

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A Rough Ride Home II Samuel 19

Intro: Verses 1-8 are really a continuance of the events of ch18: the demise of Absalom & David's breakdown of grief. We noted that David's grief over Absalom's death was aggravated by his own guilt over the sin that usher in this disaster. We can understand David's grief over losing yet another son but the passion & extent of his grief is surprising to us in light of all the pain & destruction Absalom had caused David. None of us have experienced similar events (royal) so we can excuse our lack of comparable empathy but there's a better reason why David's response surprises us. We've known Absalom was toast all along, at least from 17:14b. It was YAYWEH's intention that Absalom be taken out.

That's why David's command in 18:5 is so unsettling. How can David's supporters deal gently with Absalom when YAYWEH intends disaster for him? Which will come out on top, YAYWEH's **sovereignty** or David's **sentimentality**? We know the answer: for David to receive deliverance; Absalom **must** meet with disaster, there was no middle ground.

It's the same with sin in the believer's life. We can't continue to beg & plead for deliverance if we're not willing to lose not just the sin but all the little indulgences that tend to lead to that sin. "There's nothing wrong or evil about this particular thing." Sure, but if that particular thing has a tendency to lead you to that particular sin, to be rid of the 1 you must be willing to be rid of the other too. It's like going in for cancer surgery & asking the surgeon to "deal gently" with my cancer: take most of the tumor but leave a bit behind; after all, it is part of me & I would hate to lose it all.

1-7- David voiced his grief from the time the Cushite delivered the message until the entire army returned from the battle field. As we can see, David's grief cast a pall of shame over the returning fighters. What should have been a day of celebration for them turned into a time of confusion & embarrassment. The soldiers slinked back into town as tho they had been defeated. They'd risked their lives for David & Israel but now they felt like common criminals.

Once again, Joab must take action in the face of David's inaction; he goes in & reads the riot act to David. Joab knows, even if David has forgotten, that a leader must still lead, even if their heart is broken. Great responsibility cuts both ways: yes, David was Absalom's father; but he was also Israel's appointed king & mourning could wait. If David doesn't do right by his faithful supporters then

soon enough, what little support he has will vanish & he'll be all alone. David's problem wasn't in what he knew (Absalom dead) but in what he **forgot**: YAYWEH's still in control, a great victory was won, he had many loyal supporters & YAYWEH showed great grace & mercy towards him.

8- This is what the people needed to see; this told them that their sacrifice was worth it & was appreciated by David.

The rest of ch19 deals with David's return to Jerusalem. Oddly enough, it's not as smooth a ride as 1 might expect. Sure, David is still Israel's anointed king but up to 20 minutes ago, the vast majority of Israel didn't care if David lived or died! David must now set aside his warrior persona & take up the persona of a statesman because: there are some fences that need mending. David must tread lightly here & be prepared to extend as much grace as he has received. David will return home as king but it seems the kingdom is about to crumble in his hands.

9-13- It didn't take Israel long to recognize the power vacuum caused by Absalom's death. "Clearly, we picked the wrong horse but we still have an experienced monarch in David, why not bring him back?" David must have had his focus groups & pollsters checking the national pulse because it seems he got wind of this sentiment in no time. But, in all of this talk, David noticed that there hadn't been a response from Judah & he sends the 2 priests to go find out why.

In his message to Judah, David appeals to their: **pride** (*last*); **relationship** (*brethren*) & **anxieties** (*Amasa*). The last was a sign to those in Judah who had supported Absalom that they need not fear David's wrath. Why did David make this great concession? What else could he do? He had to have some assurance of Judah's allegiance. He couldn't return without Judah's support. Yes, they were his own tribe but Absalom's revolt began in Hebron – in the heart of Judah! That couldn't have happened without massive Judean support. Ahithophel was from Judah as was Amasa (Absalom's general). Since Absalom had won such significant support from Judah it was logical for them to assume that David's return to the throne wouldn't be all fun & games for them (**trepidation**). Maybe that's why David hadn't heard from them, they feared he'd return with a sword not a scepter. David's gracious concession did the trick!

14-15- David still had the old magic. He used this approach because he wanted his kingdom to be united & unity can't be **forced**; thus, their hearts had to be **swayed**. Sure, he offered **reason & logic** but in the end, **grace** won the day.

Then- David wouldn't return as king until he was welcomed, until hearts were swayed to receive him. In a similar way, the Son of David, Jesus Christ, will not **force** His reign on anyone. He must be welcomed into our hearts & lives because He will not **force** our hearts to respond to Him. But, tho He won't **force** us, He will attempt to **sway** our hearts. Despite man's determined rebellion; by His grace & thru the work of the Word of God & the Holy Spirit of God; 1-by-1 He is swaying the hearts of men, women, boys & girls all around this world into receiving Him as their anointed King!

When David escaped Jerusalem, he met several people along the way. Same thing happens on his way back home.

16-23- Shimei: Israel's loudest heckler. Sure, this guy is a snake but even snakes want to live. Note: he's the 1st to approach the king, prostrating himself before David. Apparently, he arrived hungry because he sure is eating a lot of crow. He admits his sin (what else could he do?) & makes his appeal (I'm 1st to come of all) but best of all, he didn't come alone! He convinced a large number of tribesmen to jump back on David's bandwagon. Abishai was unmoved; he still wanted to give Shimei a haircut but David stopped him. Abishai was right; his head should be carried off in a bucket but Abishai wasn't smart. If David executed Shimei, the rest of Israel would wonder if a general purge would follow. Shimei wasn't the only one who deserved to die. Would more heads roll? David met Shimei with clemency.

What are we to make of this guy? There's no reason to think Shimei's had a change of heart here. He's just trying to survive his own gross sin. He submits to David out of **necessity, not love!** He sees the political tide has turned & adapts to go with the flow. There are a lot of Shimei's in the Body of Christ today; folks who align themselves with God's people out of **self-interest**. Granted, the advantages of church attendance are greatly diminished from years past but there are still some to be had: **please parents; pacify a spouse; network for business** or just to **be seen!** Regardless the motivation, it's a token submission to Christ; it's **not** a matter of **conviction**, it's just **politics**.

24-30- Mephibosheth: in **ch16** we only hear about him & what we heard was not good. Now we get to hear from him. But it wasn't just his speech that convinces David, it was his appearance: old Mephibosheth had "let himself go!" He seems to have misplaced his nail clippers, mustache trimmer & washing machine! His wretched appearance revealed that he had opted to share in David's exile in spirit since he was denied the opportunity to share in it in person. He made no secret of his loyalty & his grief over David's being forced to

escape (dangerous with Absalom hanging around).

Mephibosheth had taken a 1-2 punch: 1st he was **deceived** by Ziba; then he was **slandered** before the king! But, he doesn't seek retribution or restitution; he's happy with whatever David decides to do. How's this possible? He's enjoyed so much grace & mercy from David, how could he dare expect, let alone ask for, anything more? All that matters to him is that the rightful king of Israel has come back safely. David reverses his previous decision but Mephibosheth doesn't care.

What are we to make of this guy? He's **crippled** from infancy; his servant pulled a fast one on him but still, his **long toe-nails**, **scraggly whiskers** & **stinky clothes** prove his **loyalty** to David, the **true** king of Israel. **Mark 14:3-8a** this unnamed woman received the greatest commendation from the Lord, "**She has done what she could.**" [?] That was Mephibosheth: **lame**, **limited** but he's **loyal**! His loyalty wasn't driven by **survival** (**Shimei**) or by **greed** (**Ziba**). He couldn't bless David with abundant provision; no, the tokens of his faithfulness were small – **he did what he could.**

31-40- Barzillai: a wealthy, elderly farmer who has sustained David with provisions while he was in exile (**32**). He comes to see David off & David takes this opportunity to express his gratitude to Barzillai by inviting him to come & live at the royal court & allow David to take care of him for a change. Barzillai respectfully declines the offer for obvious reasons: he's too old to enjoy good food or good entertainment so it would all be wasted on him. But, so David's gracious offer would not seem slighted, he was happy to send a replacement: Chimham, his son. All he wants to do is return & die in his own home town, close to his final resting place. That's all he asks & its enough.

What are we to make of this guy? Barzillai's most noticeable characteristic is his **unwavering faithfulness** to **YAYWEH**'s appointed king. He used his wealth well for the kingdom of God & at the end of his life he was content. Take note: his most important service for the kingdom of God came when he was 80 yrs old! All we can say about Barzillai was that he was faithful to **YAYWEH**'s covenant king but really, besides that, what else matters? If that's all people can say about us – they've said a mouthful! What else could we want more than that?

41-43- What's the most logical thing for people to do when things are looking up? Start an argument & pick a fight! As silly as it may seem, this argument is ultimately about who is more loyal to the king & who has the greatest right to honor him. The original question seems innocent enough (**41**) but the word "**stolen**" shows it was meant more to incite an argument than inquire on

information. Apparently, **them's fightin' words!** Judah's defense was in her relationship to the king & the fact that they had never abused that relationship. Israel's rebuttal claim was that there were more of them than all of Judah & they were the ones who spearheaded the move to bring the king back home.

Of course, logic didn't really matter here because in the end; the ones who talked the meanest & loudest carried the day. I'm sure David was amazed at the degradation of human nature: it didn't seem to matter if they hated him or loved him, they're still going to argue over him. The rightful king has returned but there's no peace in the kingdom. The animosity & envy of his subjects threatened the stability of his kingdom. This bad situation does provide us with a positive witness: this must really be the kingdom of God or it would have self-destructed long ago.

The Body of Christ has a lot of problems, all of which stem from the people who are part of it! There's plenty of petty bickering & flagrant sin; foolish stubbornness & hurt feelings; skewed priorities & tragic apathy. But, despite the fragmenting capability of human frailty, it seems to be constantly overcome by the glue of divine grace. It's obvious that Jesus is building His church or else it would have disappeared a long time ago.

How **radical** is your personal commitment to Christ? Is it just a matter of policy – keeping up appearances? **Well, it worked for Shimei!** Not really. See, he had a weakness for resisting authority & treating God's ministers with disdain. Ultimately, it cost him his life. What's the Lord going to make of you? If you deny Him & resist Him – He can deal with that. But, if you accept Him & receive Him – He can deal with that too. You will not believe what He can make of you then. 😊