SECOND SAMUEL

Chapter 19

**Joab was told, “The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.” 2 And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that day the troops heard it said, “The king is grieving for his son.” 3 The men stole into the city that day as men steal in who are ashamed when they flee from battle. 4 The king covered his face and cried aloud, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!” 5 Then Joab went into the house to the king and said, “Today you have humiliated all your men, who have just saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and concubines. 6 You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that the commanders and their men mean nothing to you. I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. 7 Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the Lord that if you don’t go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come upon you from your youth till now.” 8 So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. When the men were told, “The king is sitting in the gateway,” they all came before him.**

**19:3** *stole into the city*. Entered secretly, in humility, not as triumphant conquerors. (TLSB)

**19:5** *Joab went … to the king.* Apparently confident that the king was unaware of his part in Absalom’s death. David never indicates that he learned of it (see 1Ki 2:5). (CSB)

*you have humiliated all your men.* Joab boldly rebukes David for allowing his personal grief to keep him from expressing his appreciation for the loyalty of those who risked their lives to preserve his throne. Joab warns David that his love for Absalom can still undo him. (CSB)

**19:6** *hate those who love you*. By continually mourning for Absalom, David seemed to place more value on the rebels than on his loyal followers. (TLSB)

**19:7** *speak kindly*. To thank his supporters and congratulate them on their victory. Cf Is 40:1–2. (TLSB)

*not a man will stay with you*. An implied threat that Joab would lead the troops against the king. (TLSB)

*worse*. David needed to move beyond his mourning and leave behind his self-pity to continue living as king, the vocation God had given him. (TLSB)

**19:8** *sitting in the gate*. Sign that David had publicly resumed his royal office and honored their victory over Absalom (TLSB)

*the people came before the king*. To present themselves and honor David as their king. (TLSB)

**19:1–8c** David’s grief over Absalom threatens to undo all that has been accomplished on his behalf. His mourning borders on self-pity and despair, which is neither expedient nor faithful. Sometimes our sin is manifested in pride and self-righteousness, other times in despondency and defeatism. Like Joab, the Law confronts us with what we must do. But God our King speaks kindly to us. He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all. • Dear Father in heaven, we pray “that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.” Give us the victory by the death and resurrection of Your only-begotten Son. Amen. (TLSB)

*David Returns to Jerusalem*

**Meanwhile, the Israelites had fled to their homes. 9 Throughout the tribes of Israel, the people were all arguing with each other, saying, “The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies; he is the one who rescued us from the hand of the Philistines. But now he has fled the country because of Absalom; 10 and Absalom, whom we anointed to rule over us, has died in battle. So why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?” 11 King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests: “Ask the elders of Judah, ‘Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, since what is being said throughout Israel has reached the king at his quarters? 12 You are my brothers, my own flesh and blood. So why should you be the last to bring back the king?’ 13 And say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my own flesh and blood? May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if from now on you are not the commander of my army in place of Joab.’ ” 14 He won over the hearts of all the men of Judah as though they were one man. They sent word to the king, “Return, you and all your men.” 15 Then the king returned and went as far as the Jordan. Now the men of Judah had come to Gilgal to go out and meet the king and bring him across the Jordan. 16 Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, hurried down with the men of Judah to meet King David. 17 With him were a thousand Benjamites, along with Ziba, the steward of Saul’s household, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed to the Jordan, where the king was. 18 They crossed at the ford to take the king’s household over and to do whatever he wished. When Shimei son of Gera crossed the Jordan, he fell prostrate before the king 19 and said to him, “May my lord not hold me guilty. Do not remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. May the king put it out of his mind. 20 For I your servant know that I have sinned, but today I have come here as the first of the whole house of Joseph to come down and meet my lord the king.” 21 Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said, “Shouldn’t Shimei be put to death for this? He cursed the Lord’s anointed.” 22 David replied, “What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? This day you have become my adversaries! Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? Do I not know that today I am king over Israel?” 23 So the king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” And the king promised him on oath. 24 Mephibosheth, Saul’s grandson, also went down to meet the king. He had not taken care of his feet or trimmed his mustache or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. 25 When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him, “Why didn’t you go with me, Mephibosheth?” 26 He said, “My lord the king, since I your servant am lame, I said, ‘I will have my donkey saddled and will ride on it, so I can go with the king.’ But Ziba my servant betrayed me. 27 And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king. My lord the king is like an angel of God; so do whatever pleases you. 28 All my grandfather’s descendants deserved nothing but death from my lord the king, but you gave your servant a place among those who sat at your table. So what right do I have to make any more appeals to the king?” 29 The king said to him, “Why say more? I order you and Ziba to divide the fields.” 30 Mephibosheth said to the king, “Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has arrived home safely.” 31 Barzillai the Gileadite also came down from Rogelim to cross the Jordan with the king and to send him on his way from there. 32 Now Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years of age. He had provided for the king during his stay in Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. 33 The king said to Barzillai, “Cross over with me and stay with me in Jerusalem, and I will provide for you.” 34 But Barzillai answered the king, “How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? 35 I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between what is good and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of men and women singers? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? 36 Your servant will cross over the Jordan with the king for a short distance, but why should the king reward me in this way? 37 Let your servant return, that I may die in my own town near the tomb of my father and mother. But here is your servant Kimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king. Do for him whatever pleases you.” 38 The king said, “Kimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him whatever pleases you. And anything you desire from me I will do for you.” 39 So all the people crossed the Jordan, and then the king crossed over. The king kissed Barzillai and gave him his blessing, and Barzillai returned to his home. 40 When the king crossed over to Gilgal, Kimham crossed with him. All the troops of Judah and half the troops of Israel had taken the king over. 41 Soon all the men of Israel were coming to the king and saying to him, “Why did our brothers, the men of Judah, steal the king away and bring him and his household across the Jordan, together with all his men?” 42 All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “We did this because the king is closely related to us. Why are you angry about it? Have we eaten any of the king’s provisions? Have we taken anything for ourselves?” 43 Then the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, “We have ten shares in the king; and besides, we have a greater claim on David than you have. So why do you treat us with contempt? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?” But the men of Judah responded even more harshly than the men of Israel.**

**19:9–10** *arguing*. Political arguments on who should now be king. (TLSB)

**19:9** *The king delivered us.* With Absalom dead, the northern tribes remember what David had done for them (see 3:17–18; 5:2). (CSB)

**19:10** *anointed over us*. Although not mentioned earlier, this anointing evidently took place in Hebron when Absalom launched his revolt (15:10). If he was anointed with the majority’s approval, David probably could not immediately resume his kingship. Cf 15:6, 12–13. (TLSB)

*you say nothing*. Appeal for the popular support David needed to become their king again. (TLSB)

**19:11** *Zadok and Abiathar*. David used priests for secular political purposes. The politics of Israel could not be separated from the nation’s religious significance or from God’s promise concerning David and his throne (7:12–13). (TLSB)

*Ask the elders of Judah.* Even though the rebellion had begun in Hebron in Judah (see 15:9–12), David appeals to the elders of his own tribe to take the initiative in restoring him to the throne in Jerusalem (see 2:4; 1Sa 30:26). This appeal produced the desired result, but it also led to the arousal of tribal jealousies (see vv. 41–42). (CSB)

*bring the king back*. David wanted his own tribe of Judah to lead the way in restoring him to the throne. (TLSB)

*Word of all Israel*. David had received intelligence concerning the movement in his favor among the northern tribes. (TLSB)

**19:13** *Amasa.* See 17:25 and note. Although Amasa deserved death for treason, David appointed him commander of his army in place of Joab, hoping to secure the allegiance of those who had followed Amasa, especially the Judahites (see 20:5). (CSB)

David’s nephew, cousin of Joab and Abishai. (TLSB)

*May God deal with me, be it ever so severely.* A curse formula (see note on 1Sa 3:17). (CSB)

David made a strong promise to Amasa. Perhaps David wanted to remove Joab for having Absalom killed (18:14–15) and for his earlier murder of Abner (3:26–39; 1Ki 2:5–6). At the same time, David sought to bring a leader in Absalom’s revolt over to his side. By doing so, David would gain an influential ally and would assure the rebel forces that he did not intend revenge against them. (TLSB)

**19:14** *swayed the heart*. Won the loyalty. Whereas Absalom “stole” the hearts of Israel (15:6), David “sways” the heart of Judah. (tlsb)

**19:15** *Gilgal.* See note on Jos 4:19. (CSB)

**19:8d–15** Having won the war, David has the task of regaining the people’s support. The northern tribes of Israel are the first to call for his return to office, but David needs to negotiate Judah’s loyalty. In so doing, he shows that he does not bear grudges against those who opposed him. Today, we are tempted to manipulate the people and situations around us to our own advantage, and even to seek revenge. Remarkably, rather than seeking revenge on us, our gracious God forgives our sins for Jesus’ sake and calls us back to His service. • Lord Jesus, let not pride prevent us from doing what is good and right, nor let us make expedience our rule, but guide us by Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

**19:16–17** Those who had opposed David now took the initiative in being reconciled to him, lest he punish their treason. Ziba was among them, though he had not opposed David but had aided him in his flight (16:1–2). Perhaps he saw that his ruse concerning Mephibosheth would be exposed (16:3; 19:24–28). He reaffirmed his loyalty, hoping not to lose the reward he had received (16:4; cf 19:29). (TLSB)

**19:17** *a thousand Benjamites.* No doubt fearing they would be suspected by the king of being implicated in Shimei’s deed. (CSB)

**19:20** *I your servant know that I have sinned.* Shimei’s guilt was common knowledge; he could only seize the most appropriate time to plead for mercy. (CSB)

*house of Joseph.* A common way of referring to the northern tribes (see 1Ki 11:28; Eze 37:19; Am 5:6; Zec 10:6)—of which Ephraim and Manasseh (sons of Joseph) were the most prominent (see Nu 26:28; Jos 18:5; Jdg 1:22). (CSB)

Technically, this included only the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (Jsh 16–17), but here it was used for all the northern tribes of Israel, in contrast to Judah. (TLSB)

**19:21** *Abishai.* See 16:9; see also note on 1Sa 26:6. (CSB)

*the Lord’s anointed.* See note on 1Sa 9:16; see also 1Sa 24:6; 26:9–11; Ex 22:28; 1Ki 21:10. (CSB)

**19:22** *an adversary to me?* David described Abishai as an accuser (Hbr *satan*) because he urged punishment instead of absolution in response to Shimei’s confession. Cf Jb 1:5–12; Rv 12:10–11. (TLSB)

*Should anyone be put to death in Israel today?* It was a day for general amnesty (see 1Sa 11:13). (CSB)

*I am this day king over Israel?* Politically speaking, David had nothing to gain, but everything to lose, by resorting to violence at this point. (TLSB)

**19:23** *You shall not die.* David kept his pledge; he would not himself avenge the wrong committed against him (see note on 1Sa 25:2–44). But on his deathbed he instructed Solomon to take Shimei’s case in hand (see 1Ki 2:8–9, 36–46). (CSB)

*the king gave him his oath*. But Solomon would see to his punishment (1Ki 2:8–9, 37–46). (TLSB)

**19:24** *Mephibosheth.* See 9:6–13. (CSB)

*from the day the king departed*. In contrast to Ziba’s accusations (16:3), Mephibosheth truly mourned David’s exile. (TLSB)

**19:25** *Why didn’t you go with me … ?* David remembers Ziba’s previous allegations (see 16:3). (CSB)

**19:26** Instead of assisting his master, Ziba had left without Mephibosheth, and then had accused him of plotting insurrection against the king (16:3). (TLSB)

*saddle a donkey for myself*. Doing so would have been difficult for the lame Mephibosheth. (TLSB)

*lame.* See 4:4; 9:3. (CSB)

Shows that he was hardly in a position to threaten David’s throne. (TLSB)

**19:27** *he has slandered your servant.* See 16:3. (CSB)

*like an angel of God.* See 14:17 and note. (CSB)

Like the angel of the covenant, the mediator of divine blessings to the nation, knowing good and evil. (TLSB)

*do whatever pleases you.* Mephibosheth discreetly requests David to reconsider the grant of his property to Ziba (see 16:4). (CSB)

**19:29** *divide the fields.* Faced with conflicting testimony that could not be corroborated, David withholds judgment and orders the division of Saul’s estate. (CSB)

Compromise. One of the men has lied, but David chose not to punish either of them. (TLSB)

**19:31** *Barzillai.* See note on 17:27. (CSB)

**19:33** *provide for you*. More than simply offering to repay Barzillai for his generous support, David sought to secure the alliance by making Barzillai a permanent member of his court (1Ki 2:7). (TLSB)

**19:35** *difference between what is good and what is not.* At his age, he would be indifferent to all the pleasures of the court. (CSB)

Barzillai’s senses were dulled by old age. He describes the pursuits and activities of the king’s court. (TLSB)

**19:37** *Kimham.* Likely a son of Barzillai (see 1Ki 2:7). (CSB)

**19:39** *went over*. Back into the main territory of the realm. (TLSB)

*the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him*. To mark a friendship and establish an alliance. (TLSB)

**19:40** *Gilgal*. cf 1Sm 11:14–15. (TLSB)

*the people of Judah* … *half the people of Israel*. Judah was decidedly supportive of David, while Israel remained divided in its support. This is a turn of events; the northern tribes were the first to speak of restoring David to his throne (vv 9–10, 43), while his own tribe of Judah hesitated (vv 11–12). (TLSB)

**19:41** *Why did … the men of Judah, steal the king away and bring him … across the Jordan … ?* It seems that the Jordan was a kind of psychological border to the land of Israel (see Jos 22:19, 25; Jdg 12:4)—which may also explain why Ish-Bosheth (2:8), Mephibosheth (9:4) and even David himself (17:22) had sought refuge in Transjordan. That being the case, the protest of the Israelites may be that the Judahites had not waited for all Israel to assemble before bringing David across the Jordan, thus leaving the Israelites in a bad light—as though they were reluctant to receive the king back (see v. 43). (CSB)

**19:42** *our close relative*. David was from the tribe of Judah (1Ch 2:1–15; Mt 1:3–6; Lk 3:31–33). (TLSB)

*Have we eaten* … *any gift?* The men of Judah deny having abused their close kinship with the king. (TLSB)

**19:43** *ten shares.* The ten tribes, excluding Judah and Simeon (see note on 2:4). (CSB)

David was the anointed king of the entire nation, of which Israel comprised the northern 10 tribes, Judah the southern tribe (the Levites not being counted). (TLSB)

*we have a greater claim on David.* The grounds for this assertion may be that the Lord had chosen David to reign in the place of Saul (see 3:17–18; 5:2). (CSB)

*fiercer*. This conflict anticipated the final rift between the north and south under David’s grandson Rehoboam (1Ki 12:16–20). (TLSB)

**19:16–43** As David retraces his steps to Jerusalem, he meets several of the same people he encountered previously. With mercy, wisdom, and generosity, David crosses over the Jordan, out of the wilderness on his way back to the royal city. In contrast to David’s willingness to forgive, there is too often jealousy and fierce anger burning in our hearts against our brothers. Thanks be to God that His heart burns instead with love and mercy for us. For He despises nothing He has made but forgives the sins of all who are penitent for Jesus’ sake. • Lord God, heavenly Father, grant to us Your Holy Spirit and the charitable heart of Your dear Son, that we may bear with one another in love. Amen. (TLSB)