

## Daily Devotional, July 28, 2020 Do Not Let Anger Block the Sunlight

***When King David heard all this, he was furious. And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar. <sup>28</sup>Absalom ordered his men, "Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine and I say to you, 'Strike Amnon down,' then kill him. Don't be afraid. Haven't I given you this order? Be strong and brave." So Absalom's men did to Amnon what Absalom had ordered. Then all the king's sons got up, mounted their mules and fled. (2 Samuel 13: 21-22, 28-29)***

Growing up, I found it too easy to hold things against people when they wronged me. Over time, God has helped me grow out of this into more of an attitude of grace and forgiveness, but I can remember the burden of that simmering anger. Whenever someone reminded me of a situation that had harmed me, I would immediately sense that burst of hurt and resentment again, in spite of the fact that frequently some years had passed. I would argue that I felt completely justified to feel angry, but my powerlessness to cope with it in a healthy way only let it hang around and fester.

Absalom most definitely had every reason to be angry. His brother had done a terrible thing in assaulting their sister, and his father, David, had done next to nothing except get angry at what had happened and couldn't seem to bring about an appropriate reaction. At that moment, Absalom made two crucial judgments that would lead to his ultimate future downfall. First, he "never said a word to Amnon about this" and then he let that anger fester in his heart and ravage his thoughts for two years before acting on it in a most decisive and underhanded way.

Both of these decisions lead Absalom down a dark and gloomy pathway that there was no escaping and no turning back from. In Matthew 18:15 we read, "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault." Absalom should have gone to Amnon immediately after he found out what had happened and try to bring this to a reasonable resolution. What Amnon did was despicable, but possibly, if he could have only been able to realize that and submit to David and agree to a punishment, one that Absalom would have talked to him about, this whole situation might have come to a resolution that would have been life-giving and a balm to all.

Ephesians 4:26-27 says to us, "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." In his silence, not seeking to find some amicable resolution Absalom gave the devil a two year foothold to harden his heart towards David and Amnon, which eventually would lead to his rebellious destruction.

I have experienced the pain of not forgiving, of letting anger and animosity build up inside of me. And let me tell you friends... it's just not worth it. It does a lot more damage to you than it does to the other person your anger is directed towards, and it can damage a relationship much more than you had intended. It is so much wiser to follow God's direction. It might seem like a loss at that particular moment, but it will lead to a much healthier and happier life. And it works this way every time, no matter how much we think that our situation is different from everyone else's. If we can follow the instructions of these few verses, and soften our hearts towards those who wrong us, God will work through our forgiveness to provide healing and restoration, rather than destruction.

***Prayer: Most gracious God, all too often we let our pride or our indignation cloud our thoughts towards those who wrong us or towards others who are close to us. Help us to realize that we have wronged others in much the same way, and are really no better, and must therefore learn to reserve our judgement. Bring us to learning greater discernment, and to walk in the pathway of greater discernment, love, grace and understanding. In the example set before us in the image of Christ we pray. Amen.***