

# 2 Samuel 14 - Joab's Scheme for Absalom's Return; David Authorizes Absalom's Return

III. David's foes (13:1—20:26)

(1) Turmoil in David's immediate family (13:1—18:33)

(B) Absalom's rebellion (14:1—18:33)

(a) Absalom returns from exile (14:1-33)

## 2 Samuel 14

(B) Absalom's rebellion (14:1—18:33)

(a) Absalom returns from exile (14:1-33)

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1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom.

- Joab thought Absalom had the best chance to succeed to the throne, and he felt that if he could put Absalom in the position to do that, Absalom in turn would cancel the threat of judgment hanging over him

— Absalom was David's heir to the throne by custom, but God had already designated Solomon to succeed his father (2 Chr 22:6-10)

- David had a great capacity to love others, including his son Absalom, who was a murderer

— Often people who love greatly fail to confront and discipline others

2 So Joab sent *a messenger* to Tekoa and brought a wise woman from there, and said to her, "Please follow mourning rites, and put on mourning garments now, and do not anoint yourself with oil but be like a woman who has been mourning for the dead for many days.

2 So Joab sent to Tekoa and brought a wise woman from there and said to her, "Please pretend to be a mourner, and put on mourning garments now, and do not anoint yourself with oil, but be like a woman who has been mourning for the dead many days;

2 so he sent messengers to Tekoa to bring a wise woman from there. He told her, "Please play the role of a mourner, wear the clothes of a mourner, and refrain from using makeup. Act like a woman who's been in mourning for the dead for many days.

2 And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:

- In a man-made version of God's intervention, with David through Nathan, Joab enlisted the help of a widow from Tekoa
- Joab grew up in the vicinity of Tekoa, about six miles south of Bethlehem. He may have know this woman from earlier days. Tekoa later was the home of the prophet Amos (Amos 1:1).

3 Then go to the king and speak to him in this way." So Joab put the words in her mouth.

3 then go to the king and speak to him in this manner." So Joab put the words in her mouth.

3 Then go to the king and speak to him like this..." Then Joab told her what to say.

3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

- It was evident to all that David sorely missed his exiled son, but no one knew how to achieve Absalom's return and a reconciliation

— Finally Joab, always a tactician, convinced or commanded an "actress" from Tekoa to disguise herself as a mourner and go to the king with a story which he himself concocted and put in her mouth

4 Now when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself, and said, "Help, O king!"

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4 When the woman from Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, prostrating herself to address him, "Help, your majesty!"

4 And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.

- The story that the "actress" told David mirrored David's own problem with Absalom

5 And the king said to her, "What is *troubling* you?" And she answered, "Truly I am a widow, for my husband is dead.

5 The king said to her, "What is your trouble?" And she answered, "Truly I am a widow, for my husband is dead.

5 The king asked her, "What's your problem?"

"I've been a widowed woman ever since my husband died," she answered.

5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

6 And your servant had two sons, but the two of them fought in the field, and there was no one to save them from each other, so one struck the other and killed him.

6 Your maidservant had two sons, but the two of them struggled together in the field, and there was no one to separate them, so one struck the other and killed him.

6 "Your humble servant used to have two sons, but they got into a fight out in the field. Because there was no one to keep them apart, one of them attacked the other and killed him.

6 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him.

7 Now behold, the entire family has risen against your servant, and they have said, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother, so that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed, and eliminate the heir as well.' So **they will extinguish my coal which is left**, so as to leave my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth."

7 Now behold, the whole family has risen against your maidservant, and they say, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed, and destroy the heir also.' Thus they will extinguish my coal which is left, so as to leave my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth."

7 Now please pay attention closely! My whole family is attacking your humble servant! They're saying, 'Turn over the one who attacked his brother and we'll put him to death in retribution for his brother, whose life he took. That way, we'll kill the heir also!' They're going to extinguish the only light left in my family, leaving my late husband neither an ongoing name nor a survivor on the face of the earth!"

7 And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth.

- "...they will extinguish my coal which is left" - a figure of speech that means they would eliminate her only source of support

— By putting the murderer to death, the woman's revenging relatives would have deprived her of a means of support

— Likewise, by putting Absalom to death for his crime, David would have deprived himself of his heir, which Joab evidently perceived Absalom to be

Having gained access to the king, the woman related to him that she had had two sons, one of whom had murdered the other: This meant that the surviving son was liable to blood vengeance at the hands of relatives. But perhaps even more serious, she would have no heir to carry on the name and memory of her dead husband. The extinction of a family was the most dreaded of all misfortunes. The institutions of concubinage and levirate marriage were both instituted to forestall this possibility. The birth of a son to carry on the family name was regarded as most important.

**8** Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your home, and I will issue orders concerning you."

**8** Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you."

**8** Then the king replied to the woman, "Go home and I'll issue a special order just for you."

**8** And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee.

**9** The woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My lord, the king, the guilt is on me and my father's house, but the king and his throne are guiltless."

**9** The woman of Tekoa said to the king, "O my lord, the king, the iniquity is on me and my father's house, but the king and his throne are guiltless."

**9** But the woman from Tekoa told the king, "Your majesty, let any guilt for this be on me and on my ancestors' household, and not on my king or his throne!"

**9** And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne be guiltless.

- From the woman's answer we can infer that David had put her off with a promise because he saw that if he defended the guilty son, he would become involved in his guilt

— The mother pleaded for the king's help and offered to bear personally any guilt

**10** So the king said, "Whoever speaks to you, bring him to me, and he will not touch you anymore."

**10** So the king said, "Whoever speaks to you, bring him to me, and he will not touch you anymore."

**10** The king replied, "Bring anyone who talks to you about this to me, and he certainly won't be bothering you anymore!"

**10** And the king said, Whosoever saith ought unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.

11 Then she said, "May the king please remember the LORD your God, so *that* the avenger of blood will not continue to destroy, otherwise they will destroy my son." And he said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground."

11 Then she said, "Please let the king remember the LORD your God, so *that* the avenger of blood will not continue to destroy, otherwise they will destroy my son." And he said, "As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground."

11 Then she said, "Your majesty, please remember the LORD your God, so that blood avengers don't do any more damage! Otherwise, they'll destroy my son!"

So he promised, "As the LORD lives, not even a single hair from your son's head will fall to the ground!"

**11** Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.

- Since David promised not to execute the woman's son, it would be inconsistent for him to refrain from pardoning Absalom (v13)

Obviously touched by her story, David told the woman to return home in peace; he would issue an order to resolve the matter. However, she was not convinced that she had fully made her point and pressed her case even further. In the event of any miscarriage of justice, she said, she and her family would bear the responsibility. That is, if the circumstances really did require vengeance (Num 35:9-21), she wanted the king to know that he would not be legally or morally culpable if he did not stop it from being carried out.

Patently David heard her out and again assured her that if anyone tried to prosecute the case he would have to answer to the king. Relentlessly she continued, however, until she elicited from David a formal oath that her accused son would suffer not even the slightest harm: "As surely as the LORD lives (Cf. comments on 1 Kings 1:29) not one hair of your son's head will fall to the ground."

**12** Then the woman said, "Please let your servant speak a word to my lord the king." And he said, "Speak."

**12** Then the woman said, "Please let your maidservant speak a word to my lord the king." And he said, "Speak."

**12** At this, the woman responded, "Would your majesty the king please allow your humble servant to say one more thing?"

"Say it..." he replied.

**12** Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.

13 The woman said, "Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is like one who is guilty, *in that* the king does not bring back his banished one.

13 The woman said, "Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, *in that* the king does not bring back his banished one.

13 "Why, then," the woman asked, "are you planning to act just like this against God's people? Based on what your majesty has said, you're acting like one who is guilty himself, because you're not bringing back the one whom you've banished!

**13** And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.

- Joab was advising David how to succeed in sin by overlooking the law against murderers
- David followed Joab's lead and agreed to allow Absalom's return
- Satisfied at last, the woman boldly accosted the king with the meaning of her parable:
  - In granting amnesty to an unknown murderer, it was now incumbent on him that he do the same for his own son Absalom
  - There are circumstances, she said, under which the death penalty need not be applied, particularly where premeditation was not involved (Num 35:15)
  - Though that was not relevant here (since Absalom had plotted Amnon's death long in advance) there was still the principle of mercy: God does not take away life; instead, He devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from Him.

14 For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. Yet God does not take away life, but makes plans so that the banished one will not be cast out from Him.

14 For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him.

14 After all, even though we all die, and we're all like water being spilled on the ground that cannot be recovered, nevertheless God doesn't take away life, but carries out his plans so as not to cast away permanently from him those who are presently estranged.

14 For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.

- David had experienced God's mercy and had escaped death for his adultery and murder (12:13)

- The woman appealed to David to deal with Absalom as God had dealt with him, or the nation would suffer
- The “actress” reminded David that God does not take away life (He does not delight in punishing people); rather, He plans ways by which guilty people can enjoy reconciliation with Him
- The Cross is the greatest historical proof of this truth
- Is 28:21 says that judgment is God’s “strange” work: mercy is what He delights to display
- Because of this, David should be godly and make a way to show mercy to Absalom, rather than punishing him, according to Joab

15 Now then, the reason I have come to speak this word to my lord the king is that the people have made me afraid; so your servant said, ‘Let me now speak to the king, perhaps the king will perform the request of his slave.

15 Now the reason I have come to speak this word to my lord the king is that the people have made me afraid; so your maidservant said, ‘Let me now speak to the king, perhaps the king will perform the request of his maidservant.

15 “Now as to why I’ve come to speak with your majesty the king, it’s because the people have made me afraid, so your humble servant told herself, ‘I’ll go speak to the king, so perhaps the king will do what his humble servant has requested.

15 Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.

- To make David think that her remarks about Absalom were only incidental to her real purpose, the woman reminded the king of the fear that prompted her to come in the first place

— She coupled this reminder with effusive flattery of the king’s wisdom (My lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil, v17,20)

16 For the king will listen, to save his slave from the hand of the man who would eliminate both me and my son from the inheritance of God.’

16 For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy both me and my son from the inheritance of God.’

16 Perhaps the king will listen and deliver his humble servant from the oppression of the man who intends to eliminate both me and my son from what God has apportioned to us!’

16 For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.

17 Then your servant said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king be comforting, for as the angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.'

17 Then your maidservant said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king be comforting, for as the angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.'

17 "So your humble servant is saying, 'Please, your majesty, let what the king has to say be of comfort, because just as the angel of God is, so also is your majesty the king to discern both good and evil. And may the LORD your God remain present with you.'

17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee.

- Having received the king's pledge, she avowed it to be her design to satisfy the royal conscience, that in pardoning Absalom he was doing nothing more than he would have done in the case of a stranger, where there could be no imputation of partiality

— The device succeeded: David traced its origin to Joab, and secretly pleased at obtaining the judgment of that rough, but generally sound-thinking soldier, he commissioned him to go to Geshur and bring home his exiled son

**18** Then the king answered and said to the woman, "Please do not hide anything from me that I am about to ask you." And the woman said, "Let my lord the king please speak."

**18** Then the king answered and said to the woman, "Please do not hide anything from me that I am about to ask you." And the woman said, "Let my lord the king please speak."

**18** In reply, the king asked the woman, "Please don't conceal anything about which I'm going to be asking you now."

So the woman replied, "Please, your majesty, let the king speak."

**18** Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.

19 So the king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" And the woman replied, "As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me, and it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your servant.

19 So the king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" And the woman replied, "As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me, and it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant; 19 Then the king asked, "Is Joab behind all of this with you?"

"As your soul lives, your majesty, the king," the woman answered, "no one can divert anything left or right from what your majesty the king has spoken! As a matter of fact, it was your servant Joab! He was there, giving me precise orders about everything that your humble servant was to say. Your servant Joab did this,

**19** And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:

20 In order to change the appearance of things your servant Joab has done this thing. But my lord is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know all that is on the earth."

20 in order to change the appearance of things your servant Joab has done this thing. But my lord is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know all that is in the earth."

20 intending to change the outcome of this matter. Nevertheless, your majesty is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to be aware of everything that's going on throughout the earth."

20 To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.

- David discerned that "the woman doth protest too much" and asked if Joab had something to do with all this; found out in her treachery, she had to admit it was true.

— David's recognition of Joab as the instigator lies no doubt not only in the general's recognized craftiness but in the fact that David was surely aware of Joab's interest in Absalom's return

**21** Then the king said to Joab, "Behold now, I will certainly do this thing; go then, bring back the young man Absalom."

**21** Then the king said to Joab, "Behold now, I will surely do this thing; go therefore, bring back the young man Absalom."

**21** Then the king addressed Joab, "Look! I'll do this thing that you've requested. Go bring back the young man Absalom."

**21** And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

22 And Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrated himself, and blessed the king; then Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord the king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant."

22 Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrated himself and blessed the king; then Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, O my lord, the king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant."

22 At this, Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrating himself to bless the king, and then said, "Today your servant realizes that he's found favor with you, your majesty, in that the king has acted on the request of his servant."

**22** And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

23 Then Joab got up, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

24 However, the king said, "He shall return to his own house, but he shall not see my face." So Absalom returned to his own house and did not see the king's face.

24 However the king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face.

24 Nevertheless, the king said, "Let him return to his own home and not show his face to me." So Absalom returned to his own home and did not show his face to the king.

24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

- David had no alternative but to act on the sentiment he had expressed to the woman concerning forgiveness, even though he had been conned into doing so. He sent Joab to bring his alienated son back.

— When Absalom returned, David refused to meet him personally or to let him visit the palace and return to fellowship with himself

— David's forgiveness was official, but not personal; this led to even more trouble (thankfully, God both forgives us and restores us to fellowship with Himself)

— Perhaps David felt that too ready a reconciliation would lead the people to believe that he did not view Absalom's crime with sufficient seriousness

**25** Now in all Israel there was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the top of his head there was no impairment in him.

**25** Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him.

**25** Now throughout all of Israel no one was as handsome as Absalom or so highly praised, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there wasn't a single thing wrong about him.

**25** But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

26 And when he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut *it*, because it was heavy on him, so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels by the king's weight.

26 When he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut *it*, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight.

26 Whenever he cut his hair—he cut it at the end of every year, because it grew thick on his head, which is why he cut it—his hair weighed in at 200 shekels measured by the royal standard.

26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

- Along with Saul, Absalom was attractive physically, but not attractive to God spiritually. He put his own ambitions before God's plans, similar to Saul.

27 And to Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a woman of beautiful appearance.

27 To Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a woman of beautiful appearance.

27 Absalom fathered three sons and one daughter, whom he named Tamar. She was a beautiful woman, both in form and appearance.

27 And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

- His profound love for his violated sister Tamar also testifies to his attractiveness; he named his own daughter after her

- The reference to his long hair (weighing about five pounds after his haircut) is made to prepare for Absalom's peculiar undoing—later he was caught by his head (perhaps his hair) in the branches of an oak tree (18:9-15)

**28** Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, yet he did not see the king's face.

**28** Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face.

**28** Meanwhile, Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years, but never saw the king's face.

**28** So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

- Still conflicted and stunted by indecision, David refused to see Absalom for two more years, until Joab arranged their reunion to symbolize peace

— Whatever the reason—misguided affections, the memory of his own past failures, or exhaustion from life's demands—David repeatedly failed to contend for faith with his sons by confronting their corrupt and rebellious behavior

- Two years: 982-980 BC (Cf. 13:38)

David had experienced the benefits of godly rebuke. Though Nathan, God provoked David's confession and repentance of his sins (2 Sam 12). He received God's promised forgiveness, just discipline and reconciliation. David's inaction toward his sons' sins deprived all his children of the same gracious opportunity God had patiently given to him.

29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. So he sent *word* again a second time, but he would not come.

29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. So he sent again a second time, but he would not come.

29 After this, Absalom sent for Joab, intending to send him to the king, but Joab would not come. Absalom sent for him a second time, but he still would not come.

29 Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

30 Therefore he said to his servants, "See, Joab's plot is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the plot on fire.

30 Therefore he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

30 So Absalom told his servants, "Observe that Joab's grain field lies next to mine. He has barley planted there. Go set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

30 Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

31 Then Joab got up, came to Absalom at his house, and said to him, "Why have your servants set my plot on fire?"

31 Then Joab arose, came to Absalom at his house and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?"

31 At this, Joab got up, went to Absalom's home, and demanded of him, "Why did your servants set fire to my grain field?"

**31** Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

32 Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent for you, saying, 'Come here, so that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me still to be there.'" Now then, let me see the king's face, and if there is guilt in me, he can have me executed."

32 Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent for you, saying, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me still to be there.'" Now therefore, let me see the king's face, and if there is iniquity in me, let him put me to death."

32 In answer to Joab, Absalom replied, "Look, I sent for you, telling you 'Come here so I can send you to the king to ask him "What's the point in moving here from Geshur? I would have been better off to have remained there!"' So let me see the king's face, and if I'm guilty of anything, let him execute me!"

**32** And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.

- During these two years, Absalom resented David's treatment of him; he regarded himself as a prisoner in Jerusalem

— He was willing to suffer punishment of death for his murder of Amnon, or receive a full pardon, but the present situation was unbearable for him

33 So when Joab came to the king and told him, he summoned Absalom. Then *Absalom* came to the king and prostrated himself with his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom.

33 So when Joab came to the king and told him, he called for Absalom. Thus he came to the king and prostrated himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.

33 So when Joab approached the king and told him what Absalom had said, he summoned Absalom, who then came to the king and fell to the ground on his face in front of him. Then the king kissed Absalom."

**33** So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

- After two years of estrangement from his father, Absalom twice sought Joab's aid in bringing about a final resolution of their differences

— Rebuffed each time, Absalom resorted to dramatic action—he set Joab's barley field on fire, which finally got the general's attention

- Joab then intervened with the king and at last made it possible for Absalom to be reunited with his father
- The meeting was at least superficially cordial, but as subsequent events demonstrated, David's long-delayed acceptance of his son came too late: Absalom was embittered and resolved to do whatever was necessary to make David pay for his intransigence

David handled Absalom as he did partly because David's conscience bothered him; he himself had also sinned greatly. David's approach offended Absalom and contributed to his desire to seize the throne from his father.

*David made a blunder in not forgiving his son as God had forgiven David. He will live to regret it.* [J.V. McGee]

The entire chapter is the story of a father and king caught between his responsibilities to be both just and merciful. Every parent and leader eventually finds himself or herself in David's position. God Himself had to find a solution to this dual responsibility. The chapter deals with how to discipline. David's solution was to compromise. He tried to punish Absalom by keeping him in exile but not executing him. Then he allowed him to return to Jerusalem but not to have fellowship with himself. Both of these compromises failed and only made the relationship worse. God's solution is to be merciful, to forgive and welcome back warmly and quickly (Cf. 12:13; Matt 6:12,14-15; Luke 15:11-24).

Perhaps David was reluctant to pardon Absalom because his son did not repent. At least the text says nothing about his doing so. Nevertheless, David's lack of true forgiveness bred a bitter attitude in Absalom that resulted in his organizing a *coup* to overthrow his father.