

Fight or Flight

2 Samuel 15:13-16, 23

Arm yourself for spiritual combat today.

How are you doing in the spiritual battle?

You are fleeing from Jerusalem. After Absalom declares himself king in Hebron, David has to flee from Jerusalem or be killed. As Absalom takes possession of the holy city, David hides in the wilderness of the Jordan valley, east of Jerusalem, awaiting word from the spies he left behind. This week, David's sufferings teach us that spiritual fatherhood requires faith, courage, humility, and trust.

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 a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom." Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee; or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom; go in haste, lest he overtake us quickly, and bring down evil upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword." And the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides." So the king went forth, and all his household after him.

And all the country wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness.

Reflection

Stuck in sloth, David delayed acting within his family. This neglect has now forced him to act, to flee from the holy city. It is too late to prevent rebellion; there is only time to react to it.

When King Saul wanted to flee from Goliath and the Philistines, it was the boy, David, who stepped up and agreed to face the giant. Now, for seemingly the first time in his life, David runs from a fight. All of his negligence as a father culminates in cowardice.

In spiritual combat, fear only emboldens satan. St. Ignatius of Loyola puts it this way:

The enemy conducts himself as a woman. He is a weakling before a show of strength, and a tyrant if he has his will. It is characteristic of a woman in a quarrel with a man to lose courage and take to flight if the man shows that he is determined and fear-less. However, if the man loses courage and begins to flee, the anger, vindictiveness, and rage of the woman surge up and know no bounds. In the same way, the enemy becomes weak, loses courage, and turns to flight with his seductions as soon as one leading a spiritual life faces his temptations boldly, and does exactly the opposite of what he suggests. However, if one begins to be afraid and to lose courage in temptations, no wild animal on earth can be more fierce than the enemy of our human nature. He will carry out his perverse intentions with consummate malice.

As important as it is to know that God has enemies, it is more important to believe that Jesus has conquered sin and satan. God still permits the devil to tempt, discourage, and persecute human beings, but satan's kingdom has been vanquished. He cannot win. We are not alone in the spiritual battle. We can fight and prevail over evil by the power of Jesus Christ who dwells in us by grace. That is why it is so important to stay in the state of grace, and to get up quickly whenever we fall into sin.

The apostles urge us not to flee but to fight against satan. As Caleb urged the Israelites to attack and conquer the promised land, St. Paul assures us that we can conquer satan overwhelmingly through our Father in heaven: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38). He exhorts us to put on the armor of God and stand firm (see Ephesians 6:10-17). Although the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, St. Peter commands us to "resist him, steadfast in your faith" (1 Peter 5:9). Faith opens our hearts to prayer and reminds us that God is our all-powerful Father who will never abandon his children.

In your silent prayer today, talk to Jesus about your battle against sin and evil and how he wants to assist you.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 8 Action Items

1. Plan another communal BBQ.

So far this summer, was your fraternity able to hold a BBQ or were able to gather with your neighbors? If so, how did it go? Are you ready for a follow up or another one with a different group? If you were not able to BBQ yet, can you get one on your schedule?

2. Keep Friday as a day of penance.

Fridays are the most intense days for penance. Have you been able to keep

this up over the summer? Our Friday disciplines give us a strength and focus that anchor the entire week and prepare us for Sunday worship. Persevere in your Friday disciplines, such as fasting and cold showers.

3. Check in with and pray for your anchor.

Stand with one another in battle! Make sure you are praying for one another and checking in. If you have not been doing this often enough, get back on track.