

Lie Down and Sleep

They were hungry and thirsty; weary from a rather frightening escape. Having left the comfort of their homes in Jerusalem the household of King David, many friends, and an army crossed the Kidron brook east of the city and set up camp in a wilderness area somewhere north of the Dead Sea, south of Jericho. Absalom, David's son, was in pursuit of David and the throne of Israel. This event occurred after more than seven years of hatred that had festered in the heart of Absalom.

Absalom's hatred was originally aimed at his half-brother Amnon who had fallen in love with his beautiful sister Tamar. Amnon had strong desires for Absalom's sister, Tamar, but she refused him knowing that his intentions were sinful. She even pleaded with Amnon to speak with King David assuring him that the King would allow them to marry. Amnon was impatient and raped Tamar and then in anger sent her away. In desolation Tamar went to her brother Absalom and he encouraged her to be quiet about the matter. Absalom had nothing to say to Amnon, neither good nor bad.

Two years later Absalom saw an opportunity to resolve his hatred. He invited all his brothers together for a celebration during the shearing of the sheep. During the party when everyone was *merry* with wine, Absalom gave the command and his men killed Amnon. Absalom's mother was the daughter of the King of Geshur, so he escaped to the land of Geshur and stayed there three years.

David was greatly distraught over the death of Amnon, his firstborn son, and he mourned over him every day. Eventually, at the humble request of Joab, the commander of David's army, David sent for Absalom. Upon Absalom's arrival in Jerusalem, David gave instructions that Absalom should go to his own house and not see the king face-to-face. For two years Absalom was not allowed to see King David.

During those two years Absalom sat at the entrance of Jerusalem and greeted people as they came to the city. He assured everyone that he would render justice if only he had the authority to judge their complaint. He endeared himself to all of Israel, but at the same time he was calculating a secret plan to overthrow King David.

Perhaps it was because his father had never punished Amnon for his disgraceful sin; perhaps it was because his father had not communicated with him for three years; perhaps it was because King David would not let Absalom come into his presence after moving back home. Whatever the reason, Absalom apparently grew in his hatred for his own father to the point that

he was willing to kill David and install himself as the king of Israel.

However, no evil plan is without fault and a messenger informed King David that "the hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." David understood and immediately began evacuating his family, close friends, and his loyal army. It was while fleeing from Absalom that he wrote the third Psalm which begins:

O Lord, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!
Many are saying of me,
"God will not deliver him." (Psalm 3:1-2)

David had killed a lion; he had victoriously faced the giant, Goliath; but now it was his own son who was in pursuit. How could he fight his own son? With Absalom enthroned what would be the fate of Israel? What should he have done when Amnon first violated Tamar? How could he have done or said to Absalom to bring about a better result? Before going into battle he told his men to deal gently with Absalom. Could they follow his command? Would they?

David: deposed king; one son lost to death, one son lost in life; leader of family and friends, leader of an army, chosen by God.

If we could begin to capture the enormous burden that weighed down on his shoulders, I think our minds would simply reel. I would imagine that all rational thought would certainly escape most of us and we would literally worry ourselves sick. Yet David stands as a tremendous example and encouragement as he wrote:

I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because
the Lord sustains me. (Psalm 3:5)

His simple answer was his dependence and confidence in God:

But you are a shield around me, O Lord (v 3)
From the Lord comes deliverance. (v 8)

David knew that his God was greater than his problems. Because of that conviction he was able to survey his difficult situation then prepare a place of rest and peacefully **lie down and sleep**.