

## **The Discipline and Deliverance of the LORD**

2Samuel 18:1-33

### How many of you have ever had a close call?

A situation where if it had gone just a little bit differently things could have turned out really bad.

I have had a few over the years. One that stands out in my mind happened several years ago as I was on my way home from the church.

The weather had been nice that day and I decided to take my motorcycle to the meeting and was enjoying a nice ride home after dark.

I was cruising along on Seacliffe Road, doing the speed limit in case any of you are wondering, about half way between Leamington and Kingsville when out of the corner of my eye I saw a set of eyes moving onto the road.

Sure enough it was a deer. It came onto the road right in front of me looked in my direction and decided to stand still.

### I would guess I had about 100-150 feet driving at 60km/h to figure that situation out.

If I had not recently taken the motorcycle safety course I might have decided to swerve which would have put me into oncoming traffic or into the gravel.

In the safety course though they teach you to do emergency braking. They say keep braking until you hit the object that popped out in front of you because you want to be going as slow as possible before impact.

So, without even thinking in what seemed like a fraction of a second I started applying the brakes and ended up stopping short of the deer by about 10 feet or so.

It trotted on its merry way and I continued on home safe and sound.

### As I was driving along, I was thanking the Lord for His mercies.

You see, I decided to take the course because I thought it was an easier way to get my license not because I was concerned about safety.

Taking the course I realized it was full of valuable information and training on how better to control the bike and it sure paid off that night.

I also thought about how the brakes worked like they should, how I caught a glimpse of the deer before it came on the road, about how it wasn't raining, and about how it was warm enough for the tires the grip the road.

If any of those things were different, the outcome could have been bad.

God in his mercy kept me from injury or worse that day and I was thanking Him for His deliverance all the way home.

[Has something like that ever happened to you? I think if we belong to Christ and we are even paying a little attention to our lives we will clearly see that the LORD has delivered us from

trouble many times in our lives. But that also raises a question. Why allow us to be in a situation where we needed saving in the first place? One of the reasons, I believe, is to wake us up, to show our need of Him, and our need to be concerned about our walk with Him. That is what we see in the life of King David in our text this morning **2Samuel 18:1-33**. In this chapter we see both God's discipline and His deliverance in the life of the king. Let's listen in together and see what the LORD has to say to us about these matters. With his life, on the line the first thing that we can see in David's situation is that...]

**Point #1 – God's faithfulness is our hope for deliverance. (Verses 1-5)**

The LORD never breaks a promise because it is impossible for Him to go against His truthful nature and that is why we can trust that He will save His people.

*As this chapter opens we find King David in a place that he has been in many times in his life, he is preparing for battle. (Verses 1-2)*

We know from what is said here that the men in David's service number at least in the thousands, but how many troops he has in total is left unsaid.

There is a good chance that those that are with David are fewer, maybe by quite a bit, than those that are against him.

Being in a weaker position is something the king has faced before.

Remember Goliath? He scoffed at David's size when they met on the battlefield, but the young shepherd wisely replied, "*You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.*" (1 Sam. 17:45 ESV)

He knew then that having the LORD on your side matters more than size, strength, and numbers.

Like a good general, he wisely divides his troops, but his hope needs to be in something deeper than his own strength and wisdom.

*We get a sense of that with how his men respond to his desire to go out to the battlefield (Verses 3-5).*

In the ancient world it was common for the king to be on the battlefield, but in this instance David's men convince him to stay behind.

The reason they give here is the value of the king's life. They say he alone is worth ten thousand of them.

Why would they say that? Because this battle is a battle for who is the rightful king of Israel.

If David falls what is there left to fight for? Nothing! If he dies the battle is immediately lost and the kingdom would go to his son Absalom who is not God's chosen king.

*That is what is on the line here. It is much bigger than the life of one man, this is tied up in the covenant promises of the LORD.*

It is interesting that David is only called by his name once in these five verses, but he is called 'the king' five times.

I agree with commentators who suggest that is the writer's way of reminding us that David is the true king chosen by God and by reminding us of that we are being reminded that the LORD has made promises to this man which points us to His faithfulness.

Whatever other motivations David's men may have had this, I believe, is what the writer wants us to see.

I believe David sees it because he is willing to stay behind which means he will have no direct control of anything that happens.

That is hinted at here in the command he gives concerning his son which we will come back to.

What can he do while he waits at the city gate? The only thing he can do while he waits at the city is trust.

His hope for being rescued from this situation is God's faithfulness to his promises.

[You have probably heard of the two astronauts that thought they were going to the space station for one week and ended up there for nine months because the space capsule intended to carry them home had technical issues that made it unsafe to fly. If you are stuck on the space station your only hope to make it back safely is to have a space craft able to make the flight back.]

That is the kind of picture we should have in mind we it comes to being rescued by God. We cannot rescue ourselves.

Oh people try. People put their trust in all kinds of things and many of them are good things in themselves.

It is good to go to the doctor, but he/she can't give you eternal life.

It is good and I believe God glorifying to eat well, but if that is all we have then all we are is slightly healthier dying person.

Trying to do good and right things is good, but every good thing with do apart from faith is stained with the sin of idolatry and only serves to walk us further down the road that leads to hell.

Other religions only have false gods made up by dead men who can do nothing for you.

Only One person has died for our sins and conquered the grave brothers and sisters and His Name is Jesus.

[Why did God send Christ into the world? Because we deserve it? If we deserved it He would have no need to come. Why then? Because God resolved in Himself from before the foundation of the world to set His eternal love upon all those redeemed by the blood of His precious Son. Why should we be confident in our future salvation? Because the LORD is faithful. That is our hope for deliverance just as it is David's hope in this battle. As the writer moves into describing what happens in the fight he shows us another very important lesson. He shows us that...]

**Point #2 – Despising God's discipline leads to destruction. (Verses 6-18)**

When people feel the consequence of disobeying God and still persist in the same direction it will lead to judgement and death.

*The battle is described for us in verses 6-9.*

While the LORD is not specifically named here there is a clear sense of His hand in what takes place.

David's men though outnumbered gain the upper hand.

Yes they are the better warriors but why are they the better warriors?

Where does strength, intelligence, and ability come from? It all comes from the LORD according to His plans and purposes.

Beyond that it says at the end of verse 8 that, "the forest devoured more people that day than the sword"

Commentators have considered several different ways that could happen.

Horses stumbling on uneven ground, wild animals attacking, falling into crevasses, and alike.

*We are only given clear details on one person and that is Absalom.*

There is some irony here that he gets caught in a tree by his hair.

You may recall he had an exceptional amount of hair that he gloried in which gives us a sense of the pride that he had in his heart.

Here it serves as his undoing.

In verses 10-16 we are told about a man seeing Absalom and telling Joab and how Joab shows contempt for David's command concerning Absalom and how he and his armor bearers take the life of the King's son.

With Absalom's death the battle comes to an end and we read this in **verses 17-18.**

*We are being told something more here that they made a grave with a big pile of stones.*

Several times in the Bible we see the people of Israel pile up stones as a means of remembering things.

That is clearly the point being highlighted by telling us about the pillar Absalom set up in the King's Valley. Why did he do it? To be remembered.

Who sets up a monument in their own honour? Someone with a good deal of pride in their heart.

What does this big pile of stones over the pit where he is buried have to say to everyone who sees it?

This is what happens to those who in their pride defy the LORD.

Now let us ask a very important question. Did Absalom have opportunity to turn from his pride?

Without a doubt he did. He had lived in exile for three years and was kept from the presence of the king for two years.

Instead of humbling himself under those circumstances, his pride grew.

It is also interesting that in verse 18 we are told Absalom puts up the monument to himself because he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance."

Back in chapter 14:27 it says Absalom had three sons but they are not named which probably means they died as children or young men.

I can think of no greater grief than that and that should drive a man's face into the ground before a Holy God, but there is no indication Absalom was humbled in any way.

How many more things do you think God may have brought into this man's life that should have affected the course of his life?

The Bible says that just as an earthly father disciplines his son so too the LORD disciplines people.

Why does a good father discipline his children?

Because he loves them and sees the need to turn them from things that are bad for them.

What if they don't listen? What if they hate discipline and keep going down a road of bad stuff? It is going to end badly.

[It is the same with God. If you ignore His correction and carry on down the road of rebellion refusing to turn from sin and accept Christ as Saviour you will end up suffering His eternal wrath. It doesn't have to be that way. That is the good news of the gospel. Instead of destruction God offers deliverance. The next few verses bring us back to that theme as they focus on those who are entrusted to go back to the city and tell David what happened in the battle. From what is said here we can see that...]

**Point #3 – Bringing news of God's deliverance is a privilege. (Verses 19-23)**

It is a joyful honour to be able to tell people that the LORD saves.

With Absalom gone and his followers hightailing it for home the next thing to do is go and tell the king what has happened.

Immediately, it seems, there is a volunteer. **Verses 19-20**

We are reminded of something important about Ahimaaz and the beginning of verse 19.

It says that he is ‘the son of Zadok.’

Zadok is a priest and he has remained loyal to David throughout this rebellion.

The fact that Ahimaaz’s father is a priest means that Ahimaaz is also a priest, and like his father he has remained faithful to David.

Every indication we have from the passages where these guys are mentioned is that they had a genuine heart to serve the LORD.

That, I believe, is why he wants to carry the news that “the LORD has delivered (the king) from the hand of his enemies.”

Joab doesn’t want him to carry the news and the reason he gives is the death of Absalom.

Some scholars think the end of verse 20 is a narrator’s note and not part of what Joab says to Ahimaaz. As we will see that would alleviate the tension between this verse and verse 29.

Most commentators think that Joab’s concern here is that David might execute the one who brings news of his son’s death, so instead of sending the priest verse 21 tells us that he sends a Cushite who is a foreigner and likely expendable in the eyes of Joab.

After the Cushite leaves, Ahimaaz persists. (**Verse 22-23**)

‘Come what may’ Ahimaaz wants to carry the news which leaves Joab sort of scratching his head.

Why would you want to deliver the news, there is nothing it is for you.”

Even so, he wants to run. Why?

The only answer that makes sense is that for Ahimaaz this is much bigger than, ‘we won the battle’, this is about declaring the work of his glorious and infinitely powerful God bringing judgment against evil and remaining faithful to His promises.

It is honour enough to have the privilege of saying, “Look David our God saves!”  
Delighting in our God Who is mighty to save is the reward!

[How many of you have heard the expression, “If you love what you do you will never work a day in your life?” When I was a kid I had that job figured out. Professional golfer. Never happened but if it had it is hard to imagine it feeling like work. Why? Because I like golf. Part

of what is implied in the statement “love what you do” is if you didn’t need the money you would work at that job for free because you like doing the job. The job itself is the reward.]

That is how this young priest feels about bringing the news of God’s salvation.

Don’t we have that same privilege?

Isn’t the news we have about Who Jesus is and what He has accomplished much greater than what we see here with David?

God conquers enemies with sword and spears to rescue David, but in Christ God conquers sin, and death, and hell in His resurrection from the dead.

Is it a burden for us to carry that news?

I confess, it feels that way sometimes.

There are times where I say to myself, “What is the point, what does it matter?”

There are times when I say to myself, “It’s too hard” and I want to quit.

[I admit that is both foolish and sinful. How can we see the greatest news in the history of the world as a burden? Instead we should think how amazing is it that we get to carry this news. You don’t have to die in your sins! You can turn from them, look to the cross and be forgiven, look to the empty grave of Jesus and be saved. How amazing it is that the bible calls us ‘ambassadors of Christ’. What a privilege. That brings us to one more lesson from this text, it is a tough one. It is an inescapable reality, it is that...]

#### **Point #4 – God’s deliverance often requires discipline. (Verses 24-33)**

Rebellion against the LORD must be dealt with in a just manner if people are going to be saved.

Verse 24 tells us that “David was sitting between the two gates” of the city wall.

That is where he was when the army went out for battle and it is likely where he has stayed there the whole time.

How many of you know that waiting for news is often difficult to do?

As soon as the watchman sees something David wants to know about it.

Sure enough he sees someone running towards the city by himself.

David knows right away in verse 25 that if he is alone he has news from the battlefield.

It is either victory or total defeat.

If it were retreat there would be more than one guy coming.

A few moments later the watchman sees another guy and David concludes that he has news as well.

Ahimaaz must have had a recognizable way of running because as he gets closer the watchman is able to identify him which David sees in an optimistic light saying, “He is a good man and comes with good news.”

Indeed he does have good news. **Verse 28-29.**

Notice where the focus of Ahimaaz is. It is on the praise of God for His work of deliverance.

Evil men who seek the life of God’s chosen king did not prevail because of God’s faithfulness.

David though seems to pass over that news and seems more interested in what happened with Absalom.

Either Ahimaaz is being honest here or specifically vague by saying he saw a commotion but did not know what it was.

Since he doesn’t give an answer the king puts him aside and focuses his attention of the second runner. (**Verses 31-33**)

The Cushite brings the news of deliverance using almost identical language here.

Again David brushes past that and inquires of Absalom and is cut to the core of his being when he hears the answer.

I have to say I have an enormous amount of empathy for David here.

I can’t begin to imagine what it was like for him to have his son want him dead.

Even still you see the tender heart of a father who loves his son despite all that had happened.

Doesn’t that point us to the love the LORD has for people?

God says in Ezekiel 33:11, “*As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*”

But what happens when the wicked refuse to turn from their ways? What is God to do then?

If He does nothing how will He save His people?

What would have happened if the LORD had done nothing and let the battle here take a different course?

What do you think Absalom would have done if he had won the day?

He would have surely taken David’s life.

While I think Joab acted sinfully here, I also believe that God allowed it for the purpose of delivering David.

There is also the matter of disciplining David here as well.

It seems pretty clear from this book that David was too indulgent with the sin of his sons.



Why is that? Likely on account of his own sin.

The king here in many ways is experiencing the consequences of his own moral failures, he is feeling the weight of what evil can do and that should have the effect of deepening a believer's hatred for sin.

Whether we are considering David or Absalom here we see that the LORD must deal with sin in order to deliver his people.

[Think of this like dislocating a shoulder. I've never had that experience but I am told it is quite painful. Now imagine someone going to the hospital with a dislocated shoulder and the doctor says, "I'm sorry I can't put your shoulder back into place because it is going to cause you pain." What would we say about the doctor? We would say he is a bad doctor because we can see that the pain of putting the shoulder back into place is necessary to make the patient better.]

The same thing can be true in the Christian life.

God needs to deal with sin in order to deliver us.

It is also important to remember that the LORD is not some far away indifferent observer in this process.

God the Son took on humanity in Mary's womb, lived a perfect life in this sin cursed world, and suffered a most horrible death bearing the full wrath of God in our place so that we can be justly forgiven and saved from hell.

If God's loves us enough to kill His Son for us will He not also be willing to discipline us so that the fruit of our salvation will grow in us day by day?

Of course He will!

*Of course He will keep working to deliver us from evil because He is faithful.*

Part of what it means to be born again is to accept the LORD's discipline so that we would be saved from destruction.

It is a glorious work that He is doing in the world and every Christian has the privilege of being an ambassador for the LORD.

That is not always easy, in fact it is often hard because in order to save His people God must deal with evil.

Praise the LORD He has done that, is doing that, and will do that until all of His people are gathered before His throne to the praise of His glorious grace forever.