

(2 Samuel) Treachery and Loyalty

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon explores the themes of treachery and loyalty through the tumultuous relationship between David and Absalom, highlighting the consequences of unresolved family conflicts and the nature of true forgiveness.

Duration: 1:02:09

Scripture: 2 Samuel 15:14-16, 2 Samuel 15:18-22, 2 Samuel 15:25, 2 Samuel 15:30-37

Topics: "Biblical Leadership", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the character of Absalom and his cunning tactics to win the hearts of the people of Israel. Absalom would sympathize with anyone who came to him with a problem or lawsuit, promising to bring them justice. He positioned himself at the gate, where people sought the king's judgment, and claimed that if he were made judge, he would ensure justice for all. Absalom's image-building and popularity grew, eventually surpassing that of King David, causing tension and concern for David.

Transcript

Tonight, as we begin in 2 Samuel 14, we're going to join up where we left off, and that was in the middle of the chapter, actually. David had a lot of family problems. The family problems began long before it got violent, but because of David's multiple wives, because of his poor parenting, there were family problems, and it led, as we saw in chapter 13, to one of David's sons raping one of David's daughters, which led to another of David's sons murdering the son who committed this horrible crime, which led to the banishment the exile of the son, Absalom, who committed the murder in retribution for the rape.

Well, Joab was one of David's trusted advisors, and Joab saw the situation and was nervous, because Joab was fiercely loyal to David. Not that Joab was a terribly moral man. Joab was a man who could be brutal.

He didn't mind breaking the rules or cutting the corners if he thought it could get the job done, but on the positive side of his ledger, he was a man of deep, deep loyalty to his king. And Absalom looked at the situation. He saw this young, rising political star in exile, and he knew that every day he spent out of the presence of Israel, out of the presence of David, it increased his own popularity and the wishful thinking of the people that this attractive, dynamic, charismatic leader would perhaps come back and take a prominent role in the national life.

One other thing I would like you to consider was that Absalom was, in all likelihood, the next in line for the throne. Second Samuel chapter three tells us that Absalom was David's third son. The first one was Amnon.

We saw last chapter, he ended up dead. The second was a fellow named Tiliab. Now, we don't read anything else about Tiliab, and so we have reason to believe that perhaps he died or was incapacitated in some way, just because we read nothing else of him.

He's just a non-factor. The third born son was Absalom. Assuming that Tiliab was out of the picture.

We know that Amnon was out of the picture. This made Absalom the crown prince, and it's a dangerous thing to have the crown prince at such a distance, especially when he himself is a ruthless, cunning, immoral - I won't say immoral, although I'm sure he was that too - amoral, an amoral man. So Joab engineered this whole scene where a widow came and spelled out a whole story that was analogous to this estrangement, this banishment of a son.

And she got David to lay down the principle that you should forget about justice when a family member is involved. And then they trapped David behind that principle. Verse 18, Then the king answered and said to the woman, Please do not hide from me anything that I ask you.

And the woman said, Please, let my lord the king speak. So the king said, Is the hand of Joab with you in all this? And the woman answered and said, As you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. For your servant Joab commanded me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your maid servant to bring about this change of affairs.

Your servant Joab has done this thing, but my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that is in the earth. You can just imagine David saying, Please, lady, you're laying it on pretty thick. But it was in fact Joab who put you up to it, wasn't it? And yes, it was.

David knew that Joab had orchestrated this with precision. David knew Joab well enough, and we know that Joab knew David well enough, that Joab knew exactly what strings to pull in David. He was loyal to David, but it was not a selfless loyalty.

So, verse 21, And the king said to Joab, All right, I have granted this thing. Go, therefore, bring back the young man Absalom. Then Joab fell to the ground on his face and bowed himself and thanked the king.

And Joab said, Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord, O king, and that the king has fulfilled the request of his servant. So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. And the king said, Let him return to his own house, but let him not see my face.

So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king's face. Joab got what he wanted. Joab wanted to bring Absalom back.

And I believe Joab wanted this because he thought it would be best for the nation, best for David's security. He hoped that Absalom's reconciliation with David would prevent a rebellion from this rising political star. But David, David handled this badly.

He was overindulgent with his sons in the past. Remember when Amnon committed that horrible crime against his sister Tamar? Did David say anything to Amnon? No. When Absalom committed the murder

against Amnon, did David say anything to Absalom? No.

He just accepted Absalom's self-imposed exile. And now David, perhaps overcompensating for his prior leniency, is now too harsh to his son Absalom, or at least he doesn't approach him in the right way. He says, OK, you can come back, but not really.

I'll let you come back to the land of Israel. I'll let you come back to Jerusalem, but you can't see me. The whole nation is going to know that you're on the outs with me and I'm going to keep you away from me.

Now Absalom knew that this was no good. So what did he do? Verse 25, Now in all of Israel, there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him.

And when he cut the hair of his head at the end of every year, he cut it because it was heavy on him. When he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels, according to the king's standards. That's a lot of hair, folks.

By my reckoning, that's something like five and a half pounds of hair to cut off every year. That's heavy hair. That's thick hair.

Going on now, verse 27, To Absalom were born three sons and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a woman of beautiful appearance. You see, Absalom was a man of political destiny, good looking, charismatic, and as I said before, a man of great cunning.

Friends, we usually expect evil or wickedness to show up like blackness before us. We expect Satan to come as an angel of darkness, but that's not how he comes. You remember what Paul said to us about the coming of Satan? He comes as an angel of light.

And that was Absalom, folks, charismatic, friendly, sympathetic. You heard the man talk and you felt that he listened to you. You felt a connection with the man.

Look at the sympathy in his heart. He named his daughter after his wronged sister, Tamar. He says to his sister, Tamar, I'm going to memorialize you.

I'm going to memorialize you by naming my daughter after you so that nobody forgets you and your great dignity in Israel. Yet for all that that was going for Absalom, he was still refused an audience with the king. Look at it here in verse 28, And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king's face.

Therefore, Absalom sent for Joab to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come. So he said to his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine and he has barley there.

Go set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. Can you imagine what it was like during those two years in Jerusalem, two years where Absalom is welcomed back, but not reconciled with his father? Welcomed back, but kept at a distance.

Absalom grew more and more bitter against David. He saw the palace all the time. Well, there's the palace and that's where my dad is.

Matter of fact, he probably saw his dad walking around sometimes on the balcony of the palace and he would look, That's my dad. He won't let me see him. It was almost worse what David did, at least when Absalom was at a distance, he wasn't tormented by the thought of my dad just lives a quarter mile away and I can't see him.

This partial reconciliation is this incomplete forgiveness or reconciliation was worse than nothing at all in this case. You see, you can see how it worked on Absalom from the inside out. Did Absalom feel justified in murdering his brother Amnon? You better believe he did.

And the way Absalom looked at it, he says, David, you wouldn't do anything about it. You did nothing. And now you're criticizing me because I did something about it.

And so what does he do? Hey, Joab, give me an audience with David. Joab blows him off. He comes into the office the next day, Joab does, and there's the message sheet.

Call from Absalom. Please return call. Oh, great.

Picks up, checks his voicemail. Joab, this is Absalom. Come on, you got to arrange the meeting for me with David.

I need to see my dad. Joab pushes the button that deletes the voicemail message. So what does Absalom do? He's not taking any more of this.

Hey, I'll get his attention. Go set his field on fire. Go burn down his fields.

He's frustrated that he can't see his father until he burns down Joab's fields to get his attention. Friends, this shows how brutal and amoral Absalom was. Do you think Absalom really thought much in terms of right and wrong? No.

Right. Wrong. Absalom said, who cares? Does it work? That's what he cared about.

Does it work? Well, you know, leaving the message wouldn't work with Joab burning down his field. Well, let's do that. A pragmatic man, an amoral man, doesn't ask, is it right? Doesn't ask, is it wrong? The only question he asks is, will it work? And if it works, it's good.

Well, it isn't good. It's hard to think of a greater contrast than between Absalom and the prodigal son of Jesus's parable, two sons who had sinned against their father. Right.

Look at the prodigal son back, humble and repentant. How did Absalom come back? Burning Joab's fields. Oh, I know we like to be critical of David here and say, David, what were you doing? You misplayed this badly, keeping Absalom at arm's length.

You made it even worse. But friends, we know very well Absalom does not get a free pass on this. David may very well have been waiting for the tears of repentance from Absalom.

They were not coming from him. Not one bit. He was not going to humble himself before his father.

Nope. Dad, I want to be reconciled with you, but it's going to be on my terms. That was Absalom's hard, wicked heart.

By the way, did you notice that perhaps you've experienced it? You ever have God get your attention by setting your barley field on fire? You know, just like Absalom knew how to get Joab's attention, God knows how to get our attention. And sometimes the barley field's on fire and we pretend it's not. You know, when God issues us a wake up call, we should respond to it.

We'll just have to keep burning more barley fields if we don't. Well, look at Absalom's response here. He says here, verse, well, 31 here, Joab.

Then Joab arose and came to Absalom's house and said, why have your servants set my field on fire? Not only does this show Absalom to be a man of brutality, and ruthlessness, he's got guts, too. Joab was not a man to be messed with. At the same time, Absalom knew he's not going to kill me.

I'm the crown prince. You're not going to mess with me. But still, it would be a scary thing to go head to head with a guy like Joab.

Absalom did it. Verse 32. And Absalom answered Joab, look, I sent you saying, come here so that I may send you to the king to say, why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still now.

Therefore, let me see the king's face. But if there's any iniquity in me, let him execute me. Do you see how righteous Absalom feels? Again.

We often fail to deal with the true nature of evil and wrongdoing in our midst. We expect it to wear a very darkened, wicked face. Absalom feels like he's on a crusade of righteousness.

Hey, this isn't fair. I only did what was right. I only did to my brother what the law demanded.

I'm getting worked over and I'm the one in the right. Matter of fact, if there's any wrong in me, let David execute me. Absalom should be feeling very gratified that there was not a bolt of lightning from heaven striking him down right at that moment.

But there wasn't, of course, verse 33. So Joab went to the king and told him, and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom.

As brutal and amoral as Absalom's plan was, it worked. Burning Joab's fields got his attention and it made Joab intercede on Absalom's behalf. And so as Absalom came to David, he outwardly submitted to David.

But David's two year refusal to reconcile left a legacy of bitterness in Absalom that's going to turn out very badly for David. It's going to turn out very badly for Absalom and it's going to turn out very badly for Israel. Matter of fact, I want you to see that when it says then the king kissed Absalom, what David did was he offered Absalom forgiveness without any repentance or resolution of the wrong.

Now, again, as we shared previously, friends in personal relationships, it's a sign of great love and graciousness to overlook along a wrong. The Proverbs 10, 12 says hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. Isn't that great? You know, if you think it's your job to be judge and jury in your personal relationships and you're sitting around saying, well, you know, I'm not going to reconcile with them until they repent and until they apologize.

And I'm the judge and they're guilty and they haven't confessed before the court yet. And until they pay their sentence, they're not getting any satisfaction from this court. You're forgetting that you're not the

judge.

There's a completely different standard for interpersonal relationships and hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. Well, it's not righteous for me just to forget what they did to me. Oh, it isn't righteous.

You have the responsibility to eke out a payment from them for every sin. Well, aren't you going to be happy when God does that towards you? No, my friends, we should be very gracious and generous with mercy and forgiveness towards others. But this is different for David.

David was the king of Israel and it was more than a personal matter. David was the chief judge of Israel and David excused and overlooked Absalom's obvious crimes. I like what one commentator, the old commentator, John Trapp, he says instead of kissing him, he should have kicked him.

And he instead he hardened him into further villainy. That was David. That's going to lead to a greater outbreak of sin.

Chapter 15, verse one, after this happened, that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses and 50 men to run before him. Now, Absalom would rise up early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision that Absalom would call to him and say, oh, what city are you from? And he would say, your servant is from such and such tribe of Israel.

Then Absalom would say to him, look, your case is good and right. But there's no deputy of the king to hear you. Moreover, Absalom would say, oh, that I were made judge in the land and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me, then I would give him justice.

And so it was whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. In this manner, Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Here we see the prototype of the modern politician. First, very image conscious. So what does Absalom do? He gets chariots and horses and 50 men to run before him.

Now, why would you normally get a chariot and a horse? Because you're in a hurry. Right, you need to go somewhere fast. But why would you get chariots and horses to go fast and then get 50 men to run before you? You see, that just slow down your chariot and your horses, right? Fifty men going before your horse is going slow.

But that's better that way, because then everybody can see you. You know how celebrities love to travel with the entourage? That's Absalom. I get myself the entourage.

I get myself the Mercedes chariot with a lot of horsepower. And I'll let everybody know who I am. You're going to know that I'm a winner.

They're going to know that Absalom has it together. After all, he's got the good looks, right? Now you put the right kind of things around him. That man looks like a winner.

People look at him and that man is going straight to the top. Look at Absalom. Did you see that? What a contrast.

Think of the difference between Absalom, the son of David, and Samuel, the man who anointed David. We have reason to believe that Samuel went everywhere he went on foot. On foot, never a horse, never a chariot, certainly never 50 men in his entourage running before him.

Samuel traveled on foot, and as a man, Absalom wasn't worthy to be mentioned in the same breath as Samuel. But here he is, flashy entourage, image building. Then what does he do? Well, he gets up early every morning and he stands before the gate.

Now, the gate was where people came to get their business done. It was like City Hall. So he stands on the steps of City Hall and he looks for people who come up to City Hall worried, they're anxious.

And why are they worried or anxious? Because they have a lawsuit and they need to make their appeal to the king. You see, in those days, not only was the king the head of state, he was also the chief justice of the Supreme Court. And so the final court of appeals was to bring your case to the king.

You felt like you got worked over at a lower court level. Well, then fine. Bring your case before the king.

Now, I'm not saying that the king would hear it. They would have nothing else to do if that's all that he did. But he would have his representatives, his assistants.

And maybe if they couldn't handle the case, eventually it would work itself back up to David. But you would come and see the king or one of his representatives. Now, when you're already troubled by a lawsuit, you come up to City Hall looking very disturbed, don't you? Absalom would look for that face.

He'd look for the guy who looked like he was out of town and he'd go up to him. Well, brother, come on over here. What's your name? I'm Absalom, the crown prince.

Well, Absalom, I never expected to meet the prince here out on the steps of City Hall. Tell me about your case, brother. So the guy explains his case, and you know what Absalom would say every time? Well, your case is right and good.

Isn't that amazing? No matter what the guy's case was, Absalom would say it's good and right. There are only winners in front of Absalom, right? Only sympathetic characters. Well, you could almost see it.

The first guy comes up and Absalom embraces. Oh, my brother, I'm so sorry to have you. Oh, we'll get you justice somehow.

And then 15 minutes later, his opponent in court comes up. And what's Absalom doing? Same thing. Oh, we're going to get that guy who's done this to you.

Now, did Absalom actually fix these problems for people? No. What he did was he very definitely, though very, very subtly and with great cunning. He stirred up dissatisfaction with David's government and he campaigned against David by promising to provide justice for the people, since David isn't giving it to you.

Did you see his great line there in Chapter 15, verse four? Oh, that I were made judge in the land and everyone who had any suit or cause could come to me, then I would give him justice. Now, friends, Absalom had reason to be disillusioned with David's administration of justice. Can you see the way that David failed to correct Amnon, how it still sticks in Absalom's craw? When Amnon raped Tamar, David did nothing, and when Absalom did something about it, David banished him and then kept him at a distance, even when he did bring him back.

So he doesn't like the way David administrates justice. So he says, I'm going to make all Israel dissatisfied with it. So he cultivates it very subtly.

I also like what it says here in verse five, that whenever anyone came near to him to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. Can you see it? Oh, it's the crown prince. And the person would instantly go down on their knees or on their face before Absalom.

And what would Absalom do? Man of the people, my son, don't bow down before me. We're brothers in Israel. Stand up.

And then Absalom would give him a brotherly kiss of affection. Oh, he was very skilled at projecting the man of the people image in a very obvious display. He wouldn't let others bow down to him, but he'd lift them up.

He'd shake their hand and then he would embrace them. And you know what I think is fascinating about this is from everything we know about Absalom, we can guess that he really didn't consider himself a man of the people at all. You know, he regularly acted as if he was above the laws that applied to everybody else.

Well, Absalom, do you think it's OK for everybody to burn down everybody else's barley fields? Oh, no, that's wrong. Well, but my case is different. Well, Absalom, do you think it's OK for everybody to take justice in their own hands and execute their own brother? Oh, no.

But my case was different. He didn't consider himself of the people at all. He thought there was a separate set of rules that applied to him.

You see, Absalom knew, Absalom knew that he was better looking, better connected, better off and had better political instincts than most anyone. And these political instincts made Absalom know that he had to create the image of being a man of the people. And friends, that's the beauty and the tragedy of politics.

You don't have to be a man of the people. You just have to project the image. You don't have to be honest.

You just have to project the image. You don't have to be sincere. You just have to project the image.

And Absalom knew how to do it. You know, in ancient Israel, we can see by how they responded to Absalom that they were too easily impressed by image. They were too slow to appreciate the reality behind the image.

Aren't you glad that we've gotten so much better at those things since then? Well, it's a joke, isn't it? We are only more impressed with image over reality today. So what did he do? It's at the end of verse six. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

I'd say that's worth blinking your eyes at and reading all over again. Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. His cunning campaign worked.

He became more popular and more trusted than David. You know, every year the poll would come out. Most admired man in Israel.

And for as long as anybody could remember, it was always David. Not this year. This year, it's Absalom.

I can imagine how David felt when he read the newspaper that morning. So good for Absalom. Well, I love to see my boy doing well.

And how did Absalom take it? Well, he said, my plan is succeeding. Because Absalom knew exactly how to do this. First, he cultivated an exciting, enticing image.

I mean, who wants a boring old guy to lead you? Get somebody exciting and enticing. Secondly, Absalom worked hard. There's no denying it.

He got up early every morning, right? He would rise early to do this. Third, he knew just where to position himself. He stood beside the way to the gate.

Next, he looked for troubled people. Oh, people like Absalom. Treacherous people, divisive people.

They've got a nose for troubled people. Now, they'll put it like this. Isn't it funny? All the troubled people just seem to come to me.

Craziest thing. No, you've got a nose like Absalom. You're drawn to them.

Maybe they're drawn to you, too. But there's a danger signal right there. And what did Absalom do? Well, he reached out to troubled people.

There he is reaching out. Well, this poor, disaffected soul. He sees him walking up the steps to City Hall and Absalom would call out to him.

He would reach out and he would take a personal interest in the troubled person. What city are you from? My friend, tell me about your family. Oh, no, let's not discuss your case first.

I want to get to know you. And then Absalom would sympathize with the person. Well, your case is good and right.

Isn't that terrible? But but Absalom was smart. He was smart enough to never attack David directly. Look at verse three.

Absalom would say to him, look, your case is good and right, but there's no deputy of the king to hear you. Oh, well, whose fault is it? Well, it's those deputies. But whose fault is it really? Well, it's David's fault, isn't it? But he would never say it directly.

And isn't it interesting that Absalom would always leave the troubled person more troubled? Well, there's no deputy of the king to see him. Sorry. I guess if I was in power, things would be different, but, you know, I'm sorry.

Nothing we can do. And then without directly attacking David, Absalom promised to do better. Oh, that I were made judge in the land and everyone who had any suit or cause would come to me, then I would give him justice.

Now, Absalom's clever approach made him able to subvert and to divide David's kingdom without saying anything specific that would condemn him. Look at it carefully. Verses one through six, what specific statement could you nail Absalom to the wall for? Nothing.

You know, if somebody objected, you know, somebody walk. This didn't sound. Absalom, you just said that you wished you could provide justice for everybody in the land.

I don't like how that sounds in my ears. And Absalom would say, what, you don't want justice for everybody in the land? Well, that's what my father wants, too. We all want justice, don't we, brother? And so he was cunning enough to use the words that couldn't be pinned down exactly against him.

But yet no one no one could miss his intent. But if you got him in the lawyer business, all right, well, what's the accuser? Well, you said this. What you know, that's not exactly what I said.

I didn't mean it in that way. He could slip by under cross examination. Absalom would probably find refuge and say, well, you know what I'm really trying to do is is I'm just trying to help David deal with all this discontent.

Look, all this discontent is out there. I'm just trying to help David deal with it. While all the while Absalom was, in fact, promoting the discontent.

Ladies and gentlemen, this this is something that sadly I've had experience with in my pastoral life is the divisive person. Who will never announce themselves as a divisive person. I mean, whoever does what do we really expect Absalom to shout out from the steps of City Hall? I'm trying to spread discontent and divide people away from David.

Well, he's never going to say that. No, he'll couch it all in, you know, noble words and spiritual sounding phrases. But at the end of the day, he's dividing and he's spreading discontent.

You know, the sad part about it is that there are many people in the body of Christ. Who will never recognize a divisive person unless they wear a name badge that says, hi, I'm a divisive person. I mean, virtually the only thing that it would take is a confession, they would have to confess to it, but as long as they claim their intentions are noble, as long as they claim, well, I'm just doing it for God's sake and all the rest, as long as they well, OK, I guess so.

No. That wasn't the case with Absalom. Look at this.

We scratch our head and we say, my heavens. Who is he? Who is he rebelling against? Who is he spreading discontent about? Ladies and gentlemen, David, the son of Jesse, the greatest king Israel ever had. You know, this isn't one of the loser kings that came in hundreds of years later.

This is David. David, the one that that that Jesus most closely identified himself with, Jesus never took the title son of Solomon, though he was or son of Abraham. No, he was son of David.

Did you know that in the millennium to come, God is going to give David, the son of Jesse, jurisdiction over the land of Israel? As far as God's concerned, that's the best king Israel ever had. And the people don't want him anymore. That the people are rejecting him, why? Well, let me throw out some suggestions.

I think one reason is because David was getting older. You know, here he is, he's in his 50s, 60s, probably whatever. You know, he's not as young as he used to be.

And people, you know, they look to the future. David's getting older. Of course, we have to say that part of it is because David's sins diminished his standing.

You know, his his his life and and royal career just didn't have the same shine on it after the Bathsheba thing, did it? Next, we could say it's just because people like change and Absalom was exciting. He provided an attractive alternative. We could also say it was because Absalom was very skilled and very cunning.

You want to know, I think the biggest reason is, is because David had to enter into the fellowship of his sufferings with the Lord. And he had to be rejected like the son of David would be rejected later. Look, if it shocks us that somebody could win Israel away from David.

Does it surprise us that there would be a crowd standing before the son of God who never sinned against anybody and screaming, crucify him? It's just the way people are, folks. And by the way, let me say one more thing before we go on to verse seven. Couldn't we say that Absalom's greatest sin was impatience? He was the crown prince.

The throne was his. All he had to do is wait for it. Absalom, let it come your way.

No, I need it now. I'm willing to kill my dad to take the throne. I want it now.

That kind of ambition is deadly, my friends, deadly. Verse seven. Now it came to pass after 40 years that Absalom said to the king, now 40 years.

One of two things. Either it means that that's how old Absalom was at the time. But you also should know that there's some ancient manuscripts that have four years instead of 40 years.

So it could go either way. It's either when Absalom was 40 or after he'd been doing the shtick for four years of winning the hearts of Israel away from David. Probably it's the four year thing.

And now it came to pass after those years that Absalom said to the king, please let me go to Hebron and pray, pay the vow which I made to the Lord. For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, excuse me, if the Lord indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord. And the king said to him, go in peace.

So he arose and went to Hebron. Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say Absalom reigns in Hebron. What? You know, dad, I got to pay the vow which I made to the Lord.

Absalom is going to commit treason under the guise of worship. Absalom knew that the appearance of spirituality could work in his favor. I mean, he's smart politician, politician thinking, what do the people want? Well, you know, the people want a spiritual king.

So I got to keep up that image, too. But, you know, it's possible, perhaps likely, that Absalom did all this feeling spiritual and feeling that he was in God's will. I mean, men in Absalom's place often deceive themselves with words like this.

Lord, you know, we need new leadership. Thank you for raising me up for such a time as this. Oh, God, guide me and bless me.

Oh, Lord, help me as I endeavor to do what's best for your people. Stab. That was Absalom.

I need to point it out again, folks, because it's so easily forgotten. Divisive people almost never see themselves as divisive. They see themselves as crusaders for God's righteous cause, and they believe or hope that God's hand is upon them.

So David says those words. Did you catch that? When David said to Absalom in verse nine and the king said to him. Go in peace.

He's going to go and do a coup d'etat against your government, David, and you're saying go in peace. There's a big smile on his whole Absalom. He a little nipper there.

Go out and have a great time. Go in peace. You know, something really sad is those are the last words that David will ever speak to his son Absalom.

So. Absalom counted on the hope that when the announcement was made, Absalom reigns in Hebron. I think Absalom was counting on the hope that people would see it as succession, not treason.

Oh, Absalom is the crown prince. I guess something happened to David. Yeah.

Long live Absalom. Of course, Absalom was going to do his best to make sure that something happened to David. But you see what he's the crown prince.

What surprise is that? That he's on the throne now. Verse 11. And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything.

Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel, the Gileanite, David's counselor from a city from Gilo, where he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong for the people with Amnon continually increased in number. So Absalom knew that he needed others to endorse or at least to appear to endorse his government.

And so he invited these two hundred men who didn't have a clue what was going on. But when they appeared with Absalom and Hebron, it appeared that they were on his side. You see, these men may have not been against David, but at least they were silent.

And to be silent in that circumstance meant that you were for Absalom. When there are innocent and unknowing people among the divisive, their silence is always received as agreement. Always were these two hundred men for David or for Absalom, we don't know, but they stayed silent.

And so everybody figured that they were for Absalom. That's just what he wanted. And so he sends for Ahithophel, the Gileanite.

I'm tempted to speak a lot about Ahithophel right now, but in the interest of time, we'll save him for later because he comes up in a fascinating way in a couple of weeks. But the conspiracy grew strong. Once some started coming to Absalom's side, it encouraged more and more to come momentum built because others were doing it.

So what's next? Well, David better get out of town. Verse 13. Now a messenger came to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.

So David said to all his servants who were with him in Jerusalem, Arise, let us flee or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us and strike the city with the edge of the sword. Friends, isn't that striking? As soon as David hears that Absalom took over,

what's his first reaction? Two reactions he makes.

The first one is, I can believe that. You don't hear David say, No, not Absalom. See, David knew.

The second thing he knew about Absalom is he'll kill us if he has the opportunity. We've got to get out of here. That's a scary relationship between father and son.

You put the sword in his hand and he'll kill me in a minute. We've got to get out of here. And plus, David said, Let's let's get out of here.

We don't want to make Jerusalem a battleground. I don't want to see Jerusalem become a city under warfare. Let's let's leave.

And so what did they do? Verse 15. And the king's servant said to the king, We are your servants ready to do whatever my lord, the king commands and the king without with all his household after him. But the king left ten women concubines to keep the house and the king went out with all the people after him and stopped at the outskirts.

Then all his servants passed before him. All the charities, all the palatines, all the get tight. Six hundred men who had followed him from Gath passed before the king.

You know what I love? Just in those few verses. What word was repeated over and over again? King, king, king. Do you think the writer here is trying to get something across to us? Who's the king? It's David.

He's on the run. There's a pretender saying I'm the king. No, the writer of Second Samuel is letting us know David's the king.

But he's saying, let's get out of here. He gets some people around him to support him. Who comes around him? The charities, the palatines.

Well, those were David's personal bodyguard. But you know, what's interesting about all these guys is they were foreigners. Wait a minute, David.

Where's your family? Isn't your family right there saying, oh, we're here for you? No. Where's the great group of Israelites? Where are the people of Jerusalem? You know, mobbing the streets. No, this is our king.

We're with him. Nope. It's only a rough band of foreigners that come around David at that moment and say, we're with you.

We will stand beside you. Doesn't matter where you go, David. We are with you.

And it's just absolutely remarkable that in this defining moment, foreigners rallied around David. And it's more remarkable. It's more tragic that his own countrymen and his own family were nowhere to be found.

So look at these faithful friends of David. Verse 19. And the king said to get tight.

You just like saying that name, don't you? It tight. They get tight. Where are you also going with this return and remain with the king for your foreigner and exile from your own place? In fact, you only came yesterday.

Should I make you wander up and down with us today? Since I go, I know not where. Return and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth be with you.

It tight. Thanks. Oh, what a great guy you are.

But listen, man, this doesn't look good for me. And did you see what David said in verse 19? Return and remain with the king. What does David call Absalom? The king.

You see, David, letting go, God, I'm not going to hold on to this throne. It's yours. Lord, if you want Absalom to be king, fine.

Then he's king. It's all right with me. David's concern is for others.

It tight. You know, it might not be the smartest move for you. You're new to the country.

You don't have your green card yet. You're still, you know, here under questionable status. You might you might want to go back and just hang out in Jerusalem.

Oh, how wonderful David is, again, concerned for others at a point like this. And what is it? I say back, this is glorious. Look at it here.

Verse 21. And if I answered. And said.

Excuse me. Verse 21. And if I answered the king and said, as the Lord lives and as my lord, the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord, the king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there your servant will be.

So David said, it's like, oh, and cross over. And it tie the get tight. And all his men and all the little ones who are with him crossed over.

And all the country wept with a loud voice. And the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the brook Kidron.

And all the people cost crossed over toward the way of the wilderness. You see, it's I loyal to David, loyal to David when it was going to cost him something. Is it fair to say that true loyalty isn't demonstrated until it's likely to cost us something? You know, I feel that I'm at the place in my life.

You probably are, too. I got all the fair weather friends I'll ever need. You know, there's a lot of them out there.

Well, fair weather friends. I got all of them. I mean, those aren't a rare commodity in this world.

They're out there. Ah, but real loyalty. That's a precious thing.

It's I had it. Did you see what he said to David? He said, listen, whether whatever place my lord, the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also, your servant will be. Doesn't matter to me, David.

I'm going with you. Death or life. It doesn't matter to me.

You know, when we think about it, it's it's even more remarkable what I said. Because number one, if I did it when David was down, you know, there's lots of people who will come and say that to David, you know,

Verse 24. There was Zadok also and all the Levites with him bearing the Ark of the Covenant of God. And they set down the Ark of God and Abathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city.

Then the king said to Zadok, carry the Ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he'll bring me back and show me both it and his habitation. But if he says this, I have no delight in you, then here I am.

Let him do to me what seems good to him. Well, it's wonderful to see that the priests were loyal to David. They're like, we see through this nonsense with Absalom.

He's a counterfeit king. We have nothing to do with him. So can you see the priest hustling out of Jerusalem, coming over to David? We got the Ark.

We got out of there. David, you know, we're with you. And David says, you know what? It's better for the nation if you go back.

Plus, you can be an informant for me. The bottom line is simply this. David says, I'm in the hands of the Lord.

If God wants to use this to chasten me and to reject me. Okay, Lord, as long as I'm in your hands. You can shake me up as long as I'm in your hands.

David's humble and chastened spirit proves he knew that God was dealing with him righteously. Verse 27. The king also said to Zadok the priest, are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace and your two sons with you.

Ahimaz, your son, and Jonathan, the son of Abiathar. See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me. Therefore, Zadok and Abiathar carried the Ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

So he says, listen, you go back. It's good for me if you do. Now, verse 30.

So David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives and wept as he went up. And he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.

You know, I hate to say it. But you can really only grab a hold of this if you've been to Israel. You see the city of David and the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives.

And you can just see David and this group walking up the Mount of Olives at nightfall under the light of the moon, weeping and mourning as they go. And when they get up to the top of the Mount of Olives, they look back. He says, that's my city.

That's where my palace is. It's all being taken away from me. He wept as he went.

He had the emblems of mourning with the covered head and he went barefoot. David was struck by the great tragedy of all of this. But friends, it wasn't a pity party or soreness merely over the consequences of sin.

We could say that David was crushed by the consciousness that all of this was deserved. It was the bitter fruit of the sin that filled all his later life with darkness. Can you imagine how hard it was for the people around David? They looked at his face in the moonlight and they said, you know, I've been with David through a lot, through a lot I've been with him.

And, you know, he always seemed to have this courage, this, hey guys, you know, the Lord's going to take care of it. Don't worry. You know, so many times I was scared, but I'd look to David and his face didn't look like there was a care in the world on his face.

He just knew God was going to come through to him. But this one's different. This one, David knows it's because of his own sin.

So there's a resignation on David's face, a mourning. I'm in your hands for, you know, when he shed those tears on the Mount of Olives, those were tears of penitence. Those were tears of sorrow over his sin.

They weren't tears of self-centered regret. Now, when I say that it was because of David's sin, that doesn't excuse Absalom in the slightest. But David knew and this showed David to be a truly redeemed man.

You know, some people would look at this whole situation between David and Bathsheba, adultery, cover up, murder, hardening of heart. They'd say, God, you let David off way too easy. I've read the law, God.

The penalty for those things is execution. You let him off easy. You know what you're going to do, God? You start letting people like David off easy and they're going to think they can run out and do it again.

Oh, thanks, Lord. Thanks for the forgiveness. Friends, that is not how grace and mercy works in the heart of the redeemed.

In the heart of God's people, when they receive this gracious relief from God, you see, when they when they receive it, grace and forgiveness work a strange work in the heart of the redeemed and David's sin was ever before him. And he climbed Mount Olivet with a strange combination of deep gratitude for having been forgiven, yet horror over his forgiven sin. Might I say David never did it again, did he? So we'll conclude here with verse 31 through 37.

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. By the way, God answered that prayer.

Look at that. Here's Absalom. He's got the hearts of the people of Israel.

He's got the army. He's got the city. He's got the capital.

He's got good position. He's got a ruthless disposition. Absalom, pretty fearsome.

What does David have? Prayer. It's not a fair match, is it? And you can know right now who's going to win. It's said that the Queen Mother of Scotland used to say that she was more afraid of the prayers of John Knox than a whole army of fighting men.

So we read there verse 32. Now it happened when David had come to the top of the mountain where he worshipped God. And he said, Well, man, we could talk about that for about a half hour, couldn't we? Everything's being taken away from you.

And someone who wants to murder you is out looking for you. What does David do? Time to stop and worship the Lord. Now, not just the fact that he thought to do it, but that he could do it.

Oh, I can't worship. You know, I got this problem. Well, David had a problem and he worshipped the Lord.

It happened when David had come to the top of the mountain where he worshipped God, that there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. And David said to him, If you go on with me, then you'll be a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, I'll be your servant, O king, just as I've been your father's servant previously.

So I will now also be your servant. And you may defeat the council of Ahithophel for me. And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar, the priest there with you? Therefore, it'll be whatever you hear in the king's house that you should tell it to Zadok and Abiathar, the priest.

Indeed, they have come there with them, their two sons, Ahima, Zadok's son and Jonathan, Abiathar's son. And by them, you shall send me everything that you hear. So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

That's where it ends for tonight. David submitted unto the Lord, worshipping God on the top of the Mount of Olives. Next time together, we'll pick it up from there.

And you need to see what happens next. Look at the last phrase of chapter 15. Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Absalom came into Jerusalem as a cunning, wicked rebel. David came into Jerusalem as a brave, noble conqueror. Jesus came into Jerusalem as a servant king riding on a donkey.

Quite a contrast, right? How do you want to arrive? I hope it's like David, a noble, conquering hero, like Jesus, a humble servant king, not like Absalom. Father, that's our prayer tonight. Lord, give us wisdom.

Guard our hearts. Guard my heart, Lord, from ever being divisive. Satan sucks us into that, Lord, with such subtlety, where even we are not self-aware of what's going on at the time.

So deliver us, God. And Lord Jesus, we pray that you would make us like Jesus. Humble servants, Lord.

At times, Lord, noble conquerors. But Lord, never like Absalom, cunning and wicked. Bless your word to us, Lord.

Enable us to be not only hearers, but doers of your word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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