

Allegiance to Christ

Text: 2 Samuel 15

Introduction: In American history, the name Benedict Arnold is synonymous with betrayal. But Arnold didn't begin as a traitor. He was a decorated general in the Continental Army. He fought bravely. He was trusted. He was admired. If you had asked early American soldiers about Benedict Arnold, they would have called him a hero. In fact, it has been said that had Arnold died at the Battles of Saratoga in the fall of 1777, he would have been considered as one of America's greatest heroes.

So, what happened? What made this man go from hero to traitor? His heart changed. Resentment began to grow. He felt overlooked. Underappreciated. Passed over for promotion. What started as wounded pride slowly hardened into disloyalty. And eventually, that disloyalty turned into treason. He secretly negotiated with the British to hand over West Point.

History remembers the betrayal. But the betrayal began long before the secret meeting. It began in the heart.

In 2 Samuel 15, we witness a far more tragic betrayal. Not just one man turning against his country. But a nation turning its heart away from its rightful king. Absalom doesn't begin with swords. He begins with charm. With flattery. With whispered dissatisfaction.

And before long, the text tells us, "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

We're in 2 Samuel 15. Go ahead and turn there in your Bible if you haven't already. It begins on page 248 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we encourage you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read 2 Samuel 15...Pray)

We're going to see this morning that **Absalom grasped for authority that was not his, but Jesus, David's greater Son, has been given all authority in heaven and on earth.**

That's the main idea of 2 Samuel 15. **Absalom grasped for authority that was not his, but Jesus, David's greater Son, has been given all authority in heaven and on earth.**

And out of that main idea, flow two exhortations that form the structure for my sermon this morning. First...

I. Beware of false kings (2 Samuel 15:1-12).

Chapter 15 begins, "After this." Which reminds us of where we left off last time at the end of chapter 14. David's son Absalom had fled to Geshur because he murdered his brother Amnon. Absalom stayed in Geshur for three years. But after three years, Joab, who was the commander of David's army, made arrangements for Absalom's return to Jerusalem.

Initially, when Absalom returned to Jerusalem, David did not allow his son to come into his presence. But Absalom eventually got tired of that. He set Joab's field on fire to get his attention. And Joab arranged for Absalom to go in to his father the king. Absalom "came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom" (14:33b). And that's where we left off last time.

But now we begin to see as we look at chapter 15 that Absalom sought to steal the hearts of the people.

A. Absalom stole the hearts of the people.

1. We see this first with Absalom's chariot.

- a. Look at verse 1. (Read vs. 1)
- b. Now, this may not seem significant to us at first, but there are some things in the biblical text that make this more significant than we may initially realize.
- c. First, regular people don't have chariots. The fact that Absalom has now acquired a chariot and horses should tell us he's up to something. Not only that, he has enlisted 50 men to run before him.

- d. Not only that, the biblical text is surprisingly negative in its portrayal of horses and chariots. We see the enemies of the Lord and his people with chariots, but we do not see God's people relying upon horses and chariots.
 - e. Also, do you remember all the way back in 1 Samuel 8 when the people of Israel were first asking for a king? They wanted a king like all the other nations. And Samuel warned them that having a king like all the other nations wasn't all it was cracked up to be.
 - f. Here's part of what Samuel said in 1 Samuel 8, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots" (1 Sam. 8:11-12).
 - g. Now, in acquiring a chariot and horses for himself, Absalom is fulfilling Samuel's warning all the way back in 1 Samuel 8 before Israel even had a king.
 - h. Not only that, Psalm 20:7 says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." So, when we read that "Absalom got himself a chariot," it's supposed to alert us to the fact that something isn't right here. Absalom's trust is not in the Lord. It's in himself and his own power and might. Absalom wanted to impress the people. He wanted to project strength so that the people would view him as the kind of person they would want for a king. We'll see that even more clearly as we make our way through the chapter.
2. The second way we see Absalom stealing the hearts of the people is recorded for us beginning in verse 2. (Read vs. 2-4)
- a. Isn't that something?
 - b. Absalom sowed a spirit of discontent among the people and set himself up as the answer to their discontentment.
 - c. It was an effective strategy then, and it's still an effective strategy today. If you're not in power but you want to be in power, you can't say that the person who is in power is doing a great job. You have to point out what a terrible job they're doing and how you would do so much better. That's exactly what Absalom did. He was a master politician.
 - d. People were trying to get to David to have him decide their dispute. But Absalom would intercept them along the way and tell them, "Your claims are good and right, but there's no one to hear them."
 - e. And notice what Absalom says in verse 4, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice."
 - f. One commentator says that what Absalom is really promising is that he would decide in the favor of those who would come to him for a judgment (Woodhouse, 382). What a promise! Everyone would get what he or she wanted. Of course, that's not actually possible. But when has the impossibility of a promise ever kept a skilled politician from making that promise?
 - g. Notice that Absalom doesn't come right out and say, "I should be king instead of David my father." But that's essentially what he is saying. The responsibility of judging disputes belonged to the king. When Absalom says, "Oh that I were JUDGE in the land," he really means, "Oh that I were KING in the land!"
 - h. You have to wonder where David was in all of this. Surely he heard reports of all that Absalom was doing. The chariot. The standing by the gate. The undermining of David's authority. But there's no indication that David did anything to stop it.

David's passivity in these chapters is mind-blowing to me. The king who, as a young shepherd boy, killed a Philistine giant with a sling and a stone comes across now as weak and impotent.

3. We further see Absalom's charisma beginning in verse 5. (Read vs. 5-6a)

- a. Again, Absalom was a master politician. This was the modern equivalent of a politician kissing babies to present himself as a man of the people.
- b. We might see a connection between Absalom TAKING hold of those who would come to him and Samuel's warning of a king who TAKES. Saul became a king who TAKES. David became a king who TAKES when he TOOK Bathsheba. Amnon TOOK his sister Tamar. And now Absalom is TAKING hold of the people.
- c. The remarkable thing about Absalom-style politics is that it works. It certainly did for Absalom.
- d. Look at the end of verse 6: "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

4. Now Absalom turns his attention to his father David to work his magic on him.

- a. Look at the beginning of verse 7: "And at the end of four years." Absalom has spent four full years stealing the hearts of the men of Israel. That is remarkable patience on Absalom's part. Remember that he went two full years before enacting his revenge on Amnon. Then he waited in Geshur for three full years before Joab made arrangements for his return to Jerusalem. Then it was another two years before he was able to enter the king's presence. Absalom was patient. He was more than willing to bide his time until the perfect opportunity arose for him to accomplish what he wanted.
- b. Now, look at what Absalom asks David. (Read vs. 7b-8) We'll soon find out what Absalom is up to,

and we'll see very clearly that it has nothing to do with a vow he made to the Lord or his desire to worship the Lord.

- c. We might ask why it was that Absalom wanted to go to Hebron. Couldn't Absalom offer worship to the Lord in Jerusalem? Why did he need to go to Hebron? The answer of course is that Hebron was a place of significance both to Absalom and the people of Israel. Hebron was the place of Absalom's birth. But it was also the city where David had first been made king. Hebron was also Abraham's town, and therefore, linked David's kingship to the promises that God had made to Abraham.
- d. You would think that maybe David would be suspicious of Absalom's request. Why had Absalom waited this long to make good on a vow he made to the Lord while he was still in Geshur? That was 6 years ago at this point. Why did he want to go to Hebron?
- e. But either David fell for it hook, line, and sinker or he was completely unwilling to stand up to his son. Either could be true based on what we know of David at this point in his life. Look at David's response in verse 9. No objection. No questioning. David simply said, "Go in peace." Of course, we'll soon find out that Absalom was not going in peace. He was going to make war.

5. In fact, upon his arrival in Hebron, Absalom began to grow his army.

- a. Look at verse 10. (Read vs. 10-12)
- b. Notice the name Ahithophel in verse 12. Ahithophel was one of David's closest counselors. He also was Bathsheba's grandfather. We don't know for sure why Ahithophel was willing to betray David, but it may have been that David betrayed him first when he took Ahithophel's granddaughter Bathsheba for himself and killed her husband Uriah. Perhaps crafty Absalom had been able to exploit that situation to his advantage. We can't say for certain.

- c. **What we can say for certain is what the text says at the end of verse 12: “The people with Absalom kept increasing.”**
- d. **Absalom had successfully stolen the hearts of many of the people of Israel. And not just their hearts but their allegiance. Many were aligned with the wannabe king Absalom now instead of Israel’s true king, David.**

And I do think this is a picture of what Satan tries to do in our lives. Just as Absalom stole the hearts of the people of Israel, we know that...

B. Satan seeks to steal our hearts.

- 1. **I think specifically of John 10:10 where Jesus warns, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”**
- 2. **See, the people of Israel’s allegiance should have been to David as their king. We’re going to talk about that in just a minute. And we know that as Christians, our allegiance should be to Jesus who is our king.**
- 3. **Our Scripture reading earlier in the service was chosen very intentionally because Absalom should remind us of someone from the NT.**
 - a. **We can’t be certain of the context in which David wrote Psalm 41, but Psalm 41:9 says, “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” It’s possible that David was referring to Ahithophel when he wrote those words. But aside from him being David’s son rather than his close friend, they apply equally well to Absalom.**
 - b. **Now, listen to what Jesus said in John 13 as He was gathered with His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem on the night of his arrest. He said, “I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’” Jesus was talking about Judas.**

- c. **Satan stole the heart of Judas, and Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. His allegiance had been to Jesus. But his allegiance shifted with his heart.**
- 4. **What are the things in your life that may have begun to shift your allegiance away from Jesus?**
- 5. **See, Satan doesn’t need to get you to denounce Jesus to render you ineffective in the kingdom of God. He just has to divide your loyalty. And he does it in subtle ways. Just like Absalom didn’t just come out one day and make an announcement, “I’m going to be the new king of Israel. Everyone follow me instead of David.” Instead, he subtly stole their hearts. He shifted their loyalties. He created discontentment in their hearts and then set himself up as the answer to their discontentment.**
- 6. **Is there discontentment in your life? What is Satan trying to get you to satisfy that discontentment with? Money? Possessions? Attention? Politics?**
- 7. **We so easily make idols out of ordinary things in our lives, and if we’re not careful, those ordinary things will begin to steal our hearts and shift our allegiance away from Christ.**

That’s why we need the second exhortation that we’re going to see in the rest of the chapter. It’s not enough to beware of false kings. We also must...

II. Trust in the true king (2 Samuel 15:13-37).

A. David was Israel’s true king.

- 1. **But things don’t look good for David in Jerusalem.**
 - a. **A messenger came to David and said, “The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom” (vs. 13).**
 - b. **So, David determined that he and all his servants would flee from Jerusalem for their own safety. David said, “Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword” (vs. 14).**

- c. In this we see the truthfulness of Nathan's words to David after his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house" (2 Sam. 12:10).
2. One of the men who determined to flee Jerusalem with David was Ittai the Gittite.
 - a. The Gittites were Philistines who had become David's followers. And among the Gittites was a man named Ittai.
 - b. David asked him, "Why do you also go with us?" David said, "Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home" (vs. 19).
 - c. It's interesting, isn't it, that David refers to Absalom as "the king." It seems that David saw the overthrow of his kingdom by Absalom as a very real possibility. And if that were to happen, why should Ittai and the rest of the Gittites follow him. It would make far more sense for their own sake for them to remain in Jerusalem under the new king Absalom.
 - d. But notice the loyalty of Ittai to David in verse 21. (Read vs. 21)
 - e. That sounds kind of like what Ruth said to Naomi in Ruth 1, doesn't it? "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried."
 - f. Ittai the Gittite showed more loyalty to David as Israel's true king than many of David's own people, including his son Absalom.
 - g. These foreign converts to David's rule and reign are a reminder to us that God's plan of salvation is for the nations and that the true children of Abraham are those who share Abraham's faith.
3. But I wonder if you can feel the tragedy of this moment as David and those willing to follow him flee from Jerusalem. Look at verse 23. (Read vs. 23) David is the king of Israel. Things were not supposed to turn out like this. But here David is fleeing Jerusalem. And the people weep.
 4. But David has two faithful friends named Abiathar and Zadok.
 - a. Abiathar and Zadok determined that if David was going to flee from Jerusalem, they would help David by bringing the ark of God as they fled with David.
 - b. But look at David's response in verse 25. (Read vs. 25-26)
 - c. This feels a bit like the old David, doesn't it?
 - d. Some of you will remember all the way back in 1 Samuel 4 when the people of God tried to use the ark of God like a good luck charm. They thought that if they brought it out into battle, it would assure them victory. Well, it didn't. And even the ark was captured by the Philistines.
 - e. David understands here that his future is not dependent on bringing a wooden box with him. He needs the Lord. I think David understands that he is experiencing the disciplining hand of God in his exile from Jerusalem. But I also think we see David here throwing himself completely on the mercy and grace of God.
 - f. When David says, "Let him do what seems good to him," perhaps we're reminded of the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."
 - g. David expresses his trust in the Lord, but he also launches a plan for Zadok and Abiathar and their sons to return to Jerusalem as his informants (vs. 27-28).
 5. David's ascent up the Mount of Olives in verse 30 should remind us of another ascent up the Mount of Olives many years later. We know, don't we, that years

later the Lord Jesus would walk up the Mount of Olives weeping as he faced exile in our place. David was exiled for his own sins. Jesus would be exiled on the cross for our sins so we can escape the judgment of God (Chester, 118).

6. David also received a report that his counselor Ahithophel had sided with Absalom. David responded by praying, “O Lord, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” (vs. 31). That’s trust in the sovereignty of God, isn’t it? David had trusted the wise counsel of Ahithophel in the past, but now he recognizes that God is able to turn his counsel into foolishness, and he asks God to do it.
7. We’re introduced to another man in verse 32, Hushai the Archite. David sends him back to Jerusalem to subvert the counsel of Ahithophel.
8. See, David trusts in the sovereignty of God. But he doesn’t use the sovereignty of God as an excuse for inaction. He takes action to protect himself and his kingdom from the subversive actions of Absalom.
9. We don’t have to pit the sovereignty of God and human responsibility against one another. They go together. God uses means. God is the one who saves, but He uses people like you and me to share the gospel.

We’ll have to wait until next time to see what happens with Absalom and David. But I want you to see this morning that just as David was Israel’s true king...

B. Jesus is the King of kings.

1. The similarities between King David and King Jesus in this chapter are numerous, and we’re supposed to notice them.
 - a. David was betrayed by his son Absalom and his counselor Ahithophel. Jesus was betrayed by Judas.
 - b. David was rejected by many of the people of Israel in favor of Absalom his son. Jesus also was rejected by His own people. The Apostle John writes, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (Jn. 1:11).

- c. David was embraced by the Cherethites and Pelethites and Gittites, including Ittai, and they were welcomed into his kingdom. Jesus was embraced by Gentiles, and they too were welcomed into His eternal kingdom.
- d. Despite the betrayal he experienced and being rejected by his own people, David trusted his life in the Lord’s hands. Jesus too maintained a deep-seated confidence in God the Father despite His rejection by men.
- e. In 2 Samuel 15:23, David crossed the brook Kidron as all the people wept aloud. In John 18:1, the Lord Jesus “went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.”
- f. In 2 Samuel 15:30, David ascended the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. And in Matthew 26:30, Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives with His disciples, knowing He would be arrested and crucified.
- g. See, the similarities between King David and King Jesus in 2 Samuel 15 are numerous, and we are supposed to notice them.

2. But we should also recognize that the differences between David and Jesus are every bit as important.
 - a. In 2 Samuel 15, we see David experiencing the consequences for his sin. This betrayal by Absalom didn’t happen in a vacuum. As king, David likely didn’t spend the time he could have and should have on being a father to his children. We do know that David’s family was already dysfunctional due to numerous wives. But the big turning point in David’s life was his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. There’s no recovering from something like that with regard to your moral credibility. Especially with your family. We also know that David became very passive in his leadership of his family, allowing his sons to do as they pleased.

There's much to be learned from David by way of negative example.

- b. But where King David experienced the consequences of his sin in his betrayal by Absalom and subsequent exile from Jerusalem, we know that King Jesus had no sin of His own to pay for. He experienced the consequences of our sin. He was exiled on our behalf. He suffered on our behalf. He was crucified on our behalf.**

Conclusion: We were far from God because of our sin. So, Jesus came and lived the sinless life we could not live. And died the death we should have died. So that through repenting of our sin and placing our complete trust in Jesus, we are made right with God. The righteousness of Jesus is credited to our account.

We also know that the Lord Jesus did not remain dead following His crucifixion. He was raised from the grave three days later. He ascended into heaven 40 days later. And He is right now seated at the right hand of God the Father where He rules and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

He is the final fulfillment of God's promise to David, "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

Things look bleak for David and his kingdom in 2 Samuel 15. But they're not really bleak. Because God always keeps His promises. He always does exactly what He says He is going to do.

Jesus, David's greater Son, has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. His throne has been established. He rules and reigns forever. May our allegiance be to Jesus alone because He is our King.