

Message #6**II Samuel 3:17-39**

One of the most diabolical acts that can occur in a person's life is when powerful people make up lies and spread lies against you. There is nothing you can do about it because most of the time it is done behind your back. What is so sad is that sometimes the liars seem to win. Liars often get people to believe them.

Political enemies typically invent things not true to try to destroy their opponent and his credibility. Sometimes it appears as though they win and get away with it. But they really won't win and they won't get away with it.

That is what happened right here in this text. This is a tragic story in which the one who is right with God loses and the one who does the wrong sins and wins. What we see here is this:

WHEN ONE IS RIGHT WITH GOD AND DOING WHAT IS RIGHT, HE MAY DISCOVER HE LOSES AND THE ONE DOING WRONG WINS; BUT EVEN WHEN THIS HAPPENS, GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN AND STILL WORKING OUT HIS PLAN AND EVENTUALLY HIS WILL SHALL BE DONE.

In this case Joab not only speaks out against Abner, he assassinates him. He seems to get away with it, for a while. In the end, he will pay a high price.

There are four main parts to this story.

PART #1 – Abner, Saul's former military commander, joins David. 3:17-21

Now Abner has done a complete reversal in thinking. When Ish-bosheth falsely accused Abner of immoral behavior, that put him over the edge and he wanted to join David. There are three specific facts we learn:

Fact #1 - Abner counsels the Elders of Israel to join David. 3:17-18

Abner knew that these Elders had spoken in the past about wanting David to be king. Abner says that now was the time. They needed to act on their past thinking and do it.

The Elders did not have the clout of a king, but they were leaders and people looked to them. They did have some influence and Abner knew that. The Elders were very much aware of the fact that God had promised that David would be the next king.

One reason why Abner said this to them is because of what he knew about the word of God. God had spoken to David that He would deliver His people from the Philistines (**v. 18**). Beating the Philistines was a major issue for the king of Israel. That was true even for Saul (I Sam. 9:16). Abner knew that when David fought the Philistines, David won.

So Abner knew the word of God when it came to David. He knew that David was right with God and now that he had joined him, he wanted these Elders to join as well. In fact, Abner is telling them that God has said David is “My servant.”

Fact #2 - Abner spoke to the Benjamites. 3:19a

The Benjamites were Saul’s own tribe. Apparently, Abner set up a meeting with the Benjamites. Abner, himself was a Benjamite and was the top Benjamite. He was now speaking to them telling them that now was the time for them to join David and support David.

This would have been somewhat intimidating because Abner is trying to convince Saul’s own family to join David. This is a remarkable turn of events.

Fact #3 - Abner spoke to David. 3:19b-21

It is clear that Abner’s efforts paid off. The Elders of Israel and the Benjamites agreed and Abner wanted to see David and tell David himself.

Abner took 20 men with him and went to Hebron and told David what he had done.

David received him and welcomed him and made a feast for him and his men. David treated these men as honored guests.

While they were at this meeting, Abner says let me go round up all Israel and bring them to join with you and enter into a covenant with you. Abner said let me go and I will get to work on transferring all national power over to you.

According to **verse 21**, David sent him away with his blessings in peace.

Only God could cause this to happen. Ish-bosheth made false allegations against Abner and Abner has a complete change of heart and mind about everything.

PART #2 – Joab, David’s present military commander, rejects Abner. 3:22-26

As soon as Abner had left, Joab returned from a victorious military campaign bringing many spoils to David (**v. 22**). The spoils would have been great for David because to this point he did not have any way to generate income. He had his own needs, plus he was looking out for the welfare of his men and their families. So when Joab returned with the spoils, it would have been a real boost to David.

According to **verse 23**, when Joab returned to Hebron, he learned that Abner had been to see David and had gone in peace.

We don't know who it was that told Joab this. It may be that the people were excited at the prospect of Israel joining David and it was the talk of the world.

When Joab learned that David had entered into an agreement with Abner, he was angry. That would not have set well with Joab.

Abner had killed his brother, Asahel, who was David's nephew (2:23). We may recall that Abner had tried to tell Asahel to stop, but he didn't so he got killed. We may also remember that Joab and Abishai had chased Abner for miles and decided to back off when it got dark and they reached the bottom of a hill (II Sam. 2:24-25).

But we may be certain, Joab did not forget what Abner had done and he did not like learning that David had made some agreement with him. He did not think that Abner could be trusted. The truth is, politically speaking and militarily speaking, the only man who could stand in the way of Joab being the supreme military commander was Abner.

Verse 24 says that Joab went to David and wondered why David had let him go. Joab was mad. He wanted to know if Abner had already gone.

In **verse 25** Joab alleged that Abner is a very deceptive man and his goal is to find out everything David is doing. In fact, Joab alleges that David knew this about Abner. He assumes he knows more than David, who was the king.

This does happen. There are people who become part of a God-appointed leader's team, who think they know more than he does. There are political spies who work themselves into the system to spy on people. I think there are leaders in a church who aren't there to help the ministry grow; they are there to spy on things to report to others. Frankly, they are arrogant buffoons.

According to **verse 26**, Joab sent messengers after Abner and they brought him back. Now Joab did not get this order from David. David did not say go get him and bring him back. He took it upon himself to usurp David's authority and in the end Joab will pay a severe price. Just before David died, he ordered Joab to be executed for this action (I Kings 2:5-6).

Abner and his men had probably stopped at a well to take a break from their trip. Joab's messengers caught up to them and we aren't sure what they told Abner, but they convinced him to go back with them. They probably told them that David wanted to talk with them.

PART #3 – Joab, David's present military commander, kills Abner. 3:27, 30

According to **verse 27**, when Abner returned, Joab took him aside privately in the middle of the gate and stuck a knife into his belly and he died.

Now Joab's motive for doing this was that Abner had killed his brother Asahel to death in the battle of Gibeon (**v. 30**). We may recall that Asahel ran after Abner, but was no match for him and Abner struck a spear in his belly (II Samuel 2:20-23).

PART #4 – David responds to Joab's murder of Abner. 3:28-39

When David learned what Joab had done, it was too late for him to do anything about it. When David learned what Joab had done, he was distressed. He responded:

Response #1 - David and his kingdom were innocent of this crime. 3:28

The word “innocent” is a legal term which means David says I am free from any liability for this crime and the consequences. There are things people can do that make them legally liable in the sight of God and murder is one of those crimes. David believed that to shed innocent blood in times of peace was a horrible crime.

It is ironic that in a few years David will actually be involved in the murder of an innocent man because he wants his wife. At this point in time, David is very sensitive to what is right and wrong.

Response #2 - David wanted God's judgment to fall on the head and house of Joab. 3:29

Joab was solely responsible for this horrible action and David wanted him and his family held accountable. He asks God to hold him accountable. David is praying that a variety of curses will come upon the house of Joab for doing this.

David said may God always see to it that Joab's family is cursed. May there always be sick and dying people in his family. May people in his family be killed and starve and not succeed.

It is important to observe **verse 30** because it was Joab who murdered Abner, but Joab and Abishai were both held accountable. So God was holding both family members responsible.

Response #3 - David demands that Joab and all Israel mourn the loss of Abner. 3:31-32

David did not want any person to gloat over this and view this as a major blessing.

David demanded that Joab and all people tear their clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of mourning. He demanded that the entire nation mourn the loss of Abner.

David demanded that every person connected to this “tear their clothes and put on sack cloth and lament.”

David himself walked behind the “bier,” a cart that hauls dead bodies or caskets, to the burial spot and they buried Abner and David wept. David was publicly displaying his sadness over the fact that Abner was dead.

But do not overlook the fact that in **verse 31** and **32** is the fact that David is now identified as “the king.”

Response #4 - David verbally lamented Abner. **3:33-34**

David’s eulogy is very unique. He comes up with a song that basically shows the evil of those who killed Abner. Abner was no fool, who would just walk into a trap. He did not have his hands or feet bound; he thought he was coming to a good meeting and was assassinated. David calls the men who did this “wicked.” He basically says this was no way for Abner to die.

Joab deceived him and killed him. After David had sent Abner away in peace, Joab fooled him and then killed him. Abner was not wicked but he died as a wicked enemy would die.

Response #5 - David would not eat until the sun went down. **3:35-37**

The people wanted to eat, but David would not. As the people watched this, they were impressed. David is a highly disciplined man. They saw how seriously David took Abner’s death and it pleased them.

All Israel realized that David did not have anything to do with the death of Abner. He did not support it nor did he sanction it.

Response #6 - David speaks to his servants. **3:38-39**

Behind closed doors with his servants David again spoke highly of Abner. He viewed him as a royal leader for Israel and a great man.

He told his servants that even though he was now king, he was weak. David did not take vengeance on Joab and the sons of Zeruiah, but he said the LORD will repay them.

David would never forget about this and he did not want Solomon to forget about it either. Just before David would die, he brought up this very episode (I Kings 2:5-6). It would be Solomon who would execute Joab for what he did (I Kings 2:29, 32-34).

So in all reality this horrible event is being used by God to continue to make David more popular among the people. Only God could turn things like this.