

Holy Tears

2 Samuel 3:31–36

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

Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Rend your clothes, and gird on sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.” And King David followed the bier. They buried Abner at Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented for Abner, saying, “Should Abner die as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound, your feet were not fettered; as one falls before the wicked you have fallen.” And all the people wept again over him. Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was yet day; but David swore, saying, “God do so to me and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!” And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them; as everything that the king did pleased all the people.

Reflection

Once again, we might expect David to be relieved with the death of another foe. As much as peace with Abner meant for David politically, a dead Abner was surely better. Joab’s killing of Abner would threaten the alliance and throw back into chaos the peace of Israel. Yet, David distances himself from the act of Joab and commands his people to fast and mourn.

Unlike Joab, David sees the world and its events not in terms of what it means for him personally and his earthly success but in terms of God’s heavenly kingdom. As king, he will not celebrate these moments that other kings would have seen as clear victories or perhaps even signs of divine favor. Rather, he will be the one who leads God’s people in mourning and lament. He will be an example of a man who sheds tears over evil and actively works to make some reparation.

Evagrius, who has been helping us think through the sin of sloth, said that

one of the first and most important things a slothful person must do is pray for “holy tears” and “compunction” (a feeling of remorse and guilt). Evagrius recognizes that sloth creeps in as we become less concerned about sin, when we make peace with it and minimize its offense against God. If sloth is rooted in a kind of indifference or relaxation of the soul, the remedy is to quicken our hearts and sharpen our consciences. A person struggling with sloth needs to recover a sense of the awfulness of sin and genuinely lament evil to the point of weeping. If sloth is characterized by a lack of concern, then the remedy must be a recovery of concern. Thus, weeping over sin is an important step against sloth.

These “holy tears” cannot be conjured. We cannot flip a switch and become profoundly sorry for our sins. We can only pray for such profound contrition. So, with David as our example, we should ask the Lord to give us his sense of remorse. What sins have you made peace with? What sins have you minimized? What evils or tragedies do you acknowledge but feel indifferent toward? What sins do you keep around because you see them as advantageous or deserved? Pray to the Lord for tears of genuine sorrow.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 3 Action Items

Plan a summer BBQ.

Evaluate your Plan of Life.

Commit to intentional prayer time with others.