

# King David doesn't deal with Joab

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to sing. Joab has been on Team David from the beginning of this chapter. He's not been on Team Saul as Abner was.

We know a few bits about him. He seems to have a key role in David's house. So verse 12, Abner son of Ner, together with the men of Ish-boshah son of Saul, left Mahani and went to Gibeon. Joab son of Zeruiah and David's men went out and met them. They're meeting about to fight together.

It seems significant that Joab's mentioned first as one of David's men. He seems to be someone who sort of takes the lead in fighting, it appears to me.

And it appears later on, more of his leadership role down in verse 26. In other words, he's saying, look, Abner, this is silly.

[ 1 : 21 ] We're really in the same country. We should be not fighting together. And so Joab is calling for peace, even after Abner had killed his brother in battle.

And so Joab leads the way in it. In verse 28, Joab blew the trumpet and all the troops came to a halt. They no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore.

Clearly, he has power and influence in terms of David and his men fighting. And so much so that he calls them to peace rather than to war here.

But nothing is simple in these chapters as we've probably come to see this morning and just reading it again this evening.

Even though at the end of chapter 3, verse 21, all just seems to be very well, doesn't it? Abner's moved to David's side, and so David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

[ 2 : 29 ] All seems to be well. But, but, but, it's not all going to go straightforwardly.

As we've noted already from this morning, Joab killed Abner. Now, I think with these two men, Abner and Joab, they're two pictures of something.

I think Abner is a picture of someone coming into God's kingdom by his grace. An outsider, changing sides, coming to bow down to God's king.

No longer trying to live for himself in his own position. And then I think Joab is a warning to us, actually, if we resist God's grace. A warning to us if we ignore his words.

Let me try and help us to see that. First of two points, and hopefully this will become clear as we go on. The older brother image, I think, in Joab.

[ 3 : 36 ] Let me try and show you that, and show you what that means. So, chapter 3, verse 24. Here is Joab's reaction to Abner moving to David and his kingdom.

Verse 24, Joab went to the king and said, What have you done? Look, Abner came to you. Why did you let him go? Now he is gone.

You know Abner, son of Ner, he came to deceive you and observe your movements and find out everything you're doing. Joab does not trust Abner.

Joab doesn't believe Abner's really changed. And I wonder if he's heard about what happened in verse 20.

When Abner, who had 20 men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men. Which then reminds me of the older brother in that parable of the two sons.

[ 4 : 48 ] Remember, the younger son comes back to his father. He's welcomed back into the family with open arms. And the father throws a feast for him.

And the older brother's reaction is outrage. How dare you throw a feast for him? Look what he's done.

And this is the reply of the father to the older brother in Luke 15. My son, the father said, you are always with me.

And everything I have is yours. But we have to celebrate and be glad because his brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. Joab, Joab, you were always with David. You were always on his side. You were a key part of his kingdom. Key part of his army.

[ 5 : 58 ] We had to celebrate Abner and all the rest of Israel coming to King David.

Because once they were on the wrong side. Now they're on our side. They have turned and trusted in God's promises to David that he would be the ruler of his people.

I think we're seeing a bit of this older brother image in Joab. Joab, I think, is sort of showing us where the older brother path can lead to.

We don't know what happened to the older brother in Luke 15. We don't know if he turned back to his father. We don't know if he remained jealous and bitter and angry of his younger brother.

But we do know what happens to Joab. And it's rather sabering. And as we see Joab here this evening, again, like we said this morning, God's word is a bit of a mirror.

[ 7 : 16 ] And we can see ourselves in it. And perhaps we don't really see ourselves in Joab, but he is a warning to us. In terms of Joab being the older brother, what's the warning there?

We need to be careful. As people who've received God's grace, who are a part of his people, who are part of Calvary Church Brighton, we need to perhaps be careful at times when we look at others who might come in by God's grace, new to the church, new to God's kingdom, and they seem to sort of get celebrated and they sort of seem to fit in so naturally and we wonder where is our place. We've been here a long time. We've been serving, showing up for years and they're the ones in the limelight, not me. And perhaps we think, I've given so much, yet they get celebrated.

We need to remember, don't we, that God's grace is for all who will respond to him. It's for the complete outsider.

It's for those who've only just tasted God's grace. It's for those who have not led honourable lives, those who have made a mess of things, as well as for those who are clever, those who have studied, those who dress well.

[ 8 : 47 ] It continues to be ours, whether we've been a Christian for 50 years or just a few months. And none of us deserved it. It's all fallen human beings who have fallen short of God's glory.

None of us deserve a seat in God's kingdom. Abner didn't deserve to be under David's rule. He tried to rebel against it and now by God's grace he's there.

And Joab could rejoice in that, but instead he remains bitter. How dare David celebrate him? And so secondly, I think Joab is a warning that we need to deal with evil in our hearts.

Just a note on Abner's killing of Joab's brother Asahel.

It was a very different context to what we'll see Joab's killing of Abner is. So back in chapter 2, verse 21, then Abner said to him, that is to Asahel, who is described wonderfully, isn't he, in verse 18.

[ 10 : 14 ] It's fleet-footed as a wild gazelle chasing Abner. It's a bit like a David Attenborough documentary, isn't it? Verse 21, then Abner said to him, turn aside to the right or to the left.

Take on one of the young men and strip him of his weapons. But Asahel would not stop chasing him. Asahel would not let Abner go.

And so again, Abner warns Asahel, stop chasing me. Why should I strike you down? I don't need to do anything to you. But Asahel refused to give up the pursuit.

And so Abner, in defense of his life, in the midst of a battle, stabbed his spear into Asahel's stomach.

Thankfully, we've had lunch. He fell there and died on the spot. And Abner even said to Asahel, in verse 22, how could I look your brother Joab in the face if I had to strike you down?

[ 11 : 26 ] Even before he has no choice but to do it, really, he's sort of thinking, I want to honor you. But this is unnecessary.

It doesn't need to happen. And yet it does. So it's a very different kind of killing to what we then find here in chapter 3, verse 26. Joab then left David and sent messengers after Abner.

And they brought him back from the cistern at Syrah. But David did not know about it. Now, when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into an inner chamber as if to speak with him privately.

And there, to avenge the blood of his brother Asahel, Joab stabbed him in the stomach and he died. That's what happens if we don't deal with the evil in our hearts.

Joab was very angry with David, very angry at Abner, trying to think, who is he? He has no right to do this. He's deceiving David.

[12:44] And so he turned away from David. David did not know what he was going to do, we're told. He turned away from the king and his rule and he did what he saw fit to do in his own eyes.

Which is what sin is, isn't it? We turn away from God, the king's rule, and do what we feel is right to do in our own eyes.

And it's not really dealt with. Beyond David saying this in verse 29, May his blood fall on the head of Joab on his whole family.

May Joab's family never be without someone who has a running sore or leprosy or who leans on a crutch or who falls by the sword or who lacks food.

Quite a statement to say to Joab, he's going to face some consequences. But then we get this at the very end of the chapter.

[13:50] And today, though I'm the anointed king, I am weak and these sons of Zariah are too strong for me.

May the Lord repay the evildoer according to his deeds. He admits that he just feels too weak.

Too weak to deal with Joab who's done evil. Joab who's killed Abner.

So unnecessary. David feels weak. He's the king.

They're meant to exercise justice. And in this way, I think, fails to deal with Joab and his evil behavior.

[14:51] Fails to act on the evil within the kingdom. And failure to act on evil can lead to a slippery slope.

So can we just turn to chapter 20 of 2 Samuel? chapter 20, verse 8 to 10. Chapter 20, verse 8 to 10.

While they were at the great rock in Gibeon, a masser came to meet them there. Joab was wearing his military tunic and strapped it over his waist.

Sorry, and strapped over it at his waist was a belt with a dagger in its sheaf. As he stepped forward, it dropped out of its sheaf. Joab said to a masser, how are you, my brother?

Then Joab took a masser by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. A masser was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand.

[16:03] And Joab, again, good we've had lunch, plunged it into his belly and his intestines spilled out on the ground. Without being stabbed again, a masser died.

Then Joab, his brother Abashay, pursued Sheba, son of Berkai. Joab's at it again, killing someone else in David's kingdom.

Can we move again a bit further forward to 1 Kings chapter 2? 1 Kings chapter 2, verse 5 to 6. This is David at the end of his life as he's speaking to Solomon who would succeed him on the throne.

Did I say 2 Kings? I did say 1 Kings, that's right, good. 1 Kings chapter 2, 5 to 6. Now you yourself know what Joab, son of Zeruiah, did to me and what he did to the two commanders of Israel's army, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jethar.

He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle. And with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet.

[17:33] Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his grey head go down to the grave. I wonder if David at the end of his life he has regretted not dealing with Joab as he should have done and now he's got to ask his son to deal with him.

Solomon's charged with clearing up the mess. It's what happens when evil isn't dealt with.

And then chapter 2 of 1 Kings verse 29 King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the Lord and was beside the altar and Solomon ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada go strike him down.

So Benaiah entered the tent of the Lord and said to Joab the king says come out. But he answered no I will die here. Benaiah reported to the king this is how Joab answered me.

Then the king commanded Benaiah do as he said strike him down and bury him and so clear me and my whole family of the guilt of the innocent blood that Joab shed. The Lord will repay him for the blood he shed because without my father David knowing it he attacked two men killed them with a sword both of them Abner son of Ner commander of Israel's army and Amasa son of Jethar commander of Judah's army were better men and more upright than he.

[19:07] May the guilt of their blood rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever. But on David and his descendants his house and his throne may there be the Lord's peace forever.

And so that's how Joab met his end. but all far too late after far too much evil was done in the kingdom.

This is the trajectory really for Joab grief for a brother a desire for justice that's okay isn't it? You grieve when your brother dies you want justice but he didn't really deal with those feelings and it became resentment and that resentment was left unchecked and became hatred and then it became murder and that pattern was the same later on.

The evil in his heart was never really dealt with. James chapter 1 I've quoted from the book of James a lot today James chapter 1 says this each person is tempted when they are lured and enticed by their own desire than desire when it has conceived give birth to sin and sin when it's fully grown brings forth death.

[ 20 : 37 ] Joab let that desire to do something with Abner take control of him and that gave birth to sin and sin when it was fully grown brings forth death.

Joab sort of that verse in narrative form in some ways is a warning to us check our hearts check our hearts desires our motives don't let resentment grow in us don't let those desires that shouldn't be there keep growing don't feed them I think it's in Romans 12 verse 3 it says this I've got the right chapter and verse Romans 12 verse 3 yeah do you not think of yourself more highly than you ought Joab thought himself quite highly he thought he could deal with Abner thought he knew what was right but rather think of yourself as sober judgment in accordance with the faith

God has distributed to each of you think of ourselves as sober judgment keep watch of ourselves as I've quoted to us in the past from John Owen be killing sin or it will be killing you so important that we deal with it and so I've got to ask us is there things in our lives that we're not really dealing with is there resentment and bitterness within us about something or someone maybe jealousy which is eating us up a bit is there an unchecked desire we've allowed to live in our heart that we're feeding we might be in the king's house we might have received his grace we might be serving we might be showing up to church looking the part but if there's something festering beneath the surface Jeb's story is a bit of a warning to us it might not stay very small we might think we can control it but it can get out of control very quickly and David himself he doesn't deal with the evil within his kingdom he feels too weak to isn't it good news as we've been reminding ourselves there is a greater king who doesn't just sort of manage mess he really deals with the strong enemies that are facing his people he faced death and defeated it not by shedding his own not by shedding someone else's blood but by shedding his own he faced sin he dealt with sin not his own he took our sin on himself didn't have any sin so he could deal with our sin and bore that punishment we face and he rose from the grave and offers us a new heart clean heart offers us a transformed life by his grace in Luke 15 as I said earlier that the parable of the two sons ends very open we never learn what happened to that older brother and the question can still be asked today of people will you come in will you taste the grace the father's grace will you let the father's grace deal with your heart will you stay outside angry at grace holding on to your resentments until they destroy you will you let the lord deal with what's in your heart!

I think after hearing such things we just need to take a moment to pause don't we perhaps speak to the lord perhaps there is something which has come to mind which you just need to talk to him about perhaps there's sin that you need to confess before him perhaps there's an attitude in your heart which you need to say lord please help me please change me perhaps we need to say search my heart oh god see if there is any offensive way in me so can we pause there and just speak to the lord quietly on our own there's a prayer words of a prayer of confession on the screen and if it is of help to you to say it this evening let's join in and pray it lord god we have sinned against you we have done evil in your sight we are sorry and repent have mercy on us according to your love wash away our wrong doing and cleanse us from our sin renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen we sing a couple of songs firstly this one purify my heart let me be as gold and precious silver refine as fire my heart's one desire is to be holy set apart for you Lord purify my heart cleanse me from within and make me holy purify my heart cleanse me from within deep within let's continue the prayerfulness to the lord that he would be working in our hearts