

2 Samuel 18 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[2 Samuel Chart](#), from Charles Swindoll

TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES

1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	

Outline of 2 Samuel 18 from What the Bible Teaches

1. The **marshalling** of David's troops (2Sa 18:1-8)
2. The **manner** of Absalom's death (2Sa 18:9-17)
3. The **meaning** of Absalom's pillar (2Sa 18:18)
4. The **message** about Absalom's death (2Sa 18:19-33)

DAVID COUNTS TROOPS SELECTS COMMANDERS

Then - Marks progression in the narrative. Battle is now imminent. This scene actually had begun in 2Sa 17:24 which set up the battle lines - "Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him." In 2Sa 17:24-29 David's army settled in Mahanaim and were generously supplied and refreshed by Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai. Now David musters his men and strategically divides them as the experienced man of war readies for battle with his son.

David numbered the people who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds - The text does not give us the time frame - was the following done in days or weeks? We do not know, but we know David made this an immediate priority - to prepare his men for battle. David did not simply count noses, but **mustered** his army signifying that he assembled troops for inspection and preparation for the imminent battle. His division of the military into three fighting units made up of sections of one hundred and one thousand is typical of Israelite military structure (see (Ex 18:21; Nu 31:14, 48; Dt 1:15; 1Sa 8:12; 11:11, 22:7; 29:2, Nu 31:48; Jdg 9:43).

Josephus, Antiq. 7.10.1, tells us that David had four thousand men but this is uncertain as the text does not give a specific number. The point is that David had rallied considerable support for his cause.

2 Samuel 18:2 David sent the people out, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I myself will surely go out with you also."

- **third**: Jdg 7:16, 19 9:43
- **Joab**: 2Sa 10:7-10
- **Ittai**: 2Sa 15:19-22
- **I will surely**: 2Sa 17:11 Ps 3:6 27:1-3 118:6-8
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 15:19-21+ Then the king said to **Ittai the Gittite**, "Why will you also go with us? Return and remain with the king (DAVID CALLS ABSALOM "THE KING"), for you are a foreigner and **also an exile**; return to your own place. 20 "You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander with us, while I go where I will? Return and take back your brothers; mercy and truth be with you." 21 But Ittai answered the king and said, (**ITTAI'S LOYALTY TO DAVID**) "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also **your servant** will be."

1 Samuel 11:11+ (STANDARD MILITARY PRACTICE - DIVISION INTO THIRDS) The next morning **Saul put the people in three companies**; and they came into the midst of the camp at the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

COMMANDERS: JOAB ABISHAI AND ITTAI

David sent the people out, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite - Joab and **Abishai** were brothers and were both somewhat impetuous. **Ittai the Gittite** (from Gath, a major Philistine town!) although a foreigner is a loyal servant of David ([see above](#)), no matter the cost (battle could cost him his life!) David's division would allow for a "three pronged" attack (cf Jdg 7:16; 1Sa

11:11; 13:17).

THOUGHT - David seemed to have a personality and demeanor that attacked those who were not Hebrews (cf Shobi an ammonite in 2Sa 17:27). It reminds me of the greater Son of David Who attr

acts (and saves) men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (Rev 5:9+)

Mattoon - Rest and friends can do wonders for a person. David begins to take charge again and do his duty as the rightful king. Indecisiveness, laxity, and moral paralysis had weakened him in recent years. He divided his forces into three divisions....Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. ([Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

And the king said to the people, "I myself will surely go out with you also- Perhaps he did not want a repeat of his previous mistake in 2Sa 11:1+! David does not sit back this time, but seeks to join the battle. Note that the writer refers to the real KING 5 times in this opening section of chapter 18 - 2Sa 18:2, 4, 5! David is the King of Israel, not Absalom.

ABISHAI - ab'-i-shi, a-bi'-shi ('abhishai, in Ch 'abhshai; meaning is doubtful, probably "my father is Jesse,"): Son of Zeruah, David's sister, and one of the three famous brothers, of whom Joab and Asahel were the other two (2Sa 2:18). He was chief of the second group of three among David's "mighty men" (2Sa 23:18). He first appears with David, who was in the Wilderness of Ziph, to escape Saul. When David called for a volunteer to go down into Saul's camp by night, Abishai responded, and counseled the killing of Saul when they came upon the sleeping king (1Sa 26:6-9). In the skirmish between the men of Ishbosheth and the men of David at Gibeon, in which Asahel was killed by Abner, Abishai was present (2Sa 2:18,24). He was with and aided Joab in the cruel and indefensible murder of Abner, in revenge for their brother Asahel (2Sa 3:30). In David's campaign against the allied Ammonites and Syrians, Abishai led the attack upon the Ammonites, while Joab met the Syrians; the battle was a great victory for Israel (2Sa 10:10-14). He was always faithful to David, and remained with him, as he fled from Absalom. When Shimei, of the house of Saul, cursed the fleeing king, Abishai characteristically wished to kill him at once (2Sa 16:8,9); and when the king returned victorious Abishai advised the rejection of Shimei's penitence, and his immediate execution (2Sa 19:21). In the battle with Absalom's army at Mahanaim Abishai led one division of David's army, Joab and Ittai commanding the other two (2Sa 18:2). With Joab he put down the revolt against David of Sheba, a man of Benjamin (2Sa 20:6,10), at which Joab treacherously slew Amasa his cousin and rival, as he had likewise murdered Abner, Abishai no doubt being party to the crime. In a battle with the Philistines late in his life, David was faint, being now an old man, and was in danger of death at the hands of the Philistine giant Ishbihinob when Abishai came to his rescue and killed the giant (2Sa 21:17). In the list of David's heroes (2Sa 23) Abishai's right to leadership of the "second three" is based upon his overthrowing three hundred men with his spear (2Sa 23:18). He does not appear in the struggle of Adonijah against Solomon, in which Joab was the leader, and therefore is supposed to have died before that time.

He was an impetuous, courageous man, but less cunning than his more famous brother Joab, although just as cruel and relentless toward rival or foe. David understood and feared their hardness and cruelty. Abishai's best trait was his unswerving loyalty to his kinsman, David.

ITTAI - A Gittite or native of Gath, one of David's chief captains and most faithful friends during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam 15:11-22; 18:2,4,12). The narrative reveals David's chivalrous and unselfish spirit in time of trouble, as well as the most self-sacrificing loyalty on the part of Ittai. He seems to have but recently left his native city and joined David's army through personal attachment to the king. David rapidly promoted him. Hearing of Absalom's rebellion and approach to Jerusalem, he flees with David. The latter remonstrates, urges him to go back and join Absalom, as he is a foreigner and in exile. His interests are in the capital and with the king; there is no reason why he should be a fugitive and perhaps suffer the loss of everything; it would be better for him, with his band of men, to put himself and them at the service of Absalom, the new king. "Mercy and truth be with thee," says David in his magnanimity. Ittai, with a double oath, absolutely refuses to go back, but will stand by David until the last. Remonstrance being useless, the monarch orders him across the river, doubtless glad that he had such a doughty warrior and faithful friend by his side. On mustering his hosts to meet Absalom, David makes Ittai a chief captain with the intrepid Joab and Abishai. He doubtless did his part in the battle, and as nothing more is said of him it is possible that he fell in the fight.

QUESTION - [Who was Joab in the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - Joab was a son of Zeruah, King David's sister (1 Chronicles 2:13-17) and was therefore one of David's nephews. Joab's brothers were two of David's brave warriors, Abishai and Asahel. Joab was positioned as commander of David's armies because of his victory over the Jebusites, resulting in the possession of the city of Jerusalem. It was through this victory that Jerusalem became "the city of David" (1 Chronicles 11:4-9).

Joab fought and won many battles for the king, but his personal lack of self-control was problematic. In a war against the forces of Ish-Bosheth, Joab's brother Asahel was killed by [Abner](#), the commander of Ish-Bosheth's armies. Joab was furious and pursued Abner to kill him, but Abner escaped (2 Samuel 2:12-32). Later, after Abner swore allegiance to David, Joab's fuse blew, and his

desire to avenge his brother's blood drove him to deceive and murder Abner (verses 26–27). This action deeply grieved David, but the king felt unable to bring justice against the mighty Joab (verse 39). Instead, David pronounced a curse over Joab and his future descendants: "May his blood fall on the head of Joab and on his whole family! May Joab's family never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food" (verse 29).

As the commander of David's armies, Joab was provided many victories by God, but Joab caused much grief to the king and to Israel. His anger and perhaps the power of his position drove him to poor decisions at times. In addition to his murder of Abner, Joab killed his own cousin, Amasa—and his betrayal was Judas-style, accompanied by a kiss: "Joab said to Amasa, 'How are you, my brother?' Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, Amasa died" (2 Samuel 20:9–10). Joab disobeyed King David's command to spare Absalom's life, himself striking Absalom with three javelins (2 Samuel 18). David mourned the death of his son Absalom, a response that was sternly reprimanded by Joab (2 Samuel 19:1–8). It was also Joab who, in accordance with David's command, placed Uriah the Hittite at the front of the battle to be killed, so that David could feel justified in marrying [Uriah's widow](#) (2 Samuel 11).

Joab, for all his faults, was obviously a capable man of war and valiant on the battlefield. And he ought to be given credit for his loyalty to David for almost four decades. Joab also counseled David when David sinfully desired to take a census; if David had heeded Joab's advice, he could have spared his nation the plague that befell Israel (2 Samuel 24).

When David was on his death bed, Joab conspired with Adonijah to install Adonijah as the next king, instead of Solomon (1 Kings 1). This action, plus Joab's other rash decisions, vengeful murders, and inability to take certain important orders, finally drove David over the edge. David commanded Solomon to ensure Joab's execution, an act that was carried out by Benaniah as Joab was clinging to the [horns of the altar](#) in hopes of finding clemency (1 Kings 2:5–6, 28–34). [GotQuestions.org](#)

2 Samuel 18:3 But the people said, "You should not go out; for if we indeed flee, they will not care about us; even if half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that you be ready to help us from the city."

- **You should not go out;** 2Sa 21:17
- **if we flee:** 2Sa 17:2 1Ki 22:31 Zec 13:7
- **worth:** Heb. as ten thousand of us, La 4:20
- **succour: Heb. be to succour,** 2Sa 10:11 Ex 17:10-12
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 21:17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah helped him, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You shall not go out again with us to battle, so that you do not extinguish the lamp of Israel."

Mahanaim is in NE corner of the pink-shaded area of Gad
(click to enlarge)

TROOPS DISSUADE DAVID FROM GOING

But the people said - Term of contrast. David's troops object to his personal appearance in battle.

"You should not go out; for if we indeed flee, they will not care about (Heb. set their heart on) us; even if half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us (Heb - "for now there are ten thousand like us."); **therefore now it is better that you be ready to help us from the city** (Mahanaim - see map above) - Note they give 3 reasons David should not lead the forces - (1) He is their prime target, (2) closely related is that he is more valuable than 10,000 soldiers and (3) he can provide help from the city if they should need it. The main reason of their logic for David not going into the battle is that Absalom's troops are focused on killing David more than his troops. A dead David would signal sure defeat for them! It is somewhat ironic, that David's men echoed the wisdom of Ahithophel who knew that killing David would bring about victory for Absalom and "all the people would be at peace." (2Sa 17:2-3+).

Note the clear contrast with Hushai's advice to Absalom to personally go into battle declaring in 2Sa 17:11+ "But I counsel that all

Israel be surely gathered to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea in abundance, and that you personally go into battle." Perhaps he knew the risk of the king himself going into battle, but in any event it was under the providential control of the LORD, because the loss of Absalom would be the third of the "four fold" discipline (consequence of his sin) that David (that David had actually decreed himself in 2Sa 12:6+) would suffer because of his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. The fourfold discipline was the deaths of his unnamed son, death of Amnon (rape of Tamar), death of Absalom and death of Adonijah (who tried to usurp the crown from Solomon).

Mattoon - In the game of chess, pawns are sacrificed for the king because the king is valuable. These men were willing to sacrifice themselves for David. Is the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, valuable to you? How do you demonstrate your belief in the unsurpassed worth of Christ the King. In what way do you make sacrifices for Jesus Christ? Christ should be everything to us because of what He has done for us. ([Treasures from 2 Samuel](#))

Utley on the city - Mahanaim was **the city** where Mephibosheth and later Ishbosheth sought refuge. David's kindness to the same leader in rural Gilead made him want to help David in his time of need.

2 Samuel 18:4 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 thousands.

- **by the gate:** 2Sa 18:24 Isa 28:6
- **by hundreds:** 2Sa 18:1 1Sa 29:2
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID STAY IN CITY & REVIEWS TROOPS AT GATE

Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." - David does not argue with the logic of his troops. A good leader knows when and how to receive good advice.

THOUGHT - [No man is an island](#). We all need others to give us good advice! Are you an "island" or are you open to the advice of others? Pride fights against receiving good advice from others and needs to be laid aside! As Paul said "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." (1Co 10:12+) Just imagine if David had not received their advice, went forth and was killed (a hypothetical question of course)!

Good leaders listen to the wise advice of their counselors!

So the king stood beside the gate - That is, David remained at the gate of the city as the 3 divisions of his troops [passed in review](#).

And all the people went out by hundreds and thousands - How many were in his army at this time but the word "thousands" is certainly suggestive? We do not know for sure, but Josephus wrote that there were only 4,000 men. Of course the numbers are not the determinative factor! The only number that counts is whose side is God on in the battle? The answer is unequivocal. God was on the side of David, not necessarily because David was so good (in fact this is all a consequence of David's evil in His sight - 2Sa 11:27+), but ultimately because He is a covenant keeping God and would be faithful to His promises in 2 Samuel 7

"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15 but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."" (2Sa 7:12-16+)

2 Samuel 18:5 The king charged Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom.

- **Deal gently:** 2Sa 16:11 17:1-4,14 De 21:18-21 Ps 103:13 Lu 23:34

- **all the people:** 2Sa 18:12
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID'S CHARGE TO GO EASY ON ABSALOM

The king charged (commanded, ordered) **Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom."** - Notice David still sees him as but a boy! Perhaps he considered the rebellion a youthful escapade! Commanders were commanded basically not to harm or kill Absalom.

MacArthur points out that "The 4 uses of "the young man Absalom" (vv. 5, 12, 29, 32) imply that David sentimentally viewed Absalom as a youthful rebel who could be forgiven. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Utley - There is no VERB here ("DEAL" IS ADDED BY TRANSLATORS) but there is in 2Sa 18:12. Obviously David remembered the prophecy of doom upon his own house (cf. 2Sa 12:11-12). I think he was conscious that his sin related to Bathsheba and Uriah was ripping his own family apart.

And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom- All the troops heard David's clear command to treat young Absalom gently.

Guzik - They were willing to take on sacrifice and danger for the benefit of their king. Their devotion to David is an example of how the believer should be devoted to the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. (ED: OUR "CAPTAIN OF THE HOST OF THE LORD." - Joshua 5:14+).

2 Samuel 18:6 Then the people went out into the field against Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim.

- **forest of Ephraim:** Jos 17:15,18 Jdg 12:4-6
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE BATTLE BEGINS IN THE FOREST

Then the people (army, David's forces) **went out** (marched) **into the field against Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim** - The **forest of Ephraim** was evidently on the eastern side of the Jordan River and apparently was not far from Mahanaim; and it is supposed to be the place where the Ephraimites were slain by Jephthah. So the battle was not on the open plain but in a wooded area which apparently would be helpful to David's troops who, although likely better trained, were outnumbered by Absalom's troops (cf 20,000 massacred in 2Sa 18:7).

MacArthur - A dense forest existed E of the Jordan River and N of the Jabbok River in Gilead, where the battle was waged. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Utley is probably correct commenting that "David had a smaller but better trained army. The element of surprise and the terrain were on his side. Apparently this battle occurred on the eastern side of the Jordan in the rocky and treacherous upclimb from the Jordan Rift Valley."

Mahanaim two camps, a place near the Jabbok, beyond Jordan, where Jacob was met by the "angels of God," and where he divided his retinue into "two hosts" on his return from Padan-aram (Gen. 32:2). This name was afterwards given to the town which was built at that place. It was the southern boundary of Bashan (Josh. 13:26, 30), and became a city of the Levites (21:38). Here Saul's son Ishbosheth reigned (2 Sam. 2:8, 12), while David reigned at Hebron. Here also, after a troubled reign, **Ishbosheth was murdered** by two of his own bodyguard (2 Sam. 4:5-7), who brought his head to David at Hebron, but were, instead of being rewarded, put to death by him for their cold-blooded murder. Many years after this, when he fled from Jerusalem on the rebellion of his son Absalom, David made Mahanaim, where Barzillai entertained him, his headquarters, and here he mustered his forces which were led against the army that had gathered around Absalom. It was while sitting at the gate of this town that tidings of the great and decisive battle between the two hosts and of the death of his son Absalom reached him, when he gave way to the most violent grief (2 Sam. 17:24-27). The only other reference to Mahanaim is as a station of one of Solomon's purveyors (1 Kings 4:14).

2 Samuel 18:7 The people of Israel were defeated there before the servants of David, and the slaughter there that day was great, 20,000 men.

BGT 2 Samuel 18:7 καὶ πῆσαι ἐκεῖ ἡ λαὸς Ἰσραὴλ ἐναντὶ τῶν παῶν Δαυὶδ καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ θρᾶσις μεγάλη καὶ τὸ μῦθος ἕκκασι χίλιες ἄνδρες

LXE 2 Samuel 18:7 And the people of Israel fell down there before the servants of David, and there was a great slaughter in that day, even twenty thousand men.

KJV 2 Samuel 18:7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men.

NET 2 Samuel 18:7 The army of Israel was defeated there by David's men. The slaughter there was great that day-- 20,000 soldiers were killed.

CSB 2 Samuel 18:7 The people of Israel were defeated by David's soldiers, and the slaughter there was vast that day-- 20,000 casualties.

ESV 2 Samuel 18:7 And the men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the loss there was great on that day, twenty thousand men.

NIV 2 Samuel 18:7 There the army of Israel was defeated by David's men, and the casualties that day were great--twenty thousand men.

NLT 2 Samuel 18:7 and the Israelite troops were beaten back by David's men. There was a great slaughter that day, and 20,000 men laid down their lives.

NRS 2 Samuel 18:7 The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men.

NJB 2 Samuel 18:7 There, the army of Israel was beaten by David's retainers; it was a great defeat that day, with twenty thousand casualties.

NAB 2 Samuel 18:7 The forces of Israel were defeated by David's servants, and the casualties there that day were heavy-- twenty thousand men.

- **the people:** 2Sa 2:17 15:6 19:41-43
- **a great:** Pr 11:21 24:21
- **twenty thousand men:** 2Sa 2:26,31 2Ch 13:16,17 28:6
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID'S TROOPS MASSACRE ABSALOM'S TROOPS

The people of Israel were defeated there before the servants of David, and the slaughter there that day was great, 20,000 men - NJB = "the army of Israel was beaten by David's retainers; it was a great defeat that day." As alluded to above, David was apparently outnumbered but his losses (I am assuming the 20,000 in context of "Israel...defeated" speaks of Israel's troops not David's) are not even mentioned so great were the losses of Absalom's troops who are called **the people of Israel**. Indeed, this battle is a civil war, which are usually bloody wars.

2 Samuel 18:8 For the battle there was spread over the whole countryside, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

- **the forest devoured,** Ex 15:10 Jos 10:11 Jdg 5:20,21 1Ki 20:30 Ps 3:7 43:1
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

FOREST FIGHTS FOR DAVID

For the battle there was spread over the whole countryside, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword

devoured That is, probably, many more were slain in pursuit through the wood than in the battle, by falling into swamps, pits, etc., and being entangled and cut down by David's men. Such is the relation of Josephus; but other versions such as the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic state that they were devoured by wild beasts in the wood. This description reminds me of the scene in [the Lord of the Rings where the trees came alive and fought](#) against the evil enemy.

Guzik on forest devoured - This phrase implies that God fought for David in unusual ways. Soldiers loyal to Absalom seemed to be "swallowed up" by the woods.

Spurgeon on forest devoured - Perishing not only by the sword, but among the thick oaks and tangled briers of the wood, which concealed fearful precipices and great caverns, into which the rebels plunged in their wild fright when the rout set in.

Adam Clarke - It is generally supposed that, when the army was broken, they betook themselves to the wood, fell into pits, swamps, and so forth, and being entangled, were hewn down by David's men; but the *Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic*, state that they were *devoured by wild beasts* in the wood."

Walton on forest devoured - When the Old Testament speaks of land devouring people (as the **forest** does here), it is indicating a hostile, inhospitable environment that threatens survival. Since this was a battlefield chosen by David and not Absalom, it may be expected that the king's forces utilized the rough terrain and forested areas to their advantage. Ambushes, feints drawing troops into ravines or wadis, and other guerilla tactics may have been employed. Divisions can get disoriented, lost or isolated and become easy targets. (See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 18:9 Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. For Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going.

NET 2 Samuel 18:9 Then Absalom happened to come across David's men. Now as Absalom was riding on his mule, it went under the branches of a large oak tree. **His head got caught in the oak** and he was suspended in midair, while the mule he had been riding kept going.

CSB 2 Samuel 18:9 Absalom was riding on his mule when he happened to meet David's soldiers. When the mule went under the tangled branches of a large oak tree, **Absalom's head was caught fast in the tree.** The mule under him kept going, so he was suspended in midair.

ESV 2 Samuel 18:9 And Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and **his head caught fast in the oak**, and he was suspended between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on.

NIV 2 Samuel 18:9 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 head got caught in the tree.** He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

NLT 2 Samuel 18:9 During the battle, Absalom happened to come upon some of David's men. He tried to escape on his mule, but as he rode beneath the thick branches of a great tree, **his hair got caught in the tree.** His mule kept going and left him dangling in the air.

NRS 2 Samuel 18:9 Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. **His head caught fast in the oak**, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on.

NJB 2 Samuel 18:9 Absalom happened to run into some of David's guards. Absalom was riding his mule and the mule passed under the thick branches of a great oak. Absalom's head got caught in the oak and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule he was riding went on.

NAB 2 Samuel 18:9 Absalom unexpectedly came up against David's servants. He was mounted on a mule, and, as the mule passed under the branches of a large terebinth, **his hair caught fast in the tree.** He hung between heaven and earth while the mule he had been riding ran off.

YLT 2 Samuel 18:9 And Absalom meeteth before the servants of David, and Absalom is riding on the mule, and the mule cometh in under an entangled bough of the great oak, and his head taketh hold on the oak, and he is placed between the heavens and the earth, and the mule that is under him hath passed on.

GWN 2 Samuel 18:9 Absalom happened to come face to face with some of David's men. He was riding on a

mule, and the mule went under the tangled branches of a large tree. **Absalom's head became caught in the tree.** So he was left hanging in midair when the mule that was under him ran away.

BBE 2 Samuel 18:9 And Absalom came across some of David's men. And Absalom was seated on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great tree, and **his head became fixed in the tree** and he was lifted up between earth and heaven, and the beast under him went on.

- **his head:** 2Sa 18:14 14:26 17:23 Mt 27:5
- **left hanging between heaven and earth:** De 21:23 27:16,20 Job 18:8-10 31:3 Ps 63:9,10 Pr 20:20 30:17 Jer 48:44 Mk 7:10 Ga 3:13
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Kings 1:33; 38 The king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son **Solomon ride on my own mule**, and bring him down to Gihon....38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on **King David's mule**, and brought him to Gihon.

2 Samuel 14:26+ When he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut it, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling.

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride will bring him low (**OR HANG HIM HIGH!**), But a humble spirit will obtain honor.

Exodus 20:12+ "Honor your father and your mother, **that your days may be prolonged** in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Deuteronomy 27:16+ '**Cursed is he who dishonors his father** or mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

Deuteronomy 21:18-23+ "If any man has a **stubborn and rebellious son** who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, 19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. 20 "They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 "**Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.** 22 "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

ABSALOM'S HEAD HANGS HIM HIGH

Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David - Note that this did not just "happen" as if by chance, but by divine providence. Recall 2Sa 17:14 which ends with "For **the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel**, so that (PURPOSE CLAUSE) **the LORD might bring calamity on Absalom**."

For Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. Mules were ridden by royalty (and this may have even been David's mule!) Riding furiously under the thick boughs of a great oak, which hung low and had never been cropped, either the twisted branches, or some low forked bough of the tree, caught him by the neck, or, possibly by the loops into which his long hair had been pinned, which had been so much his pride, and was now justly made a halter for him. There are two facts that support he actually was hanging by his hair - if he had been caught by his neck, he would have either suffocated or had a broken neck, but either way his hands would have been able to reach the branches and push his neck free. On the other hand if he had hung so low from the bough, because of his long hair, he could not have used his hands to free himself. Another possibility is he was so entangled that his hands were bound, so that the more he struggled the more he was entangled. While this interpretation is quite dramatic, the text says it was his **head**, not his hair which was caught. This does not exclude the hair might have been in play. Either way, this "hanging high" set him up as a fair mark to the servants of David, although David had commanded to spare his rebellious son.

Through Hushai, God answered David's prayer (in two ways - first he told Absalom to go into battle 2Sa 17:11+ and second he warned David of imminent attack 2Sa 17:15-21, 22+) preserved David's throne. Absalom made his choices, but God was sovereign all the while. "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps" (or our "hangings") (Proverbs 16:9NLT)

And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going - Josephus Antiquities 7.10.2 ([see chapter 10](#)) says he was caught by his hair, but it seems reasonable in light of 2Sa 14:26. There is something almost poetic (poetic justice) in the phrase **left hanging between heaven and earth**. [Poetic justice](#) describes an outcome in which vice is punished and virtue rewarded usually in a manner peculiarly or ironically appropriate

Walton - The text says that it was Absalom's **head** that got caught, **not his hair as commonly assumed**. The situation is pregnant with symbolism as the royal mule (the designated mount of kings) deserts the would-be king and leaves him hanging in a tree, a condition for one cursed of God (Deut 21:23)(See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 18:10 When a certain man saw it, he told Joab and said, '**Behold**, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak.'

- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ABSALOM'S LOCATION REPORTED TO JOAB

When a certain man saw it, he told Joab and said, 'Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak- Providentially, the entanglement of Absalom (entangled by his sin! - see Are you Entangled?) was reported not to David but to Joab, the impetuous one who had already taken revenge on another man Abner who had allied himself with David (2Sa 3:23,27+).

2 Samuel 18:11 Then Joab said to the man who had told him, "Now **behold**, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a belt."

- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

JOAB'S REWARD FOR KILLING ABSALOM

Then Joab said to the man who had told him, "Now behold, you saw him! (What! You saw this?) Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten pieces of silver (~four ounces of silver) **and a** (NIV = "warrior's belt", NLT = "hero's) **belt** - Joab had heard King David's clear order but is preparing to disobey it, even saying he would have given a reward to the man who killed Absalom! Ryrie thinks this means that he would have made him a commissioned officer.

Walton on ten pieces of silver and a belt - A bonus of one year's worth of pay and a distinctive article of clothing constituted a significant reward and indicates how strategic Absalom's death was to Joab. Gilgamesh's military attire included both a belt for his dirk and a sash or girdle of some sort, but the word used here (feminine form) is never used elsewhere as a piece of military gear (despite the NIV's addition of "warrior"), usually conveyed by the masculine form. It is used for a woman's sash in Isaiah 3:24 and may refer to a fancy sash or belt worn on special occasions (see comment on 1 Kings 2:5).(See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 18:12 The man said to Joab, "Even if I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Protect for me the young man Absalom!'

- **in our hearing:** 2Sa 18:5
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

JOAB REPROVED RE:

THE KING'S COMMAND

The man said to Joab, "Even if I should receive (Lit - "weighing out in my hand") a thousand pieces (~25 pounds, ~\$6500) of silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for (term of explanation) in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Protect for me the young man Absalom - In our hearing recalls 2Sa 18:5 which says "All the people heard." Joab could not claim ignorance. The man's response was a clear reminder (and warning) of David's command not to touch Absalom and the reason was it was for David's sake.

2 Samuel 18:13 "Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof."

BGT 2 Samuel 18:13 μ ποι σαι ν τ ψυχ α το δικον κα π ς λ γος ο λ σεται π το βασιλ ως κα σ σ τ σ ξ
ναυτ ας

LXE 2 Samuel 18:13 so as to do no harm to his life: and nothing of the matter will be concealed from the king, and thou wilt set thyself against me.

KJV 2 Samuel 18:13 Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me.

NET 2 Samuel 18:13 If I had acted at risk of my own life-- and nothing is hidden from the king!-- you would have abandoned me."

CSB 2 Samuel 18:13 If I had jeopardized my own life-- and nothing is hidden from the king-- you would have abandoned me."

ESV 2 Samuel 18:13 On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof."

NIV 2 Samuel 18:13 And if I had put my life in jeopardy--and nothing is hidden from the king--you would have kept your distance from me."

NLT 2 Samuel 18:13 And if I had betrayed the king by killing his son-- and the king would certainly find out who did it-- you yourself would be the first to abandon me."

NRS 2 Samuel 18:13 On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof."

NJB 2 Samuel 18:13 Even if I had deceived myself, nothing stays hidden from the king and you would have dissociated yourself from me.'

NAB 2 Samuel 18:13 Had I been disloyal and killed him, the whole matter would have come to the attention of the king, and you would stand aloof."

YLT 2 Samuel 18:13 or I had done against my soul a vain thing, and no matter is hid from the king, and thou --
thou dost station thyself over-against.'

GWN 2 Samuel 18:13 If I had done something treacherous to him, would you have stood by me? Like everything else, it wouldn't stay hidden from the king."

BBE 2 Samuel 18:13 And if I had falsely put him to death (and nothing may be kept secret from the king), you would have had nothing to do with me.

NIRV 2 Samuel 18:13 Suppose I had put my life in danger by killing him. The king would have found out about it. Nothing is hidden from him. And you wouldn't have stood up for me."

- **if I had dealt treacherously:** 2Sa 1:15,16 4:10-12
- **there is nothing hidden from the king:** 2Sa 14:19,20 Heb 4:13
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**ANOTHER REASON THE MAN
WOULD NOT KILL ABSALOM**

Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof - NLT says "And if I had betrayed the king by killing his son--and the king would certainly find out who did it--you yourself would be the first to abandon me." NIV = if I had put my life in jeopardy." In essence the man is saying that if he had risked his own life and taken Absalom's life, King David would discover his deed and Joab would not have defended him at that time. Knowing Joab as we do, that is good reasoning by this man! In short, this man did not trust Joab, for his reputation preceded him!

Treacherously (08267) [sheqer](#) deception, disappointment, falsehood, lie, vanity. Speaks of words or activities which are false in the sense that they are groundless, without basis in fact or reality (Ps 38:19). **Vine** says "As "faithfulness" is a relational term, "falsehood" denotes "one's inability to keep faith" with what one has said or to respond positively to the faithfulness of another being.

2 Samuel 18:14 Then Joab said, "I will not waste time here with you." So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

- **thrust them:** 2Sa 18:5 Jdg 4:21 5:26,31 Ps 45:5 1Th 5:3
- **heart,** Mt 12:40
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

JOAB'S WASTES NO TIME IN KILLING ABSALOM

Then - Marks progression in the narrative, and a significant progression as it relates to Absalom.

Joab said, "I will not waste time here with you." - NLT = "Enough of this nonsense." But it was not nonsense, but good sense. Nevertheless, Joab refused to hear (heed) the man's arguments against killing Absalom.

So he took three spears (javelins) **in his hand and thrust** (plunged) **them through the heart** ([leb](#); Lxx - [kardia](#)) (NET - "into the middle") **of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak**- Joab's stabs to Absalom's heart would result in stabs (figuratively) to the heart of David! It is surprising that the text does not say it killed him. See Walton's explanation for why this verse does not say "he died" or he "killed him."

Walton on three spears (javelins) - The "javelin" used by Joab everywhere else refers to a blunt rod used to beat someone. The verb is one that usually means to strike (exception, Jdg 3:21). The heart is not always internal, but can refer to the chest or the midsection. If Joab's intention was to stab Absalom, a sword or spear would have been the more likely choice. It seems instead that Joab intends to dislodge Absalom (See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 18:15 And ten young men who carried Joab's armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him.

- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

TEN OF JOAB'S MEN FINISH OFF ABSALOM

And ten young men who carried Joab's armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him- Joab's action spurred on his armor bearers to also attack Absalom. The text said they killed him, so presumably (and surprisingly) he was still agonizing and alive even after being struck with Joab's three spears.

Walton on armor-bearers. Commanders and officers within the army were accompanied by armor-bearers (see examples in the Iliad). These trusted individuals formed a bodyguard during battle (see 1Sa 31:4-6), provided substitute weapons should the commander break or lose one, and apparently even functioned as "friends" and advisers (see David as Saul's armor-bearer in 1Sa 16:21 and Jonathan's armor-bearer in 1Sa 14:12-17). (See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 18:16 Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the people.

- **blew the trumpet:** 2Sa 2:28 20:22 Nu 10:2-10 1Co 14:8
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



JOAB BLOWS TRUMPET CALLING HALT TO PURSUIT

Then - Marks progression in the narrative, now that the rebel king was dead.

Joab blew the trumpet ([shophar/shopar](#) - [Wikipedia](#)), and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the people - Joab's blowing of the shofar was a signal to his troops to cease chasing the army of Israel.

Walton on armor-bearers. As part of the preparations for battle, ancient armies throughout the Near East broadcast to their troops a set of designated signals that would call for advance or retreat. The use of trumpets (shofar) and runners might be the only means to control troop movements. They were also used as a rallying sound to assemble troops for battle or, like the fire signals of the Mari texts, as a signal of approaching danger. (See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

ARMOR-BEARER - ar'-mer-bar'-er (nose' keli; Greek uses a phrase, ho airon ta skeue, literally "the one carrying the armor"): One who carried the large shield and perhaps other weapons for a king (1 Sam 31:4), commander-in-chief (2 Sam 23:37), captain (1 Sam 14:7) or champion (1 Sam 17:7). All warriors of distinction had such an attendant. Rather than perish by the hand of a woman, Abimelech called upon his armor-bearer to give him the finishing stroke (Jdg 9:54), and when King Saul's armor-bearer refused to do this office for him that he might not become the prisoner of the Philistines, he took a sword himself and fell upon it (1 Sam 31:4). David became Saul's armor-bearer for a time, and Jonathan's armor-bearer was a man of resource and courage (1 Sam 14:7). The shield-bearer was a figure well known in the chariots of Egypt and Assyria and the Hittites, his business being to protect his fighting companion during the engagement.

2 Samuel 18:17 They took Absalom and cast him into a deep pit in the forest and erected over him a very great heap of stones. And all Israel fled, each to his tent.

- **cast:** Jos 7:26 8:29 10:27 Pr 10:7 Jer 22:18,19
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 21:20; 21+ (**PENALTY FOR A REBELLIOUS SON**) "They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 "Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.

Joshua 7:25-26+ (**ACHAN'S STONING**) Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26 They raised over him a **great heap of stones** that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day.

ABSALOM BURIED IN FOREST PIT

They took Absalom and cast (threw) him into a deep pit in the forest and erected over him a very great heap of stones- Piling up rocks was not a way to honor but was a way to show that they detested Absalom.

[Wycliffe Bible Commentary \(borrow\)](#) Some think the heaping of stones on Absalom's grave was symbolic of the stoning which was the legal penalty due a rebel son (Dt 21:20, 21). It is still a custom in the East for passers-by to cast stones on the grave of a criminal.

And all Israel fled, each to his tent - Absalom's army fled to their homes for the rebellion was clearly quelled! Quell means to thoroughly overwhelm and reduce to submission or passivity.

TSK - This was the ancient method of burying, whether heroes or traitors; the heap of stones being designed to perpetuate the memory of the event, whether good or bad. The Arabs in general make use of no other monument than a heap of stones over a grave. Thus, in an Arabic poem, it is related, that Hatim the father, and Adi the grandfather of Kais, having been murdered, at a time before Kais was capable of reflection, his mother kept it a profound secret; and in order to guard him against having any suspicion, she collected a parcel of stone on two hillocks in the neighbourhood, and told her son that the one was the grave of his father, and the other of his grandfather. The ancient cairns in Ireland and Scotland, and the tumuli in England, are of this kind.

Walton on **cast him into a deep pit in the forest and erected over him a very great heap of stones - burial practice.** Assyrian texts indicate that punishment of rebels regularly included impalement, leaving the bodies unburied. Israelite leaders also engaged in these forms of "display" (see the execution of the five enemy kings in Josh 10:27), but the bodies were not to be left hanging indefinitely (Dt 21:23). Thus even accursed individuals would be buried under a pile of stone (see comment on Josh 8:29)—not to be confused with the honorable funerary mounds of Mesopotamian kings (See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar which is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to preserve my name." So he named the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

NET 2 Samuel 18:18 Prior to this Absalom had set up a monument and dedicated it to himself in the King's Valley, reasoning "I have no son who will carry on my name." He named the monument after himself, and to this day it is known as Absalom's Memorial.

CSB 2 Samuel 18:18 When he was alive, Absalom had set up a pillar for himself in the King's Valley, for he had said, "I have no son to preserve the memory of my name." So he gave the pillar his name. It is still called Absalom's Monument today.

ESV 2 Samuel 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself the pillar that 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 it is called Absalom's monument to this day.

NIV 2 Samuel 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.

NLT 2 Samuel 18:18 During his lifetime, Absalom had built a monument to himself in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to carry on my name." He named the monument after himself, and it is known as Absalom's Monument to this day.

NRS 2 Samuel 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar that is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance"; he called the pillar by his own name. It is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

NJB 2 Samuel 18:18 Now, during his lifetime, Absalom had made and erected a pillar to himself, which is in the Valley of the King. 'I have no son', he said, 'to preserve the memory of my name.' He gave his own name to the pillar, and today it is still called Absalom's Monument.

NAB 2 Samuel 18:18 During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it for himself in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to perpetuate my name." The pillar which he named for himself is called Yadabshalom to the present day.

- **set up for himself a pillar:** 1Sa 15:12

- **the King's Valley;** Ge 14:17
- **I have no son:** 2Sa 14:27 Job 18:16,17 Ps 109:13 Jer 22:30
- **he named the pillar after his own name:** Ge 11:4 1Sa 15:12 Ps 49:11 Da 4:30
- **Absalom's:** Ge 11:9 Ac 1:18,19
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 15:12+ (**SAUL'S MONUMENT TO SELF**) Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal."

Genesis 14:17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the **valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley)**.

Modern Absalom's Tomb
(Probably Not Original Site)

ABSALOM'S MONUMENT

Now - marks a parenthetical statement in this context and is used, especially in conversation, to draw attention to a particular statement or point in a narrative.

Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar ([matstsebah](#)) which is in the King's Valley, for he had (reasoned), **"I have no son to preserve my name."** - Let's be honest, every man wonders what will they remember about me when I'm gone? Or will they even remember me at all? In 2Sa 14:27+ **"To Absalom there were born three sons,"** but clearly they did not live to be adults so there was no male to pass on the line of Absalom. Note that this is **not** the King's Valley in Egypt, but the valley in Israel. The exact location of the **King's Valley** is unknown but is often identified with the [Kidron Valley](#), east of Jerusalem, or the confluence of the Hinnom, Tyropoeon and Kidron Valleys and is also called the Valley of Shaveh in Genesis 14:17. The [Modern Absalom's Tomb](#) may be at the same site but we cannot be certain, but in any event is notable that orthodox Jews spit on this tomb when passing by.

Did you observe the dramatic contrast in 2Sa 18:17 **a very great heap of stones** and 2Sa 18:18 **named the pillar after his own name**?

Believer's Study Bible - The "King's Valley" was probably the same as the [Kidron Valley](#) just outside the wall of Jerusalem. But the pyramid-shaped structure which now stands there is of Greek rather than Hebrew origin.

So he named the pillar ([matstsebah](#)) after his own name, and it is called Absalom's Monument ([yad](#)) to this day - Since he had no surviving, living sons, he sought to memorialize his name in a dead stone monument. Are we surprised that Absalom builds a monument to himself? He reminds us of another man who was a man after his own heart, King Saul who "set up a monument for himself" (1Sa 15:12+).

TSK - Josephus says there was in his time, about two furlongs from Jerusalem, a marble pillar called Absalom's **hand** ([yad](#) - literally = hand, but used for "monument"), as it is in the Hebrew, (See note on 1 Sa 15:12+) and there is one shown to the present day, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, which, though comparatively a modern structure, probably occupies the site of the original one set up by Absalom.

Walton on - pillar as monument - The Ugaritic [Epic of Aqhat](#) (c. 1600 B.C.) mentions that one of the duties that a son owes to his father is to erect a stele or pillar in honor of the ancestor gods. Since Absalom has no [living?] son to do this for him, he does the job himself. **This is rather ironic considering that he was not buried in the family tomb. His personal monument becomes a sad marker of a failed life.** The tomb in the village of Silwan (across the Kidron valley from Jerusalem) today called Absalom's tomb is from a much later period (Herodian). messengers bringing news. Runners were used by armies and government officials in the ancient Near East. The Mari texts describe battlefield movements being partially (See page 347 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

Pillar ([04676](#)) [matstsebah](#) from **natsab** = to take a stand) means something set upright, most often "a standing, unhewn block of stone utilized for religious and memorial purposes. After a powerful experience of the Lord in a dream, Jacob set up as a pillar the stone on which he had laid his head, in commemoration of the event (Ge 28:18, 22; cf. Ge 31:45; 35:20). Moses set up an altar and also twelve pillars at the base of Mount Sinai to represent the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex. 24:4). These pillars were erected as

monuments to God (Hos 3:4); or, more commonly, to pagan deities (1Ki 14:23, Mic. 5:13). Many times in 2 Kings, the term refers to a sacred pillar that aided people in their worship of pagan gods, especially the Canaanite god Baal. In most of these passages, the sacred columns were used by Israelites, contrary to the Lord's prohibition concerning the worship of any other god (2 Ki 3:2; 10:26, 27; 18:4; 23:14; cf. Hos. 10:1, 2; Mic. 5:13)." ([Baker](#))

Septuagint in 2Sa 18:18 = **stele** = a commemorative stone block or pillar, monument, pillar from the time of Hom. inscribed and used as a grave marker, or for commemoration of events, proclamation of decrees, recognition of personal achievements. Stele is a block or slab, bearing an inscription; and so, 1. a gravestone, Hom., Att. 2. a block or slab, inscribed with record of victories, dedications, treaties, decrees, etc., Hdt., Att.; whether for honour, or for infamy, Hdt., Dem.: -also the record itself, a contract, agreement, kata. th.n sth,lhn according to agreement, 3. a boundary post, Xen.: -the turning-post at the end of the racecourse,

See also [dictionary descriptions of pillar](#)

Josephus Antiquities 7, chapter 10 -3. Now Absalom had erected for himself a stone marble pillar, in the King's dale; two [furlongs](#) distant from Jerusalem: which he named **Absalom's Hand** ([yad](#) = hand): saying, that if his children were killed, his name would remain by that pillar. For he had three sons, and one daughter, named *Tamar*: as we said before.²⁰ who, when she was married to David's grandson, Rehoboam, bare a son Abijah by name,²¹ who succeeded his father in the kingdom. But of these we shall speak in a part of our history which will be more proper.²² But after the death of Absalom they returned every one to their own homes respectively.

The [Tomb of Absalom](#) (Hebrew: יד אבשלום, [romanized](#): *Yad Avshalom*, [lit.](#) 'Absalom's Memorial'), also called **Absalom's Pillar**, is an ancient [monumental rock-cut tomb](#) with a [conical roof](#) located in the [Kidron Valley](#) in [Jerusalem](#), a few metres from the [Tomb of Zechariah](#) and the [Tomb of Benei Hezir](#). Although traditionally ascribed to [Absalom](#), the rebellious son of [King David](#) of Israel (circa 1000 BC), recent scholarship has dated it to the 1st century AD.

King's Garden and King's Valley - In the times of the [Old Testament](#) kings, the Kidron Valley was identified with, at least in part, the King's Garden; the kings owned land in the area.^[9] That the upper Kidron Valley was also known as the King's Valley, in which Absalom set up his monument or "pillar" (see 2 Samuel 18:18; no connection to the much later "[Absalom's Pillar](#)"), is problematic. The Bible does not make this identification explicit, and the association can only be inferred as associated with En-rogel, which is farther down the Kidron Valley towards the desert.^[14] The name 'King's Valley' may be derived from its location just east of the palace of David in the City of David on the western slopes of the Kidron Valley and south of where the platform was built.^[15]

Pillar ([04676](#)) [matstsebah](#) from *natsab* = to take a stand) means something set upright, most often "a standing, unhewn block of stone utilized for religious and memorial purposes. After a powerful experience of the Lord in a dream, Jacob set up as a pillar the stone on which he had laid his head, in commemoration of the event (Ge 28:18, 22; cf. Ge 31:45; 35:20). Moses set up an altar and also twelve pillars at the base of Mount Sinai to represent the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex. 24:4). These pillars were erected as monuments to God (Hos. 3:4); or, more commonly, to pagan deities (1 Ki. 14:23, Mic. 5:13). Many times in 2 Kings, the term refers to a sacred pillar that aided people in their worship of pagan gods, especially the Canaanite god Baal. In most of these passages, the sacred columns were used by Israelites, contrary to the Lord's prohibition concerning the worship of any other god (2 Ki. 3:2; 10:26, 27; 18:4; 23:14; cf. Hos. 10:1, 2; Mic. 5:13)." ([Baker](#))

Matstsebah refers to the obelisks which stood at the entrance to the temple of the Sun in the Egyptian city of Heliopolis (Jer. 43:13). According to Heroclitus (II.3), two of these pillars were a hundred cubits high and eight cubits across, and each was a single stone. The word is also used of the statues of Baal (2 Ki. 3:2) which were erected in the innermost recess of the Temple.

In 2Sa 18:18 **pillar** is translated in the **Septuagint** with **stele** (see [STELE in Wikipedia](#)) which is a commemorative stone block or pillar, monument, pillar from the time of Hom. inscribed and used as a grave marker, or for commemoration of events, proclamation of decrees, recognition of personal achievements. Stele is a block or slab, bearing an inscription; and so, 1. a gravestone, Hom., Att. 2. a block or slab, inscribed with record of victories, dedications, treaties, decrees, etc., Hdt., Att.; whether for honour, or for infamy, Hdt., Dem.: -also the record itself, a contract, agreement, kata. th.n sth,lhn according to agreement, 3. a boundary post, Xen.: -the turning-post at the end of the racecourse,

Holman Bible Dictionary - Pillar - Stone monuments (Hebrew *matstsebah*) or standing architectural structures (Hebrew *amudim*). 1. Stones set up as memorials to persons. Jacob set up a pillar on Rachel's grave as a memorial to her (Genesis 35:20). Because Absalom had no son to carry on his name, he set up a pillar and carved his name in it (2 Samuel 18:18). **Shrines both to the Lord and to false gods.** Graven images often were pillars set up as gods. God commanded Israel to break down such "images" (Hebrew *matstseboth*; Ex 23:24). The Canaanites erected pillars at their places of worship, and probably influenced Israelite

practice. Archaeologists found pillars, at Gezer. Jacob set up a pillar following his dream (Genesis 28:18) and again when God spoke to him at Bethel (Genesis 35:9-15) as memorials of God's revelation. **Moses set up twelve pillars to commemorate the giving of the law to the tribes of Israel** (Exodus 24:4).

2 Samuel 18:19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Please let me run and bring the king news that the LORD has freed him from the hand of his enemies."

- [Ahimaaz](#): 2Sa 18:23,27-29 2Sa 15:36, 17:17
- **the LORD has freed him from the hand of his enemies** Ps 7:6,8,9 9:4,16 10:14,18 Ro 12:19
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AHIMAAZ'S DESIRE TO BRING NEWS OF VICTORY

Then [Ahimaaz](#) the son of Zadok said "Please let me run and bring the king news that the LORD has freed him from the hand of his enemies - [Ahimaaz](#) is one of the brothers that brought the critical news to David allowing him to escape across the Jordan River (2Sa 17:17+). It would see apropos that he would be one to carry the news of the final victory.

2 Samuel 18:20 But Joab said to him, "You are not the man to carry news this day, but you shall carry news another day; however, you shall carry no news today because the king's son is dead."

- **to carry news** 2Sa 17:16-21
- **because:** 2Sa 18:5,27,29,33
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

JOAB REJECTS AHIMAAZ'S REQUEST

But Joab said to him, "You are not the man to carry news this day, but you shall carry news another day; however, you shall carry no news today because the king's son is dead - The reason Joab refused Ahimaaz's request is that the good news was tainted by the bad news of Absalom's death. As the NLT says ""it wouldn't be good news to the king that his son is dead. You can be my messenger some other time, but not today." Clearly Joab knew the negative effect Absalom's death would have on David, especially since he had commanded that he not be harmed and Joab directly disobeyed.

Walton on messengers bringing news. Runners were used by armies and government officials in the ancient Near East. The Mari texts describe battlefield movements being partially directed by messengers as well as diplomatic dispatches and news of the approach of delegations and caravans. It seems apparent from these texts as well as the biblical narrative that messengers had different ranks. Some, like the suh6 arum of Mari, were young men employed for their stamina and speed. However, there were also messengers in the lower levels of the diplomatic corps (perhaps comparable to the priestly status of Ahimaaz) who were trusted with more important missions. (See page 348 [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

2 Samuel 18:21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran.

- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

CUSHITE TO CARRY BAD NEWS

Then Joab said to the [Cushite](#) - Joab selects a foreigner, a man from Ethiopia to carry the sad, badnews to David.

"Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran - Cushite obeys Joab's command. The implication is that he had seen Absalom's body (or grave marked with stones).

2 Samuel 18:22 Now Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said once more to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why would you run, my son, since you will have no reward for going?"

- **since you will have no reward for going**, Ro 1:28 Eph 5:4
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AHIMAAZ STILL DESIRES TO RUN

Now Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said once more to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why would you run, my son, since you will have no reward for going - Joab questions Ahimaaz's desire to run with the message, explaining that there would be no reward for this news.

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - 2 Samuel 18:22–23 Wherefore wilt thou run? ... Come what may, said he, I will run. (R. V.)

Joab did not love David, as Ahimaaz did, and could not understand what made the young man so eager to carry the tidings. Doubtless Ahimaaz and Cushie entirely misinterpreted the heart of David, and thought that he would be glad to hear that the rebellion was stamped out, and Absalom was dead. And it was because of the pleasure which he thought to give his king that the swift-footed son of Zadok pleaded for permission to run. What though there would be no reward, or that it would fall to the lot of Cushie, who had already started at Joab's command—that mattered not, the love of David constrained him.

How often that question of reward is thrown at the servants of God. It is one of the favorite taunts of the world; as Satan said of Job, that we do as we do because we are paid. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" And nothing so startles men as disinterested service. They cannot account for it; but it wins their respect. "Reward or no reward; recompense or none; smiles or tears, come what may, let me run." That is the spirit that becomes a Christian, and convinces the world. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Ahimaaz outran Cushie. The one was a volunteer for love's dear sake; the other, a bond-servant, doing as he was told. Love loaned wings to his feet, and speeding past his fellow bore him first into David's presence. So God's will is done in heaven: "The cherubim ran and returned like a flash of lightning." So God's will is done on earth: "They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail!"

2 Samuel 18:23 "But whatever happens," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and passed up the Cushite.

- **passed up the Cushite** Joh 20:4
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AHIMAAZ PASSED THE CUSHITE RUNNER

But whatever happens," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, 'Run.' Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and passed up the Cushite - The NLT explains "Then Ahimaaz took a shortcut across the plain of the Jordan and got to Mahanaim ahead of the man from Cush."

2 Samuel 18:24 Now David was sitting between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man running by himself.

- **between:** 2Sa 18:4 1Sa 4:13
- **the watchman:** 2Ki 9:17-20 Isa 21:6-9,11,12 Eze 33:2-7
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WATCHMAN SPOTS RUNNER

Now David was sitting between the two gates - The **two gates** would be the outer and inner gates leading into the city, Mahanaim (see above).

and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man running by himself - This would have been Ahimaaz who by now considerably outran the Cushite.

Watchman (06822) tsaphah means to look out, spy, keep watch and most often translated as the one who is alert and looks out, a watchman (see 1Sa. 14:16; 2Sa 13:34; Isa 21:6; Mic 7:4). It describes a guard who keeps watch, to keep an eye on something or someone, to guard someone, to watch over. Eli was "eagerly watching" in 1Sa 4:13. **Tsaphah** refers to God's watching over persons while they are apart (Ge 31:49), "eyes keep watch on the nations" (Ps. 66:7). Proverbs 15:3 says "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, **watching** the evil and the good." The prophets were called **watchmen** for God (Jer. 6:17; Ezek. 3:17; 33:7; Hos. 9:8). Figuratively **tsaphah** means waiting to see something, such as waiting to see what God will do (Ps. 5:3; Nah. 2:1; Hab. 2:1). The wicked watch the righteous to do them harm (Ps 37:32).

Gilbrant - The root carries with it the meaning of "being alert" and "active in watching" rather than simply gazing at something in the distance. Of the eighty-two occurrences of this root, about half of them are used to convey the idea of being fully aware of a situation so as to guard against any incoming enemy attack or to gain some kind of an advantage. The verb is used in the sense of the wicked who watches the righteous in order to slay him (Ps. 37:32). Inversely, the prudent woman watches over the ways of her household to take care of its needs (Pr. 31:27). It is with the same intent that the LORD watches over the nations and every individual, both the good and the wicked (Ps. 66:7; Pr. 15:3). The same root is used to express Eli's anticipation to see the return of the Ark, "Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God" (1Sa 4:13). Most of the thirty-seven occurrences are in the participle form and function nominally, signifying a watchman. This was the intent of the call upon Ezekiel's prophetic ministry, "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel" (Ezek. 33:7). The root also denotes the act of "overlaying or adorning something." The verb occurs as such over forty times in the OT. Most occurrences are in connection with the adorning of the Temple and its furnishings with gold or other precious metals (Exo. 25:11, 24; 1 Ki. 6:22; 2 Chr. 3:6). But also clay pots were overlaid with glaze (Prov. 26:23). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Tsaphah - destined(1), keep watch(3), lookout(1), looks well(1), spies(1), watch(3), watch expectantly(1), watched(1), watching(2), watchman(14), watchman's(1), watchmen(5). Ge 31:49; 1 Sam. 4:13; 1 Sam. 14:16; 2 Sam. 13:34; 2 Sam. 18:24; 2 Sam. 18:25; 2 Sam. 18:26; 2 Sam. 18:27; 2 Ki. 9:17; 2 Ki. 9:18; 2 Ki. 9:20; Job 15:22; Ps. 5:3; Ps. 37:32; Ps. 66:7; Prov. 15:3; Prov. 31:27; Isa. 21:6; Isa. 52:8; Isa. 56:10; Jer. 6:17; Jer. 48:19; Lam. 4:17; Ezek. 3:17; Ezek. 33:2; Ezek. 33:6; Ezek. 33:7; Hos. 9:8; Mic. 7:4; Mic. 7:7; Nah. 2:1; Hab. 2:1

2 Samuel 18:25 The watchman called and told the king. And the king said, "If he is by himself there is good news in his mouth." And he came nearer and nearer.

- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID THINKS ONE MEANS GOOD NEWS

The watchman (tsaphah) called and told the king. And the king said, "If he is by himself there is good news in his mouth." And he came nearer and nearer - David is a bit superstitious here saying one runner is a good omen. Alternatively why might this be good news? If there were a group of men running, this would suggest they were fleeing and would signal that they had to retreat and run for their lives. On the other hand a single runner would not be fleeing for his life.

2 Samuel 18:26 Then the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "Behold, another man running by himself." And the king said, "This one also is bringing good news."

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- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WATCHMAN SPOTS SECOND RUNNER

Then the watchman ([tsaphah](#)) saw another man running; and the watchman ([tsaphah](#)) called to the gatekeeper and said, "**Behold**, another man running by himself." And the king said, "This one also is bringing good news - Even though there are now 2 runners, David still thinks this is an "omen" of good news.

2 Samuel 18:27 The watchman said, "I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "This is a good man and comes with good news."

- **think** 2Ki 9:20
- **He is a good:** 1Ki 1:42 Pr 25:13,25 Isa 52:7 Ro 10:15
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AHIMAAZ RECOGNIZED AS FIRST RUNNER

The watchman said, "I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "This is a good man and comes with good news - For the third time David thinks this is an "omen" of good news. He might be thinking since it was Ahimaaz who brought him the warning that he should cross the Jordan (and that had a good result, cf 2Sa 17:17-21), then he would again be bringing a good result.

2 Samuel 18:28 Ahimaaz called and said to the king, "All is well." And he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, "Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."

- **All is well:** 2Sa 1:2 14:4
- **Blessed:** 2Sa 22:27 Ge 14:20 24:27 2Ch 20:26 Ps 115:1 124:6 144:1,2 Rev 19:1-3
- **delivered up:** 1Sa 24:18 26:8 Ps 31:8

Ahimaaz called and said to the king, "All is well."- Literally he said [Shalom](#), peace. Sadly David's peace would soon be disturbed.

And he prostrated ([shachah](#) ; Lxx - [proskuneo](#)) himself before the king with his face to the ground - He bowed facedown on the ground.

TSK - he fell down upon his face, This act was not only in reverence to the king, but in humble adoration of God, whose name he praises for this victory. The more our hearts are fixed and enlarged, in thanksgiving to God for our mercies, the better disposed we shall be to bear with patience the afflictions mixed with them

And he said, "Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king - Surely this must have made David nervous regarding Absalom for he was the very one who had lifted up his hand against the king!

Prostrated (bowed down) ([07812](#)) ([shachah](#) ; Lxx - [proskuneo](#)) means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship. The idea is to assume a prostrate position as would in paying homage to royalty (Ge 43:28) or to God (Ge 24:26, Ps 95:6).

Delivered (shut)([05462](#)) [cagar/sagar](#) means "to close, to shut up; to stop: to close up a hole in one's flesh (Gen. 2:21); to shut, to close a door, etc. (Gen. 7:16; 19:6, 10); to shut, enclose something, e.g., Israel in the wilderness terrain (Ex. 14:3); to close the womb from being fertile (1 Sam. 1:5). In its passive uses, it means to be shut, shut up, closed (Num. 12:14, 15; Josh. 6:1; 1 Sam. 23:7; Neh. 13:19; Eccl. 12:4). In its intensive and causative stems, it means to enclose, to deliver over to someone or something (1

Sam. 17:46; 24:18); to give into another's authority or power (Deut. 23:15; 1Sa 23:11; Amos 1:6; Obad. 1:14).

2 Samuel 18:29 The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was."

- **Is it well with the young man Absalom**: Heb. is there peace to, etc. I saw a great. 2Sa 18:19,20,22
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID INQUIRES ABOUT ABSALOM

The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" - In light of the statement **delivered up the men who lifted their hands against** David "cuts to the chase" and asks if the young man Absalom is alright?

And Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was - Ahimaaz is lying for Joab has said "the king's son is dead." (2Sa 18:20).

2 Samuel 18:30 Then the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still.

- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID TELLS AHIMAAZ TO WAIT

Then the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still - Ahimaaz obeys David's command to step aside and wait.

2 Samuel 18:31 **Behold**, the Cushite arrived, and the Cushite said, "Let my lord the king receive good news, for the LORD has freed you this day from the hand of all those who rose up against you."

- **the Lord**: 2Sa 18:19,28 22:48,49 De 32:35,36 Ps 58:10 94:1-4 124:2,3 Lu 18:7,8 Cushi was the man Joab ordered to carry the tidings to David. He was an Ethiopian, as his name signifies, and some think he was so by birth--a black, who waited on Joab, probably one of the ten who had helped to dispatch Absalom; though it was dangerous for one of those to bring the news to David, lest his fate should be the same with theirs that reported the death of Saul and Ishbosheth to him.
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE CUSHITE'S NEWS FROM THE FRONT

Behold, the Cushite arrived, and the Cushite said, "Let my lord the king receive good news, for the LORD has freed you this day from the hand of all those who rose up against you

2 Samuel 18:32 Then the king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And the Cushite answered, "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!"

- **The enemies**: Jdg 5:31 Ps 68:1,2 Da 4:19
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE CUSHITE'S BAD NEWS

Then the king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?"The same question he posed to Ahimaaz, but a different answer.

And the Cushite answered, "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man - The Cushite slowly but definitively informs David of the death of his son Absalom.

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

- **my son:** 2Sa 19:4
- **Would I had died instead:** 2Sa 12:10-23 Ps 103:13 Pr 10:1 17:25 Jas 5:17
- [2 Samuel 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DAVID'S HEART IS DEEPLY SMITTEN

The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son - Note he mentions his son five times, 3 times with the name Absalom.

ESV Study Bible - O Absalom, my son, my son! David is overcome with grief. He has lost another son whom he loved. First he lost Absalom's love and loyalty, and now he has lost Absalom's life and all hope of reconciliation. It is possible that David is beginning to see how God's punishment for his sin with Bathsheba (prophesied by Nathan in 2Sa 12:10-11) has tragically come to pass; but his grief is clouding his sight of his duties toward his loyal troops (2Sa 19:1-8). (Borrow [ESV Study Bible](#))

MacArthur - In spite of all the harm that Absalom had caused, David was preoccupied with his personal loss in a melancholy way that seems to be consistent with his weakness as a father. It was an unwarranted zeal for such a worthless son, and a warning about the pitiful results of sin. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

G Campbell Morgan (borrow [Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#)) - Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!—2 Sam. 18.33.

Following the advice of Hushai, Absalom delayed until he had gathered together a great army. That strategically was his undoing. It gave David time also to gather an army and set them in orderly array. The forces met and fought in the forest of Ephraim. Absalom was slain by Joab, in whose heart there was no pity for him. That his action was warranted from the standpoint of national safety, there can be no doubt. In this hour David's cup of sorrow was filled to the full. Everything in the story leads up to, and culminates in, this wail of anguish over his dead boy. It is very brief, but it thrills with agony. Five times he repeated the words, "my son." This surely had a deeper note in it than that of the merely half-conscious repetition of words occasioned by personal grief. The father recognized how much he was responsible for his son. It is as though he had said: He is indeed my son, his weaknesses are my weaknesses, his passions are my passions, his sins are my sins. Out of that sense there came the deepest cry of all "Would I had died for thee!" Here surely David reached the profoundest moment of his suffering. May none of us ever experimentally enter into its awful consciousness! In order that we may not, we need to ponder all the story carefully, and learn the solemn lessons it teaches of parental responsibility.

Death of a Child

The late Joe Bayly wrote about the death of the young from firsthand experience. He lost three children: one at 18 days, after surgery; another at 5 years, with leukemia; the third at 18 years, after a sledding accident complicated by mild hemophilia. Joe said, "Of all deaths, that of a child is most unnatural and hardest to bear." He did not underestimate the grief of parents. "When a child dies," he added, "part of the parents is buried."

David knew that experience. He had watched his young son Absalom grow up, the boy with the long, flowing hair. Perhaps he had been his favorite. Absalom had certainly shown great promise as a future leader, if not king, of Israel. Then came the tragic incident with Absalom's sister Tamar and his half-brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13:1-14). The young man turned bitter and eventually murdered Amnon (14:23-29). Later he plotted a rebellion against his father, which almost succeeded (2 Sam. 15:1-18:18). Yet despite all that, David mourned his boy's death as though he had been the perfect son. The death of a child is a catastrophic blow even if he has the heart of a rebel.

God understands the pain every parent feels when he or she loses a child. He Himself had to stand apart and watch His beloved Son die on the cross. He walked the same valley of deep sorrow as every grieving parent. And God understands as well when the one you sorrow for has been a wayward son or daughter. Ezekiel 33:11 says, "'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.'" God grieves even when the wicked die.

If you are grieving for a child today, take comfort in God's understanding. He will sustain you through each surge of sorrow. His loving arms will uphold you all along the way. ([Back to the Bible](#))

God is also a grieving parent.