

Final Prayer

Speak to me Lord Jesus, when for whatever reason, I do not know where to turn because of fear. Send Your Holy Spirit and fill me with Your love and peace, and in that security may I find my way to the heart of faith again, and hand all my problems over to You. Thank You Lord Jesus, my Saviour; AMEN

2 Samuel 12:24-31

No: 22 Week: 168 Sunday

30/11/08

Prayer

The beauty of Your world astounds me, Lord God, and the cruelty of humanity shocks me. Motivate me to live according to Your Word, the only means whereby truth may be upheld, honesty be valued, love be seen as strength, and care for others be the highest goal. As I pray, show me the truth about this world, Your Love, and my life. In this light, may I follow You always: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Weapons of War

Our world today is in many ways dominated by the military, and the arms trade is an offshoot of the military which is controversial. Pray today against the illegal use of guns.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for casual workers in your country who have no fixed home*
- *Pray for India and the terrorist outrages in Mumbai (Bombay)*
- *Give thanks to God for the joys of Christian fellowship*

Meditation

Start believing; not because you must,
but because Jesus Christ has saved you!

Start praying; not just when you need to,
but when the Lord prompts you!

Start listening; not because you ought to,
but because the Saviour loves you!

Start rejoicing; not just when you want to,
but when the Holy Spirit leads you!

Start living; not because you have no option,
but because your God frees you!

Start expecting; not just when you have a reason,
but all the time God gives you!

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 12:24-31

²⁴ Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went to her and slept with her. She gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. The Lord loved him, ²⁵ and sent a message by Nathan the prophet to call him name Jedidiah (which means 'beloved of the Lord'), because of the LORD.

²⁶ Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites, and took the royal city.

²⁷ He sent messengers to David, and said, 'I have fought against Rabbah, and I have also captured the water-supply. ²⁸ Now, then, assemble the rest of the troops, lay siege to the city and take it; lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.'

²⁹ So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, attacked and captured it. ³⁰ He took the crown of their king from his head. The weight of it was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone which was placed on David's head. And he took a large amount of spoil from the city. ³¹ He took away the people who were in it, and set them to work with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them work in the brick kilns. He did the same in all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

Review

At the beginning of our passage today (12:24-25), we hear of the birth and naming of Solomon. We who read the story of 2 Samuel know that Solomon is the one who will bear the Messianic covenant of David's dynasty and will build the great Temple in Jerusalem. This, however, was far from clear to the people at the time. David already had an elder son, Amnon, and several other sons (2 Sam 3:2-5) who would in coming years complete for the rights of inheritance from their father. After this description of Solomon's birth, we hear no more of him until he managed to gain the throne of Israel (1 Kings 1), and became the great King who built the Temple. Certainly, the Book of Chronicles describes the works of Solomon with great grandeur, perhaps more even than his father David, so we will certainly hear a great deal more of Solomon in the Bible, but not in the rest of 2 Samuel.

A public scandal The rest of the passage (12:26-31) describes a military success of David which acts as his rehabilitation in the eyes of the army and the people after the shame and shambles of what happened in Jerusalem with Bathsheba. The scandal of what had happened, particularly the murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah, had probably been discussed everywhere, around the court, and also the city and the army. The soldiers would not have been enamoured by a king who sent secret orders to have one of their own number killed in battle. So Joab, the army commander, correctly perceived that now David had completed his time of mourning (12:15-23) he needed to demonstrate his power and authority as a King worthy of the name, protecting his people and securing the boundaries of the nation. So he sent for David to assume his royal duties (12:27,28)! Having retained personal command of the troops who were already at war, Joab asked David to assemble 'the rest of the troops' (12:28) and join him in order to press home the advantage already gained and complete victory over their Ammonite enemy and the city of Rabbah.

The need for David to face his responsibilities The battle had been going on for some time, and it was of course David's absence from the army that led to him staying in Jerusalem, from where he spotted Bathsheba and the whole sordid affair of his adultery was begun (11:1,2). Uriah was also killed at the walls of Rabbah on the direct orders of David during a recklessly ordered manoeuvre (11:14-17), so it was fitting that David should be asked to return to the battle to face not just his kingly responsibilities but also the truth of his personal situation. David accepted the advice of his loyal army commander Joab, a man who had been with him (together with his brothers Abishai and Asahel), since David was living in exile during the reign of Saul (1 Sam 26:6ff). Scripture does not dwell on this, but is nevertheless crucial to the story, that David commanded extraordinary loyalty amongst his senior army leaders, notably Joab. It was something that would play an important part in the later stories of David's reign (2 Samuel 15f.), because trouble certainly lay ahead, as Nathan prophesied.

The capture of Rabbah When David returned to battle, he was successful in capturing the city of Rabbah, the Ammonite capital (east of the river Jordan), and it was an extremely important victory, securing all Israel's eastern borders. The Ammonites had not previously presented much of a threat to Israel (apart from during the time of the Judge Jephthah - Judges 10,11) and Israel had no long term feud with them, as they did with the Philistines

in the west. The war was the result of the humiliating treatment they had meted out to David's envoys after the death of their former king (10:1ff), and unless David had won this battle, the Ammonites would have become an increasing threat in years to come. Having won the battle, David took control of the Ammonites, and the Ammonite royal crown was placed on David's head (12:30). He also placed the population under hard labour, in service of the greater Kingdom of Israel David was establishing. This sounds cruel to us, but it was far more humane than the ritual slaughter of whole peoples, commonly practiced in ancient times.

I wonder how difficult it was for David to face his kingly responsibilities again after confessing personal failure to the Lord? The scriptures do not tell us of David's feelings, but it must have taken courage to stand in front of everyone again and call for their loyalty, knowing that they would have heard all about his affair. Unless David did this, his future lay in shreds. Yet there is something to admire in David's ability to 'bounce back' after the tragedy of his sin and waywardness. This was not just a personal quality, however, for God had blessed him with His Spirit (1 Sam 16:13ff), and part of that blessing was the strength necessary to overcome the consequences of his sin and act with repentance. For the people of Israel, that repentance had to be visible if they were to trust him again as their leader and king.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss what positive qualities of David emerge from this story. Is it easy to do this task knowing what David has done?
2. God may have forgiven David, but how easy do you think it was for the people to forgive him?
3. Why did God allow David to continue as king after committing murder and adultery? Why was he not dismissed, as Saul was before him?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Making our repentance public is not always appropriate, but it is necessary for a leader who has used his people! By taking up his duties again, David faced his people whom he had let down, and took hold of the real challenges before both him and the nations. When we have done something wrong we like to think it has affected very few people, for we dislike facing others with our guilt, preferring to ignore the consequences of sin, particularly that which affects others. It is far more Godly to accept our responsibilities by being 'up front' with what has happened; in truth, we expect it of others, and even respect others who are able to do this, so we should not shirk what it may be necessary for us to do. By so doing, we openly and publicly accept our responsibilities towards God and others, and thence receive our healing.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *If there are sins in your own life which still come back to haunt you, it may be that you have not followed through the repentance the Lord requires of you; that is, not just saying 'I repent', but demonstrating in your family or church or the workplace. Ask for the Lord to help you face your responsibilities.*
- *Pray for those who are trapped in sin because they are not able to confess what they have done, or are fixed in the mindset that says 'never admit guilt'. Ask the Lord to break down this mindset within the church.*