

You Will Be Missed

Our actions and our reactions authenticate or de-authenticate the authenticity of OUR FAITH!

2 Samuel 18:18 - Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which is in the King's Valley. For he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

I. The Battlefield at Saratoga

At the battlefield in Saratoga (NY) there is a 155-foot-tall **monument** that commemorates the fight where the British made their last stand on American soil. It sits in the foothills of the Adirondacks and Taconic's and it gives a silent testimony to those men who bravely refused to bow down to the British.

Around the base there are four deep niches, and, in each niche, there appears a name of one of the American generals who commanded there. Above the names stand giant bronze figures on horseback, as famous today as they were when they were shouting commands and encouragement to their men. In the first niche the name Horatio Gates appears; in the second, Philip John Schuyler; and in the third, Daniel Morgan.

But the niche on the fourth side is strangely vacant. The name appears, but the soldier is absent. In fact, it is conspicuously absent. When you read the name, the mind rushes back into the yesterdays of history to the foggy banks of the Hudson River where a man sold his soul and forfeited his right to be remembered. How the mighty have fallen! The brigadier general who once commanded West Point, the major general who distinguished himself at battles along Lake Champlain, Mohawk Valley, Quebec, and Saratoga, committed treason and died a synonym of disgrace—Benedict Arnold.

The final place of Benedict Arnold is in a lonely room in London. He dies an old man, but his age is not an honor to him as he dies without friends, without family, without a home, and without God. He was a hero, a patriot, and a traitor.

Clarence Macartney—The empty niche in that monument shall ever stand for fallen manhood, power prostituted, for genius soiled, for faithlessness to a sacred trust.

II. Absalom

The text we read gives us a picture of another man, another traitor, who died in a place that he, should never have been.

In the previous verses of **2 Samuel 18**, there is an account given of Absalom's death. **Joab** jams three darts into his young body and kills him. **Absalom** is then cut down from the limb of the oak tree that had entangled his hair and unceremoniously tossed into a pit and covered with rocks.

A place to bury a rebel prince was chosen as a sorry substitute for where he should have been buried. He was **buried under a rock-pile** instead of a stately monument for the royal family. In fact, **Absalom had built a great monument for himself** in the valley of the kings, and he never made it.

What a tradeoff!

- A **gashed** and **broken** body.
- **Lying** at the bottom of a pile of rocks.
- Only a **forsaken father** mourned over him.
- His winsome ways all come to **nothing**.
- His ability to listen to people **wasted in tragedy**.

His whole life—entirely unfulfilled and never living up to his calling.

We find that the world and the Church are **full of Absalom's** who never live up to their calling or their ambition. **They build huge monuments** with their words, but their deeds are never called to a nobility of action.

Their end will be one filled with regret and horror.

Life is filled with people like Absalom, and we need to **make sure that we do not** fall into that category. They end up making it into stone piles of **regret and infamy**. And **people all wonder how** in the world it could have happened.

- **How could Benedict Arnold be a traitor?**
- **How could Absalom turn his back on his nation and his father?**

One man said it like this: **Men never fall far.**

That means that the failures we see in them were something that had begun to erode their souls' months before the calamity took place. . . for some it was years that they managed to hide behind a facade until the collapse came.

Look at the landscape of life and even of this church. . .

- How many **Absalom's** have been missed over the years?
- How many are about to **make their exit now**?
- How many have **built a monument** that **will be filled with the barrenness of failure**?

We missed them when they left, and we will miss them when they leave. **But I can't go with them, no matter what wooing words or logical reasons that they may give. . . **Above all else I must be saved!****

III. Why The Failure?

Because the Bible is just as applicable now as it was when it was first written, we can find answers to the deepest questions of life and faith in it.

There are some reasons that Absalom fell, and it would do us well to look to his life and examine our own.

1 Corinthians 10:12 - So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Romans 11:20-21 - ²⁰Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. ²¹For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

Self-Deception—A sinner is well conceited of himself while he dresses himself by the flattering mirror of presumption. But if he knew how deplorable and disfigured, he was in God's eye, he would abhor himself in the dust.

A. A Lack of Purpose

From the outset, there is a lack of purpose that surrounds Absalom's life. We never find in Scripture where that he is motivated toward doing something purposeful with his time, his days, and his motives.

That is the great danger of having too much in life. More men have been destroyed by prosperity than ever are destroyed by adversity and lack.

Prosperity puts an ease of comfort on us that gives rise to laziness.

Far too often, those with the Absalom-like mentality sit around waiting on some wind of purpose to stir them into action and drag them from their laziness of physical and spiritual inactivity. . . it will never happen!

You must give yourself to the discipline of work.

When a person has some goal or purpose in life that they are pursuing, it has a great blessing in their life even if they are laboring under great limitations.

If purpose can ever be embraced. . .

- It stimulates the mind.
- It pulls hidden talents out of us.
- It forces discipline to focus on the task.
- It helps to determine the priorities of his life.
- It keeps us from falling to temptation.
- It gives us a defense against the vicious habits that would rob us.
- It helps us to endure hardness.
- It will cheer us on in moments of depression.
- It will make you capable of self-sacrifice and self-denial.

Because Absalom had no purpose in his life, he paid dearly in the end.

There must be a purpose to our physical and spiritual lives.

Find some noble goal to pursue with your life.

Certainly, the Lord is coming back but we must live our lives like He is coming today but plan like He is returning 100 years from now.

More importantly, find some spiritual purpose to give yourself to. . .

It is usually after the fact that someone has backslidden that *certain trends can be noticed in their lives*.

- They lost the purpose of their own personal commitment.

- They **lost their purpose** in having a prayer life.
- They **lost their purpose** of coming to church.
- They **lost the encouragement** that comes from the body of Christ.
- They begin to think that **worship was a matter of convenience** over the cost of commitment.
- They **lost the grace of God** and the constraints of the love of Christ.
- There was a **magnetism toward the world**, and they become *progressively more worldly*.
- They began to **forsake long-held personal convictions** that God had put into them.
- They began to **resent any preaching** that called them to a higher life of Godly living.
- They **rejected the warnings that came from the Bible** concerning how they were to live their spiritual lives.
- The **battles within** became **greater than** the battles without.

They finally walked away, *just a shell of what they had been in the past and their monuments are now empty. . .*

As Absalom they died somewhere they never should have been.

B. Selfishness

So, if a lack of purpose settled in on their lives and there was no ambition to press Absalom, **he gave into something just as deadly, selfishness.**

His whole life was devoted to the serving of self.

He had a desire to be famous in life and remembered in death.

Instead, he was like *the carcass of a dead dog* under a pile of rocks.

While there must be a pressing ambition of life—it all comes to nothing when it becomes so focused on self.

Absalom got to the point that **he treated everybody around him as a means to his own ends.**

- **David** was his ticket to the throne.
- **Ahithophel** was his ticket to the throne.
- **The people of Israel** were his ticket to the throne.

History is full of the foolish that were consumed by selfishness:

Theodore Roosevelt—The things that will destroy America are peace at any price, prosperity at any cost, safety first instead of duty first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life.

When you get to **2 Samuel 15-16**, we find **a series of actions driven by utter selfishness:**

- **Absalom** hired mercenary soldiers to run in front of his chariot.
- **He stood in the gates** of Jerusalem and stole the hearts of the people.
- When he got to Hebron, on the pretense of **fulfilling a vow to David**, he instead announced his new kingship.
- **He pulled Ahithophel into his deadly web that would lead to ***Ahithophel's suicide.*****
- **Absalom forced David** from the city of Jerusalem and to flee to the wilderness.
- **Absalom consuming his own lust** on some of David's concubines.

It all caught up with him in the end because he was only thinking of his career and his success in the nation.

His selfish talking is what put him into a difficult place.

- He talked to the ***mercenary soldiers*** and convinced them he was right.
- He talked in ***the gates of Jerusalem*** and convinced them he was right.
- He talked to ***David about the vow in Hebron*** and convinced him he was right.
- He talked to **Ahithophel** and convinced him that he was right.

And all of them were deceived by Absalom's words. . .

He deceived every one of them!

The Absalom mentality can get so bent on his own success that he can talk himself and everyone around him into believing a lie.

There are some people in our generation who are literally **talking themselves into a place of deception** while they perceive it to be a revelation.

Far too many **blow every opportunity** that life presents to them **because of selfishness**.

An old method for catching raccoons is to place a piece of foil inside a small, barred box that is staked to the ground. When the raccoon comes by, he reaches his paw into the box to get the foil. But, once he has grasped the foil, his paw changes shape and will not fit back through the bars of the box. ***Many times, a raccoon would rather give up his freedom and perhaps his life—just for the sake of a shiny but useless piece of foil.***

You will meet people in the world and in the church ***who waste what God has called them to do all because of the shiny trinkets of life*** that confuse them.

When the values of the world replace the value that God has in your life, you are building a monument that will never live up to its calling.

C. Irreverence

If a lack of **purpose and selfishness** corrupted Absalom, one more thing finally sank him—**irreverence**.

There should be **three elements of reverence** in our lives:

- One for what is **above us—God**.
- One for what is **equal to us—our peers and family**.
- One for what is **beneath us—the poor, the weak, and those less fortunate than we are**.

Every action about Absalom caused him to pursue his ambitions—at the expense of God’s will for his life.

There was nothing sacred to Absalom **except his own comfort and position in life**. He refused to let his appetites be ***“fenced in.”***

He had no reverence for God or for others. He did not care about their feelings, their rights, or their sufferings.

You might ask the question. . . how do I know if **I am becoming irreverent** for God and the things of God?

Perhaps one of the greatest expressions of a lack of reverence is how one looks at grace.

It views grace so cheaply that it can be abused and tossed around without the slightest bit of guilt. . . and we are all guilty before God. **Romans 2: 1-16**

Romans 2:1-4 - God's Righteous Judgment

2 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

- **Cheap grace is** the preaching of forgiveness without repentance.
- **Cheap grace is** baptism without church discipline.
- **Cheap grace is** communion without confession of God's glory and power.
- **Cheap grace is** grace without discipleship.
- **Cheap grace is** grace minus a cross.
- **Cheap grace is** grace without a living Jesus Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer—We have gathered like eagles round the carcass of cheap grace, and there we have drunk the poison which has killed the life of following Christ. (*The Cost of Discipleship*)

In the end **Absalom**, instead of being the king, was hanging from an oak tree by the hair of his head. ***He died a lonely man!***

Clarence Macartney—*The loneliest man is not the man who sits in a home out of which has been taken by death the companion of many years; not the man who is a stranger, away from friends and companions and familiar scenes and sights. No! The loneliest person is that person who has been living to himself and therefore has only himself for company. He is like a coffin—room for himself and on one else.*

IV. CLOSE: Just A Little Bit of God

Just a tiny bit of reverence for God would have been the thing that saved Absalom.

- Just a small bit of his conscience being prompted by God.
- Just a small bit of his spiritual ear hearing what the Spirit said.
- Just a small bit of attendance at the house of God.
- Just a small bit of participation at the altar in the Temple.

All these things would have been enough for him, but it was not to be.

Any time a person tries to get along without God, they will become a loser.

1 Timothy 4:8 - For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

This message started with the beautiful but empty tomb of Absalom who was a son of David.

But there is another tomb in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, also empty, **the tomb of Jesus.**

The first tomb speaks to us. . . .

- About wrecked ambition, blasted hopes, and prostituted powers.
- About a man who found his life and lost it.
- About a man who loved and exalted himself.
- About a man who shows the failure, the breakdown, and disappointment of one who did not build on God.
- About a man who ended up under a pile of stones—lost.

The second tomb also speaks to us. . . .

- About a Man who lost His life but found it.
- About a Man who humbled Himself and was exalted.
- About a Man who could not be held by Death.
- About life **that lives forever** because it lives unto God.

Our actions and our reactions authenticate or de-authenticate the authenticity of OUR FAITH!

Just a tiny bit of reverence for God – Will you have reverence for God today?