**Absalom’s death**

**2 Samuel 18:1-33**

**Key Verse 18:33** “The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!”

**Introduction)**

Thispassage deals with Absalom’s death. Throughout his life, Absalom was a source of pain and rebellion.  However, David accepted Absalom’s rebellion as a part of God’s punishment, so he did not want to kill Absalom in spite of all the terrible sins he committed to.  He anxiously waited for the news of his son’s safe return, however, when he knew that Absalom was slaughtered, all the triumphant turns into anguish and sorrow.  Unlike David the king and the warrior, David the father of Absalom looks like a father anxiously waiting for safe return of the prodigal son. No victory can console of his sorrow and deep pain of the death of his sinful son.

**1.**      **Read verses 18:1-5. How does David organize his army? (1-2) Why do David’s men request that he stay in the city? (3, 4) What are David’s special orders regarding Absalom? (5)**

**1-1)**      **Read verses 18:1-5.**

*David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. 2 David sent out his troops, a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab’s brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, “I myself will surely march out with you.” 3 But the men said, “You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won’t care about us. Even if half of us die, they won’t care; but you are worth ten thousand of us.[*[*a*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8482a)*] It would be better now for you to give us support from the city.” 4 The king answered, “I will do whatever seems best to you.” So the king stood beside the gate while all his men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands. 5 The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.*

**1-2)**      **How does David organize his army? (1-2)**

*David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. 2 David sent out his troops, a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab’s brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, “I myself will surely march out with you.”*

David prepared for his final counterattack against Absalom and mustered his men and divided into three armies.

**1-3)**      **Why do David’s men request that he stay in the city? (3, 4)**

*3 But the men said, “You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won’t care about us. Even if half of us die, they won’t care; but you are worth ten thousand of us.[*[*a*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8482a)*] It would be better now for you to give us support from the city.” 4 The king answered, “I will do whatever seems best to you.” So the king stood beside the gate while all his men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands.*

David was probably old and he was no longer warrior as he had been in his younger age.

**1-4)**      **What are David’s special orders regarding Absalom? (5)**

*5 The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.*

He commanded his generals that he wants Absalom not to be killed, but be taken care of him gently. We struggle to resolve many times between God of justice and God of grace.  As God is a sovereign ruler, David is a sovereign king in his kingdom, so he could pardon his son in spite of his crime. Especially, as a father, he wants to save his son’s life, though as a king, it is not possible without paying the price of righteousness.

**2.**      **Read verses 18:6-18. Where does the battle take place? (6) What is the outcome of the battle? (7,8) What happens to Absalom? (9) What is Joab’s response to the soldier’s report about Absalom? (10, 11) Why does the soldier remain hesitant to strike down Absalom? (12, 13) How is Absalom killed? (14-17) What had Absalom made when he was still alive? (18)**

**2-1)**      **Read verses 18:6-18.**

*David’s army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. 7 There Israel’s troops were routed by David’s men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. 8 The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword. 9 Now Absalom happened to meet David’s men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom’s hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going. 10 When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, “I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.” 11 Joab said to the man who had told him this, “What! You saw him? Why didn’t you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels[*[*b*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8490b)*] of silver and a warrior’s belt.” 12 But the man replied, “Even if a thousand shekels[*[*c*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8491c)*] were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king’s son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.[*[*d*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8491d)*]’ 13 And if I had put my life in jeopardy[*[*e*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8492e)*]—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have kept your distance from me.” 14 Joab said, “I’m not going to wait like this for you.” So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom’s heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. 15 And ten of Joab’s armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him. 16 Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. 17 They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes. 18 During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King’s Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, “I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.” He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom’s Monument to this day.*

**2-2)**      **Where does the battle take place? (6)**

*David’s army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim.*

**2-3)**      **What is the outcome of the battle? (7, 8)**

*7 There Israel’s troops were routed by David’s men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. 8 The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword.*

Many of the men got lost in the forest and may have been missing in action.

**2-4)**      **What happens to Absalom? (9)**

*9 Now Absalom happened to meet David’s men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom’s hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.*

**2-5)**      **What is Joab’s response to the soldier’s report about Absalom? (10, 11)**

*10 When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, “I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.” 11 Joab said to the man who had told him this, “What! You saw him? Why didn’t you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels[*[*b*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8490b)*] of silver and a warrior’s belt.”*

Joab ignored David’s command, and wanted to finish off the source of trouble. As a general, it is a righteous way to finish the battle sooner, however, as a king’s officer, it was wrong to disobey the king’s command.  Here, we can see many different aspects of ethical dilemma in the same thing; whom should we please for?

**2-6)**      **Why does the soldier remain hesitant to strike down Absalom? (12, 13)**

*12 But the man replied, “Even if a thousand shekels[*[*c*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8491c)*] were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king’s son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.[*[*d*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8491d)*]’ 13 And if I had put my life in jeopardy[*[*e*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8492e)*]—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have kept your distance from me.”*

**2-7)**      **How is Absalom killed? (14-17)**

*14 Joab said, “I’m not going to wait like this for you.” So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom’s heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. 15 And ten of Joab’s armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him. 16 Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. 17 They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes.*

**2-8)**      **What had Absalom made when he was still alive? (18)**

*18 During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King’s Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, “I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.” He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom’s Monument to this day.*

He had three sons and a daughter (2 Sam 14:27), but probably his sons died young.

**3.**      **Read verses 18:19-27. Who volunteers to take the news to David? (19) Who does Joab send as a messenger to David? (20,21) Who else does Joab allow to tell David the news? (22-23) What does David expect to hear as he is told that two messengers are coming? (24-27)**

**3-1)**      **Read verses 18:19-27.**

*Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, “Let me run and take the news to the king that the Lord has vindicated him by delivering him from the hand of his enemies.” 20 “You are not the one to take the news today,” Joab told him. “You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king’s son is dead.” 21 Then Joab said to a Cushite, “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off. 22 Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, “Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite.” But Joab replied, “My son, why do you want to go? You don’t have any news that will bring you a reward.” 23 He said, “Come what may, I want to run.” So Joab said, “Run!” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain[*[*f*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8502f)*] and outran the Cushite. 24 While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. 25 The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, “If he is alone, he must have good news.” And the runner came closer and closer. 26 Then the watchman saw another runner, and he called down to the gatekeeper, “Look, another man running alone!” The king said, “He must be bringing good news, too.” 27 The watchman said, “It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok.” “He’s a good man,” the king said. “He comes with good news.”*

**3-2)**      **Who volunteers to take the news to David? (19)**

*Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, “Let me run and take the news to the king that the Lord has vindicated him by delivering him from the hand of his enemies.”*

**3-3)**      **Who does Joab send as a messenger to David? (20, 21)**

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**3-4)**      **Who else does Joab allow to tell David the news? (22-23)**

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**3-5)**      **What does David expect to hear as he is told that two messengers are coming? (24-27)**

*24 While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. 25 The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, “If he is alone, he must have good news.” And the runner came closer and closer. 26 Then the watchman saw another runner, and he called down to the gatekeeper, “Look, another man running alone!” The king said, “He must be bringing good news, too.” 27 The watchman said, “It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok.” “He’s a good man,” the king said. “He comes with good news.”*

This passage shows how anxious David was waiting for the news of safe return of his son, Absalom.

**4.**      **Read verses 18:28-33. Who is David concerned for when he is told the news of the victory by Ahimaaz? (28, 29) What does David ask the Cushite? (31,32a) What is David’s reaction to hearing of Absalom’s death? (33)**

**4-1)**      **Read verses 18:28-33.**

*Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, “All is well!” He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, “Praise be to the Lord your God! He has delivered up those who lifted their hands against my lord the king.” 29 The king asked, “Is the young man Absalom safe?”Ahimaaz answered, “I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king’s servant and me, your servant, but I don’t know what it was.” 30 The king said, “Stand aside and wait here.” So he stepped aside and stood there. 31 Then the Cushite arrived and said, “My lord the king, hear the good news! The Lord has vindicated you today by delivering you from the hand of all who rose up against you.” 32 The king asked the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man.” 33 The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!”[*[*g*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8512g)*]*

**4-2)**   **Who is David concerned for when he is told the news of the victory by Ahimaaz? (28, 29)**

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**4-3)**   **What does David ask the Cushite? (31,32a)**

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**4-4)**   **What is David’s reaction to hearing of Absalom’s death? (33)**

*The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man.” 33 The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!”*

As a father, David wanted to save Absalom in spite of all the sins he committed, which is like the Father waiting for the return of a prodigal son.  When he found out he was slaughtered, he cried out for his son, Absalom. The son is the part of the father, which he shares his part of body and spirit with his son and the death of son means the death of the part of himself.

**In conclusion)**

This passage describes how David’s army put down Absalom’s rebellion and killed Absalom.  David accepted Absalom’s rebellion as a God’s judgment for his sins and he did not want to kill his son, Absalom in spite all that Absalom had done and he wept loudly for his death.  David’s heart toward rebellious and sinful Absalom resembles God’s heart toward sinful men.

One word: O my son Absalom!