

2 Samuel 19 Introduction

19:1-8, Joab rebukes David, the king. Chapter 18 ends with David in deep grief over the death of Absalom, his son. When chapter 19 begins, David's grief has not subsided. For the people still hear the king continually mourn, saying, "*O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!*" (v.4). The overwhelming grief demonstrated by David at the loss of Absalom may be, in reality, the compounded grief that David felt for the bitter fruit produced by his own moral failures and its devastating impact on his family and on God's kingdom. With Joab's characteristic courage, he was moved by the Spirit of God – like Nathan the prophet (12:1) - to confront David about the serious repercussions of his behavior as commander and king.

Joab's words were like sharp swords thrust into the king's heart. But they were words of wisdom and warning that David needed to hear (Prov. 27:6; "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend.*"). So "*the king arose and took his seat in the gate ... and all the people came before the king*" (v.8).

The Bible commentator William MacDonald may have been *spot-on* when he wrote concerning Joab's execution of Absalom: "... this was against the king's command, but it was best for the kingdom. David had consistently refused to punish his sons for their crimes, so the task fell to someone else" (MacDonald, p. 342). [Compare God's judgment on Eli the priest for letting the sins of his sons go unpunished (1 Sam. 3:13; 2:25)].

19:9-15, What Now? As Word Reaches Jerusalem of Absalom's Defeat. Confusion and indecision reigned in Jerusalem about what to do next. Absalom their king was dead, "*whom we anointed over us!*" (10). But again, God intervened. By His Spirit, God's wisdom revived in the mind and heart of David. Like new life was breathed back into David. Each step, each decision that David now makes, evidences new perception and discernment of mind, along with humility, mercy and grace of heart.

Indeed, David's message was totally free of revenge. Instead, he spoke clearly of peace and forgiveness. With wisdom and insight David used 1) the high priests Zadok and Abiathar to bring the king's message to the people (v.11). 2) He reached out with a palm branch of peace to his own tribe of Judah, and strongly encouraged them to be the first to bring the king back! (v.12). 3) He elevated Amasa, Absalom military commander, to replace Joab as his new military chief (v.13). These words were just what the people of Jerusalem needed to hear. David, like a seasoned and wise shepherd, stilled his troubled and anxious sheep. The shepherd's voice with words tender and reassuring, brought calm to a city filled with fear and distress.

19:16-40, On the Way Back to the City, David Dispenses Mercy and Grace. Many of the individuals who were a part of David's experience in flight, now reappear in the narrative of his return. At David's departure Shimei, of the house of Saul, cursed the king

unceasingly, saying, “*Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man!*” (16:7). On David’s return, Shimei hastened to him and prostrated before the king in confession and contrition, which David mercifully acknowledged and received. Ziba, at David’s return from exile, met him at the Jordan River to assist the king’s household cross over. And this time, at David’s return, Mephibosheth was there to welcome the king as well, saying, “... *My lord the king has come safely home*” (30). David’s loyal servant, Mephibosheth, had mourned the king’s exile but was prevented from being at his departure. Last to be mentioned is Barzillai, the Gileadite (17:27-29), who provided David with an abundance of supplies during the king’s exile. Barzillai, at 80 years of age, made the long trek from Rogelim (over 60 miles!) to escort the king over the Jordan. To them all, David extended words and deeds of ‘loving kindness’ (Hb. *hesed*). Indeed, it patterned God’s foremost quality; now revived in David! (Ex. 34:6).

19:41-43, Internal Strife Breaks Out. Judah, in their zeal to bring back David, caused an offense to the other tribes. Thus, the chapter ends on a troubled note: a note that will escalate greatly in chapter 20.