

**Recap of 3/1/26 message by Steve Plank
("Character Matters") 2 Samuel 14:25-15:12:**

David continues to reap the God-declared consequences (2 Sam 12:9-12) of his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. In this section, we see Absalom conspire against King David. Last week, he managed to get invited back to Jerusalem. After two years living there without seeing King David, Absalom convinces Joab (by burning his field) to convince the king to see him. When Absalom finally sees the king, David kisses him, denoting forgiveness.

Was David right to offer forgiveness to an unrepentant Absalom? Is forgiveness unconditional? Does the Bible command us to forgive those not seeking forgiveness; those who are not sorry for what they did? Some teachers answer these questions in the affirmative based on passages like Mt 6:14 and Lk 6:37. However, passages like Co 3:13 and Eph 4:32 indicate that we are to forgive because God forgave us and in like manner to God's forgiveness. Is God's forgiveness unconditional? If so, then does everyone go to heaven? No! While God loves unconditionally and calls us to do the same, forgiveness is contingent upon a genuine request. (Mt 18:21-35 and Lk 17:3-4). God is willing to forgive everyone (1 Ti 2:4, 2 Pt 3:9), but only those who believe in Jesus are forgiven (Jn 3:18). We are commanded to love and pray for those who wrong us (Mt 5:44, Lk 6:27-28). As Paul said, as much as it depends on us, we are to live at peace with everyone (Ro 12). In other words, we are to pray for the salvation of those who wrong us and be ready to forgive immediately when forgiveness is sought. Jesus is our ultimate example. He prayed for the salvation of the very people who were killing Him; "Father, forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing." (Lk 23:34)

Following his restoration, Absalom conspires to steal the hearts of Israel away from King David. He hires a chariot and an impressive entourage. He decries the king's justice while proclaiming that he would bring justice to the people if given the chance. Absalom tells people what they want to hear, and they embrace him for it. He uses deception to get the king's permission to go to Hebron with 200 important men from Jerusalem. Finally, he sends spies throughout the land to declare Absalom is king in Hebron.

Stealing the people's hearts required more than just Absalom's shrewdness; it required hearts able to be stolen. Are our hearts able to be stolen from the King? Until Jesus returns, there will always be something trying to steal our hearts away from God. We must be so steeped in His Truth, that our hearts are un-stealable. The only way to accomplish this is to read, hear, study, memorize, meditate on, and fully submit to the scriptures. I pray we all do exactly that.