

Session 27 God's Provision: David Flees Jerusalem (2 Sam. 17-18)

I. REVIEW

- A. David fled from Jerusalem to spare the city from destruction by Absalom's attack (15:13-15).
*¹³Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."
¹⁴So David said to all his servants..., "Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom." (2 Sam. 15:13-14)*
- B. The story of David leaving and returning to Jerusalem is very dramatic. It was the most dangerous season in David's 40-year reign in which he experienced *adversity* from enemies and *blessing* from friends. In eight chapters (2 Sam. 13-20), we see the consequences of David's great sin (2 Sam. 11). We see the fulfillment of God's discipline on David as pronounced by Nathan (2 Sam. 12:10-12).
*¹⁰Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me...
¹¹I will raise up adversity against you from your own house [Absalom]... (2 Sam. 12:10-11)*
- C. The Lord corrects or disciplines those whom He loves and delights in (Prov. 3:12). His correction is not rejection. He uses correction to train us in godliness (Heb. 12:11). Grace includes God forgiving us, but it does not guarantee that all the circumstances caused by our sin are instantly removed.
¹²Whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)
- D. There was a combination of sorrow and blessing even as he endured divine discipline. He learned from it but continued to believe God for blessing. "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." C.S. Lewis
- E. Absalom's rebellion and the various responses to it give us insight into the complex dynamics that will occur in the end times as many will be offended and will betray and hate one another.
¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (Mt. 24:10)

II. DAVID FLEES FROM JERUSALEM (2 SAM. 17)

- A. Ahithophel's plan was for Absalom to mobilize 12,000 soldiers in a surprise attack against David that very night (17:1-4). The goal was to overwhelm him while he was weary and weak in numbers. David's forces that night were probably only 600 men (15:18), 20 times smaller than Absalom's.
¹...Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. ²I 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..." ⁴And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. (2 Sam. 17:1-4)

Ahithophel knew that a delay would be dangerous since it would give David the opportunity to mobilize an army. David was the only one who needed to die for the revolt to succeed.

No one resisted Ahithophel's cold-blooded plan to kill David, the man after God's own heart. Absalom was pleased and not afraid to kill his godly father who was God's anointed king.

- B. Absalom asked Hushai to give a plan for attacking David (17:5-10). Hushai reminded Absalom that his father was a man of remarkable military abilities. No enemy had captured or killed David. Hushai's advice is one of the most significant words given by a royal counselor in Israel's history.

⁵Absalom said, "Now call Hushai...let us hear what he says too."...⁷Hushai said to Absalom: "The advice that Ahithophel has given is not good...⁸For...you know your father and his men... are mighty men...and your father is a man of war, and will not camp with the people. ⁹Surely by now he is hidden...and it will be, when some of them are overthrown ...whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter...' ¹⁰And even he who is valiant...will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men. (2 Sam. 17:5-10)

Ahithophel underestimated David who was shrewd in battle having spent years being chased in the wilderness. There was no way that he can be disposed of so easily.

He implied that in their search for David Absalom's forces could fall into a trap, allowing David's men to attack first. If that happened, the advantage would swing over to David's side. False reports might circulate about the slaughter of Absalom's men, causing fear to spread.

- C. Hushai suggested a plan that involved mobilizing far more forces than 12,000 soldiers (17:11-14). Absalom rejected the good advice of Ahithophel and accepted Hushai's plan that involved significant delay—giving David time to escape that night and mobilize an army against Absalom. Hushai flattered Absalom, urging him to "go to battle in person"—to take a place of honor.

¹¹I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person...¹⁴Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai...is better..." For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom. (2 Sam. 17:11-14)

- D. God was working sovereignly behind the scenes overriding the effective plans of Ahithophel in answer to David who prayed that the Lord turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness (15:31). Throughout history, the Lord has "defeated" the plans of men (Job 5:12; Prov. 21:1; 1 Cor. 1:19).

¹The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. (Prov. 21:1)

¹²He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot carry out their plans. (Job 5:12)

- E. Hushai gave Zadok and Abiathar a report on Absalom's plans to pass on to David through their sons (17:15-22). Hushai was not sure if Absalom would follow through on his plan to delay his attack and take the time to prepare for a very large attack, so he urged David to flee that very night. David and his group walked 20 miles through the night to cross the Jordan River by daybreak.

¹⁵Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. ¹⁶Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.'"...²²So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan. (2 Sam. 17:15-22)

- F. Ahithophel calculated the situation carefully, then set his home in order and committed suicide (17:23). He believed that Absalom would be defeated if he delayed the attack as Hushai said. He understood that David would prevail and he would be executed for treason against David.

²³Now 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. (2 Sam. 17:23)

- G. David fled to Mahanaim, making it his new base of operations (17:24-26). After crossing the Jordan River, David and his group traveled 25 miles north to Mahanaim. Absalom pursued him, crossing the Jordan in his determination to kill David—this is one of the darkest pictures of betrayal in the Bible. Absalom made his cousin Amasa captain to replace their cousin Joab (17:26; 1 Chr. 2:17).

²⁴David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. ²⁵And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. (2 Sam. 17:24-25)

- H. Three wealthy men provided food for David—Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai (17:27-29). Even in time of difficulty, the Lord often surprises His people with unexpected blessings.

²⁷Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash..., Machir ...from Lo Debar, and Barzillai...²⁸brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched grain and beans...²⁹for David and the people who were with him to eat. For they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness." (2 Sam. 17:27-29)

III. THE LORD REMOVES DAVID'S ENEMIES (2 SAMUEL 18)

- A. 2 Samuel 18 tells us of how God gave David victory over the rebel army (18:1-8), how He removed the rebel leader Absalom (18:9-18), and how David received the news of it (18:19-33).

- B. David put his soldiers under three men—Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gittite (18:1-2).

¹David numbered the people...and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. ²Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai...and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. (2 Sam. 18:1-2)

- C. We are surprised by David's command to "deal gently with Absalom" (18:5). David insisted on this because he loved his son and because God had dealt gently with David in his sins (Ps. 18:35). This story is meant to turn our focus to the amazing love of Christ who died for His enemies (Rom. 5:8).

⁵Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave...orders concerning Absalom. (2 Sam. 18:5)

³⁵...Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:35)

- D. The decisive battle took place in Ephraim resulting in 20,000 men in Absalom's army being killed.

⁶The people went out into the field of battle...in the woods of Ephraim. ⁷The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took place there that day... (2 Sam. 18:6-7)

- E. During the battle Absalom's mule went under the thick branches of a large oak tree. The mule kept going and left him hanging suspended in mid-air with his hair caught in the branches.

⁹Then Absalom...rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth [oak tree]; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which was under him went on...¹⁴Joab...took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart...¹⁷They took Absalom...laid a very large heap of stones over him. (2 Sam. 18:9-17)

- F. David was deeply moved; he wept and grieved over the death of his rebellious son (18:33).

³³Then the king was deeply moved...and wept. As he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:33)

IV. PSALM 3: DAVID PRAYED WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD

- A. The title of this psalm indicates that it was written while David was fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam. 15-18). Psalm 3 is one of the greatest expressions of faith in the face of difficulty in the scriptures.
- B. David's great danger (3:1-2)—David acknowledged his great danger, crying out that many people were troubling him and the number was increasing (3:1). Enemies surrounded David as Absalom won the hearts of the people (3:2; cf. 2 Sam. 15:6). The revolt increased, growing continually and gaining great momentum (2 Sam. 15:12). David's adversaries spread the rumor to many others that, because of his sins, the Lord's favor was no longer on his life.

¹LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me.

²Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God." (Ps. 3:1-2)

- C. David prayed with confidence that the Lord would deliver him (3:3-7). He looked to the Lord as his "shield" or source of protection. He used prayer as his weapon, asking God to "Arise and save me."

³But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. ⁴I cried to the LORD...and He heard me...⁵I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me. ⁶I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. ⁷Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone... (Ps. 3:3-7)

My glory: expresses his adoration without any offense toward the Lord even in difficulty

The One who lifts my head: speaks of David's confidence that the Lord would restore what his enemies had taken—even being restored to his position as king in Jerusalem

Sustained: The Lord saved David that fateful night when Absalom could easily have killed him by sending Hushai to aid him that very hour (2 Sam 15:31; 17:14-16, 21-22).

David had confidence that God would give him victory over "ten thousands" of enemies who came against David in the battle in Ephraim (2 Sam. 18:6-7). David was so confident that the Lord would save him that he described his enemies as already defeated (3:7).