

Any • 2 Samuel 17

Heb 12:14-15

1. Stay on the lookout for “**any** root of bitterness.”
 - a. It’s a **root**; underground, unseen.
 - b. But like a root it **feeds our soul, informs our mind, fuels our motives**.
 - c. It’s **bitter**; so it poisons us & all we touch.
2. We see a shocking example of that today.

2 Sam 15 Set the Scene

1. David’s adultery with Bathsheba & the murder of her husband set in motion a series of troubling events in David’s family.
2. Like a line of dominoes, they fall one after another, bringing pain & sorrow to thousands.
Domino **1** = David’s firstborn son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar.
2 = Her brother Absalom killed Amnon.
3 = After a few yrs in exile, Absalom returns to hatch a conspiracy against his father, King David.
4 = Absalom rebels and steals David’s throne.
3. As David flees Jerusalem, word reaches him a one-time close friend and confidant had gone over to Absalom.

³⁰ So David went up by the Ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who *were* with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. 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!”

4. David was worried because Ahithophel was brilliant. 2 Sam 16:23 says -

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.

5. Besides concern over the *advantage* Ahithophel provided the rebellion was the betrayal David felt.
6. He wrote of it in Psa 55

¹² *It is* not an enemy *who* reproaches me; Then I could bear *it*. Nor *is it* one *who* hates me who has exalted *himself* against me; Then I could hide from him. ¹³ But *it was* you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. ¹⁴ We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked to the house of God in the throng.

7. As David fled Jerusalem, he worried that with guys like Ahithophel backing Absalom, there was little chance of coming out alive.

8. So he asked God to thwart Ahithophel’s influence. The answer to that prayer was immediate

³² Now it happened when David had come to the top *of the mountain*, where he worshiped God—there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. ³³ David said to him, “If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. ³⁴ But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; *as I was* your father’s servant previously, so I *will* now also *be* your servant,’ then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me.

1. Hushai’s mission was to counter Ahithophel’s counsel & to send reports to David on the sly.
2. Hushai goes back & is quizzed by Absalom on why he didn’t follow David.
3. Hushai says he doesn’t serve **David**, he served the **throne**. Absalom now occupied it.

Ahithophel’s Counsel

1. Once Absalom entered Jerusalem, he asked Ahithophel what to do first.
 - a. David & Absalom, father & son, had a history of making up after a break.
 - b. Supporters of the coup needed to know there was no going back.
 - 1) Absalom wasn’t going to leave them in the lurch by making up with Pops.
 - 2) Ahithophel suggested the way to do that was by taking over David’s harem.
 - a) A tent was set up in a public place where all could see.
 - b) David’s concubines were ushered in; Absalom followed.
 - c) When some time later he emerged, everyone knew there’d be no reconciliation.
 - c. The rebellion could now only end one way With the death of either David or Absalom.

2. Ahithophel was determined it was going to be David.

Ch17

¹ Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Now let me choose 12K 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. 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.

1. Take note of Ahithophel’s desire to lead the final assault on David **personally**.
 - a. He wasn’t interested in killing David’s entire retinue though they’d be an on-going threat to the rebels.
 - b. Ahithophel wanted to kill **just one guy David!**
 - c. What’s unusual about that is— Ahithophel **wasn’t a warrior**.
 - d. He was an **advisor, a counselor; not a soldier**.
 - e. He made a great member of the **think** tank, not a **battle** tank.
 - f. He’s an **idea** guy. A **book** belongs in his hand, not a **sword**.
 - g. Yet he wanted to **lead** the attack on David and slay the man **himself**.
 - h. **Why?** What’s going on with Ahithophel that he’s so far out of character?
 - i. Well: That’s the whole point of our study today.

⁵ Then Absalom said, “Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too.” 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.” ⁷ So Hushai said to Absalom: “The advice that Ahithophel has given *is* not good at this time.

1. Absalom decided to check with his other advisor.
2. When Hushai *heard* Ahithophel’s counsel he knew it was the right course to take. If Absalom did, David’s done for.
3. So he suggested the usually brilliant Ahithophel had failed to consider 1 important thing.
4. David & his men would be **furios** at the rebellion; like a bear robbed of her cubs.
5. They may be few, but they **were** mighty men of war.
6. Hushai then appealed to Absalom’s vanity by suggesting they wait till the **entire army** could be rallied, then **Absalom himself** could lead the attack.
7. That appealed to ever-vain Absalom, so he rejected Ahithophel’s counsel & went with Hushai’s plan.

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.

1. Hushai then sent a message telling David to hide in the hills on the other side of the Jordan.
- 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.
1. Wait-What?!? Why would such a seemingly minor thing drive Ahithophel to such drastic action?
 2. Ahithophel seems like the kid who because he doesn’t get to play shortstop, takes the ball and goes home.
 3. But as we dig into his story we realize that’s **not** the reason for his suicide.
 4. It’s much deeper & far more troubling.
 5. Ahithophel was a **bitter** man who threw in his lot with Absalom **for one reason: Revenge**; to get back at David.
 6. Though they’d **been** friends, Ahithophel now **hated** David & **ached** to destroy him.
That’s why he was so eager to press the final attack personally.
 7. But when Absalom preferred the **folly** of Hushai’s plan to the **wisdom** of his,
Ahithophel realized he’d thrown in his lot with a fool & the rebellion was doomed.
 8. So he went home, put his affairs in order, and killed himself.
 9. **What happened** to drive this bitter wedge between these one-time friends?

1. Look at 15:12 –

¹² Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from his city—from Giloh—while he

offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.

- a. When Absalom recruited Ahithophel for the coup, he wasn't living at court, offering David his counsel; he was home, miles away.
- b. How did Absalom **know** Ahithophel was ready to join a rebellion?
2. The answer is found in one of those dreaded genealogies most skip over.
 - a. Ch23 is a list of David's mighty men.
 - b. v34 tells us of **Eliam**, son of **Ahithophel**. Eliam was **Bathsheba's** dad. She was Ahithophel's granddaughter.
 - c. v39 says **Uriah**, Bathsheba's husband was also one of David's mighty men.
 - d. Eliam & Uriah served together.
 - e. Eliam had such admiration for Uriah he knew he'd make a great husband for his daughter & the arrangements were made.
3. But one day Ahithophel learned of David's tryst with his granddaughter & the conspiracy to kill her husband.
 - a. David became his mortal enemy. David hadn't just betrayed Uriah, he betrayed Ahithophel as well.
 - b. So he packed up his stuff & went home.
4. There he sat for **10 yrs!** Nursing his hurt, hatred, & bitterness; longing for a way to get back at David.
5. The summons from Absalom came & Ahithophel saw his chance.
6. It all went smoothly till Absalom preferred Hushai's plan to Ahithophel's.
 - a. In that moment, Ahithophel knew the rebellion was doomed & getting even with David was a lost cause.
 - b. It was now clear **Absalom** would be the loser; Ahithophel would go down with him.
 - c. So he went home, & ended it himself.
1. Ahithophel was **bitter** over David's betrayal & sin against his family.
 - a. He thought the king had gotten away with it & was living without consequences.
 - b. Because he'd gone home, he had no idea how God had **already** dealt with David.
 - c. How Nathan had confronted him & David had broken so completely before God.
 - d. Because their friendship ended, Ahithophel never saw David's spiritual agony & remorse.
 - e. He didn't know of David's forgiveness by God.
 - f. He knew nothing about the week David fasted & spent on his face before God pleading for the life of his child while the palace staff feared he'd take his own life, he was so grief stricken.
2. If Ahithophel had witnessed any of that torment it may have cooled the fires of his hate.
3. But Ahithophel stayed in Giloh, oblivious to the change happening in David.
4. The flames of anger slowly burned down to become smoldering embers of bitterness that twisted the once great sage into a **little man bent on one thing Making David Pay!**
5. When he saw those plans slipping away, there was nothing left to live for, and killed himself.

CONCLUSION - Not the End

1. But: That **wasn't** the end.
2. Ahithophel said to Absalom, "I will kill **just** David."
3. Know this Ahithophel! The rebellion you start, will fail at what you aimed at accomplish, but not before **thousands** will pay for your bitterness & hate.
4. In 18:7, we read 20K fall in the battle between David & Absalom **20K!**
5. How many more fathers, mothers,
brothers, sisters,
wives, sons & daughters
will each one of those 20K leave to become soil the seeds of Ahithophel's bitterness drop in to?

How many **more** Ahithophels will his bitterness produce?

The Root of Bitterness

Heb 12:15 - Looking carefully . . . lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

1. Ahithophel's root of bitterness remained unseen **for a decade**.
2. But it kept growing as he daily watered it with dreams of revenge.

3. 1 day it sprouted & became a tree dropping rotten fruit poisoning thousands.
4. Long before Ahithophel committed suicide, his *spirit* shriveled & died **because he refused to forgive**.
5. And it was all so pointless because David had already been dealt with by God.

Ephesians 4

²⁶ “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil.

1. As we go thru life, we’re going to be hurt, offended & will get angry as a result.
2. We must never let that anger drive us to sin, either the sin of lashing out right away –
3. Or the more subtle sin of stuffing our anger & turning it to a hate that morphs into bitterness, and provides a beachhead in our soul for the devil to work.
4. Before the day passes, we need to take our hurts to God for His healing touch & the grace to let go of the right & desire to get even.

³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

1. We’re forgiven **completely**! That’s the way **we** must forgive.
2. Now, let me make something clear. **Forgiveness** is not the same as **reconciliation**.
 - a. **Forgiveness** means letting go of the **right** to get even.
 - b. **Reconciliation** means returning the relationship to friendship.
 - c. If someone **refuses** to be friendly, we can’t **pretend** everything’s hunky-dory.
 - d. But we **have to** let go of the **desire** to make them pay.

Any

1. The writer of Hebrews calls us to a careful inspection of our hearts to see if there’s **ANY** bitterness within.
2. The most common kind of grass around here is **Kikuyu**. It a super-hearty grass that spread easily.
 - a. It’s hard to keep it from taking over.
 - b. Put a border between lawn & flower-bed and it just grows underneath.
 - c. I’ve found grass growing in my flower bed 2 ft from the lawn.
 - d. A runner several inches down goes all the way back to the lawn.
3. Bitterness is like that. It can remain hidden for years as we harbor a sense of being wronged & hold on to the hope of getting even.
4. If we don’t put some spiritual *Round-up* on it by forgiving & letting go of our desire for revenge, that bitterness will *out* one day & do great harm.
5. Heed the call of the Spirit today. Is there **ANY** root of bitterness, any at all?
6. Some know there is but feel justified in their enmity.
7. Hear it again – “Look carefully, lest there be **ANY** root of bitterness.”

A cop pulled a guy over for **rolling** a Stop. The driver asked “What’d I do?”
 The officer said, “You failed to stop back there.”
 The driver said, “I **slowed down**. What’s the difference?”
 The cop pulled out his night stick & commenced beating the guy.
 He asked, “Would you like me to **stop** or **slow down**?”
8. God doesn’t call us to forgive **most** stuff. It’s **all** of it.
9. He doesn’t tell us to watch out for **most** bitterness, but **any**!
10. Here’s some cookies I made yesterday.
 - a. I put some rat poison in the batter. Not much, just a smidgen. Maybe .5%.
 - b. Want one? Why not; the poison’s such a small part compared to the whole.
 - c. It isn’t the **amount** that matters. It’s the presence of **ANY** that makes them dangerous.
11. Bitterness is poison to your soul.
12. The antidote to the poison of bitterness is to remember the greatness of our forgiveness thru Christ.