

## 2 Samuel 18

- The fight between David and Absalom for the throne of Israel has reached a critical moment
  - David has retreated to a town in the north called Mahanaim on the east side of the Jordan along the banks of the Jabbok river

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**2Sam. 17:24** Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

- Ironically, this town was Ishbosheth's capital city when he was challenging David for the throne
- Perhaps David chose this place because he expected that Saul's family might be kind to him since he was kind to Mephibosheth
- Now it's become David's stand against his own son
- And in a way it's sad for David that he has been forced to retreat across the Jordan river
  - Technically, the land God gave Israel spanned both east and west of the Jordan river, but historically the Jews stayed to the west
  - And therefore the view in David's day (as is the case still today) was that crossing the Jordan was leaving Israel
  - So to some in Israel, David's flight to Mahanaim was equivalent to exile outside the land of his people
  - And that does not sit well with some, as we will see later
- Meanwhile, after Absalom took up residence in the palace in Jerusalem, he was advised by Hushai, David's plant, to engage in a mighty battle
  - Hushai knew that David was by far the better warrior, so a meeting of forces in the open heavily favored David
  - For this same reason, other counselors told Absalom to strike more quickly with a smaller force while David was nearby
  - But Absalom falls for Hushai's deception and decides to raise a great army from across Israel which gives David time to prepare

- And now Absalom is ready to chase after David into the Transjordan in the hope of a decisive victory in Gilead
  - By his counsel, Hushai has done his best to help David gain the advantage in the coming contest for control of Israel
  - So now at the end of Chapter 17, we learn of the preparations each side makes for the battle

**2Sam. 17:25** Absalom set Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother.

**2Sam. 17:26** And Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

**2Sam. 17:27** Now when David had come to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim,

**2Sam. 17:28** brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds,

**2Sam. 17:29** honey, curds, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David and for the people who were with him, to eat; for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

- Being new in the position of king, Absalom chose a man with family ties to David's commander, Joab
  - Amasa was the son of Ithra, and according to 1 Chronicles 2:17, his father was an Ishmaelite, not an Israelite as written here (another copyist error)
    - Ishmaelites descended from Ishmael, and were therefore not Jews
    - Amasa's mother was Abigail, a cousin of Joab, and so it seems that Absalom was trying to gain legitimacy by association
  - By appointing a commander with ties to David's commander, he reinforced the idea that he was a legitimate replacement king
    - But he appointed a non-Jew which showed his ignorance and a lack of relationship with the God of Israel Himself
    - So with Amasa, Absalom camps his forces in Gilead, the general region east of the Jordan that includes Mahanaim

- David's forces led by Joab are in Mahanaim, and he has an assorted group of supporters and allies standing with him, we're told
  - Among them are Shobi, the brother of the current king of Ammon
    - David had conquered Shobi's father when he ruled Ammon years earlier, so Ammon was a vassal of David's Israel
    - The fact that this man is supporting David demonstrates that Israel's enemies are remaining aligned with David as king
  - Also present with David are a couple of men who knew David's character and supported him in this time of need
    - One was Machir, who had hidden and protected Mephibosheth before David welcomed him to his table
    - He saw David's faithfulness to Mephibosheth and offers his own faithfulness to David now
  - Finally there is Barzillai, wealthy man from northern Gilead, who sustained David with tremendous provisions
    - We don't know how he knew David, but because of his kindness to the king here, David give his family a place at the king's table
    - Both of these men demonstrate that God was moving in the background to help David because David was His anointed
  - From a human perspective, David would seem to be greatly disadvantaged in this fight, but God is the great equalizer
    - Whoever has God's approval has everything, and since David was in God's grace, Absalom literally had no chance
    - And God delights to show us that we are under His care in little ways like this...
    - Even as the big details of our story may suggest that God has forgotten us, the little details remind us He is with us
  - God allows the big issues to come into our life to teach us, correct us, train us up in righteousness
    - But when they come, the Lord also desires to reassure us that these things have not come to crush us

- So He will give us moments like this, moments when we see the Lord is on our side, even in the midst of our trials
- Look for those encouraging signs from the Lord so you can withstand the trial with the right attitude and stronger faith
- Of course, David is God's anointed king and Absalom is not...and he never will be, so the outcome of this battle is never in doubt
  - David was the one cursed by Shemei, but it will be Absalom that pays the penalty of that curse
    - This is a classic display of the power over the hubris of mankind
    - Proverbs puts it succinctly

**Prov. 16:9 The mind of man plans his way,  
But the LORD directs his steps.**

- The Lord is directing everyone's steps in this story to ensure the outcome He intended
  - David is experiencing a trial that will train him concerning his leadership deficits
  - But the trial isn't intended to crush David and his place as king is certain since the Lord placed him there
- In fact, in this next chapter, we will see subtle cues throughout to reinforce that David is king, not Absalom
  - For example, throughout this next section, David is referred to as king to emphasize his rightful place
  - And the story is constructed as a contrast between David and Absalom so that we see the difference in each man's heart
- The chapter opens by showing David's battle strategy

**2Sam. 18:1 Then David numbered the people who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.**

**2Sam. 18:2 David sent the people out, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I myself will surely go out with you also."**

[2Sam. 18:3](#) But the people said, “You should not go out; for if we indeed flee, they will not care about us; even if half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that you be ready to help us from the city.”

[2Sam. 18:4](#) Then 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 hundreds and thousands.

[2Sam. 18:5](#) The king charged Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.” And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom.

- David’s strategy is sensible, prudent and sound...beginning with sharing command of his forces among three trusted and competent men
  - When David proposed to go out in the fight, his people objected and argued that David was too valuable to place himself in harm’s way
    - David is an older man by this point, and so his value as a leader had changed
    - When he was younger, David was an asset on the battlefield, but now he’s more valuable in the rear ranks
    - And David wisely takes counsel and agrees with their concerns
  - Finally, notice David gives explicit instructions concerning Absalom...he is not to be harmed
    - He is to be treated gently, which is a subtle way of saying he should not be killed in battle
    - And David makes this explicitly known and clear to all and the people hear it too
  - The question, though, is whether David’s choice to show his son an excess of mercy was the right thing to do or not
    - What would normally be the penalty for someone who did what Absalom did?
    - Wouldn’t anyone else in his place be put to death for trying to take the king’s throne, much less the king’s life?
    - And in fact, isn’t David’s reluctance to hold his son accountable the very reason this situation has come to pass in the first place?

- Remember, mercy and kindness are virtues, unless they become excuse for overlooking disobedience and rebellion
  - Justice absent mercy and kindness hardens hearts, since it is the kindness of God that brings us to repentance
  - But kindness and mercy absent justice becomes license to sin, and that's the situation David has created with his sons
  - So David's instructions show he is thinking more like a father unwilling to discipline his children than like a king at war
- So David's careful battle plan goes into action with the expected result

**2Sam. 18:6** Then the people went out into the field against Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim.

**2Sam. 18:7** The people of Israel were defeated there before the servants of David, and the slaughter there that day was great, 20,000 men.

**2Sam. 18:8** For the battle there was spread over the whole countryside, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

- The people refer to David's forces, while the term "Israel" refers to the army that Absalom raised from across the nation
  - The battle takes place in the forest of Ephraim, the location of which is not known precisely but lies somewhere in Gilead
  - It was called the forest of Ephraim because historically many Ephraimites settled there beginning in the time of Judges
- As the battle ensues, it's a bloodbath for Absalom's forces, as expected
  - They were not led well, trained well, or fighting on the right side
  - And as a result 20,000 men lost their lives...an unnecessary cost for the nation because of Absalom's insolence
- Curiously, in v.8 we're told that more of Absalom's men died in the forest as they were trying to run from the fight than in the battle itself
  - The forests of Gilead are not like the serene, spacious terrain of Sherwood Forest
  - They are desert forests overrun with dangers and obstacles, which W. M. Thomson describes this way:

...rocks piled in horrid confusion, and covered with prickly oak and other thorny coppice, which confound the unhappy traveler who gets entangled among them. ... Nothing is more impracticable than these stony, thorny [forests], and I can readily believe that such a 'wood' would devour more of a routed army than the sword of the victors.

- So Absalom's army has been routed and many of his men have been killed
  - Again, what should the punishment be for a man who instigated this unnecessary bloodshed?
    - Under any other circumstances, the commander of such a rebellion would be put to death
    - And the Law in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 required it, in fact, since the man was guilty of insurrection against the king
- Since David issued orders for Absalom to be spared, so the Lord is going to ensure that Absalom receives the justice he deserves
  - And yet because of David's order, the Lord will bring justice in a certain way that leaves the guilty punished and preserves the innocent

**2Sam. 18:9** Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. For Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going.

**2Sam. 18:10** When a certain man saw it, he told Joab and said, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak."

**2Sam. 18:11** Then Joab said to the man who had told him, "Now behold, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a belt."

**2Sam. 18:12** The man said to Joab, "Even if I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Protect for me the young man Absalom!'

**2Sam. 18:13** "Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof."

- In his own retreat, Absalom is riding away on a mule, and as he passes under the thick branches of an oak tree, his flowing hair gets caught

- We remember that Absalom had movie star looks, and among his key attributes was a great mane of hair
  - The text implied that he was very proud of his hair even to the point of making a public spectacle of getting a haircut
  - So it follows that the Lord should use that pride to bring about his fall
- As his great mane gets caught, the entanglement is so severe that it causes Absalom to be ripped off his mule
  - He hangs suspended by his hair, likely in much pain since his hair is holding the weight of his body
  - We might suppose that Absalom didn't possess a knife that he could use to cut his own hair
  - Or perhaps he did have a knife but was too vain to cut his hair so he was seeking for another solution
- Either way, a spy of David's camp sees Absalom hanging and goes away to report what he saw
  - When he reports to the commander of David's forces, Joab is incredulous that the soldier didn't use the chance to kill Absalom
  - For Joab, this was the perfect chance to end the rebellion and restore life to normal in Israel
- But this soldier responds that he was just following David's orders, and he was correct in doing so
  - To raise his hand against the king's son, especially when the king had directed otherwise, was rebellion itself
  - Surely people still remembered what David did to the man who killed Saul...and Saul was already dying
  - In fact, the man correctly says that had he killed Absalom, not even Joab would have defended him before David
  - So there was little doubt that David would have put this man to death had he killed David's son against orders
- Clearly, the Lord has captured Absalom in this ridiculous trap to humiliate the man and ultimately to bring him to a just end

- But because David has commanded that no one kill him, the one who takes action will himself be guilty and due justice for disobeying David
  - So the Lord brings this innocent man to witness the scene and report back
  - But the man's godly character will not allow him to raise a hand against Absalom, and that's why the Lord has him report to Joab
- Joab is already a man due justice for unlawful killing, so the Lord is going to allow that man to dig his hole a little deeper
  - And in the process, the Lord will harness the man's unwavering willingness to ignore orders to accomplish a good outcome
  - This story is a great example of that principle of Scripture at work...God is not the author of sin but He can harness it

**2Sam. 18:14** Then Joab said, "I will not waste time here with you." So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

**2Sam. 18:15** And ten young men who carried Joab's armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him.

**2Sam. 18:16** Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the people.

**2Sam. 18:17** They took Absalom and cast him into a deep pit in the forest and erected over him a very great heap of stones. And all Israel fled, each to his tent.

**2Sam. 18:18** Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar which is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to preserve my name." So he named the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

- Joab reacts to the man's response in frustration...which is typical of the ungodly when confronted by godly men standing by their principles
  - Joab says he won't waste time in the conversation, because he's afraid that someone might come along and free Absalom
    - So Joab leaves quickly with spears and when he finds Absalom, he impales him while still hanging
    - These spears don't immediately kill Absalom, so Joab's armor bearers cut him down and finish the job

- Again, Absalom's death was the correct outcome in terms of justice, but for someone to accomplish it meant defying David
  - So it fell to Joab just as God intended so that one guilty man might take the life of another
  - And though this will trouble David tremendously, that in itself is part of the lesson for him
  - His love for his family clouded his judgment to the point that he ruined his family through poor decision-making
  - And the death of his sons were the consequences of those decisions
- With Absalom dead, Joab calls off the rest of the attack, because there was no point in pursuing fellow Israelites once their cause was no more
  - To make sure that Absalom wasn't treated as a hero or martyr, the body was disposed in a hidden grave
  - They buried him under a high pile of stones in the middle of the forest
  - That end is somewhat ironic, since the penalty for a rebellious son is stoning
- With the battle over and Absalom gone, the people flee, and the war ends
  - As a footnote to Absalom's story, we're told in v.18 that Absalom had previously set up a monument to himself
    - The monument was set up in the King's Valley, which is the Kidron Valley on the east side of Mt. Zion
    - There is a monument standing in the King's Valley today called Abaslom's monument, but that is not the original
    - It was built in the first century as a Roman tomb for a wealthy individual and it may stand in the same general location
  - Apparently, Absalom had given some thought to the potential to die in battle and so he made this preparation for his legacy
    - His reasoning was because he had no children as yet, so he wanted something by which people would remember his name

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- It's an act of hubris and self-importance, and in the end it became a monument to his folly
- The writer includes this detail to remind the reader that Absalom expected that his rebellion meant death
  - Not even Absalom himself expected his father to spare his life should his rebellion fail
  - Which makes David's orders concerning his son look all the more foolish
- Absalom is the third son to die indirectly because of David's multiple wives and his subsequent unwillingness to discipline his sons
  - Joab was a man prone to acting against authority and against David, in particular, but his ruthlessness explained his success as a leader
    - God used Joab to further His plan at times, but not because God endorsed Joab's methods
    - Rather, Joab's methods were his own, but at times the Lord used Joab's sinful instincts to defeat even greater sin in Absalom
  - And ultimately, God used Joab to discipline David, and now the time has come for this lesson to reach its intended target

**2Sam. 18:19** Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Please let me run and bring the king news that the LORD has freed him from the hand of his enemies."

**2Sam. 18:20** But Joab said to him, "You are not the man to carry news this day, but you shall carry news another day; however, you shall carry no news today because the king's son is dead."

**2Sam. 18:21** Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran.

**2Sam. 18:22** Now Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said once more to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why would you run, my son, since you will have no reward for going?"

**2Sam. 18:23** "But whatever happens," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and passed up the Cushite.

- A messenger named Ahimaaz pleads for the chance to deliver the news of Absalom's death to David

- A messenger who brought good news would often be rewarded on the spot, and this man is longing for the chance to tell David
  - Clearly, he didn't appreciate the bigger picture, because if he had, he would not have volunteered for this assignment
  - David is not going to react to the news of Absalom's death with joy and he certainly was not going to reward the messenger
- So Joab wisely spares the man by saying he will not deliver the message
  - In v.20 Joab clarifies that the man isn't being fired from his post...he will still deliver messages
  - But he won't deliver this one, because Joab knew better than to put a valued man in this position
- Instead, Joab sends another man, a Gentile soldier from Cush, to report to David, probably because this man was expendable
  - If David reacted in anger and killed the man, there would be little loss for Joab
  - But Joab valued Ahimaaz, and when Ahimaaz begged again to go with the Cushite, Joab tried to explain the situation
- In v.22 Joab assures the man there would be no reward for delivering this news to David
  - But the man insists, so Joab says go and Ahimaaz was so determined for reward, he ran fast enough to pass the Cushite
  - And as he reaches the outskirts of David's camp, a watchmen reports his approach to David

**2Sam. 18:24** Now David was sitting between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man running by himself.

**2Sam. 18:25** The watchman called and told the king. And the king said, "If he is by himself there is good news in his mouth." And he came nearer and nearer.

**2Sam. 18:26** Then the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "Behold, another man running by himself." And the king said, "This one also is bringing good news."

**2Sam. 18:27** The watchman said, "I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "This is a good man and comes with good news."

- Given the slower pace of travel in that day, the time required for a runner to make his way to the king gave opportunity to speculate about the message
  - David says that one runner means good news, because if the news were bad, there would be a great retreat of many people running back
    - When the man reports seeing the second runner, the Cushite, David holds to his optimistic outlook saying more good news
    - And when he's told the man was Ahimaaz, David doubles down on his bet, claiming that this is a good man
  - David seems to be working very hard to keep an optimistic attitude, and it makes you wonder if he was secretly worried that his son would die
    - David gave strict orders but that just indicated that he didn't trust his men to do the right thing
    - So it seems that David's primary concern is whether his son will survive the encounter
  - Meanwhile, the rest of the nation is worried about the kingdom
    - The nation's future lies in the balance, and those who aligned themselves with David will likely die if Absalom prevailed
    - Once more the tension between David's public role as king and his private role as father is at odds
    - Which is why the Lord brings about Absalom's death and why the news must reach David in this way

**2Sam. 18:28** Ahimaaz called and said to the king, "All is well." And he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, "Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."

**2Sam. 18:29** The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was."

**2Sam. 18:30** Then the king said, “Turn aside and stand here.” So he turned aside and stood still.

- Ahimaaz reaches David first, which was always his desire, and when he does, he reports on the outcome of the battle
  - The messenger buries the lede, so to speak, by emphasizing the outcome of the battle while ignoring the news of Absalom
    - He begins praising the Lord for a victory over Absalom’s military force
    - But David fully expected to be victorious in battle, so this was not the news David was waiting to hear
  - David was far more interested in the outcome for his son, and when he presses for that news, Ahimaaz shows he had been paying attention
    - He knew that the Cushite was following close behind, so he elected to play dumb
    - He says when he left he knew that something had been heard but he didn’t know what the news was
  - Clearly, the man knew that David’s son was dead, since Joab told him, so his statement to David was a lie
    - So Ahimaaz must have decided that he would get credit for reporting the battle was won
    - But he would leave the bad news for the Cushite to deliver
- David knew that another runner was coming in shortly, so he tells Ahimaaz to stand aside

**2Sam. 18:31** Behold, the Cushite arrived, and the Cushite said, “Let my lord the king receive good news, for the LORD has freed you this day from the hand of all those who rose up against you.”

**2Sam. 18:32** Then the king said to the Cushite, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” And the Cushite answered, “Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!”

**2Sam. 18:33** The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

- Now it falls to the poor Cushite to deliver the bad news, but he does it diplomatically
  - He begins with the same opening announcement concerning the battle, but then predictably David asks about Absalom
  - The Cushite responded that all who would oppose the king should be as that young man, meaning dead
- David completely overlooks the news of the battle won and focuses only on the news of his son
  - He leaves the room deeply grieving for his son and as he walks away he weeps over and over again for his son
  - While we can sympathize for David over the loss of his son, David is more than a father...he's the king of a nation
  - And in this moment he's showing that he was more focused on his personal loss than on his nation's gain
- Now it becomes clear what good news David had been expecting to hear from the messengers
  - David's reaction to this news proves why it was necessary for the Lord to deliver this blow to David...he has to see the damage he's done
    - By refusing to hold his sons accountable, he has enabled them to follow after the worst desires and instincts
    - Amnon pursued perverted lust while his brother Absalom pursued unbridled pride and ambition
  - And after Absalom divided the nation, sent the king packing, and caused 20,000 families to lose fathers, sons and brothers...
    - David mourns his death as if to say the outcome has been a disaster for the nation
    - When in reality the outcome is the best possible resolution for the nation...and ultimately for David too
  - Had Absalom lived and been allowed to remain in David's house, he would have almost certainly sought other ways to disrupt the nation

- And if he had been exiled, he would no doubt come back one day with a new army
- There was little reason to expect Absalom to stop trying to have what he wanted, and David showed no inclination to stop him
- This is what discipline from God looks like and how it works in our hearts...it takes us places we won't go on our own
  - It brings us to the end of ourselves so we have no choice but to contend with our pride or deception or rebellion or other issue
  - And then when forced, we get an honest look at ourselves and realize we don't like what we see
  - And then with God's help, we repent and move in a new direction, which ultimately brings us to somewhere better
- That's the path that David is on, and all that remains is for David to see himself in that mirror...

**2Sam. 19:1** Then it was told Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourns for Absalom."

**2Sam. 19:2** The victory that day was turned to mourning for all the people, for the people heard it said that day, "The king is grieved for his son."

**2Sam. 19:3** So the people went by stealth into the city that day, as people who are humiliated steal away when they flee in battle.

**2Sam. 19:4** The king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

- After David goes off weeping, someone reports this to Joab, because no one can believe David's response
  - In that time, a king's response to any situation was expected to be echoed by his subjects' response
    - So when a king was joyful, the nation was joyful, and when the king was agitated, the people got anxious
    - And when a king mourned, the people mourned with him
  - So David's response to the messengers' news led to several unintended consequences for the people of Israel

- First, the people were surprised and worried by David's response to the news of victory on the battlefield
- They simply hadn't anticipated such a strong negative response
- It's not that David wasn't expected to mourn for his son privately
- But it was that David's *primary* response to the victory was mourning, and that wasn't what they would have expected
- Secondly, the people had already started celebrating the military victory, the biggest victory for the nation in some time
  - So when the news came out that David was mourning greatly for his son, the people suddenly found themselves embarrassed
  - They were in the middle of parties and song, when they should be engaged in mourning
- Notice in v.3 we're told the people slink away from the celebrations in the field and back into Mahanaim humiliated for having celebrated
  - They act as if they had been the ones defeated and humiliated
  - Why are they feeling this way? Because David was mourning the son who brought this tragedy upon himself
  - Remember, even Absalom expected that death was a possible outcome for him...only David was unprepared to accept it
- The Lord has brought David to the end of himself and his unreasonable devotion to his family at the expense of his role as leader of the nation
  - Notice in v.4 the king is still in his room calling out Absalom's name in a full-fledged pity party
    - And after seeing the people of Israel humiliated by their own king after a great military victory, Joab has had enough
    - So he gathers the courage to go to David and give the king a piece of his mind

**2Sam. 19:5** Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who today have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines,

[2Sam. 19:6](#) by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased.

[2Sam. 19:7](#) “Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, surely not a man will pass the night with you, and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now.”

- Joab tells David like it is...David has covered the faces of his own people with shame, the very servants who saved David's life
  - Had David's forces lost, not only would David have died but his entire family would have died
  - His other sons, including Solomon, and his daughters and his wives and his concubines...everyone
  - In other words, Absalom's actions meant that someone was going to die...either one of David's children or all of them
- So in light of the alternatives, Absalom's death was – by far – the best outcome possible, and in light of God's grace, David should temper his mourning
  - Joab wisely describes David's action as loving those who hated him while hating those who loved him
    - We've all heard the phrase “blood is thicker than water” which means that the bonds of family are stronger than any other
    - We may have chosen friends that we like better than any of our family members, but in the end blood bonds always win out
    - David seemed to live by that standard to a fault
  - He was favoring a rebellious son who wouldn't have hesitated to kill his father if he had the chance
    - And in the process, David was forsaking those who put their lives on the line to save him and his family and the nation
    - Joab says you have shown today that princes and servants mean nothing to David
    - He adds that if Absalom were alive and all of them were dead, then David would be happier, and that seemed to be true

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- This is the moment that God held up the mirror so David could see who he had become as a father and king
  - He was an indulgent, absentee father...or at the very least, detached and unwilling to hold his sons accountable
  - He tried to avoid bringing the penalty of the law upon his sons to spare them from punishment or even death
  - And his weakness simply led to even more bloodshed and death
- Ironically, David's son Solomon gives the wisest advice concerning parenting found in all the Bible...advice that David needed

**Prov. 19:18** Discipline your son while there is hope,

And do not desire his death.

**Prov. 19:19** A man of great anger will bear the penalty,

For if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again.

**Prov. 19:20** Listen to counsel and accept discipline,

That you may be wise the rest of your days.

- A failure to deal with a child's rebellion while they are young will only lead to great rebellion when they are older
- Kids do not "grow out" of rebellion...they only get better at it, and if you rescue them from their rebellion, you get to do it again
- And that's why David is where he is...the Lord is showing David why this came to pass and where the problem truly lies
  - This is the moment we all face from time to time in one way or another...moments when the Lord puts a mirror in our face
    - We see ourselves honestly through a set of circumstances that God brings about so we can make changes
    - It's the way He disciplines us, and it works the same way as when we discipline our children
  - We can learn our lesson or repeat it later...much better to obey and move on than to stay stuck in a cycle of discipline
    - So the question becomes what will David do with the Lord's discipline

- We remember something else that Solomon wrote

[Prov. 3:11](#) My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD

Or loathe His reproof,

[Prov. 3:12](#) For whom the LORD loves He reproofs,

Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.

- So Joab ends with a bold demand telling the king that he needed to go out before the people who fought for him and make things right
  - We'll look at David's response next time