

2nd Samuel Ch 17

I hope these reviews don't seem overly redundant but I don't know what else to do exactly when we find ourselves in this same scenario regarding the dire straits of David. And in order to get our bearings for the text we need to sort of back up a bit and get an overview of what's happened so far so that we're in the context of this happening of which we're sort of just parachuting down into the midst of.

And the overall feel for what's happening is that Absalom, (David's son) has incited a rebellion against his own father. And rather than fight, David took flight. #1 Because he didn't want to kill his own son in a scenario of war which was what was fixing to take place, nor did he want to see any unnecessary casualties in the city of Jerusalem who were just innocent bystanders. But then also David decided to flee rather than fight because he knew that the heavy hand of God's chastening was upon his life due to his own sin. And so directly or indirectly this was apart of the ramifications of his sin and so he'd resolved not to resist God's dealing with him in any way but rather he would absorb whatever needed to take place in order that he might bear the fruits of repentance before the Lord. If God wanted someone else on the throne, then he would say, "Who am I to resist the will of God?" And so David fled from Absalom. He had taken the, "Not my will but Yours be done" mentality before the Lord.

A policy we all do well to adopt, be it in good times or times of chastening, or difficulty. David could've resisted Absalom and the rebellion that was taking place, he could've had Shimei, that Benjamite who went along kicking up dust and throwing stones at them as they were in route, he could've had him eliminated and taken out of the equation altogether. But he'd already blown life in a major way, and so now he'd learned that it's better to err on the side of grace and seek to be radically sensitive in a given situation in order to do the right thing, rather than perhaps what his 1st initial impulse might be. Sometimes that 1st impulse can be good thing, other times it can be radically wrong, and so it's best to do as David did, and just give the situation over to the Lord and say, "Lord, You're more than able to deal with this, if it's Your will that this be happening, than so be it, if not, I'll trust you to deal with it." Because there are always going to be people who want to kick you while you're down, kick up dust, make a mess of things, and throw stones at you, even though they don't have a clue as to the reality of what's happening. But God knows what's happening, and David took comfort in that; didn't try to defend himself or set the record straight, or have him taken out. Just said, "God if you want me to for some reason bear up under this as a measure of your chastening, than so be it, if not, I trust You'll deal with it."

Meanwhile back at the palace Absalom asked Ahithophel what he should do now, “I mean, my dad didn’t fight, we’ve secured the city, now what?” And so Ahithophel, who was renowned for his wisdom, and a real Judas to David, (and there will always be those kind of people around) a familiar friend, people you trust, who unbeknownst to you, have a problem *with* you and so when an opportunity arises that will benefit them, they’ll *betray* you even if it destroys you, or the cost is your destruction. But he said, “You need to do something so low, so unforgivable that you and your dad can never reconcile, because as long as it seems as though there’s even a chance that you and your dad might make up, the people will never fully be behind you lest they get hung out to dry when you guys kiss and make up. So take your dad’s concubines into a tent on the roof and go into them, and when the people see that you’re taking this insurrection for real, and that it’s do or die, they’ll be behind you. And so that’s what he did, and that’s where we left off.

And for Ahithophel not only did it sever the ties permanently between Absalom and David, but it was also a personal dig against David who’d violated his granddaughter Bathsheba, now David’s getting it 10 fold (sort of a thing).

Vs 1-4

So Ahithophel’s plan, and military strategy for a successful campaign against David was short and swift. And it involved 2 parts, 1st of all humiliate and desecrate him *publicly*, and then 2^{ndly} (Ahithophel would say) let me deal with him *personally*. 1st of all take his concubines and have relations with them, seal this thing on your end, let everyone know that you’re in this till the end, humiliate your dad, disgrace him, and dishonor him publicly. Then let me select 12,000 men and we’ll come upon him tonight, while he’s weak and weary, and I’ll move swiftly and selectively and when everyone sees this ambush and flees for their lives, I’ll only strike David, and everyone else will have no reason to fight, they’ll come back and swear allegiance to you, and this whole thing will be over, just let me deal with it personally.

If this portion of a movie was shown as a trailer, as far as Ahithophel’s conflict with David was concerned, it would be the classic indictment, “This time, it’s personal.” Ahithophel had a personal bone to pick with David, notice 5 times in these 3 vs Ahithophel references himself as the remedy to this whole thing. “Let me, I will, I will, I will, I will.” You guys this is what we spoke of last week, it’s the fruit of the bitter root, he has a personal interest in wanting to end David’s life because he was never able to forgive David for what he did to his granddaughter. And that seed of bitterness has burrowed down deep into the soil of his soul and has brought forth its murderous fruits. And I want you to see that this type of grudge didn’t root itself into Ahithophel’s heart overnight, it’s been conservatively 10-11 yrs since David’s sin. And Ahithophel never approached David about it, never sought to bring resolve to the issue that had taken place and how it impacted his life as a member of her family.

But instead he let this violation fester in his heart and infect his relationship with David until all he could think about is the fact that David deserved to die and if it was the last thing he did, he'd be the one to run him through. He just couldn't forgive him, and understand that bitterness, and unforgiveness are like hand in glove, they're virtually inseparable. This is why the bible is so emphatic regarding our need to forgive, even as we've been forgiven. Because if not the effect is 2-fold in our lives, 1st of all it'll drive you to murder, oh perhaps not physically, but emotionally and spiritually you'll run that person who's violated you through, and though they may not be physically dead, they may as well be because as far as you're concerned they are. You just cut them off in your heart, and Jesus said that to go there in your heart is the same thing as murdering them. Remember what Paul said in the book of Ephesians? He said, "*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*" Eph 4:31-32 Now see this; bitterness is the root, remember Heb ch 12, the root of bitterness that left unchecked burrows down and springs up, and it causes trouble, it defiles you, or stains you. Bitterness is the root, wrath (which speaks of indignation), anger (which speaks of vengeance), clamor (speaking of crying out against), and evil speaking is the fruit.

And of course we're seeing all of that in these 1st few vs, Ahithophel is speaking out against with a sense of vengeance and indignation towards David. And he wants to see David dead, these guys were practically best friends for years in Ps 55 David speaks of how they fellowshiped together, ate bread together, took counsel together and went to church together. And now here he is prepared to personally run David through with the sword because of years of festering bitterness, bitterness destroys lives.

And David talks about him throughout Ps 55, and there we read, "*He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords.*" Ps 55:20-21

You know some people know just what to say and when to say it, their words are smoother than butter, they seem softer than oil, but they're drawn swords, they're inadvertently running you through so smoothly, so softly. And for years this was brewing in his heart and David knew nothing about it, that's why the bible says if your brother sins against you, go to him, perhaps he doesn't know that he's inadvertently violated you, or that you personally feel affected by a certain situation. Meanwhile you're stewing and brewing and allowing this bitter spirit to settle in on you and they don't even know there's a problem. And so you see them as an insensitive jerk, and they're walking around clueless like it's all good between you 2 and you put off on the surface like it's all fine and well, but inside you're growing more and more indignant.

And if you leave it unchecked eventually you'll Judas that person, or murder them in your heart. Bitterness is a disease, and forgiveness is the cure. That's why Eph 4:32 says in contrast to vs 31 that rather than being bitter, and allowing anger and wrath and evil speaking to come into fruition through your life, be kind, and tenderhearted, not hard hearted, but tender hearted, and forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Don't let it eat at you, or else it will consume you, and we'll see that as #2 in a little bit. #1 Was murder, you'll want to see that person done for and out of the picture, if not physically, than in your heart you'll cut them off.

And can I say that Ahithophel's plan from a military point of view was a great plan. David's weak, he's weary (which by the way is always when the enemy likes to attack) when you're weak and weary. But he's discouraged, he's depressed, he's only a mile or so outside the city, he's vulnerable, didn't take any supplies and Ahithophel's advice is, "Let's capitalize on this situation, let's be swift, let's be decisive and let's end this thing now!" And I'm of the persuasion that had Absalom followed this counsel, this whole thing may've turned out quite differently than it did. It would've spared a civil war, it was just an overall good plan from the human perspective, but real quick did you notice that slip of the tongue by Ahithophel in vs 2? Who did he say he would strike? The *king*, wait a minute, I thought Absalom was the king? Ahithophel knows who the king is, and in speaking of David he says, "Hey, I'll take out the king." (Interesting isn't it?)

Vs5-6

Can you imagine how the wheels started spinning in Hushai's mind right now? It's like all he could hear was the theme song from jeopardy, you've got 30 seconds to come up with the right answer phrased in such a way as to place a question mark on Ahithophel's counsel.

And you just have to see God's hand on this whole thing. Vs 4 tells us straight that both Absalom and the elders of Israel were good with Ahithophel's plan, so why ask for a 2nd opinion? Ahithophel is renowned for his wisdom, nobody 2nd guesses it. I mean did Absalom ask for a 2nd opinion when Ahithophel counseled him to go into his father's concubines? No, he swallowed that hook, line and sinker, so why get another opinion now? Well vs 14 tells us and we'll see it when we get there, but in reality David had prayed in Ch 15 that the Lord would deal with Ahithophel, and would turn his counsel to nothing, to foolishness. And so really Absalom is way out gunned, because even though he has the power of the majority and all the best human wisdom at his disposal, David is operating in the power of prayer. And so the Lord is dealing with this whole situation, what can I say?

God is in control, you recall in Genesis Ch 42 when Jacob thought his life was falling apart, Joseph had been lost, a famine was in the land, Benjamin had become his favorite and now the boys were saying that the lord of the land of Egypt was demanding that they bring him with them the next time they came to prove that they weren't spies. And Jacob cried out, "All these things are against me!" But were they working against him?

No, they were working for him, right around the corner he was going to receive Joseph again into his life, be brought into the land of which Joseph was lord over, and provided for above and beyond all they could ask or think. And that's sort of what's happening here, things seem to be working against David, but God is working it out for him, behind the scenes God is at work. And it's always that way, even though we can't always see it, it's that principal that we often find quoted out of Rom 8:28, "*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*" And David is working these things together for David's good, both temporally and eternally. And can I say that the same thing is true in your life, it may or may not seem like it now depending on your circumstances, but ultimately, eternally, you'll see how it all pans out in the end for your eternal best interest even if you can't see it in the temporal. But you can stand on God's Word, and all these things that seem to be breaking loose in your life, are doing just that, they're breaking you, stretching you, molding you, and growing you, developing your character that you might be more like Jesus. And God is at work here, taking care of David, manipulating the situation to David's favor.

Vs7-13

Now we've already seen how Absalom thinks he's all that and a bag of chips, and so Hushai capitalizes on his own ego. In plan A, Ahithophel was the ringleader, in plan B; Hushai sets Absalom up as the superstar. And Hushai creates this image of David like he's this radically ticked off mad man who's able to cash whatever checks he cares to write, not to mention the men who's he's got surrounding him are the stuff legends are made of when it comes to warfare. And he says, "You've come in here and driven these guys from their homes! You think they've been seen as mighty men before, you ain't seen nothing until you've personally violated these men's honor. And then you want to chase them down and try and humiliate them on top of it by some kind of ambush as though they're not expecting that! How many years did your dad run from Saul, he's a master tactician, anticipating your every move, and he's not even with the people. He's not going to subject them to danger, and by now he's set up somewhere and expecting you to come after him, has his veterans strategically placed and when you guys come upon them they're going to tear into you. And if you send Ahithophel upon the people, and some of them going to die pointlessly, then that's going to get out, and everyone's going to think you're an idiot and abandon you."

Now all this couldn't be farther from the truth, David isn't out there strategizing, and waiting for them, that's the David of the past, the David of the present is a heartbroken older man who couldn't fight if his life depended on it, he's vulnerable. But Hushai paints this picture of David as this ticked off military General who really doesn't even understand the meaning of military defeat, because he always wins, and now he's going to fight twice as hard because you've sought to humiliate him. He's looking to buy David some time.

And so he says, “Listen, 12,000 aren’t enough. You need to overwhelm him with sheer numbers, then it won’t matter where he is, whose with him or anything else, because by the magnitude of your army, you’ll overcome him. And forget about Ahithophel leading the army, you’re the king, you lead the armies, the people have seen what your dad has done, show them they’ve got a military man in their new king, someone who can lead them to victory!”

Vs14

Let me just give you a few quick vs, Prov 19:21 *“There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel -- that will stand.”* Prov 21:30 *“There is no wisdom or understanding Or counsel against the LORD.”* And finally 1 Cor 1:19 For it is written: *“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”* God took the wise counsel of Ahithophel and destroyed it, brought it to nothing, and so there are all kinds of plans that man has, but the bottom line is that the Lord’s counsel, *that* will stand. So get to know God’s Word, stand on what *He* says, because you can take His counsel to the bank, nothing else is guaranteed, but the counsel of the Lord, or the Word of God will stand. “The Lord had *purposed* to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel.” The bible says, *“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness is from Me, Says the LORD.”* Isa 54:17 You see God’s got David’s back, and He’s got yours to, and until God’s finished with your life, nothing will harm you but that God’s not aware of it and allowing it for His eternal purposes.

Vs15-22

And of course this kinda reminds us of Rahab back in Joshua Ch 2 and how she hid the spies, but apparently Absalom didn’t think too much of this because even though this young man couldn’t find them, he didn’t dispatch any further investigation or anything, which was of course a huge mistake. Ultimately it would be his undoing, because these guys kept David informed so that David was always one step ahead of Absalom. Absalom was just the king’s kid, Mr. Silver spoon, hadn’t seen a day of warfare in his whole life, and so he just makes all these military blunders that ultimately leads to his own death. But these guys want David to know what Ahithophel has said just incase Absalom changes his mind.

Vs23

So this wise man makes a foolish mistake, and commits suicide, hangs himself. And again the similarities between Ahithophel and Judas are uncanny, both friends of their king, both having partaken of bread together, they went to church together, were familiar with one another, both betrayed their king for their own self interest, and both committed suicide by hanging themselves. And here’s the irony, Ahithophel wanted David to die, yet he’s the one who wound up dead. And you guys that’s the 2nd fold, or the #2 aspect of the fruit of bitterness. 1st of all it makes you want to kill the person who has violated you, but then 2^{ndly} you’re the one who winds up damaged, if not destroyed while they just move on.

That's the irony, you're the one who feels violated, but instead of them being hurt, you're the one who lets this thing eat at you, until it eventually devours you and consumes you altogether. It eats at you until you're entirely ate up unless you resolve the matter. It destroys you, and imprisons you, and binds you up, you recall the parable of the unforgiving servant that Jesus taught in Matt 18, he owed a quadrillion dollars to a certain king, and knowing he could never pay it off, he fell down and begged for forgiveness, and being moved with compassion the king cleared him of all charges, completely forgave him. Then he found a fellow servant that owed him a few dollars and he took him by the throat, was angry, malicious, and bitter towards him. And that guy fell down and asked forgiveness, but the 1st guy refused to forgive him. And so news got back to the king, and he said, refresh my memory, didn't I forgive you a quadrillion dollars? "Yes," then how is it that you won't forgive your servant a few bucks? And the king had him thrown into prison until everything was paid in full, the point being that unforgiveness, and bitterness binds you, imprisons you, and destroys you. David is still alive and well, but Ahithophel is dead, his inability to forgive, and his bitter spirit destroyed him.

May we hear what the Spirit is saying to us, if there's bitterness and unforgiveness in your heart and in your life, let the Lord deal with it. I'm not saying you have to condone sin in someone else's life, but as much as depends upon you, live peaceably with all men, forgive, even as you God in Christ has forgiven you, it's for your own good. You're inability to forgive that person doesn't hurt them or impact them one bit, but it'll destroy your life, cast your cares upon the Lord, for He cares for you.

Now there are those who think that Ahithophel is being a spoiled sport here, "Everyone hates me, no body likes me, why don't I go eat worms!" But I don't think that this was just as simple as, "Well if that's the way it's going to be why don't I just shoot myself?" He was a wise man, he knew that Absalom just played the part of the fool, and that in giving David time, refusing his advice and acting on Hushai's, it was all over but the singing. He knew Absalom's downfall was eminent. And he would be tried as a conspirator, and a traitor, so he's offing himself rather than waiting to be off'd. Is suicide wise? No, is it sin? Yes, is it unforgivable? No, is it justifiable? No, it's self murder, God has said, you shall not commit murder, God is to be the giver and taker of life, and Ahithophel made a foolish mistake here, as believers we entrust our lives into the hands of God, Ahithophel didn't, he took his own life.

Vs 24-29

Real quick what do we see here? God's comfort to David in the midst of his brokenness. Even in God's chastening, His heart of mercy goes out to us. Ps 34 says, "*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.*" Ps 34:17-19

Here's David, and broken and contrite man, remorseful and repentant, and the Lord is just reaching out to him, refreshing him, showering him with His tender mercies, just providing for him and looking after him. And if you're in the midst of chastening, or difficult times perhaps not because you've done anything wrong but because you're doing things right, the Lord hears your cry, and is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. He's looking after you, wanting to refresh you, and shower you with His tender mercies as well, taste and see, that the Lord is good.

Next time we'll see the culmination of this insurrection, and the consequent eradication of Absalom, and his mini-empire.