

2 SAMUEL—WEEK 9

COLLAPSE



F. Michael Slay

A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

*The Cover Picture is Bathing Bathsheba by Artemisia Gentileschi (1593 – 1656)
On display in the Neues Palais in Potsdam, Germany*

David receives a second wake-up call from the wise woman of Tekoa, and he gets it. He's seen this before with Nathan. This starts a sequence of events where Absalom launches a coup d'état.

David's confidence in the LORD's blessing is gone. He's living out Psalm 51.

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at www.ailbe.org and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

Thank you.

All the individual weekly study guides are available for download here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/itemlist/category/91-deep-studies>

2 Samuel, Week 9 — Collapse
Copyright 2023 F. Michael Slay
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.

1 2 Samuel 14:12–17

Therefore the woman said, “Please, let your maidservant speak another word to my lord the king.”

And he said, “Say on.”

So the woman said: “Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God? For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring his banished one home again. For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him. Now therefore, I have come to speak of this thing to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. And your maidservant said, ‘I will now speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his maidservant. For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together from the inheritance of God.’ Your maidservant said, ‘The word of my lord the king will now be comforting; for as the angel of God, so is my lord the king in discerning good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.’ ”

Having gotten permission to speak to the king freely, the “wise woman of Tekoa” drops a Nathan-like message on David. He won’t do for his own son what he’s willing to do for hers.

Next comes a theological gem. *For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him.*

While the idioms she uses here are hard to figure out exactly, her basic point is that while everyone dies, God grants grace. This is designed to ping David; it’s been the lesson of his life the last few years. But for the grace of God, he’d be dead. He’s been teaching that lesson too.

David has to be reeling. The parallels with his encounter with Nathan are too strong.

But then the woman abruptly switches back to talking about her own son and thanking the king for delivering *his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together from the inheritance of God.*

The shift feels awkward, as if it suddenly dawned on her that she needs to get back to the main storyline. While Nathan’s story of the rich man and the poor man was general enough to work as a parable, her story isn’t. It’s a specific personal plea for help. If it becomes obvious that this isn’t the real reason she’s there—it’s just a ruse to set David up—she’ll come across as a liar. She’s no Nathan.

But it’s too late. David got the point about Absalom as soon as she made it. All the guilt and shame that he felt when Nathan lit into him came flooding back.

So, when she switches back to talking about her son, he’s jolted out of his memories. He can sense why she’s there.

2 2 Samuel 14:18–24

Then the king answered and said to the woman, “Please do not hide from me anything that I ask you.”

And the woman said, “Please, let my lord the king speak.”

So the king said, “Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?” And the woman answered and said, “As you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. For your servant Joab commanded me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant. To bring about this change of affairs your servant Joab has done this thing; but my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that is in the earth.”

And the king said to Joab, “All right, I have granted this thing. Go therefore, bring back the young man Absalom.”

Then Joab fell to the ground on his face and bowed himself, and thanked the king. And Joab said, “Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord, O king, in that the king has fulfilled the request of his servant.” So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. And the king said, “Let him return to his own house, but do not let him see my face.” So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king’s face.

Not only does David instantly realize that the woman’s tale is really all about Absalom, but he suspects that this is Joab’s doing. So he asks and, sure enough, it is.

While David is, at times, inspired by the Holy Spirit to write scripture, this is not an example of supernatural inspiration. David simply saw through the ruse.

And there’s no special meaning to the woman complementing David by saying he *is wise, according to the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that is in the earth*. That’s just her fawning response to her deception being exposed.

But it’s okay. It was all done in love. David learns the lesson they were trying to teach him and acts on it.

This is yet another case study on when it’s okay to lie. Unlike Nathan’s parable, which was told in vague, general terms, this woman was clearly and specifically lying about her husband and her sons. What makes that acceptable? Are there some situations where it’s okay to violate the ninth commandment?

This particular lie had an important distinction—it was, by design, temporary. The woman let on about this when she said, *“Why then have you schemed such a thing against the people of God? For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring his banished one home again.”*

Presumably, she intended to maintain the deception a little longer, but not indefinitely. The purpose of the lie she told was not to deceive, but to teach. The lesson was permanent; the lie was not.

To my eyes, that is not bearing false witness.

3 2 Samuel 14:25–33 (ESV)

Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king's weight. There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a beautiful woman.

So Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, without coming into the king's presence. Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but Joab would not come to him. And he sent a second time, but Joab would not come. Then he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. Then Joab arose and went to Absalom at his house and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent word to you, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to ask, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still." Now therefore let me go into the presence of the king, and if there is guilt in me, let him put me to death.'" Then Joab went to the king and told him, and he summoned Absalom. So he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.

Is Absalom a piece of work or what? What is going on with this guy?

He's a royal spoiled brat; that's what. No punishment is too small for him to whine about. He's lucky to be alive after what he did, yet he wants no loss of privileges at all.

And God forbid you ignore one of his whiney messages. Arson is a pretty strange way of telling someone, "You've got mail."

But the real kicker is that Absalom did this against Joab. Did he forget how it was Joab who rescued him from exile?

He didn't forget; he just doesn't care. How did Absalom get like this? Was something important missing in his upbringing?

*Discipline your son, and he will give you rest;
he will give delight to your heart. — Proverbs 29:17 (ESV)*

Our sinful nature makes solid parenting essential. David's polygamous family was not the best environment to grow up in. Absalom's status as a "pretty boy" probably didn't help either.

David's cold disapproval of Absalom is evidence of his parenting style. He's busy and it shows. He lets Absalom return to the kingdom but makes a point of saying that he won't give him the time of day. There's no evidence that David ever gave him the time of day.

When David called Absalom back from exile, instead of shunning him, he should have spanked him.

4 2 Samuel 15:1–12 (ESV)

After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, “From what city are you?” And when he said, “Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel,” Absalom would say to him, “See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you.” Then Absalom would say, “Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.” And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron. For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, ‘If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the LORD.’” The king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he arose and went to Hebron. But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, ‘Absalom is king at Hebron!’” With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

Absalom is lying when he says that there is no man designated by the king to hear you. The king himself heard the pleas of the wise woman of Tekoa. That’s how Absalom’s exile ended. David also personally heard out Joab about restoring Absalom to full privileges. That’s how he’s now able to sit in the city gate.

So, what Absalom is doing there is perfectly ironic—and he knows it.

But Absalom plays the long game. He waited two whole years to strike Amnon. That was incredibly shrewd. After all that time, Amnon would have let his guard down.

This time, Absalom lets four years pass before launching the next phase of his coup d’état.

Absalom’s behavior is awful, but it’s not surprising. David’s, however, is. How could he possibly not know what’s going on right under his nose?

David is a popular war hero—the slayer of Goliath and countless other enemies. He’s the true king, anointed by Samuel. While being chased by Saul, he refused to strike the LORD’s anointed when he had the chance. He brought the ark back to Jerusalem and danced before the LORD, shedding all pretense.

Now a conspiracy against him is growing out in the open, yet no one warns, or even informs, David.

There is no natural explanation for this. Nathan’s prophesy is coming true with a vengeance.

5 2 Samuel 15:13–23 (ESV)

And a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom.” Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.” And the king’s servants said to the king, “Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides.” So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left ten concubines to keep the house. And the king went out, and all the people after him. And they halted at the last house.

And all his servants passed by him, and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king. Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home. You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where? Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you.” But Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be.” And David said to Ittai, “Go then, pass on.” So Ittai the Gittite passed on with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness.

What’s so heartbreaking about this is that David used to be willing to fight against all odds. He trusted the LORD to deliver him.

Now that faith is lost—not his faith in the LORD, but his faith in what He’ll do. Before, David assumed that he would be blessed. Now he doesn’t.

So, instead of standing and fighting, he goes into exile.

Curiously, David doesn’t want others, such as Ittai, to share any of his misery. This is honorable but puzzling. What’s going on inside David’s head?

He told us. He wrote it all down in the Psalms. Specifically, David didn’t just write Psalm 51; he lived it.

*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.*

*O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.*

*For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.*

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. — Psalm 51:14–17 (ESV)*

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. When have you seen through a deception?
2. When is it okay to lie?
3. What's the key to good parenting?
4. What have you seen that had no natural explanation?
5. Have you seen pessimism take over someone?

Items for prayer: