

## **“OUT OF THE DEPTHS”**

Proper 14B August 9, 2009

2 Samuel 18:5-9; Psalm 130;

### **Introduction:**

We've been following the sin of King David with Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah, and how that sin affected David's life and his relationship with God. I've noted a paradox that emerges from these incidents that informs us about God. Namely, we sin, yet God continues to bless us. That's the paradox. I've also carefully tried to note that God also confronts the sin in our lives. Sin is rebellion against God and has consequences for us.

Sometimes the sin is dealt with immediately and directly by God. Bathsheba was pregnant as the result of David's sin, and the baby did not live. When the baby died David went into a period of mourning – a time of sack cloth and ashes. He knew the Baby's death was directly his fault. He repented before God and sought God's restoration of his life.

In spite of his sin of adultery and murder God then blessed David. Another child was born to David and Bathsheba, a son named Solomon, who would grow up to become the wisest man in the world and Israel's greatest king – thus, the paradox of sin and blessing.

However, because of the murder of Uriah, God

set in motion a greater, and later, punishment of David. That unintended consequence for the sin of conspiracy and murder, resulted in the rebellion of one of David's other sons – Absolam. Absolam became to David what Lucifer had become to God; namely, the evil rebellion of a son who thought he could do a better job of running the empire than the “old man”.

Like Lucifer, Absolam's rebellion failed. After an initial, early victory against his father, he, in turn, was hunted down and killed in battle. Before the battle, David interceded with his army on behalf of his son: *“Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absolam.”*

David loved his son in spite of his rebellion, even as God loves us in spite of our rebellion. Perhaps David was not totally surprised that day had arrived. He must have been dreading the possibility of it ever since the prophet Nathan confronted him after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. Nathan, speaking for God, said: *“I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; ...”*

Now, it was coming to pass through a son he loved – Absolam. Absolam dies on the battlefield that day and word is brought to King David. It is a happy day for the army. The leader of the rebellion is dead. No one

else needs to risk his life defending the King.

For David it is a devastating day. He retreats to a private chamber in his palace, where he cries and mourns the loss of another son as a consequence of his sin. O, the folly and evilness of sin. How destructive are the ends when we disobey God.

David cries out: "*O my son Absolam,  
my son,  
my son Absolam!  
Would I had died instead of you,  
O Absolam,  
my son, my son!*"

David was in the pit of despair.

There are a couple of questions I want to ask you regarding David, that might also help you understand your own experience with the Pit of Despair.

The First Question: "*Did God cause David's despair? Or, was it David's own actions with Bathsheba that began a sequence of events resulting in Absolam's death and David's lament?*" What do you think?

Personally, I don't think God caused David's despair; though God knew it was coming, and was there with David through every second of the experience, and I don't think God causes your despair.

Second question: "*Was David lamenting because his son had been killed?*" Well, 'yes', or course.

He loved his son. However, I suspect David was also grieving because of his sense of guilt. He knew in his heart this day was coming, and it was his fault. God had warned him through the prophet Nathan. David didn't know the who, what, when, nor where. But, he knew in his heart his sin was going to cost him dearly.

When it all came together, and Absalom was killed, David fell into the bottomless Pit of Despair. As a fellow visitor to the Pit I want to ask,

### **Have You Ever Been In The Pit of Despair?**

The Pit of Despair is that time and place where life is consumed with sorrow and depression. It is a season when failure has robbed life of its joy and deepest meaning. It is a time when life feels like it is not worth living anymore. I've been in the pit of despair a couple of times in my life. Once, I even seriously considered suicide. Living felt that painful and awful. It is not a fun place to be. However, the Pit of Despair can also be a time and place for repentance, for restoration, for growth, and for discovering, or rediscovering, God's amazing grace.

During his time in the Pit of Despair, David wrote Psalm 130: "*Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.*" Some people enter the Pit,

totally give up, and die. Others fall into the Pit but are held onto by the bungee cords of faith in God, and the faithful prayers of others on their behalf. These bungee cords sometimes keep the person from perishing long enough for God to rescue them by changing their mind and heart.

That's what happened with me, and why I think it so critical that we have connections with believing brothers and sisters. We never know when we will need their prayers to save us from the destruction of the Pit.

As a fellow visitor, with David, to the Pit of Despair I want to offer

### **Three Observations About Life In The Pit:**

1. The first thing I've observed is this. If you live long enough, life will deal you a blow that will put you on the edge of, or into the Pit of Despair. Often, we bring our despair upon ourselves, like David did; but, sometimes we are the victims of other people's evil actions or the tribulations of life. We are not told how the death of Uriah affected his family. They were also the victims of David's sin.

2. The second thing I've observed about life in the Pit is how much the Devil rejoices in our visits to the Pit. Sometimes, the Devil is the author of the disaster

that sends us to the Pit. Jesus said the Devil's mission here is the "kill, steal, and destroy", and we are the victims of his work. Sometimes, it is just the vicissitudes of life that put us in the Pit, but the Devil rejoices nevertheless, and tries to keep us there. That is why we need God in our lives.

3. In the Pit, the light is dim, the horizon is non-existent, and the outlook is bleak. In the Pit it is easy to lose perspective and think that our life is not worth living. Life can become so painful that death seems like a good way out. But it never is, because it is not God's way and time. God wants us to have "abundant life", and when it is time to leave here Jesus will come to lead us home. In John's Gospel, Jesus says: *"I go to prepare a place for you; and when everything is ready, I will come and get you so you can be with me where I am. If this were not so I would have plainly told you."*

The Bible discusses sin, the Pit, the Devil, and Hell for a reason. It should scare us to some degree when we think about these things; but, I don't think that is the reason they are in Scripture.

The main thrust of the Bible is the proclamation of Good News: God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. However, human nature being what it is, Good

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News is better grasped when we come face-to-face with the Bad News: sin not dealt with and unforgiven ends up costing us our very soul.

Kind David understood that. At the same time he was pleading with God from inside the Pit, he acknowledged God's mercy: *"For there is forgiveness with you, therefore you shall be feared. ... for with the Lord there is mercy; with him there is plenteous redemption, ..."*

Today at Communion take advantage of the mercy and redemption being offered. If you are on the edge of, or in the Pit of Despair, allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with fresh hope and strength. And know this: God has not abandoned you. You are loved by God and by others here.