

“O My Son Absalom”
2 Samuel 18:19-19:7
(Preached at Trinity, December 8, 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. The war had come to a speedy conclusion and the vastly larger army of Absalom had been thoroughly defeated. And most notable, Absalom himself had lost his life to Joab and his men. The forces of David may have been surprised at the magnitude of the victory, but we are not surprised. This is because we already knew God's plan regarding Absalom.
2 Samuel 17:14 NAU - "Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring calamity on Absalom."
The rebellious son of David had lost his life under the wrath of God, hung in a tree and slain by Joab's javelins.
2. The war was over and it was time to carry the good news to David. It was time for him to return to his throne.
One of the young men who earlier ran to warn David of Absalom's approaching army was Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok the priest.
2 Samuel 17:17 NAU - "Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En-rogel, and a maidservant would go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David, for they could not be seen entering the city."
It was a great sound of alarm and David quickly gathered his people and fled across the Jordan. It was a time of great uncertainty.
3. Now that the victory has been gained Ahimaaz couldn't wait to bring the good news to David.
2 Samuel 18:19 NAU - "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."
 - A. For Ahimaaz it had Gospel overtones. He wanted to bring David the good news of deliverance. His message was simple:
2 Samuel 18:28 NAU - "Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."
 - B. Ahimaaz may have been excited about the enemies of David being defeated but Joab knew David would not be pleased to learn the fate of Absalom. Joab knew clearly the charge of David the king:
"Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom."
Joab made an effort to spare the young man from the reaction of David upon hearing of the death of his son.
2 Samuel 18:20 NAU - "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."

- C. Joab determined to send an unnamed messenger with the news, one simply referred to as “the Cushite.” It could also be translated “a Cushite,” which removes any sense of identification. The KJV translates it as a proper name: “Cushi.” There is no explanation for Joab’s choice of this man. Perhaps, it was because he had been an eyewitness to the death of Absalom.
2 Samuel 18:21 NAU - "Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen."
- D. Finally, after repeated pleadings Joab relented and allowed Ahimaaz to go. He quickly outran the Cushite.
4. David’s watchman saw the two men running from a distance and announced it to David. Hearing that one of the men was Ahimaaz David was encouraged.
2 Samuel 18:27 NAU - "This is a good man and comes with good news."
5. As soon as Ahimaaz was within the ear of David he shouted, “All is well!” In the Hebrew it is a single word: שָׁלוֹם. At last peace has been restored! God has delivered David from his enemies. Notice the righteous training of Ahimaaz who gave all glory to God for the great victory.
2 Samuel 18:28 NAU - "Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."
6. Surely that was good news, but it wasn’t the most important news to David. He was more concerned about the welfare of his son than of his army.
“What about Absalom? Is it well with Absalom?”
- A. Suddenly it dawned upon Ahimaaz why Joab had so forcefully sought to keep him from being the bearer of the news. He could see in the eyes of the king that there was only one piece of news he was interested in.
- B. Ahimaaz lost all courage and mumbled something about some tumult. He knew the truth but did not divulge it to David. It was more than a deception. It was an outright lie. Ahimaaz knew the truth. He remembered Joab’s words to him in **Verse 20** – “The king’s son is dead.”
- C. David commanded him to stand still. He must have stood like a pillar of stone. This is the last we hear of Ahimaaz for the rest of David’s reign.
7. Then David turned to the Cushite who was much more forthright:
2 Samuel 18:31 NAU - "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."
 “But what about Absalom!”
2 Samuel 18:32 NAU - "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!"
8. The words of David are some of the most heart stirring in Scripture:
2 Samuel 18:33 NAU - "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!"
9. The author obviously wants us to hear the cries of David’s broken heart. The question is, why is this being held before us? David’s heart was being smitten on many sides. Surely, he was grieving the loss of his son whom he knew to be not only lost to this life, but forever lost to God’s condemnation.
 I want us to consider this great outcry of David.

- I. We still find the consequences of David's sin with Bathsheba
- A. God declared the consequence of David's sin. David could not have imagined the fulfillment.
2 Samuel 12:11-12 NAU - "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'"
1. David had no idea that this would be fulfilled by his own son
 2. David could not have imagined Absalom's defilement of his concubines
 3. Nathan declared to David:
2 Samuel 12:10 NAU - "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."
 David's young son born to Bathsheba died. Amnon died. And now Absalom was dead. David knew this was God's just penalty for his sin.
 David wish he had died instead of Absalom—it was David's sin.
- B. David knew well Absalom's wickedness. Absalom certainly received the just end he deserved. David knew God's just condemnation
2 Samuel 17:14 NAU - "For the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring calamity on Absalom."
1. But David's cry sounded forth a cry of regret. Were Absalom's actions, at least in part, due to his own sins. David could see some of himself in his children, only increased exponentially.
 Michael Milton comments: "David cries the cry of a man who wishes that he could go back and change the clock. If only he had not taken more than one wife! If only he had repented of that and sought to bring peace to his family! If only he had not plotted the murder of Uriah! If only he had intervened, as a parent, to deal with the horrible situation with Tamar and Amnon and to quiet the heart of Absalom. If only, if only . . . These are some of the saddest words in the English language."¹
 2. There was a huge difference between David's sin and Absalom's sin.
 David confessed and repented of his sin.
Psalms 51:2-4 NAU - "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge."
 3. Never was there even a hint of remorse with Absalom. Never did he confess his sin, nor did he turn away from it. To his dying breath his hatred and rebellion consumed him.
 This too must have been like an arrow in the heart of David.

¹ Michael Milton quoted by Richard Phillips. *2 Samuel, Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2018, Page 330.

- II. We are again reminded of the sin of poor parenting
- A. We've seen over and over David's failures to oversee his children
1. He failed to deal justly with the sin of Amnon and Tamar was left to suffer
 2. He failed to deal justly with the sins of Absalom, and the entire nation was suffering.
 3. This was David's pattern. Never did he cross his children. Never did he exercise the parental responsibility to discipline his children.
1 Kings 1:5-6 NAU - "Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. ⁶ His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?" And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom."
 4. How differently things might have turned out if David had fulfilled his duty as a parent.
- B. David allowed the blindness of his doting heart to affect how he dealt with his son
1. It had a terrible impact upon his ability to govern his nation. David declares his wish that he had died instead of Absalom. In his grief he completely disregarded God's covenant. What terrible consequences would have ensued if David had been killed in battle and Absalom survived?
 2. David's command to "deal gently" with Absalom revealed a greater concern for his son than for his kingdom or his army.
And the author wants us to know this was not concealed from those who were following David.
2 Samuel 18:5 NAU - "And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom."
 3. A.W. Pink wrote: "In his charge *to deal gently with my son* we see expressed the weakness of a doting father, rather than the uncompromising faithfulness of a monarch. It was not for the interests of his kingdom that such an insurrectionist should be spared, for none could tell how soon he would occasion further trouble. Sentiment ought never to override the requirements of righteousness, yet often it is far from easy to perform the latter when they come into conflict with the yearnings of the former."²
 4. It cannot be stressed enough the importance of curbing the natural sinful disposition of our children.
Proverbs 22:15 NAU - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."
a. By nature our children are self-willed and have a great hatred of authority.
Ephesians 2:1-3 NAU - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

² Arthur W. Pink, *The Life of David*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), page 173.

- b. Never should they be allowed to get away with their resistance to the authority of their parents.

Ephesians 6:1 NAU - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

5. None of this was lost upon the heart of David. He knew far too well his own failures with Absalom. These regrets would have increased his anguish for his son.

Richard Phillips writes: "David knew that his own sins—sins of omission in failing to attend to Absalom's upbringing and sins of commission in sinning against Bathsheba and Uriah—lay in the background to Absalom's violent end. It was God's sword, he knew, that had fallen on his house once again, magnifying his anguish."³

III. Perhaps our greatest attention should be upon the merciful heart of a loving father

A. David knew the wretched rebellion of his son

1. He knew Absalom's hatred even in the face of David's love
2. He knew Absalom's desire to overthrow his kingdom, his desire to seize the throne of his father.
3. David knew Absalom was selfish, reprehensible, and without natural affection. He desired to kill David.
4. Despite this wretchedness, David looked upon Absalom with pity and grace. He would have willingly given his own life for the sake of his son.
2 Samuel 18:33 NAU - "my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you,"

B. What a beautiful picture of God's grace in the Gospel.

1. William Blaikie – "David could express no feelings but those of love and longing. Was it not a very wonderful love, coming very near to the feeling of Him who prayed, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"⁴
2. We were rebels seeking to overthrow the rule of God. We despised Him and by our actions wished He did not exist.
Romans 1:29-30 NAU - "being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil"
3. God could have justly killed us and sent us to hell. Instead He looked upon us with the pity of a Father.
4. Where David wished he could have taken Absalom's place, God actually did take our place, bearing our just judgment.

³ Phillips, Richard. *2 Samuel, Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2018, Page 330.

⁴ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), page 280.

*And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

Conclusion:

1. David's anguish stirs our hearts. It reminds us of the terrible curse of sin. Our hearts grieve at the thought of lost loved ones. And our hearts grieve at the impact of our lives upon others, sometimes in negative ways.
2. But what comfort we find in the Gospel and in the wondrous mercy of God. He is able to make all things new and wipe every tear from our eyes.
Revelation 21:4-5 NAU - "and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."