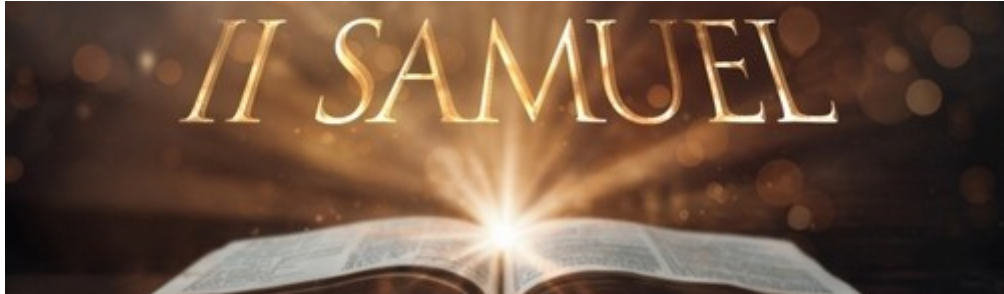


Let's Worship God

27th July - 1st August

2 Samuel





Monday - 2 Samuel 18:1-9 - Absalom: The Man Who Would Be King

In this chapter we have a civil war. Some people want Absalom to be king of Israel instead of David, and other people want David to stay king. This war is only going to end when either Absalom or David are killed. But when it comes to the decisive battle, it's covered in only 3 verses (verses 6-8). It's civil war in Israel. 20,000 people are killed. But we're hardly told anything about it. What the chapter seems to want us to focus on are the two leaders: Absalom and David.

Absalom's attempt to become king has been a long time in the planning. Back in chapter 14 we saw how he weaselled his way back to Israel and then into David's presence. One step at a time. Then in chapter 15 we saw how he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. Slowly, deliberately, he turned the hearts of the nation towards him over the course of years. In chapter 16 David has had to flee Jerusalem, and gets out just before Absalom enters. Then in chapter 17, it takes the crucial intervention of Hushai - Absalom's advisor who is secretly working for David - to delay things enough so that David can prepare to fight. Now in chapter 18, battle commences. And before we're even half-way through the chapter, Absalom is killed. All that build up, all that planning, all that momentum. His victory had looked inevitable. But a 'chance' meeting with some of David's soldiers, an attempt to flee, his head stuck in a tree, and that's pretty much that. It's amazing how quickly things can change. All those years of planning, the charm offensive, the campaign, the misinformation. It all worked - for a while. But then he ran head on into reality. The reality being that God had promised that David's throne would flourish, that he would build David a house - a kingdom.

We live in a world where people are suppressing the truth. But they can only do that for so long. One day, they'll have to stop pretending and come face to face with reality. It can seem like things are moving inevitably and irreversibly in one direction. But God can stop it just like that. So don't panic when you see things moving apparently unstoppably in the wrong direction. Because God can stop the apparently unstoppable, and he can do it in an instant.

Question

1. How quickly does God turn the situation around here?

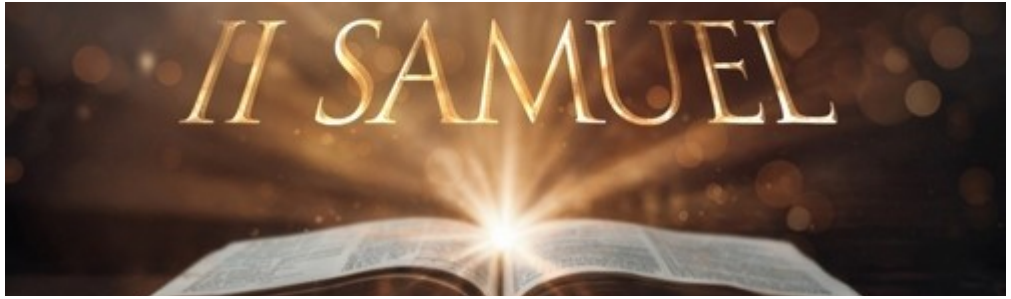
Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God can change things in an instant.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

Praise: Psalm 3 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Tuesday - 2 Samuel 18:9-18 - The Downfall of Absalom

As is the case throughout the story of Absalom, God doesn't intervene dramatically. Absalom isn't struck by lightning. There's just a 'chance' meeting in v9. Absalom 'happened' to meet the servants of David. But of course, God is overruling it all. Absalom doubtless tries to get away, and suddenly his head is caught fast in an oak tree. Now it would be possible to understand this as meaning that Absalom got his head stuck between a fork in a branch, or between two branches. So what the image most of us probably have in our minds is of Absalom hanging from his hair by a tree. Is that just a bit of over-imagination? Not necessarily. The word 'head' can be used to mean hair. For example back in chapter 14, when we were told about Absalom cutting his hair because it was heavy on him, the word 'hair' isn't actually used the first time we're told about it, just the word 'head'. It is a natural way to understand it, that the thing Absalom took pride in becomes his downfall. The thing he gloried in, became a curse for him. This is surely a warning that if we glory in God's gifts, but refuse to acknowledge God, and if we use them to promote our glory rather than his, then those very gifts may prove our downfall.

Absalom in his pride had also built a monument to himself. We read about it in v18. But actually he ends up with a second monument - a very great heap of stones over the pit that contains his lifeless body. He wanted to be remembered, and he is remembered alright. But he's remembered as the man who tried to remove God's king from the throne. And there was a massive pile of stones in the middle of a forest as a reminder of where that got him.

Questions

1. What happens to Absalom?
2. What was his memorial?

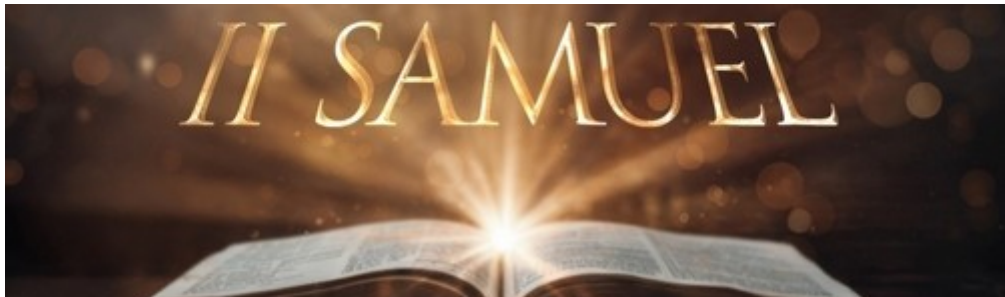
Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would seek God's glory in all the gifts He has given us.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

Praise: Psalm 1A - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Wednesday - 2 Samuel 18:9-16 - The Cursed Death

One minute Absalom is on his mule, the next minute the mule is still running but with no rider on his back. It seems like a total fluke. But then we remember that in the words of Deuteronomy, 'a hanged man is cursed by God'. Or as Paul quotes it in Galatians: 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'. Suddenly it doesn't seem so coincidental. Here is the man who rebelled against God and his kingdom. Now he's hanging from a tree, under God's curse. Humanly speaking the chances of him ending up hanging from a tree would have been minute. But in fact when that day dawned, nothing was more certain. Because God had decreed it. This will be the fate of all who are like him. All who fight against God's kingdom, they will end up under God's curse. That truth reassures us. It helps us go out into a hard world this week. Because we know we're on the winning side.

This certainty should never make us proud or vindictive. As we picture Absalom hanging there, we need to realise: that should have been us. Why? Why should we have died under God's curse? Like Adam and Eve, we have listened to the serpent's lies - and so we deserve to be under God's curse. But then we try and work our way back into God's favour! What does the Bible say about that strategy? 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them'. So we deserve to be under God's curse, both because of our sin - but also because of what we try and do about our sin! We deserve to die under God's curse. So why won't we, if we're believers? Because someone else died there in our place. It wasn't a pretend, rebel king like Absalom, but the true King, Jesus Christ. On the cross, suspended between heaven and earth, dying under God's curse, and dying for us. And if the unintentional death of David's rebellious son - Absalom - brought peace in Israel. How much more will the deliberate death of David's obedient son - Jesus Christ - mean life for the world? When we read about Absalom, we're not simply reading about an interesting and unusual death. We're seeing a picture of what we deserve. And we're seeing the future of the unbeliever - dying under God's curse. But by God's grace, if we've put our faith in Jesus, it's no longer our future, because Jesus has hung there in our place.

Question

1. What is Absalom a picture of?

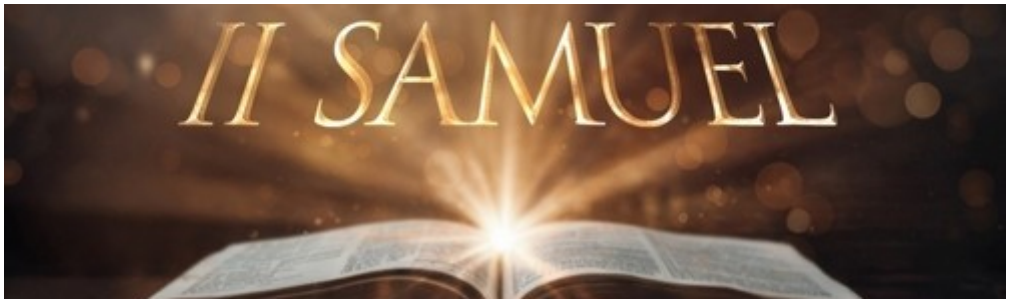
Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for Christ's death on the cross.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

Praise: Psalm 94:1-3 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Thursday - 2 Samuel 18:19-19:8 - David's Disproportionate Love

In the second half of the chapter, through to the first part of chapter 19, David is the winner - but he acts like the loser. What stops David acting like the king he should have been is his inordinate affection for his rebellious son. His desire for Absalom to stay alive seems to be the only thing that matters to him. We can understand David's love for his son. Yes, Absalom had grown into a wicked man. But he was still David's son. We can't be unmoved as we hear David lamenting over Absalom. Yet as a result of David's uncontrolled grief, we're told in chapter 19 verse 3 that the people were ashamed - when they shouldn't have been ashamed. God had given them a great victory. But they were acting as if it was a defeat. Because David was acting as if it was a defeat.

Joab speaks boldly in the opening verses of chapter 19, but he speaks the truth. Joab recognises that David has had a hard life. But if David doesn't pull himself together and start treating those who love him better than those who hate him, he will lose his kingdom. And David, to his credit, listens to him. But it was a close thing. David had been very close to losing his kingdom in chapter 17. But here he's as close if not closer to losing it, and if he had, it would have been completely self-inflicted. We can't fault David for continuing to love his rebellious son, and for being crushed by his death. But his inordinate love - his disproportionate love - for a son in rebellion against God is affecting his decision making. He's no longer doing what is best for the kingdom. Remember that twenty thousand people died that day. Think of all those bereaved families. All those mothers who had sons go off to battle and never come home. It all happened because Absalom decided to rebel against God and his king. In fact if David had done what needed to be done earlier, if he had ensured that Absalom had faced capital punishment for the murder of his brother, even if he'd simply ensured Absalom had stayed in exile, none of this would have happened. But for years now, David's undue, disproportionate love for his son has clouded his judgement. It's made him weak. And it almost loses him the kingdom. And at the end of the day, Absalom still dies.

Question

1. What is the danger here?

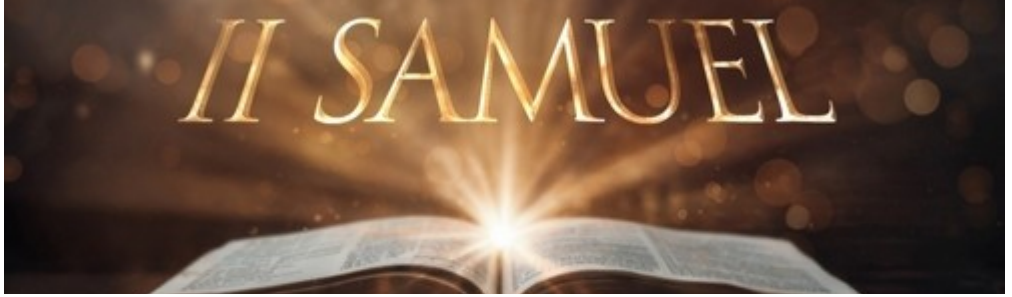
Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would not put love of family before love of God.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

Praise: Psalm 94:4-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Friday - 2 Samuel 18:31-19:8 - Misguided Loyalty

It's hard to even call David's affections for his son love. If David had really loved him, he would have said hard things to him. He would have made sure Absalom had faced the consequences for the cold-blooded murder he carried out. Sadly this is a theme in the books of Samuel. We've seen it with Eli. We've seen it with Samuel himself. And we see it with David. Wicked sons - and yet their fathers don't take the actions they should have taken.

How does this passage apply to our own day? If we fail to rebuke a family member or close friend no matter what they do, then that's the sin of partiality - siding with people because of who they are, whether they're on the right side or not. Or to apply it in a wider sense, the Puritans often used David's disproportionate love for Absalom as an example of how there can be some sins we aren't willing to kill. But kill them we must. Sparing Absalom's life here would only have risked another rebellion, an extended civil war, and more death. As long as Absalom is alive, David's life - and his kingdom - is under threat. And if we leave any sin alive, our spiritual lives are at risk. As it has been so rightly said: 'Be killing sin, or it will be killing you'. The sin that you aren't willing to kill is the sin that one day will kill you.

Questions

1. What pattern do we see in 1st and 2nd Samuel of fathers and sons?
2. What is the danger of not killing sin?

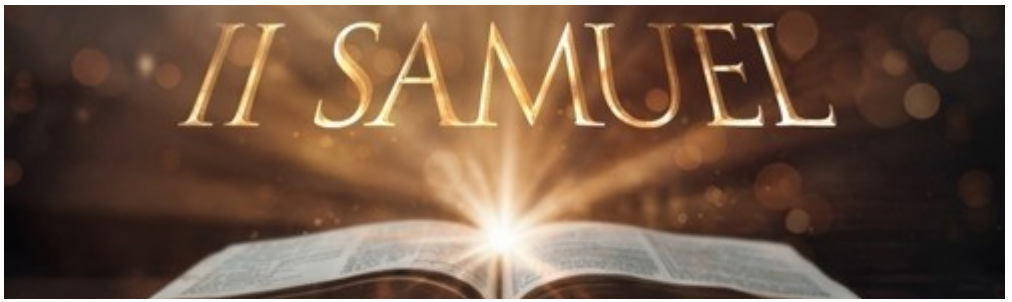
Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would put sin to death in our life.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

Praise: Psalm 94:7-9 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Saturday - 2 Samuel 18:18-19:8 - Taking Another's Place

David's unbounded grief for Absalom is also because David knows that, ultimately, Absalom's death is his fault. God had told him - chapter 12 verse 10 - 'because you have despised me, the sword will not depart from your house forever'. And since then, David's infant son died, his son Amnon had been murdered, and now Absalom has perished. David knows that ultimately it's his own sin that has unleashed the sword on his household.

David says here, at the end of chapter 18, 'Would that I had died instead of you'. But David can't die for Absalom. He can't take away Absalom's guilt - because he's guilty himself. He can't swap places with him - because it would be swapping one guilty man for another. Neither can David atone for Absalom's sin. David, in the words of his own men in chapter 18 verse 3, is worth ten thousand of them. But for someone to be able to bear the punishment that Absalom deserved, he would have to be worth more than that. He would have to be God himself. Only someone who was himself God could bear the infinite wrath of God that Absalom deserved. So rebels like Absalom need someone who is both innocent - and who is no mere man. And that's what we have in Jesus! What David wanted to do, but couldn't - Jesus did! David wanted to die in place of Absalom because he was his son, even though he was acting as an enemy. Jesus died for his enemies to make them sons.

This is a sad section in many ways. Yet we can't get away from the cross. Whether in Absalom hanging there under God's curse - pointing forward to someone else who would do the same thing, but do it in our place. Or whether it's David wanting to die for his rebellious son - but being unable to. Even how the story ends points us to the cross. This civil war ends in a day of great sorrow - and yet it is a day of good news. Just like the day Jesus died was a day of great sorrow, but ultimately it was a day of good news. And if our faith is in the king's son who died in our place that day, then whatever challenges we may face, the words of verse 28 are true: 'All is well'.

Question

1. How does this passage point us forward to Christ?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

Praise: Psalm 94:10:12- See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

**The goal of Let's Worship God is to
encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.**

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

**Let's Worship God is produced
by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.**

If you have any queries please contact - rpchurchscotland@gmail.com