

2 Samuel 17:1-23

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[0:00] Thank you, Bibles, going to 2 Samuel, 2 Samuel chapter 17, 2 Samuel chapter 17. Were y'all having a discussion of where we were at?

You were right, Ms. Myrtle. I mean, there are not very many aspects of my life which I'm very predictable.

I don't normally travel the same road twice. If I go somewhere in one direction, I always find another way back. That's just kind of how I am. But my preaching is very predictable because I'm just making my way through Scripture.

So if you are paying attention, you kind of know where we're at. 2 Samuel chapter 17. Our text this evening will be verses 1 through 23. We won't quite finish up the chapter because the latter verse fit better with the 18th chapter and the events that are going on there.

So we will read them in connection to the first part of the 18th chapter. Put it in context. Because we always want to set it in context, especially when we're reading the historical writings of the Old Testament because we're interrupting a story sometimes or an event in an account.

[1:10] We need to know what's going on, what's preceded it, what brought us to this point. How did we get here, right? Absalom's revolt is in full swing. Ahithophel, which had been counselor to David, kind of worthy of notes, also Bathsheba's grandfather, is joined with Absalom in the revolt.

Now they have come into Jerusalem. King David has left. He has fled Jerusalem so that there would not be a bloody massacre. There would not be any war.

He spared the people. We saw his humility. We saw his acceptance of God's disciplinary action upon his life. We've seen, too, though, that David left some behind.

Who's shy? Who wanted to go with David, but yet he left him there. God always has his man. It's a theme that we continue to trace through Scripture. And he is there to be kind of the eyes and ears of David and to send messages.

We'll see that as we get into the latter part of the 17th chapter. We won't see it this evening. Well, we'll begin to see the beginning of it this evening. He sends channels to what's going on so that their movements are known.

[2:19] But yet Absalom has come in. He's pronounced himself king. And Ahithophel, the counselor, is there. And it tells us, this is worthy of noting before we read the 17th chapter, that in those days the counsel of Ahithophel was as if God had spoken, as if the word of God.

David took it and Absalom took it. He was considered the best counselor, the wisest counselor in the kingdom. His advice was worthy of adhering and worthy of following.

Now that's important because we're about to read what transpires in that counsel. Because that's his character. That's what we can expect from him.

And yet we will see that things do not unfold that way because we'll see in the first 23 verses of the 17th chapter, best laid plans overruled.

Best laid plans overruled. It says, starting in verse 1, Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight.

[3:25] I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted and terrify him so that all the people who are with him will flee. Then I will strike down the king alone and I will bring back all the people to you.

The return of everyone depends on the man you seek. Then all the people will be at peace. So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. Then Absalom said, Now call Hushai the archite also and let us hear what he has to say.

When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom said to him, Ahithophel has spoken thus, Shall we carry out his plan? If not, you speak. So Hushai said to Absalom, This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good.

Moreover, Hushai said, You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men and they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. And your father is an expert in warfare and will not spend the night with the people.

Behold, he has now hidden himself in one of the caves or in another place. And it will be when he falls on them at the first attack that whoever hears it will say, There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.

[4 : 33] And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men. But I counsel that all Israel be surely gathered to you from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand is by the sea in abundance, and that you personally go into battle.

So we shall come to him in one of the places where he can be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and of all the men who are with him, not even one will be left. If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it into the valley until not even a small stone is found there. Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.

For the Lord had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel so that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom. Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar, the priests, This is what Ahithophel counseled Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is what I have counseled. Now therefore send quickly and tell David, saying, Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over, or else the king and all the people who are with him will be destroyed. Now Jonathan and Ahimez were staying at Enrogel, and a maidservant would go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David, for they could not be seen entering the city.

[5 : 54] But a lad did see them and told Absalom, so that the two of them departed quickly and came to the house of a man in Baharum who had a well in his courtyard. And they went down into it, and the woman took a covering and spread it over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it so that nothing was known.

Then Absalom's servant came to the woman at the house and said, Where are Ahimez and Jonathan? And the woman said to them, They have crossed the brook of water. And when they searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

It came about after they had departed that they came out of the well and went and told King David, and they said to David, Arise and cross over the water quickly, for thus Ahithophel has counseled against you.

Then David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed the Jordan, and by dawn not even one remained who had not crossed the Jordan. Verse 23. Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself.

Thus he died and was buried in the grave of his father. 2 Samuel 17 verses 1 through 23. Again, we see the best laid plans being overruled.

[7 : 08] We see what David has left his actual fruition, and he hears word, and he is able to make movements accordingly because he hears of the counsel of Ahithophel.

Again, it's worth noting that the word tells us that the counsel of Ahithophel in those days was considered as accurate as a word from God. He was one that was taken at face value.

He was one who was trusted by David. He was David's best counselor who so joined with Absalom in his revolt because of personal concerns. We'll get to that in just a moment.

And yet here in this chapter, we see that that counsel is overruled and neglected and forgotten. Hopefully we'll understand by the time we get to it, this is not just because of the eloquence of Hushai's speech or of his persuasion.

Persuasion, we'll see rather there was a greater movement that is going on. The first thing that I want you to notice, though, we consider the counselor, that is Ahithophel himself. And we see that when he speaks, because this is really what is happening, not only in the realm of man, but also in the courtroom of heaven, it is a matter of self-concern.

[8 : 21] Ahithophel, after they come into Jerusalem, David has just left. He's not even made his way all the way to the wilderness. He is at the edge of the Jordan River, not yet crossed over. He is still at the ford.

And Ahithophel gives advice that the Word of God tells us later on is good counsel. Theoretically, according to man, if the counsel of Ahithophel is followed, the ruin of David is certain. Because there has not been a battle yet. There has not been a fight. There has been no butch. Yet David and his men are weary. They are tired. They are true. Truly, they are worn out. And Ahithophel counsels that a small number of people go, and they attack quickly, secretly, and they go for one individual, and that is David. And then when David is gone, then the rest of the people will come back.

But I want you to notice when you read this how Ahithophel frames his counsel. As a matter of fact, pay attention to all of the personal pronouns in his counsel.

[9 : 21] He tells the king, let me take 12,000 men, and I will pursue the king, and I will overtake him, and I will strike him down, and then I will lead back all of the men.

There's a lot of I's in Ahithophel's counsel. It is Absalom who has declared himself king, but the counsel, which is declared good later on in this chapter, we'll get to that in just a moment, the counsel is very much self-centered.

Because Ahithophel here is not really seeking that which is best for the nation of Israel, nor that which would be best for the new king, quote, unquote, Absalom.

He is really seeking personal vengeance for a vendetta, which he has against King David. We have seen the reality that more than likely what is happening is Ahithophel has forsaken David because he is upset over the matters with Bathsheba, which is understandable.

He doesn't like how David has handled matters there, even with Uriah, and since these things were never really publicly addressed, he decided to take matters in his own hands. Now, he is part of the plan of God's chastisement.

[10 : 39] While it was not publicly declared, we do know that David has been privately told what is going to happen because the prophet Nathan has stood before him and told him these things would happen. But yet, because of his concern, and he says there's no judgment, vengeance is mine, says Ahithophel.

And now we're in a dangerous place because he says, give them to me. I will take them. I will do. I will go. I will take. I will bring back. I will lead. And self-centered living is the first step to destructive endings.

And we see this because there's a whole lot of I in that council. While it may be militaristically good, the reality is Ahithophel is thinking more about himself than he is about military warfare here.

And we're on dangerous ground any time we begin to put self in the forefront. He is declaring what it is he could do.

It's striking to me because Absalom is the king. Absalom has declared himself king. Ahithophel has declared him king. Some of the men around him have declared him king, but he's not fought the first battle.

[11 : 58] He hasn't been victorious yet. He hasn't been declared king by all of the people. But yet we see here that Ahithophel says, I can do it without you. You stay here.

And we understand that this matter of self-concern rather than other concern is the beginning of the downfall of this great man.

And it's the downfall of many, many people throughout history. When we begin to be more concerned about self. When we begin to look and see about us.

Now, I would never say, even though some of the scholars will tell you, that I would never say this book is great in theology.

Even though, for a number of years, the individual who wrote it, Martin Nehomuller is his name, was a pastor in Germany, went around and declared all this stuff for the peace of Jerusalem and all after the matter.

[13 : 00] But Martin Nehomuller's book, and then they came for me. He declared it in a number of universities. He declared it in a number of settings throughout history.

And he said it this way. When the Nazi regime came, they first came for the Jews, and I wasn't a Jew, so it didn't bother me. And then they came for the sick, and I wasn't sick, so it didn't bother me. He said, and then they came for me. And it had to bother me. Unfortunately, as a pastor in that land, that's what it took to get his attention.

Now, I'm not putting him down here, but I'm just saying also, theologically, there's a lot wrong with the beliefs that are being stated there.

That the only thing that bothered was self. The rest of it could be dismissed. And that's exactly what happened in one of history's greatest downfalls.

[14 : 03] It's amazing. How did Hitler ever rise to power? How did Germany ever fall? It's because people were living with self-concern. And as long as you left me alone, it was okay.

And the reason the downfall around so many churches in that land, and in our own land, if we're going to be honest, is because the churches are living with self-concern.

And when self-concern begins to take preeminence, disastrous outcomes are inevitable. We see this in Ahithophel's counsel.

Number two, we see there is a measure of prideful confidence. And here we're not talking about Ahithophel. We're going to move to Absalom. There's this measure of pride that leads to really an untested and untried confidence.

Ahithophel gives his counsel. Absalom and all his men said, that sounds great. Absalom says, well, wait a minute. Let's call Hushai in and let's see what Hushai has to say. Hushai comes in, and he says, well, this time the counsel of Ahithophel is not good.

[15 : 10] And he gives a great speech, right? He starts talking about the proudness of David. He starts talking about David's mighty men, which we have said over and over again, don't forget David's mighty men are still with him, right? Men who can fight, men who would fight.

The moment David tells him to men who are more than capable of winning the battle. But really what gets Absalom is when Hushai tells him, what you need to do, O king, he begins to exalt him, right?

What you need to do is call all of Israel to yourself, and you need to go before them, and you will win the battle, and you will call them back. Listen, to someone who puts themselves on the pedestal, the best way to get them to do anything is to tell them what they can do.

And Absalom wants to assert himself as king. And here's this council, and he's like, yes, that's what I want. I want to go before all of the people. I want to go. He tells him to call all of Israel.

I want to go and battle, a mighty battle array, and then you will be victorious, and we will be strong, and we'll even pull cities down with ropes, right? And you hear how he's just pumping him up and telling him, now you and I know what's going on, because David left him here for this purpose, but the reason Hushai had an audience is because Absalom was so prideful to begin with that he did not recognize that when Hushai spoke of being loyal to the king that he was speaking of the true king, he assumed that he was saying, well, you're going to be loyal to me.

[16 : 33] Remember Sunday night, and we looked at that, right? Hushai never lost faithfulness in David. He says, He whom the Lord has called and all his people have chosen, him I will serve.

Absalom said, well, that's me. That's what pride does to you, right? It begins to put yourself in a place where you don't belong, and it begins to give a false assurance of abilities that you don't possess.

Pride tells us, well, surely I, he's speaking to me, pride says, well, surely I can take all the people of Israel. Pride says, well, yeah, we'll just rip cities down, and we'll go to there. And this pride, what does the scripture say?

Pride goes before a fall, right? It's amazing. We're kind of jumping ahead of the story a little bit here, but both of these individuals end up hanging from a tree.

The self-centered and the prideful. One from a rope, another from his hair. But this pride, Hushai found an opportunity in the pride of the man before him.

[17 : 36] Now, Hushai is a friend of the king. He is there speaking on behalf of David for this purpose, but unfortunately, the enemy of our souls often finds an opportunity in the pride we possess.

Pride that says, yes, we can do it. Yes, we can have this. Yes, we ought to be able to do this. Yes, we can do things on our own. And yes, we can do things. Sure, I can. It must be speaking of me.

And we begin to put ourselves in a position which we never belong.

And it's amazing when we read this story, Hushai tells him correctly of everything about David.

He's a mighty man. He's got mighty men with him. He's hiding. He's won battles. He's done all this. And yet somehow convinces Absalom that he is stronger. That you can do it.

And it's what was found in Absalom that convinced him and that's pride. And this pride is going to be the thing that leads to the council being overruled, which is our third thing.

[18 : 40] The third point is a move to neglect council. It tells us in Scripture, then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, the council of Hushai the arch is better than the council of Ahithophel.

So it's even more astounding that not only did Absalom believe it, but all the men with him believed it. And this is what should cause us to pause. Because everyone had heard the council of Ahithophel.

It tells us that all the men of Israel heard the council of Ahithophel and said, yes, that's good. The next man comes in and speaks and now all of a sudden they all go, oh, well, that's really good. Now that's astounding because you may convince one, but it's going to be very hard to convince all. But yet we're told that Absalom and all the men with him said his council is better. But don't give Hushai too much credit here. Don't say, well, he gave a rousing speech and he did really good with his persuasion and I love his illustrations and I love what he was pointing to because if you do, you fail to see the very next verse because the very next verse says, for the Lord had ordained. Why did they all believe? For the Lord had ordained to thwart the good council of Ahithophel so that the Lord might bring calamity on Absalom.

[20 : 01] The reason they accepted the council of Hushai is for the Lord had ordained. Now, you need to understand this, that though men make plans on earth, God still rules from heaven.

Right? The best laid plans of mice and men, so the book says, and the best laid plans down here really don't stand a chance in the courtroom of heaven because the ordaining work of the Lord God Almighty always overrules the grandest plans of mankind.

Now, what's astounding is that we see God's ordaining to do this is in direct connection to the prayer of David when he's leaving Jerusalem.

If you go back to the 15th chapter and in the 15th chapter starting in verse 31, Now, someone told David, saying Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.

And David said, look at this, O Lord, I pray he met the council of Ahithophel foolishness. David says, God, make he who is a good counselor be as foolish in their eyes.

[21 : 11] And the first council Ahithophel gives, actually it's the second council because the first one is that Absalom going to his father's concubines, which was according to the plans of God because God had declared through Nathan that that would happen.

But yet we also know that according to the plan of God, God is disciplining David, but he's not destroying David because he has been forgiven. Don't ever lose sight of that. This is the disciplinary action for his sin.

This is not the destruction of his soul because Nathan declares, you are forgiven, but these things will happen. So he prays this prayer and then we come over here when he gives this council which would have destroyed David and we read, but the Lord had ordained.

Isn't it astounding that even in his grace and mercy, God's still working things out. Hey, we've said this over and over again. When we read scripture and it seems as if all the world is falling apart and all of mankind has his own way and every man's doing whatever he wants to do, however he wants to do it.

And all of a sudden in the middle of that, we have this interjection where God is even moving in the courts of heaven to change the council behind the king's door. He says he doesn't, he's not going to allow it to happen.

[22 : 20] The reason he's not going to allow it to happen is because it would bring a destruction he had not ordained. And God wants to discipline Absalom. You say, well, I have a problem with that.

I have a problem with he's going to bring calamity on Absalom. That seems as if God is a vengeful God. Well, let's not forget about Absalom's multi-year conspiracy to kill his brother, bringing about the murder of his brother.

Let's not forget about the unaddressed sin in Absalom's life because though man had not addressed it, God would one day call it to account. Just because man doesn't call us to account doesn't mean God won't call us to account.

And that day is rapidly approaching for Absalom. God is just in his dealings with man. And we see here that the good counsel is neglected.

Now, on the one side, I have Hushai who knows this and he's not really sure what's going to happen because they could always go back. So he goes to the proper channels. Again, God's sovereignty here in protecting the spies.

[23 : 19] We see that throughout Scripture. A lot of people are either in baskets or in wells or in holes and are always covered up, right? All throughout Scripture, right? They're covered up with stalks on the roof when they go spy out Jericho.

They're in a well here and covered up with seeds so that they're drying seed. They're, you know, Paul's in a basket case all the time. He was being laid down in a basket and Noah was being put in a basket and you have all these things, right?

Throughout Scripture that God, his hand and his sovereignty is always keeping his people. But we're going to focus our last one not on what's going on over there because that's in connection to what happens in the 18th chapter but we see a moment of tragic consequences.

A moment of tragic consequences which is when Ahithophel realizes his counsel has been neglected. Now, his self-centeredness wanted to go take care of the problem of David himself. His wisdom and Warren Wearsby points this out and I think it's valid. If Ahithophel is as good a counselor as the Word of God declares he is then there's no reason for us to think that he's not.

[24 : 23] And if Ahithophel understands military as much as the Word of God declares that he does and there's nothing to tell us that he doesn't. Then as Wearsby points out the moment that Absalom takes Hushai's advice Ahithophel knows destruction is imminent.

He knows Absalom doesn't stand a chance in a head-to-head battle with David. He knows that which is why he gave the counsel to do it the other way.

But how he responds to that that knowledge is tragic. It says that when he learned that his counsel had been neglected he saddled his donkey he went to his city and he went to his house and he set his house in order and he went out and he took his own life.

Now again as Wearsby points out the realization that he had connected himself to the wrong king was more than he could handle.

And understanding that when Absalom was destroyed judgment was unavoidable. He would either be pretty much on house arrest or publicly executed by King David.

[25 : 45] So he decided to take it take his life on his own terms. Set his house in order he got everything ready and he took his own life. Why? Because he had joined himself to the wrong king.

He had forsaken the true king and sought another kingdom. And in forsaking the true king he had walked away from all the hope and the promises of that kingdom and connected himself to a failing kingdom which was on its way to destruction.

We've seen the similarities between this moment in David's life and the foreshadowing it is of the moment when Christ makes the same walk out of Jerusalem through the same valley up the same Mount Olive and we've seen the similarities there and we follow those similarities here when there was one that was with the king of kings in the garden.

There was one who went there with a crowd. He wasn't there when he went but he went and joined him and he kissed him on the cheek. There was one who went with a multitude behind him who had decided to follow another kingdom and that was Judas Iscariot.

And we have seen the similarities how the moment Ahithophel realizes I'm on the losing side he takes his life and the moment that Judas Iscariot realizes he has joined the wrong kingdom he takes his life.

[27 : 07] It's because they had sought a kingdom that was not the true kingdom. Now the reality is Ahithophel was going to die anyway but this is tragic that it comes to this conclusion that since there's no hope I'll end it here.

We're on the other side of the cross. When King David comes into Jerusalem there's a day of reckoning for all those who had forsaken him all those who had mocked him and all those who had revolted against him.

But my friend the king that we serve when he was on the cross prayed for those who was persecuting him. He prayed for those who were crucifying him. We serve a greater king than King David.

We serve a king that though we were in the wrong kingdom though we had united to the wrong king lowercase k the true king was calling us in his grace and his mercy and in his forgiveness and in his compassion to be united to his kingdom.

we have a king that forgives and cleanses and restores. We have a king that doesn't call us to look up one day and go oh I'm on the wrong side and we end it all there.

[28 : 26] He calls us to look up and go oh I'm on the wrong side and we fall on our faces and we beg for mercy and we find it because the king of kings and lord of lords is a compassionate king who calls us to himself.

What happens in the world are multitudes and multitudes and multitudes of people realize one day that the king they are following is a king that's a part of a kingdom that's going to be destroyed and the kingdom they're a part of is on its way down so they take their own lives sometimes literally other ways sometimes it's substance with substance abuse and sometimes it's just with throwing themselves out there into utter destruction with however they want to live.

But there's a king there's a king that's coming back someday and until he comes back he's a king who's still calling people out of the kingdom of darkness and he's calling them into the kingdom of light where there is hope and there's restoration there's mercy there's forgiveness listen David isn't on the mountain calling for Ahithophel to come to himself but Jesus is in the courtroom of heaven still calling for men and women and boys and girls to come to himself.

See there's a vast difference in the kings there's a grand difference we if we're honest we're in the place of Ahithophel and Absalom in the kingdom of revolt but we've been called out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light because of the mercy of the king who's on the throne and in forgiveness and in restoration he has cleansed us and we've cast that off but the tragic consequences that come from constant neglect of that are exactly what we find happening in Ahithophel's life here's a man who was sought after by kings here's a man whose counsel was considered as sure as the word of God here's a man who gave good vice good advice and yet in the end had no hope why?

because he turned his back on the king and he took his own life Judas walked with Christ three and a half years Judas saw every grand miracle that is recorded in scripture and even more so John tells us in his gospel that if every miraculous work which Jesus had done had been written or could be written that he didn't think the world could contain the books that's what Judas saw for three and a half years and yet he turned his back on the king and in that moment of turning his back on the king allowing Satan to use him he takes his own life what tragedy what tragedy we see here these are the best laid plans that are overruled we'll see as we continue the story that God is omnipotently working it's in a mess sure it's never nice neat and easy in scripture it's always kind of confusing but we see behind it all God is still in control right he's still doing everything that he has ordained everything that he's promised and he's going somewhere with this it's amazing to me he's going somewhere like many of you going through my bible reading

[31 : 52] I'm in those grand books of chronicles right first chronicles you're reading two chapters a day you're reading nothing but a list of names and you read those list of names you're like man these are tiresome you know what those list of names remind you that God was doing something through each and every one of those because he's leading to a purpose which is really a person so that when you read those list of names you can open up your bible in the new testament you read the book of Matthew and you find another list of names yet at the end of that list of names is Jesus he's moving through the mess God's doing something wonderful those people matter because God is using them for our redemption doesn't make it any easier to pronounce their names I know that but yet he's doing something right he's got a purpose they keep messing up man a lot of those people those names fail a lot of those names they fail they mess up they stumble praise God for that because I have a name too that's recorded in Lamb's book of life not because of what I've done not because of what I've accomplished in spite of my failures there's a name written because Jesus

Christ has redeemed me and written my name there we see that right how glorious it is even when my best laid plans are overruled and God does something amazing instead 2 Samuel 17 verses 1 through 23 thank you brothers so Thank you.

Thank you.