

# (2 Samuel) the Death of Absalom

by David Guzik

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*David Guzik's sermon on the death of Absalom explores the tragic consequences of rebellion and the importance of wise leadership under God's sovereignty.*

**Duration:** 1:01:41

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 18:33, 2 Samuel 19:6-11

**Topics:** "Biblical Leadership", "Gods Judgment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Absalom's crime and his ultimate fate. The preacher mentions that some ancient rabbis believed that Absalom's crime was so severe that he would not have a portion in the world to come. The preacher also talks about how Absalom tried to avoid punishment by staying up in a tree, but was eventually discovered. The sermon emphasizes the importance of having the message right when delivering God's word, using the example of Ahimaz and the Kushite messengers. The preacher concludes by discussing David's reaction to the news of Absalom's death and how he took action to secure his throne.

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## Transcript

Now, one of the greatest trials that David had to endure in his life was when his own son Absalom rose up and started a civil war against him. Now, I'm not talking about one of those yelling fights in the house where the teenage son wants the keys to the car and dad won't give them to him and so they're slamming doors and screaming at each other. I'm talking about the kind where literally the son raises an army and seeks the life of the dad.

You know, this isn't an awkward moment over Thanksgiving dinner. This is, I'm going to try to kill you, and the whole nation knows it. Absalom had, by political skill, by great cunning and skillful backstabbing, some people seem to have a gift for that, don't they? It's not a spiritual gift, it's a very unspiritual gift.

You see it in office politics sometimes, don't you? You know, sometimes you'll see it at the PTA school board. You know, wherever, there's just some people who seem to have that knack for skillful backstabbing. Oh, that was Absalom.

And he did stick it to David. Not only did he run David out of Jerusalem, and one of the most fascinating things I find in that account where David first hears of what Absalom is doing, when he hears that Absalom is coming to Jerusalem with an army, David's first reaction is, we got to get out of here because he'll kill

me. That's pretty heavy when the dad realizes that immediately, that his own son will murder him if he has the opportunity.

So when David left town, he left ten of his concubines. We said before that a concubine was sort of like an officially sanctioned mistress. He left ten of his concubines in charge of the house, and Absalom systematically, publicly raped each one of them to burn all of his bridges of reconciliation with David.

And then he planned his attack, his battle against David. I'm just sort of running over some of the ground we talked about last time, because when we come into chapter 18, verse 1, the battle is about ready to get engaged. Let's look at it.

And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. Then David sent out one-third of the people under the hand of Joab, one-third under the hand of Abishai, the son of Zariah, Joab's brother, and one-third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, I will surely, I also will surely go out with you myself.

David was a skilled military man, a brilliant general over Israel. And so David isn't at a loss to know what to do. He looks over the troops that he has, he looks over the commanding officers at his disposal, and instantly he can piece it together in his head.

He says, okay, we need to divide into three divisions. Joab, you're the head of one. Abishai, you're the head of another.

Ittai, the Gittite, you're the head of the third division. I like that Ittai the Gittite fellow. He's the fellow that came to David in the midst of it, and he just says, I'll be with you, and I'll follow you wherever you go.

And David tried to shoo him away. David said, look, man, you're new to Israel. You're from the Philistines.

You're new here. You've got a lot to lose by joining yourself with me. They might not renew your green card if you join up with me.

Ittai says, I don't care. I just want to be with you. And so David respected that, and he says, Ittai, you're going to head up one of these divisions.

So David's dividing the men. He has that military eye. And you know, he knew just where to set this division, and just where to set that division.

And he knew where to tell this man to be aware of this kind of geography, and how to tell this other one to prepare his troops. David was a very skilled military man, in great contrast to his son Absalom. Now, again, we don't know.

It's possible that Absalom was trained in the finest military academy that Israel had to offer. That's not the feeling we get from Absalom, is it? The feeling we get is that he's sort of the pampered, neatly coiffed rich boy, who fancies himself quite a general. Spends a lot of time looking at himself in the uniform, in front of the mirror.

But he was persuaded, because God was behind it all. He was persuaded to lead the armies against David. And so he marshaled together this huge army of Israel to come against David.

But Absalom's the guy with no military experience. David is the guy who knows exactly what he's doing. Did you see it there at the end of verse 2? David's saying, Okay, well, I'm going to go out with you.

Now, get it in your mind here. David, I'm just throwing this out on the top of my head. I would say he's probably like in his mid-60s right here.

He's not in the flower of youth by any means. Oh, and he's got all the smarts up here still. But, you know, he's just not as physically capable to do what he once did out on the field of battle.

Now, look at what the response of the people is in verse 3. But the people answered, You shall not go out. I mean, they didn't even phrase it subtly, did they? You shall not go out, for if we flee away, they will not care about us, nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But you are worth 10,000 of us now, for you are now more help to us in the city.

So the king said to them, Whatever seems best to you, I will do. So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by the hundreds and by the thousands. David knew that a good commander belonged right out in the battle.

He did not want to repeat the mistake that he made in 2 Samuel chapter 11 at the time of the year when the kings should go out to battle, but David didn't. And so David just assumed, I'm going out. I mean, that's what I do.

But yet everybody around him, all of his advisors, the officers council, all the rest of it, they said, You're not going, David. And he listened to them. Why? Because David was hesitant to go to battle? Because he was afraid? No, because their reasons made sense.

They essentially had three reasons. They stated two of them. One of them, I think, is unspoken.

First of all, they said, David, you are more valuable than any of us. If we get into battle, they're just going to be gunning for you. You're such a valuable asset.

We need to keep you protected. David, this is nothing personal. It just makes better military sense to keep you away from the field of battle because you're the one they're gunning for.

You know, that game capture the flag. Well, David, you're the flag. And they don't care about beating our army.

They care about killing you. So stay away from the battle. David mulled that over.

He said that makes some sense. Secondly, they said you are now of more help to us in the city. I think what they meant by this is, David, you know what? If the battle starts turning badly, you can bring in the reserves.

You can marshal them. Stay back. You're of more help to us away from the front line than right there.

I think the third reason, the unspoken reason is simply this. David, how are you going to lift up a sword against your own son Absalom? Maybe it's better that you stay back. So David did.

He was not stubborn. He knew how to submit to the good advice of others. David was wise as a leader that way.

You know, you don't trust a leader who's only stubborn, who never knows how to listen to or to submit to the advice of other people. And this wasn't David giving up leadership. No, not at all.

He practiced good leadership by listening to the wise advice of the people around him. David had every right to go out on the battle if he thought it was best. But he said, you know what? You guys are making a lot of sense.

I'm going to listen to this. And so David stood beside the gate. All the people went out.

These people were willing to endure sacrifice and danger for the sake of their king. I think that the devotion of these people going to battle for David is an example of how the believers should be devoted to our king, Jesus Christ. Every day we're going to go out to battle and our king is going to watch us.

We're going to go out and we're going to expose ourselves to sacrifice. We're going to expose ourselves to danger. But we'll do it for the glory of our king.

We're not asking to be shut up and just set aside in some safe place as if that's the only thing that concerned us was safety. We're concerned for the honor and the glory of our king. So put us out to the battle.

Now, as the troops are leaving, look at what David says to them in verse five. And the king had commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captain's orders concerning Absalom.

David wanted it clearly known. Don't kill Absalom. Don't mistreat him.

Don't torture him. And you know what else he said in there that is interesting in verse five? He said, deal gently for my sake. In other words, I know you guys hate his guts.

I know you wouldn't extend him the slightest courtesy for his sake. So do it for my sake. And then David went the extra measure of saying this in the presence of everybody.

Why? He wanted those captains to send some accountability on this one, right? That everybody knew. Not only wasn't an order given, but everybody knew that the order was given to do this. And the captains would feel the pressure to follow through and do what David told them to do.

Don't you hurt Absalom. Verse six. So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel.

By the way, isn't that a funny phrase right there? David and his forces fighting against Israel. I just think it's fascinating how the nation went over to Absalom so quickly. How the nation rallied behind him.

How it's almost unthinkable that David would be fighting against Israel. But those loyal to David fought against Israel because Israel was not loyal to David. Israel was seduced by Absalom's charisma and by his power.

So you notice he went out in the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim. The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David.

And a great slaughter of 20,000 took place there that day. For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside. And the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

You see the experienced leadership of David and his captains. This, humanly speaking, was probably the main reason for their overwhelming victory. And what a victory it was.

20,000 dead on the other side. And David was wise enough. He probably figured, you know, let's direct the battle over to the woods of Ephraim.

We'll have an advantage there. The experience of our captains, of our military leaders, will make all the difference. And it says in a fascinating phrase there, that the woods devoured more people that day than the swords devoured.

And what does that mean? You know, the trees coming alive and swallowing people. Or I don't know, not at all. But the soldiers loyal to Absalom just seemed to be swallowed up by the woods.

You can see them running, becoming disoriented in the thick woods. Lost, you know, disconcerted, confused. And then suddenly a detachment of David's troops comes down upon them and just strikes them down.

Other commentators' pictures, people being trapped among the thick oaks and the tangled briars. Or falling down in the midst of concealed caverns or hidden precipices, cliffs. And they just plunged over in wild, wild flight when the rout set in.

You should know that some ancient translations say that here, when the army was broken and the people were on the run, not only did they fall down into the pits and swamps and other dangers of the woods, but there are some ancient translations, like the Chaldean and the Syriac and the Arabic, they say that the men were devoured by wild beasts in the woods. God sicced a bunch of bears and lions on the forces of Absalom. Who knows, that may be it.

It's in some obscure translations, but it's possible. The bottom line is, friends, the battle's over, isn't it? Absalom lost. You know, this is just another example that you can't fight against God.

God didn't want Absalom to be king. And you know, you ever heard the name of that musical? I don't know if it ever reached Broadway. Probably did, spent a little bit of time there.

The name, I don't know what it's about at all, but the name of it is priceless. Your arms are too short to box with God. And that's what Absalom needed to learn.

He wanted to box with God. He thought that he should sit on that throne, not David. And he said, you know what, I'm going to box with God about it.

Guess what, Absalom, your arms are too short to box with God. Oh, you've got the army, you've got all the things, you've seduced Israel, it looks like you're going down a million miles an hour, you're a real winner, everything looked great. You're going down, Absalom.

God isn't with you. Look at your army, it just got swallowed up in the woods. Look at your army, they're fleeing.

Look at your army, you're a goner, Absalom, that's all there is to it. And more than ever, we see David's great wisdom there. How David didn't feel like he had to take the battle to Absalom, Absalom brought the battle to him.

It was like, Lord, if you want to take the throne away from me, then fine, I'll give it up. But Lord, it's in your control, it's in your hands. And oh, did the Lord demonstrate that.

What about Absalom? His cause is finished. Well, his own life is going to be finished pretty quick here too, look at verse 9. Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule.

I just have to stop right there. I picture Absalom fancying himself quite the military man. But you just don't think of a great general riding a mule.

You know, great generals ride, you know, beautiful, white, muscular horses, you know, dramatic sword poses. You don't think of them, you know, scooting along in a little mule. I mean, that's Absalom.

Absalom, wanting to be this great man, obsessed with himself, self-focused, self-absorbed, all the rest of it. Admiring how he looks as a general. You know, but it was his vanity to put him in this battle.

Do you remember how we saw it last week? That two plans of attack were presented before Absalom. One of them was brought by the smartest man in Israel. His name was Ahithophel.

He said, Absalom, let me tell you the plan. Let me get a detachment of men, a relatively small detachment. I will lead them, Ahithophel told Absalom.

And I'll go right now and we'll get David and we'll kill him and him alone. And we'll choke this thing off at the neck right now and all your troubles will be over. The kingdom will be yours.

And they listen to that plan and go, you know what, that's pretty smart. I mean, this is the smartest guy in Israel. But then for some reason, well, not for some reason, it was because the Lord moved upon him and it was because the Lord moved upon him because David was praying for this to happen.

Absalom asked Hushai, the archite, for his advice. Now, what do you need a second opinion when the smartest man in Israel is just giving you his advice? But prompted by the Lord, Absalom asked for advice, but he didn't know he was asking it from a double agent. Because Hushai was really loyal to David.

So you just think of Hushai's head swimming. How can I give advice that Absalom would pick, even though Ahithophel has just given the smartest advice anybody could give? This plan of Ahithophel's will work! Hushai's thinking, what do I say, what do I say? And then it hit him. I know.

I'll appeal to Absalom's vanity. I mean, he saw Absalom right there. Most handsome man in Israel.

That beautiful, pretty boy face. That big, flowing hair. I mean, he was like the Fabio of ancient Israel.

Fabio in his prime, not on the downside as you see him now in his career. Good heavens, there he is and he says, I know, I know. So he says, look, this is what you gotta do, Absalom.

Forget about Ahithophel's plan. No, get together a huge army, which will give David time to assemble his resources. And you lead the battle.

Well, that just tickled Absalom's fancy to no end. Me, General Absalom. But look at him now, pathetic, riding on a mule.

There he is, fleeing away. The battle's broken up. The troops are on the run.

It's all lost. The trumpets for full retreat are sounded. There's dead people along the road.

His own soldiers struck down and there's Absalom scooting along on the mule. Verse 9, the mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree. And his head caught in the terebinth.

So he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule, which was under him, went on. Now, that's being caught in a mess right there.

Now, we know from other passages of Scripture that Absalom was noted for his big, luxurious hair. He probably had the finest mullet in all of Israel, or big hairdo. You know, just a big hair thing.

They cut off five pounds of hair from him every year. You know, that's how fast his hair grew. And when most people read this, myself included, we assume that somehow that big hair got caught up in the tree.

Well, it doesn't specifically say that. Some commentators take great pains to point out that it could have been that he was caught by his neck, or something like that. Who knows, for example? It's great, at least poetic justice, to think of him being caught by that great, big, beautiful head of hair.

And the mule goes on, and there he is. He's tangled. What was his glory is now his curse.

Absalom is caught by his own hair in the thick trees of the forest. You can just see him there, dangling, struggling, fighting, filled with fear, filled with panic, because the whole plan is crashing down upon him now. He knows, but at the same time, there's a strange confidence in Absalom.

Maybe I shouldn't say confidence. Maybe I should say arrogance in Absalom. Because he knows he's got daddy wrapped around his finger.

Daddy has never laid down the law to Absalom. Daddy's never spanked Absalom, so to speak. Daddy's never disciplined him.

And so what can happen? A little slap on the wrist. Maybe I've got to go out into exile again. This is bad, but I'll be all right.

Because whatever mess he's gotten himself into before, David has rescued him in one way or another. By the way, a little portion I'll read to you from a guy named Ginsberg in his book, *The Legends of the Jews*. And these are legends.

It's just for fun. This is the writing of one ancient rabbi. Absalom's end was beset with terrors.

When he was caught in the branches of the oak tree, he was about to sever his hair with his sword stroke. But suddenly, he saw hell gaping beneath him. And he preferred to hang in the tree to throwing himself into the abyss alive.

Absalom's crime was indeed of a nature to deserve the supreme torture, for which reason he is one of the few Jews who have no portion in the world to come. Well, that's what some ancient rabbis used to say. He looked down beneath him and hell is wide open below him, ready to receive him.

He says, well, I'll just stay up in this tree for a while. Thank you. Verse 10.

Now, a certain man saw it and told Joab, and he said, I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree. But you got to see the video of this conversation when you get up into heaven. I trust that God will have these

Bible scenes on DVD or video or something like that.

You just go check it out of the library. And I just want to see how this guy delivered this line to Joab. Craziest thing.

I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree. So Joab said to the man who told him, you just saw him. And why didn't you strike him there to the ground? I would have given you 10 shekels of silver and a belt.

Big deal of belt, you're thinking. Well, the belt was a sign of military prestige. It basically means a promotion.

I would have given you money and a promotion. Right now? And the guy's shocked. Now, why is he shocked? Well, he'll explain.

Verse 12. But the man said to Joab, though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing, the king commanded you and Abishai and Itzhai saying, beware lest anyone touch the young man Absalom.

Otherwise, I would have dealt falsely against my own life. But there's nothing hidden from the king. And you yourself would have set yourself against me.

Joab, I would never do this. You heard the king. We all heard him.

He said nobody hurt Absalom. You almost wonder if he wasn't saying that maybe to get Joab to up the ante a little bit. But Joab has no time for any of that kind of foolishness.

Joab, again, is one of the most interesting characters in all of the Bible. Fascinating man, complex character. He listens to what this man has to say.

And instead of sending the man back or anything else, Joab's a man of action. So you know what he's going to do? Verse 14. And Joab said, I cannot linger with you.

It's burning daylight. I got places to go and people to kill. Verse 14.

And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. All right, if I'm filming this, if I'm the director, Absalom and the man who just, excuse me, Joab and the man who just saw Absalom are having this conversation together and they're walking over towards where the Absalom is hanging. And Joab's listening to the man give this impassioned procedure why he would never touch Absalom, why he would never kill him under any circumstances.

And Joab's going, yeah, yeah, yeah. And as they get close to Absalom, Joab says, I can't linger with you. And he turns and he just kills him right like that.

That's what I was to it. You're dead, you're gone. Joab did not hesitate for one moment, even though he knew David commanded him not to.

Now, again, why? Well, because Joab was convinced that it was in David's best interest and in Israel's best interest to show Absalom justice and not mercy. Can we point out right here? There's no need to feel sorry for Absalom here, right? He only got what he deserved. He deserved the death penalty three or four

times over.

He was a murderer, a traitor and a rapist. And Joab knew that David was generally indulgent towards his children. Joab knew that David would never punish him.

Joab saw David's lack of action towards his son, his lack of discipline. And so he said, listen, in the interest of the kingdom, I'm going to do this. David's too weak in this particular situation to do what's right.

So I'm going to do it. And so let me throw out something to you here. I would say that Joab was correct, but he was not right.

He was correct in understanding that it was better for David and that it was better for Israel that Absalom was dead. At the same time, he was not right in disobeying King David. God has an order of authority, folks.

God has an order of authority and submission in many human relationships. There's an order of authority between employee and employer. There's an order of authority in the home between parents and children and husbands and wives.

There's an order of authority in the civil community between citizens and the law enforcement. There's an order of authority ordained by God between church leadership and church members. And in these God ordained relationships of authority, you're to submit, you're not to disobey.

Of course, I'm accepting if that authority tells you to do something that's clearly unscriptural, that's clearly simple, that goes without saying. Your boss tells you to lie or to steal or to cheat. You don't do it because the Bible tells you not to do that and that's a higher law than your boss.

But if your boss tells you not to kill somebody like Joab's boss told him not to kill somebody, Joab was supposed to do it. He was not right in disobeying David who was the God appointed authority over him. You know, and David knew this lesson himself because of his own dealings with King Saul.

By David's dealings with King Saul, we see that God can deal with those in authority and we don't need to disobey them unless commanded to by scripture or clear conscience. So Joab was correct, but he was not right at the same time. There is an ironic twist in the fact that the rebel Absalom had his life taken in a rebellious act by Joab.

You see how God weaves or allows irony in these things. Here's Joab rebelling against David, killing a rebel. Absalom got what he deserved and might I say Joab would be held accountable for what he did to Absalom.

Both by God and by David. You know what David told Solomon, the son who would succeed him as king of Israel before he died? David said to Solomon, when I go, you give the business to Joab. Joab got what he deserved.

He was not unpunished for this act of rebellion and unlawful killing. Well, and if that wasn't enough, verse 15, and ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him. There's Absalom, three spears hanging in his abdomen, barely hanging on to life and Joab just nods or winks to these ten young men and they just go in and start wailing on this poor man.

Isn't it ironic that just as Absalom had defiled ten of his father's concubines, so these ten young men take what little life there is remaining in him and send him in over into death. Verse 16, then Joab blew the trumpet and the people returned from pursuing Israel for Joab held back the people and they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods and laid a very large heap of stones over him and then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent. Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself which is in the king's valley for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance.

He called the pillar after his own name and to this day it's called Absalom's Monument. Joab wanted to make sure that Absalom didn't receive some glorious burial. So they dug a pit and covered it with stones right there in the woods.

Absalom was self-aggrandizing enough to make sure he had a monument. So he set up one for himself even before his death. By the way, you can go to Israel today and in the Kidron Valley you'll see a structure that they call Absalom's Monument.

Most guides will tell you that it doesn't date back to that time but maybe it's erected there in the memory or after the pattern of something that was there earlier. So Absalom's dead. All his scheming, all his planning, all his rebellion against David, it came to nothing because God was in control.

And might I say because David was a praying man. Because David prayed a prayer, Lord I pray turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness and God answered that prayer and it turned the tide for David. Verse 19.

Then Ahimaaz, son of Zadok said, let me run now and take the news to the king how the Lord has avenged him of his enemies. Joab said to him, you shall not take the news this day for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news because the king's son is dead.

This Ahimaaz fellow had been used as a messenger to David before. He seems like a young man just full of energy, full of desire to please. Hey, let me go.

Wow, we won the victory. I want to go tell David. Let me go.

I can go tell him, Joab. Please, please, please, please, please. Joab, look, Ahimaaz, I like you kid.

You don't want to bring this message. Trust me. You don't want to deliver this message to David.

Verse 21. Then Joab said to the Cushite, go tell the king what you've seen. So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran.

And Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, said again to Joab, but whatever happens, please let me run also after the Cushite. Joab said, why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready? But whatever happens, he said, let me run. So he said to him, run.

Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite. Now, here's Ahimaaz, just like a puppy dog. Oh, please, please, please, please, let me go take him.

Please, please. All right, Joab says, just to get rid of the kid. I can't take you anymore.

Get out of here. Go, run. Oh, boy.

Hippity-hoppity, down the road. Run, run, run, run, run, run, run. And he passes the Cushite.

Verse 24. Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate to the wall, lifted his eyes, and looked.

There was a man running alone. And the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, if he's alone, there's news in his mouth.

And he came rapidly and drew near. Then the watchman saw another man running. And the watchman said to the gatekeeper and said, there's another man running alone.

And the king also said, he also brings news. The watchman said, I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaz, the son of Zadok. And the king said, he's a good man, and he comes with good news.

See, David knew. David's thinking, no, you know, Joab would never send Ahimaz with bad news. It's got to be good news, because Ahimaz is running.

He's coming to me. You see, David's hope getting up. And what's David thinking of in return, in regards of good news? That Absalom is alive.

Verse 28. And Ahimaz called out and said to the king, all is well. Then he bowed down to the face of the earth before the king.

He said, blessed be the Lord, your God, who's delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord, the king. And the king said, is the young man Absalom safe? Do you see that question? You see what a revealing question that is about David. That's his only concern.

He should have been more concerned about Israel as a nation than for his traitor son. Is Absalom safe? Not are my armies successful? Not will I be able to hold on to the kingdom? Not how fair is the kingdom? How does the nation survive? Is Absalom okay? So on the one hand, as a statesman, we say, not good, David. No, but you see, as a father, this shows how David's question is an example of the incredible bond of love between a parent and a child.

I mean, that's how it is, right? When your kid's involved, that's all that really matters. How is it for your kid? And you know, sometimes it's not right. But that's just how you feel as a parent.

It is how you feel. You know, if your son's on an athletic team, and his team wins a great, great victory out on the field. But for some reason, your child humiliates themselves out on the athletic field.

Do you feel good walking away? All right, we won. You feel terrible. Yeah, we won, but man, did you see what happened to my kid? Because he's your kid, that's why you're so concerned.

And that's where David's coming from in this. You know, he might have said, hey, listen, is Absalom dead? Listen, if Absalom's dead, oh, then man, I'm safe. If Absalom's dead, then the Civil War's over.

If Absalom's dead, then everything's going to be OK. But no, he's a father, and he speaks like a father loves his offspring. The kind of father's love that can survive even the hatred of his son.

Now, don't you see how this great bond of love between David and Absalom is a great picture of the bond of love that God has with us? Oh, how we have rebelled against him. Oh, how we have turned our back on

him. Oh, how we have schemed against God in many ways.

But how he loves us. How he cares for us. Spurgeon said, our children may plunge into the worst of sins, but they're our children still.

They may scoff at our God. They may tear our heart to pieces with their wickedness. We cannot take complacency in them.

But at the same time, we cannot unchild them, nor erase their image from our hearts. Ask any parent who's going through grief with their children, and that's what they'll tell you. Oh, they're killing me, they'll tell you.

Oh, but that's my child. And that's how God feels towards us as well. Verse 29, the king said, is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, when Joab sent the king's servant and me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I didn't know what it was about.

In other words, he didn't even have the message right. Oh, I know we won. Well, is Absalom safe? Man, I don't know.

There was a lot of going on. I missed that part. But we won.

Verse 30, and the king said, turn aside and stand here. So he turned aside and stood still. And just then the Kushite came and the Kushite said, there's good news, my lord, the king, for the lord has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you.

And the king said to the Kushite, is the young man Absalom safe? And the Kushite answered, may the enemies of my lord, the king and all who rise against you to do you harm be as that young man is. Which was a very tactful way for the Kushite to deliver the message. There was no easy way to deliver it.

David, Absalom is dead. I know you gave the command. But Absalom is dead.

Just one more thing before we go on to verse 33. Which one was the better messenger, the Kushite or Ahimaz? We say, well listen, Ahimaz. He had the enthusiasm, right? Ahimaz, he was fast.

Ahimaz, man, there's something great in him. There's just one thing that Ahimaz didn't have right. The message.

His enthusiasm was high. His delivery was spectacular. But what didn't he have? He didn't have the message down.

This is a great passage for pastors and teachers among God's people. You gotta have the message down. You know, you can have all the enthusiasm.

You can have a spectacular delivery. God bless you for those things. Let me tell you, friend.

If you don't get the message down, you're not gonna be a good messenger, period. It was the Kushite who wasn't overflowing with enthusiasm and who wasn't as fast as Ahimaz who turned out to be a better messenger because he had the message right. Verse 33.

Then the king was deeply moved. By the way, the Hebrew idea behind those two words, deeply moved, it implies a violent trembling of the body. Can you picture that here? David hears the news.

May the enemies of my lord, the king, and all those who rise against you due to your harm be as that young man is. And it just takes David a moment. That sentence has to register in his head because he didn't come right out and say, Absalom's dead.

But he puts two and two together very quickly. In his mind, he works out the equation. And when it comes upon him, he just freezes for a moment.

Then he starts shaking. The tears, the sobs, he just becomes undone. Maybe if he's standing, he collapses and he just begins to shake.

He begins to tremble. It's almost a violent trembling of the body. He was completely undone at hearing the news of Absalom's death.

The king was deeply moved and he went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said thus. Oh, my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom.

If only I had died in your place. Oh, Absalom, my son, my son. David, you won.

Don't you understand? This man was a traitor. This man, this Absalom, was a man who was going to kill you in five seconds. He wouldn't hesitate for a moment.

And let me tell you, Absalom would not have lost five minutes of sleep the night he murdered his father. Not five minutes. He was a ruthless, cold-blooded man.

It saved the kingdom. It saved the posterity of Israel. It saved so many things that now Absalom was gone and his armies were defeated.

But David's completely undone. Why? Why? Let me suggest to you two reasons. First of all, the obvious one.

His son is dead and David had that bond of affection that a parent has for a child. But can I suggest to you a second reason? David was so deeply moved because he knew that he supplied the soil that this tragedy grew from. The soil came from David's indulgent parenting.

I mean, look at that. Here's David never disciplining these boys, never telling them no. They grow up rich.

They grow up privileged. They grow up having yes said to them for everything. And you see it in Amnon.

You see it in Absalom. You see this character in David's kids. It's just terrible.

And he thinks, oh, if only I was a better parent. My son wouldn't have turned out this way. Then the second thing he thinks.

He knows that the soil came not only from his indulgent parenting, but the soil also came from his own sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. After that, God promised this to David. This is from Second Samuel 12.

He said, David, the sword will never depart from your house because you've despised me and you've taken the wife Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. I will raise up adversity to you from your own house. David looks at this.

This is the fulfillment of it. I created this. This is the soil that I put there.

Absalom grew up in it. But I supplied the soil from my indulgent parenting, from my own sin with Bathsheba. But then again, there came in another sense as well.

The soil came from David's own sinful indulgence of his passions, his own smaller rebellions against God. He saw Absalom indulging his passions and David knew that the same heart was in him. He saw Absalom rebelling against God, against himself.

And David knew that he had rebelled against God. Oh, those sins were smaller in David, but they were magnified in his son. And he looks at his son and he says, those are my sins.

Those are my weaknesses. They're just amplified. They're just magnified in my son.

Let me tell you, friends, that David's sorrow shows us that it isn't enough that parents train their children to be godly. Let me say that again. It's not enough that you train your children to be godly.

You must first train yourself in godliness because they're not just going to learn from the lessons that you give them. They're going to learn from your life. And how could David sit down and talk to his sons about restraining your passions and saying no to yourself sometimes and sacrificing to do what's right when he's just added two more concubines? So we have to not only train our children.

We must train ourselves for their sake. But David didn't. And so we see his cry here.

Oh, my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, because he really was his son. He goes, that's me just magnified, just amplified. But that's me.

G. Campbell Morgan said this. He said this surely had a deeper note in it than merely of the half conscious repetition of words occasioned by personal grief. The father recognized how much he was responsible for the son.

It was as though he said he is indeed my son. His weaknesses are my weaknesses. His passions are my passions.

His sins are my sins. And you see how David concluded that there at the end of verse thirty three. He said, if only I had died in your place.

He wanted to die in the place of his rebellious son, but he couldn't. Now, here's the glorious news, right? What David could not do, God did by dying in the place of rebellious sinners. The same anguished love that David has for Absalom in a in a pure way, in a sinless way.

It is the love that God has for us. And he says, oh, that I could die in their place. In this cry of David, we actually hear an echo of the cry of God for his lost children, his desire to restore them, his desire to forgive them.

And he says, I'll do it by dying in their place. That's a great message of the gospel, isn't it? He's brought back rebels and traitors just like us. People who haven't restrained their passions, people who haven't followed in submission to our king.

He brings us back. And he did it by dying in our place. We're going to conclude tonight with a few verses from chapter 19, because it flows along very well in the context.

Verse one. And Joab was told, behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom. So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people.

For the people heard it said that day, the king is grieved for his son. And the people stole back into the city that day as people who are ashamed to steal away when they flee in battle. And this is not good.

I mean, did you read that line there in verse two? The victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people. I mean, David had loyal supporters, sacrificing supporters, and they won the day for the glory of God and for the good of Israel and for the safety of their king. And now they feel bad about their victory because David is overcome with excessive weeping and mourning for Absalom.

And might I say right here, there is a such thing as excessive mourning. There is a such thing as mourning that is basically rooted in unbelief and in self-indulgence. My friends, again, we do not expect Christians to be stoic.

And a loved one dies and what? Don't mourn, brother. No, there is an appropriate grief. There is an appropriate mourning.

But I would say that by anybody's measure, David has overstepped that which is appropriate here. And he has given himself over to excessive mourning, to an ungodly grief. Remember what Paul warned Christians in 1 Corinthians 4.13. He says, I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

That's how David is sorrowing. And some Christians sorrow in times of death or in times of tragedy. And they sorrow just like people who have no hope in God.

And that's wrong to do. What a disgraceful testimony that is of our Lord. Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said.

He said, if your dear ones are dead, you cannot restore them to life by your unbelief. And if they still survive, it will be a pity to be downcast and unbelieving while there's no occasion for it. Your strength is to sit still.

Remember that you're a Christian and a Christian is expected to be more self-possessed than those who have no God to find refuge in. And so the people there. Well, they were ashamed.

David put that upon them by his excessive mourning. He made his loyal friends and supporters feel ashamed that they won a great victory. Well, you might expect Joab is having none of this.

Verse four. But the king covered his face and the king cried out with a loud voice. Oh, my son, Absalom.

Oh, Absalom, my son, my son. Can you see this? Can you hear it echoing through the city of Jerusalem? People can hear the king almost shrieking, echoing off the stone walls of the palace. David crying, pacing back and forth, undone as a king, given over to this excessive mourning, this excessive grief.

Verse five. Then Joab came into the house of the king and he said, today you have disgraced your servants and today who today have saved your life. The lives of your sons and your daughters, the lives of

your wives and the lives of your concubines.

And that you love your enemies and you hate your friends. For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants. For today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and of all of us have died today, then it would have pleased you well.

Now, therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than with all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now.

Wow. That's a you know, it's interesting to read the older commentators. They all say this.

They say, especially the British commentators. They say, well, Joab was absolutely correct, but no one should speak that way to their king. You know, this high vision of royalty that they have.

Because, man, I'll tell you, Joab was direct. He just comes in to David and he says, forget it, man. This ends now.

Friends, David couldn't stop singing that song. Oh, my son, Absalom. Oh, Absalom, my son, my son.

He was locked into excessive mourning and a lack of perspective. He was mastered by his feelings, and our feelings were never meant to master us. Now, friends, let me be very clear on this point.

God is not against feelings. Not at all. We're not out campaigning for some kind of stone-faced, stiff-upper-lip Christianity where you never get too happy or you never get too sad.

Forget about that nonsense. God is not against feelings. And many Christians have a great lack in their Christian life.

They lack deep and profound feeling and experience in their walk with God. However, nevertheless, we can say at the same time that feelings were never meant to master over us. And that's where David's at.

He's completely mastered by his feelings. And let me tell you that the problem was not in what David knew. Absalom's tragic death and David's own role in it, David knew all about that, and that's okay.

But David's problem was in what he forgot. Yeah, he knew all about Absalom's death. He knew all about his role in it.

And it grieved him to no end. But what David has forgotten is just as big. He's forgotten that God's in control.

He's forgotten that a great victory was won. He's forgotten that he has many loyal supporters. He forgot that God showed great grace and mercy to David.

You know, when you see somebody who's overcome in tragedy or sorrow, the problem isn't in what they know. The problem is in what they forget. Oh, they see their problem crystal clear.

How do they see their problem? What they don't see is they don't see the hand of God and the love of God all around them. And so what a wake up call Joab gives to David. David, your excessive mourning is selfish.

It's all about you. These loyal, sacrificial supporters of you deserve to feel good about their victory. And you're making them feel terrible about it.

You snap out of it. Boy, did you catch that line that Joab laid on him in verse six? That if Absalom would have lived and all of us would have died, it would have pleased you well. How about that, David? That's sharp truth, and it's delivered with precision.

Joab wanted David to see that not only he was being selfish, he was being foolish. And so he says, you go out there now and you speak encouragement to the team. They deserve it.

And if you don't, you're going to lose them all, and you're going to deserve to lose them. I imagine then Joab turning on his heels and walking out. And David's left at one of those moments that leaders are left with.

You know, Joab, again, a complex guy. You hate to put a stamp of approval on a guy like Joab. Because he's just, man, there's an awful lot of good, there's an awful lot of bad there in a man like Joab.

But this was good. Let me tell you, David needs a Joab in a place like this. David needs a Joab who will come in and just say, you're full of it, man.

Have you thought about this and this and this? And then he'll say, now you make the decision, and walks out of the room. And leaders need people like that. They really do.

I thank God for people in my life who have been like that. It's not the most comfortable thing in the world, but it doesn't take you much perspective at all to see that this is a blessing from God. You need it.

Every leader needs somebody to look them square in the eye and say, what, are you kidding me? You better run this by me again, because it's not adding up. And so here, here he hears it. And David is left alone there in the throne room, or at least in the way I picture it.

And he just thinks for a few moments and he goes, you know what? He's right. He's absolutely right. So he steps down.

Off of his seat. Verse eight. And the king arose, sat in the gate, and they told the people, saying, there's the king sitting in the gate.

And he can see this. He's back. He's not screaming in the palace anymore.

You know, nobody heard those words. My son, my son anymore. David said, that's gone.

I'm done with that. There's a time for mourning, and that time's over. He's tagging along with a pastor that I really respect, just kind of hanging out with him for a day.

And he was counseling a family whose Christian son had been lately greatly troubled. And in the midst of his time of great trouble, he had committed suicide. What a tragedy for this family.

I mean, can you imagine? Yet there was really no doubt that the son was a believer, a very troubled man, a very troubled young man. But the family felt confident, as did the pastor, that this young man was in heaven. I saw the pastor say something to these people that just kind of, I went, whoa.

You know, there they were, and they were sort of in this thing of mourning, and it was beginning to become excessive. And with a great big smile on his face, the pastor said, hey, it's okay. But tomorrow at 7 o'clock in the morning, this ends.

It's over then. Then you start rejoicing. You have time to recognize the tragedy of this.

But there comes that one, that's got to end, and then you rejoice that your son's with Jesus in heaven. Let's move on. You know, I don't know if I would have had the boldness or the sensitivity or the discernment.

Maybe it was a spiritual thing, because it sure seemed to be effective in that time and place for that family. It's what exactly they needed to hear. And God forbid to the person who would say such a thing like that flippantly to anybody.

But the principle holds. We're not to be mastered by our feelings, and David was trapped in that cycle. He needed Jud to come along and shake him out of it.

Hey, come on. It's not all about you, David. It's not all about your grief.

Get your eyes on the nation. Get your eyes on these people. We need you to see it.

And when he came out there, just like we read there in verse eight. And the king arose and sat in the gate and they told all the people saying, there's the king sitting in the gate. So the people came before the king for everyone of Israel had fled to his tent.

You see now they're coming together again. Now David's doing what he should be doing. He was letting his understanding of what was right be bigger than what he felt.

See, David didn't feel like doing this. His feelings told him, stay locked into your excessive mourning. Yet David let his understanding of what was right be bigger than what he felt.

And so the people came before him. They saw what they needed to see. They saw David sitting in the place of authority.

This told them your sacrifice was worth it. You went out and put your life on the line for your king. And look, there he is.

He's reigning over Israel again. Your sacrifice was worth it. Your sacrifice was appreciated.

And David will continue to reign. And in this case, at least in this small case, we will say God bless Joab. Joab, his rebuke worked because Joab cared enough to make it.

And David was wise enough to receive it. Father, we pray that when we need to hear a word of correction or admonishment or even rebuke, that you would put those around us courageous and obedient enough to speak it and that you would give us the wisdom to discern it and to receive it. Because we know you love us, Lord.

That's the thing that makes us confident that we don't have to stay locked into excessive sorrow or mourning. It's because we have a maker who knows our name. And he's our great shepherd and the great lover of our soul.

And that's our confidence and that's our standing. We bless you this evening, Lord. Thank you for your word.

Lord, keep us loyal to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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