

# (2 Samuel) Counselors and Comfort

by David Guzik

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*David Guzik's sermon explores the themes of betrayal, humility, and the destructive power of bitterness through the narrative of David and Absalom in 2 Samuel.*

**Duration:** 53:35

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 17:11-14, 2 Samuel 18:1, 2 Samuel 18:27, Proverbs 17:17

**Topics:** "Godly Counsel", "Divine Providence"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of David and his trusted advisors during a time of conflict with Absalom. Jonathan and Ahimaz risk their lives to gather information for David and are able to escape undetected. The preacher emphasizes that even though they may not be dramatic warriors, they played a crucial role in supporting David during his time of affliction. Additionally, the preacher highlights how God provides for David through the arrival of Shovey, Machher, and Barzellai, who bring much-needed provisions. The sermon concludes by reminding listeners of God's love and discipline, using the analogy of a parent using a belt for discipline.

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## Transcript

2 Samuel chapter 16 tonight, we're going to make it through the end of chapter 17 and we're going to pick it up in the middle of chapter 16, but when we left it last time in 2 Samuel, David was just starting to see a very gloomy period brighten just a little bit. The two significant events of chapter 16 that we already covered were number one, the deception of Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, who came and met David in this time of discouragement and difficulty for David when his own son had started a civil war against him and when his own son was looking to kill him, Ziba came and used this crisis as an occasion to gain at the expense of the truth, at the expense of his master, Mephibosheth, and at the expense of David, whom he was deceiving. Then the next thing we saw in 2 Samuel 16 was this sort of crazy guy named Shimei, who was doing everything he could to offend and insult and keep despair upon David in his time of need, and he was cursing David.

But David really received this adversity with humility. And at the very last verse we saw last time in 2 Samuel was verse 14, where we saw how they were refreshed from some of the provisions that were brought to them and that little note of refreshment is like a little shaft of light down in a dark mine and things are going to start turning up a little bit for David, and you'll see that through this chapter. Verse 15 of 2 Samuel 16, Meanwhile, Absalom and all the people of the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and

Ahithophel was with them.

And so it was when Hushai to Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, Long live the king, long live the king. So Absalom said, Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend? And Hushai said to Absalom, No, but whom the Lord and with his people and all the men of Israel choose, his I will be, and with him I will remain. Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so will I be in your presence.

Well, a couple of weeks ago when we were in 2 Samuel 15, we saw that this fellow named Hushai to Archite wanted to go with David when David was forced to flee Jerusalem, when Absalom started this coup d'etat, this civil war to take over Israel. And as Hushai came to David, as David was leaving the city of Jerusalem, David told Hushai, You go back. Thanks, I appreciate it.

But you can do more good for me by the way of espionage than by coming back and joining with me as I'm out on the run. Go back and maybe you can frustrate some of the wise counsel that Absalom will get, especially from this fellow that's mentioned here in verse 15, Ahithophel. Keep that name in your mind.

Ahithophel was one of David's counselors or advisors who had betrayed him. Ahithophel didn't want anything to do with David and he turned against David and then outsided with Absalom. And David says to Hushai, You go back and be a spy for me.

Be the mole, the inside guy for me. And Hushai says, OK. So when he does now, he comes to Absalom and he says, Here, I'll be for you now, Absalom.

Just like Ahithophel is for you now, so I will be. I love how it says in verse 15, excuse me, 16, how Hushai, when he came to Absalom, he says, Long live the king. Long live the king.

Now, who do you think Hushai has in his head when he's saying that? He's saying, Long live the king, David. Long live the king, David. Not you, Absalom.

He's got his fingers behind his back the whole time when he's saying this. By the way, some people may have a big problem with the fact that Hushai is lying to Absalom here. Let me just say this, without getting into too technical a discussion, he's just acting like a spy.

If you're going to be a good spy, you better lie. I mean, there's no way to be a good spy and walk into a situation, Hi, I'm here to gather information for David and I'm going to pretend to be your friend, but I'm really not. I'm just sort of scoping out the plan for David.

So I mean, that pretty much disqualifies you as a spy if you're going to do that. So Hushai is just acting like a good spy. Well now, some of the inner workings of Absalom's inner counsel here, verse 20, Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, Give counsel as to what we should do.

What are we going to do now, Ahithophel? Now it's going to say a little bit later here at the end of the chapter, something you should be aware of, that Ahithophel's advice was renowned within the Kingdom of Israel. This guy was brilliant. You wanted good advice? You ask Ahithophel.

And so that's exactly what Absalom does. Absalom goes to Ahithophel and just simply says, What should we do? Now the middle of verse 20, And Ahithophel said to Absalom, Go into your father's concubines,

whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong.

You understand what Ahithophel counsels Absalom to do. He says, Go and take, now the concubines. How do you explain what a concubine was? I would say that a concubine was an officially recognized mistress.

I don't know any other way to put it. It was a woman who was not your wife, but with whom you would have sexual relations with and was attached to you formally. You were a licensed supporter and it was public.

And again, this sort of displays for us David's lack of ability to restrain his own passions. His five or six wives were not enough for him. He also had several concubines.

I didn't, did it give a number here? I don't think I caught a number. It's several. And you see, this is very interesting here.

First of all, David had, in addition to his several wives, these concubines. But then if you notice what Ahithophel's counsel is, he says, Look, I want you to pitch a tent on the roof. And in that tent, you take a concubine and, you know, you're inside of a tent, so nobody will actually see the act happening.

But everybody will know what's happening inside the tent. And everybody will know when you go in with the concubine and when you come out, everybody will know what you did to that concubine. They'll know that you took your father's woman and took her for yourself.

And what does he say? He says, Go into your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. In other words, Absalom, you should do something so offensive, so disgraceful that everybody will know that there's no turning back. That there's no possibility for a reconciliation between you and your father.

Absalom, burn your bridges. Make it clear. I'm going to have nothing to do with my father anymore.

And I'm going to show how much I hate him and how much I despise him by taking his women and not just taking them sexually, but publicly doing it. And everybody will know this. Ahithophel felt that this radical, strong statement would give courage to Absalom's followers.

Did you see what he said there at the end of verse 21? Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong. In other words, they'll say, Man, that Absalom, boy, he doesn't do anything halfway. He decides to take the kingdom from his father.

Boy, he's doing it all the way. He's not leaving his father a shred of dignity left. Boy, Absalom, he's a strong man.

Now in the ancient world, taking the king's concubines was not only an act of immorality, which clearly this is. I mean, it's offensive enough just on the basis of its immorality. But it was also an act of treason.

I mean, again, not to sound too crude or offensive about it, these women were the king's property. And you're taking the king's property and saying it's not his anymore, it's mine. It was a way for Absalom to not only replace David.

That wasn't enough. Ahithophel counseled Absalom to repudiate David. You know how it would be in communist countries when one leader would replace another and they would kind of go through the country and whenever there was a picture of the old leader, they would replace it with a picture of the new one.

Whenever there was a statue of the old leader, they would replace it with a statue of the new leader. It was kind of a way of saying, we're going to wipe out the memory, we're going to repudiate this old leader and now there's a new leader. That's essentially what Absalom was counseled to do by Ahithophel.

Now, you have to ask yourself, why would Ahithophel give such radical advice? Well, one reason is, is because it made sense according to his own self-interest. Ahithophel had a lot to lose if Absalom failed in taking over the kingdom from David. You know, because when you're a traitor inside with the rebel government, that rebel government better win because if it doesn't, your head's going to be on the chopping block.

Everybody knows that you were a traitor with the rebel government. But I think there was another reason as well that we'll get into in just a minute. Let's take a look at verse 21 and see how Absalom followed the advice.

And Ahithophel said to Absalom, go into your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father, then the hands of all who are with you will be strong. So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house and Absalom went into his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God.

So was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom. That's how highly regarded Ahithophel's counsel was. You say, you know what? You don't even have to ask God, just ask Ahithophel.

That's how wise this man is. Now, the fact that Absalom actually carried out Ahithophel's advice says a lot about Absalom. Any sensible young man, and by the way, not that Absalom was that young, he was probably somewhere between 30 and 40.

Any sensible young man would have looked at this and said, no way, Ahithophel, have you gone crazy? I'm not doing that. Mister, that's sin. Don't you know that there's commandments in the Bible against that? But obviously Absalom didn't care about that.

This disgraceful act says a lot about Absalom, who actually did it. It also says a lot about Ahithophel. Ahithophel's a smart guy, right? Wisest in all the country.

But I suggest to you that Ahithophel had a strange sense of satisfaction as Absalom took those women inside the tent and outside the tent one by one. Why would Ahithophel find a strange sense of satisfaction in this? Let me remind you who Ahithophel was. Ahithophel had a son whose name was Eliam.

Eliam had a daughter whose name was Bathsheba. I want you to connect the dots here for a minute. Ahithophel's granddaughter was Bathsheba.

And can you imagine, because he was a man at the inner workings of David's court, how betrayed he felt by what David did to Bathsheba. This was his granddaughter. And as he looked back on this whole situation, he must have had such a bitter sense of anger and revulsion at David that as soon as he has the

opportunity to stick it to David, he does it in the worst way imaginable.

He counseled Absalom to do this. Absalom did not think of it as himself. Absalom was wicked enough to take the advice.

But you see, really, as much as anything, this is Ahithophel just getting vengeance upon David with a bitter satisfaction of revenge upon him to the greatest measure imaginable. Friends, doesn't that show you something about the power of bitterness? Ahithophel was willing to sacrifice all of those women. Can you imagine that? I'm going to give, and again, for some reason the number 10 sticks in my mind, that it was 10 concubines.

Ahithophel is going to give 10 women over to rape because he's bitter against David. Ahithophel is going to give Absalom over to absolute immorality. What Ahithophel did to those women by commanding them to be raped, what he did to Absalom by commanding him or advising him to become a rapist, what he did to Israel by putting Israel through the public trauma of seeing, even if he was just the former king, to seeing those concubines publicly raped, all that to satisfy his longing for bitter revenge.

It's staggering, isn't it? The power of bitterness. Now, there's another aspect to this that we need to bring out, and it's from 2 Samuel chapter 12 in the words of Nathan to David. When the prophet Nathan confronted David after his sin with Bathsheba, this is what he said to David.

The Lord spoke this to the prophet Nathan. I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun, for you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel before the sun. You know, things happen for a lot of different reasons and on a lot of different levels.

Why did this whole horrible event of a tent being pitched on the rooftop of the palace, by the way, wouldn't it be poetic justice if that tent of disgrace stood on the very spot where David stood when he looked down and saw Bathsheba bathing? Well, you ask yourself, why did what happened in that tent, why did it happen? You know, you could get a lot of different answers. You could say it happened because Absalom was such a power-hungry, amoral man that that's why it happened. Or you could say it happened because God was chastising David for his sin.

Or you could say that it happened because there was a man so filled with bitterness that he was willing to put these women, this man, this nation and the former king through a horrible trauma just to satisfy his sick longing for fulfilled revenge. Now, which one of those three is the answer for why it happened? They're all true. Each one of them is.

Now, verse 23 tells us that Ahithophel's counsel was so great that it was regarded as an oracle from God. He had a well-deserved reputation for giving counsel that was almost like hearing God speak. Was his counsel wise in this situation? Not one bit.

It was absolutely foolish. Isn't it strange that Absalom thought it was wise? Maybe it was just because Absalom jumped at the opportunity to fulfill his lusts. But isn't it strange how Absalom thought he could establish his kingdom directly through immorality? But then again, when you take the kingdom by immorality, by taking power from your own father, you think you can establish it by more immorality.

Absalom was a skilled and clever politician, but he was ignorant about the ways of God. If he knew anything about the ways of God, he would say, this is no way to establish my kingdom. But I'll tell you

something else about Ahithophel's advice.

Say, how could such a smart man give such stupid counsel? Well, this is the power of bitterness. The power of bitterness in your life can take your best qualities and turn them sour. This is the smartest guy in Israel, and he's giving advice like this.

Why? Because he's bitter. It was foolish and destructive advice, but Ahithophel, in his bitterness, he did it. And folks, you and I have to take a serious look at our life and see if it's been eaten up by bitterness.

The Bible describes bitterness as a root. Be careful that the root of bitterness does not get established among you. And you know how a root is.

First of all, its growth is hidden. You don't see it outwardly, right? That's how it is with bitterness. There can be very little of the plant on top, but a deep, deep, strong root.

Secondly, roots grow deeper with time. If it's not pulled up, if it's not killed, it'll just grow bigger and deeper. And the longer it grows, the harder it is to pull up.

That's how it is with bitterness. That's why the day to deal with your bitterness is today. But it's so hard.

It's so hard for me to forgive that person who hurt me. It's so hard for me to just let go of my obsessing over that injury that was done to me and to just let it go. It's so hard for me to do it.

And brother or sister, I know that it's hard. But I'm just here to tell you tonight, it's not going to be any easier tomorrow. It would have been a lot easier if you would have done it two years ago when the root was this big.

You know, now it's this big, but tomorrow it's going to be a little bit bigger. It's not going to get any easier for you to deal with this. Pull up that root of bitterness now.

Give it over to the Lord. I'll give you one more reason why Ahithophel gave this counsel. From Ahithophel's side, the reason was because he was bitter over the way his daughter, his granddaughter Bathsheba had been treated.

From God's unseen hand working in all situations, it's because David prayed a prayer. Keep your finger there. Go back to 2 Samuel chapter 15 verse 31.

2 Samuel 15 31. Then someone told David saying Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, Oh Lord, I pray turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

God answered that prayer, didn't he? I want you to think about it. Absalom has every strategic advantage. He has Jerusalem.

He has the army. He has the smartest counselors. He has the political charisma.

He's got the good looks. He's got everything. Absalom has every advantage.

What does David have? David has nothing but prayer. And friends, this is a huge mismatch. There's no way Absalom can beat David.

Not when David has the power of prayer. So David prayed. And this prayer of David, Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.

That's going to win the whole battle right there. It started with this, with Ahithophel giving foolish counsel to Absalom and Absalom taking it. Now look at chapter 17 verse 1. Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, Now let me choose 12,000 men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight.

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. 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. And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. You hear Ahithophel's advice? A quick, selective attack against David only.

Let's do it now. Let's do it before David escapes west of the Jordan River, or excuse me, east of the Jordan River. Do it while he's still west of it.

Let's do it now. There's an urgency to this. And did you see what he said there very plainly? He said in verse 2, I will come upon him while he's weary and weak, and I'll strike him.

And let me tell you, you better believe that it was Ahithophel himself that wanted to deliver that wound. Hey David, this is for what you did to my granddaughter. Wow.

Slip of the tongue, though, was evident. Did you see what he said there in verse 2? And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only David. Did he say that? No.

I will strike only the king. Isn't that an interesting slip of the tongue? Because who's supposed to be the king now? Absalom. But who does he mean? He means David.

That's an interesting, perhaps an unknowing prophecy from Ahithophel. But when the elders of Israel and when Absalom heard the plan, they liked it. They said, listen, this will work.

It has a high probability of success. It will spare Israel a prolonged civil war between the supporters of David and the supporters of Absalom. Yes, this is good, good, good.

Now this is interesting because basically what we have here at the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17 is two pieces of advice that Ahithophel gives. One of them is foolish advice. The next one is very wise advice.

Man, this was brilliant. This was an outstanding plan. But look at what happens beginning at verse 5. Then Absalom said, now call Hushai the Archite also and let us hear what he says too.

Now, stop right there. Is that the hand of the Lord or what? Ahithophel gives brilliant advice. Absalom likes it.

All the elders of Israel like it. And yet, for some reason, Absalom says, let's get a second opinion. Well, why would you do that? Did he ask for a second opinion when Ahithophel gave the advice about the concubines? No.

But for this, when he gives great advice, he says, well, man, this sounds great, but let's get a second opinion just in case. Now remember who Hushai is. He's secret agent man in there, right? Verse 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. Can you imagine the wheels turning in Hushai's head right now? He's saying, oh, man, that's a good plan. You know, he just got back from visiting David out, you know, on the run.

And he knows that David is depressed. He knows that David is weak. He knows that David has a ragtag band of men with him.

He's thinking, oh, man, this this one will work for sure. He's thinking, I got to be good. I got to give some advice that's going to counteract this.

Let's see what I can do. So praying on the run, thinking on the run. This is what he says.

Verse seven. So Hushai said to Absalom that the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. I bet that's the first time anybody ever said that.

That the counsel of Ahithophel was not good. Verse eight. For, said Hushai, you know that your father and his men, that they are mighty men and they are enraged in their minds like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field.

And your father is a man of war and will not camp with the people. Surely by now he's hidden in some pit or some other place. And it shall be that when some of them are thrown at first, then whoever hears it will say there's a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.

And even he who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men. Now Hushai gets good here.

He starts painting this picture that David, who's like in his 60s. And is discouraged and at the end of his rope and all he can do is cry and he's walking out of there. And Hushai has seen this with his own eyes.

He knows what David's like, but he paints him like Braveheart. You know, just out there, just this. Oh man, you don't want to cross him.

I love what he says there. You know that verse 8. You know that his father and his men, that they're mighty men and enraged in their minds like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. And your father is a man of war and he will not camp with the people.

You know, he won't even stay in camp. He's standing guard outside the camp. I love what he says later.

He's in verse 9. Surely by now he's hidden in some pit or other place. He's probably, he's in a pit somewhere just waiting for you, Absalom. All of this was fantasy.

Hushai knew very well that David was hanging on at the end of his rope. David could hardly keep himself together emotionally, much less pick up a sword. I mean, he's like at the end of his rope.

But Hushai is painting the story. Oh, Hushai, you don't want to mix it up with David. Man, he's a warrior.

He's like Braveheart out there. Don't mess with him. Because, you know, what's going to happen is you'll do this and then you'll lose a few men.

And then panic will spread throughout all of your ranks. Oh, no, Absalom, don't do this. This is going pretty good for Hushai so far.

But watch beginning of verse 11. Now he really delivers the killer stroke here. He says, therefore, I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea from multitude, and that you go to battle in person.

So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found and will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground and of him and of all the men who are with him, there shall be not left so much as one. Moreover, if he's withdrawn into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city and we will pull it into the river until there's not one small stone found there. See, Absalom, what I counsel you to do, first of all, is gather a huge army from coast to coast, from north to south in Israel.

Gather a huge army. Now, why did he give that advice? Because it takes time. It's a stalling tactic.

It will give David a little bit of time. Anything he can do to stall it. He knows David's a wreck.

Give him a little bit of time. Oh, but then here's the real brilliant stroke. I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you from Dan to Beersheba, that it be like the sand of the sea in the multitude, and that you go to battle in person.

Oh, Absalom. I can see it now. General Absalom, man of war.

Now, you know, Absalom was very aware that his father David was a man of renowned military accomplishment. I mean, this is the guy that killed Goliath. This is the guy that triumphed in many a war.

Absalom was a prince. And by and large, princes don't go to battle. You know, he was the kid with the silver spoon in his mouth.

And he can just see it now. General Absalom. I like the way that sounds.

Yeah, me leading the armies of Israel. Now, in Ahithophel's council, who would lead the army? Ahithophel. In Hushai's council, who would lead the army? Absalom.

What Hushai did very wisely was he appealed to Absalom's vanity. Oh, you should lead the army. You've got the skills.

Very clever, very effective of Hushai. Verse 14. So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel.

Like I say, first time that had ever been said. But why did they say it? Look at the end of verse 14. For the Lord had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel to the intent that the Lord might bring disaster upon Absalom.

Now, why did Absalom take the advice of Hushai over the advice of Ahithophel? Well, you could say it was because it appealed to his vanity. And you'd be right. But you could also say it was because the Lord was in control.

Because the Lord was in control. Ladies and gentlemen, God's in control. The rebels like Absalom can come up all they want.

But the throne of Israel belongs to God. And God's going to grant it or deny it at his will. You're not going to defeat God's plan, Absalom.

Period. Think about it. Absalom had the smartest men in Israel on his side.

But David's prayer was mightier than Ahithophel's smarts. God led Ahithophel to give foolish counsel that was listened to. And then when Ahithophel gave wise counsel, they didn't listen to it.

God was in control. It's what the Lord had purposed. G. Campbell Morgan says this passage.

This is one of the great principles of life, which every page of the Bible emphasizes and illustrates. Men cannot escape God. They go their own way, but that way never sets them free from the authority and the invincible power of God.

Now, why did the Lord purpose to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel? Why? Because David asked him to. It was prayer. Friends, do you see it? Do you see the power of prayer? It was David's prayer that won this battle.

It was David's prayer that won this war. This wasn't about armies. This wasn't about politics.

It wasn't about smarts. It wasn't about political intrigue. It was about prayer.

That's where the battle was won or lost. Right there. And friends, it's still that way today.

So, verse 15. Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priest, Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. Now, 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.

He does exactly what David hoped he would do when David sent him back. The information comes back to him. And this is what the thing is going to do.

Hey, go get out of here. I bought you a little bit of time. Make the most of it.

Flee. Get out of here. Get some protection.

Go on the other side of the Jordan. And this is exactly what's going to happen. Verse 17.

Now, Jonathan and Ahimaaz stated and Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city. So a female servant would come and tell them and they would go and tell King David. Nevertheless, the lad saw them and told Absalom.

But both of them went away quickly and came into a man's house in Bahariyim, who had a well in his court, and they went down into it. Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth and spread ground grain on it. And the thing was not known.

And when Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan? So the woman said, They've gone over the water brook. And they searched and they could not

find them. And they returned to Jerusalem.

Now it came to pass after they departed that they came up out of the well and went and told King David. And thus said to David, Arise and cross over the water quickly, for thus has Ahithophel advised against you. So David and all the people 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. Isn't it interesting that as Jonathan and Ahimaaz, these two spies, couriers, messengers, went to go tell the message to David, that they could find sympathetic people along the way, like the man's house in Bahariyim. This shows us that not everybody was over to Absalom.

As a matter of fact, I think Absalom gained a lot of popularity in Israel until he pulled that stunt in the tent on top of the palace roof. How do you think that played with the people of Israel? That did not endear him to the people of Israel. That disgusted the people of Israel.

And they were able to find sympathy. And so they made a successful intelligence operation and got the information to David and they went over the Jordan River. Look at verse 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. He was buried in his father's tomb.

Why did Ahithophel kill himself? Look, it wasn't because his feelings were hurt. They didn't take my advice. I guess they don't think I'm the smartest man in Israel anymore.

It wasn't that. You know what it was? It was because Ahithophel was smart. He said, I can see how this is going to turn out.

They didn't take my advice. My advice would have won the day. And you know what, folks? It would have.

If they would have taken Ahithophel's advice, it would be King Absalom and no more King David. But God's hand wouldn't allow it. But Ahithophel was smart enough to know, you know what? This isn't going to work.

Hushai's advice that they just took, that's going to end in ruin. And when Absalom is defeated, they're going to come after me. I may as well kill myself now.

That's exactly what Ahithophel thought. He knew that everything would be lost. And so he ended his life right then.

This is an example in the Bible, again, of one of the rare examples we have of a person committing suicide. And maybe it's worth it to just say a few words about suicide. Suicide, of course, is a sin.

It's the sin of murder. It's self-murder. Just as much as your life is not in my hands to end as I would will, so my life is not in my hands to end it as I would.

Yet it would be wrong to regard suicide as an unforgivable sin. You know, anyone who commits suicide, they've given in to the lies and the deceptions of Satan, whose purpose is to kill and to destroy. And how Satan just must smile, with a big smile on his wicked face, when he's enticing people, perhaps especially believers, towards thoughts of suicide.

You know, friends, if it's ever crossed your mind, maybe it's more recent for you than you'd even care to admit, it's just nothing but lies from the devil. I heard a pastor, who I really respect, tell a story about a counseling call he got once. A woman called and she said, I think I'm going to kill myself.

I'm going to commit suicide. And you know what the pastor said? He said, you know, I think you're on to something there. I think we should really look at this.

He said, so let's look at killing yourself right now. He said, alright, the first thing I want you to do is, how's your body? What kind of shape is your body in? Are you healthy? Are you physically okay? She goes, well, yeah, I'm fine physically. He goes, well, the problem's not there.

Let's leave your body alone. What else is going on? You know, and she just talks about her problems and goes, well, I know what your problem is. It's self here.

Let's do that. Let's crucify self. Forget about your body.

Your body's fine. You don't need to do anything to your body. You're right.

There does need to be a suicide here. You need to put self to death. Just not in the way you're thinking about it.

And let me tell you, that's pretty sound advice. Look, it's not your body giving you this trouble. It's not your body driving you to this despair.

It's self. That's what needs to be crucified with Christ. Isn't it curious, especially in this? Ahithophel, so smart, but so foolish.

He was smart enough to put his household in order. Right? Well, I better prepare for after my death. Right? I better make sure everything's in order.

So he's smart enough to do that. But he's foolish enough to kill himself. Smart, but foolish.

Verse 24. Then David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed over the Jordan. He and all the men of Israel with him.

And Absalom made him Amasa, captain of the army, instead of Joab. This Amasa was the son of the man whose name was Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone into Abigail, the daughter of Nashah, the sister of Zariah, Joab's mother. So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.

Has he got the scene? Absalom got his great big army. He's leading it. I can imagine him looking just like a big pompous fool leading this army, because he's no general.

He's one of those vainglorious generals. And there he is, leading the army. All right, we're going to get David now.

He's ours. E. Campbell Morgan said, Absalom's vanity ensured his ruin. That's how it's going to happen.

Verse 27. Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi, the son of Nahash, from Rabah, of the people of Ammon, Machir, the son of Amil, from Lodabar, and Barzileh, the Gileadite, from Rogelem, brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched grain and beans, lentils and parched seeds, honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the

people who were with him to eat. For they said, The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.

You know, I love it. These obscure men. Shobi, Machir, Barzileh.

These obscure men, not mentioned anywhere else in the scriptures. These obscure men are given special mention because they helped David in a time of great need. You ever hear that old proverb? Friends in need are friends in deed.

That's how it is, folks. This is when a man like David needs his friends. This is when he needs them.

Oh, fair weather friends are great. You know, when David's sitting on the throne there in Israel and everything's great in Jerusalem. He's got lots of friends then, right? Well, now's the time when he needs them.

Now, aren't you going to be stoked to meet these three guys in heaven? You know, they'll come up to you and you know what they'll say? They'll say, Did you read that? 2 Samuel 17? That's me. Now, I'm in there. You'll go, Wow.

What are you in there for? He goes, Because I helped David when he was down and out. And he really needed it. I was his friend in need.

And so I was a friend in deed. And what's it say at the very last line of verse 29? For the people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness. You know, those helpers of David, Shovei, Meacher, Barzellai, those helpers of David, they were not dramatic warriors.

You know, this wasn't your team of Navy SEALs to go out there, you know, and do a commando raid on Absalom. No, not dramatic warriors. But they helped David in the battle just as much as the bravest soldier.

They were specially sent by God to comfort David in his time of affliction. How encouraging for David. Lord, what are we going to do? This band of a few hundred with me.

We're almost out of everything. The cupboards are bare. The provision is almost gone.

God, what are you going to do? And then what? Shovei, Meacher and Barzellai, they show up with the provision they need. I mean, that's like an angel of God coming to you. That's like God saying, You're going to continue on.

I'm going to bless you. I'm behind you. And don't we see God's sweetness to David in us? I mean, here he is.

He's being chastised by God. That's sort of the big overarching. This is David's chastisement.

And yet all through even the chastisement, God can't help but show comfort to David, his beloved. God can't help but bring special people along to just supply and to bless and to bring provision. It's like God's way of saying, Listen, I'm going to make it better.

I'm going to comfort. I'm going to bring blessing. You know, those stripes that are on your back from the beating you got.

Let me put some soothing balm over them. I'll heal them up. I'll show my kindness to you.

What great love from this God of ours. How much he cares for us. Would God have been wrong? Would God have been wrong for one moment to have said to David? Hey, man, this is your mess.

You brought this on your own head. Work through it yourself. When you're through on the other side of this, then you come to me.

God would have been entirely justified to say that, but he doesn't. Now, in the midst of it, he sends men like Shobir, Macher and Barzellai. They came and brought precious, sweet comfort to David.

Well, things are looking up for David. And you'll see how it sorts out next time we're in 2 Samuel chapter 18. I want you to see how much God loves you.

Do you feel like you're under the chastising hand of God? God has taken off his belt. Meet me in the room, young man. That's how I used to get disciplined as a boy.

I'd get spanked with a belt. And, you know, I mean, it never damaged me. It was never whipped with a belt or anything in any abusive way.

My parents knew right to apply it. As some people would say, they knew how to apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge. They knew right where to put it.

No lasting damage whatsoever. But I knew what it was like to be under the belt. Well, it's like God's got his belt out on David.

And maybe you feel like God's got his belt out on you. Still ask him for comfort in the midst of it. You're still my father.

Now, what would a loving father do even in the midst of a time of correction? When the son's crying, when the son's weeping because of it, he'll take that boy and hold him in his arms and say, You needed that. Oh, but I still love you and I still want to comfort you. That's what the Lord's doing to David.

When you feel the chastising rod of God upon you, embrace it as a sign of love for you. And receive the love and comfort that he wants to give to you in the midst of it. He will.

He will give it to you just like he did to David. Because this shows us the kind of God we serve. Well, Father, that's our prayer.

That you would just make us more in love with you when we see more of how you love us. Thank you for your great graciousness to David and to us. We love you and praise you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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