

community when individuals seek attention or manoeuvre events to their on advantage. How can God's people be protected against this?

- Pray for all those who hold positions of responsibility and whose families are therefore exposed to public interest. Pray that God will give them the wisdom to deal with the complex situations which arise when family interests and leadership issues clash.

## Final Prayer

Let me hear Your voice tonight, faithful God and Lord of all. Speak to me so that I may know Your will, whether it be hard or easy, comforting or challenging, exciting or mundane; and let me value each and every word, the instruction You give for Your servant's life. Thank You Lord; AMEN

## Prayer

Father, we worship You and adore You. Be careful with us pray, so when our lives do not make sense and nothing appears to work out for good, then touch us with Your compassion and make us aware of Your presence. May we bear the heartaches and enjoy the thrill of the lives You have given us, and may we catch a glimpse of the life You have prepared for us in Your Kingdom: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Fire Services

*In most country there are services responsible for helping us fight fires. Those who have this job do difficult work on our behalf, so pray for them, and any fire-fighters you know.*

### On-going prayers

- Pray for small businesses struggling to keep going
- Give thanks to God for safety whilst you travel
- Pray for people in Tibet and the political problems there

## Meditation

Save us Lord, Creator of all things. Open our eyes to see you.  
For people own so much and think they can do what they want,  
Yet really, You have given us everything:  
Everyone can communicate easily using the internet,  
But it is You with whom we need to keep in touch:  
Many people drive miles for work, leisure or enjoyment,  
But You are with us wherever we are:  
Doctors perform marvels, can even reconstruct a human face,  
But only You can mend a broken heart:  
Trained engineers know how to utilise the world's resources,  
Yet You hold all mysteries and secrets of the world:  
Save us Lord, Creator of all things. Open our eyes to see you.

## Bible Study - 2 Samuel 13:30-39

<sup>30</sup> While they were on the way, word reached David that Absalom had killed all the king's sons, and not one of them was left. <sup>31</sup> The king arose, tore his clothes and lay on the ground; and all his servants who were standing nearby tore their clothes.

<sup>32</sup> But Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimeah, said, 'My lord should not imagine that they have killed all the young princes; Amnon alone is dead. Absalom has been determined to do this from the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar. <sup>33</sup> My Lord the King should not be concerned about this report that all the king's sons are dead; for Amnon alone is dead.' <sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, Absalom had fled.

Now, when the young man who kept watch looked up, he saw a large number of people coming from the Horonaim road by the side of the mountain.<sup>35</sup> Jonadab then said to the king, 'Look, the king's sons are coming; it is happening just as I said!' <sup>36</sup> As soon as he had finished speaking, the king's sons arrived. They wept aloud, and the king and all his servants also wept very bitterly.

<sup>37</sup> But Absalom fled and went to Talmai son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. David mourned for his son day after day. <sup>38</sup> After Absalom fled to Geshur, he stayed there three years. <sup>39</sup> Then David began to consider what to do about Absalom, for he was sorry about Amnon, who was dead.

## Review

After Absalom had murdered Amnon, confusion reigned. Confusion creates its own problems however, and in an age when information travelled only as fast as a man could either run or be carried by an animal, there was ample time both for false rumours to run rife and for people to take advantage of them.

Both things happen in this part of 2 Samuel. It is not just we who recall that Amnon was the heir to David and the supposed ancestor who would bear God's covenantal promise (2 Sam 7), this was probably the first thought of everyone at the time. If Absalom, according to the first report received (13:30), had killed the king's sons, then he alone was left as David's heir, and having disposed of everyone else, he was in a strong place to take the throne from his father by force. You may think this to be somewhat imaginary, but similarly things happened in other countries in David's day, and would certainly happen within the next couple of centuries of the life of Israel and Judah. Indeed, it would not be long before Absalom removed his father from Jerusalem, though not just yet.

There is one other interesting feature of the story of Amnon, which is this. Amnon's name in Hebrew means 'faithful'. Whatever character he turned out to be, this had been given to him by his father and it expressed hope for the future; the word faithfulness means 'going on and on without fail'. David had invested his future and that of his dynasty in Amnon, and the man turned out to be a scoundrel, creating division in the royal household and finally being murdered by his brother. Things were not good in Jerusalem during part of the reign of David.

**The coming of the news** All who heard the news at court did as David did; they tore their clothes and wept. They could only respond to the news as they heard it, and believed that the king's sons were dead. At this point, Jonadab (13:32) decided to intervene. We should remember that it was Jonadab who earlier in 2 Samuel 13 had interfered in Amnon's obsession with Tamar and helped to engineer the situation in which she was raped, thus triggering this whole sequence of events. It is tempting to wonder whether, as a son of David's brother, he was trying to engineer his succession and claim to the throne of David, creating dissent and misinformation within David's court. He was certainly identified as a 'crafty man' (2 Sam 13:3), and his currying of favour with the king at this time seems particularly coniving.

Jonadab announced that he believed only Amnon had been killed (13:32), and I doubt if this was prophetic knowledge; it was most probably insider knowledge. It was discovered that Jonadab was right when the rest of David's sons turned up at court on their mules having fled the scene of the murder at Baal-hazor (13:23ff). The weeping continued, however (13:36), in sorrow not just at Amnon's confirmed death but also because the next in line to the throne, Absalom, was responsible for the murder and had left Israel, taking exile in Geshur. He could not now show face at court after what had happened. In the meantime; but Jonadab revelled in the success of his apparent foresight (13:35)!

**David and Absalom** Right at the end of the passage, I have translated the last verse (13:39) differently from most Bibles, which have 'And the heart of the king went out, yearning for Absalom; for he was now consoled over the death of Amnon.' The implication of this is that David, after all that had happened, continued to love Absalom, even though he could not bring himself to allow him to return home from exile. This sounds just about feasible in the story as we have it, except that it does not fit with the story which comes next in chapter 14, in which a parable is told which likens David to someone who aggressively sought vengeance against Absalom. Now, the word for 'yearning' is somewhat unclear, and bears the meaning of someone attempting to bring something to completion, and it could mean that David was plotting against Absalom because of his sin, and this would fit the story in chapter 14. Either he was doing this, or he was simply trying to work out what to do to bring the whole situation to a satisfactory conclusion. I have therefore translated this verse neutrally, as above; 'David began to consider what to do about Absalom ...' Certainly, the whole political situation in Israel was now very difficult. Absalom was David's heir, but was in exile in Geshur, and it was not easy for David to simply designate another heir. There were no easy options for him.

**Faith in the midst of trial** There is only one conclusion to be drawn from today's story. The great King David's reign was in confusion, and no-one knew what to do. It is easy for us to have a very idealistic picture of David in our minds, which paints him as a great leader and man of faith. He was undoubtedly this, but the story helps us realise that part of David's greatness lay in his longevity, endurance and faith through considerable upheaval during his long reign, not just before it. Most people are well aware of David's battle with Saul before he became King, but few are aware of the deep divisions and rifts he had to deal with amongst his family whilst he reigned in Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, David remained faithful to God, and God remained faithful to him. This is the kind of real life faith that we need to hear about from the Bible, and we should be amazed and encouraged at the way in which God remained faithful to him despite the problems.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Which parts of this story comes as new to you, or surprises you upon reading it now? Why is this so?
2. Does this story deserve to be better known, and why?
3. What impression do you have of David from this story? To what extent does he show faith even though the word is not specifically mentioned in the text?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*Following the Lord can be the most painful experience when we find that our path of discipleship comes into opposition from our families. Just as David had a son who showed little real faith (Amnon), many Christian parents deeply mourn the unfaithfulness of their children or other close relatives. This can be a source of deep distress, yet it is one in which we need to remain strong, and through which the Lord can lead us even though it may seem terrible hard and painful for us. Thank God that he has a long term view of things, and we can rest assured that God both knows and understands everything about us.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *From where does misinformation come to you and the people in the life of your church? This is a difficult issue, but sometimes troubles are created in a church*