

## Sloth and Paranoia

2 Samuel 10:1–5

Arise to follow the Lord today.

Has the summer been a time of spiritual progress or malaise?

You are in Jerusalem, David's new capital city. God prefers that, rather than building the Lord's house, David set himself to building up his own home by becoming a good father and husband. Rejecting the Lord's calling, David lays the groundwork for trouble.

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

After this the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. And David said, "I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me." So David sent by his servants to console him concerning his father. And David's servants came into the land of the Ammonites. But the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Has not David sent his servants to you to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?" So Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off half the beard of each, and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return."

### Reflection

Yesterday, we saw David show kindness to Mephibosheth, who had, of course, lost his father, Jonathan. In today's reading, we see David once again showing kindness to a son who had lost his father. This is all very well and good, especially in the case of Mephibosheth. But what of David's own children? What of his house, the house the Lord promised him? He seems a bit distracted from his responsibilities and from the promise of God.

The slothful person, as we have said, is not always one who sits idly and lazily. A slothful person can be very active and passionate yet derelict in his duty. Again, we wonder why we are not reading about his compassion toward his family and court. What is interesting is that both of these recipients of David's compassion end up turning against him. The once vigilant and discerning David is now a bit naïve. Perhaps this is because

he is extending compassion as a distraction from (or as a substitute for) the love he should have been showing his family.

Again, while these acts of kindness are admirable, they do seem a bit skittish. David does seem to be a bit unsettled or insecure after having been denied his request to build the temple. Sloth can manifest as a kind of paranoia. Evagrius spoke of how monks would start to worry about every little bodily pain and use that as an excuse to reject the fasts.

As we have seen, sloth cannot stay settled. It is almost looking for reasons to be worried or discontent. This can be a constant searching for the next thing or a fear that what one has will be taken away—that one has not done enough to maintain their place.

There are times when we take on tasks out of fear. We can take on extra responsibilities at work—responsibilities that we know will cost our family life in order to secure or justify our position in the company. This slothful busyness born out of insecurity and fear can jeopardize our presence in the home, just as the presence of Mephibosheth eventually disrupted David's court.

Do you see any nervous busyness present in your life? Do you take on unnecessary duties out of a kind of skittishness or self-preservationist fear? Reflect on recent decisions you have made as you work through these questions during your time of prayer.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

#### Week 5 Action Items

Bookend your day with a morning offering and nightly examen.

Check in with your anchor.

Don't give in to distractions.

Invite men to join your fraternity for Kings of Summer, Part 2.