

II SAMUEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Samuel chapter 17 as we continue our study through the Word of God. If you remember from our last study, Absalom has usurped or taken the throne away from his father, David. And David is on the run; he has left Jerusalem and is heading for Mahanaim, on the east side of the Jordan River, in the area of Gilead. But as he is leaving he leaves a few spies to keep him informed of what is going on. One of them was Hushai, who was an old man, and thus it would be difficult for him to travel with David. So David, as I have said, sends him back to be a spy for him, for he was going to be able to do more good in Jerusalem than with David. It is Hushai who will frustrate the counsel of Ahithophel, as we will see as we continue on in II Samuel this evening. Both Ahithophel, who was David's close friend and advisor who has now sided with Absalom and Hushai who will be giving Absalom advice regarding what he should do with David, attack now or gather more men and attack later. So with that said, let's begin reading in II Samuel chapter 17, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

II SAMUEL 17**VERSES 1-4**

1. Here we see Ahithophel continue with his counsel, his advice to Absalom. Remember what his previous counsel to Absalom was back in II Samuel 16:21-22, “**And Ahithophel said to Absalom, ‘Go in to 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 in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.**” As I said last time, by his actions it would be such an offensive action that it would eliminate any possibility of reconciliation with David. He had passed the point of no return and the people would recognize that fact. Thus, this was more of a political move than a lustful move, to solidify the people’s support around him and to sever any hope of reconciliation between David and Absalom. You see, it was customary in the Ancient Near East for the king of a new dynasty to take the harem of the previous monarch, thus he was showing to all that there is no turning back, that he was now the king.

2. His second counsel was just as good as the first. He said that they need to attack David now, strike him before he can prepare to fight back, and the battle will not be against all the people that are with David, but with David alone. Interestingly enough, Ahithophel said, **“I will strike only the king.”** That is interesting to me because as much as Ahithophel tried to make Absalom the king, he recognized who the real king was! But, once David is dead with this quick strike, the people will rally around Absalom, they will see him as the king! And when you are after one man, and when the rest of David’s men were unorganized, Ahithophel felt they only needed 12,000 men to carry off this attack and kill David!

3. Now you can understand why Ahithophel had such hatred for David, but David’s own son agrees with this counsel, to kill David. And maybe the reason he hated his father so much was that after David’s son Amnon raped Absalom’s sister Tamar, David did nothing. And maybe that just ate away at Absalom till he finally hated David so much that he wanted him dead. I think he also wanted the power and the prestige of being the king!

4. Now it was time for Hushai to give Absalom counsel.

VERSES 5-10

1. Remember what David said to Hushai as David was fleeing Jerusalem as king back in II Samuel 15:32-37, **“Now it happened when David had come to the top of the mountain, where he worshiped God — there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. David said to him, ‘If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; as I was your father’s servant previously, so I will now also be your servant,’ then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be that whatever you hear from the king’s house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Indeed they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s son, and Jonathan, Abiathar’s son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear.’ So Hushai, David’s friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.”** And keep in mind that he heard the counsel of Ahithophel and it was good, thus, he must come up with one that is better, better for David that is!

2. Now before Hushai could give Absalom his counsel, he had to put down the counsel of Ahithophel and that is exactly what he is doing here. This is what took place. We see that Absalom calls Hushai in, explains the counsel that Ahithophel has given in this matter, and then asks for Hushai's counsel. And Hushai tells Absalom not to rush into this, think this through. David and his men are warriors, fighting machines. And now, since you have taken away the kingdom from David, he is going to fight like a **"Bear robbed of her cubs."** And even if your best men try to fight against David, they will lose. In fact, David is not even with his men, he is hiding out somewhere and you won't be able to find him! Now that Hushai has set the stage, he is ready to give his counsel regarding this matter.

VERSES 11-13

1. These are very wise words by Hushai and he is buying David time to prepare to fight against his son, Absalom. Here we see Hushai appeal to Absalom's pride in this matter. He says the only way to get David is to gather all Israel, from the north to the south, and you Absalom can lead this invasion force into battle. He would lead this huge army into battle and then home victorious. But don't send 12,000 men into battle against David, for they will lose and your victory will be turned into defeat. Pride is a very powerful tool and Hushai used it to buy some time for David to escape. You see, to gather soldiers from all over Israel will take several days or more, thus Hushai could get word to David on what is coming down. But whose counsel will Absalom choose? Let's read on and see!

VERSE 14

1. So as Absalom and his men listen to the counsel of Ahithophel and Hushai they decide that Hushai's counsel is far better and that is the one they will follow. Now wait a minute here, wasn't Ahithophel's counsel better than Hushai? Absolutely, but remember David's prayer in II Samuel 15:31, "**O Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!**" God is answering that prayer of David's! And again, I think the reason Absalom liked this so much, the counsel of Hushai, was that it fed his pride, his ego and his men just went along with their king.

2. Now think about this for a minute. Absalom thinks that he is in charge, he is the king and no one is telling him what to do but the reality is, God is in control and He knows what is going to happen before it happens. Morgan wrote, "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."

3. Now here's the thing. Some people feel that if God uses people for His plan, for His purposes, then they obviously should not be held accountable for their actions! In fact, some feel that Judas should not be held accountable because Judas was just fulfilling prophecy, he was destined for that role, and thus he is not at fault for his actions! That is just plain foolishness! That is just WRONG! Judas and every one of us have a free will, a choice in life to make on what we will do, who we will serve, the Lord or ourselves, the god we have made up in our own minds! God does not send anyone to Hell; you go there because you have refused His free gift of life, Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins that is only found in Him! God knew all along what Absalom would do, but it was his choice to do it and the same is true in our own lives!

VERSES 15-16

1. So Hushai tells Zadok and Abiathar the priests what has transpired and what David should do, go cross over the Jordan to the east side and put some distance between you and Absalom and there you can re-gather your men and prepare for war! And then their sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan will go and tell David. It is just as David had said when he sent these men back to Jerusalem to be spies for him on what Absalom was doing. Back in II Samuel 15:35-36 we see David say, **“And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Indeed they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear.”**

VERSES 17-22

1. These spies were stationed at En Rogel, which is just south of Jerusalem. They were positioned there and this woman would come and tell them what was going on in the city of Jerusalem. They felt if they went back and forth they would be detected, they would be exposed. And, they were exposed, Absalom's men got word about them and they are going out to find them. Thus, they go to Bahurim, which was on the east side of the Mount of Olives and they hide in the bottom of a well or pit, which had no water in it at that time. And the woman covered this pit up to hide it and as Absalom's men went looking for them, they could not find them and Absalom's men returned to Jerusalem. When things calmed down they left the pit and they then brought word to David who did not waste any time in crossing over to the east side of the Jordan River, to Mahanaim.
2. Something I want you to notice is that not everyone sided with Absalom, they saw through him and they stood loyal to David.

VERSE 23

1. Now after reading this you get the idea that Ahithophel was a sore loser. When Absalom did not accept his counsel he went and committed suicide. In other words, it seems that if he could not get his way, if Absalom would not listen to him, then what is the point in living and he hung himself! But I don't see it that way. You see, Ahithophel was a wise man, even though he did a foolish thing, and he saw that the counsel of Hushai was only going to lead to trouble for Absalom. And Ahithophel saw his future come crashing down before him. He realized that David was going to have enough time to strengthen his forces and defeat Absalom. And that would mean his defeat also, for David would in no way spare this rebellious man's life, or so he thought. He was part of this conspiracy with Absalom and he could not get away from that!

2. Now what about this thing regarding suicide? Suicide is wrong, it is a sin because it is self-murder and remember that God says, "**you shall not murder**" in Exodus 20:13. And if a person goes down this path they are giving themselves over to the lies of Satan as Jesus tells us in John 10:10 what he is all about, "**The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. . .**" So suicide is wrong, it is selfish but please understand that it is not the unpardonable sin.

You see, the only unpardonable sin is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit according to Matthew 12:31, which says, **“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.”** What does that mean, this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? What Jesus was referring to was the rejection of the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives, which is to draw people to Christ. If you reject Christ you are blaspheming the work of the Holy Spirit and condemning yourself to eternal separation from God. Yes, when a Christian commits suicide it paints a bad picture of God and destroys your witness that you have left behind, it hurts those you have left behind, but you don't lose your salvation.

Listen to what Morgan had to say regarding this issue of suicide. He wrote, “Suicide is always the ultimate action of cowardice. In the case of Saul, and in many similar cases, it is perfectly natural; but let it never be glorified as heroic. It is the last resort of the man who dare not stand up to life.”

And Spurgeon made these remarks regarding this issue, “I desire to call your attention to the text on account of its very remarkable character. *‘He put his house in order, and hanged himself.’* To put his house in order, showed that he was a prudent man; to hang himself, proved that he was a fool. Herein is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, mind and madness. Shall a man have wisdom enough to arrange his worldly affairs with care, and yet shall he be so hapless as to take his own life afterwards?”

He goes on to say, “Thousands set their houses in order, but destroy their souls; they look well to their flocks and their herds, but not to their hearts’ best interests. They gather broken shells with continuous industry, but they throw away priceless diamonds. They exercise forethought, prudence, care, everywhere but where they are most required. They save their money, but squander their happiness; they are guardians of their estates, but suicides of their souls.”

In other words, if you reject Christ for the things of this world, you have committed, in a sense, suicide for you will spend eternity apart from God in the Lake of Fire and you have done this to yourself! Many would never commit the act of physical suicide but they have committed suicide of the soul, which is even worse, by rejecting Jesus!

VERSES 24-26

1. Absalom has taken the time to gather all his men together to go against David and Absalom is leading the way in this battle. It fed his ego but as Morgan wrote, “Absalom’s vanity ensured his ruin.” We will see that as we read on. Now both David and Absalom are on the east side of the Jordan River, with Absalom and his troops slightly north of David’s. And Joab is one of the captains in David’s army, and his cousin, Amasa, is put in charge of Absalom’s. Civil war is about to break out, brother against brother. And the only winners are the enemies of Israel.

2. What a great lesson for us in the body of Christ. That to divide the body up is not a good thing. That we need to work together for the common goal and that can only happen if there is one head and that is Christ and not us! The enemy likes to divide because it is easier for him to conquer then, may we be wise to his devises!

VERSES 27-29

1. These three wealthy men come to the assistance of David and his men. They bring bedding and food for them. Who are these men? Shobi was the son of the Ammonite king, Nahash. You may remember his brother from II Samuel 10:1-4, Hanun. David had sent some emissaries over to show respect over the death of his father, Nahash. But Hanun humiliated them and sent them back to David. And David took care of the situation and defeated the Ammonites. His brother, Shobi, respected David and sided with him. Machir took care of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth before David brought Mephibosheth back to Jerusalem to care for him, II Samuel 9:5. And Barzillai was a very old man, a very wealthy man. He too was very loyal to David and as we will see in II Samuel chapter 19, as David is heading back to Jerusalem, he invites Barzillai to come with him. But this old man respects David's kindness, but is too old for the journey, so he remains on the east side of the Jordan River. (II Samuel 19:31-40).

You see, when the chips are down you will find out who your friends really are. It is amazing how many people want to jump on the bandwagon when things are going well. But when difficult times come, persecution, and-so-on, it amazes me how many want to jump ship. It is as Proverbs 17:17 tells us, **“A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.”** David found out that these three men were his friends, and even in difficult times, they came to David’s assistance.

2. And so as David and his men are preparing for war with his son Absalom, God sends comfort and refreshment to David and his men. It is as Meyer wrote, “It was as though God stooped over that stricken soul, and as the blows of the rod cut long furrows in the sufferer's back, the balm of Gilead was poured into the gaping wounds. Voices spoke more gently; hands touched his more softly; pitiful compassion rained tender assurances about his path; and, better than all, the bright-harnessed angels of God's protection encamped about his path and his lying down.” Make no mistake about it, God does the same with us, He gives to us times of refreshing by people we may not even know, but God sends them.

3. Let’s read on and see what takes place in this battle between David and his son Absalom.

II SAMUEL 18**VERSES 1-4**

1. Remember David was a soldier; he was a military leader and a very good one. So he divides up his men into three companies or divisions under the leadership of Joab, Abishai and Ittai the Gittite. And David is now ready to fight and I think he learned his lesson by staying home in the past but I also think that he is concerned about his son Absalom, that his men may kill him and we will see that in a minute.
2. Now David's men realize that it is foolish to allow their king in battle because if he is killed, it is all over. That is the reason they were fighting in the first place, to have David back on the throne. Also keep in mind that David is some 50 or 60 years old. So if he remains at home, it is much better, his life was more valuable than theirs, he could send in reinforcements if they were needed in the battle and how could David fight against his own son, that would be difficult and that is why his men told him he should not go into this battle and he listened to them.
3. What a great lesson for us. Look at the devotion to their king and that should stir our hearts to be that devoted to our King, Jesus Christ and sacrifice our lives for Him. We should not fear the danger or worry about this or that, but as a soldier of the Lord's army, fight for the truth that has been entrusted to us, pulling down ideologies, ideas of this world by God's Word, by God's Spirit, as we go forth!

VERSE 5

1. David wanted his leaders to know as well as all the people going into battle to bring Absalom back alive and don't mistreat him. Obviously that is the heart of a father and not a warrior and you can't fault David for that. But also keep in mind that Absalom is coming to kill his father David!

VERSES 6-8

1. Obviously David was outnumbered and thus, he could not overpower Absalom in the open field, so he set the battle in the woods of Ephraim. It would be more of gorilla type warfare instead of hand to hand combat. Now that is confusing because we are told that both David and Absalom were on the east side of the Jordan River, and Ephraim was on the west side of the Jordan River, in the Promise Land. So how can that be? Some feel it derived its name from some memorable action of the Ephraimites there, though it lay in the tribe of Gad. You see, David wanted to meet the enemy with his forces at some distance, before they came up to Mahanaim and the woods of Ephraim were perfect, on the east side of the Jordan River, in a dense forest north of the Jabbok River. And keep in mind that David's men were trained warriors, they were use to fighting in all kinds of battle terrain and it is very possible that Absalom's men were not. And in one day David's men, and the woods of Ephraim destroyed 20,000 of Absalom's men. In fact, the forest of Ephraim killed many more of Absalom's men than David's men did!

You may be wondering how that can be, but listen to what Spurgeon wrote and I think it will be a little clearer to you. He wrote, “Perishing not only by the sword, but among the thick oaks and tangled briers of the wood, which concealed fearful precipices and great caverns, into which the rebels plunged in their wild fright when the rout set in.” And Clarke makes these comments, “It is generally supposed that, when the army was broken, the betook [to resort to or go to] themselves to the wood, fell into pits, swamps, and so forth, and being entangled, were hewn down by David's men; but the *Chaldee*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, state that they were *devoured* by *wild beasts* in the wood.”

VERSE 9

1. So as David's forces come upon Absalom, he high tails it out of there on a mule. Really, he high tails it out of there on a mule? Now I'm not sure how fast a mule can travel but as he was fleeing for his life, his hair got caught in the branches of a tree, pulling him off this mule and leaving him hanging by his hair, unable to escape.

Remember back in II Samuel 14:25-26 we were told, **“Now in all 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 two hundred shekels according to the king's standard.”**

That is a lot of hair, some five pounds per year and it was his glory and it was what brought him down or caught him, left him hanging you might say! It is as Isaiah 2:12 says, **“For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up-and it shall be brought low.”** That is what we are seeing here!

VERSES 10-13

1. One of David’s soldiers saw Absalom just hanging there and he doesn’t do anything to him. And when he tells Joab, the commander of what he saw, Joab is mad at him. He tells this young man that he would have rewarded him for killing Absalom. Why didn’t he do it? Because this man honored the words of king David and Joab didn’t! They all knew the king demands not to hurt Absalom and if you did, the king had the power to put you to death. But Joab did not care; he was a loose cannon and did what he wanted!

2. Now what did this belt represent? Clarke tells us, “The military belt was the chief ornament of a soldier, and was highly prized in all ancient nations; it was also a rich present from one chieftain to another.” But that did not matter to this soldier; he was more interested in obeying the king rather than earthly possessions. What a great lesson for us!

VERSES 14-15

1. Did Absalom get what he deserved? You bet he did. He was a murderer, a traitor, and a rapist as he had sexual relations with David's concubines so all could see. And yet, the king told his men, including Joab not to kill Absalom, and yet Joab did and he got ten of his men to help! Joab had seen how David disciplined his children and he knew that this was best for David and the nation and yet, it was not what the king commanded. It is as Clarke reminds us, "Long ago he should have died by the hand of justice; and now all his crimes are visited on him in his last act of rebellion. Yet, in the present circumstances, Joab's act was base and disloyal, and a cowardly murder." I wonder how often we do that? We know what God has said and yet we think it is better to do it our own way? Folk's, it is not. It is better to obey our King, Jesus!

2. We see Joab take three spears and put it through the heart of Absalom and he is not dead yet, how can that be? Because the heart was a term for the general area of the chest and so ten of Joab's men come by and they finish the job!

VERSES 16-18

1. As soon as Absalom is dead, Joab puts an end to this war, why? Because he was killing his fellow brethren and he wanted this civil war to end. Their king was now dead and it was time for David to come back to Jerusalem and be their king. There should now be unity and not division! Also notice that he was just thrown into a pit so he would not be memorialized and maybe inspire others to revolt!

2. Remember back in II Samuel 14:27 we are told that Absalom had 3 sons and 1 daughter. What happened to these 3 sons? We are not told and thus, we can only speculate that they died at an early age and the monument that was set-up was to keep the name alive since he had no son's to do that. And isn't that what a self-centered person does, they set up monuments so that people, even when they are dead, will honor them. Again, Joab placed Absalom's body in a pit so he would not be honored in his death, but in his life, Absalom built this monument for himself! What kind of legacy are we leaving behind? May it not exalt us but the Lord, pointing people to Jesus!

VERSES 19-20

1. Joab knew that the news brought to David was not good, for his son Absalom was dead. And so he encourages Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, to let someone else bring the news to David, someone who is not close to the king.

VERSES 21-23

1. Joab sends a Cushite, probably an Ethiopian slave, to bring the news, but Ahimaaz wants to go and finally Joab lets him and he runs and passes this Cushite, even though he has no good news to tell David. He had no real message for David; it will be empty, as we shall see. You see, it doesn't really matter how well you run, if your message is empty. Now, how did he run ahead of this Cushite, was he just faster? I don't think so.

One commentary makes these interesting remarks:

The Cushite, probably an Ethiopian (2 Chr. 14:12), was apparently a swift and powerful runner. In fact, he may have been retained in Joab's army as an experienced herald (foot runner bearing a message). But he chose the direct route from the battlefield to Mahanaim. This took him over rugged terrain, as the city lay in a steep gorge carved out by the Jabbok River.

Ahimaaz was also a renowned runner (2 Sam. 18:27) and an experienced messenger, having already shuttled messages to David from Jerusalem during the rebellion (15:27, 36). Perhaps Ahimaaz was more familiar with the terrain, for he chose the "way of the plain" (18:23), the smooth riverbed of the Jabbok. The route was less direct but easier to run than that of the Cushite. As a result, Ahimaaz arrived first.

- Earl D. Radmacher, Ronald Barclay Allen, Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, 2 Samuel 17:26

VERSES 24-26

1. Think of it like this. If you saw one or two guys running from the battle, you could pretty safely guess that good news was coming. But if you saw a whole group of guys running from the battle, you were in for trouble because they were in retreat. That would not be good news because they were running for their lives. That is why David felt there must be good news coming, only seeing two men coming from the battle.

VERSES 27-29

1. I don't know if Ahimaaz had a certain running style, but he could be picked out from a distance! And as he comes before king David, David asks him, "**Is the young man Absalom safe?**" Obviously David is speaking as a father and not the king. But the reality here is that he did not ask how his men were doing but how his son was, was he safe. I think David figured out they won the battle, but what a slam to his men who fought this battle. No concern for them just for his rebellious son who started this civil war in the first place. And we will see that as we read on here!

2. When Ahimaaz is asked this questions he basically tells David that he did not know what happened to Absalom, was that true? No it was not! Remember what we read just a few verses back, in II Samuel 18:20, "**And Joab said to him, 'You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king's son is dead.'**" Thus, Ahimaaz is not being truthful; he knew that Absalom was dead because Joab told him. He only wants to give to David the good news, we won the war but not that his son Absalom was dead.

3. Today there is a great emphasis on telling just the good news, no bad news in Christianity. We are not to talk about sin. We are to accept everyone's experience as being from God. And the list goes on, as one Calvary pastor put it, "Shouldn't we be known for what we stand for and not what we are standing against?" That is foolishness because if you are standing for something you will stand against something else. Didn't Jesus stand against the false religious leaders of His day? Of course He did! And we are to warn people of what is going on out there and speak forth the truth. Folk's, as we share the gospel we too are to give the whole truth and not lie. We are to be honest. Yes God is a God of love but He is also a righteous judge who will judge and punish sinners. We are not called to be salesmen for Christ, but **WITNESSES** of Him! We must speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and that truth has to be based in God's Word!

VERSES 30-32

1. David tells Ahimaaz to stand aside as he waits for this other man, the Cushite to come in with the news and David asks him the same question about his son. And the Cushite, without directly saying Absalom was dead, the way he said it lead David to recognize the fact that he was.

VERSE 33

1. David is overcome with sorrow over the death of Absalom, as a father would be, but he was also the king over Israel and his men risked their lives to save his kingdom and to save David from being murdered by his son Absalom! You see, David, by his actions is basically saying to his men that he would have been happier if they were all dead and Absalom was alive! Joab will deal with this more as we see next time in II Samuel chapter 19. But David needed to dry his tears and welcome home his men who fought this battle for him and he is not doing that!

2. As I close this evening let me leave you with this to think about. You see, what we see here is a picture of God the Father who is weeping over his children that are living in rebellion against Him. David could not die in his son's place, but God was able to die in our place and set us free from our sins. We can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Yes David could only weep over what had transpired, but God was able to send us *HIS SON* because, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”** John 3:16-17. May we not forget that!