

Ryan Milne

2 Samuel / Discipline; Reproach; Suffering; Restraint / 2 Samuel 16

David receives God's fatherly discipline through the curses of men, yet is sustained by the Lord's quiet and sovereign kindnesses.

Curses And Kindnesses

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Introduction

As we come to 2 Samuel 16, we are stepping into the continuing fallout of everything that began back in chapter twelve. When Nathan confronted David, the Lord forgave his sin, but he also declared that the sword would not depart from his house. From that moment the narrative has been tracing the slow and painful unfolding of that discipline. In chapter 13 the house of David fractured through the sin of Amnon and the bitterness of Absalom. In chapter 14 Absalom returned to Jerusalem, but not to reconciliation. His heart remained proud and restless. And in chapter 15 the rebellion finally erupted. Absalom stole the hearts of Israel, declared himself king, and David walked out of Jerusalem in tears, humbled under the hand of God.

Yet even in those dark chapters, the Lord was not absent. He preserved David's life. He sent Hushai to stand with him. And he brought David to a posture of humble submission beneath his providence.

Now in chapter 16, the pressure intensifies. David continues his flight from Jerusalem, and the curses of men begin to fall on him from every side. He meets deception, reproach, and corruption on the road out of Jerusalem. But woven through these painful moments are the kindnesses of God that uphold him and preserve the promise that will one day lead to Christ.

This chapter shows us both the weight of God's discipline and the strength of God's providence. It shows us a humbled king walking through the consequences of sin, and a faithful God who refuses to let his servant fall.

Sermon Text: 2 Samuel 16

Call: *"The grass withers and the flower fades,"*

Response: *"But the word of the Lord endures forever."*

1. The Curse of Deception and the Kindness of Provision (v1-4)

The Curse of Deception - Ziba exploits the chaos of David's flight to slander Mephibosheth and steal his inheritance. His lie clouds the king's discernment.

The Kindness of Provision - God provides food for his weary servant and restrains David from greater folly. Even the schemes of deceivers serve his purpose.

1.1 A Gift with an Agenda(v1-2)

As David comes over the ridge of the Mount of Olives, **verse 1** tells us that Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth meets him on the road. We last saw Ziba in chapter 9 when David showed covenant kindness to Jonathan's son. Now, in the moment of David's weakness, Ziba appears again, and he does not come empty handed. The verse lists his supplies in detail. Two saddled donkeys. Two hundred loaves of bread. A hundred clusters of raisins. Summer fruits. A skin of wine. For a weary king fleeing into the wilderness, it looks like quite the unexpected mercy.

But **verse 2** begins to reveal that this gift is not as simple as it appears. When David asks, Why have you brought these, Ziba answers with a very practical sounding explanation. The donkeys are for the household to ride. The bread and fruit are for the young men to eat. The wine is for those who grow faint in the wilderness. Everything he says sounds loyal. Everything looks helpful. But the text is already showing us that Ziba is not simply meeting needs. He is positioning himself.

Ziba knows exactly what he is doing. David's stock is at its lowest point. His throne looks lost. His reputation is wounded. His future is uncertain. And Ziba sees an opportunity. He is trying to buy favor when it is cheap so that he can profit if the king rises again. His gift is not love, it's leverage. It's an investment in David's desperation that he hopes will yield a return when David is restored.

This is often how deception works. It does not always approach with open hostility. Sometimes it arrives with bread and fruit. Sometimes it arrives with a smile. Sometimes it arrives in the form of a gift that seems to meet the need of the moment. Ziba's generosity is not generosity at all. It's opportunity. He sees David vulnerable, and he sees a chance to advance his own cause.

Yet even here, in the middle of Ziba's hidden agenda, the Lord is quietly at work. The provisions are real. The bread will strengthen David's people. The fruit will refresh them. The wine will revive the faint. God is feeding His servant through the hands of a deceiver. The kindness is false, but the provision is not. And this is the mystery of providence in these opening verses. The Lord can sustain His weary king even through the schemes of the manipulative.

Awakening Church, when we see God acting this way, because we know our Bibles we are not surprised. This is not the first time God has fed His people through the hands of the unrighteous. Joseph's brothers sold him, but God used their treachery to preserve a nation. Pharaoh's daughter rescued Moses, and the very household of the murderer protected the one who would one day overthrow Egypt. Balaam tried to curse Israel, and God turned his curse into blessing. And at the cross, the schemes of wicked men became the salvation of the world. God can sustain his servant even through the hands of a deceiver.

Ziba's gift carries an agenda. But God's kindness carries a purpose. Before David ever hears the slander that follows, the Lord is already providing for him on the road of discipline.

But the bread was only the bait for the trap, and in verses 3-4 Ziba finally springs it. He feeds the King's belly, then moves on to poison his mind.

1.2 A Calculated Slander (v3-4)

When we come to **verse 3**, Ziba finally reveals why he has come. David asks him, Where is your master's son, and Ziba answers with a slander that cuts David deeply. He claims that Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem because he believes the kingdom will now be restored to him. It is an accusation designed to wound David and elevate Ziba. It is a lie crafted to strike at David's heart in a moment of weakness.

And here is where the contrast becomes painfully clear. In the previous chapter, every true servant of David wanted to go with him. Ittai the Gittite said, Where the king is, there your servant will be. He had only been with the king a single day, but that one day of loyalty from Ittai outweighed years of convenience from Ziba. True loyalty is not measured by history alone, but by the heart. How much history did the thief on the cross have before he met his Lord in paradise? Then we have Zadok and Abiathar, who came themselves and carried the ark until David sent them back. And what about the people who followed him up the Mount

of Olives weeping. These were men who loved their king in his lowest moment. They clung to him when he had nothing to offer them but danger.

But Ziba never once offered to go with his king. He brought donkeys, but he didn't saddle a donkey to follow David into the wilderness for himself. He did not pledge loyalty. He did not weep on the Mount of Olives. He stayed behind. He remained in the comfort of Jerusalem. That's not the only thing Ziba didn't bring. He didn't bring Mephibosheth with him either. Now he uses the very absence he orchestrated as evidence against his master. The man who refused to follow David accuses the man who would have followed him if he could. Ziba's slander is not only false. It is cruel.

And remember where David is emotionally. His own flesh and blood Absalom has just betrayed him. The wound is fresh. The pain is real. David is completely vulnerable to the idea that another adopted son would betray him too. Ziba knows this. He is counting on it. His entire scheme depends on catching David at a low point.

This is the nature of slander. It does not need evidence. It only needs opportunity. It preys on exhaustion. It thrives in moments of confusion. It takes advantage of the vulnerable. And David is vulnerable. He is tired. He is grieving. He is under the weight of God's discipline.

In **verse 4**, David responds quickly. He accepts Ziba's report and grants him Mephibosheth's land. But the law of God requires multiple witnesses for a charge like this. The book of Proverbs warns us that the first to plead his case seems right until his neighbor comes and examines him. David does not pause. He does not inquire. He does not seek another witness. His judgment is clouded by pain.

Awakening Church we must see the warning here. When we are exhausted we are vulnerable. When we are hurting from betrayal we are prone to believe the worst about others. We must be careful not to make permanent decisions based on temporary pain. We need to hold fast to truth and justice even when we are weary.

So for us, from our perspective, we can see that David failed here. He was a human king and his judgment was clouded. This turns our hearts to look for a better King. We need a King who cannot be deceived by flattery. We need a King who judges with perfect righteousness. We need a King who sees through every Ziba and vindicates every Mephibosheth. We need a King who cannot be manipulated.

And praise God, we have one.

If we look back at our text, we are brought again to the road of David's exile. He leaves the hidden deception of a slanderer behind only to face the open hostility of a curser ahead.

2. The Curse of Reproach and the Kindness of Restraint (v5-14)

The Curse of Reproach - Shimei hurls stones and accusations at the humiliated king. He misinterprets providence and deepens David's shame.

The Kindness of Restraint - God grants David grace to refuse vengeance, to submit to his hand, and to hope in his mercy. God also refreshes David in his weariness.

2.1 Stones and Slurs Against the King (v5-8)

In **verse 5**, David arrives at Bahurim. This is in Benjaminite territory. It is the heart of Saul's old support base. Saul has been dead for twenty years, yet the bitterness in this region has not faded. Bitterness does not fade on its own. It festers. It grows. And out of that long nursed resentment comes Shimei. He doesn't come with bread and wine like Ziba. He comes with rage. The text says he curses continually. He is a fountain of hatred. He has completely lost control of himself, and from his heart he is pouring out all his stored up resentment.

In **verse 6**, the scene becomes as outwardly chaotic as Shimei is internally deranged. Shimei is not shouting from a safe distance. He is running along the hillside, throwing stones at David and at all the mighty men who surround him. This is either extreme bravery or extreme madness because David is surrounded by his elite warriors. But Shimei is so blinded by bitterness that he does not care about his own safety. Bitterness rejoices when the person it hates is hurting. David is weeping as he flees Jerusalem, and Shimei celebrates it.

In **verses 7 and 8**, we hear the content of his curse. Shimei screams, Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man. The Hebrew word for worthless is *beliyyaal*. It means a man of absolutely no value. Shimei is trying to strip David of all royal and moral dignity. And then he presumes to speak for God. He claims the Lord is avenging the blood of the house of Saul and that God has handed the kingdom to Absalom as punishment for David destroying Saul's family.

But this is certainly a lie. David did not destroy the house of Saul. He refused to lay a hand on

Saul when he had the chance. He executed the men who murdered Saul's son. He brought Saul's grandson to his own table. Shimei is twisting history to fit his own bitterness. He is interpreting David's suffering through resentment, not through truth. This is what bitterness does. It takes a personal grudge and baptizes it. It slaps the name of God on its own anger. It convinces a person that their resentment is righteous.

This is the curse of verses 5-8, the curse of reproach. It is the weaponizing of a man's past and his present pain to crush his spirit. David is guilty of sin, but not this sin. David is under the heavy discipline of God for the blood of Uriah. Shimei throws a stone that misses the truth but it does hit the wounded conscience of the king. David knows he deserves God's discipline, and Shimei is standing on the hill making sure he feels the full weight of his shame.

In this shamming of David here, there is a profound pastoral lesson for us here in this text which I don't want to miss. God often uses the harsh words of our enemies to reveal the blind spots in our own hearts. Our friends love us. They often hesitate to tell us the hard truth because they do not want to hurt us. But an enemy has no such restraint. An enemy will gladly point out your failures and expose your sin. David could hear the voice of God in the mouth of his enemy. We need to learn to do the same. When someone attacks you, don't just blindly defend yourself. Ask if God is using their anger to show you a truth your friends are too kind to mention. Men will attack you with lies. They will attack you with the truth. They will attack you with half truths. But whatever the enemy intends for evil, God means for your sanctification.

And this sanctifying moment in David's life points us forward to Christ yet again. David was a king who had stones and slurs thrown at him while he was guilty of sin yes, but still innocent of the charges being hurled. But Jesus is the greater King who had insults thrown at him while he was innocent of all charges. He was mocked as a blasphemer while he was the very Word of God. The crowds hurled their verbal stones at him on the road to Golgotha. Just like Shimei, they misinterpreted Jesus' suffering. They thought he was smitten by God for his own crimes, for his own sins. But Jesus, the greater David, was being smitten for ours.

Bitterness never stays private. It spills out. And Shimei's private resentment has now spilled out to become public violence. But while Shimei is losing control, David is about to show remarkable restraint, and that brings us into the kindness of verses 9-14.

2.2 Submission to the Sovereign Hand (v9-14)

In **verse 9**, Abishai steps forward. He is a fierce warrior and a man of action. He hears this dead dog cursing the king and offers a simple solution. He asks David for permission to take off his head. This is the natural human response to public humiliation. When someone throws stones at us we want to throw boulders back. Abishai offers David a quick way out of the trial.

But in **verse 10**, David stops him. He asks, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah. Joab and Abishai were loyal but quick to shed blood. David uses this phrase whenever these men try to solve a spiritual problem with a sword. It is his way of saying your instincts are fleshly but mine must be spiritual. You want vengeance but I must submit to the hand of God.

We all know what this temptation feels like. Someone attacks your character or humiliates you. Instantly your flesh loads the weapon. In David's day that weapon was a sword. In our day it is our words. We fight with emails and texts and social media posts. You know exactly what to say to destroy them. You have the power to take off their head with your words. But then by the grace of God the Holy Spirit restrains you. He steadies your heart. Instead of hitting send you delete the message. It might feel like a defeat to your pride. But it is actually the mercy of God protecting you from sinning your way out of a trial.

How does David find the strength to show this restraint? He explains in the rest of verse 10 and **verse 11**. He says let him curse for the Lord has told him to. David is not excusing Shimei. He is acknowledging that God is sovereign over the trials of our lives. His own flesh and blood Absalom is trying to kill him. Why should he be surprised that a Benjaminite is cursing him. The Lord softens the heart of the king to accept this public humiliation as discipline.

We should also notice where David keeps his eyes. He is walking through a massive crisis. His kingdom is falling apart and Shimei is kicking up dust. But David refuses to be distracted by this immediate offense. He keeps his mind on the actual threat and his eyes on the sovereign discipline of God. We need this same focus today. Life will constantly throw dust in your face. The devil wants you consumed by every new rock thrown your way. Paul commands us in Colossians chapter 3 to set our minds on things that are above. Hebrews chapter 12 tells us to run our race by looking to Jesus. Do not let the loud noises of this world pull your eyes away. Look past the stones. Keep your eyes fixed on him and let him guide you through the dust.

In **verse 12**, we see the fruit of that restraint. David says it may be that the Lord will look on my affliction. The traditional Hebrew text actually reads look on my iniquity. This fits the

theology of the whole narrative. David knows he is under discipline for his sin with Bathsheba. He knows he deserves humiliation. He says to the Lord you see my guilt but you may yet show mercy. David is not demanding justice. He is throwing himself on the character of God.

In **verse 13**, the one man cursing parade continues. Shimei keeps throwing stones and dust. David endures it all without another word. He submits completely to the sovereign hand of God.

Finally in **verse 14** they arrive weary at the Jordan. God gave David the grace to endure the curses on the road. Now God provides the rest he needs at the river. Do not miss the timing of this mercy. This rest is not only faraway hope waiting at the end of the trial. God provides comfort right in the middle of it. Our God does not abandon his people to the wilderness. He is a God of comfort in our pain and through our suffering. Paul reminds us of this beautiful truth in 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. Paul calls him the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He writes that he comforts us in all our affliction. We will share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ. But through Christ we will also share abundantly in his comfort. God gives you the strength to bear the stones. And he gives you the grace to rest by the river.

Awakening Church, before we move on we need to see this last thing. This scene is a beautiful preview of the obedience of Christ. A thousand years later the true Son of David stood in a garden. The soldiers came to arrest Jesus. Peter pulled out his sword just like Abishai and cut off an ear. But Jesus told him to put the sword away. Then Jesus healed the very man Peter wounded. Jesus said shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me. That was his submission to the sovereign hand of God. When he was reviled he did not revile in return.

What David shows in shadow Jesus fulfills in substance. The innocent one endures cursing. The righteous one refuses retaliation. David submitted because he was a guilty sinner under discipline. Jesus submitted because he was a righteous Savior bearing our sin.

But while David is submitting to the Lord by the Jordan River, the text shifts our eyes back to Jerusalem. The rebellion is climbing onto the throne.

3. The Curse of Corruption and the Kindness of Preservation (v15-23)

The Curse of Corruption - Ahithophel urges Absalom into public immorality. The kingdom descends into moral darkness and covenantal disorder.

The Kindness of Preservation - God places Hushai in Absalom's court to frustrate wicked counsel and preserve the line of the Messiah. God is already overturning rebellion.

3.1 A Divided Kingdom (v15-17)

Verse 15 brings Absalom into the capital with all the men of Israel, and Ahithophel at his side. Here is where we see the visible curse of a divided kingdom. The city of peace has become the city of rebellion. The unity of God's people is shattered. Nathan's warning is being fulfilled. Evil has risen up against David out of his own house.

And church, do not miss the weight of Ahithophel standing there. This is devastating news! Ahithophel was not just another advisor. Later in this chapter (verse 23) the narrator tells us that the counsel of Ahithophel was regarded as if a man had consulted the word of God. His wisdom carried almost prophetic authority. When Ahithophel spoke, kings listened. When he advised, nations moved. He was the sharpest mind in Israel, the strategist behind David's throne, the man whose insight shaped the kingdom. So when Ahithophel stands beside Absalom, this is not a small betrayal. This is the collapse of the kingdom's center of gravity. The greatest counselor in Israel has thrown his weight behind the rebellion. The intellectual, political, and spiritual power of the nation has shifted to the wrong side. The kingdom is descending into moral darkness and covenantal disorder.

But in **verse 16**, the kindness of God's preservation begins to move. Hushai the Archite arrives. He is David's friend, David's loyalist, David's undercover agent. David sent him back into the city to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. Hushai greets Absalom with the words, "Long live the king," and Absalom assumes the loyalty is his. But God is placing his man in the heart of the rebellion. Even when the enemy seems to have total control, the Lord is already positioning the instruments of his downfall.

Then in **verse 17**, Absalom hesitates. He knows Hushai was one of David's most trusted men, and he asks why Hushai did not go with his friend. Suspicion fills the palace. The kingdom is so fractured that no one can be trusted. Absalom has the city, but he doesn't have security. He has the throne, but he doesn't have the blessing.

This is the nature of corruption. It creates a world of fear and distrust. A divided kingdom is a kingdom under the curse of disorder, that's what Absalom has won himself.

Yet even in this darkness, God is preserving the line of David. A light is still burning in Jerusalem, because the purposes of God cannot be overthrown.

3.2 A Hidden Loyalty (v18-20)

In **verses 18-20**, where Hushai gives his answer. This is the moment where the tension in the palace becomes almost unbearable. Absalom has just asked him why he did not go with his friend. It is a direct challenge. It is a test of loyalty. The kingdom is so fractured that every relationship is under suspicion.

Hushai responds with remarkable skill. He tells Absalom that he will serve the one whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen. Absalom hears that as loyalty to himself. But Hushai means David. His words are intentionally crafted. They are true in one sense and misunderstood in another. They are designed to protect the true king and to undermine the rebellion from within.

This raises an important question for us. Is Hushai lying? Is he using falsehood to protect David? Scripture helps us.

The narrator never condemns Hushai. Instead, the text presents him as God's instrument to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

David himself sent Hushai back into the city for this very purpose in 2 Samuel 15:34, and we are told that God ordained his presence to overturn the rebellion in 2 Samuel 17:14.

Hushai's situation is not personal ethics. It is war. He is acting as a loyal agent of the true king in a moment of national crisis.

And to further drive home this point I want to draw attention to the nature of how he uses words

They are true. David is the one the Lord has chosen.

They are ambiguous. Absalom misunderstands them.

They are strategic. They are meant to defeat wicked counsel.

They are sanctioned by David. The king sent him. (2 Samuel 15:34)

They are used by God. Providence is working through him. (2 Samuel 17:14)

This is not malicious deceit. This is righteous cunning in the service of God's covenant. Scripture gives us no hint of moral failure here. Instead, it shows us the quiet wisdom of God working through the careful speech of his servant to preserve the line of the Messiah.

And this is exactly the kind of wisdom Jesus calls His people to. In Matthew 10:16 Jesus says, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

That is Hushai. Surrounded by wolves as the only sheep in the palace. His heart is innocent, but his mind is sharp. He is living out the very balance Jesus commands, the kind of holy shrewdness that stands firm in a corrupt world without becoming corrupt itself.

So in these verses we see a hidden loyalty shining in the shadows of rebellion. Absalom thinks he has gained a counselor. But God has placed a spy in his court. The rebellion looks strong, but the Lord is already unraveling it from the inside.

3.3 Wicked Counsel and Public Shame (v21-23)

When we reach verses 21-23, the rebellion finally shows its true nature. In case anyone was still wondering who the villains are, this moment removes all doubt. When Absalom turns to Ahithophel for guidance, what he receives is not simply political strategy. It is moral corruption and spiritual darkness. It is the curse of sin taking center stage in the palace of Jerusalem.

In **verse 21**, Ahithophel gives us his masterstroke. He tells Absalom to go in to the concubines David left behind. In the ancient Near East this was the ultimate claim to the throne. To take the king's harem was to basically declare yourself the new king. But Ahithophel is doing more than making a political move. He is forcing a point of no return for his entire movement. The Hebrew word used here carries the idea of becoming a stench. Ahithophel wants Absalom to become repulsive to David. He wants him to become a permanent offense. If Absalom commits this act, reconciliation becomes impossible. The rebel army will have no choice but to fight to the death. This is brilliant strategy wrapped up

in profound evil. It's the curse of corruption at work.

In **verse 22**, the tent is pitched on the roof. This is not hidden and it's not private. This is done in the sight of all Israel. And the location is significant. It is the very same roof where David once looked down and lusted after Bathsheba. The place where David fell in secret now becomes the place where Absalom sins in public. The roof which was the stage for sin now becomes a stage for judgment.

And this is exactly what God said would happen. In chapter 12 Nathan told David that the Lord would take his wives and give them to his neighbor. Nathan said David sinned in secret, but God would bring judgment before all Israel and before the sun. The word of the Lord never falls to the ground. God is using the wicked counsel of Ahithophel to fulfill his own holy judgment. Absalom is acting freely according to his own corrupt nature, but God is sovereignly executing discipline on David. Both are true at the same time.

In **verse 23**, the narrator explains why this moral atrocity was accepted. The counsel of Ahithophel was treated as if it were the very word of the Lord. His intellect carried enormous weight. Both David and Absalom revered his insight. But intellect without holiness becomes a weapon. David knew this counselor was a smart man, which is why he prayed that his counsel would be turned to foolishness. Now we see his wisdom divorced from righteousness leading to abomination. Ahithophel's brilliance has become a tool of destruction.

We get a New Testament theological warning in the life of Ahithophel. Ahithophel is the Old Testament picture of Judas Iscariot. Jesus actually confirmed this truth in John chapter 13. Jesus quoted Psalm 41 to describe the betrayal of Judas. David originally wrote that exact psalm to describe the betrayal of Ahithophel. The parallels strike us right in the face. Both men were trusted followers. Both men ate bread with the king. Both men betrayed their master for worldly gain. And eventually both men hung themselves in deep despair. Ahithophel had massive intellect but he did not have a regenerate heart. God preserved the faith of David through severe discipline because David belonged to him. But God left Ahithophel to his own reprobate mind. Worldly wisdom without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit only leads to death.

This is the curse of corruption. Sin never stays private. It grows. It spreads. It destroys families. It fractures kingdoms. It turns the city of God into a place of public shame. Absalom seizes a kingdom through violence and immorality. He takes what is not his. He makes himself a stench.

But this is where another contrast with Christ shines through.

Absalom is a false king who brings shame to the roof. Jesus Christ is the true King who brings glory to the cross.

Absalom defiles and dirties the king's house. Jesus cleanses his bride with his own blood.

Absalom takes what is not his. Jesus gives what we could never earn.

Absalom's kingdom is built on corruption. Christ's kingdom is built on righteousness.

The false king brings disgrace. The true King brings redemption.

4. Application And Call To Christ

Awakening Church, this morning we have walked down a dark road. We have seen a king surrounded by the curses of men. We saw the deception of Ziba. We saw the reproach of Shimei. We saw the corruption of Absalom. And yet in every moment we saw the sovereign kindness of God sustaining his servant.

Everyone of us will walk down dark roads in this life. We live in a world broken by the fall. We will face false friends who use you for leverage. We will face bitter critics who throw stones at your character. We will see corruption and betrayal. And sometimes, like David, we will face the heavy fatherly discipline of God for our own sin.

So what does this chapter teach us?

First, it teaches us that sin has consequences.

David is forgiven, but he is still walking through the discipline of the Lord. God's grace does not erase the earthly effects of our sin. It redeems us through them. Some of you are living with the consequences of past choices. Some of you are walking through the fallout of your own failures. This chapter reminds us that God does not abandon his children in discipline. He walks with them, he sustains them, and he restores them.

Second, it teaches us that God's providence is never absent.

Ziba lies, but God feeds David. Shimei curses, but God restrains David. Ahithophel plots, but God preserves David.

The curses are real, but the kindnesses are greater. The world may wound you, but the Lord will not forsake you. The schemes of the wicked may surround you, but the providence of God surrounds them. Nothing touches the child of God apart from the hand of God.

Third, it teaches us that we need a better King.

David is humbled. David is deceived. David is slandered. David is disciplined. David is preserved, but what David is not is perfect. His failures in this chapter are reminders that even the best of men are men at best. We need a King who can't be manipulated. We need a King who can't be deceived. We need a King who will never fail His people.

And that King is Jesus Christ.

Look at the true King. Jesus faced every curse we saw in this chapter.

He was betrayed by a friend who sold him for leverage.

He was mocked and spit upon by a bitter crowd.

He was condemned by the wicked counsel of corrupt men.

He endured deception, reproach, and corruption. But there is a massive difference between David and Jesus.

David suffered for his own sin. Jesus suffered for ours.

On the cross Jesus took the ultimate curse. Galatians 3:13 tells us that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. At Golgotha there was no kindness of restraint. God did not hold back the sword of justice. God did not stop the wrath. He poured it out completely on his own sinless Son.

Jesus took the curse of our deception.

He took the curse of our reproach.

He took the curse of our corruption.

He drank the full cup of judgment so that we would never have to taste it. He became the curse so that we could receive the everlasting kindness of God. He took our public shame so we could share his eternal glory.

Awakening Church, do not side with the rebellion. Do not trust the worldly wisdom of Ahithophel. Do not rely on the flattering lies of Ziba. The wisdom of this world can't save you. Sin will always promise a kingdom that it can never give.

And don't comfort yourself with the thought that you would have stood faithfully beside the king. This chapter is not written about us as the faithful David. And apart from the grace of God, we are not among the faithful followers of the King. But, by nature, we are in the story, though. It's just not on the side of righteousness. We are among the rebels. We are the ones who sided with Absalom against the Lord's anointed king. We are the ones who, by nature, reject God's rightful rule over us.

But here is the glory of the gospel. Jesus Christ is the true and greater King who receives rebels.

He was rejected by men. He was mocked and cursed. He walked the road of sorrow outside the city. Yet he willingly went to the cross to save enemies and to reconcile rebels to God.

So if you are carrying the heavy weight of your own guilt today, do not run from him. Do not hide your sin. Bring it to Christ. Cast yourself upon his mercy. Do not trust in your own righteousness but in his finished work alone.

Bow your knee to the true King today. Come to Christ and live.

5. Questions for Reflection and Discipleship

Please be encouraged to use these questions for reflection throughout the week and Awakening discipleship group discussions.

1. Ziba used a gift to manipulate David when he was tired and vulnerable. Where are you most likely to be influenced by people or situations when you are exhausted or discouraged? How can you slow down and seek God's wisdom instead of reacting out of weakness
2. Shimei carried bitterness for twenty years before it finally erupted. Where do you see small seeds of bitterness in your own heart? What would it look like to confess that bitterness to God and pursue reconciliation before it grows into something destructive?
3. David accepted Shimei's cursing because he trusted that God was using even painful moments for his good. When someone wrongs you, what is your first instinct? How would your response change if you acted as you believed, that God was sovereign over every insult and every injustice?
4. Ahithophel offered advice that was clever but wicked. Where do you feel the pull of worldly wisdom in your own life? What voices or influences tempt you to choose what is practical instead of what is holy? How can you train your heart to recognize and reject counsel that does not honor God?
5. David suffered because of his own sin, but Jesus suffered for ours. When you face the consequences of your failures, are you tempted to believe untrue things about God or his character? How does remembering the cross help you face those consequences with hope instead of despair?
6. David showed restraint when he could have retaliated. Where do you struggle most with self control in your relationships? What would it look like for you to trust God enough to stay silent or gentle when your flesh wants to strike back?
7. God preserved David through quiet and hidden kindnesses. Where has God been quietly sustaining you in ways you have not fully noticed? How can you grow in gratitude, and fill your life with thankfulness for the small mercies that surround you every day?
8. Hushai served the true king with wisdom in a corrupt environment. Where has God placed you in a setting that feels spiritually dark or confusing? What would faithful loyalty to Christ look like in that specific place this week?

9. David was cut off from the ark and the public worship of God during his flight from Jerusalem. When we face the fatherly discipline of God we often want to isolate ourselves and hide from the church. Why is it spiritually dangerous to endure hardship alone? How do the ordinary means of grace like the preached word and the Lord's table sustain your faith when you are suffering?

Questions for small children during family devotion:

Please be encouraged to use these questions in family devotion throughout the week, especially for young minds learning about Christ.

1. Why did a man named Ziba bring food to King David?

Parent guided answer: Ziba brought food to pretend he was a good friend. But he also told a mean lie to steal land. This teaches us that we should do nice things with a pure heart because God sees the truth.

2. What did a bitter man named Shimei do when King David walked by?

Parent guided answer: He threw rocks and dust and yelled very mean words at the king. Shimei was full of anger. This shows us how ugly our hearts can become when we hold onto anger instead of forgiving others.

3. Did King David let his strong soldiers attack Shimei for throwing rocks?

Parent guided answer: No. David told his soldiers to put their swords away. He chose to accept his discipline and trust God. This teaches us to trust God when people are mean to us instead of trying to get revenge.

4. Who gave Absalom very bad advice and why was it dangerous?

Parent guided answer: A very smart counselor named Ahithophel gave Absalom wicked advice. This reminds us that being smart is not as important as loving God. We should always obey the Bible instead of listening to bad advice.

5. How is King Jesus a much better king than King David?

Parent guided answer: David was a good king but he still sinned and deserved his punishment. Jesus is the perfect King who never sinned. Jesus chose to take the punishment for our sins on the cross so we could be forgiven.