

Theme: Combining the ingredients of others' sin, our own pride, lust for power, and the desire for a legacy makes for a powerful concoction of the deadly poison of rebellion.

## I. Intro - Bitter Brew (Story of AB rise & fall)

- A. Interesting book on Busch family of AB fame
- B. One component: son's and bad relationships with father
- C. Some even seized power from their dads
- D. This has happened in other companies, kingdoms
- E. Why did Absalom rebel? What can we learn?

## II. Absalom's Rebellion

### A. Absalom lays the groundwork for rebellion

1. Absalom began to act in a kingly fashion to draw attention to himself

In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. <sup>2</sup> He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." <sup>2</sup> Samuel 15:1-2

- a. Absalom rides on a chariot, has an entourage - makes him look impressive and important
- b. He greets people at the gate, showing interest in them and their complaint
- c. These are the actions of a king in the ANE

2. Absalom undermines David directly

Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." <sup>4</sup> And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice." <sup>2</sup> Samuel 15:3-4

- a. He takes the side of the plaintiff
- b. He implies that the king is not available and responsive
- c. He puts himself forward as someone who could help the people

3. Absalom steals the people's affection

Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. <sup>6</sup> Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. <sup>2</sup> Samuel 15:5-6

- a. Absalom shows false humility to win the people over
- b. He stole the hearts of the people away from David to himself

### B. Absalom springs the rebellion

At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the Lord." <sup>2</sup> Samuel 15:7

1. Absalom laid the groundwork for 4 years!!
2. He acts submissive and asks to go to Hebron - the former capital
3. He probably has a stronger base there and thinks this will give momentum for the rebellion

4. Absalom sends secret messengers around to proclaim him as the new king (v10)
5. Absalom invited 200 important men from Jerusalem who knew nothing about the rebellion - to make it look like he was becoming king by popular acclaim
6. Absalom recruited Ahithophel the wisest counselor in David's entourage to join the rebellion

#### C. David's response

A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." <sup>14</sup> Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword." 2 Samuel 15:13-14

1. David hears that the people are following Absalom
2. David is finally decisive and determines they must flee - for his own good and that of the people in the city
3. David knows he needs to assess relative strengths and determine what to do
4. David's close associates stick by his side - they are loyal to him (v15)
5. Furthermore, as David travels he finds many more people who are still loyal to him. The initial reports have been too pessimistic - many people do not follow Absalom and are loyal to David.

#### D. The next stage: cementing the rebellion

1. Absalom returns to Jerusalem, and at the advice of Ahithophel sleeps with David's concubines in broad daylight so everyone knows!

2. This is meant to show Absalom is the king, and to let people know there will be no peace between David and Absalom.
3. However, Absalom does not listen to Ahithophel's advice on immediately engaging David in battle, but instead listens to David's spy Hushai. This gives David time to prepare.
4. We are told God is going to bring disaster on Absalom.  
Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel." For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom. 2 Samuel 17:14
5. Ahithophel realizes disaster looms and kills himself!

#### E. The battle: Absalom's rebellion is crushed

The army marched into the field to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. <sup>7</sup> There the army of Israel was defeated by David's men, and the casualties that day were great — twenty thousand men. <sup>8</sup> The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest claimed more lives that day than the sword. 2 Samuel 18:6-8

1. Joab lures Absalom's army into ground that favors David's smaller but more experienced force
2. David's army crushes Absalom's army
3. The forest claimed more lives: as if Yahweh is fighting against Absalom and to help David - because He was! God is still with David.

#### F. The conclusion: the death of Absalom

Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going. 2 Samuel 18:9

1. Most believe Absalom was caught by his hair - which had been a source of immense pride for him. (See Josephus, *Antiquities*, 7.239)
2. In any event, it looks like Divine Intervention.
3. The punishment is picturesque - ripped from his mount, caught by his source of pride, left hanging "between heaven and earth" helpless
4. Joab hears about this and comes and kills Absalom.
5. When we consider the promise of Absalom (David's son; good-looking; charismatic, decisive leader), and then see his tragic end we can weep with David "O Absalom, O Absalom"

### III. The Ingredients of Absalom's Rebellion

#### A. The base ingredient is David's sin

1. Such occurrences were prophesied as the result of David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah  
"This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup> You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'" 2 Samuel 12:11-12
  - a. Absalom's rebellion was from David's own house, it was a calamity, and included lying with David's wives in broad daylight for all to see.

- b. The fruits of David's sin continue to unfold around him.
  - c. Innocent people such as Tamar, soldiers, and the concubines have been swept into the aftershocks of David's sin.
  - d. Sin is never contained, but rather expands, spreading misery and suffering far beyond its original bounds.
2. David's sin in not disciplining his sons has contributed to this horrible state of affairs
    - a. In all of the sins of Amnon and Absalom, we do not have a single word of rebuke or instruction from David to his sons.
    - b. This lack of parenting has allowed sin to harden in Absalom's heart.
  3. In this sin-soaked fallen world, the effects of other people's sin always reverberate in our own lives. If we do not give this over to God, it provides a base for the potion of rebellion in our own heart.

#### B. Absalom's pride is a key ingredient in his rebellion

In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him. <sup>26</sup> Whenever he cut the hair of his head — he used to cut his hair from time to time when it became too heavy for him — he would weigh it, and its weight was two hundred shekels by the royal standard. 2 Samuel 14:25-26

1. Absalom was physically flawless - and he knew it!
2. His incredible hair became a source of pride - he even weighted the cuttings!
3. Pride is one of the deepest root vices, feeding all sorts of other sins, including rebellion.

4. Pride leads me to believe that the rules that apply to others do not apply to me, and enables me to justify ungodly actions in myself or my friends.
5. But pride goes before destruction, and often the very source of our pride becomes our downfall (as apparently happened with Absalom's hair).

C. Absalom's lust for power is a key ingredient in his rebellion

1. Based on his actions, many think Absalom might have set up the Amnon-Tamar incident to remove Amnon from the line of succession
2. He clearly is extremely calculating in his actions to undermine any rivals and to take power himself.
3. God says that overall David was the greatest of all kings - yet Absalom was discontent and unwilling to wait to be given power and kingship.
4. The raw lust for power leads to ungodly actions, often with the excuse that good will be done in the end. But the ends do not justify the means.
5. Ahithophel counseled a path that would harm as few as possible, but Absalom acted in a manner that displayed no concern for who would be destroyed by his quest for power.
6. When one is in the grip of a desire for power, virtually any action or ally seems justifiable. But this is not the way of Christ and His cross.
7. Sadly, many Christians are willing to justify virtually any sin in themselves or their allies to gain power to do good in the end. This is not the way of Christ and His cross.

D. Absalom's desire for a legacy is a key ingredient in his rebellion

During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King's Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, "I have no son to carry on the memory of my name." He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day. 2 Samuel 18:18

1. A monument to himself (pride) so he can be remembered
2. The desire for legacy has been the ruin of many leaders, from King Saul to King Henry VIII to our own day.
3. Absalom had no son, and thus the Davidic Covenant would be passed down through another, so he built monuments to himself and seized power.
4. An unwillingness to accept God's call and limitations for myself is rich soil for rebellion against God and envy towards those who received the call I desire.

E. Summary: A powerful concoction for rebellion

1. David's Sin
2. Pride
3. Lust for Power
4. Desire for Legacy
  - a. Individually these are rich ingredients for a sickening potion of the beginnings of rebellion
  - b. Combined, these are the formula for the deadly poison of full-blown rebellion that leaves death in its wake.

## IV. Applying the Word

### A. Do I display the effects of rebellion in my life?

1. Am I willing to sacrifice truth to accomplish my desired ends?
2. Am I willing to minimize or justify sin in myself or others to accomplish my desired ends?
3. Am I more concerned about temporal power and results or obeying God's Word?
4. Am I more concerned about temporal power and results or the eternal kingdom of God and the salvation of my 'enemies'?
5. Do my words and actions display a desire for getting my way, or for advancing the Gospel in the lives of others?

### B. Detecting the ingredients of rebellion in my own heart

1. The sin of others
2. Pride
3. Lust for Power
4. Desire for Legacy

### C. The Table of Humility and Submission

1. The humility and submission of Jesus are the basis of our salvation - he was not Absalom!
2. Here we are called to humility and submission as we confess our sins, submit to God, and receive power to embrace His Kingship

## Absalom the Rebel

2 Samuel 15-18 (2 Samuel 15:1-16)

June 17, 2018

Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: biblical characters; sin; leadership; humility and pride

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thess 5:23–24

In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. <sup>2</sup> He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." <sup>3</sup> Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." <sup>4</sup> And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice." <sup>5</sup> Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. <sup>6</sup> Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. <sup>7</sup> At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD. <sup>8</sup> While your servant was living at Geshur in Aram, I made this vow: 'If the LORD takes me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.'" <sup>9</sup> The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he went to Hebron. <sup>10</sup> Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'" <sup>11</sup> Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the matter. <sup>12</sup> While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing. <sup>13</sup> A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." <sup>14</sup> Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword." <sup>15</sup> The king's officials answered him, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king chooses."