

Title: Deliverance from Evil

Scripture: 2 Samuel 18

Series: The Promise of the Messianic Kingdom

1. Introduction:

- a. Our passage continues the dramatic story of Absalom's rebellion. In the last sermon, Hushai informed David of two possible outcomes. If the rebellious Absalom had taken Ahithophel's advice, David would have needed to cross the river immediately. If Absalom had taken Hushai's advice, David would have to prepare for a civil war.
- b. The stakes could not be higher; the kingdom of God hangs in the balance.
- c. Today's passage answers some vital questions: Can man usurp God's kingdom? Can man dethrone God?

2. Verses 1-8: David Sinful Command

- a. After receiving Hushai's report and escaping, David now gathers his army. Absalom is coming, and David needs to be prepared. This must have been a challenging time as David contemplated the horror of a civil war. Brother would fight against brother, father against son, as sides were taken in the conflict!
- b. David was an older man at this time, yet he was still willing to lead his men into battle. But the men are opposed. They say, "**You shall not go out.**" The men were concerned that if the elderly David fell, the kingdom would be lost. David humbly submitted so that this great warrior, the killer of the giant, was relegated to sitting in the camp and waiting.

- c. At this point, David gives instructions regarding the rebel Absalom. David orders his men to **deal gently** with Absalom. Such a command must have seemed strange to the soldiers. **Deal gently** with Absalom? **Deal gently** with the man who had thrown the kingdom into turmoil, who had tried to usurp God's authority? How could such a command come from David's mouth?
 - i. With this command, David demonstrated little wisdom. Absalom had done what David would not: lifted his hand against the Lord's anointed, a crime punishable by death. David knew this.
 - 1. But David is willing to prioritize Absalom over God's cause. Essentially, his son was more important to him than God's kingdom or people.
 - ii. David's command crippled his fighting force. Each man was afraid to do what needed to be done.
- d. As each side engages in the battle, the Bible tells us that the battle favored David. Immediately, Absalom's army suffered significant casualties. The men are devoured by the sword and by the elements. It becomes obvious that God is against Absalom.

3. Verses 9-18: Absalom, The Central Character

- a. Absalom happened to find himself in front of David's overwhelming army. Realizing that the battle was lost, he decided to flee, and as he fled, he and his mule went under a large oak tree. Absalom was looking backward at his pursuers, and it was precisely at this

point that Absalom crashed head-first into the tree. His mule continued, but Absalom just hung there by his hair. Injured, he was unable to free himself.

- b. Joab arrives at the scene. Angry that Absalom is still alive, Joab shoves three javelins into Absalom's heart; the wounds are indeed mortal and ghastly as Absalom begins to bleed out. As Absalom is dying, Joab's men all take turns stabbing Absalom until he finally perishes. Joab's men then heaved his carcass into a deep pit in the forest and piled over him a very high heap of stones. Absalom was buried in an unmarked grave, not with dignity, but like an animal. Thus, the rebellion was quashed, and the enemy of God's kingdom was destroyed.
 - i. How Absalom dies reveals God's hatred for him.
 1. **Deuteronomy 21:23** his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.
 - ii. Absalom was a murderer and rebel, and by God's sovereign decree, he was hanged on a tree. God had fulfilled His word.
 - iii. This is the end of Absalom, the media's darling, the rising prince who could work the crowds with such flair and fought against God's sovereignty with disdain and arrogance.
 1. This seemingly unstoppable force flares out with barely a whimper. How dare any man lift his hand against God!

- c. Beloved, we have seen this pattern before- the fall of the wicked from the pinnacle to the pit. This is God's work.
 - i. **Deuteronomy 32:35** Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.'
- d. We must see that Absalom's end is a microcosm. His death as a man under the curse is typical of what will happen to all who set themselves against God's kingdom, his chosen King, and his people.
- e. So the man that would erect a monument to his name now has that very monument bear witness to his sinfulness, shame, and judgment.

4. Verses 11-16: Joab, The Dominant Character

- a. David's order was clear but incredibly unwise. David had commanded that his army **deal gently with Absalom**.
 - i. David's order shows that even before the battle, David was willing to abandon military right and moral justice for his personal feelings. On the one hand, he is sending out the people to risk their lives for him and his throne, while on the other hand, he is prepared to ask that his son, who is the root of all the current evil, not be killed. At this point, David loved his son more than he loved God. This is idolatry!
- b. When Absalom is found under the tree, the man who found him becomes afraid. He would not execute Absalom. He had two good reasons to fear:

- i. The soldier remembered David's words. He did not want to be executed for insubordination.
- ii. The soldier remembered Joab's character. Joab would have used him as the scapegoat.
- c. Joab is frustrated and decides to kill Absalom himself.
 - i. He reasoned it would do no good to spare the prince's life and allow him to foment rebellion further. He knew that Absalom would not stop.
 - 1. What if David chose to forgive Absalom? Would it not have been evident that Absalom would try to retake the crown?
 - ii. Therefore, Joab reasoned that the only way to deal with Absalom's threat was to destroy him. Joab ignores the king's order and kills Absalom.
 - 1. At that moment, Joab was rebellious against the king's order and wise in protecting the divine kingdom. God's kingdom must supercede David's feelings.
 - 2. So Joab killed Absalom because it was politically necessary. There was no alternative. Absalom was a devil that could not be allowed to live.
 - iii. Joab teaches us a necessary lesson about dealing with corrupting sin. You don't play with sin, cuddle it, or make excuses for it. You cut it out, violently if necessary.
 - 1. **Matthew 5:29-30** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. (30) And if your right

hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

2. Joab understood that David's emotionalism was compromising God's kingdom.

a. David wanted to treat cancer with candy. Joab knew it required radical surgery.

5. Verses 19-32: The Cushite, The Truth Telling Character

a. Ahimaz wanted to be sent to David with news of the battle. Joab decides to protect Ahimaz, the priest's son, from the possible wrath of the king. We have all heard the saying, do not shoot the messenger. Afraid of what David might do, Joab sends the Cushite instead. However, Ahimaz's persistence makes Joab give him permission to run, too. Ahimaz takes a shortcut and arrives first to an anxiously waiting David. When he arrives, he falls on his face in front of the king, proclaiming the good news of victory, **'Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king.'**

i. However, all is not well for David unless Absalom is safe. When David asks about his son, Ahimaz refuses to answer, lying instead to protect his life.

1. Ahimaz tells David only the good news and will not risk telling the king the bad news. Ahimaz failed to be a good messenger.

- ii. It is at this point that the Cushite appears. He is a minor character yet faithful to his duty of heralding both the good and bad news, **“Good news for my lord the king! For the LORD has delivered you this day from the hand of all who rose up against you.”** The king said to the Cushite, **“Is it well with the young man Absalom?”** And the Cushite answered, **“May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you for evil be like that young man.”**
- iii. He delivers the good news and the bad news, the whole truth.
 - 1. There is a lesson here. God would have us compare the two men. For a herald to be faithful, he must speak the entire truth of a matter. The Cushite gave David both the news he wanted and did not want. God had spoken! God had delivered David and killed Absalom!
- iv. Beloved, the same should be said of you and me in our proclamation of the gospel. The gospel has both good and bad news. To proclaim one without the other is to fail in our heralding duties. The Christian herald must proclaim the bad news of man’s nature, sin, and separation and then the good news of Christ's love, sinlessness, substitution, and imputation. This is the whole counsel of God.
 - 1. **2 Corinthians 2:17** For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of

sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

2. **1 Corinthians 4:1-2** This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. (2) Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.
 - a. Our evangelism must be biblical.
 - b. And with that, let us return to the message of the Cushite. **May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you for evil be like that young man.** Beloved, we knew that this would happen. We did not know the exact details, but we did know the final result.
 - i. Our theology expressly teaches us that God's sovereign hand guides all things. God's sovereignty had determined Absalom's death!
 - ii. Our previous chapter let us know that this end was inevitable.
 1. **2 Samuel 17:14B** ...For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm (calamity) upon Absalom.
 - iii. This was the problem with David's command to **deal gently with Absalom.**
 - iv. How could David's men '**deal gently**' with David's son when God intended **calamity** for the rebel? We are at a crossroads. Will God's sovereignty or David's sovereignty prevail? The Cushite has told us that David's deliverance also

involved the destruction of Absalom. God always wins!

1. If the kingdom of God under God's chosen king is to be saved, then the enemy who attacks that kingdom must be destroyed. God does not secure salvation for his church unless he first destroys the church's enemies.

a. We cannot pray '**and deliver us from evil**' unless we long for evil's destruction.

i. **1 John 3:8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

b. May God's people understand this truth. Sin must be defeated for righteousness to reign, and it will be at the coming of our Lord.

6. Verse 33: David, The Passive Grieving Character

a. We get a glimpse into David's state of mind. His command regarding Absalom reflected a heart of idolatry. We find him anxiously waiting for news, talking himself into believing that Absalom would somehow survive.

i. **2 Samuel 18:27** 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.”

b. When the truth is finally out, David is devastated:

i. **2 Samuel 18:33** And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

1. Clearly, God wants us to hear David’s pitiful and helpless wailing. His son is dead. David would have traded places with him. The king is inconsolable, but God’s kingdom and people are safe. God has acted righteously.

c. David's grief comes from two sources:

i. First, he had a natural love for his (favorite) son. Absalom was a rebellious sinner, bent on killing his own father, but David loved him and would have forgiven anything, even Absalom’s treason against God.

1. Many Christian parents struggle in this area. The child that they love has given themselves over to terrible sin. Their sin is destroying the entire family. The child is hell-bent on living a life outside of Christ and in direct opposition to God’s headship. What is our duty in such cases?

2. It is clear that in such a situation, we cannot put our children above our obedience to God. David failed in this area.

- a. Like Eli, the high priest, David committed the grave sin of honoring his children above God.
 - i. **1 Samuel 2:29A** Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me...
 - ii. Second, David's sorrow stemmed from his own sin that had put his family on this path. We remember Nathan's words to David in **2 Samuel 12:10-11A** Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' (11) Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house...
 1. David's guilt also caused his grief. David's sin had devastating consequences.
 - a. Four of his children were forever impacted, with three of them now dead. David knew that his sin had set the sword loose on his household.
 - b. There was a time when David acted justly, but now he stands before the Lord a broken man, mindful of his failing. All this pain resulted from David abandoning the right way, and he knew it!

- c. So David wished he had died instead of Absalom because he knew he deserved death.
 - i. Remember, sin impacts everyone around us.

7. Beloved, First and Second Samuel clearly show us that David is a suffering king as the anointed king. Here, however, he suffers grief because of his own guilt. Yet amid this sorrow, there is a prophetic message. Our two books point the believer past David to the perfect descendant of David, the man of sorrows, Jesus, who bears our grief and sorrows.

- a. **Isaiah 53:4-5** Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.
- b. There is a contrast being made here. It is important that you and I pay attention. Unlike David, Christ suffered not for his sins- he had none- but for ours. David's grief is self-inflicted, while Christ's grief is self-sacrificial. David's tears are fair, while Christ's tears are unjust. David wishes he could have died instead of Absalom, while Jesus dies instead of sinners. At times, David might be a prophetic picture of the perfect king, but Christ is the fulfillment and substance of that perfection.

8. Benediction:

- a. **Joshua 24:16** Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods,

Public Reading
Joshua 24:14-18