

By Mrs. Bessie Wilbon

INTRODUCTION

With the passing years of David's rule over Israel, David gradually developed a pattern of life that became more self-indulged, more accustomed to luxury, and less dedicated to the serious concerns of life. At one time he had been a simple shepherd boy, most earnest and faithful, even risking his life to protect his family's flocks from predatory animals. He had been willing to face the giant Goliath in his rough shepherd garb, trusting in God's care. He had trusted the Lord through days and years of wilderness as he was hunted relentlessly by Saul's armed men. He had retained in his life a refreshing candor and trust.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It was not unusual for tension and distrust to exist between different segments of the Hebrew kingdom. We remember that after Saul's death the more northerly areas seemed to follow Ishbosheth, Saul's son, while the area to the south gave David refuge and accepted him as king. For seven and a half years David reigned at Hebron. Soon after consolidating his reign, he conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital city. Here he reigned for 33 years, (2 Samuel 5:4, 5).

Yet these 33 years were not without internal problems. Among David's many sons, one was especially handsome and gifted - Absalom. He had a sister, Tamar, but she was only a half-sister to Ammon, who was the son of another of David's wives. Ammon raped Tamar, which so infuriated Absalom that, after some time, he secured an opportunity and murdered Ammon in revenge. Then he fled. Later, by the intercession of Joab, a half-hearted reconciliation was made between David and Absalom. This whole story is told in 2 Samuel 13, 14.

(2 Samuel 15:2-4) Absalom would get up early in the morning and go and stand by the road at the city gate. Whenever someone came there with a dispute that he wanted the king to settle, Absalom would call him over and ask him where he was from. And after the man had told him what tribe he was from, Absalom would say, "Look, the law is on your side, but there is no representative of the king to hear your case." And he would add, "How I wish I were a judge! Then anyone who had a dispute or a claim could come to me, and I would give him justice."

Courting the people's favor, Absalom made a special effort to intercept those who came to Jerusalem with grievances for which they sought loyal intervention or adjudication. Subtly he insinuated that their affairs were not being properly handled by the current administration. He had no authority to judge in these matters, but tried to give the impression that he would be sympathetic and helpful if only he had the chance. It is always easier to win many hearts if one doesn't have to give sentences. When this is done some people are going to be disappointed, because everyone cannot win. For the one charged with making decisions between disagreeing parties, universal popularity is impossible.

In 1 Corinthians 10:6 we read that events during the journey of the Hebrew people from Egypt to Canaan were "our examples." After several more episodes are mentioned we are again reminded, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition," (V. 11).

It is quite evident that the unrest and distress in David's family and David's kingdom were the result of the spiritual decline that occurred in David's life. His early simple trust and steadfast reliance on God were blurred by the unrestrained indulgence of his sexual desires and his continued prosperity and power. The beautiful faith he expressed in the 23rd Psalm became more eroded, and even the contribution evidenced in Psalm 51 could not cancel out the continued effects of his folly.

One thing we must not forget in our thought about David's spiritual condition and our own. God had promised to be with David and He continued to care for him. In Absalom's rebellion we note that David prayed to God for help in frustrating the plans of Ahithophel in the support of Absalom (2 Samuel 15:31). David still retained a trust in God in spite of the way he often forgot Him. We read a most comforting passage in 2 Timothy 2:13, "If we are faithless, he will remain faithful for he cannot disown himself." Whatever our unsteadiness, God will remain steady in His love for us; whatever our wandering, He is there to come home to.



Mrs. Ocie Perry Harrison
...An administrative assistant
After 30 Years Of Service
Mrs. Harrison Retires

When Ocie Perry Harrison retires as Administrative Assistant to the President at Johnson C. Smith University on June 30, she will leave behind 30 years of service to seven different JCSU administrative leaders.

Mrs. Harrison, a graduate of J.C. Smith, first came to work for the Beaties Ford Road School in 1954 as secretary to Dr. Hardy Liston Sr. The enrollment then totaled 600 students, including the Theological Seminary. "The president's office at that time up until 1970 was a one-horse show," observed Mrs. Harrison. "Presidents then did everything, from making out the payroll, paying the bills, hiring and monitoring the faculty, working with architects on building plans to registering students. It was a time when I personally knew every faculty, staff and student body member on campus."

Before her three decades of service would pass, Mrs. Harrison witnessed both the joys and hard-won victories and the heartbreak of losses that accompany the top administrative office of the 117 year old institution.

"One of the most exciting days came in 1963 when we received a phone call from Dr. Gordon Sweet, executive secretary for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools," recalled Mrs. Harrison. "Dr. Sweet announced that J. C. Smith was being fully accredited, whereas before the school was accredited under separate standards for black institutions."

"One of the most emotional times came during the 1967-68 school year when the Theological Seminary moved to Atlanta to join the Interdenominational Theological Center," she pointed out. Declining enrollment in the campus Theological Seminary prompted the move along with the likelihood of accreditation in the larger Atlanta center.

"Dr. Thompkins, dean of the Seminary, received an outpouring of sentiment throughout the entire Ca-

taba Presbytery as the school produced a great number of the ministers active in the area," reflected Mrs. Harrison.

Another sad moment was the death of Dr. Liston on Homecoming Day in 1956.

"The news was kept quiet until the festivities were over," she noted. An administrative council ran the institution for 10 weeks until Dr. James Ward Seabrook became acting president. The following year Dr. Rufus Patterson Perry was selected to head the private institution.

"Dr. Perry's was a busy administration," reflected Mrs. Harrison. "He was able to supplement support from the Board of National Missions with money from new federal programs that allowed Johnson C. Smith University to expand."

Seven new buildings went up in Dr. Perry's tenure. The enrollment doubled while the school's endowment grew. Just as the future appeared limitless, disaster struck.

The recession of 1967-68 created a financial crisis for the federal government that would directly affect J. C. Smith. Several campus buildings were half-constructed when the Department of Housing and Urban Development cut drastically back on loans already approved for JCSU.

"It was a time that speculation grew that Smith would be forced to cease operations," stated Mrs. Harrison. "Salaries were frozen, funds for other programs had to be diverted. But it was also a time that strength grew from adversity."

Dr. Lionel H. Newsom assumed leadership when Dr. Perry retired in 1968. The trustees rallied to save the school with a successful capital campaign in 1972. Dr. Newsom left shortly after the presidency at Central State (Ohio).

Ocie Harrison has served in a number of roles, including 23 years as recording secretary to the Board of Trustees, Director of the Affirmative Action program and administrative assistant in personnel.



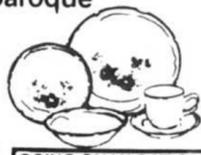
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