

David And Absalom

2 Samuel 14

Lesson Outline

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David's Advice

2 Samuel 14:1-20

David's Counsel: 2 Samuel 14:1-11

Joab's Deception

Joab perceived David was upset due to Absalom's absence. It was probably based upon David's conduct. Joab understood David cared for his son and although David loved Absalom dearly, he was unable to bring him home without punishment for his crime (2 Samuel 13:28-29). So Joab shrewdly devised a plan based upon Nathan and David's previous meeting (2 Samuel 12:1-7). It was an act of deception. Joab found a woman from Tekoah to assist him. She was a wise woman, implying she was subtil, intelligent, and quick witted. The kind that could use words to make wrong appear right. Joab wanted the woman to pretend to be in mourning, including dressing the part. Joab prepared the woman for her role.

1. *Joab provided the words* – he gave her direction and purpose.
2. *Joab provided encouragement* – he challenged her to approach the king.

Joab's motives are questionable. Perhaps he truly considered David's feelings or maybe he recognized an opportunity to secure his position in the kingdom. Absalom was courageous and many might have believed he was going to be the next king, so it appears Joab looked to please David, Absalom, and the people. He was as shrewd as he was courageous. Also, Joab being a murderer himself evidently had no issue with Absalom's conduct (2 Samuel 3:27).

David's Decision

Keep in mind this was a fabricated story with the purpose of encouraging David to bring Absalom home. It was hatched by a cunning Joab and carried out by a wise woman. It's thoughts, ideas,

and explanations were not from the LORD. This widowed woman respectfully approached the king with her story.

1. *Her misfortune* – she was a widowed woman with two sons.
2. *Her situation* – her sons fought one day in the field with one being slain. It was a vicious altercation without witnesses.
3. *Her hardship* – her family demanded the man be held accountable. Notice, she implied that those seeking justice were evil. The victim was forgotten while the criminal pitied.
4. *Her grief* – her son was the only heir. If he were taken the name would be gone.

The clever argument was to set aside judgment for the sake of a family heritage. But that would conclude certain circumstances justify breaking the law. She made justice appear wrong and sin acceptable. It must be remembered that it is never right to do wrong (James 4:17). Instead of looking to excuse sin we must seek God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

After hearing her out, David informed the woman he would consider the situation. The widow woman impatiently pled with the king for a quick decision. She would be willing to bear the blame if her request was granted and proved to be incorrect. This may have sounded good but it opened the door to poor discernment, making a decision without considering all the details. David promised protection for her but she remained unsatisfied. The persistent woman encouraged David to remember the LORD'S mercy and longsuffering (Psalm 103:8). She brought up a good point but misapplied it to her situation. Yes the LORD is patient but He also deals with sinners. After some consideration David promised to prevent vengeance and protect her son. This was not according to the law but a personal decision. Maybe David wanted to be merciful or he may have given in to her persistence.

David's Conclusion: 2 Samuel 14:12-20

David's Dilemma

The wise woman asked for permission to continue. She had received a verdict but was just beginning.

1. *She was crafty* – she waited until David confirmed her son was pardoned.
2. *She was courageous* – she addressed the king concerning matters of judgment.

She implied David was hypocritical since he declared her son that was banished could return yet he did not treat Absalom in a similar fashion. The situations were not identical but had enough in common for her to make a case. David was basically accused of being the bad guy. Why, because he dared to bring justice. This shrewd woman claimed he was intolerant, though he allowed Absalom to live after murdering the heir to the throne. In her accusation Absalom appeared free of any guilt. The woman continued to reason with David.

1. *Concerning death* – she argued that death was part of life, implying it was simply Amnon's time. It was a poor argument because it validates all murder (Exodus 20:13).
2. *Concerning mercy* – she reminded David of the LORD'S mercy towards those that are banished. Absalom had been spared, so perhaps David could forgive him. It was a faulty argument because it ignored sin and its consequences (Galatians 6:7-8).
3. *Concerning urgency* – she excused her brashness with necessity. The people were disappointed with David's treatment of Absalom. It was a bad argument because it based the decision on preference instead of justice.

The doctrine of forgiveness concerning the LORD is correct (Psalm 86:5). However, David was encouraged to ignore sin instead of forgiving Absalom. Never forget our sins have not been ignored but paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 3:13). God forgives because the payment for sin has been made (1 Peter 1:18-19).

David's Discovery

She flattered David when comparing him to an angel of the Lord. Building self-esteem does nothing concerning sin. One can feel good yet make incorrect decisions. The woman claimed to believe the LORD would provide the correct direction. Either she truly believed this or knew David did, so encouraged him by saying it.

After hearing the woman out, David wisely asked her to be truthful and she agreed. He inquired if Joab worked behind the scenes. David may have been tipped off by something that was said. Perhaps the king and Joab had already discussed the matter in detail. David also understood the woman would not have been that bold without some encouragement. The widow woman confirmed that Joab was the mastermind. It is always best to be honest.

David's Action

2 Samuel 14:21-33

Absalom Retrieved: *2 Samuel 14:21-27*

David's Direction

David authorized Joab to retrieve Absalom. Joab was grateful for David's generosity, believing David showed him kindness. Perhaps it was because the king forgave his deception. David wanted Absalom home and this provided the opportunity. Because the people liked Absalom, it was accomplished without a problem. It was also done without consulting the LORD (Proverbs 3:5-6). Apparently it was based upon David's affection for Absalom and the desire of nation. He followed what the people wanted instead of God's command. Absalom would produce many troubles for David.

Joab immediately went to Geshur where Absalom resided. Evidently Absalom's whereabouts was common knowledge. There was also no opposition by Absalom or Talmai. David's son was taken to Jerusalem without an issue. It must be noted that Absalom never displayed a repentant heart and returned because David retrieved him.

Absalom's Destination

David generously returned Absalom to his estate, where he was confined. David refused to meet with Absalom, maybe to publicly display his displeasure concerning his conduct. Apparently David allowed Absalom to return but prevented him from resuming his previous position. At this point, one wonders why David brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. It may have been David's way of enacting justice while attempting to please all involved.

1. *He tried to please Joab and the people* – he brought Absalom home.
2. *He tried to please Absalom* – he returned to him his estate.
3. *He tried to please himself* – he would not see Absalom because he knew he was guilty.

David brought his unrepentant and guilty son home and in the long run it was a failure. Perhaps he hoped Absalom would repent once he returned but that was not the case. Though his location changed, his heart remained rebellious.

Absalom was adored in the nation, praised for his physical beauty. He was popular because he was the handsomest man in Israel. It had nothing to do with his moral character, experience, or abilities. He had no blemish, so he was a physical specimen to behold. His hair grew long and thick before he cut it yearly. There is no mention of devotion to the LORD or dedication. As Matthew Henry aptly put it, "In his body there was no blemish, but in his mind nothing but wounds and bruises."¹ Absalom also had three sons and one daughter named Tamar. It is possible his boys died during the rebellion (2 Samuel 18:18).

Absalom's Rage: 2 Samuel 14:28-33

Absalom's Discontentment

For two years Absalom dwelt in Jerusalem without seeing David. They neither met intentionally nor accidentally. He was confined to his estate, which is why he had to call upon Joab for assistance. Apparently, he thought David should have restored him to his former position in the kingdom. He should have been grateful that David spared his life but he remained unrepentant and inconsiderate. Because of his pride and ambition, Absalom struggled to be content with what he received (Proverbs 11:2).

Apparently Absalom grew tired of waiting. His ambition to be king probably fueled his desire to return to the palace so he could take the throne from David. He sent for Joab and was ignored. It is

¹ Matthew Henry, "Matthew Henry's Commentary, Volume 2," (United States: Hendrickson, 1996) p. 404

likely Joab perceived David did not plan on Absalom succeeding him, so Joab no longer had interest in Absalom. This probably infuriated the proud young man.

Absalom's Destruction

Absalom ordered his men to set Joab's field on fire. His men, perhaps the same that slew Amnon, had no problem with this order.

1. *It was insulting* – hoping to get a favor, he offended Joab. Absalom was spiteful and vindictive.
2. *It was inconsiderate* – people may have been hurt and other fields burnt.
3. *It was immature* – he did not get what he wanted so he threw a fit.

Absalom proved he would go to any lengths to get his way. Of course, when Joab heard about his fields he met with Absalom. Whether Joab received restitution or not is unknown (Exodus 22:6). Absalom was courageous but foolish. Joab was not a man to take lightly. He had proven to be a cunning adversary, willing to wait before striking. Joab would eventually settle the issue with Absalom (2 Samuel 18:14-15).

Absalom requested Joab's assistance, asking him to address the king concerning his presence in Jerusalem.

1. *It was audacious* – demanding the king see him.
2. *It was ungrateful* – he was not thankful for the grace already shown him.
3. *It was arrogant* – believing he belonged in the palace.
4. *It was defiant* – he wanted to see the king, for good or bad, apparently he believed himself innocent of any sin and challenged David to kill him if he had evidence (1 John 1:8).

There is no indication Absalom considered his sin or repented of it. He was upset because he lost his position and possessed no title or authority. Joab convinced David to see Absalom. He was called before David and approached him with respect. It was motions without meaning. David restored Absalom to his former position and opened the door for the rebellion to begin. David compromised by allowing him to return and next thing you know, Absalom is in the palace as if nothing had ever happened.