

Absalom's Rebellion Against David

David's beloved son Absalom conspires to steal the kingdom, forcing David to flee Jerusalem. The rebellion ends tragically with Absalom's death and David's heartbroken lament.

2 Samuel 15:1-37 • 2 Samuel 16:1-23 • 2 Samuel 17:1-29 • 2 Samuel 18:1-33

CHARACTERS: David, Absalom, Ahithophel, Hushai, Joab, Zadok, Abiathar

THEMES: Consequences of family dysfunction, Political conspiracy, Loyalty and betrayal, God's providence, Parental love and grief

ABSALOM, DAVID'S SON, was charismatic and beautiful—'from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.' But beneath his outward beauty festered ambition and bitterness. For four years, he systematically stole the hearts of Israel, standing at the city gate, intercepting those seeking the king's judgment, and suggesting he would give them better justice. When his conspiracy ripened, Absalom went to Hebron and proclaimed himself king. David received devastating news: 'The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.' The aging king, perhaps remembering Nathan's prophecy that evil would rise from his own house, fled Jerusalem with his household and mighty men. It was a procession of sorrow—David went up the Mount of Olives barefoot, his head covered, weeping. When told that his trusted counselor Ahithophel had joined Absalom, David prayed, 'O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.' God answered by positioning Hushai as a counter-spy in Absalom's court. Ahithophel counseled immediate pursuit of David while he was weary; Hushai advised gathering all Israel for overwhelming force. Absalom chose Hushai's flattering but foolish counsel, giving David time to cross Jordan and prepare. The battle came in the wood of Ephraim. David commanded his captains, 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.' But when Absalom's

mule passed under a thick oak, his abundant hair caught in the branches, leaving him suspended between heaven and earth. Joab, despite David's orders, thrust three darts through Absalom's heart. News of victory brought David no joy. His cry echoed through the chambers: 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' The price of sin and family dysfunction had come due.

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