

2 Samuel 16 — From Friends To Foes

October 22, 2023

Good morning CrossWinds! If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are grateful to have you. I have a few quick announcements before we get to our study.

First, the garage construction project is underway. We started on Saturday morning. The next build day is this coming Saturday at 8:00 AM. We could use your help. I hope to see you this Saturday morning.

Second, we had a request for a membership class that was not on Wednesday night. We have new parents who are helping with AWANA. They would like to take the class but they have the AWANA commitment. To accommodate them, we are offering a two-week-long membership class on Monday nights. It will be November 6 and 13. If you have been around a while and want to join CrossWinds, the membership class is the biggest part of membership. If you are new to CrossWinds and want to learn more about Jesus and our mission to reach people with Jesus, the membership class is a great way to learn about the heartbeat of CrossWinds. There is no obligation to join after taking the class. If you are interested in signing up, get on the church app. Go to the Spirit Lake page. Scroll to the bottom button called "Registrations." You can register there. If that doesn't work for you, simply talk to me after church.

Lastly, I want to tell you about Life Groups. At CrossWinds, we have many Life Groups. These are smaller groups of folks that get together either weekly or every other week to do life together. Most Life Groups meet in homes. Life Groups eat together, pray together, and study the Bible together. It is doing life

together. Our Life Groups are sermon-based. That means in the group, we study the chapter of the Bible we studied in the sermon on Sunday morning. Most life groups use the questions at the bottom of your sermon handout for that study. We like sermon-based Life Groups because it helps us move from hearing Bible teaching to applying the Bible in our life. Life Groups are also where you will find your closest friendships. We can only know one another on a surface level on Sunday but in Life Groups, we get to know one another intimately. If you are looking for closer connections at CrossWinds, you will find them in a Life Group.

If you are not in a Life Group, you can request to be part of one on the church app under the registration page. You can also talk to me after the service. Even better is simply talking to someone who is in a Life Group to ask them about it. This morning, if you are in a Life Group, could you stand up? See who is standing. If you want to learn more about Life Groups, after the service, talk to one of these people.

This morning, we continue our study in 2 Samuel. We are in 2 Samuel 16. At this time, King David is in a tough spot. His life has been a complete train wreck since his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Last week, things became completely unhinged. David's son, Absalom, who was next in line for the throne, was forgiven of murder by David. Absalom was such an egotistical scoundrel. As soon as he got away with murder because of his father's forgiveness, he set out to murder his father and steal the kingdom. Absalom was a seriously ungrateful child. Any son who spends four years meticulously

planning the murder of his own father is a terrorist far worse than anything Hamas has to offer.

Last week, we watched Absalom put his plan into motion. In Hebron, he proclaimed himself to be king. The sleeper cells he planted in the towns and villages around Israel rose up. They also proclaimed Absalom as king. All the chariot riding, hand kissing, and schmoozing paid off as most of the nation rallied behind Absalom. David was forced to run for his life. To avoid a bloody civil war, David left the gates of Jerusalem wide open for Absalom when he left. David and his loyalists ran for their life into the Judean wilderness.

Last week, as David was on the run, he met three of his faithful friends. One was Ittai the Gittite. He was an island of loyalty when a sea of treachery surrounded David. Another were the priests Zadok and Abiathar. They originally planned to take the ark with David and escape with David, but instead, at David's request, they returned to Jerusalem to serve as a spy network for David and report to David Absalom's plans as he took over the city. The last faithful friend was Hushai the Archite. He was too old to head into the wilderness. He was a friend of David known for his wisdom. David asked him to return to Jerusalem. His mission was to serve as a mole. He was an agent on the inside with the express purpose of confusing the advice of a brilliant man named Ahithophel. Ahithophel was one of David's best friends. He was also a genius. He switched sides and joined Absalom in his rebellion. Ahithophel was so smart that if his advice was not derailed, there was no way David would survive.

The last chapter closed with Hushai returning to Jerusalem and slipping into the city just as Absalom and his men arrived.

In 2 Samuel 15, we met three friends of David. Today, in 2 Samuel 16, we meet three foes of David. We will see how God was at work caring for David and disciplining David, and maturing David through his enemies. We will learn that even when enemies are working against us, in their evil, God has not forgotten us. Even when our enemies freely carry out evil plans against us, God is bigger than their evil plans. He can turn those plans around and use their evil schemes for his good purposes and the good of God's people. That was not just true of David. It is also true for you and me.

Let's meet the enemies of David.

Ziba — The Con-Man God Used

Having little warning of Absalom's coupe and the need to run for his life, David and his followers were completely unprepared for an escape into the wilderness. When we hear wilderness, we think of trees, streams, and animals. Let me show you what the Judean



wilderness looks like. This is where David and his men were headed. This week, I studied this photo. I didn't see a Kwik-Star or Casey's Gas station anywhere. It is also missing a Super Walmart. That is not good news. People were running for their lives, heading into the desert. They have little food. This does not look good, until a man shows up, a man named Ziba.

When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine. 2 Samuel 16:1 (ESV)

The ESV translates this as a couple of donkeys. To emphasize the fact that there were more than two, the NIV translation calls this a string of donkeys. Ziba has lunches packed for everyone on the trip. This is great news at an important time.

When we began, I said this message was about David meeting his enemies. Ziba and his donkeys loaded with food as they head into the desert don't make it sound like Ziba was an enemy. He looks like a friend. That is the point. Sometimes enemies can look like friends.

Who is Ziba? He was the chief servant of King Saul's household. We first met him in 2 Samuel 9. At that time, we found him enriching himself with the vast acreages of King Saul's farms, while he left the one remaining heir of King Saul's property alone in hiding. That was a man named Mephibosheth, who was a cripple. When we met Ziba in 2 Samuel 9, we had the feeling that he was a little shady and looking out for himself since he never brought Mephibosheth home. David set that straight. He put Mephibosheth over Ziba. He restored to Mephibosheth King Saul's vast estate, which was rightfully his.

Even though Ziba came to David, and he appears to be generous to David and his men with all this food, David suspects something is not right so he asks Ziba a question.

And the king said to Ziba, "Why have you brought these?"... 2 Samuel 16:2a (ESV)

A literal translation of the Hebrew is, “What are you doing with these things?” Ziba, does all this food belong to you? What right do you have to give all this away? David was asking him, “Did you run off with Mephibosheth’s stuff? Is all of this yours to give away?” Look how Ziba answers. He was like a politician. He avoided David’s question by answering a different question. When the thappens, it is always a bad sign.

...Ziba answered, “The donkeys are for the king’s household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness to drink.” 2 Samuel 16:2b (ESV)

Ziba didn’t answer David’s question. He just spoke of how useful the food and transpiration would be for David and his men as they headed into the wilderness. Was Ziba generous, thoughtful, and considerate, or was something else going on? David still didn’t trust him so he asked him directly.

And the king said, “And where is your master’s son?”... 2 Samuel 16:3a (ESV)

Ziba’s master was Saul. His master’s son (technically his grandson) was Mephibosheth. Where is Mephibosheth, the owner of all this stuff you are so generously offering?

This gave Ziba the opportunity he wanted so he could move from the cloak of being a generous man to displaying his true colors, a con-man.

...Ziba said to the king, “Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.’” 2 Samuel 16:3b (ESV)

Mephibosheth remained in Jerusalem. Now that you are gone from the city, he expects the nation will install him as king in your place. Ouch!!!! That hurt!

Before we go any further, let’s put ourselves in David’s shoes and remember the stress he was under. His son was out to kill him. David was facing

a national revolt against him. David was running for his life. He didn't know who was on his side. He was running into the desert. He was exhausted. He was stressed. If you think you have rough days, trust me, the day your son has several thousand people chasing you hoping to kill you is worse.

When David heard that Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem and, in David's absence, planned to be crowned king, he flew off the handle. That ungrateful little twerp. Years ago David found Mephibosheth in hiding. As a cripple, David showed great kindness to him. Every day Mephibosheth ate at the king's table. Now he was trying to steal the kingship! How could he do that to me. David was angry. We all know this. When you are angry, please don't make a hasty decision, or it will be the wrong decision. Apparently David missed that lesson in school.

Then the king said to Ziba, "Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours."... 2 Samuel 16:4a (ESV)

David didn't have time to investigate. He didn't have time to think. This was all emotions. He was upset and hurt. He stripped Mephibosheth of the vast wealth that came with King Saul's estates leaving him penniless, then he gave all of it to Ziba. You can imagine how excited Ziba was about this.

...And Ziba said, "I pay homage; let me ever find favor in your sight, my lord the king." 2 Samuel 16:4b (ESV)

Ziba says, "Thank you so very much."

At first, after looking at this, it doesn't look like Ziba was an enemy of David. It looks like he was a loyal friend, and Mephibosheth was the traitor. Spoiler alert. David survives this attempt on his life. Later in the book, when

David returns to Jerusalem, there is more to this story. He comes back to Jerusalem and meets Mephibosheth.

And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. He had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety. And when he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?" He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. He has slandered your servant to my lord the king... 2 Samuel 19:24–27 (ESV)

In 2 Samuel 16, Ziba lied through his teeth. Mephibosheth had the long beard, nails and no washed clothes to prove he was in mourning since David left town.

Ziba took advantage of David's vulnerability. He played into David's weakness with supposed goodness. Ziba lied and manipulated David into making a rash decision he would later regret. There is a practical lesson in this.

1. **Be careful about judging by appearances.** When Ziba told his story about Mephibosheth, David should have thanked Ziba for the stuff but not assumed the worst about a man who had been so faithful to him in the past. He should have assumed the best about Mephibosheth, not the worst. The Bible requires us not to accept a charge against someone unless it is based on two or more witnesses.

"A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. Deuteronomy 19:15 (ESV)

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 1 Timothy 5:19 (ESV)

God's law required David to reserve his judgment against Mephibosheth until more than one person established that Mephibosheth was trying to steal the throne. Until that was done, David was not to jump to conclusions and make a hasty decision. Those kinds of hasty decisions are decisions that are often wrong. They are decisions we will live to regret.

This applies to us. When we are tired. When we are stressed and we hear something about someone that sounds like they have done or spoken a hurtful thing about us, it is so easy to be like David and in the heat of the moment make a rash decision or speak condemnation we will live to regret. David should have accepted the stuff from them Ziba, then told him, when I return, I will find out it what you are saying is true. It doesn't seem possible because that would be completely out of character for Mephibosheth.

So we have Ziba, the manipulative flattering liar, and David, who stepped into his trap and made a rash decision he will regret. But there is another side to this story that is the theme of this chapter.

God can use the evil plans of our enemies as part of his care and leading of his people. Ziba's motives were to use stuff to manipulate David, but David and his men needed food and supplies to make it through the Judean wilderness. God used Ziba's strategy as a con man to provide for the physical needs of David and his men. Ziba had no idea what he intended for his greedy purposes was being used by God to protect and provide for David and his men in their time of need.

When people have evil plans for us, or they manipulate us or they hurt us, they have no idea that God is so much bigger than their evil plans. God can take evil plans and intentions and incorporate them into his good purposes to protect and provide for his people.

Have you ever had something hurtful or difficult happen to you, that at the time left you full of pain? Now you look back on it and can see how God took that pain and used it for a good purpose. Maybe you were falsely accused, but in the end, God used those hurtful things to do something good in your life.

It reminds me of the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. His own brothers sold him as a slave to Egypt. Imagine walking on the hot sand in chains to Egypt looking behind you to see your own brothers laughing as they dragged you away. Later in Joseph's life, he realized the evil his brothers planned for him was turned on its head by God and used as the way to take Joseph to Egypt to save many lives, including the lives of the brothers who betrayed him. God has an amazing way of taking the evil our enemies plan against us and turning it around for our good and God's glory.

Even David's enemies were unwittingly serving God's good purposes.

Shimei — The Potty Mouth With A Purpose

Ziba was David's enemy as a liar and deceiver. Now we meet Shimei. He also hated David. The difference is he was honest about it. He was a potty mouth.

When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually. 2 Samuel 16:5 (ESV)

Bahurim was about 1.5 miles northeast of Jerusalem. They had just left town when they met this man. We have heard that sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me. You know that is not true. In all the marital counseling I have done, the problem in the marriage was not that the couple was hurting one another with sticks and stones. They are hurting one another with words. In Shimei, David met a man who was going to do his best to hurt David with his words. When David was going through his darkest hour, running for his life, here was a man who wanted to kick David when he was down.

Cursing out King David is significant. It is not something anyone should do lightly. The last time anyone cursed out David was a man named Goliath. That didn't end well for him. He ended up with a rock in his brain. With that as the background on the last person who cursed David to his face, you would think Shimei would rethink his filthy hate-filled words. Unfortunately, he didn't

Who was Shimei? He was a relative of King Saul. He lost out in life due to David rising to the throne and Saul losing the kingship. He blamed David for all of his family's troubles.

Incidentally, the words Shimei spoke on this day determined the rest of his life. Shimei will appear again when David returns to Jerusalem in chapter 19. He will appear again toward the end of David's life in 1 Kings 2, and early in King Solomon's reign. Each time he reappears, the hate-filled words he spoke to David on this day are remembered. Even though Shimei asked to be forgiven for what he said, the words he spoke will stain his reputation in the minds of many.

This reminds us that what we say matters, especially when we are angry like Shimei was on this fateful day. We can ask to be forgiven after we have cussed people out, but what is forgiven is not easily forgotten. Hurtful words can leave deep wounds. Shimei will use words to wound David in one of his most vulnerable moments.

Shimei didn't stop at words, but he became physical.

And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. 2 Samuel 16:6 (ESV)

He was shouting cuss words at David plus lobby rocks at David and his men. The stupidity of this is apparent. David was surrounded by his warriors. It is never a good idea to cuss at the king out and throw rocks at him when the Secret Service surrounds him. But when you are out-of-control mad like Shimei was, you don't think about those things. Let's look at some of the words he spoke.

And Shimei said as he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! The LORD has avenged on you all the blood 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. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood." 2 Samuel 16:7-8 (ESV)

As for getting out, that is what David was doing. This was King David he spoke to. He showed no respect. He called David a worthless man. Earlier in our studies, the sons of Eli were called worthless men. Nabal was called a worthless man. Describing David as a worthless man is a bad insult for someone who risked his life repeatedly to save the nation. He also called David a man of blood. He called him a murderer.

Who did David murder? What made David so worthless? In Shimei's eyes, Absalom's coup was God's revenge on David for all the blood he shed from the

house of King Saul. Shimei held David guilty for the death of King Saul and other members of his house.

If you have been with us, you know that is not true. Saul and Jonathan died at the hands of the Philistines. At the time of Saul's death, David was a hundred miles south away from the battle. David had nothing to do with King Saul's death. He mourned his death. Later, Joab, David's army commander, killed Abner, Saul's army commander. 2 Samuel tells us Joab acted independent of David. David also had nothing to do with Abner's death. Ishbosheth, Saul's remaining son, was killed by two men who brought his head to David. It looked like David was involved in the death, but again we know that David had nothing to do with it. Earlier in the book of 1 Samuel, every time David had a chance to kill King Saul, he refused to touch him, saying, "I will not touch the Lord's anointed."

The problem is for some people, people like Shimei, they don't want to look at the facts and discover the truth. They only want to hear facts that support the truth they want to believe. For Shimei, the truth he wanted to believe was that David was guilty of killing King Saul and his family, even though the evidence didn't support it. Shimei saw Absalom's rebellion as God punishing David for what he had done to King Saul and his family.

This reminds me of an interview I saw in the media this past week. It was by a reporter who was blatantly pro-Palestinian. He was interviewing a member of the Israeli Defense Force about the bombing of the hospital in Gaza. At the end of the interview, the IDF commander was angry. He told the reporter it didn't

matter how much evidence he gave him that the Israeli's didn't strike the hospital. The reporter wouldn't listen because it didn't fit the narrative he wanted to be true. The same thing was going on with Shimei. He didn't care about the evidence of David's innocence in those matters. All he cared about was what he wanted to be true.

Here is where it gets ironic. While David was not guilty of murder or acting like a worthless man in the deaths of King Saul and his family, he was guilty of murder and acting like a worthless man. He murdered Uriah, and he acted like a worthless man when he took Bathsheba, who was another man's wife. Shimei didn't know he had the right charges but the wrong crime.

Shimei was also right in claiming Absalom's rebellion was from God on account of his murder and worthless actions. Again, he had the wrong crime, but the right charges. The prophet Nathan told David that as a consequence of David's sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, God would raise up someone from within his own house who would attempt to overthrow him.

Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house... 2 Samuel 12:11a (ESV)

Absalom's rebellion against him was the evil God raised up against David out of his own house. All he was going through was part of the long-term consequences of his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah.

As we will see, Shimei kept on cursing David and pelting him with rocks for miles. David did not like this. Nobody liked this. It was making a bad day far worse. Finally, one of David's soldiers had enough.

Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.” 2 Samuel 16:9 (ESV)

Abishai called him a dead dog, which means a useless piece of trash. Why should we listen to this useless piece of trash curse the king? Let me take off his head. He knew that if you removed a man’s head from his body, that would stop their cursing.

But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’ ” And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. 2 Samuel 16:10–11 (ESV)

This reply appears enigmatic, but it gives us remarkable insight into David’s view of what was happening. David knew everything that was happening to him with Absalom’s rebellion, and all the suffering he was facing was part of God’s plan for his life. David knew this was part of the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah.

This might be the Lord’s doing. David reasoned that if Shimei was cursing him out because the Lord told him to curse David, then so be it. David realized that God may have sent Shimei to further humble him in this dark moment, even though he was accusing him of the wrong crime.

Folks, God still operates this way today. The Bible tells us God disciplines those he loves. He corrects those he calls his sons. In our life, like David, we may become involved in an area of sin on one side of our life. God’s discipline to correct us may show up in a completely different area of our lives. When God’s

discipline shows up, we know God has brought some suffering into our life to get our attention and to turn us away from our sins.

God sometimes brings suffering into our lives to humble us and correct us. He did that with his people many times in the Old Testament. He was doing that with David. This does not mean God hates us but that like a good father is corrects us because he loves us.

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. Psalm 119:67 (ESV)

David gives another reason for not taking off Shimei's head but for enduring the cursing he spoke.

It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today." 2 Samuel 16:12 (ESV)

David knew this about God. When God's people endure wrong done to them, especially if it is wrong done to them for the wrong reasons, God loves to bless his people for enduring hard times and suffering well. When we are afflicted, and people do hurtful things to us, even if their accusation is untrue, the right way to respond to it is not to get even with them and take off their heads, like Abishai wanted to do, but endure the suffering and not return evil for evil.

David realized it was not Shimei's opinion of him that mattered, but it was God's opinion that mattered. The best way to please God at this moment would be to have a humble not vengeful heart.

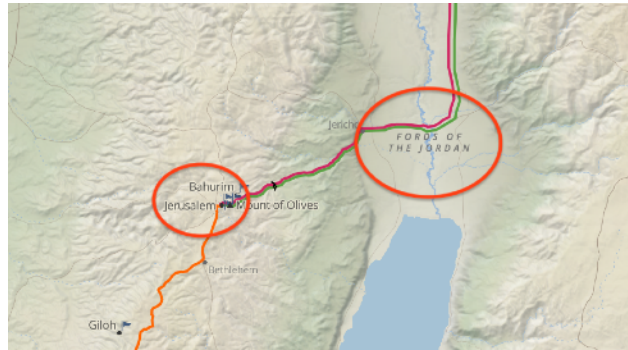
Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 1 Peter 5:6 (ESV)

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. 1 Peter 4:19 (ESV)

Shimei's cursing of David went on for a long time..

So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself. 2 Samuel 16:13–14 (ESV)

It was a long walk to the Jordan River with Shimei cursing David, plus throwing rocks and dirt on him most of the way.



Ahithophel — The Evil Genius

Now Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. 2 Samuel 16:15 (ESV)

We leave David at the Jordan River. He was weary from travel. The camera shifts back to Jerusalem when Absalom and Hushai were arriving in the capital city. The opening verse of this section gives us a snapshot of what it looked like. All the people were with Absalom. The impression we have is many people were on Absalom's side. It also tells us the men of Israel were with Absalom. At first, it sounds like that is repetition. It is not. It is the men of Israel were the men of the ten northern tribes. The ten northern tribes were firmly behind Absalom and his coup. More dangerous than the thousands of people with Absalom is the mention of one particular man. His presence or absence would decide the fate of the coupe. He was an evil genius. His name was Ahithophel. Last week, we saw David was so worried about him on Absalom's side that he sent Hushai, his best friend, to be a mole to frustrate his wise word. The only way for David's kingdom to be saved was for Hushai to derail Ahithophel's brilliant advice.

We begin by Hushai and Absalom meeting.

And when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" 2 Samuel 16:16 (ESV)

Imagine Absalom's surprise to find Jerusalem abandoned and no resistance when he came to the city to claim the throne. An even bigger surprise was the man in front of him, David's well-known friend, Hushai. If Ahithophel had reason to turn against David because of the Bathsheba incident, that was not the case with Hushai. His friendship with David was solid. The last person Absalom expected to see in Jerusalem to help him was Hushai.

Of course, Absalom did not know what we know. He did not know Hushai was in Jerusalem because he was David's friend. He did not know Hushai was there to trick him.

Hushai was a very crafty man. Seeing Absalom, he immediately took control of the conversation to direct it where he wanted it to go. He blurted out, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" As soon as Absalom heard those words, being the arrogant man he was, he assumed they referred to himself.

We know better. The king Hushai hoped would live a long time was David, his friend. Absalom thought Hushai's statement referred to him when it didn't.

And Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" 2 Samuel 16:17 (ESV)

To reinforce Absalom's misunderstandings, Hushai continued with his double-speak to not lie but still have Absalom hear what he wanted to hear.

And Hushai said to Absalom, "No, for whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. And again, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I have served your father, so I will serve you." 2 Samuel 16:18–19 (ESV)

Hushai said he would serve the one whom the Lord and all the people had chosen. Absalom's big ego loved this. He thought Hushai was referring to him as the one whom all the people and the Lord had chosen. In reality, only the people chose Absalom. Earlier in David's reign, it was the people and the Lord who chose David. Once again, Hushai skillfully spoke about David in a way that left Absalom thinking Hushai spoke flattering words to him.

Verse 19 is even more deceptive, but the subtleties of the way Hushai spoke are hidden in some of our English translations. The ESV and the NIV make it sound like Hushai was agreeing to serve Absalom like he served his father. That is not what was happening. I think the NASB preserves the subtlety of the Hebrew better so we can see the deception Hushai was playing.

“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.” 2 Samuel 16:19 (NASB95)

Hushai told Absalom that just as he served in the presence of David, he would serve in the presence of David's son. Hushai didn't say who he would serve, just in whose presence he would serve. We know he planned to serve in Absalom's presence as a spy for David. Egotistical Absalom completely misses that.

Hushai, being a crafty man, never lied to Absalom, but playing into Absalom's ego. Absalom heard the speech as if Hushai was swapping commitments. What more could Absalom ask for? First, he had Ahithphel, the evil genius, on his side. Now he also had Hushai, David's best friend. Things looked great.

It was time to get back to the task of taking over the kingdom. The camera shifts to one deadly man. David's former counselor and best friend, Ahithophel.

What happened next shows us the depth of the evil in Ahithophel's heart.

Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your counsel. What shall we do?" 2 Samuel 16:20 (ESV)

What he says takes your breath away.

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 have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened." 2 Samuel 16:21 (ESV)

His instructions were clear, direct, and outrageous. You will remember David left ten concubines to tend to the palace when he was on the run. It is difficult to imagine something more calculated to offend, disrespect and hurt his father than for him to follow Ahithophel's cold-blooded counsel and have sex with each of his father's wives. This was not an act to claim David's throne. He had already done that in Hebron. It was an act to insult and poke a stick in the eye of his father. Absalom chose to rape his father's wives. Earlier, Absalom killed Amnon, his older brother, for raping his sister. Now he will rape ten of father's wives. Absalom has become ten times worse than the older brother he hated! The Bible has some very clear words on this.

If a man lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. Leviticus 20:11 (ESV)

While this once again put Absalom under the death penalty, but Ahithophel didn't care. He knew it would force the fence-sitters to decide between David and Absalom. It would make the relationship between father and son irreparable. The amazing part is that Absalom didn't hesitate to do this.

So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. 2 Samuel 16:22 (ESV)

I assume this act took a little time. One by one, the women were brought into the tent on the roof. Absalom overpowered them and raped them. From below, everyone knew what was happening. They heard the screams. They saw the woman leaving in tears, humiliated, traumatized, and so ashamed they would never recover.

Notice one thing. Where did this take place? On the roof of David's house. Isn't this where it all began? Wasn't it on the roof of David's house that David began lusting after Bathsheba?

Abaslom's disgraceful and disgusting deed was connected to what David had done. It was part of the consequences of sin David was to endure. Look how Nathan prophetically spoke about this in 2 Samuel 12.

Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 2 Samuel 12:11 (ESV)

David, what you did with Bathsheba privately that you tried to hide, I will do to your wives publicly in a way that cannot be hidden.

Where is hope in all of this? Where is God in all of this? God shows up in many ways. First, is the authority and accuracy of his words. Everything happened exactly the way God said it would.

What I find encouraging is God didn't just speak words of consequences to David for his sin, but he also spoke words of forgiveness. He spoke words of healing and God's faithful to him. If God's words of judgment proved true, we

know God's words of forgiveness, healing, and restoration will just as accurately prove true.

Even though Absalom and Ahithophel freely chose their evil deeds, and they are fully responsible for what they have done, God is bigger than all of them. Their evil plans could never overthrow God's purposes, in fact, their evil plans ended up carrying out God's purposes.

For example, Ahithophel and Absalom freely chose to rape David's wives to hurt him. They didn't know they were carrying out God's word of judgment against David. God was taking their evil, which they chose, and were fully responsible for, then using it for God's good purposes.

Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom. 2 Samuel 16:23 (ESV)

As the chapter ends, we are given these brief words on the intellect of Ahithophel. He was a genius. He was already right. You would think that with Ahithophel on Absalom's side, there is no chance for David. What we have seen is none of them realize the enemies of David were carrying out God's will.

In all of these evil people and evil times, we see God large and in charge over everything in David's life. God use Ziba the con-man to provide for David. God used Shimei to humble David in a way that was appropriate for what he had done. God even used the mighty Ahithophel to unwittingly carry out God's word of judgment against David. The enemies of David were not bigger than God and they had no idea they could do nothing more than serve God's purposes.

It reminds me of Judas. While Judas freely chose to betray Jesus, his evil plans against Jesus were used by God for his good purposes, that was to send Jesus to the cross to die in our place for our sin, and then to rise to new life.

What an amazing reminder that evil those with evil plans against us are forced by God to serve his good purposes.

I don't know what you have faced in life. I don't know what evil has been done to you or done by you. I do know that God is bigger than the evil or hardship we face. God is so big that when men freely choose evil, he takes it and makes it serve his good purposes. That is why, no matter how chaotic our world becomes, we do not lose hope.

Applications

2. Ziba's evil plan to deceive David was used by God to provide for David. This reminds us God can take what was intended for evil against us and use it for good.
3. Shimei reminds us that God may get our attention by disciplining us in one area of life when we are harboring sin in another area.
4. Ahithophel reminds us God is bigger than evil. Even an evil genius had to carry out God's word unwittingly.
5. Evil does not destroy God's good purposes. God incorporates evil into his plans to achieve his good purposes. (Think of Judas and Jesus)
6. David and Ziba remind us to refrain from making radical decisions when tired or overwhelmed.

7. David and Mephibosheth remind us to assume the best about people, not the worst. Don't believe what you hear unless two or three eyewitnesses support it.



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