

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 SAMUEL 18-20

In Hosea 8:7 the prophet predicts God's judgment on Israel. He says, "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind." In other words, the seeds of rebellion produce a disproportionate harvest. A few seeds can reap a bumper crop.

Proverbs 22:8 tells us, "He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow."

Both verses apply to David. When he invited Bathsheba to his room for a few night games he had no idea the devastation and sadness he was inviting into his life. Pain invaded and ransacked his heart - his home – even the entire nation.

At the end of chapter 17 David is sleeping in Mahanaim – east of the Jordan River – outside the borders of his own kingdom. He's an alien in his own capitol.

His renegade son, Absalom, launched a coup to unseat David from power.

The name "*Absalom*" means "father of peace." Tragically, Absalom was one Bible character who's name did not reflect his nature. There was nothing at all peaceful about Absalom's motivations - or his manners – or his maneuvers.

Absalom resented the mistakes and weaknesses he saw in his father, David – to the point where it blinded him to his dad's many noble and godly traits.

Absalom rallied together other bitter men, and led a coup

against David. At first it was so successful he forced David to abandon his capitol city of Jerusalem. And in order to solidify his hold on the throne he rallies an army to capture his father.

He figures when he executes David, all of Israel will serve him as their king.

In chapter 18 the showdown takes place.

“And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite.

And the king said to the people, "I also will surely go out with you myself." The marring mistake of David's life was his sin with Bathsheba, and it happened when he stayed home rather than go to battle. He won't make the same mistake twice.

“But the people answered, "You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city."

Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands.

David gets bumped from combat for three reasons...

First, he was the prey the enemy was after. Their foe would fight harder if they saw David was opposing them. All they really wanted to do was capture him.

Second, if they were overcome David could rally reinforcements.

And third, they doubted how hard David would fight against his own son.

And here's why they question his resolve - "Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom." This was discouraging to the troops. They were risking their lives in a bloody battle with Absalom's army. It was a fight to the death.

And all they hear their leader say is "Deal gently..." with the enemy.

Of course, David had the heart of a true father. Despite how his son's rebellion and animosity had broken his heart, he still loved Absalom. Charles Spurgeon wrote of David, "It is a father that speaks, and a father's love can survive the enmity of a son." A child can never quench the love for their parents.

And not only was this David's heart toward his rebellious son, Absalom - this is God's heart toward us! Despite our years of rebellion He says, "Deal gently..."

Verse 6 "So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim. The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of 20,000 took place there that day. For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more

people that day than the sword devoured.”

The terrain was a factor in the battle. Men fought in forested mountains, along steep ledges, surrounded by caves and drop-offs. It minimized the importance of numbers and reduced the battle to man on man – face to face combat.

The conditions favored the army of David – and a great victory was won.

“Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule.” Why he was on a mule? I have no clue. Unless he thought it gave him some advantage in the forest. I’m sure it wasn’t - but it could’ve been a symbol of his stubbornness.

Absalom may’ve been lost – cut off from his men. He happens upon an enemy patrol, and decides to kick the mule into high gear and escape an encounter.

Remember 2 Samuel 14:25-26 describes Absalom’s appearance. “Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.” And the trait that made him so handsome was his long hair. Women love men with long hair. And Absalom kept his hair long. He had one annual haircut a year.

We’re told, “And when he cut the hair of his head - at the end of every year he cut it because it was heavy on him-- when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels according to the king's standard.” 200 shekels weighed 6 pounds.

Absalom obviously, had course, thick, bushy hair. Absalom had a fro. **(Here’s a picture...)** His hair is the detail to

remember when you read the next line...

“The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth.

And the mule which was under him went on.” The implication is his long, bushy hair got caught in the branches of the tree. A terebinth tree was like a thick shrub.

Trapp writes in his commentary, “So he hung between heaven and earth, as rejected by both.” He literally can’t untangle his hair. He’s just hanging around.

Seriously speaking this is a *hairy* ordeal - a *hair-raising* situation. Absalom’s destiny is literally, *up-in-the-hair*. He’s what you might call really *up a tree*.

Verse 10 tells us, “Now a certain man saw it and told Joab, and said, “I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!” So Joab said to the man who told him, “You just saw him! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt.” You would’ve been rewarded.

“But the man said to Joab, “Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware lest anyone touch the young man Absalom!'" The soldier had heard David’s orders.

“Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself

would have set yourself against me."

Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him." The first man on the scene fears and respects the king. His desire is to obey the king - and not slay his son.

But Joab doesn't hesitate the slightest. Without batting an eye he grabs three spears and thrusts them through Absalom's heart. Ten troops finish the job.

Joab seemed to love David, and supported him - but long ago he lost respect for the king. He'd watched David indulge his kids and never discipline them.

He knew the same would be the case even after Absalom's disaster.

Joab couldn't stand by and watch it all happen again. I'm sure he rationalized – "This is a no-brainer. All I'm doing is what David doesn't have the guts to do."

Though you sympathize with Joab – something is missing in his attitude.

David proved with Saul, if you respect God's authority – God is fully capable of dealing with that authority when and how it suits Him. But it takes faith Joab lacks.

In his book "A Tale of Three Kings", Gene Edwards, imagines David saying, "The throne is not mine. Not to have, not to take, not to protect, and not to keep. The throne is the LORD's." Neither Saul – nor Abner – nor Absalom – nor Joab

– nor anyone else living at the time had that attitude – *except David*. God loved David as much as he did, because his treasure was the Lord – nothing else.

“So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel.

For Joab held back the people. And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him.

Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent.” All who had sided with Absalom.

“Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which is in the King's Valley.” Absalom had established his own memorial.

“For he said, “I have no son to keep my name in remembrance.” In 14:27 we were told he had 3 sons, who apparently died long before their father. “He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.”

There is a site in the Kidron Valley – at the bottom of the Mount of Olives - known as the Absalom’s Tomb - but it’s not. The structure was constructed in the first century BC. Joab buried Absalom by tossing him a pit in the woods.

“Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, “Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the LORD has avenged him of his enemies.” And Joab said to him, “You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is

dead." He knows how David will react. The news of victory will be drowned out by his son's death.

"Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen."

So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran.

And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready?" But whatever happens," he said, "let me run." So he said to him, "Run." Two messengers are dispatched with the news.

"Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a man, running alone. Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, "If he is alone, there is news in his mouth." And he came rapidly and drew near.

Then the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "There is another man, running alone!" And the king said, "He also brings news." So the watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He is a good man, and comes with good news." And Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has

delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!" The king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

Before he celebrates the victory, David wants to know the welfare of his son.

"Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant and me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was about." And the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still." Ahimaaz knows exactly what happened – Absalom is dead. Yet he lies to David.

"Just then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "There is good news, my lord the king! For the LORD has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you." And the king said to the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

So the Cushite answered, (he just blurts it out) "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young man!"

Verse 33, "Then the king was deeply moved..." The idea is that he went into violent trembling and shakings. "And went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom - my son, my son Absalom - if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!"

When David hears the report, rather than rejoice in the efforts and outcome of his troops he becomes totally absorbed his grief over the death of Absalom.

Five times in verse 33 David cries out "my son". He is brokenhearted.

Charles Spurgeon once wrote, "Our children may plunge

into the worst of sins, but they are our children still. They may scoff at our God; they may tear our heart to pieces with their wickedness; we cannot take complacency in them, but at the same time we cannot unchild them, nor erase their image from our hearts.”

It's also possible David realized just how responsible he'd been for what his son became. David's insensitivity opened the door for Amnon's sin. David's failure to discipline caused Absalom to feel he had to take action. David's unwillingness to forgive stirred up Absalom's rebellion. David's lusts were mimicked by his son.

Absalom's death was David's greatest failure and he mourns deeply.

Chapter 19, “And Joab was told, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.” So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people. For the people heard it said that day, “The king is grieved for his son.”

And the people stole back into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. But the king covered his face, and the king cried out with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Joab knows David and tries to be sympathetic. But he's also a general – and his biggest concern is for the morale of his troops. This is just not right.

Men have risked their lives for David – and now he ignores their sacrifice, and mourns over the death of the leader of the rebellion. David is sending the wrong message – and his actions may end up more damaging than Absalom's sin.

Joab rebukes the king in verse 5 "Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, "Today you have disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines, in that you love your enemies and hate your friends.

For you have declared today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased you well." That was the impression David had created.

"Now therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants. For I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you from your youth until now." You're about to have real problems if you don't say "*thanks*" to the troops.

Then the king arose and sat in the gate.

And they told all the people, saying, "There is the king, sitting in the gate." So all the people came before the king. For everyone of Israel had fled to his tent.

Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king saved us from the hand of our enemies, he delivered us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the land because of Absalom.

But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle.

Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing back the king?" David's popularity ratings were so low - because of the way he'd handled his victory - some of the people didn't

know who they now wanted to rule over them.

“So King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, "Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, to his very house?"

You are my brethren, you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?' David was of the city of Bethlehem in the tribe of Judah.

David was losing some of his core constituency, and he's concerned.

"And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you are not commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.'" This was a two-fold move. It was political, but it was also personal.

Amasa was Absalom's general. He was also from Judah. By making Amasa joint-chief-of-staff David would be holding out an olive branch to the two parties who were most reluctant to return to the fold and support him as king – the men from Judah, and the former followers of Absalom. David is reunifying the nation.

But his motive here is also personal. Word has got back to David who struck the blows that killed Absalom. Joab finally stepped over the line. David has had enough of the Joab-way. It's time to reel him in and put him back in his place.

“So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah, just as the heart of one man, so that they sent this word to the king: "Return, you and all your servants!"

Then the king returned and came to the Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to escort the king across the Jordan. And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, who was from Bahurim, hastened and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David.” He was the guy hurling curses - throwing stones - and kicking up dust at David when he was forced to flee Jerusalem.

There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his 15 sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over the Jordan before the king. Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good.” The last time David crossed the Jordan was at night – while the world was dark. Now he comes back in the light of day. The first time he crossed suffering. Now he comes back victorious.

Hey, this is David's *second coming*. He's coming as king a second time.

And it's all a type of the son of David's second coming... Jesus, the Davidic heir, will also come to earth a second time. And He will return victorious.

In his first stint as king, Jesus, like David, was run out of town. He was rejected by relatives – the Hebrews. He was betrayed by Judas – an Ahithophel. He was crucified by the rebellious hearts of all men... But one day Jesus will return to conquer his enemies, and come to Jerusalem to sit on His eternal throne.

Verse 18 “Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan.” Shimei chose the

wrong side. He'd been brutal to David.

“Then he said to the king, "Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take it to heart. For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king." He repents and cries for mercy.

“But Abishai the son of Zeruah answered and said, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" Abishai has it in for this guy. He wanted to shut his mouth the first time. He wants to punish him now.

“And David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah, that you should be adversaries to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel?"

The sons of Zeruah remind me of the sons of Zebedee – James and John - they too were sons of thunder. They had fiery tempers. Remember Luke 9...

When the Samaritans refused to let Jesus travel through their borders James and John shouted, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" We're told, Jesus, "turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.

For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

Here, Abishai does “not know what manner of spirit” he is

of... This was not a day for judgment, but an opportunity to show mercy. "For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?" Therefore the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die."

And the king swore to him." As Jesus taught us, David pardons his enemy.

Even though the Jews hurled insults at Jesus when He stood before Pilate, and carried the cross to Calvary - one day they'll repent like Shimei and be pardoned.

Verse 24 "Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace.

So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?" Remember his servant, Ziba, told David earlier, that Mephibosheth stayed behind to support Absalom and claim part of Saul's inheritance. David gave all of Mephibosheth's goods to Ziba.

Here, Jesus allows Mephibosheth an opportunity to speak for himself...

"And he answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,' because your servant is lame. And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king, but my lord the king is like the angel of God. Therefore do what is good in your eyes. For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king.

Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own

table.” Mephibosheth is still overwhelmed at David’s original generosity. On behalf of his father Jonathan, David had adopted Mephibosheth into his family. And he is still filled with gratitude.

He says, “Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?”

Mephibosheth thinks David has already been kinder and more generous than he deserves. He doesn’t feel it appropriate to keep bugging the king for more.

“So the king said to him, “Why do you speak anymore of your matters?”

I have said, ‘You and Ziba divide the land.’” *I wonder which of the two men David believed? Mephibosheth or Ziba.* It’s possible he had doubts about both – that’s why he split the inheritance in half. Maybe there was truth to both stories.

Which proves what every marriage counselor already knows... *there are two sides to every story.* At times it’s difficult to determine who’s telling the truth.

“Then Mephibosheth said to the king, “Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house.”

David also blesses the house of an old man named Barzillai. This was the guy who supplied David food and drink while he was living in exile in Mahanaim.

Verse 31, **And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went across the Jordan with the king, to escort him across the Jordan.**

Now Barzillai was a very aged man, 80 years old.

And he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very rich man. And the king said to Barzillai, "Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem." But Barzillai said to the king, "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem?"

I am today 80 years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king? Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king.

And why should the king repay me with such a reward?

It's amazing, Barzillai does a simple thing – he brought the king some supplies.

A few bedrolls, canned goods, wheat, bean, lentils, seeds, honey and curds, and some cheese... just basic stuff. And it wasn't a big sacrifice – we're told the guy was "very rich". Now David returns... and he wants to reward Barzillai!

It just goes to show it doesn't take much to get a reward from Jesus. When He comes again He too will pass out rewards... and it might not take as much as you think to get in line for a crown or two. Got any lentils? *Can you pass the cheese?*

Hey, and it's never too late to rack up a few rewards. Barzillai was 80 years old.

He said he'd lost his wits – his sense of taste - his hearing. He was barely able to walk. Yet none of that mattered. It didn't

stop him from sharing his stuff...

Barzillai saw a need he could meet and he met it. If you want to get to heaven and hear, “Well done good and faithful servant.” It’s that simple. Find a need to meet and meet it! Pass the cheese. A cup of beans earns a crown of blessing.

Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you.”

And the king answered, "Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you."

Then all the people went over the Jordan. And when the king had crossed over, the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own place.”

At the end of chapter 19 a squabble erupts over the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah over who should escort the king to Jerusalem.

It amazes me, just a few months earlier, as he exited his capitol in disgrace, no one was claiming David. *The fickleness of people!* Few people stood with him in the tough times, but now that the bandwagon is rolling again it’s, “all aboard”.

Verse 40 “Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. And all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, "Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen

you away and brought the king, his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan?"

So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?"

And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, "We have ten shares in the king; (since there were ten tribes in the north) therefore we also have more right to David than you. Why then do you despise us - were we not the first to advise bringing back our king?" Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel." Apparently, Judah won out.

But this little rift at the end of chapter 19 creates another rebellion in chapter 20. Sheba, balks at the tribe of Judah's claim to David, and organizes his own revolt.

"And there happened to be there a rebel, whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said: "We have no share in David, nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel!"

So every man of Israel deserted David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri.

But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king." The same split occurs we've seen before – the 10 tribes in the north rally together against the one, larger tribe in the south. It's *Israel* versus *Judah*.

"Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king

took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them.” They’d been defiled by Absalom.

“So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.”

And the king said to Amasa, "Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself." So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him.

And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he find for himself fortified cities, and escape us." So Joab's men, with the Cherethites, the Pelethites (David’s personal bodyguards), and all the mighty men, went out after him.

And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came before them. Now Joab was dressed in battle armor; on it was a belt with a sword fastened in its sheath at his hips; and as he was going forward, it fell out.”

The Jewish historian, Josephus, says Joab dropped the sword intentionally, so he would have an excuse to approach him with an unsheathed blade.

Then Joab said to Amasa, "Are you in health, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.” *Be careful of a kiss.* How many people have been

betrayed by a kiss – a fake show of affection?

“But Amasa did not notice the sword that was in Joab's hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and he did not strike him again. Thus he died.” Amasa was Joab’s rival – a very dangerous position. Joab does to Amasa what he did to Abner. He guts him like a fresh fish.

“Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

Meanwhile one of Joab's men stood near Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David - follow Joab!" But Amasa wallowed in his blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted.” Amasa’s murder was done in broad daylight. Joab had made no attempt to do anything in secret. He stabbed his rival by the road, and left him squirming between the white lines.

This was a cold-blooded, unwarranted murder. An injustice - an arrogant act of power-grabbing - and the people halted when they saw the evidence. But, “When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab...”

In other words, “out of sight, out of mind.” This is why abortion is still legal in this country. It’s an invisible crime. No one sees the victims, and their torture.

If an injustice doesn’t make the nightly news, folks forget it ever happened. Sweep the issue out of sight and people

neglect it - they go their merry way.

“When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. And he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel and Beth Maachah and all the Berites. So they were gathered together and also went after Sheba. Then they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart.

And all the people who were with Joab battered the wall to throw it down.

Then a wise woman cried out from the city, "Hear, Hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come nearby, that I may speak with you.' " When he had come near to her, the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Hear the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening."

So she spoke, saying, "They used to talk in former times, saying, 'They shall surely seek guidance at Abel,' and so they would end disputes. I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?" And Joab answered and said, "Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy!

That is not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David.

Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city."

So the woman said to Joab, "Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab." Once again, Joab goes to battle and King David gets a *head*. "Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem."

Chapter 20 ends with a list of David's cabinet in the later years of his reign.

"And Joab was over all the army of Israel; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; Adoram was in charge of revenue (or head of the IRS);" In the previous list of David's cabinet – chapter 8 - there was no such position as "in charge of revenue". In the early years of David's reign the government was supported by the spoils of battle. Now he's levying taxes.

"Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder (state historian); Sheva was scribe (Secretary of State); Zadok and Abiathar were the priests; and Ira the Jairite was a chief minister under David." Again, compare this to the previous list, and Ira replaces David's sons as chief ministers. David's family had become so corrupt they could no longer be trusted with high level posts in his government.