

Message #25

II Samuel 18:1-33

David's sin had brought him low. His world had fallen apart. He had sinned big time, but he had faced his sin and the devastating consequences were about to let up. God would begin the process of restoration and that process starts here.

GOD SOVEREIGNLY INTERVENES AND ELIMINATES ALL OF DAVID'S ENEMIES AND RESTORES HIM TO BEING HIS HONORED KING.

OBSERVATION #1 – David systematically organizes his men. **18:1**

We may recall that the plan of Hushai for Absalom was to gather up a massive military force from the far north Dan to the far south Beersheba, and then lead them into battle against David. This had bought David quite a bit of time.

During the time that it took Absalom to do this, David was rounding up and organizing his own team. This may seem to be such a little thing, but the fact is, David's mind is beginning to work again in a very systematic and right way.

David calculated the number of people with him and he set commanders over them by breaking it down into thousands and hundreds.

OBSERVATION #2 – David systematically sends out his army under three generals. **18:2a**

David broke his army down into thirds under three trustworthy generals.

- 1) One third were under the command of Joab, his sister's son.
- 2) One third were under the command of Abishai, Joab's brother and David's sister's son and
- 3) One third were under Ittai the Gittite. Ittai was a Philistine who had been very loyal to David.

To win battles you need good loyal soldiers who stand with you, who will defend you and will fight for you.

OBSERVATION #3 – David himself planned to go out to battle with them. **18:2b**

Even though by this time David is older, he is prepared to do what he asks his people to do.

OBSERVATION #4 – David does not go out to battle with them. **18:3-4**

God is sovereignly turning minds here back to favor David. This is a key moment in the life of David. David wanted to go to battle with them. He is probably in his 60s and nothing like what happens here had happened to him since his sin with Bathsheba.

The people with David still believed in him and supported him. They respected him and they respected his ability. They said we don't want you going out with us because that will mean the end of us if something goes wrong.

They wanted him to stay in the city of Mahanaim. Their view was we are nothing so even if we lose half in this battle, we haven't lost much. But you, David, are worth 10,000 of us, so you stay here in the city and be ready to help us if we need it.

On the other side of things, the people thought it was great to have Absalom leading them. They were proud and he was proud. But on David's side, the people recognized just how valuable he was and they did not want him risking his life.

According to **verse 4**, David agreed. He stayed in the city by the gate and all the people went out by hundreds and thousands.

OBSERVATION #5 – David charges all of his leaders to deal gently with Absalom. **18:5**

David made this charge in the presence of all the people. As they were leaving, David made this public request concerning his son. It does appear as though David does believe that he will be victorious. It certainly seems from this that David thinks that he and his team will overtake Absalom.

OBSERVATION #6 – David's military defeats Absalom's military. **18:6-8**

The fact is, when it came to military tactics, Absalom is no match for David. He is not in David's league.

David knew the importance of tactical advantage, especially when you are outnumbered so he had his men position themselves in the forest of Ephraim.

What that would mean for Absalom and his forces is that they would be forced to spread out to fight and could not stay together as a unit. They would only be able to fight in small units. They could not make one massive, united stand. They had to spread out and fight in different directions in the forest.

The forest of Ephraim was east of the Jordan River and it is a mountain type forest. You have trees on both sides of a canyon and a deep ravine in between. There is no way you can march a military into battle in this type of terrain.

According to **verses 6-8**, David's strategy worked and 20,000 men from Israel were killed. Casualties from Absalom's troops were rising.

OBSERVATION #7 – David’s servants meet Absalom hanging in a tree. **18:9**

Only a sovereign God could do this. There is probably not another story in history like this one.

Because much of the military action was taking place in the forest, and Absalom was losing, Absalom probably tried to ride out of there at a high speed on his mule.

As Absalom was riding his mule through the forest, his head got caught in the branches of an oak tree and the mule kept going and he was left dangling there hanging with his head stuck in a tree.

If you have ever ridden a horse in heavy timber, you do know how this could happen. In fact, if you have ever ridden a mower with low branches, you know how the branches can hit your face and head.

We know that Absalom, metaphorically speaking, had a big head and we also know he had a lot of hair. Well anyway, Absalom was hanging in a tree stuck. So he is riding his mule through the forest and gets his head stuck and probably the hair also and he is “hanging in midair.”

OBSERVATION #8 – David’s servants see Absalom hanging but did not kill Absalom.
18:10-13

The servant who found Absalom went and reported it to Joab, and Joab wondered why the man did not kill Absalom (**18:11**). Everyone knew what David had said.

Well the servant said in **verse 12** that I would not have killed the king’s son if you would have paid me 1,000 pieces of silver because I heard what King David said. If I would have killed Absalom, I would have faced the king and you, Joab, would have not supported me (**18:13**).

So had I killed Absalom, while he was hanging, you would have left me hanging to face David.

OBSERVATION #9 – Joab kills Absalom. **18:14-15**

Joab knew of the order David had given, but he also knew that the fastest way to end this was to kill Absalom. The nation Israel was a divided mess and a house divided cannot stand. The quickest way to get things back on track was to kill Absalom, and Joab knew that.

Joab was angry that Absalom could have been killed but wasn’t killed. He said to the servant, I am not going to waste any more time debating the issue with you, so he took three spears and went back to the tree and put them through Absalom’s heart while he was hanging in the tree.

Joab took ten armor bearers with him and they did the same thing. This may have been overkill, but the fact is Absalom was dead.

OBSERVATION #10 – Joab puts an end to the military conflict. **18:16-17a**

One commentator said, “When Absalom died, the revolution died.”

Joab blew the trumpet (Shophar) signaling the war was over.

The dead corpse of Absalom was taken down from the tree and his body was buried by putting it in a pit in the forest and piling rocks over it.

OBSERVATION #11 – All Israel fled. **18:17b**

All of the Israelites who had supported Absalom realized we were on the wrong side and they all fled and went home.

As David’s military was burying Absalom, Absalom’s military was running home.

OBSERVATION #12 – Absalom’s own monument becomes a monument to his arrogance.
18:18

Absalom thought a lot of himself. He had actually erected his own monument to himself. He put it in the King’s Valley, which was located outside of Jerusalem. He wanted to preserve his memory, but the memory we have is that he was executed while hanging in a tree.

OBSERVATION #13 – Joab will not permit Ahimaaz to tell David what happened. **18:19-23**

There was a fast distance runner whose name was Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok. We may recall that Ahimaaz was one of the men who took the message to David that he needed to flee because Absalom was tracking him (II Sam. 17:17-22). He was one who had hid in the well and then took off and went to David.

According to **verse 19**, he wanted to run to tell David what happened and that Absalom was dead. Ahimaaz thought David would be thrilled at the news that the war was over and Absalom was dead, so he wanted to be the runner who would go tell David.

According to **verse 20**, Joab did not want Ahimaaz to do it, but instead he wanted the job to go to a Cushite runner. A Cushite runner came from North Africa and those runners from that part of the world are great distance runners.

Joab was well aware of what happened to previous people who brought David news about someone’s death. He ended up killing them. So Joab did not let Ahimaaz go.

In **verse 21**, Joab told the Cushite you go and tell David.

Well Ahimaaz, in **verse 22** requested that at least Joab let him follow the Cushite runner. So Joab let him and, in fact, Ahimaaz caught and passed the Cushite runner (**v. 23**).

OBSERVATION #14 – David sees the runners coming with news. **18:24-27**

Remember David’s leaders wanted David to stay and watch to see if they needed more help. David was sitting between the two gates and a watchman climbed up on the roof and saw a man running.

According to **verse 25**, the watchman yelled down to David that there was a runner coming and David said if it is just one runner, the news is good.

According to **verse 26**, the watchman saw another runner coming by himself and David concluded that the news was good.

According to **verse 27**, the watchman said I think the first runner is Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, and David concluded that he is a good man and the news will be good.

OBSERVATION #15 – Ahimaaz give his report to the king. **18:28-30**

Ahimaaz ran to the king and said, “All is well.” He then prostrated himself before David and said, “Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted up their hands against my lord the king.”

Ahimaaz is giving praise to God for the victory. While the news was good, David wanted to know if it was good for Absalom. Well Ahimaaz said I saw great turmoil but I don’t know exactly all the details.

Well David saw the other runner approaching so he asked Ahimaaz to stand aside.

OBSERVATION #16 – The Cushite gives his report to the king. **18:31-32**

Again David asks about Absalom, and the Cushite said let the king give thanks because the LORD has freed you from “all those who rose up against you.”

Let any who rise up against you be as the young man Absalom.

According to **verse 33**, David went up into his chamber and wept. Five times David repeats this is “my son.” He was emotionally distraught and said he wished it would have been him who died.

That was not God’s will and that is not the best thing to be telling people who just risked their lives so you wouldn’t die.

What David doesn’t fully grasp here is that God has just restored him back as king. God is blessing David again and He did it in part by destroying his enemies.