

## Trust in the Lord

2 Samuel 15:13-17:29

Key Verse: 15:25-26

*“Then the king said to Zadok, ‘Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again.’<sup>26</sup> But if he says, ‘I am not pleased with you,’ then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.”*

In the course of time David’s son Absalom grew in resentment toward his father. Absalom wanted justice after the rape of his sister, Tamar, by his half brother Amnon. But David did nothing, being powerless from the effects of his own personal sin. Seeing the lack of justice, Absalom plans to even the score and avenge his sister’s abuse. Two years later, Absalom’s murderous thoughts spring into action as he carries out his plot to kill his half brother. However, rarely does revenge quench the soul and eventually Absalom sets his goal on taking his father’s throne. So he greets people at the gate, ensuring them that if he were judge, he would make sure justice was carried out. In this way, Absalom stole the hearts of the people and laid his plans to take his father’s crown. God had forgiven David for his sin but he was eating the fruit of that sin.

And so our passage begins today with the news of Absalom’s conspiracy reaching his father David’s ears. Take a look at verses 13-14. “A messenger came and told David, ‘The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.’<sup>14</sup> Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, ‘Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword.’ This brings up two questions, why was David so quick to leave and why did so many people follow Absalom? The fact that Absalom’s conspiracy grew so quickly shows that deep dissatisfaction existed against David and his government. The remnant of the previous king: Saul’s family and his followers, the unhappy affair of Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, the overbearing insolence and crimes of Joab and the general negligence of justice were probably all things that contributed to Absalom’s success. Not all was happy in the kingdom of David. And this was somewhat surprising to me because of how David is highly regarded in the Bible. The Bible records more about David than any other person except for Jesus. However this reveals that David was just like you and I, he was real, not perfect and yet God loved him. I don’t know about you but this encourages me because if he was perfect, how could I ever live up to that? But flawed and mistake ridden, that I can do.

Instead of gathering up his men and preparing to fight and defend his throne, David packs his bags and leaves the capital. In the past David fought Israel’s enemies bravely and the people rallied behind him but this time was different. It wasn’t Israel’s enemy, it was his own son. David had accepted this as God’s punishment for his sins so he didn’t want to go against the Lord. This was the same attitude he had in the time of Saul. Also he doesn’t want to fight against his son. So the king and all his officials head out leaving behind ten concubines to take care of the palace.

On his way out David notices Ittai the Gittite and says to him, “Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland.”<sup>20</sup> You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us, when I do not know where I am going? Go back, and take your countrymen. May kindness and faithfulness be with you.” (v19-20) David didn’t want to burden Ittai and his men and gives them the chance to stay and even urges them to follow the new king. But Ittai shows what true loyalty looks like and decides to follow David

to the death if necessary. David rewards his loyalty by making him commander of a third of his army.

“The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by. The king also crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the people moved on toward the desert.”<sup>24</sup> Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city.” (v 23-24) Zadok wanted to go with David and to bring the ark of God along but David was careful about the ark. He knew that it’s rightful place was in Jerusalem. Even though David was king, he learned that the ark did not belong to him, it was Israel’s. For it represented God’s presence as God led His people. Therefore it belonged in Jerusalem. If God wanted David to be king of Israel, then God would bring him back. Let’s read 25-26. “Then the king said to Zadok, “Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again.”<sup>26</sup> But if he says, ‘I am not pleased with you,’ then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.” David did not try to force God’s hand, or to impose his will upon the Lord by dragging the ark along with him. After all it was David and not the Lord who was going into exile. Many times we think that we know what God wants. And we try to get our way by forcing God to do what we want. Saul tried to force God’s will by consulting a witch, David took a different approach he waited for God to prepare the way. At this critical point, most people would want to try and get every advantage they could. And having the ark would give David a huge spiritual and emotional advantage. But David puts everything into God’s hands and believes that if God wanted him back as king, then God would protect him and bring him back. However if God didn’t want him back, then God would send him away. And David was ok with that, because deep down he wanted to please the Lord. He trusted the Lord. Whatever the Lord did was ok with him because he knew the Lord’s goodness.

So Zadok, Abiathar and their sons took the ark and went back to Jerusalem and stayed there. (v29) “David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up.” (v30) Even though David trusted in the Lord, he let his emotions show. He didn’t keep it bottled up to make it look like everything was ok. It was true that he trusted in the Lord but he was full of sorrow and shame. He wept openly, he covered his head as a sign of sorrow and walked barefoot as a sign of mourning and shame. It’s interesting to note that David never wept when Saul hunted him, but he did now because his wounded conscience made his troubles heavy. David confessed, “My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.” (Ps 38:4)

When David got to the top of the Mount of Olives another dagger pierced his heart. He was told that Ahithophel, his close personal friend and counselor, had joined Absalom’s conspiracy. This was a severe blow. Ahithophel knew everything about David and the kingdom. And for the first time in this passage we see David cry out to God in prayer, “O Lord, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.” (v31) David doesn’t pray against Ahithophel personally, but against his counsel. He’s not looking for revenge, but just that his plans get messed up. David is broken, weeping and crying out to the Lord and when he reaches the summit he meets Hushai the Arkite. It appears that all of them met at the top to worship the Lord, because that is where people would go. They didn’t have a plan to gather there, they just happened to run into one another. But through this we see their attitudes and how they worshipped the Lord. Hushai, had torn his clothes and had dust on his head, just as David did, these were signs of sincere repentance and humbleness before God. Hushai and David, spiritually were on the same page, they were one in heart and Hushai wanted to go with David, but David told him, “But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; I was your father’s servant in the past, but now I will be your servant,’ then you can help me by frustrating Ahithophel’s

advice.” (v34) This way David could have a man on the inside to let him know what Absalom was doing.

Take a look at verses 16:5-8. “As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul’s family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. <sup>6</sup> He pelted David and all the king’s officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David’s right and left. <sup>7</sup> As he cursed, Shimei said, “Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! <sup>8</sup> The LORD has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!” This guy was either bold or crazy. The king’s elite forces were there guarding him, and he is shouting and throwing stones. Even Abishai, one of David’s generals, when he saw this, he wanted to cut off this guy’s head. If David really was what this guy said he was, David should have let Abishai do it, but David wouldn’t let him. Let’s read verses 16:10-12 “But the king said, “What do you and I have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who can ask, ‘Why do you do this?’” <sup>11</sup> David then said to Abishai and all his officials, “My son, who is of my own flesh, is trying to take my life. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. <sup>12</sup> It may be that the LORD will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today.” See how patient David was during this abuse. He endures it all. This reminds me of Jesus who prayed for those who cursed and crucified him. And what we can learn from this is that a truly humble person will turn blame and accusations into rebukes and get something good from them instead of getting angry. David saw the hand of God through this, and he comforts himself that God would bring good out of his suffering. We can depend upon God to repay not only our services, but our sufferings as well. This is similar to Joseph who said to his brothers, “You intended it for harm, but God intended it for good...” (Gen 50:20) David leaves open the possibility that God might have terminated his rule. At this point David really doesn’t know.

Meanwhile Absalom, Ahithophel and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem. Then Hushai, David’s closest personal friend, joins up with them. Hushai’s devotion to David was so well-known, that just his presence in the camp of the conspirators gave them a huge emotional boost. Absalom asked Ahithophel for his advice and “Ahithophel answered, “Lie with your father’s concubines whom he left to take care of the palace. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench in your father’s nostrils, and the hands of everyone with you will be strengthened.” (v16:21) The wisest counselors of the time were Ahithophel, and Hushai. The advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God (v16:23) and Hushai was David’s closest friend, (v15:37) Absalom thinks that he has it made because he’s got both of them and his father has none. So confident is Absalom in these men, that it never crosses his mind to inquire of the Lord even though he has the ark of God right there. But what miserable counselors they turned out to be. As we know, Hushai was never going to give Absalom wise advice and Ahithophel counseled him to act wickedly. How evil was Ahithophel’s advice for Absalom to sleep with his father’s concubines. This would result in the final destruction of their relationship which could NEVER be reconciled. Maybe Ahithophel, who, many scholars believe, was Bathsheba’s grandfather was getting his own revenge for what David did to his granddaughter and grandson? However this would be the fulfillment of God’s prophecy to David.

“So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he lay with his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.” (v16:22) The next piece of advice Ahithophel had for Absalom was to strike David quickly and catch him while he is weak, tired and on the run. It’s here we see the dark side of Ahithophel. He says, let me take 12K men and kill the king tonight. (v17:1-4) But for some reason Absalom asks Hushai what he thought about Ahithophel’s idea. And of course Hushai gives an

opposite suggestion to wait and gather all Israel before they go out and fight because David and his men are really tough fighters. He's appealing to Absalom's fear and yet at the same time he appeals to Absalom's vanity by saying that, "you yourself should go out and lead them." Hushai was very wise. "Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.'" For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom." (v14) This gave time for Hushai to get word to David to regroup and prepare for battle. "When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father's tomb." (v23) Ahithophel reminds me of Judas who was a betrayer and ended up taking his own life. Ahithophel had become proud and God was determined to frustrate his advice to protect David because he had humbled himself before the Lord. The Bible says that "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (Ja 4:6)

So what does this passage have to do with us, how do we apply it to our lives? Through this passage we see God's faithfulness. Our God is wonderful, gracious and faithful to his people. God was with David all along even though David didn't really seek God in the beginning of this whole ordeal. There is a re-occurring pattern, David gets into trouble when he doesn't seek God first. And yet God is with him all along. However when David did finally cry out to God in prayer to frustrate Ahithophel's advice, God accepted his prayer and was determined to carry it out. In fact as soon as David prayed, God answered right away by sending Hushai on the mountain top. We must come to the point in our lives and put our trust in the Lord and believe that he is good. David wrote Psalm 3 during his flight from Absalom. Psalm 3 says, "O LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! <sup>2</sup> Many are saying of me, 'God will not deliver him.'" <sup>3</sup> But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. <sup>4</sup> To the LORD I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. <sup>5</sup> I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. <sup>6</sup> I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side. <sup>7</sup> Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked. <sup>8</sup> From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people." David trusted in the Lord. Even though the situation may not have looked good at the moment, he believed that God would sustain and deliver him in the end. This gave David peace to sleep at night and not worry. When David was at the bottom, God sent him help. From David we learn what to do when we are in a similar situation. Like David, we need to worship God in the midst of our suffering and offer up praise to God, we need to trust in the Lord and realize that God uses all things for His good purpose, even those who curse us like Shimei, and when things get really tough, we need to flee to the Lord not run away from him.