**KING DAVID VS FATHER DAVID**

**(DAVID’S MOURNING FOR HIS SON ABSALOM)**

**2 Samuel 18:1-19:8 (Key verse 18:33)**

Last year, I delivered a message of 2 Samuel chapter 11, which showed the series of David’s sins. According to one of the bible references, chapter 11 is the beginning of trouble in David’s life after being full of blessings and victories from God (2 Sam 8:14b). Here is a brief overview of his troubles. 2 Samuel 11–12 – trouble with David himself, 2 Samuel 13–18 – trouble with his family and 2 Samuel 19–20 – trouble with his nation. David's adultery sin(ch11) damaged his family relationships and weakened his leadership as a king of Israel (ch15-20). It was a cause-and-effect relationship - David's adultery sin broke down his family relationships and the seed of Absalom's rebellion.

Today’s passage is the highlight of David’s trouble with a family, his son Absalom. Absalom's desire for power and his rebellion to father led to his own downfall, ultimately tragic death. Under God’s plan, the battle between king David and traitor Absalom resulted in Absalom’s death. But when David heard about the news of victory, he acted as if they lost the battle because of the loss of his son. Father David deeply mourned the rebellious son’s death even though that son had betrayed him. David’s unconditional love showed us God’s unfailing love toward all sinners who are against God.

Through today’s passage. I want to study **first, how God had worked David’s life in the middle of battle with his son**, **second God’s forgiving love for sinners through David’s forgiving love for Absalom.**

Let’s wrap up Chapter 17 briefly. Look at verse 17:14. **“The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom”.** Absalom had two military advice from Ahithophel and Hushai. If Absalom had picked Ahithophel’s one, the battle would have ended with Absalom’s victory. However, God intervened in the situation to ensure that Ahithophel's advice was not followed even though it may have been more strategically effective. God was working behind the scenes to fulfill his plan and purposes through David’s life. By help of God’s divine intervention, David and all his people safely crossed the Jordan river without the sudden attack from Absalom, and Absalom also crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. And now ready for the battle in the forest of Ephraim.

**Now look at verse 18:1-4.** David prepared to engage in battle against Absalom's forces. He wanted to avoid this war as much as he could, but he could not flee any more, he had to fight with the army of his son to maintain his kingship. He organized his troops into three divisions and appointed commanders over them and he told the troops, **“I myself will surely march out with you.”.** He might have learned a lesson from chapter 11. When he remained while his armies went to battle, he encountered temptation without any warning signs. David intended to fight with his armies. However, David’s soldiers are very royal and wise who recognized David’s worth and the importance of his survival for this war. They advised him not to personally join the battle, because if something happened to David, it would be a significant matter in this war. David was willing to listen to their advice and agreed to support them at the back rather than risking his own life on the battlefield.

Look at verse 5.  **The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.**

As a final speech to encourage his soldiers before they go into battle, it looked very strange. Last week, it was kind of happening, but there was an uprising against Russian government by a mercenary leader Prigozhin, and the Russian military leader warned they would be crushed like a bug. In common sense, David should have told them in this way to encourage them.

However, David told them to **deal gently with Absalom** despite his rebellion, for David's sake. David showed his love and mercy toward his son and expressed his desire to avoid Absalom’s death in the upcoming battle. David’s words included his hope for Absalom’s survival, and his repent of sinful pride and restore father-son relationship. If it was possible, he wanted to have a peaceful resolution with Absalom rather than any bloodshed and loss of life.

In these moments, David acted as a father, not as a king of one nation. He acted like all other parents, who doesn’t want to see their children’s death regardless of their previous life. But as a king of one nation, David's command was not acceptable. Absalom was a traitor who rebelled against the nation and was a serious threat to David's life and his nation.

However, the following event was totally different from what David had desired, Absalom eventually faced a tragic death during the battle. Look at verse 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 hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.”**

Absalom's long hair was the symbol of his pride and handsome appearance (2 Samuel 4:25-26), but ironically, now it became the direct reason for his downfall.

When we see Absalom’s life, his obsession with praise from others, his pride, ambition, and hunger for power ultimately led to his downfall. His sinful pride blinded him to not recognize his mistakes, shortcomings. It prevented him from having humbled himself and returning to his father, asking forgiveness from David. He remained proud and unrepentant until his death.

The story of Absalom gives us a warning message about the dangers of excessive pride and ambition. Pride can easily sneak into our lives and tempt us to think highly of ourselves (I am the best). Pride leads us to prioritize only our own desires. Especially, as young people, we are easy to take pride in what we have – our beauty, intelligence, abilities, good school, good occupation, even many SNS followers these days. But it is important for us to cultivate humility and recognize that our true value comes from our character, integrity, and most of all relationship with God, rather than external accomplishments or appearances. May God help our young people to learn the importance of humility, acknowledging our shortcoming, and turning back to God with humble attitude through Absalom’s story.

The story of Absalom also teaches us the importance of respecting authority, in this passage “parents”. Absalom refused to submit to David’s authority both father and king. This was a direct violation of one of ten commandments to honor parents (Exodus 20:12). The Bible clearly commands us to honor our parents. Respecting parents is an act of obedience to God. Most of us here, we were rebellious to our parents when we were young. And some of our young people, especially teenagers, maybe rebellious to your parents with harsh words, disregard, and indifference. Some psychologists say teenage rebellion is a part of social development in order for them to develop an identity.

But we should remember respecting / obeying parents brings blessings to our lives with healthy relationship with them. I pray that our young people may have love, respect, obedience, and gratitude to their parents by asking their prayer and guidance. So that we may build strong foundations for our families between parents and children in our church.

***Let’s go back to the battlefield.*** There was an argument between Joab and one of his soldiers who saw Absalom’s hair caught in the tree and became a very easy target like “A rat in the trap”. Like Hamlet’s speech “To be or not to be, that is the question”, this situation was like “To kill or not, that is the question”.

**Let’s look at verse 11. “Joab said to the man who had told him this, “What! You saw him? Why didn’t you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warrior’s belt.”**

**And look at verse 12-13. “But the man replied, “Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king’s son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.  And if I had put my life in jeopardy—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have kept your distance from me.”**

As one of the soldiers mentioned, David gave them a special order about Absalom – “**‘Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.”** Despite David's instructions to deal gently with Absalom, Joab took the opportunity to strike him. He thrust three spears into Absalom's heart, killing him by disregarding David’s command.

Do you think this decision made by Joab to kill Absalom against the order of King David is right? It is not easy to say good or bad, right or wrong decision if we consider David’s reality.

Here are some reasons against Joab's decision. (1) 1. Violation of God's commandments, "You shall not murder." (2) lack of respect for the authority and leadership that God had placed in David (3) Missed opportunity for reconciliation and restoration between David and Absalom.

On the other hand, here are other reasons for supporting Joab's decision. (1) Protection of the kingdom and the people by eliminating the threat, Absalom. (2) defense of the king David’s life and ensuring the safety of the King who was chosen by God (3) Upholding justice and consequences for Absalom’s sins and as an act of maintaining the law.

What do you think? Which reasons are more reasonable? And right in the sight of God? I think Joab should not have killed him though Absalom was an enemy of enemy in this battle. He should have obeyed David's command and left the results to God about Absalom’s life-or-death. Anyway, the Absalom’s coup d'etat ended in failure with miserable death. He died without honor. After losing their leader, all the Israelites fled to their homes, David’s army made a shout of triumph.

**From verse 19 – 33,** the news of Absalom's death reached David through a series of messengers. First, Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok the priest, expressed his desire to bring news of the battle's result to King David. However, Joab instructed a Cushite to go and deliver the message instead. Ahimaaz persisted and asked for permission to run alongside the Cushite. Joab allowed him to go but warned him that he would not be able to bring any significant news. As the Cushite started running, Ahimaaz took a different route, outran the Cushite, and reached David first.

Upon Ahimaaz's arrival, David eagerly asked for news about the battle. Ahimaaz, being cautious and aware of Absalom's rebellion, only mentioned the victory but did not specifically mention Absalom's death. David inquired further, asking about Absalom's safety. Ahimaaz then mentioned that he saw a great confusion but didn't know the details. At this point, the Cushite arrived, and he confirmed Absalom’s death.

When hearing this, David was deeply distressed**. Loot at verse 33. “The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!””**

When David received the news of Absalom's death, he was distressed and wept bitterly, mourning the loss of his son. Despite Absalom's rebellion, David still loved him as his son, lamented the death of Absalom.

David had hoped to reconcile the relationship with his son if Absalom came back to him. David had hoped Absalom have a chance to repent his sin against God. He wanted to heal Absalom’s wounded heart that had led to rebellion. But he couldn’t do anything for Absalom. David deeply grieved Absalom’s death not only in rebellion against himself but also in rebellion against God.

David's love for Absalom is shown throughout the chapter (2 Samuel 18:5,29,32,33). His actions showed us God's forgiveness of our sins, God's unconditional love for us as his children. No matter how much we may rebel against God or turn away from him, he is always willing to forgive us when we come back to him like in the parable of prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).

David's deep grief **– If only I had died instead of you** – showed his longing for reconciliation with Absalom despite of all his rebellion in the past. As we look at David's cry, "**If only I had died instead of you,"** it remined us of God’s grace through our Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ willingly died in our place on the cross. Just as David was willing to lay down his life for his son, Jesus was willing to lay down his life for us. He took punishment for our sins on the cross, offering us the gift of eternal life through his sacrifice. Paul says “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)”. We should remember wonderful gift of forgiveness that Jesus has offered us, extend love of forgiveness to others.

We all know how difficult it is for us to forgive others, especially people who are against us. Bitterness and unforgiveness can lead us unhealthy relationships with God and others. But we are called to love others as God loves us, even it may be difficult or painful. Because of our sinful nature, we hate others easily, but are reluctant to forgive them. May God help us to have heart of forgiveness, extending grace to others as Jesus did for us.

**Here is my personal reflection**. When I was 7 years old in 1985, my parents got divorced, and neither of them would take care of my sister nor me. I hated my family situation, especially my parents who had left us irresponsibly. I was ashamed of myself when I compared myself to friends. The more I grow up, my heart was getting filled with hatred mind toward my parents.

However, Jesus healed my wounded heart through the word of God, most of all, God helped me to see myself as selfish sinner before him and accept God’s forgiveness of all my sins. God helped me to accept Jesus who was on the cross for my all sins. When I accepted God’s love and his forgiveness, he helped me to overcome hatred mind to my parents, and to have the mind of forgiveness to them. Unless Jesus had been my shepherd, I would have suffered from hatred heart against my parents. But Jesus’ forgiveness of my sins brough healing and restoration to my relationships with my mother. God helped me to grow in faith, and in 2010, I could meet my mother again, and when I met her, I didn’t have any anger or bitterness against her, since then I have maintained good relationship with her, and I am praying for her to believe Jesus in God’s time.

**Lastly, look at chapter 19:1-8.** Verse 1 starts with David mourning the death of Absalom, showing his deep sorrow over the loss of his son. However, David's mourning was too much for his soldiers who sacrificed their life for him against Absalom. It was the time for them to praise God who gave them wonderful victory; however, God’s victory was overshadowed by David’s grief. Joab confronted David and rebuked him for his excessive grief, reminding him of the sacrifice made by his loyal soldiers. David took the advice of Joab and went to the city gate to encourage his soldiers. David should have known his personal emotion could affect his people. He needed to make balance his personal grief and his responsibilities as a leader for Israel.

**Conclusion:** As I mentioned in the beginning of message, I prayed for us to study through today’s passage. 1) how God have worked David’s life in the middle of battle with his son, 2) God’s forgiving love for sinners through David’s mourning. Do you remember 2 Samuel 15:25. **“Then the king said to Zadok, “Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the Lord’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again.”** This was David’s confession of faith before God in the time of difficulty. He showed great confidence and full commitment to God’s sovereignty in the battle with Absalom. In the middle of uncertain situation, God was still in control of David's life. As a result of the battle, David was able to go back to God’s dwelling place again exactly as he prayed before God.

Also, forgiving someone who hurt us is not easy. But by forgiving others, we can demonstrate God’s love to others, experience freedom from unnecessary negative emotions, such as anger, bitterness, and resentment. May God help us to practice God’s love, especially practice forgiveness to others, so that we may have healthy relationship with God and others, such as family members, church members and friends at school and at work.