

2 Samuel 16:15-18:33

Good evening and thank you so much for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to 2 Samuel 16? Last week in our study we left off in verse 14 of chapter 16, so we'll pick up in verse 15 and we'll go through all of chapter 18 tonight.

Remember the scene-Absalom, David's own son has now led his rebellious group to Jerusalem in his attempt to overthrow his father David as king. And many people have followed Absalom. David has now fled Jerusalem, the kingdom looking like it's no longer his.

I heard a quote many years ago that said when our children are little, they step on our toes. When they grow up, they step on our hearts. And this is true of David, he's in agony over what his son has done.

Tonight is like something out of a Hollywood blockbuster, with sudden plot twists, espionage, and full of high drama. But the ending is shocking, and not what you'd expect if you've been following this story...

The timing is amazing that we're studying this section just before Good Friday...

The title of tonight's message is "A man after God's own heart"

Let's pray

Remember, David has some spies set up, he has the priests as well as his friend Hushai as double agents.

15 Meanwhile Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem; and Ahithophel was with him. 16 And so it was, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

17 So Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" Absalom is suspicious. How come Hushai isn't with David?

18 And Hushai said to Absalom, "No, but whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel choose, his I will be, and with him I will remain. 19 Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so will I be in your presence." Of course no spy is going to announce he's a spy. Hushai says he will be loyal to Absalom

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give advice as to what we should do."

21 And Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong." In those days, when a new king took the throne he inherited his predecessor's harem. Ahithophel's motive behind this maneuver was to signal a new regime, to strengthen the resolve of Absalom's followers in their rebellion. But there's something even more sinister lurking in the

motivation-this plan will destroy any chance of reconciling with David.

22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." There are no details needed here. This is a heinous act by David's son to sexually assault the 10 concubines that David left behind. And notice how far bitterness has driven Ahithophel, he's willing to see these women violated.

This disgraceful incident also shows that God kept His promise to David. 2 Samuel 12:11-12 11 Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'

23 Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom. Ahithophel was famous for his wise counsel, and David wanted someone on the inside of Absalom's leadership who might frustrate Ahithophel's counsel. That's why he planted Hushai there.

Chapter 17

v1-2

1 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2

I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. Ahithophel recommends a quick, selective attack against David only. He tells Absalom to let him do it now while David was still on the westside of the Jordan River, not too far away.

3 Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace.” 4 And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. Ahithophel’s plan was both bold and had a high probability of success. On top of that, if Absalom went with this plan it would spare Israel a protracted civil war between the supporters of David and the supporters of Absalom.

5 Then Absalom said, “Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too.” Knowing how was Ahithophel was, it’s shocking Absalom asks for further advice.

Last week when David learned Ahithophel turned traitor, David prayed 2 Samuel 15:31 Then someone told David, saying, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” And David said, “O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!” God is about to answer this prayer.

6 And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, “Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up.” Put yourself in Hushai’s sandals when he hear’s of Ahithophel’s plan to kill David. I’m sure his heart sank.

He had to quickly think of a counter-plan so that he could defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

7-10

7 So Hushai said to Absalom: “The advice that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. 8 For,” said Hushai, “you know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are enraged in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father is a man of war, and will not camp with the people. 9 Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some other place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears it will say, ‘There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.’ 10 And even he who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men. Hushai stresses to Absalom that it was too risky to attack David immediately.

But Hushai is smart. You can’t just say don’t do that plan, you have to have a recommendation. Hushai now advises Absalom to raise a huge army and get David personally.

11-13

11 Therefore I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there shall not be left so much as one. 13 Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there.” Hushai’s proposed plan involves mustering all

the troops of Israel, which would take time, giving David more time before the inevitable attack came.

And Hushai's plan plays right into Absalom's vanity. Absalom could prove that he was a mighty soldier like his father David. So notice the difference in the 2 suggestions: in Ahithophel's plan Ahithophel led the battle; in Hushai's plan Absalom lead's the battle.

14 So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel." For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom. This was the greater reason why Absalom rejected the advice of Ahithophel. God was in control. The throne of Israel belonged to God, not any man.

Notice that Absalom had the smartest man in Israel on his side, but David's prayer was mightier than Ahithophel's wisdom.

G Campbell Morgan said "This is one of the great principles of life which every page of the Bible emphasizes and illustrates. Men cannot escape God. They go their own way, but that way never sets them free from the authority and the invincible power of God."

15-16 Hushai passes word along to David...

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. 16 Now therefore, send quickly and tell

David, saying, 'Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.' ” Hushai sends the message along that David should cross over the Jordan River, giving him room and time to regroup before Absalom's imminent attack.

17-22 the drama intensifies

17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city; so a female servant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. 18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom. But both of them went away quickly and came to a man's house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it. 19 Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the thing was not known. 20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

So the woman said to them, "They have gone over the water brook."

And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21 Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, "Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel advised against you." 22 So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan. The advice Hushai gave worked, David escaped from the immediate danger from Absalom. But

he's now further away from Jerusalem, the throne more distant for Israel's king than ever before.

23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb. Ahithophel didn't kill himself because his pride was hurt, that his counsel was rejected. Rather he knew that because his plan was rejected there was no way Absalom would take the throne, and he would be found guilty of treason. Ahithophel knew his death was coming

24 Then David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. They're in full pursuit of David.

25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. (Joab is still with David he didn't defect) This Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruah, Joab's mother. 26 So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead. Absalom is leading the charge, guiding the troops of Israel to go hunt king David. This was good for Absalom's vanity, but a disastrous recipe on the battlefield.

27-29

27 Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched grain and beans,

lentils and parched seeds, 29 honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who were with him to eat. For they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.” These helpers and supplies were specially sent by God to comfort and relieve David in his brutal circumstances.

We talked before-some folks are on the front lines in battle, some folks stay behind with the supplies. Each is used by God to bless his people.

Chapter 18 is the conclusion of Absalom’s rebellion.

1-2

1 And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. 2 Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, “I also will surely go out with you myself.” David didn’t want to repeat his previous mistake of not going to battle when he should have.

3 But the people answered, “You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city.” 4 Then the king said to them, “Whatever seems best to you I will do.” So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands. David wasn’t a stubborn king. He knew how to submit to the good advice of others.

Think about David's followers here. They were willing to sacrifice everything, even their own lives for the cause of their king.

And as disciples of Jesus, isn't this exactly how we're to conduct our lives? We're to be fully devoted to King Jesus! No sacrifice too big, no request of His is too difficult, because our King is also a gracious king.

5 Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom. David made it perfectly clear that Absalom was to be captured alive and not to be mistreated in any way.

David says this in front of everyone because he knows the tempting lure of revenge.

6 So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim. Those loyal to David fought against Israel, because Israel wasn't loyal to David. Israel was seduced by Absalom's charisma and power. The civil war has begun.

7 The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants (not soldiers) of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took place there that day. 8 For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured. Clearly David's men fought this battle with the Lord. It's like something out of a

horror movie, soldiers loyal to Absalom seemed to be “swallowed up” by the woods—we don’t know exactly what this means, although there’s much speculation.

9 Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. Absalom didn’t seem like a great general, riding a mule into battle. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which was under him went on. The text doesn’t say that Absalom was caught by his hair — we assume that based on the earlier text that described his hair. It may be that he was caught by his neck. Either way, Absalom is now stuck, hanging in the tree.

10-11

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

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.” Joab, David’s trusted general, insisted he would give both money and a promotion for anyone who killed Absalom. But this unnamed man dared not kill Absalom out of loyalty to David and his command.

12-15

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!’^[fn] 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.”

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. 15 And ten young men who bore Joab’s armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him. Joab heard king David’s instructions clearly, there was no mistaking them. Whatever the motivation, perhaps pure anger, or rage, whatever it was, Joab was convinced that it was in both David and Israel’s best interest to show Absalom justice, not mercy. David’s rebellious son is now dead.

16 So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people. 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. A pit in the wilderness is how you would bury an enemy or someone you despise. Joab wanted to make sure that Absalom’s body was not memorialized as an inspiration to his followers or future rebels.

And now, the end of verse 17 tells us that Absalom’s army is in full retreat. David’s forces completely dominate.

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. Now chapter 14 tells us that Absalom had three sons, but it’s assumed that they died before their father did.

19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the LORD has avenged him of his enemies."

20 And Joab said to him, "You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead." Ahimaaz wanted to run and tell David the news of Israel's victory and Absalom's death.

But Joab says no

Verse 21-27

21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran.

22 And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite."

So Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready?" he's a runner without a message!

23 "But whatever happens," he said, "let me run."

So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

24 Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there was a man, running alone. 25 Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, "If he is alone, there is news in his mouth." And he came rapidly and drew near.

26 Then the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "There is another man, running alone!"

And the king said, "He also brings news."

27 So the watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok."

And the king said, "He is a good man, and comes with good news." Since the messenger was someone David knew, he assumed it was good news. If you see thousands of people running toward you, you know it's not good news!

28-30

28 So Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!"

29 The king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" This was David's only concern.

Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant and me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what it was about." He doesn't have the full story! There's 2 kinds of people in the world-those who speak because they have something to say, and others who speak because they have to say something!

30-32

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

31 Just then the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "There is good news, my lord the king! For the LORD has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you."

32 And the king said to the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

So the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like that young

man!”Without saying it directly, the Cushite told David that Absalom was dead. And David’s response is not what anyone expected

33 Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: “O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!” You can feel the anguish in his voice.

Remember, Absalom revolted against his dad. He committed treason, and tyranny. His son was a wicked man that deserved to die! Absalom’s death meant that the throne would return to David; the uprising is now over. David can go home.

But power, luxury, and home are the last things on David’s mind. The news of Absalom’s death sends David into a violent trembling of his body. David is completely undone at hearing the news of Absalom’s death.

In the Psalms David had said his sin was ever before him. Remember, this all resulted from David’s sin with Bathsheba.

20k dead because of David’s sin with Bathsheba. 20k dead because of Absalom’s sinful rebellion. 20k dead because of Ahithophels bitterness. Immorality bears no good fruit. Rebellion bears no good fruit. Bitterness bears no good fruit. It defiles others and consumes us.

These chapters describe the tragic account of Absalom, a rebellious man who defied his fathers orders and took matters into

his own hands. Yet before we relegate these pages to the back corners of our mind, there's an uncomfortable truth we are confronted with regarding Absalom. If you look closely enough at these last several chapters, you'll notice that Absalom acts very similar to someone we all know.

Absalom acted towards David, like we Act to our heavenly father.

Hey we're all guilty of rebellion against God aren't we? Everytime we refuse God's way and choose our way, we are taking the throne of our lives!

You see in verse 33 David wanted to die in the place of his rebellious son. Of course, David couldn't. But what David could not do, God did by dying in the place of rebellious sinners.

In David's depths of despair, crying out 'my son, my son', we actually hear the cry of God, for His lost children. His desire to restore, His desire to forgive.

Remember, David is described by God Himself as a man after His own heart. And isn't this God's heart?

Luke 23:32 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. 34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Aren't you so grateful for God's mercy?? The question is, what will we do with His mercy? Do we just hold onto it for ourselves, or are we willing to show it to others?

2 Peter 1:5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.