

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 SAMUEL 1-4

Every day in America 22 million people “*stand by*” for Paul Harvey. His unique blend of *news and views* have made him one of the most listened to personalities in radio history. And he’s become famous for his segment... “*the rest of the story*”.

Each day Harvey recounts a set of circumstances. Then after a station break he returns to tell “*the rest of the story*”... it’s usually a conclusion with a strange twist. Paul Harvey’s true stories condition us to expect the unexpected.

Well, 2 Samuel begins with its own version of “*the rest of the story*”...

1 Samuel ends with us thinking we’ve gotten the full scoop on the death of Israel’s King Saul. On Mount Gilboa, in the heat of battle, he was hit with an arrow. Saul knew if he was captured alive by his enemies cruel and inhumane treatment awaited him - so he asked his armor bearer to thrust him through with his sword.

When the man refused, Saul fell on his own sword – an apparent suicide.

2 Samuel 1 tells us nothing that contradicts the account of Saul’s demise in 1 Samuel 31, but what it does is provide us with “*the rest of the story*”...

“Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag, on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes

torn and dust on his head.” Torn clothes and a dust shampoo were oriental signs of grief, and agony, and loss. David knew this man was in deep distress.

Which reminds me of the Greek professor at the seminary, who did business with a Greek tailor - the two men shared a love for Greek philosophy. They were always reading and discussing the Greek classics. One day the professor tore his suit, and took it to the tailor. The tailor looked at the tear and said, “**Euripedes?**”

The professor said, “**Yes! Eumenides?**” *Euripedes? Eumenides? It’s a joke!*

David is approached by a man with his clothes ripped.

“So it was, when (the man) came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. And David said to him, “Where have you come from?”

So he said to him, “I have escaped from the camp of Israel.”

Then David said to him, “How did the matter go? Please tell me.”

And he answered, “The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.”

So David said to the young man who told him, “How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?” And in verse 6 the man shares “*the rest of the story*”.

“Then the young man who told him said, “As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard

after him. Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, 'Here I am.' "And he said to me, 'Who are you?'

So I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.' Remember the sin that caused God to withdraw the Holy Spirit from Saul and anoint David as king? *It was Saul's failure to kill all the Amalekites.* How ironic that it's an Amalekite who finishes off Saul.

Hey, partial obedience to God always ends up coming back to bite us! In the short term we may not feel its teeth – but years later we can reap its results.

"He said to me again, 'Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.' Apparently, the episode in 1 Samuel 31 had already transpired. Saul fell on his sword, but his suicide attempt failed.

Hey, Saul was always doing things half-way. He refused to fully follow the Lord, and now he can't even kill himself fully. Evidently, Saul is leaning on his spear with his sword through his midsection. *He's a saulsh-kabob!* He's wounded, but alive.

Saul knows if he's captured by the Philistines they'll nurse him to health to do cruelties to him. Saul would rather die - so he asks the Amalekite to finish the job.

He says, "So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen." I went ahead and put the king out of his misery.

"And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord."

I'm sure the Amalekite expected a reward from David. Perhaps a post in his new government... He thought Saul's demise would be good news to David... but he didn't know the heart of David...

“Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.” This is not the response the Amalekite expected... *Remember what Saul's death now meant to David...*

He could finally go home and be reunited with family and friends.

The throne God anointed him to occupy was vacant - waiting on him to claim.

His life was no longer in constant peril.

He could now settle and live in the land that he loved...

But rather than jump for joy, David rips his clothes and mourns. Here's an important example for us... **David takes no joy in another man's sorrow.**

And neither should we. *Never kick a man when he's down...* or even dead. You never know when you might end up wounded in battle, and leaning on your spear.

I'm sure much of David's mourning was over the loss of his buddy, Jonathan, but he also expresses genuine sorrow over the death of the king. David respected Saul's position while he was alive. Now he'll respect his position after he's dead.

As we've discussed, David and Saul were polar opposites. David was an internally-motivated person. Saul was an externally-motivated person.

Saul's inner disposition was tied to his outer circumstances, and the opinions of other people. David lived his life, and wired his emotions directly to the will of God.

Even though Saul's death would benefit him personally, David wasn't thinking selfishly. He saw defeated soldiers. He saw the cadaver of a God-anointed king hanging from a Philistine wall. It all brought shame to the name of God.

David mourned because he cared more for God's glory than his own welfare.

Verse 13 "Then David said to the young man who told him, "Where are you from?" And he answered, "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite."

So David said to him, "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" What David does next shows how strongly he held to his convictions. He respected the king's God-given position - as would others...

"Then David called one of the young men and said, "Go near, and execute him!" And he struck him so that he died. So David said to him, "Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'" The young man expected a *reward*, but got a *sword*.

Understand David's position... For over a decade Saul has chased him like a rabbit – made his life miserable. Twice

David had his enemy in his grasp - but chose to spare his life. The *Amalekite's action* didn't reflect *David's attitude*.

If David lets this man live, it'll be seen as his stamp of approval on Saul's murder. His critics might even use this to accuse him of plotting a coup d'tat.

I'm sure one of the reasons David showed such respect for Saul was to set a precedent. He wanted people to respect him once he became king. David knows that actions against the king have to be punished - so he executes the Amalekite.

Here's a lesson for parents... David may've been tempted to let the Amalekite off the hook. After all, the man thought he was doing King Saul a favor.

And there are moments when we parents are tempted to make exceptions. We fail to enforce important principles – and end up setting the wrong precedents.

Hey, too much *leniency today* can produce *lawlessness tomorrow*.

Verse 17 “**Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher...**” The Book of Jasher is an ancient text that no longer exists. Apparently, it was an extra-biblical Jewish history.

Several books written in the Middle Ages were given this name – even modern Mormons have a book by this title - but none of them are the original.

In verses 19-27 we have the psalm David composes. “*The Song of the Bow*”.

One commentator writes of this song “(It) stands out as the genuine outpouring of a noble heart, a heart too great to harbor one selfish thought in this dark hour of his country’s humiliation.” David is absorbed with the *nation’s loss* - not *his gain*.

"The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!

Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon - lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

"O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, nor rain upon you, nor fields of offerings. For the shield of the mighty is cast away there! The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil." The implication is that Saul was not prepared for battle. The ancient Hebrews saturated their shields in olive oil to help deflect the arrows.

Of course, olive oil was not the only oil that Saul lacked. In a spiritual sense the oil of the Holy Spirit had departed from King Saul long before this battle. Saul lacked God’s help and assistance - and was defeated.

“From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, and the sword of Saul did not return empty.” They fought valiantly.

"Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives," What an insight into David’s heart. He assumes the best about his enemy. I suppose Saul started out “beloved

and pleasant". "And in their death (Saul and his son, Jonathan) were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

"O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury; who put ornaments of gold on your apparel." Saul's reign brought you prosperity.

"How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan was slain in your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women." As we talked about a couple of weeks ago – this language is not evidence of a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan.

David is just admitting that he had never had a friend as loyal and true as Jonathan. Not even his own wives had been as faithful a friend to him. This was like the guy who said, "My wife ran off with my best friend and I sure do miss him."

Verse 27 "How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

In 1 Samuel 15 when Saul reached out to grab Samuel, and tore his robe, the Lord told Samuel that He would rip the kingdom away from Saul. In essence, God looked at Saul, and said, "*Euripedes?*"... Then He turned to David and said, "*Eumenides*" - and it becomes David's job to mend a fractured kingdom.

That's what David begins to do in chapter 2...

"It happened after this that David inquired of the LORD,

saying, "Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up."

David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron."

So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. And David brought up the men who were with him, every man with his household. So they dwelt in the cities of Hebron."

With Saul's death, the door seems open for David to return home to the land of Israel - but first he consults the Lord. This is always a wise move. Proverbs 16:25 reminds us, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Self-deception is always a possibility. We should guard against it.

David prays, "Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?" God answers, "Go up." Then David asks to which city? And the Lord tells him, "To Hebron."

Notice though the brevity of the Lord's commands. God charts the course of David's future in four words, "Go up... to Hebron." When the Lord speaks to you don't always expect a detailed explanation. Long, flowery speeches are not the Lord's forte. When God speaks to us He usually gets right to the point!

Verse 4 "Then the men of Judah came (to Hebron), and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah."

David actually gets anointed king 3 times.

The first time was by Samuel while David was still living in

his father's house.

The second time is now – upon his return to Judah and the city of Hebron.

The third time will occur 7 years later when he becomes king over all Israel.

Its interesting one anointing was not enough. He received a fresh anointing every time God enlarged his sphere of influence. And this is why I think we need multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit. New challenges demand fresh empowerment.

“And they told David, saying, “The men of Jabesh Gilead were the ones who buried Saul.” So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, “You are blessed of the LORD, for you have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him. And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing.”

Just as David punished the Amalekite's *contempt*, here he rewards *respect*.

“Now therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”

“But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim;” Which is 20 miles south of the Sea of Galilee – on the east bank of the Jordan River. This is where Israel fled from the Philistines after Saul lost the battle. The enemy now occupies land west of the Jordan... “And he made (Saul's son, Ishbosheth) king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over

Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel.”

General Abner tries to perpetuate Saul’s dynasty – and rival kingdoms result.

“Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was 40 years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned 2 years. Only the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was 7 years and 6 months.”

David shares the kingdom with Ishbosheth for two years - then reigns 5½ more years in Hebron, before eventually moving his capitol to the city of Jerusalem.

A split occurs in the kingdom... the northern 10 tribes rally around Saul’s son, Ishbosheth. The southernmost tribe of Judah expresses its loyalty to David.

It’s interesting the nation will again split along these lines 80 years later in the reign of David’s grandson, Rehoboam. The kingdom will divide north and south.

Three of Saul’s sons died with him on Mount Gilboa. This is the first mention of a son named Ishbosheth – which leads us to believe he was an illegitimate heir.

Ishbosheth was a wimp - a weak leader. His name means “man of shame”.

During the reign of Ishbosheth the government of Israel was a military regime ruled by the army. General Abner was the strongman - Ishbosheth a puppet king.

An all out civil war could’ve erupted if David had not shown restraint. As usual David decided to trust the Lord to settle the dispute and reunite the kingdom.

But on occasion a border skirmish took place between the two armies...

Which is what happens in verse 12 “Now Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

And Joab the son of Zeruah, and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. So they sat down, one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool. Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and compete before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise."

Understand there are no open hostilities at the time – no declarations of war. Here are two armies on border patrol who end up at the same watering hole.

I'm sure the soldiers are bored. Men join the army looking for action. They want to *be all that they can be!* Abner tries to break up the boredom with a competition.

He challenges David's general, Joab, to a friendly joust? This isn't war – this is the Army-Navy football game. Give the soldiers something to do in peacetime.

“So they arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, followers of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David.

And each one grasped his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords, which is in Gibeon. So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the

servants of David.”

Two dozen soldiers square off for a friendly joust – intended as entertainment for the troops. But tempers flare - competitors get carried away - someone draws blood. Before you know it, an innocent competition turns into a University of Miami football game. It’s a bench clearing brawl. Two dozen men end up dead in the field, and both armies jump into the fray. A sporting event ends up a “very fierce battle.”

And when Abner sees that David’s men are winning he tries to escape.

Verse 18 “Now the three sons of Zeruah were there: Joab and Abishai and Asahel. And Asahel was as fleet of foot as a wild gazelle.” *Asahel had wheels.*

He was a Hebrew “*Michael Johnson*” - a world class sprinter.

“So Asahel pursued Abner, and in going he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner. Then Abner looked behind him and said, “Are you Asahel?” He answered, “I am.” This dialogue takes place as both men are racing through the forest. Old Abner is huffing and puffing – on the verge of a coronary. While fleet-footed Asahel is hot on his tracks and gaining ground by the second.

“And Abner said to him, “Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and lay hold on one of the young men and take his armor for yourself.” Back off or be prepared to fight. “But Asahel would not turn aside from following him.

So Abner said again to Asahel, “Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I

face your brother Joab?" Abner knows what's about to happen. A young, inexperienced Asahel is no match for a battle-hardened warrior. Abner doesn't want to kill Asahel – it'll make Joab mad.

"However, he refused to turn aside." Asahel had stopped thinking... He was now motivated by the thrill of the race. He had become addicted to the chase.

Asahel won't stop... **"Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear, so that the spear came out of his back; and he fell down there and died on the spot."** Asahel is just about to catch his prey when suddenly old Abner slams on the brakes – and sticks out the blunt end of his spear...

It punctures Asahel in the midsection like pushing a skewer through grilled veges. Sadly, it came too late to benefit from it, but Asahel finally got the point.

"So it was that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still." This whole story is a *pointed reminder* that there are some battles in life not worth fighting - rather than *push on* it's just better to *back off*.

If you're fixated on an ungodly goal give it up while you can - before it kills you. It's been said, **"A bulldog can whip a skunk, but is it really worth the effort."**

Certainly, there are causes in life so important they're worth dying for – they're deserving of sacrificial effort. But other campaigns are better off abandoned.

Some of us have spent our entire lives chasing an

Abner... Perhaps its fame, or money, or success... *We've been in hot pursuit... we've thrown caution to the wind... we're addicted to the adrenalin... our chase has become an ego trip.*

But have we considered what it'll cost us to catch Abner? And if we catch him, will the results be worth the sacrifice? It's amazing how the pursuit of a dream can become a nightmare if it is not directed by God. Hey, let's evaluate our motive.

One of my favorite movies is *"The Man From Snowy River"*. Early in the movie *"Jim Craig"* loses a valuable mare in a stampede of wild horses. Jim is fixated on the mare's retrieval, even though a tangle with the wild brumbies could be fatal.

In fact, Jim's desire to get back the mare is so strong it blinds him to the fact that he doesn't even own a horse. That's when his old buddy, Spur, comes to the rescue. He gives Jim a mountain horse, and throws in some important advice...

"Forget the mare you duffer, don't throw effort after foolishness." That's good advice for Christians. Are we throwing time and effort in the wrong direction?

Verse 24 *"Joab and Abishai also pursued Abner. And the sun was going down when they came to the hill of Ammah, which is before Giah by the road to the Wilderness of Gibeon. Now the children of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became a unit, and took their stand on top of a hill.*

Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end? How long will it be then until you tell the people to

return from pursuing their brethren?" Abner sees the folly of what's occurred. *Men are dying over what?* This was a good idea gone mad.

"And Joab said, "As God lives, unless you had spoken, surely then by morning all the people would have given up pursuing their brethren." David's general, Joab, gives up the chase and the fight - but he doesn't yet know about his brother...

"So Joab blew a trumpet; and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore. Then Abner and his men went on all that night through the plain, crossed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron; and they came to Mahanaim." They crossed the Jordan River and returned home.

"So Joab returned from pursuing Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David's servants 19 men and Asahel. But the servants of David had struck down, of Benjamin and Abner's men, 360 men who died." In all, the death count was 380 men. They died over foolishness.

Verse 32 "Then they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb, which was in Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at daybreak." Joab buries his brother, Asahel, but he doesn't forget who murdered him. And a lethal bitterness begins to brew in the heart of Joab toward Abner.

Chapter 3:1 summarizes the two years the kingdom was divided. "Now there was a long war between the house of

Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.”

The house of David loved God. David was anointed by God. The house of Saul lacked God’s blessing... No wonder David grew stronger and Saul grew weaker.

The same is true of us... Live under the influence of God’s Spirit and you’ll grow stronger. Walk in the flesh – apart from God - and you’ll be weaker.

“Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur;”

Absalom was born of a pagan princess. David probably married Maacah to seal a peace treaty with her dad. It was prudent politically, but violated God’s Law. Deuteronomy 17 prohibited the king from building a harem and multiplying wives.

David’s disobedience sowed seeds of rebellion that sprouted in his sons.

Verse 4 “the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David in Hebron.”

David ended up with 8 wives, 19 sons, and we’re told of one daughter.

Chapter 3 tells of the power struggle that occurs in Mahanaim - in the court of Saul’s son, Ishbosheth. **“Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and**

the house of David, that Abner was strengthening his hold on the house of Saul.” Ishbosheth’s weakness provided an opportunity for Abner’s ambition.

“And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. So Ishbosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"

I wonder what was going through Abner’s mind... He’d spent his whole life faithfully serving a madman named Saul. Now he’s trying to prop up a weakling named Ishbosheth. I’m sure he thought “I deserve more than a military pension.”

Guys, be careful – when someone who’s suppose to be a servant develops an entitlement mentality - danger is on the horizon. This can happen to a pastor or a church leader. “Nobody appreciates the sacrifices I’ve made. I’m going to take a few perks.” A pastor starts grabbing *the glory...* and *the gold...* and *the girls*.

When King Ishbosheth confronts Abner the old general bristles up! Verse 8...

“Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning this woman?" After all I’ve done for you – you’re going to rebuke me for shacking up with a concubine?

“May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the LORD has sworn to him - to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

Abner is so angry he jumps sides. If Ishbosheth doesn't appreciate him he'll fight for David.

“And he could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.”

“Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, "Whose is the land?" saying also, "Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel to you." And David said, "Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face.”

So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.”

Recall Saul promised Michal to David - then took her away and gave her to Paltiel as an act of cruelty. “Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, "Go, return!" And he returned.”

“Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David to be king over you. Now then, do it! For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.'”

And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin.” Abner intends to lead the entire northern kingdom away from

Ishbosheth and pledge allegiance to David.

“Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin.

So Abner and 20 men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. Then Abner said to David, "I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires."

So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.” David embraces his old nemesis, Abner, and sees in his change of heart a way to unite the nation.

But all this hope of reconciliation is about to be spoiled.

“At that moment the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. When Joab and all the troops that were with him had come, they told Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace." Immediately, Joab is suspicious.

Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why is it that you sent him away, and he has already gone?"

Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing."

And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know it.

Remember too, Joab has an ax to grind. David might be willing to let bygones be bygones, but he's not. Abner killed his brother, Asahel. "Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately..." Joab walks up to Abner with a dagger hidden in his sleeve... "and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother."

Verse 28 "Afterward, when David heard it, he said, "My kingdom and I are guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner.

Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread." Notice, David utters a curse over the house of Joab, but all that David musters is words. For the first time we see a dangerous tendency in David that haunts him for the rest of his life... He fails to discipline the people around him. He should've punished Joab, but he didn't.

"So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle." Joab got his revenge, but David has a political crisis on his hands. When word spreads in Israel that Abner tried to defect, but was killed – nobody will be willing to trust David as their king.

David needs to do some damage control. Verse 31 "Then

David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner." Joab was smiling on the inside, but David made him join in a display of public mourning. "And King David followed the coffin."

It reminds me of the casket that slipped from the hands of the pallbearers, and slid down a grassy hill. It jumped the curb, and headed right for the town pharmacy. The casket crashed through the plate glass window and stopped at the counter.

The funeral director chased the casket into the drug store, cleared his throat, and said to the pharmacist, "Wow, I want to thank you for stopping my coffin!"

David mourned the loss of Abner just as you're mourning this joke.

"So they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept." Abner receives a state funeral.

And the king sang a lament over Abner and said: "Should Abner die as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound nor your feet put into fetters; as a man falls before wicked men, so you fell." Then all the people wept over him again.

And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, "God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!" Now all the people took note of it, and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people.

For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's intent to kill Abner the son of Ner. Then the king said to his servants, "Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"

And I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruah, are too harsh for me. The LORD shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness." David understood the wisdom of Proverbs 24:17, "Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice..." This was how David reacted to the death of Saul – and now to the assassination of Abner...

"When Saul's son heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and all Israel was troubled. Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of troops.

The name of one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin. (For Beeroth also was part of Benjamin, because the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there until this day.) Abner's two captains realize that without their general they're no match for David's army. Their only hope is the assassination of Ishbosheth.

Verse 4 seems to be a sidebar. "Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

Then the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out and came at about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who was lying on his bed at noon. And they came there, all the way into the house, as though to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach.” Just like Abner, Ishbosheth dies of a stomach ache. “Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.”

For when they came into the house, he was lying on his bed in his bedroom; then they struck him and killed him, beheaded him and took his head, and were all night escaping through the plain.” They were running to present the head to David.

“And they brought the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul your enemy, who sought your life; and the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul and his descendants." Abner’s captains think they’re helping David get *a-head*.

“But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all adversity, when someone told me, saying, 'Look, Saul is dead,' thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag - the one who thought I would give him a reward for his news.” Remember the Amalekite.

“How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and remove you from the earth?" So David commanded his young men, and they

executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged them by the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner in Hebron.” Hey, more heads have rolled in tonight’s chapters than bowling balls on a Friday night. And there have been very few spares...

We’ve mostly seen strikes, and gutters... literally!