

The Return of the King

2 Samuel 19

Lesson Outline

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King Restored

2 Samuel 19:1-15

Restored After Weeping and Mourning: 2 Samuel 19:1-8

David Cried

David continued to mourn for his son Absalom. For David, who faced many hardships, this was one of his most difficult trials.

1. *He was discouraged* – because of Absalom’s actions and tragic end.
2. *He was disappointed* – because Absalom failed to live up to his potential.
3. *He was distraught* – because Absalom’s rebellion was a result of David’s sinful actions (2 Samuel 12:11).

His agony was so great he covered his face and remained in solitude. Apparently the king refused to see the leaders or address the people. It appears he focused on the situation instead of looking to the LORD. Because of this David lost control of his emotions, which allowed his grief to dictate his conduct (Proverbs 25:28). The LORD is able to provide strength in times of weakness (Psalm 28:7-8).

Though the rebellion was put to an end, the nation remained silent. There were no celebrations because of the victory, instead the people returned to their homes in shame. Out of respect to their king, they hid their joy. David, inadvertently, affected the attitude of the people. Because he failed to look to God, others became discouraged. “The more eyes we have upon us, and the greater our influence is,

the more need we have to speak and act wisely and to govern our passions strictly.”¹ With the nation split due to civil war, the people required a man that would seek the LORD (Psalm 9:10).

David Challenged

After being informed of David’s conduct, Joab immediately addressed the mourning king. He challenged David to consider his behavior towards the people, those that risked their lives for him. David was blessed with dedicated followers, because of their courage his family was saved. It was a subtle reminder that his other children had not betrayed him or the nation. With a selfish attitude David had exalted the rebellious Absalom. Joab thought David might have been happier if Absalom had lived and the people were defeated. Of course he went too far in his assessment but maybe it was said to make a point. While the people greatly valued David’s life his conduct disregarded theirs. Selfishness is often the result of focusing on our problems instead of the looking unto the LORD.

Joab challenged David to act like a king and encouraged him to assume his responsibilities. His motive is unknown but it is clear Joab wanted David to continue as king.

1. *Joab threatened David with force* – it appears to have been a general threat, Joab implying somebody would step up to lead the people if David refused. Though it was bold of Joab to state this, it was also true.
2. *Joab threatened David with failure* – if David refused to lead this would be the greatest mistake he made as a king. Basically, if David continued to mourn he would receive something greater to weep over, the loss of his kingdom.

Joab, as was often the case, spoke disrespectfully to the king but his words were right. Perhaps he should have been considerate, but who knows, maybe a bold challenge was needed to awaken David to his duties as king. Being confronted may not have been enjoyable but it caused David to recognize his mistakes. To his credit, he was able to separate the message from the messenger. The LORD may use the unlikeliest of people to stir His children to action. After listening to Joab, David left his place of mourning to return to his position as leader of the nation. When it was heard that he sat in the gate, the people gathered around their beloved king.

Restored After Withdrawing from Jerusalem: 2 Samuel 19:9-15

Desire of Israel

Because of the civil war the nation was left without a recognized leader. Understanding the importance of the situation the Israelites looked to David. In the past he had delivered the nation out of the hands of their enemies, in particular the Philistines (2 Samuel 8:1). But there was a problem, the people followed the bold young Absalom as he chased David from the throne and after Absalom’s defeat David was nowhere to be found. He chose to remain east of the Jordan River away from Jerusalem. The ten tribes were the first to bring up this issue, however nobody stepped up to escort

¹ Matthew Henry, “Matthew Henry’s Commentary, Volume 2,” (United States: Hendrickson, 1996) p. 424

David back. Like people often do, they had a good idea but were unwilling to work to see it accomplished (Proverbs 6:6-8).

It was within David's power to march to Jerusalem and take the kingdom by force. Instead, he delayed his return, waiting until the entire nation desired him to be their king. It was a similar approach to when he first assumed the throne. His patience also ensured the rebellion was finished so nobody would be endangered. It appears David waited for the LORD to work all things out (Romans 8:28).

Delay of Judah

Evidently the tribe of Judah said nothing concerning the issue. This is interesting, seeing they were the tribe that initially accepted David (2 Samuel 2:1-4). But the answer may lie in the fact they embraced Absalom when he established his headquarters at Hebron (2 Samuel 15:9-10). David did not hesitate to address the leaders of Judah. He wisely sent correspondence through Zadok and Abiathar, two highly respected priests. In his message David wondered why they delayed when the rest of Israel was ready to follow him as king.

David addressed Amasa, whom Absalom had made the captain of the host. Perhaps he was highly influential with the people of Judah. David reminded him of their close relationship, he was David's nephew (1 Chronicles 2:16-17). He also offered Amasa the position of captain of the host, which belonged to Joab while David was king (1 Chronicles 11:6-9).

1. *It was a political move* – to gain Amasa's trust and followers. Like most political moves it was more about popularity than practicality. Amasa had not proven himself as a leader, but seemed disqualified due to his traitorous actions and failure on the battlefield.
2. *It was a personal move* – to punish Joab. This may have been due to David's understanding of Joab's role in Absalom's death or to Joab's constant insubordination. Dismissing Joab may have been correct but replacing him with a traitor was unwise.

The people were pleased with David's concessions and eagerly looked to escort him back. David received their message then headed for Jerusalem. He reached the Jordan River where many met him, including the elders of Judah.

King Respected 2 Samuel 19:16-43

Respect of Shimei and Others: 2 Samuel 19:16-23

Meeting Shimei

David arrived at the Jordan River where he was greeted with enthusiasm. Shimei hurried with 1000 men from the tribe of Benjamin to meet David. Ziba also arrived, perhaps hoping to find favor with

David before he talked with Mephibosheth. The men of Judah were present to welcome David back to the land. David's return provided excitement for the nation.

Shimei immediately fell before David seeking his mercy, hoping the king would not give him what was deserved. His confession was interesting, considering his previous actions (2 Samuel 16:5-8).

1. *It was convenient* – after David was victorious.
2. *It was cunning* – when David prepared to cross the Jordan River to lead the nation towards peace.
3. *It was conceited* – implying he should be forgiven because he was first to meet him.
4. *It was compelling* – with a great company at his side, making it difficult for David to say anything negative.

His actions appear to be based upon the situation, had David lost, Shimei probably would have embraced Absalom.

Mercy For Shimei

Abishai spoke against Shimei, apparently believing him to be insincere. In his opinion Shimei should have been executed for cursing the LORD'S anointed. He wanted no mercy to be shown, just judgment. Abishai may have been correct but David had other plans.

David refused to put anyone to death that day. With the fighting finished, he knew it was time to reconcile. It would do no good to hunt down everyone that disagreed with him. Instead David wisely understood the nation needed to heal so it could move forward. David declared Shimei would live. His life was spared but he would eventually reap for his actions (1 Kings 2:8-9, 36-46).

Respect of Mephibosheth: 2 Samuel 19:24-30

Addressed Mephibosheth

Next we have the record of Mephibosheth approaching David in Jerusalem. This may have surprised David because he believed Mephibosheth was a traitor. This man was a sight to behold.

1. *He refused to clean his feet* – washing the feet due to travel was common and expected.
2. *He refused to change or clean his clothes* – he did not send them out to be cleaned of stains or spots.
3. *He refused to cut his beard* – he let it grow without trimming or caring for it.

These were signs of mourning, outward expressions of grief or sadness. Due to his appearance, his words would be hard to doubt. David asked why he remained in Jerusalem. It seemed to be an

accusation in the form of a question. Keep in mind David was only aware of what Ziba had told him (2 Samuel 16:1-4).

Answered by Mephibosheth

Mephibosheth explained that Ziba left him behind in order to deceive David. Being lame, he was unable to go himself so he remained in Jerusalem and mourned until David's return. Mephibosheth made it clear he was grateful for anything he received. Before David found him, he had nothing (2 Samuel 9:4). David blessed him with everything he desired so he had no reason to rebel. He was content (Philippians 4:11). After sharing his side of the story he was willing to submit to the king's decision, believing David would act correctly.

It appears David ordered both men to equally divide the land. Perhaps he was uncertain of the situation. If so, this appears to be a bad decision. It would have been wise to investigate further and render a correct verdict. It is possible that an enquiry took place and this was David's answer. Some are under the impression David revoked his ruling made in favor of Ziba and returned to his first decision concerning the land (2 Samuel 9:10, 19:29). Either way, Ziba received no punishment, probably due to David's merciful heart.

Respect of Barzillai: 2 Samuel 19:31-39

Barzillai Went to the Jordan River

He was eighty years old but actively assisted David. This man proved to be a great blessing to the king in a time of need. His generosity sustained and encouraged the people (2 Samuel 17:27-29). David wanted to return the kindness, so he asked Barzillai to accompany him to Jerusalem. It implies Barzillai was given an opportunity to serve the nation alongside the king. It is good to remember he did not help the people in hopes of gaining. Barzillai risked his life to assist David and expected nothing in return. It was a selfless act of kindness.

Barzillai Wanted to Remain Home

Because of his age Barzillai understood he was unable to accompany David. His decision-making was not like it once was and he no longer enjoyed the conveniences of life – eating and drinking. Understanding his limitations, he asked permission to remain home. Had he been younger, he probably would have followed David to Jerusalem. Instead he offered his servant Chimham to David's service. The king made it clear if Barzillai ever required anything all he had to do was ask. It is evident David greatly appreciated this man (1 Kings 2:7).

Though he was nearing the end of his life on earth Barzillai was still able to serve the LORD. He did not allow his age to keep him from assisting David. Nothing is known of him before the Bible reveals his act of generosity towards the people. Apparently, his greatest service for the nation was later in his life. Remain faithful, because you never know what the LORD has planned.

Respect of Judah: 2 Samuel 19:40-43

Judah's Conduct

The men of Judah escorted David back to Jerusalem. It appears Israel's leaders wanted to be involved but were too late. Because of this they became upset believing the men of Judah stole David away. Perhaps David should have done his best to involve the entire land, but it's possible the event was a surprise so David was unable to include everyone.

Judah's Contention

Upon hearing Israel's complaint the men of Judah answered fiercely. Their words may have been true but were spoken harshly. Beware, because our words can get us into trouble (James 3:6-8).

1. *They claimed David as one of their own* – implying he belonged to them more than to Israel.
2. *They claimed to have not been a burden* – implying Israel was blowing things out of proportion because there were no favors involved.

It was a matter of pride. Judah believed they deserved the honor because of their relation to David and Israel believed they deserved it because of their numbers. Both had rejected David for Absalom, which was conveniently forgotten. Both selfishly sought personal honor instead of God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). When pride is involved, troubles are usually right behind (Proverbs 16:18). David returned as king but the unity of the nation would have to wait a little longer.