

Collateral Damage
2 Samuel 18
November 21, 2021

1. _____ (18:1-5)

2. _____ (18:6-18)

3. _____ (18:19-32)

4. _____ (18:33)

5. Applying the Word

a. Grief is _____.

b. Personal sin has _____ damage.

c. Be _____ but don't _____.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on 2 Samuel 18

- Trace some of the history of Absalom and David's relationship starting in chapter 13.
 - 13:1 – What was Absalom's relationship to Tamar?
 - 13:14 – What horrible wrong did Amnon commit with Tamar?
 - 13:20-21 – How did Absalom and David initially respond?
 - 13:28 – What action did Absalom take later?
 - 13:37-38 – What did Absalom do then? What emotions was David wrestling with?
 - 14:24 , 28, 32-33 – After Absalom returned, what relationship did he have with David?
 - 15:1-6 – How did Absalom initiate a rebellion against David?
 - How does this backstory explain David's complicated grief over Absalom's death?
- How does Psalm 3:1-8 explain David's perspective while he fled from Absalom?
- How do the following passages shape our theological understanding of Absalom's rise and fall?
 - 2 Samuel 7:12-13
 - 2 Samuel 12:10-11a
 - 2 Samuel 17:14b
- If we see "collateral damage" from our own personal sin, what perspective should we have on that damage? How can we recognize the damage without despairing because of it?
- Have you ever experienced "complicated grief" when someone died? What was complicated about it? What advice would you give someone who is sorting through complicated grief?
- Why does the Bible describe such complicated characters with all of their sinful actions and attitudes? Consider what we've seen with David, Absalom, and Joab. What purpose is accomplished by including these details?

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Big idea: As predicted, trouble came from David's house but the Lord still preserved his throne.

Intro

Three passages shape our understanding of the unfolding messy drama of the second half of 2nd Samuel

2 Samuel 7:12-13 "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. "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

God promises do establish the throne of David forever through his descendant

2 Samuel 12:10-11a 'Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' ¹¹ "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household;

God warns that a rippling, collateral damage that will come from David's sin was violence in his home and evil raised up against David from his own household.

That happened beginning in the very next chapter as one son took the life of another after that son had assaulted his sister.

2 Samuel 17:14b For the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring calamity on Absalom.

God was actively working against Absalom to stop Him from taking the throne. While the narrative is chaotic and messy, God is still on His throne.

1. **Preparation** (18:1-5)

a. What led up to this battle?

i. Chapter 13

1. Brutal chapter in which one of David's sons, Amnon, rapes his half-sister, Tamar.
 - a. The Bible presses into the situations of real life, including the horror of assault and the dynamics that make it possible as people around the incident fail to protect and care for Tamar.
2. David learns of it, is angry, but takes no action.
3. Absalom takes revenge and kills Amnon 2 years later.
4. Absalom flees and is away for 3 years, David longs to see him.

ii. Chapter 14

1. Joab uses a widow to convince David he should bring back Absalom. In a parallel to Nathan, she uses a false narrative from her own life to convict David that he should bring back Absalom
2. David does bring back Absalom, but he doesn't allow him to see his face for 2 years.
3. Absalom convinces Joab to send him to David, which he does and David restored him after Absalom bows before David

iii. Chapter 15

1. Absalom steals the hearts of the people through manipulation

a. Read 2 Samuel 15:1-6

- i. He gathered an initial group of people around him (50 men).
- ii. He subtly attacked the king's character and directed people to himself instead.
- iii. He treated people with flattering affection.
- iv. In all of this he "stole away the hearts of the men of Israel."
- v. This can be how division happens in businesses, churches, non-profits today.

2. Absalom is proclaimed king in Hebron

3. David fled Jerusalem before he could be overtaken and killed

iv. Chapter 16

1. David flees

2. Shimei curses David but David allows it

b. David is in a city called Mahanaim on the eastern side of the Jordan river.

- i. Describe this by using the worship center as a "map": Pulpit the Sea of Galilee, middle aisle the Jordan River, lobby the Dead sea, Jerusalem would be to my right and the Mediterranean would be by the wall. Mahanaim would be to my left.

c. The soldiers are divided up under Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gittite

- i. They don't want David out there because they recognize his importance. Absalom's troops do not share that concern and Absalom falls as a result.

d. David gives a word of instruction for the leaders to deal gently with Absalom.

- i. This is the man who has tried to take the kingdom through manipulation and deceit, that has David on the run, that will lead to the death of many of his soldiers – and he tells them to deal gently with him?

ii. That will play

iii. Joab will later confront David on this

1. **2 Samuel 19:6** by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased.

2. Family is complicated. Imagine what their Thanksgiving dinner was like!

2. **Description** (18:6-18)

a. The battle itself is given only 2 verses.

- i. It's a quick summary – thick forest, 20,000 died – more by the forest than by the sword.

b. Absalom's fate is given much more attention.

i. This is where the author's interest lies – with Absalom.

ii. He is an example of how the forest devoured more people than the sword.

iii. His head – perhaps his hair – is caught up in the branches of a tree and he is alive but unable to get himself out.

1. We're told in chapter 14 about his thick head of hair that would weigh about 5 lbs when it was cut every year. Perhaps foreshadowing of this event.
- c. Joab disobeys David and kills Absalom
- i. A soldier saw Absalom but refused to kill him because of David's request.
 - ii. Disgusted, Joab goes and stabs Absalom and then leaves his armor bearers to finish him off, perhaps so the blame wouldn't fall on him.
 - iii. Joab is a brutal, violent man of practical action throughout 2 Samuel
 1. He deceptively kills Abner by stabbing him in the belly in the city gates in ch 3 and does an identical act in ch 20 with Amasa
 2. He obeys David's command to have Uriah the Hittite killed in ch 11
 3. He manipulates and convinces David to take back Absalom in ch 14
 4. He kills Absalom in ch 18
 5. He seems to protect a messenger by not wanting him to carry the bad news to David in the next section
 6. He berates David for his grief over Absalom in ch 19
 - iv. Joab is the one in control of this situation, but it doesn't mean he is handling everything right.
 1. **1 Kings 2:5-6** "Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also shed the blood of war in peace. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet. ⁶ "So act according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to Sheol in peace.
 2. **1 Kings 2:31-32** ³¹ The king said to him, "Do as he has spoken and fall upon him and bury him, that you may remove from me and from my father's house the blood which Joab shed without cause. ³² "The LORD will return his blood on his own head, because he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he and killed them with the sword, while my father David did not know *it*: Abner the son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah.
 - v. Joab is included in all his complicated mess because he's a real person and the Bible describes real events. The Bible isn't for perfect people, it's for real, messy people in real, messy, tragic situations.
- d. Absalom's body is cast into a pit and covered in stones, a burial that was used to signify dishonor.
- i. Compared and contrasted with the pillar he built to his own name.
3. **Communication** (18:19-32)
- a. Somewhat surprising and confusing story of how the news was relayed to David.
 - i. It heightens suspense as the read is allowed to feel the tension that David would feel as he awaits news.
 - b. Ahimaaz wanted to carry the news about the battle but Joab refused to send him, perhaps to protect him from being associated with the news about Absalom that was sure to bother David.
 - c. "The Cushite" was from a people group in modern day Sudan. He was sent with the message.

- d. Ahimaaz begged to be let to go as well, Joab relented, Ahimaaz passed him up by going a longer but faster route.
- e. A watchman sees a runner coming and assumes it is good news because it's a single messenger not a whole army fleeing in retreat.
- f. David assumes, without good reason, that he brings good news because he's a good man.
- g. The news is good from a military and national perspective, but not from David's perspective.

4. **Reaction** (18:33)

- a. David gives an anguished cry at the death of his son.
- b. Likely loaded with guilt from his own past that had a role in leading to this event.
- c. **2 Samuel 12:10** 'Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'
 - i. It is David's guilt that inflames his grief.
 - ii. His infant son died.
 - iii. Amon was murdered (ch 13)
 - iv. Absalom perished.
 - v. David knew that his sin had set the sword loose in his household.

5. Applying the Word

- a. Grief is **complicated**.
 - i. How do you mourn a complicated passing?
 - 1. An abusive father; an estranged child, an ex-spouse
 - 2. Often there are layers of loss – including a sense of loss of what “could have been” if only the relationship would have been different.
 - ii. We bring all this complicated pain to the Lord and are honest with him about it, asking him to help us sort through our grief, to help us own any contribution on our side.
- b. Personal sin has **collateral** damage.
 - i. David's choices rippled out in ways he couldn't anticipate or control.
 - ii. We can choose our sins but we can't choose our consequences.
 - iii. However, Absalom was making his own choices.
 - 1. A parent with a wayward adult child needs to come to grips with that.
 - 2. They may look back honestly at their own parenting and see ways in which they blew it. There are not perfect parents and as a parent sees their mistakes, they should acknowledge it to the Lord and maybe to the child, if appropriate.
 - 3. Saying that applies to lots of areas of life –
 - a. When is the best time to plant a tree? 20 years ago. When is the second-best time? Today
 - i. You might wish that you knew 20 years ago what you know now, but you can't change that. Obey the Lord today in those relationships.

4. But they also need to recognize that their child is an individual making their own choices.
- iv. At our Thanksgiving dinner as a church, Kevin Pettit had a great comment about applying Galatians 1:15-16 to a situation like that.
 1. **Galatians 1:15-16a** But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles ...
- c. Be **warned** but don't **wallow**.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.
 - ii. God forgives, washes, sanctifies, justifies ... in Jesus.
 - iii. Collateral damage doesn't automatically go away, but in His kindness He often restores or rebuilds in beautiful and surprising ways.



1

2 Samuel 7:12-13 "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. "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

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2 Samuel 17:14b For the **LORD had ordained** to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the **LORD might bring calamity on Absalom.**

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1. Preparation (18:1-5)

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2 Samuel 19:6 by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased.

6

2. Description (18:6-18)

7

1 Kings 2:5 "Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also shed the blood of war in peace. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet.

8

3. Communication
(18:19-32)

9

4. Reaction (18:33)

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5. Applying the Word

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a. Grief is complicated.

12

b. Personal sin has *collateral* damage.

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Galatians 1:15-16a But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles ...

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c. Be *warned* but don't *wallow*.

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1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

16

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ¹¹ Such **were** some of you; but you were **washed**, but you were **sanctified**, but you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.