

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,  
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS  
LESSON 11B  
SECOND SAMUEL  
CHAPTER 19**

**INTRODUCTION**

It is always very painful when you lose a child. Whatever the reason may be, the pain will be deep. The wound is compounded by memories from infancy to boyhood to adulthood. The memories of touch, care, love and nurture will crowd into the mind of every parent. This pain will be mixed with a deep sense of blame and soul searching. Some of the questions may include, "What if I had done better? What if I had spent more time? What if I had paid more attention? What if I had exercised more love and discipline?" The soul searching may or may not help find the answer but a sense of blame by the parent is inevitable. The deep vacuum will probably remain there for a long time.

Chapter 19 describes the reaction of David after he received the news that Absalom had died in battle. He wept bitterly for Absalom. He had to be rebuked by Joab as this was a day of victory not defeat!

No matter what one might think of Joab, what he had done here was right. We need people like Joab with the courage and honesty to point out our wrongdoing and to point us in the right direction instead of leaving us to wallow in our grief and to waste away our lives. It was difficult for Joab to stand up to his king and tell him that

his behaviour had shamed those who had served and saved him.

It was very difficult for David to wear two different hats at the same time, especially when the two hats conflict with one another. As a father, he wept for his son. But as a king, he had to rejoice with his people who had fought for him and put their lives on the line in battle for him.

David had to re-establish his kingdom all over again. His "enemies" were his own people. The people who took his side throughout this uprising needed to be rewarded and promoted. How did one juggle this sensitive dilemma? The battle might be over and the rebellion quelled but the problems confronting David were far from over.

This is life, is it not? Sometimes, we seem to float from one problem to the next, like the unceasing tide of the Atlantic Ocean.

**COMMENTARY**

**Joab Rebuked David—19:1-8**

David did not return to Jerusalem to regain his kingship immediately. The state of the kingdom was politically unstable. The people of the nation had just fought amongst themselves, brothers against brothers. David contributed to the instability. He was so grieved that he was immobilized. This devastated the people. They had expected to return to a victory celebration but instead they found their king weeping and crying. They had "to steal" back into the city.

It is all right to grieve when someone who is dear to you passes away. Grieving in the right manner is not only healthy but it heals the soul and sets the person free to go on with life. But David's grieving was

unhealthy. He was full of guilt and confusion. He had completely forgotten about his people and the nation. His thoughts were only for his dead son. This was the grief of a father.

Joab realized the seriousness of the situation. David's unhealthy grief had isolated him from his people. He went boldly to the king and used incredibly forceful language. Joab told David that he had SHAMED all who had served him. They had saved not only his life but the lives of his sons, daughters, wives and concubines. Joab continued his blistering tirade at David that he LOVED his enemies and HATED his friends because he had shown no concern for his leaders and soldiers. He continued that David would be pleased if Absalom had lived and all of them had died on that day. David would rather sacrifice thousands of his faithful and loyal commanders and servants for the sake of saving his rebellious son who sought even to kill him! According to Joab, David ought to behave like a king now and not weep like a father!

Was Joab's action to be commended? He resorted to strong language in order to shake David out of his grief and get on with the duties of his kingship. Joab told David to pick himself up and speak to the people and encourage them. If he failed to do that, the situation would become irreparable (v.5-7). The king complied and submitted to Joab's rebuke. He appeared before the people who came out to see him. The crisis was averted.

Some might argue that if Joab had obeyed David by not killing Absalom, David would not have been in such a state of grief. However if

Absalom was spared, could he be trusted? Would the political situation be stable and peaceful? Would something worse happen? Joab knew that Absalom could not be trusted. When he had taken the initiative to ask David to let Absalom return to Jerusalem, he had expected Absalom to let events take its natural course and succeed the throne only after his father's death. He had not expected Absalom to lead a revolt against his father. He had to make a decision and he chose to remain loyal to David. He might have felt partly responsible for David's grief, and therefore took it upon himself to bring him to his senses in order to avert a greater disaster to the nation.

#### **Calling the king Back—19:9-15**

The political climate in the country was unstable and volatile. The people were confused and divided with regard to the king. Absalom, who had declared himself king, was now dead. David, who had fled to Mahanaim, had not returned to Jerusalem. The kingdom was left without a "legitimate" king as there was no one to occupy Jerusalem. No one had taken the initiative to bring David back to regain his kingship.

All the 11 northern tribes of Israel initiated a move to put David back on the throne. They testified that David was the king that had saved them from their enemies and delivered them out of the hands of the Philistines. He had fled from Absalom and was living out of the land. Now that Absalom was dead, they would bring the king back.

David should have returned to Jerusalem immediately after the war was over. He did not do so probably because he was grieving over Absalom. Now after Joab's rebuke, he waited to be invited to return

instead of doing it himself. The northern tribes took the initiative. This was a cunning move on their part as most of them had not taken the side of David. Now that they had been soundly defeated and their rebel leader Absalom had been killed, they had to make this move to get back into David's good books.

When the northern tribes took the initiative, David sent Zadok and Abiathar to chide the elders of Judah for not taking the initiative to recall him back to Jerusalem (instead of letting the northern tribes do so). David reasoned with them that the Judaeans were of his tribe and that they should have taken the first step to invite him to return. He then told the priests to tell Amasa that he would promote him to be the commander of the army in place of Joab. By these words and action, David moved the Judaeans to officially send word requesting David and all his servants to return (v.15).

David's action to ask the Judaeans to officially invite him to return instead of heeding the invitation of the northern tribes was wise. It was his way of telling them that he had gotten over his grief for Absalom. He does not blame them for the death of Absalom his son! Let us now get on with business in restoring the kingdom. By this account, we see that a wedge already existed between the two groups of people in the nation, Judah on one side against the rest of Israel. We are not 100 percent sure who took the side of Absalom and who took the side of king David. But the indicators are that most likely the Northern tribes supported Absalom in the rebellion (cf. 2 Samuel 16:15, 18; 17:14, 24) and Judah supported David. This view is validated by the words of the northern tribes,

"Absalom, whom we anointed over us" (v.10). Furthermore the generals whom David sent to fight against Absalom were from Judah. David's word to Judah through Zadok and Abiathar allayed their fears and uncertainty.

As we have noted, David should have returned on his own initiative. He could then proclaim a general pardon on all those who had joined Absalom in rebellion against him. Things would have been different. All the 12 tribes would have been united. The appointment of Amasa to the top post of the army and the demotion of Joab was a political move to please Amasa. Amasa sided Absalom as his chief of general staff in the rebellion (cf. 2 Samuel 17:25). But it was a tactical move on David's part to ensure that Amasa would not continue with the rebellion and also to remove Joab in the process. David did not need to tell Joab about his intention as he was king. David could no longer trust Joab for he had disobeyed him by killing Absalom and before that Abner. How would Joab feel when he learned that he was no longer the commander of the nation's army? Had he not been a proficient, dynamic and loyal servant? 1 Chronicles 2:16-17 reveals that Joab, his brothers and Amasa were David's nephews. They were the sons of David's sisters. This means that Joab and Amasa were first cousins.

After receiving Judah's invitation to return, David and his servants prepared to depart from Mahanaim. They stopped at Gilgal where they were met by a welcome party from Judah. They had come to meet the king and to escort him and his men back to Jerusalem. Observe that the welcoming party did not include officials or representatives

from the northern tribes who were the first to initiate the return of David. They sided with Absalom and will not be allowed to partake in the victory march into the capital city even though they might have repented! By doing this, David was able to move the hearts of all Judah to his side including that of Amasa.

However, the text recorded that some individuals came to Gilgal to pay their respect and homage.

#### **David and Shimei—19:16-23**

Shimei (a Benjamite) came hastily with the men of Judah to meet David at Gilgal. He came with a thousand Benjamites! Why? In all probability, he feared for his life because of what he had done to David. He had cursed him and threw stones at him. Now he tried to get into the good books of king David. The king was rejoicing and happy, entering back into Jerusalem in triumph. Perhaps Shimei felt that when the king was happy, he would be most inclined to forgive and not kill.

He came to David and stooped himself low before the king. He confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness and mercy. He prided himself for being the first man from the tribe of Joseph to greet David. Abishai asked to execute him but David forbade him and assured Shimei that he would not die. This was a risk because Shimei had acted in a very disrespectful way towards David. Maybe Abishai could see that Shimei was a snake. Although David forgave Shimei after his confession and repentance, he never trusted him. When Solomon became king,

David told him to deal with Shimei. Why?<sup>1</sup>

#### **David and Mephibosheth —19:24-30**

Mephibosheth also came to meet David in Jerusalem. He did not wear any shoes, nor did he trim his beard and he had on dirty clothes (which had not been washed since the day the king departed). Ziba was also present at this time (v.17). David questioned Mephibosheth on why he did not leave with him when he fled from Jerusalem. David asked this question because Ziba had told him that Mephibosheth had hoped that the throne would be restored to him. Mephibosheth was given the opportunity to clear his name which had been maligned by Ziba, his servant.

Mephibosheth straightaway charged that Ziba had deceived him. He wanted to leave with David but Ziba did not saddle an ass for him to ride and he could not otherwise follow as he was lame. He added that Ziba had maligned him but he expressed confidence that David “as angel of God” would see through the man. He disclaimed any desire to regain the throne and was appreciative of David’s kindness towards him. David then impatiently decided that the estate be divided equally between Ziba and Mephibosheth but Mephibosheth was willing to forfeit the half that David

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 2:8 And, behold, *thou hast* with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which **cursed** me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. 9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.

had decreed for him. He expressed that he was more than satisfied to live in peace in the king's house.

David had heard the two versions. He did not know who to believe but if he had taken a bit of time to think through the matter, he should realize that Ziba's charge against Mephibosheth that he had hoped that his father Saul's royal heritage be restored to him was impossible. Absalom would not do that for he wanted the throne for himself. David's decree to divide Mephibosheth's estate equally between Ziba and his master was too impulsive. It was sad to see David's grudging response. The decision unjustly favoured Ziba who gained the property by deception.

#### **David and Barzillai—19:31-39**

Barzillai was no stranger to us. He had used his influence and riches to provide for the physical needs of David and his men during their time in Mahanaim. Despite his age (he was an octogenarian), he took the journey down to Gilgal to accompany David across Jordan. David wanted to reciprocate his kindness. He invited Barzillai to live with him in Jerusalem but Barzillai declined the kind offer. He gave several reasons - that he had not many more years to live, that his mind was not as sharp as before, that he used to be able to discern between good and evil, that he had lost so much of his desire for eating and drinking and singing; and that he would be a burden to the king. He humbly asked that he be excused for declining the kindness of the king and be allowed to die in his own land and be buried there beside the graves of his mother and father. In order not to offend the king, he offered to let his son, Chimham, go

with the king to Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> David in return replied in like manner and generosity. So Chimham went with David.

#### **Strife between the rest of Israel and Judah—19:40-42**

There was strife between the northern tribes and the men of Judah. The northern tribes asked David why only the men of Judah brought him and his household across Jordan. They felt that the Judaeans had stolen the king away from them. The northern tribes complained that they had been left out.

David should have answered the northern tribes but he opted to keep silent. The Judaeans answered and claimed that they were the nearest of kin to David. They denied that the king had shown any favouritism. It was obvious that these men were all scrambling for honour.

Perhaps, David should have invited all of them to welcome him back to Jerusalem? What do you think? His action in favour of his own tribe of Judah had driven a wedge between the two groups of Israelites—Judah and the rest of Israel. In the near future, this would bring war to the land.

#### **PRACTICAL VALUE**

What strikes us is David's unhealthy grieving for Absalom. There is nothing wrong in grieving for someone whom we dearly loved but we must not be like David. His grieving was mixed with guilt. He felt that it was his fault and was so confused that he became immobilized. He could do nothing but

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<sup>2</sup> According to Josephus the Jewish historian (Antiquities VII 11.4)

weep. Thank God that Joab was able to pull him back. It was not easy for Joab to confront his king. Joab had many faults but here he showed us how to help others to regain their confidence and guide them back to the flow of life. One has to be frank like Joab in order to wake the grieving party to recognize the gravity of his attitude and action. It requires a lot of moral strength, courage, knowledge and integrity.

Let us analyze some of the decisions made by Joab and David.

Joab had to decide whether to kill Absalom or to obey his king. In the end, he decided to kill Absalom in order to protect his king and country. Then he had to decide whether to confront David over his unhealthy grief.

David opted to stay out of the strife between the northern tribes and the tribe of Judah. He should have intervened. He compounded his fault by favouring the Judaeans instead of treating all the tribes equally. His action drove a wedge between the two groups.

Do you think that David forgave Shimei out of political expediency? He had confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness. Was David wrong to forgive him? Before David died, he told Solomon to kill Shimei because he could not be trusted.

David failed in the matter of Ziba and Mephibosheth. He did not spend enough time over the matter. He made an unwise decision which unjustly favoured Ziba at the expense of Mephibosheth.

The only good decision David made was in his kind offer to Barzillai who had helped him a lot. There is much we can learn from Barzillai. He was 80 years of age and was

contented with what he had. He faced his old age and his physical weakness with calm and was considerate in not wishing to be a burden to others. He believed that it was more blessed to give than to receive.

AMEN

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**Monday:** 2 Samuel 19:1-15; Joshua 7:10-15.

**Tuesday:** 2 Samuel 19:16-30; Psalm 103:6-18.

**Wednesday:** 2 Samuel 19:31- 43; Galatians 5:13-15.

**Thursday:** 2 Samuel 19:1-43.

**Friday:** 2 Samuel 19:1-43.

**Analysis:**

Text	Practical Value
2 Samuel 19:1-8	
2 Samuel 19:9-15	
2 Samuel 19:16-23	
2 Samuel 19:24-30	
2 Samuel 19:31-40	
2 Samuel 19:41-43	

**Discussion Questions**

1. Was it wrong for David to grieve the way he did for Absalom, his son?

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2. How would you analyze the following decisions which were made?

a. Joab told David to stop grieving over his son and to go and speak to the people (19:1-8).

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b. David's appointment of Amasa as the commander in chief of the army in place of Joab (19:13).

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c. David forbade Abishai to kill Shimei (19:16-23).

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4. What lessons in this chapter do you consider most precious and relevant?

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d. David gave half of Mephibosheth's estate to Ziba (19:24-30).

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e. David's failure to intervene in the strife, between the northern tribes and Judah, over him (19:41-43).

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3. What insight can we gather regarding the jealousy between the northern tribes and Judah?

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