

Only Human

2 Samuel 11:16–25

Cast off all sluggishness today to follow the Lord's royal way.

How is the Lord calling you to enter into spiritual battle right now?

You are in the royal palace in Jerusalem. David succumbs to temptation when he allows his desires to take him away from his present responsibilities. He has taken for granted what he has and lost sight of the glory of God.

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 as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite was slain also. Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting; and he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone upon him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'" So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us, and came out against us in the field; but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall; some of the king's servants are dead; and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another; strengthen your attack upon the city, and overthrow it.' And encourage him."

Reflection

How far we are from the David who slayed those who prematurely killed his rivals and established national days of mourning for the deceased! Now we have a David who tells Joab "Do not let this matter trouble you, for the sword devours now one and now another." In his slothful state, he tries to downplay his culpability by saying that this is just what happens—that it is all normal and to be expected.

In our own day, we struggle to accept responsibility for our sin. We are particularly fond of blaming our faults on our nature. When someone is confronted with some moral misstep, they are likely to respond "I'm only human!" which is to say, "What'd you expect? My faults are not my fault. They cannot be helped. I was 'made this way.'" So common is this declaration that it has been turned into a song by Rag-n-Bone Man in which he repeats "I'm only human after all, don't put the blame on me." The song makes plain what many people today feel: it is just human nature to be immoral.

Pope Benedict XVI explained that the essence of acedia "is the flight from God, the wish to be alone with oneself and one's finiteness and not to be disturbed by the presence of God" (To Look on Christ, p. 71). As we have said, sloth is a kind of sadness at God and the things of God. This slothful rejection of God's glory serves a selfish purpose: it is a rejection of our nobility. We do not have to be great once we are rid of the demand to be in God's image.

Indeed, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) observed that one of the ways in which the sadness of sloth manifests itself is in downgrading the object of human happiness from beatitude with God to a lower animalistic or "bestial" happiness. Aquinas, with the whole of the Catholic Church, teaches that we are destined to become partakers in the divine nature. We are called to be God's sons and so exhibit his perfection. But this demands much from us. In fact, we are incapable of it, and so it demands our dependence upon divine grace. So we prefer to lower the bar, to seek only a happiness which consists of nothing more than the pursuit of our desires like an animal pursues his instinct.

The purpose of saying "I'm only human" is the same as David's encouragement to Joab that "the sword devours now one and now another." Do you ever find yourself, perhaps in an argument with a co-worker, spouse, or child, dismissing your mistakes, minimizing them, blaming them on others? Do you ever come to expect sin from yourself and despair of being good? This kind of moral apathy or rejection of responsibility is the work of sloth. Talk with the Lord today about how you do (or do not) take responsibility for your actions.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

Week 6 Action Items

Pray for your fraternity.

Keep up regular exercise.

Reflect on your vacation plan.

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