

IS THE YOUNG MAN SAFE?

II Samuel 18:29

Absalom's biography contains some of the most graphic word pictures ever painted. The story of his life is one of the most exciting dramas in the Bible, and at the same time one of the saddest tragedies in all human history. This marvelously touching and dramatic story about him is a literary masterpiece. In the sixth chapter in which the story is told the plain facts are set forth just as they happened. They lay bare a father's loving heart and a son's unloving response. The story of Absalom is one of the most tragic and pathetic stories in the Bible.

I. Absalom's Natural Endowments.

1. He was well bred.
His father, David, was the king. His mother, Maachah, was a queen and a princess.
2. He had a striking personal beauty.
"In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty."
 - (1) The value of beauty.
 - a. It is a gift of God.
 - b. It is pleasant to see it.
 - c. It attracts others.
 - d. It makes it easier to influence people.
 - (2) The peril of beauty.
 - a. It tends to excite vanity and pride.
 - b. When overvalued it leads to the neglect of higher things.
 - c. It frequently attracts flatterers and seducers.
3. He had a perfect physique.
"From the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Absalom was proud of his perfect body and his handsome appearance.
4. He had great intellectual capacities.
He knew full well how to play on the weaknesses and the prejudices and susceptible emotions of men. His intellectual ability was proved by his tact and scheming in outwitting Joab.

II. Absalom's Evil Characteristics.

1. He was a willing slave of pride.
He was proud of his personal appearance. He paid much attention to the parting of his hair and the combing of his locks. He was one of a numerous class in the world that pays far more attention to outward adornment than to mental, moral and spiritual culture.
2. He was guilty of treachery.
He adopted the familiar tactics of a pretender. He learned well the arts of an office seeker. He endeavored to instill in the minds of the people a bad opinion of the current administration and a good opinion of his own fitness to rule. He even murdered his own brother Amnon under the pledge of hospitality. Turning traitor to his own father, he found fault with his father's administration, he exposed his father to ridicule, and he crushed his father's hopes for his life work.
3. He was a hypocrite.
When he had finished his plot, he lacked nothing but a cloak of religion to cover up his deeds. He asked his father to let him go back to Hebron to pay a vow that he had made there while in exile. David granted his request readily, thinking that he had a pious son. But, as Absalom left Jerusalem, he went out as a traitor with 200 men in his band.

4. He was ungodly.
He had no thought of a present judge or of a future judgment. He lacked humility, reverence, faith, affection for men, love of God, tenderness, pity, and a guide for his life.
5. He was selfish.
He had little or no thought for anyone except himself. He used his fellows as tools to build up his own fortune. His one thought was to exalt and to gratify himself at the expense and by the aid of others. He did not care how much suffering he caused, or what wrong he did, if he could only gain his ends and come out on top. He was prepared to use any means, fair or foul, to gain his desired ends. The object of his thought and creed was self. He thought that he ought to have everything he wanted, and that it was everybody's business to see that he got it.

III. Absalom's Conspiracy Against His Father.

From his father Absalom obtained the position of judge, which he had desired. As he sat at the gate of the city, he was accessible to everybody. The people came to him with their tales of woe, and they expressed their desires to him. Grasping their hands, he expressed his regret at the negligence of his father and gave a verdict in favor of everyone. He courted popularity by pretending to be a great social reformer and a special friend of the less fortunate people. He commended himself very highly to his fellowmen. He gained a reputation of being "a man above all others in the kingdom who had the peoples' welfare at heart," and thereby stole the hearts of the people. That sort of thing went on for four years without David knowing about it because he had been much withdrawn from public life on account of the humiliating sense of sin.

Absalom also had access to a large sum of money, so he began to drive a magnificent chariot and had fifty men run before him wherever he went. This was quite a contrast to the mode of travel of his father, which was upon a mule. Such magnificence produced the desired effect, captivating the hearts of the people from the beginning. A schemer of this type always strives for self-display. He cultivates all of the arts and wiles of the showman. Behold how he drives up to the city gates.

Absalom showed his shrewdness in choosing Hebron, the former capital, as the place to hoist the flag of rebellion. After the revolt was organized, they began the march upon Jerusalem. Word was quickly dispatched to David who, taking with him only a few faithful followers fled from the capital at once. That was certainly a dark hour in his life when he hastened across the Jordan River and fled into the mountains.

Absalom made a triumphant entry into Jerusalem and took formal charge of his father's harem and royal palace. While he remained in his father's harem indulging in sin, David was organizing his army in order to suppress Absalom when an opportunity afforded itself. When Absalom finally decided to pursue his father, David had already firmly entrenched himself in the hills of Manahaim.

Driven out of his capital by the rebellion of Absalom, David stood one day in front of the fortress of Manahaim to review his troops as they marched toward the field of battle. There were three divisions of veteran soldiers. As each division came abreast of David, it halted to salute the king. Before it passed on David said to each commander, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." Soon the army of three divisions had vanished into the woods of Ephraim. Absalom and his forces pursued David. Their armies met in battle somewhere in the wooded district. The first onslaught of David's men drove Absalom's army into terrible confusion. Panic-stricken they fled into the neighboring woods only to become a more easy prey to their pursuers. As the wretched Absalom, then deserted by all, hurried in terror and fright through the forest, his long and beautiful hair became entangled among the branches of a prickly oak and two of these branches caught him, while the mule on which he rode moved from under him

and left him suspended in the air. Although David had commanded his forces to suppress the rebellion but to spare Absalom, as soon as Joab learned that Absalom was hanging in a tree he took three darts and thrust them through his heart. Absalom was cut down from the tree and ten of Joab's soldiers slashed and mutilated his body until no one could have recognized him.

Absalom had been ambitious for posthumous fame, so he had erected a mausoleum in the king's vale near Jerusalem thinking that it would be a sepulchre when he passed away. That honor was denied him when his body was cast into a nearby pit and stones were piled over him to remind the passers-by that his grave was one of a rebel and a malefactor.

Cushi, a runner, was commissioned to tell David what had happened. When the king inquired as to the safety of Absalom, Cushi told him the plain truth, even though it broke David's heart. In his grief over his rebellious son David cried, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Ambition of the wrong kind had led Absalom along the downward way. There is an ambition of the right kind. Paul's ambition was inspiring, noble and unselfish. It was in its very essence the desire to be serviceable in the largest way to others. Ambition of that kind is legitimate and praise worthy, and its foes are to be fed and fanned constantly. But Absalom's ambition was earthward and downward. He desired his father's throne, renown, prestige, popularity, power and place. Beware of the wrong kind of ambition. The wrong kind of ambition will make mischief anywhere.

David did not ask, "Who has won the victory?" Nor, "Which side is in possession of the field?" All that was forgotten and the father's heart asserted itself. He cried, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

It was a question a father asked about his son. Oh, what anxieties burn in the hearts of true parents! If only the children could realize this, a thousand chapters of ingratitude would not be written. From the cradle to the grave parents are interested in their children, and these children are always their children. No matter to what height they rise nor to what depth they fall, still the parental heart overflows with anxiety toward such children.

It was a question asked by a father concerning his son, who was away from home and in rebellion against him. Oh, to what lengths parental love will go! The worst enemy David had on earth was Absalom. He meant to rob David of his crown. He meant to destroy David. Even though David knew that his son meant his humiliation, shame, destruction and death, he asked this plaintive question, "Is my boy safe?"

But David asked this question too late. Absalom was not safe. Three darts had already pierced his body and he was dead. His name was to be shrouded with disgrace throughout eternity.

1. Absalom was not safe because of his father.
Perhaps no story in human biography more vividly warns that the sins of the father often come home in the lives of his children. Absalom was not safe because the shadows of his father's sin took root in his own life.
2. Absalom was not safe because of his attitude toward his father.
A disobedient child is not only a grief to his parents, but is himself headed for a fearful disaster. Perhaps there is no better test of a son or daughter than the attitude of such a child toward its parents.

Many of you can remember when the news was flashed across the land of the sudden death of President Harding. Immediately they began searching for Vice President Coolidge. He was found far out in the country at the home of his father in Vermont. A thrill went through the nation as people were told how President Coolidge with

his hand on the old family Bible, and by the light of a kerosene lamp took the oath of office administered by his father, who was a notary. The praying people of America rejoiced when they read that in the first gleam of morning light, and before the secret service men, who were racing at dangerous speed to reach and guard the President, could arrive, Coolidge slipped away to the little cemetery and knelt by his mother's grave and promised God that he would faithfully perform the duties of his high office. There is hope for a land with such a President. And it is significant that no mark of shame ever marred his private life, his family, or his public service.

3. Absalom was not safe because he had bad associates.
One cannot be safe when with the wrong kind of company. To a great extent our companionships make us or mar us in our earthly lives. God's Word says, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." If one chooses evil companions, he will imbibe their spirit. If he goes with the right kind, even so will he be blessed by their spirit.
4. Absalom was not safe because he had the wrong kind of habits.
Although he was handsome, daring and charming, he was weighted down with the wrong kind of habits. Whenever a young man has extravagant habits, he is digging a pit for himself out yonder somewhere into which he will fall. Your life is imperiled if you yield to a wrong habit.
5. Absalom was not safe because he left God out of his life.
Absalom rebelled against his home, country and God. No man apart from God is safe. A young man is not safe unless he is positively and openly God's friend. No man is able in his own strength to withstand the currents that beat against him. No man is able to cope with Satan and his seductive wiles in his own strength. No one who follows in Absalom's footsteps is safe. Such a one will miss his goal both in life and in death.

Is your life safe? It is not safe if you are in wrong relationship to Him Who made you, Who redeemed you, Who preserves you, Who pleads with you to repent of your sin and believe on Him as your Saviour, Lord and Master. In Him is safety, salvation and victory. Accept Him now as we sing our hymn of invitation.