

Regard for Others

2 Samuel 3:12–16

The Lord calls you into his presence today.

Are you standing strong this summer?

You are with David in his triumph. Despite the sins of his followers, David remains righteous toward his enemies. He becomes King over all of Israel and takes Jerusalem as his new capital.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

And Abner sent messengers to David at Hebron, saying, "To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you." And he said, "Good; I will make a covenant with you; but one thing I require of you; that is, you shall not see my face, unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face." Then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed at the price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from her husband Palti-el the son of Laish. But her husband went with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go, return"; and he returned.

Reflection

Abner realizes the clock is ticking for him in Ish-bosheth's kingdom, and it is only a matter of time before Ish-bosheth would have him killed for his treasonous usurpation. So, he tries to preserve his power by making a covenant with David. To this proposal, David responds that Abner must return to him his wife, Michal, who was Saul's daughter. It is a plainly political move. In his commentary on 2 Samuel, Bishop Robert Barron observes that there is a "contrast between the real affection that Paltiel had for Michal and David's coldly calculating use of her for his own political purposes. This is a harbinger of the surpassingly cold manipulations of both Bathsheba and Uriah— moves that will send David and his kingdom into a tailspin." [4]

One of the entry points for sloth is a kind of numbness of the soul that fails to regard others. Evagrius speaks of monks who, suffering from sloth, would be very active in visiting the sick, yet only to satisfy their urges

to leave their cell and work behind. In other words, they use the sick for their own purposes. As David illustrates here, we men particularly struggle to regard the dignity of women. It is all too easy for us to objectify women and use them for our own purposes. We tend to let our eyes linger on a woman walking by or in a picture, thinking nothing of who she is as a person—only about how her body interests us. We do not even have to think too long before we start looking for something revealing. As we will soon see, this is this same slothful attitude that eventually leads David to reap grave consequences for his selfish actions.

Have you been lax in your guard over your eyes? Are there shows you watch or places, websites, or people you visit because you know that, while not pornography, you can catch a glimpse of someone attractive? Consider your struggle with lust today. Bring yourself openly to Christ over this topic.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 3 Action Items

1. Plan a summer BBQ.

With a more leisurely schedule over the summer, it is a perfect time to build community. Schedule a BBQ as a fraternity and include your families. You can also build stronger relationships with your neighbors.

Let's use this summertime to strengthen friendships—standing strong with other Christian men—rather than falling into the isolation of sloth. David could rely on his mighty men for support. Let's keep building our bonds of community within and beyond our fraternity.

2. Evaluate your Plan of Life.

We are entering the third week of Kings of Summer. It's early enough to make some adjustments to your Plan of Life if you already see that something is missing or isn't working well. It's important to make commitments to your disciplines, but we have to keep the goal in mind: growing in our relationship with God and building virtue. If this isn't happening, take some time to pray about what adjustments you might need to make.

3. Commit to intentional prayer time with others.

Daily prayer forms the foundation of the spiritual life, which provides a solid commitment to growing in relationship with God. In addition, we need to pray with others; Jesus told us that where two or more are gathered in his name he is there in the midst of them (see Matthew 18:20). We are members of his body, so growing in our love for God extends to loving others and loving him with them.

If you are married, pray every day with your wife and kids. This is essential for growing in holiness as a family. Pray as a fraternity. When someone turns to you for help, offer to pray with him. As we grow in our

personal prayer, we can grow in our communal prayer.