

King David
Seeds of Rebellion
2 Samuel 13-14

July 14, 2019 am

HDBC

David was probably Israel's greatest king and leader. He honored his father. He loved God. Killed Goliath. Wrote worship songs. Established Jerusalem as the capital of the nation and the chief place of worship. He did a lot of really good things and is generally remembered fondly by the people of Israel.

However, he was far from perfect. He made mistakes and paid a heavy price for some really poor decisions. Like us, he wanted to do the right things, but from time to time yielded to the influence of the enemy and did some really bad things.

He was forgiven by God. But there are two things that must be remembered when we think about God's forgiveness. **First**, it is never intended to invite further sin. The promise of forgiveness is never a license to sin. **Second**, forgiveness does not erase the consequences of sin. We see this clearly in David's life. Though he was forgiven, he experienced some lengthy and painful consequences for his sin . . . primarily involving his family.

We've already seen that one of his sons sexually assaulted his daughter. Another son committed adultery with some of his wives and concubines. It's going to be pretty painful for David for years to come. But, the most pressing problem on the horizon was rebellion that would be led by his son, Absalom. We will see it in all of its ugliness in 2 Samuel 15-18.

Rebellion is not always a reflection that parents have failed. I've known many godly parents whose hearts were broken by children who walked away from the faith that was taught and modeled in the home. However, there are times when the seeds of rebellion can be traced to unwise decisions by parents.

That is true here. **Absalom** will rebel against David and seize the throne. The one who courageously faced Goliath with a sling and stone will run from his own son to save his life. How did it get to that point?

Seeds of this rebellion were planted by a passive father and frustrated son. David's passivity does not justify Absalom's rebellion, but it does help explain it.

Note three examples of David's passivity and how Absalom reacted to it. In each case we find Absalom acting because David does not! Three events that called for decisive leadership by David. Three times he needed to act and three times he failed. Each time he did nothing, the frustration of Absalom grew deeper.

David was passive after. . . .

1. The Assault of Tamar (13:23-36)

Last week we looked in detail at the assault on Tamar, by her half-brother, Amnon. This was a vile, detestable act that should have resulted in swift, decisive action by David. That did not happen. Rather than act to bring justice, David remained passive. He was angry, but did nothing. Amnon went unpunished. Everyone was looking to David, and he froze.

David's inaction sent some really bad messages.

It communicated to Tamar that she was unimportant.

It communicated to Amnon that he was above the law and untouchable.

It communicated to Absalom that David was weak and unjust.

Passivity, when action is demanded, always sends a bad message. For Absalom this was incredibly frustrating. His sister, whom he loved dearly, had been wronged, and nothing was being done. If his father would not act, he would. He would take matters into his own hands. That would trigger a whole new set of negative outcomes.

2 Samuel 13:23-33 tells the story. I'll summarize it for you. Absalom invited David to join him for the annual time of sheep shearing. David refused attend. So, Absalom asked that the eldest son, Amnon, be sent in David's place. David questioned this at first, which may indicate that he suspected something. However, when Absalom insisted, David consented. It was an ambush.

Absalom had ordered his men to kill Amnon. (28) He even reassured them that they would not be in trouble because they were simply carrying out

orders. When the other sons of David saw what was happening, they ran for their lives. Word got back to David that Absalom had killed all his sons. In an interesting twist, it was Jonadab who corrected the record and informed David that only Amnon had been killed. Remember him? It was his plan that started this sad chain of events.

Verse 36 records the response by David. He and his sons grieved bitterly. I wonder how much his grief was intensified by the knowledge that his passivity was a contributing factor in this escalating tragedy. Unfortunately David failed to learn the important lesson about being passive. He failed to act when Tamar was assaulted. What would he do now that Amnon has been killed? Once more David failed to act.

David was passive after. . . .

2. The Murder of Amnon (37-39)

After murdering his brother, Absalom fled the scene. Notice where he went. He went to ***Talmai, the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur***. Do you know who Talmai was? He was Absalom's grandfather . . . his mother's father. So, he runs to granddad so he can be safe from dad.

What does David do? Nothing! He grieves for Absalom, but he makes no effort to reach out to him. He does not approach him to talk about what he has done. He offers **neither justice for Amnon nor grace** to Absalom. He just does nothing!

For three years there is not contact between David and his son. Just silence. All that time Absalom was unsure of what his father was thinking. He surely must have assumed that David did not approve of his actions. There was not effort on David's part to reach out, so it is understandable that Absalom felt unwanted and unloved.

What should David have done? I don't know for sure all that he could have done. But at the very least he could have met with Absalom and discussed the situation, confessed his passivity which led to Absalom's frustration. If he felt that Absalom was out of line by taking the action he did, David could have at least shared that. But there was nothing! And in that silence both men grieved and grew further apart.

There is one other time when David had an opportunity to act. If he had been proactive at this point the seeds of rebellion might have been uprooted and not allowed to grow. Instead, **David was passive after . . .**

3. The Return of Absalom. (14:1-33)

For three years Absalom is absent from Jerusalem. David is despondent. Absalom is frustrated. Those around David can see it. Finally, Joab, the leader of David's army takes action to remedy the situation. Finally, someone acts!

In an interesting twist, he uses the same kind of tactic that Nathan had used earlier with David. He enlisted the help of a woman from Tekoa. She was to tell David that she was a widow and the mother of two boys who had gotten into an argument and one killed the other.

The authorities were demanding that she hand over the guilty son so that justice could be served. She was already grieving the loss of one son and could not stand the thought of losing the other one.

This was a story intended to open David's eyes to his own situation with Absalom. And it worked. David realized that he needed to reach out to Absalom and bring him back to Jerusalem. He did. For the first time in a long time it seems that things are taking a positive turn. Maybe father and son can be reconciled and move forward in their relationship. However, this did not happen.

Once again we find David reverting to his passive ways. Look at what happened when Absalom returned. **(24)** David gave orders that Absalom was not to be brought to the palace. He would be returned to Jerusalem but would not see the king. The long-awaited reunion between father and son would not happen. How sad for Absalom. He was so close, yet he may as well have been a world away. David should have initiated a process of reconciliation, but he did not.

This went on for two full years. So, at least five years of passivity have gone by. By the time David relented and allowed Absalom into his presence the seeds of rebellion were deeply planted and were beginning to bear fruit.

Meanwhile, we learn that Absalom was married and had a daughter that he named Tamar. He has never gotten over what happened to his sister.

When David finally summoned for Absalom to meet with him, the meeting appeared to be cordial, but apparently they were simply going through the motions. Immediately after this, Absalom began to lay the groundwork for his challenge to the throne.

What's the point? What is God teaching us through this part of David's life?

1. Relationships never outgrow the need to be cultivated.
2. Passivity in relationships is dangerous and may be deadly.
3. Passivity communicates indifference, not love.