

THE CRY OF A FATHER'S BROKEN HEART

There are some **wonderful promises** in the Word of God that should **bring us great joy**. Here are just a few:
John 14:3 “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; **that where I am, there ye may be also.**” --Jesus is preparing a place for us—and that place is with Him!
Rev 21:4 “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”
Romans 8:18 “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” --Not glory revealed **to** us—what we will see. It will be **in** us!

There are also some incredibly **sad** words recorded in the Bible. “Sad” isn’t really a **strong** enough word; lamentable, mournful, **heart-wrenching** would all probably be more accurate. Jesus uttered at least three:
Mt 23:37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and **ye would not!**”

John 5:39-40 “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. ⁴⁰ And **ye will not come to me**, that ye might have life.”

And probably the most well-known, uttered by Jesus when He was dying on the cross...

Mt 27:46 “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Take your Bibles and turn to II Samuel 18, starting with v 31. This morning we are going to look at this cry of broken-hearted father. First, we’re going to look at who Absalom **was**—and **what led** to his death. And then—while looking at **why** David was so heart-broken—we will consider if a broken-heart is in **our** future for some of the same reasons.

1. *The history behind David’s cry*

A. Who is Absalom?

Five times in v 33 we see David calling Absalom “my son” and he indeed was! David had four wives—and an unknown number of concubines. The Bible gives us the names of nineteen sons and one daughter named Tamar. Absalom was David’s third son and was probably about 29 years old at this time. We will learn more of his character as we go.

B. What happened to Absalom?

The short answer was that he was **killed** in a battle. But the drama and plot are much “thicker” than that. In fact, this historical account reads much like a movie. One man calls it “the most exciting drama in the Bible, and one of the guiltiest and saddest tragedies in human history” (Bible Hub; Greenhough).

Notice v 6. Nothing overly dramatic about that—until you read v 7!

It is important to realize that the kingdom was **not** divided at this time—David was king over all 12 tribes! And yet, we see “the **people of Israel** were slain before the **servants of David.**” In other words, a civil war was taking place. **Why?** Because David’s son Absalom was **leading a revolt to kill David** and take over the kingdom! Notice, too, that 20,000 of God’s people lost their lives fighting **each other** on that day!

Absalom, however, was **not supposed to be one of them!** Notice v 5. David’s 3 captains were instructed to “deal gently” with Absalom—meaning they were to spare his life. “And **all the people** heard when the king gave **all the captains** charge concerning Absalom.”

--In v 9, Absalom’s head gets stuck in the trees and the mule he was riding keeps going, leaving him hanging

--In v 10, a soldier tells Joab that Absalom was stuck in a tree

--In v 11, Joab asks him why he didn’t kill Absalom and that he would have rewarded him for doing so.

Notice the man’s response in v 12. “...in our hearing the king charged **thee** and Abishai and Ittai...”

Now v 14 “Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee.” In essence, he was saying ‘I’m not going to waste any more of my time trying to reason with you!’

And so Joab thrust 3 “darts”—probably sharp sticks—into Absalom’s heart while he was hanging from the tree. Then in v 15 we see Joab having his ten armor-bearers “finish him off.” They surrounded him, smote him, and killed him. Then Joab blows the trumpet (v 16) and David’s men stop pursuing the followers of Absalom. The fighting stops and the war is over, but Absalom—and 20,000 others—are now dead!

Next, let’s consider... C. How did we get to this point?

So far we’ve learned that Absalom was David’s son—that led a revolt against his own father—who was killed by one of David’s captains against the instructions and wishes of David. So **how** did we get to this point? It is here where we really begin to see the **character** of Absalom. It is here where we see that Absalom—like another well known guy whose name starts with “A”—is a “complicated fella.”

i. Absalom was cunning and persuasive

Turn to II Sam 13, v 22. **Amnon** was David’s oldest son—and Absalom’s half-brother—who had “forced” Absalom’s “full” sister. Absalom “kept his cool,” though, and gave no indication that he was planning revenge.

--v 23 Two yrs later he invited the king and **all** the king’s sons for sheep shearing—time of celebration.

--v 25 David says ‘No; that would be too much of a burden on you.’

“And he [Absalom] **pressed** him.” Absalom was really pleading with his father and trying to persuade him.

--In vs 26-27, we see Absalom again **pressing** David to “let Amnon and all the king’s sons go with him.”

If it was **just Amnon**, it might look suspicious. David gives permission and **all the sons** go up to this feast.

--Notice mid of v 28. “...when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then **kill him**, fear not...”

And that is exactly what happened! Then what? In v 38 we see Absalom fleeing to Geshur for 3 yrs.

ii. Absalom was impatient

Now chapter 14, v 1. Joab—the same Joab who later disobeyed the king and killed Absalom—“perceived that the king’s heart was toward Absalom”—meaning that David wanted him back.

--Jump ahead to v 23. Joab goes to Geshur and brings Absalom back to Jerusalem.

Notice David’s instruction in v 24 “Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king’s face.”

--Now v 28. “So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king’s face.”

In v 29 we see that Absalom sent for Joab—David’s top military commander and the man who had brought him back—**two** different times. Joab didn’t respond **either** time so Absalom did something that he **knew** would **get Joab’s attention**—set **his barley field on fire**! Sure enough, Absalom got what he wanted—a visit from Joab!

iii. Absalom was self-serving

We see that in chapter 15. For the sake of time we need to skip some, but look at verses 4: “Oh that I were made judge...that every man with a problem would come to me...and I would do him justice!”

--In v 5 we see Absalom “buttering up” those who bowed before him and in v 6 we see that Absalom “stole the hearts of the men of Israel.” Why? Because he wanted to be king!

iv. Absalom was deceptive

Verse 7 “And I came to pass after **forty** years....” Nearly all the commentaries you read will point out that this is probably a copyist’s error. David only reigned forty years **total** and some of the older texts have **four** years—which makes much more sense. Four years **after what**? Probably Absalom’s return to Jerusalem.

What did Absalom tell David he wanted to do? **Go to Hebron** to offer a sacrifice as part of a vow he had made. Absalom **lied to David**, though, because he was going to Hebron to **proclaim himself king**—not pay a vow he had made to God! We see that in v 10: ‘when you hear the trumpet,’ say, “Absalom reigneth in Hebron.”

David was not the only one Absalom deceived, however. Look at v 11. “And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they **went in their simplicity**, and they **knew not any thing**.” Can you imagine? ‘Hey you guys, come to Hebron with me!’ And they did, but had no idea they had just become part of a revolt to overthrow King David!

Enough of the history behind David's cry. Let's consider next...**2. The heart of a father in David's cry**
Let's consider again David's cry in 18:33 "And the king was **much moved**, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and **wept**: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! **would God I had died for thee**, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Why such **anguish**? Why such a **pitiful** lament? Was it just from the news that he had lost **another** son—the **third** that we know of—or is there **more to** it than that? There is more—much more—and David's anguish was for reasons that **could be true of any one** of us that are fathers.

So what are the **possible** reasons? I say "**possible**" reasons because there isn't a verse that says, 'Here is why David mourned so deeply.' We have some hints, though, and that is what I'd like us to consider next.

First... A. David's failure to correct when correction was due

Why do I say that? Because we have multiple instances in this account where David failed to do what he should have done both as a father and as a king.

i. Failed to correct Amnon

Back to II Sam 13:21. "But when kind David heard of all these things..." What things? That Amnon—one of his sons—had violated his own sister! What was David's reaction? "He was very wroth."

What did he **do about** it? Nothing—except get angry! What **should he have done** about it?

Lev 20:17 "And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing; and they shall be **cut off in the sight of their people**: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity."

According to the law, Amnon should have been **put to death**. Not only did David fail to do that, but it seems he also failed to even **reprimand** him!

ii. Failed to correct Absalom

Same chapter—but **two years later**—we see Absalom taking things into his own hands and killing his half-brother Amnon (v 28). How did David react? What did he do?

--End of v 37 "And David mourned for his son every day." (Meaning he mourned for Amnon, the one who had been killed). What was David's response to Absalom? Again, he did **nothing**!

Part of David's anguish, then, was due to his **failure as a father**. He failed to correct his sons—he let their sin go unpunished—and part of his laxity and permissiveness led to Absalom becoming cunning, deceptive, rebellious, revengeful, and self-serving!

But why? Why did David have a hard time correcting his sons? Really not all that hard to figure out, is it?

It was because of... B. David's own evil example

Think about it! How could David want **Amnon punished** for wrongfully **forcing himself** on a woman when David himself had done the same thing with Bathsheba?

And how could David want **Absalom punished** for **murdering his brother** when David had orchestrated the murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah?

David's own evil example was being **imitated** by his sons and it was extremely difficult for him to insist on punishment **for them** when he had **led them** down the very path! Oh the heart cry of a father who has failed to lead by example and has brought about—to a certain degree—the destruction of their own children!

How important it is to remember that our **example** speaks volumes and often has more influence than our words! "Our **talk** talks—and our **walk** talks—but our **walk** talks louder than our **talk** talks!"

I must say this, though—do not wait until you are **perfect** to correct your children because you will never be!

Failure to be a good example is **not an excuse** for failure to correct. **Two wrongs** do not make a right! Ask your children for forgiveness in failing to be a good example—then correct them!

Why was David broken-hearted? Was it just because he had failed to correct Absalom and failed to be a good example to him? No; I believe there is yet a third reason and it is this:

C. David's possible failure to fully forgive

We're still in chapter 13, look again at v 38. Absalom had fled to Geshur after killing his brother and was there 3 years. Now v 39 "And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead."

The passing of time had healed his grief over the loss of Amnon and now he wanted a restored relationship with Absalom. Joab orchestrated the return of Absalom to Jerusalem, but David gave this stipulation found in 14:24 "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face."

Why—and so what? This is where things get a bit complicated because David was in a catch 22. He **wanted his son back** but didn't want others to think that **he approved** of what Absalom had done. So he brought him back to the city, but did not allow him the special privileges that the king's sons usually enjoyed.

Was this a **lack of forgiveness** on David's part? Absalom sure thought so! Remember the barley field incident? Absalom set Joab's field on fire so Joab would relay a message to the king. What was the message? Look at II Sam 14:32 (middle): "Wherefore am I come from Geshur? It had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me."

In essence, Absalom was saying David's half-hearted forgiveness was worse than being banished out of the city altogether. Did he say this because he loved his father so much that their strained relationship pained him? And did Absalom **mean it** when he said, "...if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me?"

I don't believe so for several reasons:

- 1) If David wanted Absalom killed, he would have done it way before this.
- 2) Absalom believed David loved him too much and didn't want to lose another son.
- 3) Absalom probably believed he didn't do anything wrong in killing Amnon.
- 4) Absalom was well liked by the people. V 25 "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty..."

Back to a question I asked earlier—Did Absalom **love his father** so much that their strained relationship **pained** him? His actions say, "**NO!**" In v 33, he bows down to the king as a **sign of respect**, but shortly thereafter he is **stealing the hearts** of the people away from David—and unto himself! Absalom needed David's favor to gain the favor of the people, and now that he got it, he doesn't care about his relationship w/ his father!

What led to David's anguish and mournful lament? He undoubtedly felt the weight of being a contributor to Absalom's rebellious nature by his failure to discipline and failure in example. And yet, I believe there is one more reason for David's tears: D. Absalom's failure to repent

Not one time in this account covering 6 chapters is there **any mention** of remorse or repentance on the part of Absalom. He died a **rebel**; a rebel against his father and king—and ultimately a rebel against God!

--And David understood that even though he had failed in many ways as both a father and king, Absalom still **could have humbled himself** before God and repented—but he did not!

--I think that explains best why David would say, "would God **I had died for thee**, O Absalom..." It is as if David is saying, "I would have rather died instead of you—in your place—because I am ready to meet God—and you are not!"

--And it is here that we see not **only** the picture of a broken-hearted **father**, but a picture of the **broken heart of God!**

--Like David, God **bears long** with those who deserve punishment

--Like David, God is **ready and willing** to forgive those that repent

--Like David, God "kisses"—with His goodness—those who are against Him! He lets the wicked live—even though they curse Him and deny Him!

But God's love is **greater** than David's, isn't it? It is **more than** a love that just **says**, "I **wish** I had died for thee." Instead, it is a love where One **did** die for thee—and His name is Jesus! Greenhough writes: "And **through Jesus** we preach to everyone a **fatherly** God, a **tearful** God, a **cross-bearing** God, a God whose pity is beyond all our measurement, whose **forgiveness is greater** than man's greatest sin."

But you must **come to Him** through Jesus to be forgiven. Have you done that?

So what would God have us do in light of His word this morning?

1. First and foremost, just as David wanted a restored relationship with his son, God wants a relationship with us. But just like it required repentance from Absalom, it requires repentance from us.

--We need to see our sin and want forgiveness—not be hard-hearted like Absalom.

--And we need to come to God in God's way—through Jesus.

Have you done that?

2. First, realize that our example matters and impacts those around us. It doesn't matter if we are a father...or mother; young or old—our **walk** talks! How is your example?

3. Each of us is accountable to God—regardless of how we were raised! Don't use your upbringing as an excuse to do wrong!

4. We can't go back and "un-do" our failures as parents, but we can have forgiveness from God and His help going forward!