

When the Bottom Falls Out

II Samuel 15:1-37

In 1785, the poet laureate of Scotland, Robert Burns wrote a most interesting poem after a plow had overturned the nest of a mouse. Here are the closing lines (in his native Scottish dialect) dedicated to that little mouse:

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o' Mice an' Men
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!
Still thou are blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I cannot see,
I guess an' fear!

In the drama of life, there will be those times when you reach the bottom and you sense it will not get worse – and alas! the bottom falls out, no matter how well laid our mortal plans. And herein we find a kindred spirit to the humble field mouse. Fortunately, we need not dig deeper in the earth like the little mouse to escape the impending doom of an advancing plow -- we have the ability to say with David, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1, 2).

The rebellion of Absalom is one of the saddest stories in the Bible. It breaks the heart of a father; it divides a family and divides a nation. The rebellion places Israel's future in jeopardy of nations that would see this as their opportunity to take advantage of the compromised and confused military of Israel.

Though sad as it is, let us observe and take heed to the lessons learned from this Scriptural saga:

1. MISALIGNING WITH GOD'S PLAN

II Samuel 15:1-4

As we read these words, we sense we are reading wording that is very up-to-date with the culture in which we live. The term social justice is thrown around loosely in our day and age. It has been defined as justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. The goal for many who would be happy to define themselves as “social justice warriors” means being involved in a struggle for equity over equality. The problem is that in the minds of many this means there is perceived injustice that can only be eradicated by not treating everyone as equals, but rather through equitable means, “level the playing field,” by taking from those who have excelled in equality to now having to struggle

harder and those who have not struggled, now to be entitled to identical benefits.

Wise Solomon through inspired Scriptures says in Ecclesiastes 9:11: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

Absalom very persuasively begins to try to convince men that David is not the king that can meet their needs, but he certainly can. So Absalom begins to sow seeds of governmental overthrow, convincing his simple followers that he (Absalom) will meet their needs in a most equitable manner. Absalom is doing more than rebelling against his father; he is rebelling against God's design. Absalom was third in line for the throne. He has no problem taking out number one, i.e., Amnon. And the second born, Chileab (aka, Daniel) is totally out of the picture. Absalom becomes a driven man to obtain by personal ambition that which was never granted to him by God.

2. MISMANAGEMENT OF GOD'S GIFTS

II Samuel 15:5, 6

The Bible says in Romans 11:29, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Word of God teaches that the Lord gives gifts to all His children. Ephesians 4:8 says, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." God intends for us to use those gifts for his glory and to bless others. We should always use our gifts to build and to bless, never to usurp and take that which God has not given us. This is what Absalom is doing now; he is taking his gifting and stealing the hearts of the men of Israel.

When Simon the sorcerer attempted to purchase the supernatural gifting of the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:20-22 records Peter's response: "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." It is our duty to find and do the will of God, but we must always keep in mind, God's gifts are unique, personal and without repentance. We will rue the day when we try to make our will God's will, if it is not God's plan.

3. MALICIOUS SEDITION

II Samuel 15:7-12

Absalom feigned spirituality, explaining to his followers that he was a true servant of the Lord. He was attempting to convince the men, that joining him would be placing them on the path of God's plan and blessings. We see that two hundred men went in their "simplicity" (innocence). This was malicious on Absalom's part to lead God's sheep off the proverbial cliff. But we see Ahithophel in another story. He was respected as the wisest counselor in the country (II Samuel 16:23). The Bible says, "And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (II Samuel 15:31). The reason David mourned so deeply and immediately over Ahithophel's betrayal is because he was David's chief counselor

and apparently David's boyhood friend. No one knew David's strengths and weaknesses or the country's condition better than his confidant. Psalm 55:12-14 and Psalm 41:9 were probably David's deep hurt over Ahithophel's decision. The Son of David, our Lord and Savior used this very reference of the pain David experienced to what He experienced with the betrayal of Judas Iscariot: "...but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18).

4. MAGNANIMOUS LOYALTY

II Samuel 15:17-37

Ittai, the Gittite, Hushai, the Archite, the priests, Zadok and Abiathar and their two sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan were filled with undying loyalty to God and their the rightful king. These men epitomized Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." The magnanimity of these faithful men bring to mind the 1940 speech by Sir Winston Churchill, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

5. MOURNFUL TRUST

II Samuel 15:23-30

The tears shed by the country and especially by David remind us of the plight of human experience. There is an old saying that bears repeating, "God has had one Son without sin, but never one without sorrow." II Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." As we read of David crossing Kidron's brook in tears, we cannot help but compare this with John 18:1 when Jesus, in rejection, crosses this same ancient brook to Gethsemane, the place of tears.

David displays beautiful trust in the Lord amidst his suffering. II Samuel 15:26: "But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him."

When the bottom falls out is the time to leave it in God's hands. Proverbs 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD." Psalm 55:22: "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

-Pastor Pope-