

The Death of Absalom – 2 Samuel 18:1- 19:8

Introduction:

David has fled the city of Jerusalem and is camped in the wilderness with his followers. At first it appears that everyone is following Absalom, and David is in a desperate situation. But as David submits to God even in this we see people start to rally around the king. Soon David has an army, and a base from which to send his army.

Nonetheless, Absalom is not ready to walk away from this fight. He wants the throne and is willing to do anything to get it. He has a large following and he has hired many men to fight for him. He follows after David, not knowing that each step he takes away from Jerusalem he is becoming more and more vulnerable.

In the passage before us we will see the wise strategies of David, but we will also see his weak spot. David will put family ahead of himself, and his nation. He almost loses the trust of his men except for the intervention of his General, Joab.

The question before us in this study is this, “To be a man after God’s heart, what should our priorities be?”

The Battle is Drawn – 2 Samuel 18:1-8

1. Once David has a base, what is the first thing he does (v. 1)?
2. David divides his army into three divisions, each under a very capable leader (v. 2). Why might he do this?
3. What was the intent of the king according to verse 2?
4. What response do the men give about David’s plan (v. 3)? Does it make sense?
5. Once again King David is staying behind while the armies march out to battle. Why is it different this time (v. 4)? What impression do we get about the army following King David in this verse?

6. What command does King David give to his three generals as they head out to battle (v.5)? What is counterintuitive about this?
7. Where did the battle take place (v. 6)? Why might this be an advantage to David's troops? How did David's army fare (v. 7)?
8. What do we learn in verse 8? What message might the Lord be giving to the readers of this sacred text?

Absalom is Killed – 2 Samuel 18:9-18

9. As the battle is waged, Absalom is discovered by David's men. Absalom is riding a mule through the forest and what happens to him (v. 9)? What is the irony of this situation?
10. A soldier reports to Joab that they have found Absalom hanging in an oak tree (v. 10). What is Joab's response to the soldier (v. 11)? What was Joab offering him?
11. Why didn't the soldier kill Absalom as Joab suggested (vss. 12-13)? How confident is the soldier that Joab would defend him before the king?
12. Joab seeks out Absalom and what does he do to him (v. 14)? The men who were closest to Joab, how did they respond (v. 15)?
13. What does Joab do in verse 16? Why was this important?
14. What was done with the body of Absalom (v. 17)? Why the stones? (note: often ancient peoples would leave a stone each time they passed by the grave of an important person)
15. Verse 18 is a "flash back" to an earlier time in Absalom's life. What did Absalom do so he would not be forgotten? What does this tell us about Absalom? (cf. 2 Samuel 14:27)

David Mourns – 2 Samuel 18:19-33

16. Ahimaaz (David's message carrier) wants to tell David the battle is over, and they won. How does Joab respond, and why (v. 20)?
17. Who does Joab send with the message of the battle to the king (v. 21)? Why?
18. Ahimaaz won't give up, and asks to carry the message to the king. What does Joab say about this in verse 22? What does Joab assume Ahimaaz desires?
19. Ahimaaz is finally released to follow the Cushite. However, what happens as they ran to the king (v. 23)?
20. When Ahimaaz nears the city where David is waiting, he is spotted by the lookout guard. He runs alone, and David assumes this means something (v. 25)? What is it and why?
21. Watching the runners approach the city, first David is told there are two runners. (v. 26) And then he is told one runner is Ahimaaz. What is David's response to the news (v. 26 & 27)? What do we learn of David here?
22. What is the message Ahimaaz brings to David (v.28)?
23. David needs more information. What does he want to know (v. 29)? What was Ahimaaz' response?
24. The Cushite arrives and again announces good news for the king (v. 31)? But David needs more information. What does he ask the Cushite (v. 32)? What does the Cushite say about Absalom?
25. How does David respond to the death of Absalom (v. 33)?

Manning Up in the Face of Grief – 2 Samuel 19:1-8

26. What message is given to Joab (v. 1)? What was David's mourning doing to the morale of the army and the nation (v. 2-3)? Even in the face of this low morale, what is David doing (v. 4)?

27. Joab goes to the king and very bluntly addresses him and what his behaviour is doing in the nation. What message is David's actions giving to the nation that Joab says is wrong (vss. 5-6)?
28. Joab then tells the king what he should do in verse 7. What does he tell the king to do? Why?
29. Where does David go, and why is this important (v. 8)?

Conclusion

This is an interesting story about a king torn between his duty as king to protect the nation and his love for his son. We almost get the impression that David would like God to deal with the problem of the wayward son so David would not have to be involved. But as a king, he had to lead the people, command armies and find a way to bring peace back to the nation. David thinks he has found a compromise by telling the armies to "treat Absalom gently" (bring him back alive). What would David do when Absalom returned to Jerusalem and led another rebellion, we don't know.

But general Joab acts like a military man and puts an end to the fighting by taking out the leader. He suspects Absalom will never reform, so he solves the problem with a spear. Though Joab is loyal to David, he is not willing to watch the nation crumble and the soldiers be disrespected by the king's inaction.

David does not know this, but his dilemma foreshadows a greater drama that would be played out just outside of Jerusalem in about 1000 years. The Son of God will be betrayed, arrested, beaten and condemned to death on a cross. His death will bring salvation to all people. The Father's heart is broken as he watches cruel, heartless men abuse his son and murder him on a cross. The Father could have said "Stop," but does not, for he will not rescue his son at the expense of mankind. The Father watches His Son die, as the door to peace and salvation is opened.

Of course David never saw that played out, but his dilemma foreshadowed the great rescue mission of God in Jesus. "How deep the Father's love for us...."