

2Samuel 14:1 ¶ Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart *was* toward Absalom.

2Samuel 14:2 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:

2Samuel 14:3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.

Joab, David's nephew and military commander, recognized that David's heart was longing to see Absalom. He decided to stage a scenario that would get David to relent and bring Absalom home. He sent to Tekoah for a wise woman that David wouldn't recognize. The Hebrew for the word "wise" references being intelligent, skillful, artful and cunning. It made me wonder if she was known for her ability to act or perform. We aren't told how he knew about this woman. He asked the woman to pretend to be a mourner by wearing mourning apparel and making it look like she had been in mourning for quite a while. He then wanted her to present herself before David and share the following story exactly as he instructed.

2Samuel 14:4 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.

2Samuel 14:5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I *am* indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.

2Samuel 14:6 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.

2Samuel 14:7 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.

The woman evidently agreed and soon presented herself to the king. She fell on the ground before him and pleaded for his help. David asked her what was wrong. She told the king that she was a widow; her husband had died. She had two sons, but they got into a fight with one another in the field. No one was able to intervene between them, and eventually one son killed the other. The rest of the family were very angry with the mother because she would not give them the surviving brother to kill him for killing his brother. It seems that it was the older brother, the family heir, that had killed his younger brother. She was worried that if they took matters into their own hands, she would be left with no one to care for her and no one to preserve the posterity of the family in name and land inheritance.

The woman's wording indicated that there were those in the family motivated mainly by their desire of becoming heir to the family property.

2Samuel 14:8 And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will

give charge concerning thee.

2Samuel 14:9 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.

2Samuel 14:10 And the king said, Whosoever saith *ought* unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.

2Samuel 14:11 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.

After hearing her story, David told her to go back home, and he would make a decision.

Verse 9 is a bit difficult. After reading several translations, the only one that seemed to bring any clarity was the NLT: "*Oh, thank you, my lord,*" she replied. *'And I'll take the responsibility if you are criticized for helping me like this.'*" This makes sense because David would be overriding established law. Absalom could not even have sought protection in a city of refuge because his was an act of cold-blooded murder—even though the provocation was very great.

The king then told the woman to bring anyone that bothered her again about this matter to him. He would make sure that they did not bother her again.

The woman persisted and pushed the king for a clear decision. She pleaded with the king to swear to her that he would not allow the revengers of blood (the closest kin) to kill her son. David swore by the LORD that her son would not be harmed.

You would think David would have asked her where the son was and how she had kept him safe from his relatives thus far.

2Samuel 14:12 Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak *one* word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.

2Samuel 14:13 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.

2Samuel 14:14 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.

2Samuel 14:15 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.

2Samuel 14:16 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.

2Samuel 14:17 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.

The woman then asked permission to say one more thing to the king, and David granted her permission. She basically made a comparison between her situation with her son and that of the king with his son and clearly implied that he was ready to treat a stranger with more compassion than he did his own son. I think the Complete Jewish Bible translation of verses 13-17 is quite a bit clearer: *The woman said, "Why is it, then, that you have produced a situation exactly like this against God's people? By saying what you have said, the king has virtually incriminated himself — in that the king does not bring home again the son he banished. For we will all die someday; we'll be like water spilled on the ground that can't be gathered up again; and God makes no exception for anyone. The king should think of some way to keep the son he banished from being forever an outcast. Now the reason I came to speak about this matter to my lord the king is that the people were intimidating me; so your servant said, 'I will speak now to the king; maybe the king will do what his servant is asking. For the king will listen and rescue his servant from the hands of those who would destroy me and my son together from our share of God's inheritance.' Then your servant said, 'Please let my lord the king say something that will give me relief; for my lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good from bad — and may ADONAI your God be with you.'"*

So how was David's action "against God's people"? We will find out that Absalom was quite popular and was probably the expected heir apparent to the throne.

John Gill had an interesting note on the phrase in verse 14, "neither doth God respect any person": "...the words in the original are, "God doth not take away the soul or life" of every offender, but spares them notwithstanding the crimes they have committed; and therefore it became the king to be sparing and merciful to offenders, and particularly to his own son; and perhaps she may tacitly have respect to David himself who had been guilty both of murder and adultery, either of which deserved death; and yet God had not taken away his life, but in his great mercy had spared him; and therefore, since he had received mercy, he should show it: or "God hath not taken away *his* soul or life"; the life of Absalom; he had not cut him off himself by his immediate hand, nor suffered the king's sons to take away his life, nor any other to seize upon him, and bring him to justice, whom David might have employed; but had by his providence protected and preserved him; so that it seemed to be his will and pleasure that he should not be put to death...."

I liked Guzik's comment on the last part of verse 14: "God has devised a way to bring the banished back to Him, that they might not be expelled from Him. The way is through the person and work of Jesus, and how He stood in the place of guilty sinners as He hung on the cross and received the punishment that we deserved."

2Samuel 14:18 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.

2Samuel 14:19 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:

2Samuel 14:20 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.

After the woman's little speech, David knew that someone was behind the woman's actions, and he asked the woman if Joab was behind what she had done. She had to admit that the king was as wise and discerning as an angel of God because it was true that Joab had told her what to say. She defended Joab and explained that he was trying to get the king to see his situation with Absalom from a different perspective.

2Samuel 14:21 ¶ And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

2Samuel 14:22 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.

2Samuel 14:23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

It would seem that Joab had witnessed the whole incident because David next speaks directly to him. He then told Joab to go and bring Absalom home again. Joab fell prostrate on the ground and thanked David for showing him favor and granting his request. Then Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

2Samuel 14:24 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.

2Samuel 14:25 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.

2Samuel 14:26 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.

2Samuel 14:27 And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name *was* Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

The king did have a stipulation; Absalom was to return to his home but not show his face in front of his father. Absalom returned and honored his father's demand.

It is noted that Absalom was so handsome that there was no man to compare to him in beauty. There was not a blemish on him from head to toe. He cut his hair every year at the end of the year because it was so heavy. When he cut it, it

weighed 200 of the king's shekels (about 3lbs.).

Absalom had three sons and one daughter whom he named Tamar, after his sister. She inherited her father's beauty.

2Samuel 14:28 ¶ So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

2Samuel 14:29 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.

2Samuel 14:30 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.

2Samuel 14:31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto *his* house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

2Samuel 14:32 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.*

2Samuel 14:33 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.

Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two full years and still had yet to see his father's face. This would seem to indicate that he was basically confined to his own property.

Absalom finally decided to send for Joab hoping to get him to go to the king and intercede for him once again. For some reason, Joab ignored him—not once, but twice. Absalom then sent his servants to set Joab's barley field on fire, and they did. This got Joab's attention, and he came to Absalom's house to get an explanation.

Absalom explained that he had asked for him to come to him so that he could get him to go to the king and ask why his father had brought him home only to ignore him. He would have been better off staying in Geshur. He demanded to see his father; and if his father still felt that he was deserving of death, he was willing to die.

Joab went to the king and told him what Absalom had said. David then called for Absalom, and he came before his father falling prostrate before him. Then David kissed his son—a public sign that he had been pardoned.

I have to admit that I sometimes wonder how to make applications to some of these Old Testament narratives. David serves as a very real example of the truth that sin has dire consequences. His relationship with his son is far from healed, as we will see in the next chapter. David has but begun to reap the consequences of his sins against God with Bathsheba and Uriah.