

2nd Samuel Ch 16

We enter back into the midst of this insurrection that's taking place in David's life. Absalom his own son has purposed in his heart to overthrow his dad and usurp the kingdom for himself. His dad didn't run things the way that he thought they should be run, the root of bitterness had settled deep in his heart over years of frustration in the lack of communication and reconciliation in the issues that had transpired between them, and so the culmination of these things was insurrection and rebellion against his dad.

And so he would get up early and seek out troubled citizens on their way to the city gate looking for justice in a certain case in which they felt they'd been slighted. And he'd befriend them, have them confide in him, and then tell them that his dad didn't have time for them, and that all the counselors were tied up and *he'd be glad to help them* but, he didn't have the power or the authority to do so. But if he ever were the king, things would be different, they could come to him and get the judgment they needed. And so he began to play on the heart strings of the people, callous them towards his dad, and console them in *his* care for them. And chapter 15 tells us that in telling the people how he'd be there for them, and desired to take care of them, that he stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

And when he felt the timing was right, and that he had enough people behind him, he made his move to Hebron with 200 dignitaries of Jerusalem (ignorant of his rebellion) riding with him so that it appeared to everyone who saw him that he had all this powerful political support. And when he got there he called for none other than Ahithophel, one of David's closest, most trusted advisors who unbeknownst to David was in on the whole thing.

You might say that Absalom and Ahithophel were "Bitterness buddies." Oh, they had their individual issues, but this they had in common, they were bitter towards David. Ahithophel because of the way David treated his granddaughter Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, and Absalom because of the lack of David's dealing with the issue of the rape of his sister, and then feeling like he got a raw deal when he finally did something about it. You've heard it before, "Misery loves company" and Absalom and Ahithophel had a common bond in bitterness. And I'm sure this point will be re-emphasized as we see this all played out over the next week or two, but I don't know that it's possible to over emphasize it, make sure you deal swiftly with bitterness if you sense it begin to settle into your heart, because it's a powerful source of destruction, both to you and those around you. The bible says, "*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*" Heb 12:14-15. And it's interesting that the bible likens bitterness to a root, because a root is relatively easy to deal with in its beginning stages, you can just yank it right up. But if you ignore it for a while, decide you'll get to it later, it grows deeper, gets stronger and becomes much more difficult to get rid of.

And sometimes if you blow it off for too long it's impossible to extract it with out doing damage or possible destroying the plants around it because roots have this tendency to rap around and entangle themselves into the roots of the other things around it. And now it's impossible to be rid of that particular root with out damaging or possibly even destroying those things which are around it. And that's the degree to which this episode has evolved, their bitterness has grown so deep and has been left unchecked for so long, that now they won't be uprooted with out destroying everyone around them.

Well, when David found out what was happening and how Absalom and Ahithophel had conspired against him, he made a break for it. And it's quite possible that Ahithophel was the coordinator of the conspiracy all along, not that Absalom was incapable by any means, but it just makes me suspicious to see how this all went down. And I'm of the notion that Ahithophel capitalized on Absalom's disposition and quite possible got this whole ball rolling and now that Absalom is ready to make his move, Ahithophel serves as David's Judas and betrays his close friend and confidant.

And this was a real blow to David because Ahithophel was renowned for his wisdom and his counsel, and so it was like salt in his wounds, and served only to make matters worse for him. But again God loves to have us turn *towards* Him and cry out *to* Him when it just seems like everything is working against us. Not because He likes to see everything working against us, but because He wants to show Himself strong on your behalf, and have you realize that He can make a way when there is no way, and remind me once again that even when it seems like the circumstances in my life are *out* of control, God is still what, *in* control. Perhaps as long as Ahithophel was on David's side, David would still trust in arm of the flesh instead of the strong arm of God, and so the Lord removed that security blanket of David's, so that David might be taken to that place of total dependence upon the Lord once again.

And it worked, as soon as David found out that Ahithophel had lifted his heel against him, he cried out to God and began to pray and ask God to turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness. And sometimes it seems as though God takes His time in answering our prayers, and other times it's like a certain request or petition no sooner than it leaves our mouth, we see the answer come into fruition. Perhaps you're waiting on a call back on a job interview and you're really praying about it and it's like as soon as you say, "Amen" the phone rings. And you're all, "Thank you Lord." And that's what happened here, just as soon as David prayed that the Lord would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, up over the crest of the Mt comes Hushai, another counselor of David's. And so though he wants to go with David, David sends him back tells him to basically be a mole, or a spy, and work to defeat Ahithophel's counsel. And he tells him of this network that he's established via the priests and their sons by which Hushai can inform him of everything that's going on. And that's where we left off, David taking flight, Absalom prepared to fight, but finding no resistance in Jerusalem (because David had a shepherd's heart unlike Absalom and he cared about the people whom God had entrusted to him, and didn't want to see anyone unnecessarily hurt.) And Hushai has returned to Jerusalem to covertly ally himself to Absalom. Now we flip back to David's journey.

Vs1-2

Now there are a number of characters introduced to us, or reintroduced to us in this particular narrative, two of which we see right here in these 1st couple of vs, Ziba, and Mephibosheth. Now Ziba was a servant in the household of Saul, apparently one of the chief type servants who was in some sort of administrative position, and he was brought to David when after David was made king he sought to show kindness to the household of Saul for Jonathon (his best friend's) sake who was Saul's son. (Saul obviously being the king whose throne David usurped).

And when David asked Ziba if there was anyone of the household of Saul left that he could show the kindness of God to, Ziba informed him of Mephibosheth who was basically in poverty and tucked away in hiding for fear of his life, and he couldn't take care of himself because he was lame in his feet.

And so David had Mephibosheth brought to him and raised him up from *poverty* to *prominence*. And we seen in that a wonderful picture of what God does for us in Christ, takes us from rags to riches in Him (spiritually speaking), from death to life, from spiritual bankruptcy to banqueting at the kings table of grace all our days. And David restored to Mephibosheth all that had been lost to him when Saul was killed, and ordered Ziba to now tend to Mephibosheth's things just as he had done for Saul.

And now David is taking flight, and as he goes over and beyond the Mt of Olives, here comes Ziba with supplies to refresh David and those with him.

Vs3

Isn't that just the way some people are with the Lord? He takes them from spiritual poverty to prominence, from bankruptcy to banqueting, only to take advantage of His goodness and try to somehow capitalize, or take advantage of their newfound position and it's like they just stab him in the back. "Thanks for the favor, now I'm going to turn this to how it best benefits me." And you see the Lord take some people and give them a whole new life, and then they turn on Him, and you just think, "Man, how quickly we forget who we are and from where we've come!" And that's the way some people are with the Lord, but not Mephibosheth. "What?"

Oh, that's what Ziba is *saying* Mephibosheth has done, he's saying, "Mephibosheth is going to watch you two destroy each other and when you guys have done each other in, he's going to be there to save the day and see the kingdom ushered back into the household of Saul. He's looking to take advantage of your hardship David." And we won't see it tonight but when we get to Ch 19 we'll find that *Ziba* is the one with the ulterior motive, and he's fabricating this whole thing, making it all up. So that he can look like the one who's catering to the king even at the risk of his life, while Mephibosheth, (the one whom David has shown such kindness) is virtually spitting in David's face.

(You would think Hollywood would go nuts for a script this intricate wouldn't you?) (The twists and turns just keep taking us deeper into the thick of things). Why would Ziba do this? What does he have to gain in lying to David?

Vs4

And as he turns around this smile comes across his face as he thinks to himself, "It worked!" There comes a time when we're not really equipped to be making decisions that have the propensity to alter peoples lives. When we're depressed, stressed, under pressure, and not thinking straight because of the load that we're bearing, that's probably not the best time to make rash judgments. Again, David doesn't have time to research the matter, assumes that because he's come with gifts that Ziba is for them and not against them, and just takes what he has to say at face value and assumes it's true. And this is what the proverbs are talking about when we read, "*He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.*" Prov 18:13 David should've said something to the effect of, "You know what, if the Lord reseats me on the throne I'll search that matter out, and if it's found true, then your faithfulness will be rewarded, or we'll deal with the matter appropriately." Or whatever, #1 Mephibosheth is lame in both his feet, he couldn't be there to give David his side even if he wanted to be, so there's no cross examination to this case, it's a one sided plea, and David acts rashly. He just says, "Everything that was his, is now yours." He feels like he's been kicked while he was down, he's done so much for this man and this is how he shows his gratitude, and so he just takes it all away from him and gives it to Ziba, (who is the one who was in reality doing the kicking.) Ziba was looking for a way to turn the tables to his favor and take advantage of David's position, and it worked, David bought it. God help us to realize when we're in no condition to be making judgment calls that will affect peoples lives, but that we wait until we have our senses about us, and are thinking clearly and can hear all the facts. And really it should be that way no matter how big or small the case may seem.

Vs 5-8

When it rains, it pours. David's just getting it from all sides right now, as he journeys on here he's around Benjamite country which was obviously still pro Saul in certain ways and so here comes this distant relative of Saul's, Shimei, and he's joined in the kicking party now that David's down. And it's interesting that Bahurim is where he took his wife Michal back and her present husband followed behind Abner weeping, and now here's David in Bahurim and the table is turned and he's the one doing the weeping.

But be that as it may, this guy adds up the facts in his mind as he sees it, and goes along telling David it's been along time coming but he's got what he deserves. And he calls him a blood thirsty man who's good for nothing, and he's just kicking up dirt and throwing rocks at them, and it's not that he's trying to injure him as much as he's seeking to insult him. And he's doing about as good a job as could be done, and David just takes it, again he's resolved to place himself in God's hands and whatever God allows to come of his life, he's good with it.

But Shimei does something here that's typical of the type of thing that happens to people who are in leadership, and if you're the type of person who can't take criticism, much less misdirected or ill informed criticism, then leadership isn't your calling. If you're ready to kill everyone who has something negative to say about you, then it's best that you not take a leadership person. Because Shimei was wrong in his accusations, yet he assailed David vehemently, but notice David didn't seek to defend himself, or set the record straight, didn't fly off on this guy, even though he could've destroyed him with the bat of an eye. He just resolved to let the Lord sort it out.

#1 David wasn't a bloodthirsty man, a man of war (yes), but not bloodthirsty, #2 David didn't take the throne from Saul, God gave him the throne. David did everything he could to safeguard Saul's life, and Saul himself forfeited the throne because of his lack of humility and dependence upon the Lord, God took the throne from Saul, not David. But he was right about one thing, it was the Lord who was allowing all this to happen, but it wasn't for the reason he thought it was. And that's somewhat common, people see that something is happening, but they're generally wrong in their interpretation of the facts, and they assume it's because of something that's it's not. And all you can do is let the Lord sort it out, and in due time He will.

Vs 9-14

So David just lets the matter ride, but Abishai and the rest of them are getting sick of it, and the law said, "*You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.*" Ex 22:28 and Shimei is in direct violation and so Abishai says, "Why are you taking this, just let me go over there and take this guys head off!" Remember these are David's mighty men, seasoned war vets that were renowned for their ability to fight, and Abishai apparently *is* a little bloodthirsty, and so if David were the type of man Shimei was accusing him of being, he'd be dead where he stood. But David held Abishai back, and says, "Look, God's allowing this to go on, and I'm not going to kick against it, I mean, the fact is my own son is trying to take my life, and you want me to make a mountain out of this mole hill of a Benjamite? Believe me, he's not my main concern, besides if I just suck it up and take it, perhaps the Lord will look upon me and repay me with good." In other words, "I've sown seeds of doing things wrong and this is harvest time, so I just want to sow the right seeds now, and perhaps that harvest will be pleasant as opposed to the painful harvest I'm enduring now." He's wanting to be careful to do the right thing, there's a heightened sense of reality in him regarding the wages of doing the wrong thing and so he's not looking to get any deeper into trouble with the Lord.

But rather he's wanting to do what's right in God's sight, that the Lord might take care of him in the future rather than have to chastise him. And that's where we all need to be, desiring to do the right thing in a given situation so that the Lord might take care of us, rather than having to chastise us.

Warren Wiersbe observes, “What did all this suffering accomplish for David? It made him more like Jesus Christ! He was rejected by his own people and betrayed by his own familiar friend. He gave up everything for the sake of the people and would have surrendered his won life to save his rebellious son who deserved to die. Like Jesus, David crossed the Kidron and went up Mount Olivet. He was falsely accused and shamefully treated, and yet he submitted to the sovereign will of God. “[W]ho, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;” 1 Peter 2:23

Vs 15-19

So meanwhile back at the palace Hushai, (David’s spy, God’s answer to David’s prayer) enters the scene. And one might argue that Hushai lied to Absalom, but yet I’m not sure there’s any spy who could enter a nation, go to the king or the president and say, “I’m here as a spy in order to undo you and restore proper order to this nation,” and be very successful. There’s a bit of concealing one’s identity that goes along with the job description of espionage. But if you look carefully, Hushai never really said anything inaccurate. He said, “Long live the king.” But he didn’t attach Absalom’s name to it, Absalom just assumed he was talking about him, then when he said he’s serve whomever the Lord and the people chose. He already knew that the Lord’s choice was David and when it was all said and done, he’d be the people’s choice again as well. And he didn’t call Absalom the king when he said he’d be in his presence, he just said, “I’ll be in your presence just like I was, in your dad’s presence.” Or to understand that another way, “I’m here to give advice to you if you want it, just like I gave your dad advice.” So he did well in hopping through the loopholes of semantics.

Vs20

See, it sort of seems like Absalom is just Ahithophel’s puppet, “What do I do now?”

Vs21-22

And of course here it’s fulfilled just as the Lord told David, “*For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.*” 2 Sam 12:12 But this was a radical violation towards his dad, something that was so heinous that it was irreconcilable, and that’s exactly what Ahithophel was wanting. Why? Because he had the most to lose here, if for some reason David and Absalom worked things out, Absalom would be off the hook, but Ahithophel would be executed as a traitor. And so he says, “Look, as long as the people think there’s even a chance that you and your dad might work things out, you’ll never have their full allegiance, but if you burn your bridges and they know you’re committed to this thing, then they’ll be behind you full bore, all the way.” And so Ahithophel has David’s concubines violated on the very platform on which he seen Bathsheba. And it’s sad to see him bound up in such bitterness that he’s willing to see 10 women basically raped, Absalom commit a grievous sin, and the entire nation suffer simply to satisfy his desire for revenge upon David. But such is the fruit of the bitter root, deal with it swiftly, see this and learn from it.

Vs23

Now this doesn't say that Ahithophel gave God's advice, but that his advice was revered on the same level, it was like having the Urim and the Thummim in human form (as far as they were concerned) sort of a thing. This doesn't say his advice was righteous, or even sort of godly. But that humanly speaking he's was the man in Israel when it came knowing what to do in a given situation. But unfortunately the wisdom of man is foolishness to God. And Ahithophel took advantage of his platform to keep this thing snowballing. And next time we'll see how his bitterness would be the end of him, don't make the same mistake, be like David, give yourself over to the Lord's mercies and extract that root of bitterness, through forgiveness, even as you've been forgiven, then from your own heart, forgive.