Absalom is opportunistic of all the hidden agendas of the human heart, and by that, he draws loyalty away from the leadership to himself. At this point it is only heart loyalties that are being transferred. He's not directly rebelling or any obvious rebellion.

But understanding human nature makes it easy for him to manipulate people. Sales people often do this. Did you ever hear about the salesman who closed hundreds of sales with this line: "Let me show you something several of your neighbors said you couldn't afford." It's very subtle, but it made the person curious as to what in the world it was that he couldn't afford, and wonder why the neighbors were talking about him, and why in the world they would think that he couldn't afford anything, and to prove the neighbors wrong. And in much the same way, Absalom was a salesman who was opportunistic of every hurt, problem, and controversy that came along. And there will *always* be hurts, problems, and controversies that an Absalom can take advantage of in any kingdom and in any church. Where there are humans there will be problems. And the opportunist eventually comes along.

And pastors tell me that it doesn't matter how many fires that they put out in order to satisfy an Absalom's criticism, the Absalom will always be able to find a new thing to criticize or a new controversy. It's just an endless going from one crisis to another. The same demonic expertise that helped Absalom moves these people. And don't think that Satan can't move true, godly, believers to be Absaloms. He can. 1 Chronicles 21 says that Satan moved David to number Israel. If Satan could move David, he can move any of us. If we are not guarding ourselves, Satan can use you and me. So Absalom is opportunistic because demons are opportunistic. And Absalom himself was probably being manipulated by these demons. So Christians need to be on guard and not allow an Absalom spirit to flourish. And honestly, the bigger a church becomes, the easier it is for an Absalom to work. Mega churches almost always have Absaloms.

VI. Self-advancement comes through tearing down a leader rather than through building up or serving a leader (vv. 3-4)

The sixth principle that I see in this passage is that self-advancement comes through tearing down a leader rather than through building up or serving a leader. They will point out gaps and weaknesses in a leader, but they won't seek to help the leadership by filling in those gaps. They won't try to cover for the leaders or serve the leaders if there is a deficiency. Look at verses 3-4

2Sam. 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."

2Sam. 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."

The "Oh, that I were made judge in the land" is not only a complaint that there was injustice in the land, but it was advancing himself as the solution. But the thing I want you to notice under point VI is that *Absalom doesn't approach David to address this injustice, and he doesn't approach any deputy to deal with the injustice.* He's not really looking for a solution for this person. In fact, he doesn't want David or any of David's deputies to be able to hear the case. If David did hear the case, he might solve the case, and there wouldn't be any discontentment to take advantage of. Instead, he claims "...there is no deputy of the king to hear you." The assumption starts floating around that the leadership is not interested in doing anything about it. But it's hard to believe that there was no deputy of the king ever available. What's going on is that Absalom wants there to be lots of discussions of the problems but no solutions to the problems. Now, he does say, "if I were made judge... then I would give him justice." But that's not a solution. That's a complaint.

And in many churches across America there are problems being constantly complained about by members with no intention of a solution. In fact, the elders and deacons who might be able to solve the problems only hear about the problems through the grape vine. They know there is discontent, but nobody comes to them so that they can solve it. It's very frustrating. And the Absaloms who keep bringing up new problems to complain about make themselves seem like caring people by tearing down the leadership. It's demonic. If Absalom had been godly, he would have found a deputy to hear the case, and would have helped this person find a

solution. He would have helped David problem solve. But he loves discussing problems without solving them where the real solution could be. He leaves the leadership out of the discussion.

VII. Accusatory and undermining (v. 3-4) yet giving the illusion of being very sympathetic (v. 4) and humble (v. 5)

While point VI deals with self-advancement by tearing down, point VII camouflages the accusations and undermining by giving the illusion of being very sympathetic and humble. Absalom undermines and criticizes in verses 3-4, yet it is hard to get on his case because he so loving, and sympathetic with these guys, and interested in their spiritual welfare, and humble in verse 5, and loveable.

Now, he may not deal this way with everyone. When he was talking to Ahithophel whom David had embittered (because remember, Ahithophel was related to Bathsheba), they might be more open to bolder criticism. They know that they can be more open in front of certain people. When they are talking to David himself (as in verses 7-9) they will hide their discontent completely and look satisfied and spiritual and humble. And when they are talking to a person who doesn't like frontal criticism, they might say, "Please pray for elder so and so." And then share a tidbit of gossip, or possibly an innuendo that may or may not be true. Prayer groups are sometimes gossip groups masquerading as sympathy and humility. It is one of the chief weapons of an Absalom to sow discord among the brethren – and still look spiritual.

VIII. Their destructive fault-finding, bitterness, accusatory statements, and critical spirit spreads to others (vv. 4-6)

The eighth characteristic that I see in verses 4-6 is that Absalom's destructive faultfinding, and bitterness, and accusatory statements begin to spread to others. If there is an Absalom in the church, it is rare to find him to be the only one undermining the leadership. It spreads like a virus. I should point out that there are other principles that we are *not* dealing with today that motivate an Absalom. We saw before that he had become embittered by a tragedy – the rape of his sister. He was further embittered by his dad's not doing anything to Amnon. He became even more embittered by his dad's banishing of him. Bitterness is at the root of Absalom, Jezebel, and Ahab. So this section is not an exhaustive list of motivators. You can see much of the Absalom spirit earlier on. For example, undermining leadership by taking leadership decisions into their own hands and by unilaterally doing what only a leader should be doing.

But back to point VIII – all this spreads. Verses 4-6

2Sam. 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.”

2Sam. 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.

2Sam. 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.

It’s almost like there is an urge to dump that exists within an Absalom. He feels like he just *has* to talk to people about it. He has to find malcontents, and if he can’t find them, he creates them. It’s a demonic urge. He is careful not to dump his feelings on a loyal Hushai, because Hushai is likely to tell him. “Hey, before you tell me anymore, have you talked to your dad about this? Maybe I should talk to him. Why don’t you come with me?” No, no, no, no, no. Absalom is too smart to be critical in front of a Hushai. Hushais refuse to hear criticism unless they can immediately become a part of the solution, whether it is a Matthew 18 solution, a counseling solution, or some other kind of legitimate Biblical solution. But your average citizen will assume the best of an Absalom and over time will be corrupted little by little. The Absalom syndrome is a virus that spreads.

IX. He subtly steals the loyalty of people away from the leadership (v. 6)

Now, we will continue looking at the Absalom spirit next week, but the last characteristic in these six verses is that Absalom subtly stole the loyalty of the people away from David’s leadership. You may not think that loyalty can be stolen, but it can. Verse 6 again:

2Sam. 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.

And the Hebrew word for “stole” is the ordinary word for theft. It’s the same word used in Exodus 20:15, “Thou shalt not steal.” And keep in mind that this is not David speaking. This is God, the narrator, speaking. God says that Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. That phrase implies four things (which we will deal with all together): 1) First, heart loyalty must be *given, not taken*, and it was given through covenant, which Absalom was ignoring and trying to undermine. The second implication is that once that loyalty was promised, that heart loyalty belongs to someone, in this case David. The third implication is that an intangible thing like a heart can be stolen. Don’t think of theft as only being relevant to tangible

property. And the fourth implication is that the theft of hearts away from leadership is at the core of the Absalom Syndrome.

So let's think about those four things all at the same time. This phrase implies that the hearts of those men belonged to David, not to Absalom. You cannot steal something that belongs to no one. Now obviously, their hearts don't belong to David in an absolute sense since God alone is the absolute Lord and owner of the heart. But if you press that too far, then there can (by definition) be no theft from humans since God owns everything. That would be unbiblical. Instead, we are talking about loyalty of heart being entrusted by God and man to David as a stewardship trust just as tangible property was entrusted to David as a stewardship trust. And the text indicates that stealing loyalty of heart away from David is just as much theft as stealing tangible property from David would have been theft. So let me repeat that first implication. This phrase implies that the hearts of those men belonged to David in some sense, not to Absalom. You cannot steal something that belongs to no one.

But the second implication is logically connected - loyalty of heart is something that God expects us to give to legitimate authorities in family, church, and state. For example, Proverbs 23:26 says that a father very legitimately says to his son, "My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways." He's calling for loyalty, and you children should show loyal hearts to your parents. This is a concept that is so absent in modern America. And yet it is something that is a parent's rightful due, and to fail to give it is to violate the eighth commandment. When you trash your parents, you are removing loyalty from them, and loyalty is something owed them. Now if such loyalty conflicts with loyalty to God, then obviously loyalty to God comes first. On that point they have stepped out from under the chain of command, and they cannot demand loyalty on an issue that conflicts with loyalty to God. But we are not looking at the exceptions here; we are looking at the norm. And the norm is for every one of us to give heart loyalty to the authorities that God has placed in our lives. First to your family, then to your church, and then to constitutional civic leaders (who have not been rejected by God like Saul was).

But if to steal a heart means to steal loyalty, then theft cannot be said to be only of tangible goods. And this may or may not impact the whole copyright and patent discussion. I won't get in to that. But it is clear in Scripture that you can steal someone's reputation, his time, his freedom, etc. And this passage says that you can steal hearts. So it's something worth considering. But let's dig into the concept of stealing hearts a bit more.

Proverbs 31 says that a good man can safely trust his heart in his wife's hands. But that's not true of all husbands or of all wives. Some people have had the loyalty of their spouse stolen by another.

Let me give you another example. In 2 Cor. 6:11 Paul says that he had opened his heart wide to the Corinthians and in 7:2 he asked them to open their hearts back up to him. Their hearts for some reason had been closed off and stolen from him. The loyalty that they used to have to him was gone. And when you read about the false apostles who had been undermining Paul's leadership (as described in 1 and 2 Corinthians), you realize that those false apostles were acting as Absaloms. Read 1 and 2 Corinthians with this Absalom syndrome in mind and you will see that it applies to church leadership as well. Those false apostles who were undermining the apostle Paul were Absaloms. And at the core of their Absalom Syndrome was theft of heart loyalty away from leadership.

Let me give you another example. Romans 13:8 says that we owe love to each other within the body. Why? Because we are covenanted to each other in mutual submission in the Lord. Which, means that when we withhold our love from each other, we are taking something that is a rightful due because we are covenanted together. Do you see how this can apply quite broadly?

Now, this whole concept has gotten me thinking a lot – if loyalty and heart faithfulness is expected in godly civics, and expected by Paul in church, and expected by God of parents and children, then to the degree that we trivialize loyalty, we trivialize authority, and are open to rebellion. The Scripture gives one of the characteristics of a deacon that he is loyal to authority. And you can see the same thing in marriage. So we need to ask ourselves, “Have you children truly entrusted your hearts in a godly sense to your parents?” They are saying, “Give me your heart.” The last verse of the Old Testament says that a sign of revival is that God will “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” (Mal. 4:6). Loyalty is that important to God. Without a return to such heart loyalty God's curse remains on the earth. So if you are praying for revival in America, you cannot ignore this issue of heart loyalty. Another question: “Have you members truly entrusted your hearts in a godly sense to the elders that you have covenanted with, or has an Absalom tried to rob your hearts away from your Davids?” Loyalty is a subject that we all need to study more. That's why I am spending two weeks on this rather than one. I think it has been largely absent in twenty-first century thinking. Now, loyalty itself can become idolatry

when it goes beyond the Scripture, but at least be willing to think about it and to ask God to show you if this is an area that you need the Spirit's reformation.

Conclusion

I started with the story of a pastor who had an indulgent love toward this underling just like David did. He was partly at fault just as David was partly at fault. And one of the mistaken notions that people have concerning Absaloms is that they can be loved back into the kingdom. They cannot. Bringing Absalom back was the worst thing David could have done in the previous chapter. It violated God's law. Without thoroughgoing repentance, there should be no restoration of a man who sows discord. Titus 3:10 says, "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition." And people will say, "Well, that's not very loving! That's not very tolerant! That's not very spiritual! It's not very patient. You've got to be kidding! After the first or second admonition?" And in our day and age, it's easy to believe that criticism, and it's hard to do the right thing. But if Paul was speaking to David, I am convinced he would have said Titus 3:10 - "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition." Absalom's had his chance; don't bring him back. To fail to do so is to invite disaster to Israel and to fail to love Israel in the name of loving Absalom. And Joab later recognized that and pointed out that David loved his enemies and hated his friends. And let me tell you something - leaders are quitting the ministry in droves across America (some months being 1500-1700 ministers leaving the ministry). In part this is because they are worn out by Jezebels and Absaloms. And sometimes it because the leader has responded to Jezebels and Absaloms by becoming an Ahab. They feel like they are in survival mode, so the leaders resort to the Ahab syndrome of trying to retain control through manipulation. It's all demonic. So pray for them. Pray for the church of America.

But let me end by outlining very briefly some of the differences between Absalom, Jezebel, and Ahab. They are so similar on some levels that people fail to distinguish them. Some of the similarities are that all three are rooted in bitterness and pride; all three use manipulation; all three use deception; all three were willing to destroy; all three try to control others; all three use others. But let me outline seven ways that they differ:

Absalom	Jezebel	Ahab
Wants to <i>gain</i> someone's	<i>Use's</i> Ahab's authority	Tries desperately to <i>retain</i> his

authority		authority. He has to pit one person against another to try to stay on top.
Stole the heart of the <i>people</i>	Stole the heart of the <i>king</i>	<i>Demands</i> the heart of the people
Tries to <i>overthrow</i> the king	Tires to <i>use</i> the king	Tries to <i>control and use</i> authorities that are under him
<i>Anointed himself</i> to be king	<i>Married</i> a king	<i>Was</i> king
Outwardly <i>nice</i>	Doesn't <i>need</i> to be nice	Doesn't <i>need</i> to be nice
Manipulates <i>citizens</i>	Manipulates the <i>king</i>	Manipulates <i>authorities</i> under him
Uses <i>charm</i>	Uses <i>charm and threats</i>	Uses <i>threats and promises</i> . History tells us that he was the ultimate coalition maker and controller.

But whether you can immediately distinguish clearly between them or not, you can at least start praying against all manifestations of all three in the church across the world. Pray against bitterness, pride, manipulation, deception, using people, criticism, and undermining of leadership, and leadership itself using demonic manipulation and politics (which is really the Ahab spirit). If we are to be used by God to effectively pray for revival of the church in America, we need to know the enemies of revival and pray against them. And Jezebel, Absalom, and Ahab are three well-known enemies of the church of Jesus. Do all that you can to pray against these enemies, and may God bind the spirits and bring revival to the church. Amen.

The Absalom Spirit, part 1

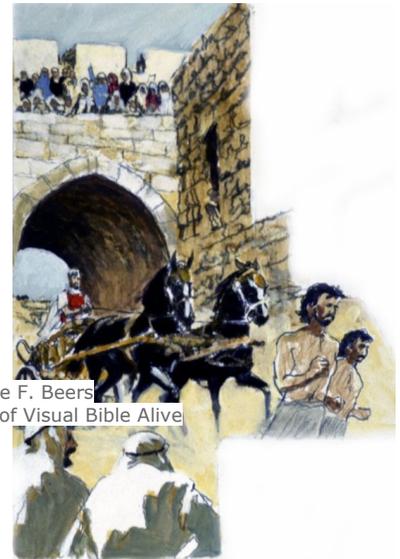
2 Samuel 15:1-6

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 10-6-2013

Introduction

- I. Often comes from those that we love the most (v. 1a) returning your good with evil (cf. 13:25-33)
- II. Rooted in pride (v. 1) yet tries to give the illusion of humility (v. 5)
- III. Self-indulgent (v. 1) yet tries to give the illusion that he is completely devoted to God (14:26), a hard worker (v. 2a), and is self-sacrificing (v. 2). So his selfish-ambition is disguised as service.
- IV. A people person – affable, fun to be around, mixing it up, drawing people into his circle (vv. 1b-6)
- V. Opportunistic of any hurts, controversies, problems (v. 2-3) – He acts like he really cares about the people and how they are suffering under the poor leadership.
- VI. Self-advancement comes through tearing down a leader rather than through building up or serving a leader (vv. 3-4)
- VII. Accusatory and undermining (v. 3-4) yet giving the illusion of being very sympathetic (v. 4) and humble (v. 5)
- VIII. Their destructive fault-finding, bitterness, accusatory statements, and critical spirit spreads to others (vv. 4-6)
- IX. He subtly steals the loyalty of people away from the leadership (v. 6)

Conclusion



© V. Gilbert and Arlisle F. Beers
Used with permission of Visual Bible Alive