

Head Trip 2 Samuel 18:9-18

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 2-6-2014

Introduction

When I titled this sermon, “Head Trip,” I wasn’t trying to be cute. Commentators believe that this paragraph’s central theme of arrogant pride was very deliberately tied in with Absalom’s head as a symbol. And the head trip of Joab (in other words, the pride of Joab) led to his future death just as surely as the head trip of Absalom led to his death in this chapter. So commentators have pointed out that this whole section is seeking to teach the truth stated elsewhere in Scripture, that “Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” That’s the central theme.

Whether you focus on their ambition, arrogance, selfishness, self-righteousness, self-will, stubbornness, vainglory, or vanity, all those sins flow from pride; they are manifestations of pride. In fact, I found it interesting that in one of my dictionaries, every one of those terms is given as synonyms of pride. I’m not sure I would call them synonyms, but they are definitely the offspring of pride.

I. A Head Trip for Absalom

A. *Startled by providence (v. 9a literal Hebrew “cried out” קָרָה)*

But let’s look first at the head trip of Absalom. And we do have a translation issue in verse 9. It says, “Then Absalom met the servants of David.” Well, obviously he did meet them, but the literal Hebrew is much more vivid. It shows how small this big man was when he was face to face with God’s providence. Here’s how the New American Commentary translates it: “Absalom began crying out in the presence of David’s men.” And I’ve looked up the Hebrew word קָרָה (karah) in the dictionaries, and it clearly means to cry out. So Absalom is totally startled when he runs across David’s men, and as soon as he runs into them he cries out in alarm. The idea is that he is startled by God’s providence, and is frightened into crying out. The big man suddenly realizes how small he really is. As one person described pride, “A man wrapped up in himself makes a pretty small package.” And down through history God has caused the prideful arrogance of tyrants to melt and dissolve into fear and into nothingness. They suddenly

realize that they aren't so powerful as they thought they were. Obviously, he flees for his life on his mule.

B. God uses nature to catch Absalom just as he used nature against the army (vv. 9b with v. 8)

The verse goes on to say, “Absalom rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth.” Verse 8 spoke of this forest as a devouring forest that killed more people than the sword did. And so verse 8 is showing that God is working all of creation together for bad against Absalom's army. And this verse shows that God was using one of the trees of the forest to do the same for Absalom. So connecting verses 8 and 9 highlights God's providence again.

C. The sign of his pride (hair – 14:26) is his undoing (v. 9b)

But how did his head get caught in the tree? Based on the fact that the author has highlighted Absalom's long hair in chapter 14:26, most commentaries believe that his head was caught in the tree by his hair, and to keep his scalp from ripping off, he hung on and was calling for help. But the head is mentioned because the author wants to emphasize pride. The first century historian, Josephus, who apparently had access to other historical documents of this time, confirms that this is indeed what the history of his time records. If that is true, then the sign of Absalom's pride became his undoing. We saw in chapter 14 that he was pretending to be a Nazarite. He was pretending to be holy and humble with a perpetual vow of submission to God, while all the time overturning God's law order. His head was giving the illusion of humble submission while his actions were showing ambition, arrogance, selfishness, self-righteousness, self-will, stubbornness, vainglory, and vanity – all of which are the spiritual offspring of pride. And God uses the very thing that he is so proud of (his beauty and his hair) to be his undoing. So you can see providence at work here humbling him in an ironic way.

D. The arrogant now hanging helplessly (v. 9c)

The next phrase says, “... so he was left hanging between heaven and earth.” Earlier he had been very arrogant and confident, but now he was hanging helplessly. But there is also a theological import to the way that phrase is worded because Absalom by God's judgment is neither on earth or in heaven – and fit for neither. I love the comment that Bill Arnold gave in his commentary. He said, “His rebellion has left him without the ground

beneath his feet, unable to fulfill his life as a prince or king and incapable of serving in the kingdom of God.”¹

So there is some marvelous imagery that is being used by the author to help the reader to properly interpret the text. Absalom is fit for neither the kingdom of earth nor the kingdom of heaven.

E. The sign of his kingship (mule) leaving him behind (v. 9d)

And the next phrase reinforces that. It says, “And the mule which was under him went on.” Any Bible dictionary or commentary will tell you that in the ancient world, mules were symbols of kingship. And that is why one author said, “As Absalom has lost his mule from under him, so he has also lost his royal seat.” So the symbolism that God used in His providence is incredibly rich.

F. Under God’s curse (v. 10 - the only other time this word for “hanging” תָּלַף is used is in Deut. 21:23)

And the last theological statement being made by the author is that Absalom is under God’s curse. Verse 10 says,

2Sam. 18:10 Now a certain man saw it and told Joab, and said, “I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!”

Commentators point out that the Hebrew word for hanging, *talu*’ (תָּלַף) is only used one other time in Scripture. It is used in Deuteronomy 21:23, which states that anyone who is hung (*talu*) on a tree is under God’s curse. Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse. And the language here is so deliberate, that one commentary spends a whole paragraph describing the significance of this word, and summarizes the conclusion by saying this:

*God himself had sent a curse against him that simultaneously caught and punished the rebel. The fearful judgments of the Torah had proven credible: the Lord had upheld his law.*²

Now, this will be significant for our upcoming sermons. If God’s curse was resting upon Absalom, then this paragraph is important for interpreting the next two sections, both of which show that David should not have been soft on Absalom. Absalom was under God’s curse. David should not be blessing what God is cursing. And we will get to that on another

¹ Bill Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), p. 595.

² Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary* (Broadman Holman Publishers, 2002), p. 421.

Sunday. But I just wanted to mention that point so that you could anticipate where we will be going.

But, what application can we take home from this first point? I think we can take home that pride is always under God's curse. We don't tend to think of pride as being as serious as God sees pride. In our age it seems to be one of those respectable sins that people ignore. But in Proverbs 8:13 God says that He hates pride. It's not just that it bothers Him; He hates it. In Amos 6:8 God says, "I abhor the pride of Jacob." That's pretty strong language to use of a sin in God's justified children. He says, "I abhor the pride of Jacob." Our pride is an offence to God. In Leviticus 26:19 God says that when his people are not quick to repent of their sins because their pride keeps them from it (and how many times does pride keep us from confessing our sins?), God promises, "I will break the pride of your power." And then he goes on to show how He will break our pride. He will do it by giving us the reverse of Romans 8:28 – He will cause everything to work together for our bad, including nature. And He will keep doing that until our pride is humbled and we confess our sins. In Proverbs 16:18 He promises:

Prov. 16:18 Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

We need to learn to hate our own pride. Psalm 31:23 says that God "fully repays the proud person." He may get away with his pride for a while, but it will come back to bite him. And Psalm 140:5 says that He cannot be in close fellowship with a proud person – it says "the proud He knows from afar." It's almost like God doesn't want to be around you when you are proud. And in James 4:6 Scripture promises, "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" God includes the story of Absalom to teach us that pride characterizes the non-elect who are under God's judgment.

But God also juxtaposes the prideful arrogance of Joab with that of Absalom to teach us that even true believers can fall into the same sinful pride that Absalom did. And just because Joab was headed to heaven did not lessen God's hatred for his pride. Nor did it stop the evil consequences of pride. Evil is evil wherever it is manifested. So let's look next at the head trip for Joab.

II. A Head Trip for Joab

A. Joab too is a prideful rebel (v. 11)

Verse 11:

2Sam. 18:11 So Joab said to the man who told him, “You just saw *him!* And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten *shekels* of silver and a belt.”

Robert Bergen comments,

Through Joab’s own words the narrator also reveals that David’s nephew/general himself was a rebel against the king. Although David had ordered his commanders to be gentle with Absalom (v. 5), Joab had promised a reward of “ten shekels of silver... and a warrior’s belt” to anyone who killed the king’s son – a reward that could only have come from one determined to disobey the king in this matter. Apparently Joab had decided that the only way to end the civil war was to kill Absalom.³

We can understand Joab’s reasoning on what would be best, but his counter-orders to David’s clear orders reveal self-will and prideful rebellion. His earlier years under David had shown such great promise. He was loyal to David, trusted God, was fearless, was a great leader, and had many other wonderful characteristics. In fact, I am convinced that David would not have succeeded without Joab. But the two evils of pride and bitterness had destroyed the value of his work and left him a rebel. And again, it highlights why we must nip pride in the bud as soon as the Holy Spirit reveals that sin to us. It is a monster that will grow if it is not starved and killed.

B. Joab’s rebellion is contrasted with the humility of the unnamed soldier (v. 12)

Joab’s own rebellion stands in stark contrast with the humility of the unnamed soldier of verse 12:

2Sam. 18:12 But the man said to Joab, “Though I were to receive a thousand *shekels* of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king’s son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, ‘Beware lest anyone *touch* the young man Absalom!’

Not only was this soldier humble, he was also loyal to David, and pretty savvy about how rebellion works. Joab has stepped out from under the chain of command and he has no authority to make this order. You only have authority to make a command when your command is under authority. If Joab is willing to rebel against David, he is not to be trusted further than he can be thrown. And you can see this in verse 13. The man says,

³ Bergen, *Ibid.*

C. Joab is not to be trusted (v. 13)

2Sam. 18:13 Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against me.”

In other words, he was saying, “I’m not stupid. I’m not going to risk my life for your lousy reward. You’d probably be the first one to turn against me in if David found out about it. No. I’m not doing your dirty work for you.” Now, he said it a bit more politely than that, but those words are still bold words for a soldier to say to his commander. Those words were definitely not going to win him any Brownie points with Joab. But the soldier is so offended by this obvious rebellion against David that he does not hide his contempt for it, and in effect he is asking Joab not to do this. Application? Humility does not mean that you must lack backbone. It does not mean you can’t be offended, or Jesus would not have been a humble man. Jesus was frequently offended. Humility does not mean you can’t bring correction. Doing the truly humble thing often requires incredible backbone and going against the grain of what is expected.

D. Joab is unwilling to listen to legitimate disagreement (v. 14a)

But Joab is obviously frustrated, and brushes the man aside.

2Sam. 18:14 Then Joab said, “I cannot linger with you.”

Rarely does pride give in to a rebuke, especially if it comes from an underling. When we are slow to be willing to be corrected, it is an evidence of pride. And it is so important that even *leaders* be open to correction. It was actually a correction from one of you that led the session to restudy our membership vow policies last year, and to realize where we were wrong, and to come into line with our own chain of command. Fathers and husbands – we need to be willing to listen to appeals from our wives and children. We are pretty stupid leaders if we never listen to the concerns of managers under our authority. Somebody from another state told me two weeks ago that a prominent preacher (whom I will leave unnamed) had publically said that a wife may never disagree with her husband, even if her husband is calling her to sin. I was shocked. I could hardly believe it. That kind of hyperpatriarchy makes an idol out of authority. All authority is limited authority. And humility in leaders is willing to listen. And we elders and deacons must always examine our hearts to make sure that we are listening.

E. Joab's impatient irritation with the chain of command (vv. 11-14)

But verses 11-14 as a whole demonstrate yet another indicator of pride, and that is irritation with the chain of command above us when we are in disagreement with that chain of command. It is clear that Joab is irritated with David and plans to undermine him behind his back. Contrast that with the soldier. Joab doesn't do anything behind anyone's back. He speaks straight to Joab. It is clear that the soldier was in complete submission to David, even though he probably didn't like David's decision any more than Joab did. Why would David go easy on Absalom? It didn't make sense. In fact, we will later see how humiliated all the soldiers felt by David's softness on Absalom. It was not good. But since that soldier was not being asked to sin in following those orders, he submitted. And lack of sweet submission is yet another indication of pride. It's not just leaders who can be prideful when it comes listening; followers can be prideful too. Pride is endemic to almost every human heart, and it is good if we can regularly give ourselves homework to crucify our pride. And because I have been seeking to crucify my pride for many years (going back to 1994) and still recognize it popping its head up, I've got plenty of homework that I can share with you if you are interested. As recently as this past week I've had to ask for forgiveness of two people that I thought I had offended at the congregational meeting by my testiness at one point. Some have told me that they didn't notice anything, but I felt it. But I felt it. And right now I want to ask for forgiveness of any others who might have witnessed it. It's easy for leaders to let pride makes us irritable. And it is easy for followers to let pride make them irritable. We've got to recognize these signs of pride so that we can fight against it. Pray for us leaders just as we pray for you, that Satan would not gain any access to our hearts through unconfessed pride. Verse 14:

2Sam. 18:14 Then Joab said, "I cannot linger with you." And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was *still* alive in the midst of the terebinth tree.

There were other ways that Joab could have handled this crisis without rebelling against David or inciting others to rebel against David. He could have brought charges against Absalom in court as soon as he was captured. If he had done so, there wouldn't have been anything that David could have done to save his son's hide – nothing. He would have been tried, judged guilty, and executed. But it would have been by way of humility and submission, not by way of pride and rebellion.

By disobeying David's orders and killing Absalom *this* way, he revealed a motive of prideful, stubborn, self-willed rebellion. Just because your rebellion is doing what you think is a good thing does not make it any less rebellion. And let me make a brief comment on why I constantly apply every point when I preach. If we read passages like this without asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the same sins in our own hearts; if we only point out the sins in others (like Absalom and Joab), then that is another manifestation of pride. Pride rears its ugly head everywhere. It even camouflages itself by coming into agreement with God's Word. Pride can easily say, "Boy those were prideful people. I totally agree with God." In contrast, humility says, "Boy, those are prideful people. I totally agree with God. And it grieves me to see the same pride in my own heart. Lord, please rescue me from pride."

F. Joab involves others in his rebellion (v. 15)

And of course, prideful rebellion is like a virus – it rubs off on others. And it certainly rubbed off on those who were closest to Joab. Verse 15:

2Sam. 18:15 And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him.

Sin that is not dealt with seems to always expand into the lives of others. It shouldn't surprise us that pride in us can produce pride in others.

III. God's further curses on Absalom (vv. 16-18)

A. Though Joab disobeyed David, this was clearly God's intended judgment (vv. 9-18); God causes all things to work together for His glory.

But having said all that, it is clear from the way that this is written that God overruled the sin of Joab and used his actions to fulfill the judgments that the law pronounced upon the heinous sins of Absalom. God was judging Absalom for incest, adultery, rebellion against a father, and attempted patricide and regicide. As one Scripture words it, God can use even the wrath of man to praise Him. Just because things turned out from Joab's actions does not justify Joab's actions. And the author will show this made Joab spiral out of control.

But consider the additional judgments in verses 16-18. There are two monuments to Absalom's pride and God's judgment. The first was Absalom's burial place. He was unceremoniously thrown into a pit and covered with a huge heap of stones. And the second was the monument that Absalom built to his own glory. Let's consider the burial first. Verses 16-17:

B. Absalom's burial

2Sam. 18:16 So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people.

2Sam. 18:17 And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent. This burial was such an appropriate symbol of God's curse upon

Absalom in five ways:

1. Excluded from family tomb

First, he was excluded from his family tomb. He got a shameful burial, not a good burial. He wasn't able to enter into the glory of the marble tomb he had built for himself.

2. Buried east of the Jordan; though David excluded from the Promised land for a time, Absalom excluded forever

Second, he was buried east of the Jordan River, which is technically outside of the Promised Land. As one commentator worded it,

The act was also laden with symbolic value: first, it caused Absalom to be excluded from the Promised Land, since the burial site was east of the Jordan River. Absalom's rebellion had caused King David to remain outside the Promised Land for a time; now the rebellion would cause King Absalom to remain outside the Promised Land forever.⁴

Symbolically, this was an eternal curse, not a temporary one.

3. Symbolically identified with Achan and the Canaanite king of Ai (Josh 7:26; 8:29)

Third, commentators point out that this massive burial would remind readers of the similar fate that had happened to both Achan and the Canaanite king of Ai. Both were under God's ban, or curse, and both were covered in a huge heap of stones.

4. Fulfillment of Deut. 21:21

Fourth, it was the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 21:21, where a rebel son would be stoned by all Israel - which again would mean a huge mound of stones.

⁴ Bergen, *Ibid.*, p. 422.

5. Monument of stone symbolized his sterile kingship (and ended rebellion)

And fifth, though this huge pile of stones became a monument of what happens to rebels, the stone itself symbolizes his sterile kingship, and indeed, it ended the rebellion, as verse 17 says.

C. Absalom's monument

1. His own monument symbolized his sterile fatherhood (v. 18 with 14:27)

But Absalom's monument was no better. Verse 18 speaks of a glorious monument that he had built years before. Some believe it was a tomb he had built for himself with a huge pillar that would glorify him as a great king. But even though it was built years before, it is introduced here because again, it is tying in with this whole theme of pride. It is illustrating the futility of Absalom's pride. Verse 18:

2Sam. 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which *is* in the King's Valley. For he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

He wanted to be remembered well. And by the way, this is not in contradiction to 2 Samuel 14:27, where the author says that Absalom had three sons and a daughter. It mentions the name of the daughter, but not the name of the sons, indicating all the way back then that all three sons had died much earlier. And now he is left without sons and without citizens. Just like the former pile of stones, this stone pillar (though more beautiful) speaks of the sterility of his leadership.

2. His prideful desire for perpetual glory was turned by God into a memorial of perpetual shame (v. 18)

Secondly, it speaks of the sterility of his prideful desire for fame and perpetual glory. He wanted to be admired. But God turned that very memorial into a perpetual reminder of his shame. In fact, making a stone monument to be remembered by seems so shallow compared to what God calls us to be remembered by. What will count through all eternity is not what people think of us now, but whether we will receive God's "Well done, you good and faithful servant." Any other tribute that pride longs for is just as empty as this empty memorial tomb. Benjamin Whichcote once said, "None are so empty as those who are full of themselves." And that was true of Absalom. He left no meaningful legacy.

Conclusion

And pride is always such an offense to God, that it will leave us empty and it will leave others feeling empty. King Louis XIV called himself the “Sun King.” He was the epitome of pride and vain glory. He eliminated the checks and balances of feudalism, centralizing power in himself, and began building projects to his greatness such as the lavish palace of Versailles. He had paintings portraying him and each of his family members as gods. He was definitely a man who was on a head trip and who thought a great deal of himself. To dramatize his greatness, he ordered that at his funeral the cathedral would be dimly lit with only a special candle set above his coffin. The idea was that there would be no other light than the light of the Sun King. So even in his death he wanted to be the center of attention. When the Bishop Massillon began to speak at his funeral, he reached down and snuffed out the candle above the coffin making the famous statement, “Only God is great!” It was a pretty bold statement, but obviously this bishop thought the king’s prideful arrogance was blasphemous. And if we are prone to pride (which I believe every human is – many just don’t recognize it) we need to constantly remind ourselves of that fact. When we have obvious pride we need to remind ourselves that only God is great. When we have inverted pride through stage fright or mortification for having failed at something, we need to remind ourselves, “You’ve got no reason to be mortified. Only God is great. Don’t be ashamed that people don’t think of you as great anymore. You aren’t. Only God is great.” Shame is frequently a mortified pride that can’t stand to be seen poorly. And we must trample on those feelings and say, “I want no part in you, pride. I crucify you. I welcome this shame, because only God is great.”

And the irony is that though God is great, God has the humility of lifting up the Son and Spirit, and the Son and Spirit have the humility of exalting each other. And when God lifts you up by His grace (which to me is an amazing concept), it is an incredible offense when you respond to his goodness with pride. It makes God feel terrible. No wonder he says that pride is an abomination to Him. He cannot stand it; He detests it.

I want to close by having you compare yourself to the humility of Jesus. Philippians 2 says that though Jesus was great; even though Jesus was equal with God the Father, that he willingly humbled himself and became a servant of all. He is the greatest example of both greatness and humility. So I would like to go through a number of contrasts between prideful men and Jesus and have you ask yourself, “Lord, does this describe me? If so, please crucify my pride and make me more like Jesus.”

- First, men often take pride in their birth or in their rank, but Jesus was willing to be called a carpenter's son. He had a choice in which family he would be born into, and He chose to be incarnated in Mary, not in some Queen over a magnificent kingdom.
- Second, we often take pride in our respectability, but it was said of Jesus, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He deliberately cloaked His respectability and let people think what they would.
- We take pride in our personal appearance, but it is said of Jesus, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." (Is. 53:2 NIV). He could have made Himself incredibly handsome. But his humility was not in the least tempted by that form of pride. Lucifer was, but not Jesus.
- We take pride in our reputation and get offended when people slander us, but Jesus took in stride the slurs being made about Him when they called him one born of fornication and when they said, "Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard..." (Luke 7:34 ESV). His humility made him not grasp for reputation to want to be thought well of others.
- We take pride in the important friends that we have, but Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners. (Luke 7:34)
- I knew one person who would never let anyone give him a gift, treat him to lunch, buy him a Coke, or in other ways serve him. He said it was just too humiliating to be beholden to someone. He would always buy; he would always serve. But that is a form of inverted pride. In contrast, Jesus had the humility to receive a gift of very precious ointment, allowed women to serve him, to wash his feet, and let a Samaritan woman draw well water for him, and He allows us to give our all to Him.
- We sometimes take pride in our degrees and learning, but Jesus never went to college and people said of Him, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" (John 7:15 ESV) He had never gone to seminary. Now, I am giving all of these illustrations because one of two of them might stick in your heart and reveal pride. So consider whether you are like Jesus. Some people don't recognize that they have pride (which is the greatest form of pride), so it is good to do self-examination sometimes.
- Here's another one: we can easily take pride in position (or have an inverted pride by shame in lack of position), yet Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves."

- We take pride in our possessions, yet Jesus gave up all. In fact, He said, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.”
- We take pride in our success, but the Gospel of John begins by affirming, “His own did not receive Him.” Where’s the success there? And it ends by showing that Jesus lost almost all His followers, and Isaiah says, “He is despised and rejected by men.” It was not success that drove Him, but doing the Father’s will. If success is the only driving force in your life, pride may be the driving force of your life.
- We take pride in our self-reliance. I remember our little kids saying, “No, no. I can do it myself.” Now, there is a healthy aspect to independence that just speaks of maturity, but frequently self-reliance flows from pride. Consider Jesus. In Luke 2:51 it says that this creator of the Universe was subject to His parents as a teenager. Wow! That’s humility, and resisting our parents can be a manifestation of pride, not of humility.
- We take pride in our own abilities, yet Jesus said, “I can of Myself do nothing.” He gave credit to the Father and the Spirit in all that He did. He was driven by delighting in the Father, not delighting in Himself.
- Some take pride in their own self-will. “Nobody is going to tell me what to do.” But Jesus said, “I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me,” and near the end of His life He said to the Father, “Not my will, but yours be done.” No wonder Philippians chapter 2 portrays Jesus as the ultimate example of humility that we need to imitate.
- We take pride in our intellect, but Jesus said, “I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.” (John 8:28). In effect He was saying that there was nothing original with Him. Everything He taught came from God the Father. Academics can be so prideful. But if the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge is not prideful about that knowledge but ascribes every bit of it to the Father, who are we to be prideful over academics? It’s ridiculous when you think of it that way.
- Pride can lead us to resentment and lack of forgiveness, but Jesus said of His crucifiers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It is pride many times that keeps us from forgiving.
- Churches can take pride in having solid members whose lives are not messed up, but Jesus was quite OK with people accusing him, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:2). Yes, that’s

because there was no pride to make him ashamed to be identified with you and with me. Praise God that Jesus had no pride or none of us could be saved. That's why Hebrews 2 says that Jesus was not ashamed to call us brethren.

- People in Scripture took pride that they were righteous and accepted in God, but it was said of Jesus, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. 5:21).⁵

This past week as I started studying all of those contrasts, it made me want to worship and adore the Holy Trinity for the humility that each Person has. But certainly, in all of this, Jesus was a model of humility. And if the greatest man who has ever lived had not the slightest bit of pride, you can see why God is offended when sinners saved by grace alone are prideful. What do we have to be proud of? 1 Corinthians 4:7 says,

1Cor. 4:7 For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?

Brothers and sisters, let the stories of Absalom and Joab be riveted into your minds as examples of the exceeding sinfulness of pride. Let these stories convince you that pride is hated by God and should be hated by us. Let them convince you that pride always goes before destruction and that God resists the proud, but gives more grace to the humble. Ask God to keep you from head trips and to make you humble like Jesus. Amen.

⁵ Though put into my own words, the ideas for this list come

Head Trip 2 Samuel 18:9-18

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 2-7-2014

Introduction

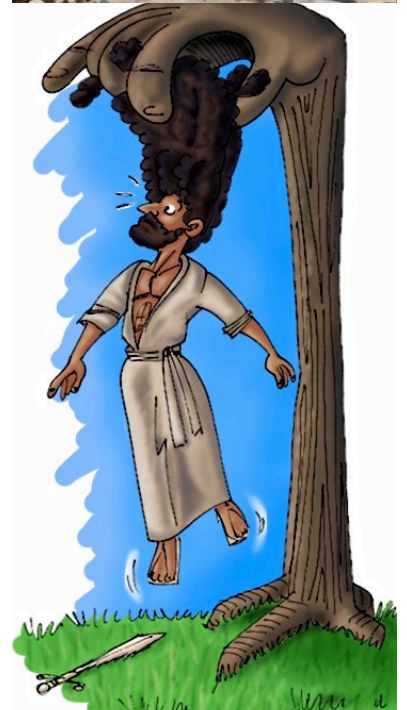
I. A Head Trip for Absalom

- A. Startled by providence (v. 9a literal Hebrew “cried out” קָרָא)
- B. God uses nature to catch Absalom just as he used nature against the army (vv. 9b with v. 8)
- C. The sign of his pride (hair – 14:26) is his undoing (v. 9b)
- D. The arrogant now hanging helplessly (v. 9c)
- E. The sign of his kingship (mule) leaving him behind (v. 9d)
- F. Under God’s curse (v. 10 - the only other time this word for “hanging” תָּלֵי is used is in Deut. 21:23)



II. A Head Trip for Joab

- A. Joab too is a prideful rebel (v. 11)
- B. Joab’s rebellion is contrasted with the humility of the unnamed soldier (v. 12)
- C. Joab is not to be trusted (v. 13)
- D. Joab is unwilling to listen to legitimate disagreement (v. 14a)
- E. Joab’s impatient irritation with the chain of command (vv. 11-14)
- F. Joab involves others in his rebellion (v. 15)



III. God’s further curses on Absalom (vv. 16-18)

- A. Though Joab disobeyed David, this was clearly God’s intended judgment (vv. 9-18); God causes all things to work together for His glory.
- B. Absalom’s burial
 1. Excluded from family tomb
 2. Buried east of the Jordan; though David excluded from the Promised land for a time, Absalom excluded forever
 3. Symbolically identified with Achan and the Canaanite king of Ai (Josh 7:26; 8:29)
 4. Fulfillment of Deut. 21:21
 5. Monument of stone symbolized his sterile kingship (and ended rebellion)
- C. Absalom’s monument
 1. His own monument symbolized his sterile fatherhood (v. 18 with 14:27)
 2. His prideful desire for perpetual glory was turned by God into a memorial of perpetual shame (v. 18)



Conclusion