

Joab

My name is Joab. I and my brothers Abishai and Asahel are nephews of David and we served him. You might think me too hard. But to tell the truth, David was far too soft. Twice, David had the opportunity to kill Saul. Think about it -- that man had tried to kill David more times than you can count! David had already been anointed by Samuel, but Saul still ruled. Abishai was with David when they sneaked into Saul's camp and found him and all his guards asleep. If that is not an opportunity arranged by the LORD himself, I don't know what is. But David told my brother, "Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless?" It happened again when Saul went into a cave to relieve himself not knowing that we were hidden in the back.

I think you will agree now that David was not tough enough. But he was also not suspicious enough. After Saul and Jonathan died, Abner was attempting to organize a rival kingdom with Saul's son Ish-Bosheth.

I arranged a little meeting with Abner. He called for a 12-on-12 hand-to-hand combat. This did not turn out to be a friendly contest. It was suddenly very bloody and spread into a larger battle, which we won, by the way. My brother Abishai then chased Abner. Abner warned my brother, who was young and inexperienced, but when he would not turn back, Abner killed him with the butt of his spear.

Later Ish-Bosheth insulted Abner and that convinced him to switch sides. He had just agreed to bring all of Israel over to David's side and left in peace. But I ambushed him and killed him. It was partly personal, but I really did not think David should trust him.

I won many victories for David. When we were attacking Rabbah, David was not there. That is one time I should have gotten tough with him. I wondered why he called for Uriah to be sent back. Then when he returned, I found written orders to put him in the front and pull back. I have a devious enough mind to figure that one out -- of course he wanted him dead. When we were about to take the city, I told David he had better show up or I would get the credit -- he seemed to be in a fog.

Then I saw David fail to take responsibility. His family experienced incest, then murder, and he was not even talking to his children. I arranged a woman to bring a "problem" to the king. It was a parable, like Nathan had used to convince David of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. This one also worked -- I am glad for David's soft side, admitting wrong. But after I got Absalom back to Jerusalem, David did not even meet with him! I did all this for David's sake. He needed to discipline his son. And I wanted Absalom to reconcile with his father -- he had the making of a good king. But I really got fed up with his pride and ambition when he gave up on waiting for succession and ingratiated himself directly to the people to gain support for a coup.

Absalom started a civil war. The battle went into the forest and my men saw Absalom caught by his hair in a tree. He was vain about his incredible head of curly hair and it was his downfall! I berated my men for not killing him. They told me that David had said "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." It was too late for gentleness. I speared him and my men finished the job.

And after a hard-fought victory when we should have been celebrating, David spoiled it by obsessing on the death of Absalom. I took him to task for it and warned that unless he talked to his army, they would scatter. He held a grudge against me and set Amasa over the army. I did not trust Amasa and used a trick to get the advantage and kill him. When a rebel named Sheba rallied the people against David, I pursued him and negotiated with a woman of the city where he fled to surrender him. She threw his head over the wall. I think I gave David good advice against taking a census, but he did it anyway and the whole nation was punished.

I had a long life for a warrior. I guess you can call me a survivor. After David died, I tried to work for the next king. Unfortunately, I chose Adonijah. When Solomon got the throne, he had Adonijah executed. Then he sent Benaiah after me even though I took hold of the horns of the altar – there was a tradition against killing in the holy place. Solomon insisted that I be killed regardless, because I murdered Abner and Amasa against the will of David. I guess I have to admit that Solomon had the toughness his father lacked.

1 Samuel 26 – 31, 2 Samuel 1 – 28, 1 Kings 1 - 11