

## Your arms are too short to box with God

2 Samuel 18

### Pray

One of the greatest trials that David had to endure in his life

- was when his own son Absalom rose up & started a civil war against him
  - He was trying to kill David & he got the whole nation involved in it
- and alot of people got on board with him to turn on his dad

Absalom had a political skill of scheming & backstabbing to make his way to the top!

- some people seem to have that gift

it's a very unspiritual gift that reminds me of lucifer who turned his back on God

- who tried to usurp Gods throne & took a third of the angels with Him

Absalom was hung up on himself and this will lead him being hung up literally

Last time we were together we saw he ran his dad out of Jerusalem

- And as we come into chapter 18 a battle is going to happen!

As Absalom David's own son declared war against his father

it is always a sad thing when there is civil war between family members

- because no one wins! there are always casualties!

this fight Absalom starts will bring his life to an end

The first thing we will look at is **the preparation for war by David,**

- That's in verses 1-5. As David prepares to go to war against Absalom

1 And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. <sup>2</sup> Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I also will surely go out with you myself."

So the strategy is **divide & conquer**. A very practical & modern technique in warfare.

- You divide the troops & select the different fronts that you go to do battle in.

David pieces together in his head the faithful men he has

- And says we need to divide into three divisions
  - He had a military eye knowing what to do in battle

Ittai the Gittite was the guy that came to David in the midst of this drama w/ his son

- and said I'll be with you & follow you wherever you go, Wherever you die, I'll die.

He wanted to be with David & so David respected his commitment to him

- and he says you're going to head up one of these divisions

even though itai was a Philistine he showed himself so faithful and loyal to David

- that he was exalted to be Commander right alongside of joab & joabs brother

**God rewards faithfulness like David rewarded Ittai faithfulness**

**1 Corinthians 4:2** says **it's required of stewards that want one be found faithful**

- how faithful are we to God?
- how faithful are we in our marriage?
- how faithful are we to church & the mission God has for us?

### God Rewards Faithfulness

- He wants us to be dependable like **Old Faithful**

**Matthew 25:23** Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

David also said, "**I also will surely go out with you myself.**"

- I'm going to go to war Also. David loved war because he was good at it.
  - David was a very skilled military man & brilliant general over Israel
    - in great contrast to his son Absalom
- who had no military experience & didn't know what to do on the field of battle

now look at what the response of the people is in verse 3 of David wanting to go to battle  
<sup>3</sup> But the people answered, "You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city." <sup>4</sup> 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 by thousands.

David here is what they call in the military an **HVT a High Value Target** On the top of the most wanted list

- If you take David out you destabilize the whole army.
  - It is why leaders in battles are sought for destruction.

Usually the head leaders get extra cover & protection b/c they have a target on their back

- there a **high value target**. They say, no, you're better off David if you stay here.
  - if you get killed in the battlefield
    - its game's over! we need you! You are so valuable to us!

So they encouraged him to stay back and they went out and fought the Battle in his place

This was really hard for David b/c he knew that a good commander

- belonged right out in the battle
  - And he did not want to repeat the mistake that he made in 2 Samuel 11
    - at the time of the year when the kings should go out to battle
      - but david didn't & got caught up with Bathsheba
- so David just assumed i'm going out
  - but yet everybody around him, all of his advisors the officers
    - counseled him saying you're not going David
      - and he listened to them B/c their reason made sense
- they said David you are more valuable than any of us

if we get into battle they're just going to be gunning for you

- you're such a valuable asset we need to keep you protected
  - it just makes better military sense to keep you away from the field of battle

you know that game **capture the flag** well David you're the flag

- and they don't care about beating our army they care about killing you
- so stay away from the battle

Here we see David practice self control & not be stubborn

- he knew how to submit to the good advice of others

David was a wise leader that could listen & submit to the advice of trusted people around him

Did you know u are so valuable to God that He sent his Son into the world to die for you?

- Satan considers us a *high value target* (HVT), and he seeks to destroy us.

In **Luke 22:31**, Jesus warned Simon Peter that Satan desired him...that he was an HVT,

- He wanted to sift him as wheat = he was on Hell's most wanted list.

the longer you walk with God, the more you love him and fervently seek & serve him,

- the greater threat you pose to Satan and the more you become an HVT,
- a high value target of Hell

All the faithful people that had Davids back, went out willing to endure sacrifice and danger

- for the sake of their king

now I believe that the devotion of these people going to battle for David

- **is an example of how we as believers should be devoted to our king Jesus!**

- every day we're to be going out to battle & our king is watching us

- And we are to make sacrifices for him B/c of our love 4 Him!

for the glory, honor & love of our king to advance His kingdom

**God didn't save us to sit. He saved us to be sent.**

- We weren't rescued just to be informed;
- we were rescued to be involved in what God is doing...
- He has given us our marching orders!

**We weren't saved to just come to church, but to be the church**

- and be on mission for Jesus reaching the lost for Jesus building up his church
- fulfilling the great commission & building up the body of Christ

We were saved to serve & be released into the world on mission w/ the power of the gospel

- To bring the life saving Gospel to the lost world around us!

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

**Romans 12:1** I beseech<sup>[a]</sup> you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your <sup>[b]</sup>reasonable service.

now as the troops are leaving look at what David says to them in verse 5

<sup>5</sup> Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom.

the final words where Specific Instructions about his son Absalom

- To Deal gently with him

David wanted it clearly known don't kill Absalom don't mistreat him don't torture him

- deal gently for my sake don't lay a hand on my son Absalom.

Now, this of course is just the opposite of what you would typically do in war.

- You would always look for the highest ranking officer and take him out,
  - and then the rest of the troops would begin to crumble
    - because there's no leadership.
- David is doing just the opposite of what was typically done.

**○ And here we see the beautiful heart of David where David is showing great mercy, compassion and great grace**

- to someone who does not deserve it...**

its no wonder we read in **Acts 13:22** that **David's a man after God's own heart.**

- And in that we see a beautiful picture of our heavenly Father,
  - how he extends grace, mercy, and compassion to us
    - when we don't deserve it,
- **And that is the same grace, mercy, and compassion that we in turn**
  - **need to show to others who don't deserve it.**

You say, they don't deserve grace, mercy, and compassion.

- Well the truth is none of us do & yet God still gives it to us....

Remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:44**, **love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who spitefully use you do good to those who hate you.**

I doubt if many of us have that on our refrigerator as our memory verse,

- and yet that's how God treats us. I don't deserve God's grace, mercy and compassion,
  - and yet he gives it to me.

I believe when we truly grab a hold of that, we will begin to treat others differently

- just like God treats us.

Well, let's come to the **2<sup>nd</sup> thing** as we see Absalom dies in spite of David in verses 6-18.

**<sup>6</sup> So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim.**

It sounds weird how King Davids army is now fighting against Israel

- it's wild how the nation of Israel went over to Absalom so quickly & rallied behind him it's almost unthinkable that David would be fighting against Israel
- but those loyal to David fought against Israel because Israel was not loyal to David
  - Israel was seduced by Absalom's charisma & deceiving persuasive talking

**<sup>7</sup> The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took place there that day. <sup>8</sup> For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.**

David's men, of course, were victorious in the battle.

- Absalom lost

**And this is just another example that you can't fight against God or thwart His plans!**

- God didn't want Absalom to be king

Absalom wanted to box with God. He wanted to challenge God.

- he thought that he should sit on that throne = not David

Absalom learned really fast our arms are too short to box with God

- Even though Absalom had the army & all the material things

It looked from the outside Absalom was a real winner, everything looked great

- But God wasn't with him = his army just got swallowed up in the woods

<sup>9</sup> Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, like a big oak tree and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which was under him went on.

this is a real problem as his hair gets caught up in the branches of this huge tree,

- And the donkey keeps going leaving him just dangling.

we know from other passages that Absalom was noted for his big luxurious hair

- he probably had **the finest mullet** in all of Israel = he had a big hairdo
  - he would cut off five pounds of hair every year & loved his hair
    - He was one hairy dude & his hair grew fast

it's very ironic how the very thing Absalom was hung up on his hair

- is the very thing that led to his death

Well, according to verse 10, it says,

<sup>10</sup> Now a certain man saw it and told Joab, and said, "I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!" <sup>11</sup> So Joab said to the man who told him, "You just saw him! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt."

I'd give you a prize, 4 ounces of silver-- which is 10 shekels.

- I'd give you a **WWE hulk hogan champions belt** for doing it.

one thing you discover about Joab-- He was ruthless. He was merciless.

- You remember what he did to Abner when Abner came down to David
  - the general from the other side-- was having a personal meeting with David,
    - he took that very personally and took this into his own hands

And took him out and pretended that it was a peaceful meeting, but killed him.

<sup>12</sup> But the man said to Joab, "Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware lest anyone touch the young man

Absalom!" <sup>13</sup> Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For ***there is nothing hidden from the king***, and you yourself would have set yourself against me."

He tells Joab I would never do this we all heard the king say nobody hurt Absalom

<sup>14</sup> Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree.

Absalom is a sitting duck hanging there defenseless & Joab killed him.

- bad way to go for sure

Joab did not hesitate for one moment even though he knew David commanded him not to

- why? because Joab was convinced that it was in David's best interest
  - and in Israel's best interest to show Absalom justice

Absalom got what he deserved = he did deserve the death penalty

- **he was a murderer, a traitor, a rapist and Joab knew that**

○ And Joab knew that David would never punish or discipline him and so he said in the best interest of the kingdom I'm gonna do this!

- Joab knew it was better for David & Israel that Absalom die at the same time he was not right in disobeying King David

there is another ironic twist in the fact that the rebel Absalom

- had his life taken in a rebellious act by Joab

well if that wasn't enough verse 15

<sup>15</sup> And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him.

Absalom was hanging there with 3 spears in his belly

- barely hanging onto life and Joab just nods to these ten young men

**And they treated him like a pinata, just hitting him, brutalizing him-- and killed him.**

and isn't it ironic that just as Absalom had defiled 10 of his father's concubines

- so these 10 young men take what little life there is remaining in him

<sup>16</sup> So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people. <sup>17</sup> And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods,

and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent.

<sup>18</sup> Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which is in the King's Valley. For he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

Absalom's rebellion against his father, ended up costing him his life.

- **And I think this is a great warning for all of us as it pertains to rebelling against God.**
  - Anytime we rebel against our father, we will get hung up & end up in a pit

- and be brought down for sure.

Well number three, and finally, let's wrap this up right here.

- we see **Absalom's death is reported to David** in verses 19-33

<sup>19</sup> Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the Lord has avenged him of his enemies." <sup>20</sup> And Joab said to him, "You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead."

If you remember a couple of chapters back.

- This runner was the son of one of the priests.
  - He was the messenger that would run back and forth to David
    - to tell him the news of what was going on in Jerusalem

And he's excited to bring news to King David. Enthusiastic.

- he a young man full of energy & desire to please the king!
- let me go say we won the victory i want to go tell david let me go i can go tell him
- but Joab says I don't want you to tell him today

<sup>21</sup> Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran. <sup>22</sup> And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." So Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready?" <sup>23</sup> "But whatever happens," he said, "let me run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

This kid is just like a puppy dog oh please please please please let me go take the news

- He is pressing Joab & he says fine go just to get rid of the kid nagging him and he outruns the other runner

look what happens next...

<sup>24</sup> Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a man, running alone. <sup>25</sup> Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, "If he is alone, there is news in his mouth." And he came rapidly and drew near. <sup>26</sup> Then the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "There is another man, running alone!" And the king said, "He also brings news." <sup>27</sup> So the watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He is a good man, and comes with good news."

this is how news traveled back in those days with runners called the URPS united runners' postal service

<sup>28</sup> So Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, "Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!" <sup>29</sup> The king said, "Is the young



man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant and me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was about."

David asks, is my son Absalom safe?

- David's greatest concern was Absalom's safety

David's question is an example of the incredible bond of love between a parent and a child

- This is a great picture of the bond of love that God has with us
  - we have rebelled against him
  - we have turned our back on him
  - we have schemed against God in many ways
    - but how He loves us & cares for us

<sup>30</sup> And the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. <sup>31</sup> Just then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "There is good news, my lord the king! For the Lord has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you." <sup>32</sup> And the king said to the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" So the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young man!"

In other words, your son is dead.

<sup>33</sup> Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!"

here, Absalom's death is reported to David & His heart is broken.

- So much so that he wishes he could trade places with his son.
  - Oh, if I would've just died in his place.

the Hebrew meaning of those two words **deeply moved** imply

- a violent trembling of the body

you can picture David hears the news Absalom's dead

- he just becomes undone & begins to tremble

he wanted to die in the place of his rebellious son but he couldn't

- now here's the glorious news = what David could not do = God did 4 us by dying in our place = who are rebellious sinners!
  - this same love that David has for Absalom
  - is the love that God has for us!

Here we see the echo of the cry of God for lost rebellious sinners!

- his desire is to restore & forgive them!
  - and He made a way by dying in their place on that cross
    - that's the great message of the gospel

**Pray & Share Gospel**