

## **Winning and Weeping**

(2 Samuel 18)

7/6/16; Wed PM Pine Grove

### **Introduction**

I grew up a huge sports fan, often watching all kinds of sports on TV.

Yet, in all the games and events I watched, one game sticks out in my mind.

It was a NFL game that I watched as a 7 year old in my grandmother's living room on January 2, 1981.

And what is interesting about this game is that I was not a huge fan of either team...

The game was a playoff game between the Miami Dolphins and the San Diego Chargers...

And though I was a Pittsburgh Steelers fan at the time, I watched it because I loved sports...

But what makes that game stick out in my mind among all the games I watched is this...

It was a game that neither team deserved to lose..

It went into overtime and since it was played in Miami, the players were all exhausted and out of energy...

Yet, they all keep playing until finally the San Diego Chargers won 41-38...

However, the scene that sticks out in my mind is not a play in the game but something that happened after the game...

And it was the picture of a player on the winning team that had to help off the field...

His name was Kellen Winslow and he had give the game so much that he did not even have the strength to celebrate after the game ended...

Rather, he had to be carried off the field due to exhaustion...

In a lot of ways, he looked like a defeated man and not a member of the winning side...

You can see a picture of him in the background of the outline on the screen...

He doesn't even look like a man that won...

He looks like he was on the losing side...

In 2 Samuel 18 tonight, David is going to win a battle...

Though David doesn't participate in the fighting, his side is going to win, and the kingdom of God is going to prevail with him as the king of Israel.

It would seem like a great victory...

It would seem like a night to celebrate...

The rebellion against David had been put down and defeated...

The threats on his life would now be gone...

Yet, at the very end of this chapter, David will be crying and not celebrating...

He will have victory but his eyes will be filled with tears...

What is going to cause him to weep even though he won?

Let's dive into chapter 18 and find out...

I have divided the chapter into three parts...

We will see....

I. The King's Victory (1-8)

II. The King's Son (9-18)

And finally....

III. The King's Grief (19-33)

Let's start with the king's victory in verses 1-8...

### **I. The King's Victory (1-8)**

To bring our minds into chapter 18, let's look at our map of Israel in David's day to set the stage for tonight....

You will remember that David went to Jerusalem in the opening chapters of 2 Samuel and set up his capital there...

However as a result of his adultery and murder, David's family is thrown into chaos...

One of his sons rapes his step-sister, who was also David's daughter...

The the girl's bother named Absalom kills his half brother in revenge...

And on top, Absalom then sets his sights on David's throne...

So, he begins a rebellion in the south in Hebron by getting supporters and an army to march with him to Jerusalem to throw his own father off the throne...

When David hears about the rebellion headed his way, he gathers his people and bodyguards and heads east out of Jerusalem...

And for the past few weeks, we have simply seen the build up for this civil war in Israel...

Last week in chapter 17, we left off with David in Mahanaim, and Absalom and his men south of them in Gilead...

And so both sides are ready to fight for the kingdom of Israel....

Now remember, God's plan is clear.

David is His appointed King.

David is the One that God has chosen to put over His kingdom...

And so anyone opposed to God's plan is going to be defeated....

But let us see how this civil war plays out...

Verses 1-8....

*18 Then David [a]numbered the people who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. 2 David sent the people out, one third under the [b]command of Joab, one third under the [c]command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the [d]command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I myself will surely go out with you also." 3 But the people said, "You should not go out; for if we indeed flee, they will not care about us; even if half of us die, they will not care about us. But [e]you are worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that you be ready to help us from the city." 4 Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and thousands. 5 The king charged Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom. 6 Then the people went out into the field against Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. 7 The people of Israel were [f]defeated there before the servants of David, and the slaughter there that day was great, 20,000 men. 8 For the battle there was spread over the whole countryside, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.*

Let's take note of a couple of things here...

First, David plans to fight against his son with a 3 of his best men...

Joab, Abishai, and Hittai are David's top commanders and all 3 are given orders to gather men and attack...

So, this war is about to happen, but notice where David will be...

He will not be on the front lines, but rather, he will be watching from the back..

All the people see the value of David, and desire to keep him protected so they ask David to stay behind while they fight...

That didn't take much persuading because I think David didn't want to fight...

If he had wanted to fight, he could have stayed in Jerusalem and fought...

I simply think David could not stomach the thought of having to fight his own son...

And though he knew he needed to offer to lead his men into battle, I don't think his feelings were too hurt when the people aged him to stay,...

So, he stays behind and the people go out and fight on his behalf, and the battle is over quickly...

It happened in the forest of Ephraim, which no one is exactly sure where that was located....

The person who drew our map puts it a little north of Mahanaim, but I am not sure where it was...

We just know this...

The forest killed more people than what died in battle..

Whether that was from running into trees or falling in the dense woods or whatever...

David may have won, but both sides lost to the forest...

However, in this first section, the most important bit of information is found in verse 5....

Where David asks his top generals to deal gently with Absalom in battle..

Now, we can all identify with David here...



Absalom is David's son...

Yes, he is a murderer...

Yes, he seeks to even kill David...

Yet, David still has a soft spot in his heart for him....

Boys, take it easy on my son if you see him in battle..

Now, for most of us that makes total sense....

And for most of us, that also makes no sense...

How can you say that David?

How can ask for mercy on a man who seeks to kill you, but more importantly than even that....

How can you ask for mercy on a man who has rejected God's plan over and over?

This is a case of blood blindness, right?

How many times have we seen this in the Scriptures where our spiritual senses are blinded by family...

Though we all love mercy and grace, Absalom is a cold blooded killer...

He is a man who wants nothing to do with God's plan to have is Father rule Israel...

Though David may have contributed to his birth, Absalom is not his friend...

But more importantly, Absalom is not a friend of the Lord...

And though we may understand's David's request, our first loyalty is to our God and Him alone...

However, David has asked his generals to show mercy to his son...

Let's see how this plays out...

We move from the King's Victory to the King's Son...

## **II. The King's Son (9-18)**

In case you hadn't guessed, David's men do encounter Absalom in battle..

And it just so happens that Joab is the one who comes across him....

So, let's see what happens...

Verse 9...

*9 Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. For Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was [g]left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going. 10 When a certain man saw it, he told Joab and said, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." 11 Then Joab said to the man who had told him, "Now behold, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a belt." 12 The man said to Joab, "Even if I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, '[h]Protect for me the young man Absalom!' 13 Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from*

*the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof.” 14 Then Joab said, “I will not [i]waste time here with you.” So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the [j]midst of the oak. 15 And ten young men who carried Joab’s armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him.*

*16 Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the people. 17 They took Absalom and cast him into [k]a deep pit in the forest and erected over him a very great heap of stones. And all Israel fled, each to his tent. 18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar which is in the King’s Valley, for he said, “I have no son [l]to preserve my name.” So he named the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom’s Monument to this day.*

So, the battle is won, and possibly as Absalom is retreating on his mule, he rides under a oak tree that catches his hair and holds on..

His mule even keeps on going, and Absalom is left hanging above the ground supported only by his hair...

And though he is alive, he is in a mess...

Well, a soldier sees him and goes and finds Joab..

Joan asks him, “why didn’t you kill him?”

But the soldier replies... “You heard what David said. I’d rather be poor the rest of my life than kill the king’s son.”

But Joab has no problem with killing Absalom and he shoves 3 spears in his heart...

And then 10 of Joab’s men finish him off..

Then they took Absalom’s body and buried it under a pile of stones, which was the custom for men who died accursed...

Now, what are we to make of this scene...

First, let’s consider Absalom...

Here is the poster boy of Israel...

The murderer of his own brother who returned to Israel years later and became a rock star....

He was tall and good looking and the people adored him..

He set himself outside the king’s gates and undermined his father by listening to people’s cases and

complaining that his father didn't have time to listen to them...

This cause his popularity in Israel to rise and his head to swell to a point where he thought he could overthrow his father and take his throne...

And now the hair that gave his such good looks is the same hair that leads to his death...

Such a sad ending for someone who was born with such privilege into the royal family...

Yet, Absalom's life ends like everyone's life who opposes God..

He ends up dead in a pit under a pile of rocks....

And though David will grieve over it, the lesson is once again crystal clear...

Opposing God, opposing God's kingdom, and opposing God's king all lead people to same place...

Death and destruction.

A once promising young man is yet one more example of why opposition to God's plan is the most dangerous way to live...

The second person we must consider here is Joab.

Now, we have know Joab for some time.

He has been David's top general for some time, but Joab is also a cold blooded killer...

He murdered Abner way back in 2 Samuel 2 even though Abner has pledged loyalty to David.

Because of that murder, David called down curses on Joab and his family..

Yet, David did not relieve Joab of his duties or title...

And here is Joab years later still working for David..

Now, what are we to think of Joab here?

Isn't he disobeying an order of David by killing Absalom?

Yes.

But the second question is this?

Was it necessary to kill him?

Yes, because Absalom had declared war on God's kingdom by his actions.

This isn't an act of murder.

This is war, and the death of the enemy is necessary at times..

Now, we may have questions about this in our mind, but what Joab did was protect the kingdom.

And while David is blinded by family ties, Joab sees very clearly how to act....

Personally, this is a tug of war in me...

As a believer, the death of anyone made in God's image is tragic...

As a father, I sympathize with David not wanting to lose a child.

But then as a believer, I know that God is just...

And I also know that Absalom deserves exactly what he got...

At times, our injuries require surgery and not just a bandaid...

David was wanting to treat cancer with an aspirin...



Joab knew that it was best to cut the cancer out, and that is exactly what he did...

We are left watching and wishing there was another way, but sometimes justice is difficult to watch.

I don't whether to boo or cheer for Joab.

I do know this.

This time, Joab was acting as a defender of God's kingdom, and his actions kept the kingdom going whether we like it or not...

So, we have seen the King's victory and the end to the King's son...

Let's finish tonight with...

### III. The King's Grief (19-33)

Verse 19....

The battle is over...

David's men have won...

The threat is ended.

Abasloam is dead..

It is time to tell David the news...

But who wants to do it?

Verse 19...

***19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Please let me run and bring the king news that the Lord has [m]freed him from the hand of his enemies." 20 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." 21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran. 22 Now Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said once more to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why would you run, my son, since you will have no re-***

*ward for going?” 23 “But whatever happens,” he said, “I will run.” So he said to him, “Run.” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and passed up the Cushite.*

Ahimaaz wants to tell David the good news of victory...

Often, messengers who brought good news were richly rewarded...

Maybe Ahimaaz thought David would give him an Outback gift card for such good news...

However, Joab didn't want Ahimaaz to go...

Though victory was sweet, Joab knew that David would not react kindly to the news of his dead son...

Maybe, Joab was seeking to protect Ahimaaz and send a non-Israelite to report the news...

So, he decides to send a Cushite to tell David what had happened...

However, Ahimaaz convinces Joab that he wants to go too, so eventually Joab lets him and he ends up getting to David quicker...

Verse 24...

*24 Now David was sitting between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man running by himself. 25 The watchman called and told the king. And the king said, "If he is by himself there is good news in his mouth." And he came nearer and nearer. 26 Then the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "Behold, another man running by himself." And the king said, "This one also is bringing good news." 27 The watchman said, "I [n]think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "This is a good man and comes with good news." 28 Ahimaaz called and said to the king, "[o]All is well." And he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, "Blessed is the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king." 29 The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was." 30 Then the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. 31 Behold, the Cushite arrived, and the Cushite said, "Let my lord the king receive good news, for the Lord has [p]freed you this day from the hand of all those who rose up against you." 32 Then the*

***king said to the Cushite, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” And the Cushite answered, “Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!”***

When Ahimaaz arrives, he tells David that they won, but the first question from David’s mouth is “how’s my son Absalom?”

Ahimaaz claims not to know, but the Cushite arrives next and he tells David of the victory...

David reacts in the same way by responding...

“How’s my son Absalom..”

And the Cushite doesn’t bite his tongue...

The Cushite replies, “what happened to him is what should happen to every enemy of David.”

Which is a clear implication that the Absalom is dead...

Though David should have been filled with praise to God for such a victory, he was not...

Verse 33...

***33 [q]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!”*

In a day where his team won, David weeps with sadness..

In a time where God has triumphed on David’s behalf, David is going through a tragedy..

And why is this?

Didn’t David know that Absalom wanted him dead?

Had not Absalom been a threat to God’s kingdom for some time?

The answers are yes and yes, but David’s tears are certainly for the loss of his son...

But I would also suggest something else as well...

David’s tears are also for his own sin that ultimately led to such a sad ending for Absalom...

It isn’t like Absalom wasn’t responsible for his own sin; he certainly was...

Yet David’s sin has turned the sword loose in his own home...

And now he has a dead infant son...

He has a daughter that was raped by her half brother..

He has a son dead at the hands of another son...

And he now has another son dead in a battle that was fought to throw him off the throne....

How great a web of consequences we often create in a moment of sin...

And I would suggest that David's own tears are a reminder of his own sins...

Yes, God had forgiven them, but the consequences of them were far reaching...

And so David cries on a day when he should have been dancing...

Joab and others on David's side are not going to like that reaction either, but we will look at that next week...

For tonight, let's grab a couple truths to take home with us...

## **Conclusion**

### ***1) Family is great, but God is greater.***

Though we have seen this numerous times in 1 and 2 Samuel, we find yet another time where family ties blur the lines of what is right and wrong.

Absalom had been trouble for David, and though David loved him, he needed to let justice find Absalom once and for all...

The time of protecting his son was over...

Sometimes, all we can do is pray for repentance and turn them over to the Lord.

Ultimately, our children belong to Him and he must deal with them as He desires..

### ***2) Sin happens quickly, but consequences can last eternally.***

David's one night of passion and one day of murder has led to years of trouble..

When we sin, we don't think about tomorrow, but we should...

Because sin affects tomorrow and many days beyond tomorrow.



The penalty for sin may be gone for the Christian, but the pain of it can last for a while.

Think about tomorrow when you are tempted to sin today...

### ***3) God is attacked, but He always wins.***

For those like Absalom who think they can take on the kingdom of God, think again...

The kingdom of God is not subject to the threats of men...

And though the kingdom is attacked today, it is never in danger...

I want to show you a picture....

This is a place in Israel that is called Absalom's tomb...

Though we have no way of knowing if Absalom was actually buried here, it may indeed be his tomb...

Jews still spit on this tomb when they pass by it today because of their great love for David...

And though Jews should love the Lord Jesus Christ, their distaste of Absalom is a good reminder to us all that all who fight against God meet their match in him...

The Absaloms of the world may appear to win for a while, but God will win forever.

And His kingdom led by his King Jesus Christ will go on forever...

Everyone opposed to Him and it will pass away forever...

Let us pray.<sup>2</sup>