

Lesson VI.

DAVID'S GRIEF OVER ABSALOM

November 8, 1903

2 Sam. 18 : 24-33. Commit to memory vs. 31-33. Read 2 Sam. chs. 15-20.

21 And Da'vid sat between the two gates : and the watchman went up to the roof ²over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, ³there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26 And the watchman saw another man running : and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold ⁴another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27 And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahima'az the son of Za'dok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

28 And Ahima'az called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he ⁵fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up

their hand against my lord the king.

29 And the king said, ⁶Is the young man Ab'salom safe? And Ahima'az answered, When Jo'ab sent the king's servant, ⁷and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.

30 And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31 And, behold, ⁸Cush'i came; and ⁹Cush'i said, Tidings, ¹⁰my lord the king : for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32 And the king said unto ¹¹Cush'i, ¹²Is the young man Ab'salom safe? And ¹³Cush'i answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, he as ¹⁴that young man is.

33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept : and as he went, thus he said, O my son Ab'salom, my son, my son Ab'salom! would God I had died for thee, O Ab'salom, my son, my son!

Revised Version—Now; ²of; ³bowed himself before the king with his face to the earth; ⁴Is it well with the young man Absalom? ⁵even; ⁶the Cushite; ⁷for.

EXPLANATION

Connection—The sending back of the ark to Jerusalem and the commission of Hushai to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel are recorded in ch. 15:24-37. Ch. 16 relates the kindness of Ziba, the cursing of the king by Shimei, and the entry of Absalom into Jerusalem. In ch. 17 we have the success of Hushai's plan, the suicide of Ahithophel, and the arrival of David at Mahanaim. Vgs. 1-23 of the present chapter give an account of the battle between the armies of David and Absalom, of Absalom's death, and of the anxious waiting of the king for tidings of the battle, and especially concerning his son.

24, 25. **Between the two gates**; in the space between the inner and outer gates of the city gateway. **Watchman**; called "the captain of the gate," who also acted as sentinel. **Went up**; to watch for the earliest messenger of victory or defeat. **The roof**. The gateway had a flat roof which reached to the outer wall of the city. **There is tidings**. A man running alone must have some message. If he had been fleeing from the battle-field because the army had been defeated there would have been others with him. **Came apace**. In those days trained runners accompanied every army. They were sometimes able in a day's journey to outrun a horse.

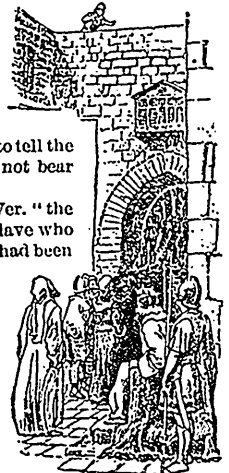
26, 27. **The porter**; the gate-keeper. **Me thinketh**; it seems to me. **Ahimaaz**. As soon as the victory was won, Joab (v. 21) had sent Cushite—Rev. Ver., "the Cushite"—that is, an African, probably a slave, to carry the news to David. Ahimaaz, a friend of David's, thinking that he could break the tidings more gently, asked and received permission to go also. Choosing an easier path, he outran the first messenger, v. 21-23. **A good man**. David rightly thought that Joab would not choose so great a man to bear any other than good tidings.

28-30. **All is well**. This was a usual form of greeting, which would have a special meaning at such a time. **Fell down**. It was, and in some cases still is, the custom in Eastern countries, for a subject in approaching a king to kneel down and bend forward till the forehead touches the ground. (See 1 Sam. 20:41; 25:23.) **Delivered up**; literally "shut up,"

that is, kept within bounds, instead of allowing them liberty to carry out their plans. (Compare 1 Sam. 17:46 and Ps. 31:8.) **Young man**. David's tenderness appears in the use of these words. He mentions the youth of Absalom as if it were an excuse for him. **Absalom**; "his estranged, misguided Absalom, the proud, bright being, who had burst away in all his princely beauty, to defy the heart that cherished him." The king's servant; the Cushite. I knew not. Ahimaaz had been eager to tell the good news, but he could not bear to tell the bad.

31, 32. **Cushi** (Rev. Ver. "the Cushite"); the African slave who had started first, but who had been outrun by Ahimaaz. **Tidings**. He speaks bluntly to the king. **The enemies**. The Cushite represents Absalom's rebellion in its true light, though he lacked in reverence for the sorrow of a father. **Hath avenged thee**. The meaning is, that God had decided justly between David and Absalom, and delivered the king out of the hands of his enemies.

33. **Much moved**; sorely troubled. **Chamber**; a room over the space between the gates where the king had been sitting, and under the roof to which the watchman had gone to look for the messengers. Thus he said. His grief was all the greater, because he had not been wise in the up-bringing of Absalom. **Would God**. So Moses (Ex. 30:32) and Paul (Rom. 9:3) were ready to die for others. David must have felt that he himself had deserved a fate like Absalom's, Ps. 51:14.



David Waiting for Tidings