

while the three divisions of David's army had for generals Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. David wished to assume command himself, not to gratify revenge, but to protect his son from the fury of the soldiers. He was persuaded, however, to take charge of the reserves. The first shock decided the fortunes of the day, and Absalom's army fled in confusion. When he got entangled the men whose hearts he stole left him to perish alone by the hand of Joab. They cast his body into a great pit, piled stones upon it, thus giving him burial which accorded with the punishment prescribed by law (Deut. 21. 13-21), and every passer-by hurling a stone as Arabs do now at detested graves. David sat between the gates anxiously awaiting for news. When the truth was learned he gave pathetic expression to his grief. The eternal interests over which he must have thought caused an agony time might soften, but could never efface.

Verse 24. David sat. Awaiting the result of the battle at Mahanaim, a city north of the Jabbok, on the east of the Jordan. The place is not certainly identified, but at *Jerash*, which has the best claim, there still stands an ancient gateway, which may occupy the spot where David was waiting. **Between the two gates.** There were two gates, an outer and an inner, with the thickness of the wall between them. This formed a room, shaded and secure, where the king sat during the day, while the battle was raging in the wood of Ephraim. **The watchman.** "The captain of the gate." **Went up to the roof.** Over the gate was a room, such as in oriental cities is often used as a guard-room for police purposes, and above this was the roof surrounded by a parapet. Here stood the watchman. **A man running alone.** After the victory was assured, Joab, the commander of David's army, sent as a messenger with the news Cushli, or "the Cushite," that is, the Ethiopian, and probably a slave. But when Ahimaz besought the privilege of also bearing tidings, he allowed him to follow the Ethiopian. Ahimaz took another and easier route, though a little longer; outran his predecessor, and was the one whom the porter now saw.

25. The watchman cried. Calling from the tower to the ground, where David was waiting. Such a cry would cause intense excitement. **If he be alone, there is tidings.** If he had been flying from a defeat, there would have been other fugitives with him. David showed his usual quickness of apprehension by even so slight a remark. **He came apace.** In the East trained runners accompany every army, and often are able in a day's journey to outrun a horse.

26. Another man running. This was the Cushite, or the Ethiopian, who had started in advance of Ahimaz, but had been distanced in the race. **Called to the porter.** This porter was probably an assistant of the "captain of the gate," and was so stationed that he could hear the watchman from above, and transmit the word to the king. **He also bringeth tidings.** We imagine the beating heart of the old king, eager for, yet dreading, the news.

27. Ahimaz. He was a young priest, the son of Zadok, who had already shown trustworthiness, skill, and courage in bringing to David news of Absalom's plans (2 Sam. 15. 27; 17. 17-21).

Joab had at first declined to permit him to bear news of the battle, knowing that the message of Absalom's death would bring sorrow, and he preferred to let the Ethiopian slave carry the evil tidings; but after Cushli had gone a distance, as Ahimaz was still eager to run, he allowed him, thinking that he would arrive after Cushli. **Zadok.** He was the chief priest in the line of Eleazar, the elder son of Aaron, as Abiathar was in the line of Ithamar, the younger son. The two were associated in the duties of the priesthood, and both were for David in the war, though at his suggestion they remained in Jerusalem with the ark, when the king fled from Absalom. **He is a good man.** David knew him well, and remembered how boldly and faithfully he had brought to him the word from Absalom's council. **Cometh with good tidings.** David rightly judged that one of such high position would not be sent with news of a defeat. (1) *It is worth while to try to win for ourselves a good name.* (2) *The good tidings of the Gospel should always be borne by good men; and how welcome should they be to us for their message's sake.*—*M. Henry.* (3) *The wandering child is still embraced in his father's love.*

28. All is well. In the original, the one word *shalom!* ("peace!") **Fell down to the earth.** Prostrating himself before the king, after the manner shown on the Egyptian and Assyrian monuments. **Blessed be the Lord.** The young priest did not forget in the hour of triumph from whom the victory came. (4) *It is well for us ever to keep in mind the giver of all success. Delivered up the men.* Literally, "shut up the men," by thwarting and putting down their projects. **Lifted up their hand.** There was something unnatural and revolting in Absalom's rebellion against and seeking to destroy a kind father, while David refused to slay his bitter enemy Saul. (5) *Evil is still restricted by God's power, working both directly and indirectly.*

29. The king said. Better for David had it been if he had asked this question earlier; and of himself, rather than of another. He had failed to keep his wayward son safe from evil companions and from tempestuous passions; and his anxiety in that moment showed that he felt that not all the wrong had been on Absalom's side. (6) *There are times when care comes too late, and must give place*

Absalom's flight of rebels, to "forest of necessity of a teacher's slaps, 15-reading of all that is these chap twelve we lesson; that is not kno the woodla but little r within the everything the Jordan, jeeting the arch-traitor adopting th friend, who Absalom,