

## 2 Samuel Chapter 18

***And David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds over them.***

***<sup>2</sup> And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.***

***<sup>3</sup> But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succor us out of the city. <sup>4</sup> And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.***

David is still in a wilderness situation but look at how he still has significant resources now to turn and fight his enemy. David splits forces up into thirds. Abishai now gets to do what he has suggested in the past, to strike David's enemies. Ittai the Gittite gets rewarded and has a leadership role in the Kingdom. Gittites probably came from Gath which was certainly not a Jewish city, it was a strong hold for the Philistines (Goliath's hometown).

Two camps represented here could also be split between Jew and Gentile.

Application: God allows and supports diversity in the Kingdom, this includes diversity in key leadership positions. Your birthplace, race, culture should not be a showstopper for you being used in key leadership and service for the Kingdom. Caution here -- while race and background should not be a criteria, commitment and obedience and right standing with God certainly are. Remember, Ittai wonderfully is committed to serving David. If you are not in right standing with the King, you are not qualified to serve....especially in key leadership roles.

Situation:

- What he had been running from, he now has to turn around and face.
- He had a period where he was refreshed and ready.
- He has something to fight with; divides it wisely. Uses his new friend who was a Gentile.
- Humble, he wants to go lead the fight as well....but his people say no. Their reasons for him staying behind are:
  - The enemy will seek to destroy David first rather than them. He was too valuable to risk losing. They may have been aware of Ahithophel's plan from the previous chapter.
  - If they encounter trouble, David could come from the city and help them.

Observations: Use your resources wisely. The timing and how you deal with a problem will be important to your success. Stay humble. Listen to counsel of those who truly are concerned about your recovery. David is not prideful and listens to the wise counsel of those who truly love him.

**Key Point:** The people know that killing David is the focal point of the battle. The enemy knows that if they can kill David, the King, that they can have the victory. There is a key application point here. David is representative of the King or a type of Christ. The devil knows that if he can kill the King in your life, that he can have the victory over you. The focus of the enemy attack is to try and kill your focus from Jesus. When Jesus is no longer leading you in the struggle, the enemy will win. The devil already knows this....do you?

He has more resources now, than when he first was on the run. Look at that. While he was on the run and being done wrong, he was picking up stuff along the way that would be used to help in this fight. While you are in this season of trouble and recovery....are you picking up anything along the way that you might have to use later?

***<sup>5</sup> And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.***

Okay, take note of this verse and instructions given. David doesn't ask, he commands that his military leaders deal kindly with his enemy who is his son Absalom. Some key points here:

- He doesn't command they deal gently with Absalom because he deserved mercy. Oh no, quite the opposite, Absalom still deserved judgment for not repenting and leading this rebellion in his pride. The reason David gives is just do it for my sake.
- Application for Today: We don't deserve His mercy or grace. We have done nothing to earn it. We are saved for the sake of what Jesus accomplished for us. Likewise, when we extend mercy to others, they may not actually deserve it, we do it (as led by the Spirit or Level 5 maturity (refer to the Feasts study)) for His sake. We extend mercy for the sake and benefit of the King. ***Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).***
- Note that David said this so that everyone heard the command to be gentle with his son. This is significant in my opinion to show that this is a command not just for the leaders but for all of us as servants to the King.

My Matthew Henry Commentary notes how David's love for his son is the complete opposite of what Absalom intends for him.

***6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;***

***7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.***

***8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.***

David's forces win. The place of the battle...in the woods was to their advantage. The woods took out more folk than David's folk did. Where you fight this fight is important.

People who were duped by Absalom now face the consequences of coming against God's anointed.

Application for Today: Be careful with that. Notice the scripture calls out Israel fighting against the servants of David the King. Don't be surprised if the enemy you have to deal with are your own folks or your own church people. You can be a chosen people and live in church and yet still be in rebellion to the true King. It happened in this story....it still happens today.

It is obvious that God is helping David and his servants win this battle. There is a part they have to play in preparing and facing the enemy, but we see God must have been at work since Israel suffered more casualties from the dangers in the woods than from David's armies. God likewise will help us win our battles when we are in right relationship with Him. Often, He will use natural events to bring about spiritual events to accomplish His will.

***9 And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.***

***10 And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.***

***11 And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? And I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle.***

***12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.***

***13 Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me.***

Absalom caught by the very thing he was so proud of...his hair (though this is an assumption, he may have been caught by his head or neck). He is caught in a tree and between earth and heaven. This is almost a symbol of his state. He cannot ascend to heaven and he will soon be taken off the earth. He is in limbo and the mule he had relied on and trusted in to carry him is no longer with him. What he trusted in has gone away.

- What he was riding into battle was gone. He was left hanging. Entangled in a situation that he can't free himself from. Got out of the murder rap and now entangled again because of his pride. He can't get out of this situation without help...divine judgment awaits.

Special Update: Here are observations from members of the Vaughn Forest Bible Study Class.

- Absalom is suspended between heaven and earth. He certainly wasn't heaven bound, but he hadn't fallen to earth yet. The class saw him being between eternal life and death as an example of God's great mercy and desire that all come to repentance. While he is hanging between life and death on the tree (one person compared this to the two thieves on the cross with Jesus), he still has time to repent and find forgiveness and life.
- Application: We all have the opportunity to follow the proper steps and come to eternal life through Jesus. There is no sin or mistake or rebellion or bad decision you have made that can't be dealt with and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. You can choose death or life.
- It was noted that mules are generally infertile and cannot reproduce themselves. So symbolically, there was no future or continuing fruit coming out of what Absalom was riding on and relying on in battle.

Application for Today: The Bible states pride goes before the fall. We see this at work in the story. When we fail to repent and rebel against God and the Kingdom, we may also be found in a similar state where what we trusted in for success, the money, the relationship, the job, the fame, etc., or whatever it is that we relied on instead of trusting in God, all goes away and no longer provides comfort or a way of escape. I have experienced such a time, where trusting in sin, the world and self I was left hanging without hope. That is until I surrendered and turned to trusting in Jesus. There was nothing else I could rely on.

Verse 10 - A man tells Joab is told that Absalom is hung up.

Verse 11 - Joab asks the man why he didn't kill Absalom. He would have given him a reward and promotion. He would have been able to get something out of this.

Verse 12 – The man reminds Joab of the order by the King to not kill Absalom. The man’s reasons for not killing Absalom is impressive and true.

1. No reward you can give me would be reward enough to go against the order of the King.
2. He also heard the order the King gave to execute mercy, so he fully understood the will of the King.
3. If he had killed him, he would have been lying to himself that he was doing a good deed since he knew that would be against the King’s wishes. He would have deceived himself by thinking he could go against the command and still come out blessed.
4. The King would find out what he did because nothing is hidden from him.
5. The very person who is telling him he would give him a reward, is the very person who would probably execute judgment upon him.

Application for Today: The above reasons provide a good argument for us to not seek reward through evil acts or disobeying the word of God and His commandments. No reward from following Satan or the world will be worth disobeying the will of God. We are only fooling ourselves when we try to justify our actions when we know what we are doing is against His will.

It is important to see spiritually that what we think may seem to be innocent, may be against the will of God and there are consequences.

Observations from Vaughn Forest Class and Maxwell FPC Bible Study:

- The man is practicing accountability with Joab. He does this by first being a good example of obedience and second, by replaying the word he heard from the King to Joab.
- Application – the best way to practice accountability and help others make the right decisions is by providing a good example of being in right standing with God and reminding about what the Word says.
- It was noted that while the man didn’t touch Absalom, he didn’t help him out of his current situation. We have an advantage here since we know the background of the story and that God intended to defeat Absalom. So any additional assistance may have been outside the will of God’s plans. It is best to seek the will of God through prayer rather than just assume you are to provide assistance in some if not all instances.

Do we have any charge from the Father about how to deal with enemies?

Matt 5:38-39, Luke 6:27-28, John 13:34, Romans 12:14, 19-21, 1 Pet 3:9

***14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.***

***15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armor compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.***

The man's response in the previous verses should have been a reminder to Joab to do the right thing and obey the commandment of the King. Instead, Joab ignores and continues to pursue after his own will rather than obey. He attacks Absalom any way and is not gentle.

When people are determined to disobey, they don't usually want to spend too much time listening to others discuss the truth.

Let's pause for a minute to consider why. While the scripture doesn't tell us here, putting ourselves in the story, we might be able to arrive at some reasons which may have led to Joab taking this action and ignoring the King's commandment.

- He was a soldier and had a history of killing. It was his nature. He may have been doing what comes naturally.
  - Application: We can never effectively obey the word of God in our flesh. We have to be led by the Spirit and not the flesh or our old nature.
- His motive might have been revenge. Remember, in 2 Samuel Chapter 14, Absalom burned up his field...and we never see where Absalom apologized or repented.
  - Application: Taking matters into your own hands and trying to get revenge is a carnal and emotional response. It is not a spiritual response. When we are motivated by our emotions alone, bad things will happen and we often find ourselves outside the will of God.
- He may have thought he was doing the right thing. Logically speaking, why would you spare an enemy who could rise up again? He may have thought the King was wrong and that killing the enemy was a wiser move.
  - Application: This reminds me of a passage of scripture in Proverbs. If Joab had only followed this verse, he could have obeyed the King.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 -- <sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. <sup>6</sup> In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.**

Verse 15 – The impact of Joab's decision and actions as a leader inspires others to follow after his example and disobey the King's command. It is critically important for leaders to mentor and train others in righteousness. People watch what you do. It is not just about you!!!

- Now Joab's actions have help caused his young men to now also disobey the King. Of course there is a significant application for today. People still today are led to disobey and not follow God's will based upon how others respond and their example.
- Don't be that kind of leader. From the youth coach to the CEO...don't set the bad example of Joab.

- Wonder if the young men would have done that if Joab had not attacked.

***16 And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. 17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled everyone to his tent.***

***18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.***

Verse 16 – Joab calls off the attack now that the prime target Absalom is dead. This was a good move.

Verse 17 – They bury Absalom without any honors. There should have been no reward for his actions against his father and the King.

Verse 18 – Absalom had built a monument for himself. Through his pride, he wanted to be remembered a certain way. He had three sons mentioned earlier in the scriptures but we may now assume that they must have died prior to Absalom's death. Sad, it was always about Absalom and his selfish desires.

***19 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies. 20 And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. 21 Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran. 22 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? 23 But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cush.***

Ahimaaz who had earlier brought David news, now wants to give the King the great news of the victory. But Joab doesn't let him go and instead instructs that he give David news another day but not this immediate news. The reason he gives is because the King's son is dead.

Joab clearly understands that David may not take this news well. Perhaps his suggestion for the priest to wait is designed to give David comfort after the bad news arrives. Perhaps he wants to spare Ahimaaz the disappointment he will experience when he sees the King's reaction to his report.

Instead, Joab sends Cush who is a more perfect witness to share what he has seen. In fact, his instruction to tell what he has seen. But Ahimaaz requests again. Joab tells him he doesn't have his

message prepared yet, but he allows him to go because of his persistence. He soon out runs Cushie to deliver the message first.

At first, I had no great revelation on this passage but perhaps if I were to place myself in Ahimaaz's place today. I can imagine a scenario where as a young minister or preacher or Bible teacher I may receive a great revelation or wonderful news that I want to eagerly share with others. I may want to deliver it quickly without much preparation or regard for how the message will be received by the audience. In my enthusiasm I may not consider or assume it will be received with great joy. I have learned over the years to prepare such messages in advance so that the receiver of the message can better understand. I try to tailor the message to meet the person where they are for their particular situation. A great caution should be noted even in this, the preparation should be directed by the Spirit and not based upon my own wisdom carnal talents.

**Further Observations and Application:**

- Upon further review, there is significant issue with what Ahimaaz wants to do. What he desires is perhaps noteworthy and makes sense. Out of his love and respect for the King, he is eager to be the first to share the good news of the victory.
- Here lies the problem, Ahimaaz may not be led by the Spirit even though his desire and purpose might be noble.
- When I asked my classes, what level of maturity (Feast level) they thought Ahimaaz was at, most said he was not acting at a high level. Perhaps even Level 1 where he needed to be humble.
- If he wasn't acting at Level 3 or 4, then his actions were being powered from the soul (his intellect and emotions) rather than from the Spirit. Therefore, his actions were carnal.
- This is important, because Christians can want to do noble acts but for the wrong reasons, the wrong timing, or the wrong approach.
- I have learned this lesson well. There had been times when I have prepared a sermon or message based upon emotions and assumptions from my understanding of what seems to make sense. However, during these times when I stop and go through the Feast process, I soon find that the Spirit may direct me to an entirely different message or approach.

***24 And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone. 25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. 26 And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings. 27 And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.***

David is still in a wilderness situation. He has done everything he needs to do up to this point in trusting and relying on God. He awaits news as to the outcome of the battle. Often in the wilderness, after we



have done all we can, all we can do next is wait and trust God to deliver. God delivers the victory while we wait by faith.

Because David recognizes it may be Ahimaaz bringing the message, he assumes it will be good news.

Here we will see the error Ahimaaz makes. David is assuming that the initial news he is about to hear will be good. Instead, he will receive the bad news last. David may be better able to handle the bad news if he knows the good news from the priest will follow. Now Ahimaaz doesn't have a gospel message prepared for David since his message is not meeting David where he is....in a state of grief over the loss of his son.

***28 And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.***

***29 And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. 30 And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.***

***31 And, behold, Cushie came; and Cushie said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. 32 And the king said unto Cushie, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushie answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.***

Ahimaaz arrives first. He brings good news. His enemies have been defeated. Ahimaaz properly gives glory and credit to God for the victory.

Verse 29 – David bypasses this news and wants to know about the status of Absalom. Ahimaaz cannot answer David's question. Perhaps he understood at that moment why Joab wanted him to wait. David seems more interested in the well-being of his son and that relationship than the status of the Kingdom. Ahimaaz now has to stand by and wait.

Verse 31 – Cushie arrives. He also brings good news and gives God credit for the victory and defeat of his enemies. So at this point let's be clear, both messengers have given good news and praise to God for delivering the victory. This is a truth.

Verse 32 – David seems to ignore the good tidings. His concern again is the well-being of his son Absalom. He asks about his status. Cushie next, gives good news that all enemies are taken care of. He reminds David that his son was an enemy, this lets David know for sure that Absalom is dead.

***33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!***

While we can understand perhaps David's grief over the loss of his son, his response presents a bit of an issue.

- He has ignored the fact that God has delivered him a great victory.
- While Absalom is dead, David's prayer is being answered. In Chapter 15 his hope is that God will bring him back again (15:25-26, 31). He also prays that Ahithophel's counsel be turned around. His prayers are being answered.
- David doesn't focus on the fact that God is answering his prayers and restoring what he has lost. Instead, his focus is on what he has lost.

Application for Today: There have been times where God has answered my prayers but not in the manner I had hoped or planned. There have been times when my prayers are answered but everything may not be perfect as I would like things to be. At times in these instances, instead of giving God praise and thanksgiving for what He has done, I have complained over what I think may be missing. If we know God is moving on our behalf, we should be careful to continue to trust His will in our lives. God knows better than we do.

Often in my complaining, I later find that God's way turns out much better than what I had planned. His way is better than my way, His plan higher than mine.

- During the wilderness transition, we may experience loss along the way. In fact, often the wilderness experience is designed to prune us and get rid of those things which will hinder us in our next season.
- There is a real possibility that Absalom being spared would be very bad for the Kingdom as a whole and against the will of God.
- Just because you suffer loss, doesn't mean that God isn't working things out in your favor.
- Note, if Absalom survives without repenting, he would be a serious threat to the next King....Solomon.
- God's best is still in front of David, it just may not be happening as he planned. Recall, this is a byproduct of his own sin and judgment.
- If David had the proper perspective, he could have praised. We understand his grief, I don't understand the lack of recognition of the great work of the Lord in his life.

David's response perhaps not proper. God's judgment was executed. Focus is on the loss and not the victory. Wrong response for the leader.