

2 Samuel 15-16

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[0 : 00] 2 Samuel today, and we're going to cover chapters 15 and 16. Let's have a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for your word. Father, we thank you that you have something to say to us today.

Thank you, Lord God, that you are a God who speaks, and that you make known yourself. You are a self-disclosing God, and you want us to know you. And so, Lord, we want to know you. We want to draw near this morning and hear from you. Lord, would you, by your Holy Spirit, illuminate your word. Would you bring it off the page, bring it out of history, and bring it into our lives, Lord, as bread from heaven.

Because we know that we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. So, Lord, we look to you for a full meal this morning. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

Okay, well, so last time we covered through the end of chapter 14 in 2 Samuel. Obviously, we've been going through slowly. We've seen how King David has been reigning over Israel, and we saw his golden age where he was victorious, and he took Jerusalem, and everything was going great.

[1 : 12] But then we saw that very, very serious sin against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, and he did repent, and he was forgiven, but consequences remained.

And I would remind us of this passage in chapter 12, where we read that this was what God said through Nathan to David.

He said, Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household.

I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed, you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and under the sun.

And I know we've come back to that a few times, but today in our text we see that very thing fulfilled. And I did think, as I pondered it afresh this week, that it was interesting to consider the balance here, because on the one hand, God has said explicitly, in the very next verse, actually, in 2 Samuel 12, that he has caused your sins, your sin to pass away.

[2 : 35] God said that. I've caused your sin to pass away. That's the repentance and the forgiveness that we've spoken of. And David will not die for his sin, and yet God also permits this.

And we say it's consequences, and I think to some extent there are consequences, but we can't escape the fact that God says, I will raise up evil. So there's a tension and a balance there, that on the one hand, this is a consequence for a sin that is forgiven, but there are things that God will allow and even say, I will do it.

So it's a thing to ponder. So what have we seen in fulfillment of this so far? We saw his firstborn son, Amnon, and his rape of his sister, Tamar.

And then we saw David's son, Absalom, thirdborn, avenge his sister when David did nothing. And he did that by murdering Amnon. David failed to take action with Amnon, and then he failed again with Absalom, doing nothing.

And when Absalom had done the deed, when he had killed Amnon, he then fled. He legged it all the way back north to his maternal home, Geshur, and he stayed there for three years.

[3 : 51] And he was, I think I said he was certainly a young man, probably early twenties, three years there. And then he came back to Jerusalem, but David refused to see him for another two years.

I ain't going to see you. And you remember the story there that we saw last time. And as we closed out chapter 15, we had this shaky reunion between David and Absalom.

They came together, they spoke, they met, but all is not well, as we will see, as we will see. So at this point, David has, I think David has shown himself to be a different man after all these events. As I said, he failed to take action in disciplining his sons. And Absalom is now the eldest, we believe. So Amnon is dead.

He had another son, of whom we don't hear anything further. So we therefore infer that he has died. And that makes Absalom then the eldest.

[4 : 53] And Absalom has a plan. He thinks, my father is, he's run his course. He's had his day. I need to take over. Absalom has a scheme and he's going to enact it.

And that is what we're going to see in the next few chapters. But will God allow the throne to be taken? Ooh, tension. So let's get into it.

Verse one, chapter 15. Now it came about after this, this reunion, that Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses and 50 men as runners before him.

Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. And when any man had a suit to come to the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, from what city are you? And he would say, your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel.

And then Absalom would say to him, see, your claims are good and right, but no man listens to you on the part of the king. Moreover, Absalom would say, oh, that one would appoint me judge in the land.

[5 : 50] Then every man who has a suit or cause could come to me and I would give him justice. And when a man came near to prostrate himself before him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him.

In this manner, Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel. Wow.

So this is the beginning of his public relations campaign, his PR campaign, let's say. First, the chariots, you've got to have the right wheels for this campaign. A chariot, 50 men.

So he's got this staff to go before him to talk him up. Hey, Absalom, have you seen this guy? And if you remember, he is quite a guy. All right. He looks the part. He's just beautiful.

He looks like a king. He looks like everything you could possibly want. And then he starts to come between those coming to the king for judgment. So to make sure we understand this, and we've touched on this before, the gates of the city functioned as like a civic forum.

[6 : 58] They were a court or a place of formal decision making. When we studied way, way back in the dim and distant past, the book of Ruth, we saw Boaz went to the gate for the formal process of resolving Naomi's estate.

And then there are private chambers there as well. That's something that we saw in chapter three. Do you remember Joab took Abner to one side, and it said, in the middle of the gate, to speak with him privately.

So, and we now believe from excavations that some of these gates are massive in size. Some of them even had upper rooms and chambers. So they're big, big things. So when it, when it says coming to the gate, it doesn't mean that we're standing huddled under this arch.

It means there's a whole space. So it is the place to go for judgment. And Absalom gets in there and he says, Hey, I'm sure you're in the right. Oh, if only I were the judge, I would ensure your case is sustained.

And it seems to me, without actually hearing the case first, there's no evidence that he actually listens to the case. He's like, I, you're right. I'm sure. Although yes, quite so anything for a boat, but I should add that the historian Josephus is take on this.

[8 : 08] We can't have a study without mentioning his name. Josephus said that he spoke to the men who have lost their causes. I don't know if he had some insight. I don't know.

But, and then the other thing that I thought was noteworthy is, is men would come and they would bow to him. And normally it would be, the king would put out his ring, but he is, is kissing them, right?

It's, it's a reversal. He is making himself a man's man. He's being lowly. And so he stole their hearts, which can sound overly romantic in English. But again, remember in Hebrew thought, the heart is the seat of decisions.

It is the, the place where you are, you have your preferences and your opinions. It's not just emotions. So he is amassing a following of people who he hopes will say he would be a better king

because he's in my corner.

So, reading on verse seven. Now, it came about at the end of 40 years that Absalom said to the king, please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord in Hebron.

[9 : 14] For your servant vowed a vow while I was living in Geshur in Aram, saying, if the Lord shall indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord. The king said to him, go in peace.

So he arose and went to Hebron. But 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 is king in Hebron.

And then 200 men went with Absalom from Jerusalem who were invited and went innocently. And they did not know anything. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel, the Gilonite, David's counselor from his city, Gilo, while he was offering the sacrifices.

And the conspiracy was strong. For the people increased continually with Absalom. So just a few bits on that. The 40 years at the beginning is an obvious error.

David reigned for a total of 40 years. And 33 of those were in Jerusalem. So it can't be 40 years of time lapse. Most commentators agree that the correct duration was four years.

[10 : 21] And that is, in fact, what Josephus says as well. But it's an old error, an old typo, let's say, if that was a thing. Because it even found its way into the Septuagint, which is from before Christ.

So an old error, but an error nonetheless. Absalom's next stage then is to contrive to get to Hebron and be proclaimed king.

Why Hebron? Well, you may remember that this is where David was first made king. And he reigned there for seven and a half years. It is also the city in which Absalom was born.

So maybe he had a personal attachment to it. I mean, he would only live there for six or fewer years. But I wonder how the residents of Hebron felt when the king decided, I'm going to move. I'm moving my capital away. It's been great here, but I'm moving to Jerusalem, 20 miles north. I wonder if there was a sense of over that. And I wonder if they liked the idea of a king being crowned there again.

[11 : 24] And I wonder if Absalom saw an opportunity to find loyalty. Don't know. I'm reading into the text. But that's probably why Hebron is where David was first crowned.

So Absalom sends out his spies to establish this conspiracy. And he says, when you hear the shofar, the ram's horn, that's the signal. So the shofar was a signal horn that would be sounded in the land.

And then you'd hear it. And then you'd blow yours. And then you'd hear it. And that's how it would spread throughout the whole land. And it's a signal. Hey, when you hear the horn, that means there's a new king in Hebron. And then we have these 200 men that are going with Absalom. But they have no idea about the conspiracy. They're just part of the dignitaries, part of the entourage to attend to the king's son. And this is very shrewd on Absalom's part because David doesn't know they're not part of the conspiracy.

David and all his staff would assume that they must be allied with Absalom. They must be behind the coup. Very, very shrewd indeed. And then we also read about this guy Ahitophel.

[12 : 32] This is our introduction to him. And he is introduced to us as David's counselor. Now, for those of you who enjoy word studies, hopefully everyone enjoys a good word study.

I thought it was interesting to discover in this verse 12 here, 2 Samuel 15 verse 12, there are two Hebrew words that find their very first usage in scripture. One of those is the word for counselor, which is yoetz.

And it appears from subsequent passages to represent a formal office or a role. So when it says that he's David's counselor, it doesn't mean that he was just a bloke who hung around and gave him counsel.

It means it was a royal office that he was appointed to. And in the future, we'll see other men appointed to that role. And then the other word is the word for conspiracy.

Keshir, which is a word that talks about men being bound together by a pact with treasonable intent. So it means conspiracy. But I thought it was interesting that they both showed up here in the same word, the same verse.

[13 : 37] But what I saw in that was what this is evidence that David is has as part of his reign.

He's created he's developed the political landscape. So, you know, we have the time of the judges where it was all kind of random and they all they they they served from different places.

And they were warriors and they were decision makers and adjudicators and they did everything. And then we had Saul who didn't really develop it very much. He didn't take all of the land. He really functioned as a judge over the whole land, like you could say.

But David is starting to establish some formal roles and government and office. And so then we also see enemies coming against it. The conspiracy. One other thing to say about Ahithophel is according to Second Samuel, chapter 23, verse 34, Ahithophel's son was among David's 30 mighty men.

You know, David had these men of renown, men whom he considered to be mighty. And I thought that was interesting. The son of a counselor is a mighty man.

[14:47] So I had to dig that a little bit. And actually, the word for mighty men is givorim, which doesn't just mean buff and strong warriors.

It means men of excellence. It means men of particular capability. So it could well be, actually, that he wasn't, well, it could be that he was super strong, but it could also be that he was so renowned for his strategy and his competence that he became successful and then part of the 30.

But who knows? Anyway, let's read on. Verse 13. Then a messenger came to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom. David said to all his servants who are with him in Jerusalem, Arise and let us flee, for otherwise none of us will escape from Absalom.

Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword. Then the king's servant said to the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king chooses.

So the king went out and all his household with him. But the king left 10 concubines to keep the house. The king went out and all the people with him, and they stopped at the last house.

[16:05] Now all his servants passed on before him, all the Herothites, all the Pelothites and all the Gittites, 600 men who had come with him from Gath, passing on before the king.

Okay, it's all happening now. Absalom's on the way, and David hears the news. It's a 20-mile journey, as I think I said, from Hebron to Jerusalem. At what point in that journey did David hear? Well, not sure. But it's urgent. David hears the news. All these men. The conspiracy. The numbers. There's those 200 guys. There's all these people. But now here's the thing.

David has got all his servants. The Herothites, the Pelothites, and all the Gittites. Now these are strong warriors who have been with David for several years.

Josephus calls them the 600 armed men who had been with him from his first flight in the days of Saul.

[17:06] So he's got these men who have proven themselves time and again in battle, proven themselves to be loyal when they were massively outnumbered, very, very seasoned veterans.

And you may remember that Gath is actually a Philistine city from which Goliath came. And David even attracted some warriors from there too, which is quite noteworthy, I think.

It's amazing, isn't it, that David drew strangers for who were far off to become his faithful servants, just like the son of David, I thought. But he's got all these warriors. He's got all these men.

Very strong men. And yet he chose to flee. And I thought that was noteworthy. And I made a whole thing about it, which I've left to the end. So we can read on for now. Verse 19.

Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, Why will you also come with us? Return and remain with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile. Return to your own place.

[18:02] You came only yesterday. And shall I today make you wander with us while I go where I will? Return and take back your brothers. Mercy and truth be with you. But Ittai answered the king and said, As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely whatever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be.

Therefore David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. So Ittai the Gittite passed over with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. So Ittai is a specific Gittite, i.e. from Gath, foreigner, whom David initially suggested he remain with the king.

Now I'm not sure whether this means go back to Gath, the king of Gath, or whether it means return to your place in Jerusalem and serve the new king Absalom.

I don't know exactly how to read that. But the point would be, you're a foreigner. You've only recently joined. There's no reason for you to risk your life and the lives of your family by choosing a side.

You don't need to choose a side. But Ittai is faithful to David and to the Lord. And you'll note that if you read it, Ittai calls on the name of Yahweh.

[19 : 19] As the Lord lives, He makes His vow. So He presumably then is a man of faith. Verse 23, While all the country was weeping with a loud voice.

That's quite a thing, isn't it? All the country was weeping with a loud voice. All the people passed over. The king also passed over the brook Kidron and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness.

Now behold, Tzedok also came and all the Levites with him carrying the Ark of the Covenant of God. And they set down the Ark of God and Abiathar came up until all the people had finished passing from the city.

So I thought at this point I'd show you this map. So that's the 20-odd mile distance from Hebron to Jerusalem. And that boxed area is over here. And so we're coming out of Jerusalem and towards the Mount of Olives.

So we haven't come very far at all at this point as they pass over the Kidron Valley there. We have not come very far at all. Now verse 24 requires a little bit of explanation.

[20 : 26] It said that Abiathar came up until all the people had finished passing from the city. Different versions render that a little differently. I think the ESV puts there he set down the Ark of God.

But that doesn't seem right to me either. The consensus view is that that word for came up or ascended is actually used of offering sacrifices.

And so what is in view here, we believe, is that the priests there have brought the Ark, the people are coming out, and they are there offering sacrifices as the people come out.

Verse 25. The king said to Tzadok, Return the Ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the Lord, he will bring me back again and show me both it and his habitation.

But if he should say thus, I have no delight in you, behold, here I am. Let him do to me as seems good to him. The king also said to Tzadok the priest, Are you not a seer?

[21 : 33] Return to the city in peace. And your two sons with you, your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I am going to wait at the falls of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.

Therefore, Tzadok and Abiathar returned the Ark of God to Jerusalem and remained there. So David sends back the two high priests together with their sons.

Why? Well, because he doesn't want the Ark of God to leave. You remember David brought the Ark into Jerusalem with much pomp and ceremony and a bit of a misstep the first time.

And David's view is this is where the Ark lives. This is where God lives in this city. And he says, I hope for and pray for the blessing that God will return me one day.

But if not, blessed be the name of the Lord. Let the Lord do as seems good to him, which is quite a thing for him and to have that degree of surrender to the will of God.

[22 : 35] But he says, no, the Ark stays in Jerusalem. You priests stay there and minister to the Lord and also have your sons for my spy network.

Double purpose there, I think. Verse 30. David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives and wept as he went and his head was covered and he walked barefoot.

Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went. Now, someone told David saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, Oh Lord, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel, easy for you to say, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness.

And I thought it was definitely worthy of note that this is the first time I've seen David pray for many, many chapters. Doesn't mean he didn't pray, but given how regularly the author delighted in showing us David's prayer, I think it does show a bit of a change at last.

David is praying. May we not be people who only pray in a crisis. And then notice the prayer. The prayer is, God, make foolish the counsel of Ahithophel.

[23 : 49] This will need a miracle because his counsel is so highly regarded, we'll read later, that it is like the voice of God. But God provides an immediate answer.

Let's read on. Verse 32. It happened, as David was coming to the summit where God was worshipped, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn and dust on his head.

David said to him, If you pass over with me, then you will be a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, I will be your servant, O king, as I have been your father's servant in time past, so I will now be your servant, then you can thwart the counsel of Ahithophel for me.

Are not Tzedok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So it shall be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall report to Tzedok and Abiathar the priests.

Behold, their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Ahimaaz, Tzedok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son. And by them, you shall send me everything that you hear.

[24 : 54] So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city and Absalom came into Jerusalem. So the answer to the prayer is God provides this man, Hushai, who just happens to be there.

And this is his first mention in scripture. So what we can infer is that he has been a servant of David's in some capacity, presumably in some office, a counselor like Ahithophel.

But note this as well, where does God provide? Verse 32 says, where God was worshipped. So there is prayer, there is attendance to the place of worship, and there God answers the prayer through his providence.

When we are praying, when we are in distress, let us not forsake the assembling in the place of worship. On the contrary, let that be a higher priority for us, because that is where we meet with God and where God answers prayer.

So David adds Hushai to the spy network. And verse 37, he is called David's friend, again believed to be a technical office or role that was fulfilled, rather than it was his buddy.

[26 : 08] So, and the chapter ends then with Absalom coming into Jerusalem. And where's David? He's come to here, Mount of Olives. This is about, this is less than a mile.

Less than a mile he's managed to get. And Absalom is there in the city. It's tense. Well, let's read on. Verse 1 of chapter 16. Now when David had passed a little beyond the summit, behold, Zeba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met him with a couple of saddled donkeys.

And on them were 200 loaves of bread, 100 clusters of raisins, 100 summer fruits, and a jug of wine. Yum. Then the king said to Zeba, why do you have these?

And Zeba said, the donkeys are for the king's household to ride, the bread and the summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for whoever is faint in the wilderness to drink. And then the king said, and where is your master's son?

And Zeba said to the king, behold, he is staying in Jerusalem. For he said, today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me. Really? So the king said to Zeba, behold, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours.

[27 : 18] And Zeba said, I prostrate myself. Let me find favor in your sight. Oh my lord, the king. Well, we've met Zeba before. He was on the staff of Saul.

So this is quite a few years ago. He was on Saul's staff. And we read how he had 20 servants of his own. So senior. And back in chapter nine, David had commanded Zeba to become the servant of Mephibosheth, who was the last surviving son of Saul.

And he was crippled and needed support. And they needed someone to take care of him. And we noted at the time, the incredible grace of David towards Mephibosheth. An amazing picture of the grace of Christ to sinners.

And I think I may have noted at the time, I wonder how Zeba felt about that. Being, you know, he was servant to the king with his own staff. And now he's servant to the crippled son who has no power.

Well, now we encounter Zeba again. And spoiler, he's been deceitful. He is saying, Mephibosheth is claiming that he's pleased that David is out.

[28 : 30] Mephibosheth is pleased because he thinks now God's going to restore Saul's kingdom to him. And he's got all these gifts. Hey, David, check it out. I brought you donkeys. What a gift. I must admit, I thought, how could David fall for this?

Like, why would Mephibosheth think that Israel is going to return to him, the throne of Saul, when Absalom is coming to reign? I couldn't understand how this obvious lie.

I'm just surprised at David's lack of discernment, to be honest, but he didn't pray about it, did he?

Maybe he was blinded by the gifts. Would we ever find our discernment impacted by gifts?

Anyway, verse five, when King David came to Bahurim, not on the map, because I've took it off the screen. Bahurim is there, ish. And so we're still only a couple of miles away.

Behold, there came out from there a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gerah. He came out cursing continually as he came.

[29 : 37] He threw stones at David, and at all the servants of King David, and all the people, and all the mighty men, who were at his right hand and at his left. Bold.

Thus Shimei said when he cursed, get out, get out, you man of bloodshed and worthless fellow. Rude. The Lord has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned.

And the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. And behold, you were taken in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed. Whoa. Then Abishai, the son of Zeruah, said to the king, why should this dead dog curse my Lord, the king?

Let me go over now and cut off his head. Just doesn't mince his words. But the king said, what have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruah? If he curses, and if the Lord has told him, curse David, then who shall say, why have you done so?

Then David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, behold, my son who came out from me, seeks my life. How much more now, this Benjamite, let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him.

[30 : 49] Perhaps the Lord will look on my affliction, and return good to me, instead of his cursing this day. So David and his men went on the way, and Shemai went along on the hillside, parallel with him, and as he went, he went cursing and casting stones, and threw dust at him.

The king and all the people who were with him, arrived weary, and he refreshed himself there.

Wow. Shemai is of the house of Saul, and that doesn't mean he was a descendant of Saul, because we know that they're all, pretty much all dead, except for Mephibosheth.

We haven't met Shemai before now, but what we can say, is that he was a Benjamite, Saul was a Benjamite of course, and that he was loyal to King Saul, probably served him, and now he's here cursing David, saying that the Lord is punishing David for the blood of the house of Saul.

You are in your own evil, David. Now we've read the story, right? We've read the story. Do you remember the time that David sought out Saul's life? Because I don't. What I remember is David going out of his way to avoid harming Saul.

Don't touch the Lord's anointed, he said repeatedly. Hey David, I could kill him. He's right there. Do not leave him. The Lord will deal with him. He waited patiently for years for God to do what he promised.

[32 : 12] And of course, Saul ultimately fell in battle to the Philistines. And David even restrained violence against Saul's son, Esrosheth. Do you remember how the son of Saul, Esrosheth, was anointed king after Saul?

And then a couple of guys thought, we can curry favor with David if we get rid of that guy. And they did. And they assassinated Esrosheth. And then David put them to death, saying, how dare you strike a righteous man on his bed.

And Shemai says, you're guilty of the blood of the house of Saul. Really? It's completely false.

Completely false. In fact, ironically so, because in chapter 21, the Lord himself will speak of Saul and his house of blood.

So what's up? Well, what's up is Shemai is lying. And he has conjured up his own reason to have beef with David. But one thing to bear in mind is this.

This is 1 Chronicles 28, verse 3. And you could also check chapter 22 for a similar thing. David says, God said to me, you shall not build a house for my name because you are a man of war and have shed blood.

[33 : 23] And there's a similar sentiment in chapter 22 of 1 Chronicles. So David has a sense of, I am a man of blood.

I have spilled blood. I am a man of violence. He has led many, many campaigns of war, which is to say nothing of the death of Uriah. Guilt. The Lord has told him to curse me.

Has he? I don't know. How does David know? But this seems to be David's perspective. And so he says, let him do his thing. And one final note of irony before we move on from this.

Shemai is cursing and throwing stones. What do you think is the penalty for cursing the Lord's anointed, stoned to death? Ironic, I thought, that in doing this, he is committing the very act of which he is now worthy.

Verse 15. Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem and Ahithophel with them. Now it came about when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, here he is, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, Long live the king!

[34 : 27] Long live the king! And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend? And then Hushai said to Absalom, No, for whom the Lord, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.

Besides, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence. Very smooth. So Hushai in the office has established his cover with Absalom.

And I just, you've got to love the intrigue. Verse 23, no, sorry, verse 20. Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, Give your advice.

What shall we do? Ahithophel said to Absalom, Go into your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened. So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went into his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one inquired of the word of God.

[35 : 39] So was all the advice Ahithophel regarded by both David and Absalom. As I said, he was the man when it came to advice. And so we see this horrifying fulfillment of God's word to David.

And it is an example of God using the sins of others to accomplish what he has decreed. What Absalom did was wicked and sinful. God used it as part of his judgment on David, as we read at the beginning.

But what's up with this advice? Why? What's the goal here? Well, it is the optics. It's how it looks. It will make Absalom appear odious, stinky to David.

What does that mean? Well, I would remind you of a similar occurrence here in 1 Samuel 27, verse 12. This is King Ahish, if you remember.

He was king of the Philistines. And he believed that David was fighting Israel. And so Ahish, we read, believed David, saying, he has surely made himself odious among his people Israel.

[36 : 46] Therefore, he will become my servant forever. And so the idea of this is, there's no way back from this. If he does this, if he does this deed, if he takes David's concubines, there is no way Absalom and David will be reconciled.

It's not possible. It is a very egregious and obvious play for the throne. It would have symbolized, I'm taking the kingdom. I'm taking what's yours. I'm the king.

And there's no way back. And as such, the rebellion is complete and the supporters will be strengthened. So that's the thinking. And this is where we'll close for today.

You'll be relieved. And we'll go on next time, hopefully in the not too distant future, to see how things close. But I have, in the time remaining, just three application points for us.

And the first one is this. It is that we should pray for our leadership. We began with Absalom stirring up dissension against David.

[37 : 48] When you're not in a leadership role, it's easy to think and claim that you do a better job. Leadership comes with a lot of pressures, stresses, decisions, threats, risks.

Shakespeare said, uneasy lies the head that wears the crown. It's true. And politics hasn't really changed much, is it you've always got the prime minister and then you've got the opposition leader who could always do a far better job, is always second guessing every decision and it makes for great drama if it doesn't make for great politics.

But it's the same thing. When you aren't in charge, when you don't have all of the stresses and pressures, it's easy to pick on little bits here and there. And it can creep into church life too.

It turns out that every single leader is imperfect. And so when you have leadership done by the imperfect, it is imperfect. That's just the way it is.

And hence why we need Jesus Christ to be leader of this church. But because we have imperfect people, there will always be things that we do wrong. And it is easy for anyone to stand up and say, do you know what?

[38 : 56] If I were in charge, I would have done it different. The message of scripture is to pray for our leaders. Whether we're talking about church leadership, whether we're talking about secular leadership, political work, sometimes leaders are just terrible.

And sometimes they are merely imperfect. In either case, we are to pray for them. I've given you a few scriptures that you might jot down to read in your own time. Hebrews 13, 7 says that we should obey our leaders and submit to them because of the burden on them.

They will give an account for your souls. Romans 13 says that every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. And it says how God established societal order for our good.

Yeah, it's got people in it, which means it's not perfect, but overall it's for our good. And then 1 Timothy 2 is all about, he says, First of all, I urge entreaties and prayers on behalf of kings and all in authority.

I mean, we could have actually, last week we read 3 John, which was all, and we read about that guy, Diotrephes, who was putting himself first. He was in this kind of position. Hey, if I were in charge, if I was one of the church leaders, pray for them.

[40 : 13] Next, this. David is cursed, and the application is, don't accept Satan's condemnation. Exactly. David accepts the cursing and the insults from Shemai, and I sensed that this is connected to his own sense of guilt.

What Shemai said is wrong, completely wrong, completely erroneous. But as I noted, David does carry with him guilt, even though it's been dealt with insofar as the Lord has put away the sin, it's passed away.

David still thinks, Yeah, I deserve it. And he allowed the enemy to oust him from the sanctuary of Jerusalem, that seriously strong city. Do you remember when David took the city?

And they were like, The blind and the lame could keep you out. That's how strong the city is. David was there, and he's like, I've got to get out of here. And I saw here a picture of the way that Satan can lie and destabilize believers, to leave a place of sanctuary.

He wants, first of all, to prevent us believing, but if he fails there, he wants to render us ineffective for Christ. And one of the ways he will do that is he will poke and he will pick at whatever guilt we may retain over our sins.

[41 : 26] And so I wanted to say, don't accept Satan's condemnation with these three passages. And there's a ton of verses, of course, we could look at here. Romans 3, 23 to 24 says, All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

So all have sinned. And we ought not, the very often the first thing Satan will say is, You've sinned worse than everyone else. No one else could understand, and all the yada yada, you know what he says. You've heard it, I've heard it.

You've sinned worse. Yes, God forgives in general, but specifically you, no. No, the word says, All have sinned. It's the great leveler. All have sinned.

And we receive justification. That is to say, we are made right as a gift. David sinned pretty bad. He did. And he is called a man after God's heart.

1 John 3, 5 says this, You know, I know, you know, that he, Christ, appeared, in order to take away sin. And in him there is no sin.

[42 : 33] That's why Christ came. Christ came to take away sin. Not to cover them up. Not to cover them up for a little while, and they just remain lurking. No, no, no. They are taken away.

Now I know, from our standpoint in time, this is in progress, in that we are being sanctified. But from the standpoint of the courtroom of God, God, it's a done deal.

It's completed. Paid in full. We've sung it this morning. He took guilt and our sorrow, and he made them his very own. It's all gone. And then we're called to live in the freedom of that victory.

And then last, 2 Corinthians 5, 17, Therefore, if anyone's in Christ, he's a new creature, or a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, new things have come.

We are new. The guilt that was part of our old life is gone. We are new creations. So if we have our own personal shimai, lobbing stones, we can remember that we have a comprehensive solution for guilt in Christ Jesus.

[43 : 36] The only requirement is to believe in his death and the resurrection, that he really did die. And if he did that, and he rose again, then guilt has no effect.

And I was reminded that I pondered that point, that Ephesians 6 says that the shield of faith, as it is what we believe, what does it do? It extinguishes all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Now, last this, in the minus three minutes I have. Finally, we saw Jesus Christ, the son of David, illustrated by this passage.

And there are some parallels, and there are some contrasts. David is the rightful Christ, the anointed king, right? Christ means anointed. David is the rightful Christ, but there is a strong enemy claiming to be king in Hebron.

A false anointed one, or you could say, antichrist. Now, David had the entire army at his disposal. He had mighty men, he had the fortress, he had the Herethites and the Pelethites, men who had killed giants, men who had captured cities.

[44 : 45] And I have no doubt that he could have squashed Absalom's little coup, if he wanted to. Now, he didn't, and there's personal reasons, and we've talked about some of that.

Jesus was arrested in the garden, same place, mountain of olives, and he could have easily extricated himself. Do you remember when they, when they came, and he said, whom do you seek?

And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. And he said, I am he. And what happens? They fell over. They fell to the ground. He had all the power. And then in Matthew, when we had, I think it was Peter, was trying to defend Jesus, and chopped off the ear of that guy.

Jesus said, put your sword back in its place, for all who take the sword up, all who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you not think that I can appeal to my father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels?

One would have been enough, by the way. How then will the scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way? And I saw in David then, a picture of a king who stayed his hand.

[45 : 52] He could have crushed the rebellion, but he stayed his hand. Why did David do this? Well, we will, it wasn't clear today. We will see it next time. It's because he loved his son.

He loved his rebellious son, and didn't want to kill him. Why did Jesus restrain himself? Because he's not willing that any should, perish, but desires all to come to repentance.

And I thought that was a striking picture for us to close on. So Father, we thank you, Lord, for your word. We thank you, Lord God, for that truth, that faith in you is what saves.

And we are able to take the shield of faith, and we are able to resist the enemy. Lord, we thank you that you are always at work. We thank you, Lord God, for King David, and his very relatable struggles.

And I pray, Lord God, for any here who do struggle with a sense of guilt or shame, Lord, that you would impress on us all, and remind us of how you came to take it away. And you do take it away.

[46 : 51] And you long for us just to come to you, and to sit at your feet, and receive the blessing of forgiveness. Lord, we thank you for your salvation plan. We praise you. We praise you in Jesus' mighty name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.