

“Submissive Leadership”
2 Samuel 19:1-7
(Preached at Trinity, December 15, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 18** David received the news that is a parent's greatest nightmare. He received the news that his son was dead. For David it was the third death of a son since his affair with Bathsheba. It was a grief beyond his ability to bear.
2. He fell into overwhelming grief and despondency. As I pointed out last time, the author is careful to draw our attention to the outpouring of David's sorrow. It was a grief full of regrets and hopelessness regarding Absalom's rebellious heart.
3. David's grief led to despair. He became swallowed up in his own sorrows. He wished that he could have died instead of Absalom. This was one of several irrational thoughts that David entertained in his sorrow.
William Blaikie – “‘Would God I had died for thee.’ Let us imagine for one moment the wish realized. David has fallen and Absalom survives. What sort of kingdom would it have been? What would have been the fate of gallant men who had defended David? What would have been the condition of God's servants throughout the kingdom? What would have been the influence of so godless a monarch upon the interests of truth and the cause of God? It was a rash and unadvised utterance of affection. But for the rough faithfulness of Joab, the consequences would have been disastrous.”¹
4. In the opening verses of **Chapter 19** we find that David's lamenting over Absalom had come to the attention of his army. This was turning the joy of victory into great mourning for all.
2 Samuel 19:2-4 NAU - "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." ³ So the people went by stealth into the city that day, as people who are humiliated steal away when they flee in battle. ⁴ The king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"
5. At this point Joab steps in with harsh words of rebuke for King David. What are we to think about this? As I've pointed out previously, Joab is an enigma.
 - A. On one hand, we find an able general loyal to his king. Joab was true and faithful to David.
 - B. On the other hand, we find a man whose highest priority was looking to his own personal interests. He was often characterized by self-will and pride and did not hesitate to defy the wishes of David if it best suited his own ends. He was often arrogant, stubborn and self-willed

¹ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), pages 282-283.

6. Joab had been with David during his entire reign. They were kinsmen. Joab was David's nephew, Absalom's cousin. This probably made him feel justified in taking certain liberties and also gave an expectation of privilege.
7. Joab often stood against the wishes of David if he thought it was in his best interests.
- A. Soon after David was enthroned Joab killed Abner. This was against the will of David
2 Samuel 3:27-28 NAU - "So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the middle of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the belly so that he died on account of the blood of Asahel his brother. ²⁸ Afterward when David heard it, he said, "I and my kingdom are innocent before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner."
- B. This was early in David's reign, Joab was a powerful military leader and David felt powerless to resist him. After Joab murdered Abner David lamented:
2 Samuel 3:39 NAU - "I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too difficult for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil."
- C. Joab sincerely believed he was doing what was necessary to protect the kingdom. but in protecting the kingdom, he was also protecting his own power.
 A.W. Pink – "He deemed it best that the crown should rest on David's brow, because by so doing his own fortunes were furthered."²
8. In the current situation David had given Joab specific instructions not to take the life of Absalom but to deal gently with him during the battle. Joab was bold and daring. He was a skilled, fearless, no-nonsense warrior. He saw Absalom as a threat to David and a threat to the kingdom.
- A. Keep in mind, David was Joab's uncle. Joab's mother was David's sister. Absalom was Joab's cousin. But Joab wasn't about to let his relationship to David and Absalom to keep him from what he saw as his responsibility as a general – to protect the nation and remove those who would threaten it.
- B. Joab was a man of action and didn't have a lot of patience for sentimental feelings. Absalom was an enemy of the kingdom and needed to be removed. When he had the opportunity to destroy the enemy of Israel he did not hesitate to do so.
 William Blackburn – "The chance of executing judgment on the arch-rebel who had caused all this misery, and had been guilty of crimes never before heard of in Israel, and thus ending forever an insurrection that might have dragged its slow length along for harassing years to come, was too much for him. 'How could you see Absalom hanging in the oak and not put an end to his mischievous life?' he asks the man that tells him he had seen him in that plight. And he has no patience with the man's elaborate apology."³

² Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Life of David*, (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 2 Sa 18.

³ William M. Blackburn, *The Rebel Prince*, (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, facsimile from the 1864 edition), Page 272.

9. Matthew Henry praises the act of Joab: “while he broke the order of a too indulgent father, he did real service both to his king and country, and would have endangered welfare of both if he had not done it.”⁴
10. Dale Ralph Davis describes the situation: “David would treat cancer with candy. Joab knew it required surgery—and he nominated himself as surgeon.”⁵
11. Joab might have considered his act a necessity in order to preserve the nation, but Joab did not have the authority to go against the wishes of David. This was the ongoing problem with Joab. There were many times when Joab was disrespectful to the position of the king. He held an improper familiarity with David. He didn’t hesitate to rebuke David if he thought it was necessary.
12. When David agreed to meet Abner, the rival general, at Hebron Joab sternly rebuked him and implied that David was being gullible.
2 Samuel 3:24-25 NAU - "What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you; why then have you sent him away and he is already gone? ²⁵ "You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive you and to learn of your going out and coming in and to find out all that you are doing."
 A. Joab is implying that Abner had succeeded in deceiving David and that David had been naïve in sending Abner away in peace. He saw David as weak and gullible.
 B. Even if Joab was correct in warning David about the deceitfulness of Abner it was not correct for him to treat the king with disrespect.
13. Now we come to the text before us tonight. Joab is aware of David’s great despondency over the death of Absalom.
2 Samuel 19:1 NAU - "Then it was told Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourns for Absalom."
 14. Joab clearly understood that this was a serious problem in David’s kingdom. They had just concluded a major war and gained a great victory over David’s enemy. David was weeping over the enemy and it was having a grave impact upon the people. True to his character, Joab took charge of the situation and gave David a stern admonition. How are we to look upon this? Was Joab right or wrong? Does it have anything to say to us today?
 I. First, we have to examine the situation
 A. David was absolutely consumed in grief. It was overshadowing everything else. Joab knew he had to intervene
 1. As I’ve pointed out, the author doesn’t want us to miss the extent of David’s grief.
Samuel 19:4 - "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"
 We find the typical Hebrew pattern of multiplying words for emphasis.
 2. Grief is always permitted. In fact, at times it is an essential response to certain situations of sorrow and loss. It was right for David to be experience grief over the death of his son.

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 467.

⁵ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, Focus on the Bible Commentary, (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 230.

3. But there is a time for grief and a time to move on in life. And we must guard against being swallowed up in grief where it consumes everything else.
A.W. Pink – “Probably this was one of the most pathetic lamentations that ever issued from a stricken heart, yet its extravagance and impiety cannot rightly be defended. David’s inordinate affection for Absalom now found expression in inordinate grief. His passions carried him completely away, so that he spoke unadvisedly, rashly, with his lips.”⁶
 4. We must not dismiss the effect our grieving may have upon others. This is particularly true for leaders. David was Israel’s leader. All eyes were upon him. It was David’s duty to govern his heart.
Matthew Henry: “The more eyes we have upon us, and the greater our influence is, the more need we have to speak and act wisely and to govern our passions strictly.”⁷
 5. There is a story of General Robert E. Lee who was in the midst of a meeting with his generals and aides when a letter was handed to him describing the death of his beloved daughter, Annie. He glanced at it briefly and put it in his pocket. It was only later that he indulged himself in grief and his whimpering cries could be heard by those close to his tent. He was able to govern his expressions of mourning for the sake of those under his leadership.⁸
- B. Joab knew he had to intervene. He had to speak to the king.
1. There is little doubt that this was wise counsel. David’s all-consuming grief needed to be corrected.
 2. David’s troops had been willing to give their lives in defense of David’s throne. Joab was their general and had witnessed their valor on the battlefield.
 3. David’s army had achieved a great victory – a cause for great celebration. They expected words of appreciation from their king. Instead, they were made to feel ashamed.
 4. David’s son was guilty of treason and insurrection. He was vile and reprehensible and wanted to bring about the death of his father. David was showing greater concern for Absalom than for those who had been loyal to David.
2 Samuel 19:6 NAU - "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"

⁶ Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Life of David*, (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 2 Sa 18.

⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 469.

⁸ Philips, Richard. *2 Samuel, Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2018, Pages 331-332

5. Joab knew the future of the kingdom was at stake. He implies that after successfully defeating the rebellion of Absalom they were now at risk of another uprising.
2 Samuel 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."

II. While Joab's counsel was sound, his manner is to be condemned.

- A. David was blessed to have someone willing to correct him.
 1. No leader should surround himself with "yes-men," men who endorse every proposal or opinion without question.
 2. But correction of one in authority over us must be done with respect and honor. Joab's disrespect was wrong.
 Matthew Henry – "A plain case may be fairly pleaded with those that are above us, and they may be reprov'd for what they do amiss, but it must not be done with rudeness and insolence."⁹
 William Blaikie – "In his eagerness to get a certain thing done, Joab showed little or no regard for those higher interests to which outward acts should ever be subordinate."¹⁰
 3. The Mosaic Law spoke clearly on this.
Exodus. 22:28 NAU - "You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people."
- B. This has important application for us today as we consider the matter of authority
 1. Our generation knows nothing of respect
 - a. It reflects our democratic system of government
 In a monarchy one understands the proper protocol before the king
 We see this clearly in the Book of Esther
 - b. Few see themselves as being under authority. Few understand the concept of honoring authority. We naturally cringe at the word submit.
 - c. The concept of respect and honor has all but disappeared. These are the threads that hold a society together—men respecting women, children respecting their parents, respecting those who are older than we are.
 2. The Fifth Commandment speaks to the matter of authority
 Spurgeon's Catechism:
Question 53: What is required in the fifth commandment?
Answer: The fifth commandment required the preserving the honour, and performing the duties belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.

⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 469.

¹⁰ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), page 290.

3. The fifth commandment commands a respect for all authority—a reverence for all whom God has placed in over us. We should render them honor, obedience, and gratitude. We must give due weight to their position. This is most difficult for the natural man who by nature despises authority.
- C. Human authority is never absolute.
1. God's authority is absolute – we must submit. He must be approached with holy reverence and high honor. This should be reflected in our worship. But even God allows Himself to be approached. We are allowed to pray God's Word back to Him and plead our case before Him.
David reasoned with God:
Psalm 22:1-2 NAU - "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. ² O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest."
Moses laid his case before God:
Deuteronomy 9:26-28 NAU - "I prayed to the LORD and said, 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷ 'Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look at the stubbornness of this people or at their wickedness or their sin. ²⁸ 'Otherwise the land from which You brought us may say, "Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which He had promised them and because He hated them He has brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.""
 2. Leaders must not lord over those under their authority
 Pastors are exhorted not to lord their authority over their congregation
1 Peter 5:2-3 NAU - "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."
- D. Good leaders understand the value of humility. They should be willing to hear correction and have a submissive heart.
1. Wives to their husbands. The authority of the husband does not invalidate the counsel of the wife. A wise wife is of infinite value. A Godly husband should be willing to submit to the admonishment of his wife when he behaves improperly or is heading down a sinful path.
 2. Children to their parents. A child should be able to lay his case before his parents. Wise parents should be willing to admit when they are wrong or have acted improperly.
 3. David wisely submitted to the admonishment of Joab because he was correct. He submitted even though Joab's demeanor was sinful.
2 Samuel 19:8 NAU - "So the king arose and sat in the gate."

Conclusion:

1. Wise leadership is humble leadership. Wise leadership will sometimes submit to the correction of those under their authority.
2. Correcting a superior demands a humble spirit of submission and respect, even while he is being corrected. On this Joab stand guilty. David would not forget Joab's insolence and rebellious heart.