

Introduction: Many people have mixed emotions about authority and authority figures. When my generation was young and full of themselves, many of my peers made a slogan out of ‘question authority’! As we matured, we came to understand the importance of organization and structure, including well-trained and wise managers, or in the vernacular, ‘bosses’. *** Christians have a responsibility to search God’s Word and pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit to answer the question: Is it ever right to disobey my boss? On the one hand, workers are commanded to work hard and do their best at their assigned tasks because they are ultimately working for the Lord (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-24). However, on the other hand, if the authorities over them ask them to do something they are convinced is wrong in the eyes of God, then they must respectfully disobey (Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29). An example might be when a corporation asks employees at a certain management level, or above a certain pay level, to make a donation to a PAC or lobbying group that supports abortion, or favors immigration screening that keeps innocent refugees from gaining refuge in our country. *** In our story from David’s life we are examining today, we heard that the general of David’s army, one of his own nephews, is outraged when he hears that David sent Saul’s general, Abner, away in peace. Joab is obsessed with getting revenge on Abner because he killed Joab’s younger brother who was foolishly chasing after Abner. So, he disobeys his uncle, the king, in order to avenge Asahel. However, Yahweh said through Moses that vengeance is His to administer, and not for foolish and unwise people (Deuteronomy 32:1-9, 35-43). Paul admonished the first-century church to not repay evil with evil, but to seek peace, leaving wrath to God; then, he quotes Moses that vengeance is the Lord’s (Romans 12:17-19). *** We also heard the conclusion to David’s psalm about the grief he suffered because people near to him were doing evil. He commanded them to depart from him; and, takes confidence that Yahweh has heard his weeping. *** We will now look at the details of what Joab did. We must let them be a warning to us of what we must not do (1 Corinthians 10:1-13).

I. Joab is angry to hear David sent Abner away in peace and roundly calls out David; then he quickly kills Abner to avenge his brother, David curses Joab. (2 Samuel 3:22-30)

A. Joab returns from leading a raid after David sent Abner away in peace, when he hears what David did he accuses David of being a fool. (*Verses 22-26*)

1. And, look! The servants David and Joab came from a raid, and they brought much plunder with them;

Abner was not with David in Hebron because he sent him away, and he went in peace. (*Verse 22*)

Joab un-informed: Joab was conducting a profitable raid on the pagan people during the time Abner had come to David to make him king of all Israel, and David sent him away in peace, so he had no knowledge of this positive development.

2. And Joab and all the army with him came; then Joab was told: Abner came to the king, then he was sent away and went in peace. (*Verse 23*)

Joab told of visit: Joab now gets a brief report of the facts of what happened, including his uncle’s blessing on Abner.

3. Then Joab went to the king and said: What have you done? Behold! Abner came to you: Why this? You sent him away and he is surely gone. You know that Abner (came) to deceive you: to know your going out and coming in, and all that you are doing. (*Verses 24-25*)

Joab hates Abner: Joab only knows Abner as the man who killed his youngest brother. And his love for his foolish brother has caused him to hate and despise Abner and everything he does.

Reveals hatred: He reveals his anger by the strong exclamatory nature of his incredulous questioning of his uncle. He does so, even though the text emphasizes that David is, first of all, king of Judah.

B. Unknown to David, Joab plots to kill Abner and quickly avenges his brother; when David hears of this he curses Joab. (*Verses 26-30*)

1. Then Joab went out from David’s presence; then he sent messengers after Abner and they brought him back again from the well of Sirah; and David did not know (about any of this). (*Verse 26*)

David un-informed: Now the tables are turned. David does not know what his nephew is doing. Joab, whose name ironically means Yah (is) Father, is intending to disobey his uncle, the king, to get revenge on Abner for what happened in a battle.

2. When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the midst of the gate to speak to him quietly in private; then he smote him in the belly (lit. ‘below the fifth’ rib) for the ‘blood’ (death) of Asahel, his brother. (*Verse 27*)

Abner assassinated: Abner’s mixed motives to establish David as king do not in any way justify Joab assassinating him. Joab’s only motive was to avenge his brother who died foolishly in war. Joab was disobedient to his king without cause!

Application: The lesson we must learn from this is that we must determine with all our hearts to never willingly disobey our king Jesus!

3. David heard of it afterwards, so he said: I and my kingdom (are) innocent before Yahweh forever (over) the blood (death) of Abner. (*Verse 28*)

David’s innocence: David did not discern his nephew’s evil intent. This may have been the first time Joab had acted insubordinately and disobeyed his uncle. The noble response of David shows his heart after God (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22).

4. It will fall on the head of Joab and all his father’s ‘house’, it will not lack one with: a discharge, leprosy, holding a staff (lame), slain with a sword, lacking bread. (*Verse 29*)

Curse: David now invokes a strong curse on Joab and all his descendants that one of five disasters will fall on them. As he was dying thirty-three years later he took Joab’s fate into his own hands through his son, Solomon (1 Kings 2:5-6, 28-35).

5. Joab, and Abishai his brother, slew Abner because he killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. (*Verse 30*)

Explicit: The Holy Spirit wants all who read this account to be crystal clear as to Joab’s motivation for killing Abner. It had to do with a previous battle (2 Samuel 2:18-24).

II. David leads all Israel in mourning Abner and the people are pleased with David who expresses grief over his nephews; David wrote a psalm that generalizes this experience and expresses confidence in Yahweh. (2 Samuel 3:31-39; Psalm 10:7-10)

- A. David calls the whole nation, including Joab, to mourn Abner, and he fasts until sunset; the people are pleased with him, but David is distressed over the severity in his nephews. (2 Samuel 3:31-39)
1. Then David said to Joab and all the people with him: You must all tear your clothes and bind on sackcloth and mourn before Abner; and David was walking after the burial stretcher. (Verse 31)
David's command: David commanded all Israel, and Joab by name, to grieve as Abner's body was carried to its final resting place.
 2. Then they buried Abner at Hebron; then, the king lifted up his voice and wept at Abner's grave; and all the people wept. (Verse 32)
David weeps at Abner's grave: David is weeping because he knew Abner had facilitated God's will for David to be king of all Israel. Joab's self-centered disobedience put this in jeopardy when he killed a man better than him.

Kings suffer when appointed leaders selfishly disobey

3. Then the king lamented over Abner, saying: As the death of a fool (*nabal*) will Abner die? / Your hands were not bound and you feet not brought into fetters / as one falls before the wicked, you fell; and, all the people wept over him again. (Verses 33-34)
The king's lament: The king's lament song highlights the irony of a soldier who did not die in battle, but was caught unawares by a vengeful brother disobeying his uncle-king! All Israel and David suffered as a result of Joab's selfish disobedience.

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4. Then all the people came to make David eat bread while it was still day; then David swore: God will do to me, and more, if before the sun goes down I will taste bread or anything. (Verse 35)
David fasts: The people sense David's distress and urge him to eat something. David steadfastly swears that because Abner died due to his nephew's disobedience he is genuinely distressed over Abner's death and wants to properly respect him.

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5. All the people paid attention, and (this) was good in their eyes; all the king did was good in the eyes of all the people; all the people, and all Israel, knew that day that it was not the king's will to kill Abner. (Verses 36-37)
People absolve the king: Everything king David after Abner's death proved to all the people that he was innocent of Abner's death; even the tribe of Benjamin knew Abner's death had unsettled David.
6. Then the king said to his servants: Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen in Israel today; and today I (am) weak (even) being anointed king; these men, sons of Zeruiah, are too stubbornly severe for me, Yahweh will recompense (requite) each evildoer according to his wickedness. (Verses 38-39)
David's nephews: David uses strong language to describe the surviving brothers. The next thirty-three years will affirm David's insight that, for the most part, the brothers, especially Joab, are thick, fierce and cruel. They will often aggravate David!

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Application: We must realize that 'insider' enemies may be harder to discipline than 'outsiders'. Therefore, we must pledge to not be an enemy to Jesus, or any true member of His Church!

- B. In a psalm, David speaks of his grief and tears over his inner circle who do evil; and he is confident Yahweh hears him and will do right. (Psalm 10:7-10)
1. Has wasted away from grief, my eye / it has become old because of all distressing me. (Verse 7)
Wasting grief: Adversarial enemies are causing David great distress so that the grief and tears falling from his eyes are causing him to waste away. He must have felt this because of Joab many times.
 2. All of you must depart from me, all working evil / because Yahweh has heard the sound of my weeping. (Verse 8)
Doers of evil: David can confidently demand all evil-workers to depart from him, those who were close to him, because he knows his faithful covenant God has heard, and will eventually act upon, his weeping.
 3. Yahweh has heard my supplication / Yahweh will receive my prayer. (Verse 9)
My supplication: David has faith that because Yahweh has heard his humble and emotional plea to be given favor, he will receive the help he needs when his God knows he needs it most.
 4. They will be ashamed and greatly troubled / all my enemies will be turned back and suddenly ashamed. (Verse 10)
Enemies shamed: Here is the expression of David's heart of faith in his covenant God. He knows that someday, somehow (Philippians 3:11 – NLT) God will cause those seeking to work evil against him to be put to shame.

Yahweh will put evil workers to shame

Application: We must have faith that our prayers of intercession and supplications to THE just and powerful God of LOVE and discipline for His help in our trials will be answered according to His good and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

Conclusion: Joab is angry to hear David sent Abner away in peace and roundly calls out David. Then he quickly kills Abner to avenge his brother, and David curses Joab. David leads all Israel in mourning Abner and the people are pleased with David who expresses grief over his nephews. David wrote a psalm that generalizes this experience and expresses confidence in Yahweh.

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