

Let's open our Bibles this evening to 2 Samuel 15 as we continue our study through the historical books of the Bible, and we are currently looking at David.

God gives David a lot of chapters, a lot of press, a lot of lines, a lot of insights. And, if you haven't been with us, David was chosen by the LORD after Saul's rebellion against Him. But David was only a kid in his teens. By the time that Saul had died, David had already spent many years running from him, seven-and-a-half to be exact. Spent another seven-and-a-half years ruling over, really, one-and-a-half of the twelve tribes; everyone else still wanted Saul's family to be in charge. And finally, after fifteen years, David comes to the throne. So the LORD tells us a lot about David. He's a man after God's own heart. His good qualities - he is a quick one to forgive, he is usually very quick to repent and to find God's forgiveness. Downside - David loved women, got married a lot, had a lot of kids, wasn't a very good father, didn't really take care of his home, and it showed.

Back in chapter 12, we ran into David's sin with Bathsheba. We probably all know the story. David stayed home when he should have been out battling and caring for the people. He was very idle, had a lot of time on his hands. And you know how the story went. He took her to his home and slept with her. She became pregnant, and he tried to bring her husband home from battle to take the blame; even got him drunk to try to get him home. He wasn't goin' for it; he was an honorable man. Finally David gave orders to have him killed to hide his sin. And when he died, David took his wife in to be his wife, another wife. It might have looked good on the outside, but for David, man, the next year was just horrible - hiding his sin, not able to sleep, not at peace at all, internally lots of guilt, obviously, the fruit of sin. When the prophet Nathan came to David and confronted him with his sin a year later, David's first fear was he was going to be killed because both adultery and murder were death-penalty offenses by the Law. But the prophet said, "God isn't going to kill you. God's grace is going to cover you. However, there are consequences to sin." And he began to lay out, there in chapter 12 (beginning in verse 10), that David was going to have great sorrow in his family - unfaithfulness, adultery, murder. All of the things David had hidden would be laid out open before the people.

Eventually Amnon, one of David's sons, raped one of David's daughters; it was his half-sister, Tamar. David did nothing about it. He was in a position where he really couldn't raise his finger to anyone, the way that he had behaved himself. And for two years he just kind of left it, and his older son, Absalom (it was his sister), planned a way to get even with Amnon. And, at a sheep shearing time, in revenge for his sister's treatment, he killed his brother, if you will, his half-brother and then fled to Syria where his wife's parents lived, and he spent three years there. Eventually Joab, one of David's nephews (was also the head of his army), tried very hard to bring the boy, Absalom, back to have a relationship with his father. David said, "All right, bring him home," and when he did, David got angry again and said, "I don't want to see him." And two more years passed till finally Absalom forced a meeting with his dad. So, a period of seven years - two years of inactivity, three years of exile, two years back without a meeting. It was a very cold meeting; the damage had been done. You can read at the end of chapter 14, here, verse 33, he bowed before the king who kissed him on his neck; but it was all formality. There was no love there, there was no resolution there at all. Now understand David had repented of his sin. He was walking with God in many ways and, certainly, by the time you get to this chapter, he is 60 years old, and he's walking with the LORD in a way that he has always done, for the most part. He is right where God wants him to be, but he's having to face the consequences of years of sin and neglect and especially the consequences of his relationship with Bathsheba.

So Absalom hates his father now, and his ambition goes to his head, and decides, "Well, maybe I'll just take my dad's job. I think I can do a better job." And he begins in earnest to court Israel to himself.

So tonight we look in one chapter at the fallout of David's sin, but it is contrasted by David, now right with God, having to rest in the LORD. And you can find the peace of God even in the midst of the consequences of sin. So David's going to let God have this; he's not going to sweat this, he's not going to struggle with this. He's going to do the right thing. Every step along the way in this chapter, you're going to see David do the right thing. It's been nine years since a lot of those things have taken place. David is repentant, and David is right with God, and yet sin has consequence, doesn't it? It just follows you around. And so we need to learn to just let God now have it. So David does.

Well, let's look at verse 1, chapter 15. It says, "After this it happened" (this was this meeting with Absalom and his father, David - kind of forced and

uncomfortable) "that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, 'What city are you from?' And he would say, 'Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel.' Then Absalom would say to him, 'Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you.' Moreover Absalom would say, 'Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.' And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." So, Absalom now - you should know - is motivated by anger. His desire to pursue his dad's throne is not a spiritual one. He wasn't wanting to lead the people in the ways of the LORD; he couldn't have cared less. He wanted to grab power. His flesh despised his father's inaction when it came to his sister's violation. And so this was a planned, slow, deliberate kind of action on the part of Absalom to steal the allegiance of the people away from David. We read in other places Absalom was a really good-lookin' kid, that he was very popular and, because of that, he had some pretty quick success, if you will. He added, notice in verse 1, the royal look to it. He got fifty servants to run ahead of the chariot. He was dressing for success. That's all you could say. He was acting the part. This tactic, of course, appealed to the basest hearts of men. Calling the people to respond to him, he wanted to make an impression upon them. It wasn't God's will, it wasn't God's interest. Absalom was riding around in his 1000 B.C. limo, so to speak, drawing attention to himself so that he might draw the people's hearts away. I've seen churches started by those who make appeals to those in other churches who are frustrated and rebellious - to join them - this whole phone-call evangelism, promise of a better place. They rarely last, and the reason is pretty simple. The foundation is built on someone else's work, not on the Lord's, and it can't last. And so we almost see this as being doomed to failure. But, at the same time, look what anger will do to a man's heart.

So verse 2 tells us he sat in the gate. If you've ever been to the Mideast - especially on our trips to Israel, we stop by lots of ancient cities, most of them walled cities because that's the way you survived - in the entrance to the city where the gate is, there was almost always found a judge's seat where the elders of the town would come and sit or where the king of the town would come and sit, and he would give judgments. You wouldn't get into town. He would be met at the

gate, if you will, to settle disputes or clarify the Law or resolve conflicts. So that's where Absalom hung out. "Hi. I'm sure you have a good case, but Dad don't care for you. There's nobody here. If I was in charge, we'd be here every day. You'd always have someone that you could get ahold of." It does sound like election season, doesn't it? "I'll be here for you." And notice, in verse 3, that he even said to everyone who he talked to, "You have a good case." He hadn't heard any evidence, mind you. He was glib about these things. He was a man on the hustle. His very words here, in verse 3, "There is no deputy of the king to hear you" would intimate that David and his government didn't care at all for the people, that they were ignoring the needs of the people while Absalom was saying, "Well, if it was me, I'd be there for you every day." In reality, David was one of the finest spiritual leaders that they had ever had. Oh, he had some problems, but all in all he was a man after God's own heart. Certainly Absalom couldn't have measured up to his father. Notice he says, in verse 4, "Oh, that I were made a judge." And I think here's the intent of his heart - he had pomp, he just didn't have any power. It always does interest me in election years - and I hate election years - every candidate cares about all your needs until they're elected, and then you'll never see them again. That's just the way it works. So notice, even in verse 5, he began to act like the common man. He didn't follow all the traditional, formal trappings of honor like "kiss my ring." Someone came to battle, "Oh, come here, just give me a hug, bro." Right? He became every man, pretending humility. He was a wolf in the flock, sowing discord. So, it's interesting how the tongue will work. And so he sought to draw them after himself.

We read, in verse 7, "Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, 'Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD.' For your servant' " (speaking of himself) " 'took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'" ' And the king said to him, 'Go in peace.' So he arose and went to Hebron." Eventually the time came when Absalom felt he had enough support to put a coup into motion. I want you to notice the words "forty years" in verse 7. It might surprise you a little bit. The Septuagint and the Syriac copies of the Bible, which translate the NIV and NET and the ESV, and there's another - MOUSE - somewhere in there (Laughing), have the words "four years," and that would certainly fit better. It could very well be a scribal error. It isn't very different to read four from forty. However, not wanting to ever say the Bible is in error because I trust the LORD knows what He's doing - He can certainly watch over it, the number "forty years," when it is used in a symbolic way, always speaks about

completeness or fullness. And if it is used in a symbolic gesture in that way, it would mean that when the time came. And that's certainly a possibility, although it strikes me that "four" would be an easier way to read it. But I can only tell you what I see here. Forty days and forty nights of rain, and the rain stopped. Forty days to open the ark window. The spies in the land for forty days. David and Solomon reigning for forty years, both of them. They all speak about a completeness or a fullness. And if that's the way it's used.....I think Elijah ate angel food, and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights. He came to a completion of his journey. So, there's a repetition of those numbers that oftentimes suggests completeness of a mission, of a thought, of an endeavor; could be that's the way it is used. Other than that, we would have to say forty years will not work literally. David will be dead in ten, for example.

In any event, when things looked like they were ready to work for him - and the people were enlisted to stand with Absalom in his move to his father's throne - he goes to his father under pretense of godliness. He says to his dad, "Hey, could you let me go to Hebron? While I was, for those three years, exiled in Syria, I really wanted to come home, and my prayer every day was, 'LORD, if you could just me home, then I will serve You.' And the LORD's brought me home, so I want to now go fulfill the vow that I made to the LORD there in Hebron and worship." And David might very well have thought, "Oh, this is great! He's turning over a new leaf. He's serious about his spiritual life." "Oh, please go. This is good." And I'm sure that David must have been very much encouraged by it.

And so we read, in verse 10, "Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, 'As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, "Absalom reigns in Hebron!" ' And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything." So they were duped, if you will. Verse 12, "Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city - from Giloh - while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number." Now Hebron was a place that Absalom was born (chapter 3 of this book). It is also the place where David, in chapter 5, began to reign as the king and found his place of rulership. Notice, in verse 10, that there had been some men that were hired to run around and kind of stir the people up, "Sound the trumpets, get the chants goin', let's make this work." There were two hundred men, from verse 11, of rank and of prominence. They came from Jerusalem. That would mean they were royalty kind of folks. They could have added a level of credibility to it,

"Well, look who's involved, look who's going," even though they were unaware of Absalom's intentions. They were innocent non-participants, but it did give him an appearance of nobility. Right? "This is an official business." Which would tell me don't jump on the bandwagon just because you know the songs they're singin'. Sometimes things aren't what they seem.

And then finally, verse 12, Absalom went after Ahithophel, who apparently had been in on this coup attempt from the very beginning. He is now very conveniently away from Jerusalem. He lives in Giloh, which is not very far (in Hebron); there is still a Giloh in Israel today, occupied by a lot of folks in the West Bank. We know that Ahithophel was a prophet of God (chapter 16:23), and he had had great influence amongst the people for years. In fact, he was one of David's true buddies. He was one of David's most trusted friends. In fact, if you read Psalm 41, when David finds out that his buddy Ahithophel has switched sides, he just felt stabbed in the heart. I mean, "This guy that I trusted in, that we went to worship together, that we prayed together, we watched God do so many great things, he's now bailed out on me for my son in standing with him in this rebellion." It kind of hit him as a ton of bricks. It added insult to injury - first his son and now his best friend. So, this was a pretty big "get," I think, for Absalom.

We read, in verse 13, "Now a messenger came to David," (someone came to Jerusalem) "saying, 'The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.' So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, 'Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.' And the king's servants said to the king, 'We are your servants, ready to do whatever my lord the king commands.' Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts" of town. Like I said, David, at this point, is a little bit over 60 years old. His last ten years will really be what we'll be reading in these last couple of chapters. Not as strong as he once was, certainly not as youthful as he might have been. And now put yourself in his position - his son is leading a rebellion, the land of Israel that you love seems to be taking to him, and David realizes, "If there's a fight here, a lot of people are going to die. I can't control this young man or what he's going to do." You would expect David, because he's a man of war, to fight. You know, old timer, old Marine, whatever. "I'm not gonna take this!" But that's not David. David is well aware of the fact that God's in charge, and he's not meant to fight, and he

loves the people - doesn't want people to die. If that means giving up what he had, "Fine. I'm gonna let God have His way. I caused this." He understands that, and we'll read that as we go. David was very well aware of the fact that part of this was his fault. Right? He'd engendered this over the last decade of years of doing very little. He's aware of the danger. He's aware of his son's capability. So notice he makes for a quick retreat just to save everybody from bloodshed. He's a true shepherd in that regard. Right? He wants to be sure the people are fine even if it means that he loses his position, a position, you remember, he had really struggled to come to. Honorable guy. He's painfully aware of the consequences. He's determined to let God be God, whatever that means. He's not gonna fight unless the LORD says "fight," and he's not gonna fight. "Let's just get out of here. Let him have what he wants. Let him take what he wants. And the LORD'll work this out one way or the other."

We read, in verse 15, that the king's servants said to the king, "We're your servants, we're going to do whatever you command." So even though Absalom had stolen the hearts of many, there were those with David, and there were lots of them who would not be moved. So, changing circumstances can oftentimes test allegiances. Right? And prosperity can bring a lot of friends. You win the lottery, you'll have friends you never met before. But adversity - true adversity - will define your real friends. So David, if nothing else, sees now people that are faithful to God's calling upon his life; these are folks he can count on. I don't know if you've ever had fair-weather friends, and then there are those who are just your friends through whatever you're having to go through. Folks who want to be everybody's friend and take no stands usually don't stand when things get tough anyway. But David found some folks who were just, "Whatever you want, man. I don't care if Absalom's comin' with the nation. We're standing with you. You're the one God has chosen." And they were able to see that. So, verse 17, there were not any fair-weather friends. But notice that David, in the calm and in the peace of the days of blessing, was going out, and now in the storm they weren't going to abandon him. And we will read in a little bit that he stops down at the Kidron Brook, down at the base of the city, down at the bottom of the mountain, and he just kind of gathers the people together, looks back at the city. He's leaving the place where he's been king for thirty-plus years.

We read, in verse 18, "Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king. Then the king said to Ittai the

Gittite, 'Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you are a foreigner and also an exile from your own place. In fact, you came only yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth be with you.' " So David now finds these men and women who are his friends, who loved him. It's interesting. Absalom stole the hearts of many in Israel, but the rest - mostly Gentiles here - aren't at all ashamed to be called his friends. In fact, he gets this solid commitment from these rugged men, no lukewarm guys, no ambitious guys. They're gonna stand with David no matter what. And David had come.....a lot of these six hundred men (in verse 18) were those men that, when David was on the run from Saul, were just discontent with the government, and they joined David thinking he was a rebel with the government. And David began to teach them about the LORD, and now they were believers in the God of Israel. And so they stuck with David, "No matter what, we're goin' with you, man. Where else can we go?" And then notice there's this group of six hundred men with a leader - his name is Ittai. They had just arrived the day before to pledge their allegiance to David. And when they showed up, David was packin' up and leavin', and the cabinet was heading out. And so David says to them, in verse 19, "Why don't you just go home? You're a foreigner, you're an exile even from the place from which you have come. In fact, you just got here yesterday. So may the LORD's grace and truth be with you."

"But Ittai," verse 21, "answered the king and said, 'As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be.' So David said to Ittai, 'Go, and cross over.' Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who were with him crossed over" (the Kidron Brook). So, at the feet of the Mount of Olives, David recognizes his faithful friends, even these newcomers. David is filled with sorrow. But he's kind. "Go home. You guys are gonna get killed. This is probably - spare yourself. There's an uncertain future. There're tremendous hardships. Danger may await. I can't make you any promises." But notice that, to this warning, Ittai and his men make a commitment to David, "Hey, living or dead, we're going with you. We're standing with you." They came to make an allegiance to David. They'd seen the hand of the LORD upon his life. They believed David was God's choice. Verse 21 says they made their vows before the LORD. So, here was a bunch of people that David had been influencing in his spiritual well-being, if you will. But what a time for these guys to come and take a stand - at a time when leadership was switching sides and the main prophet in the country had bailed out

to go the other way; he wasn't even going to stand with David. Now it made a hard choice.

I always think, reading this, about the thief on the cross. At a time when all of the apostles ran away, the thief on the cross - with nothing to lose - said, "Remember me." He switched sides. Right? He was convinced who the Lord was, and he took a stand. Even though the future looked bleak, the crowds looked like they had won, there was no real payoff, they're both gonna die, "Lord, just remember me." He was convinced. Then he got that great promise. Those kinds of decisions require, I think, real revelation from the Lord and acts of great faith. But you see them here. Now it would prove out, soon enough, to be the right call. But not immediately. I would equate this to your call to be Christians in a world that wants nothing to do with Jesus. You look like you're choosing the wrong end. You're with the minority. You're getting less rights, not more. The success rate is depleting as opposed to increasing. And yet the Lord's comin', and then you're gonna be glad that you chose to walk with Him, aren't you? But for now it's not always so easy. It takes a real act of faith.

I look at these men coming from a foreign country, just wanting to make allegiance to the king of God, the one that God had ordained, and being told, "Hey, this is gonna be tough." And they went, "I don't care if it's tough. Livin' or dying, we're goin' with you." And then David steps back real, I think, blessed by their faith, and says, "Then go ahead. Come with us. You're gonna go on a journey with us no matter where we go." And I think it's the same kind of commitment that the Lord looks for in you and me. He doesn't give us any false hope. Right? "In the world you're going to have tribulation" (John 16:33). That's not a good sales campaign. "You're gonna suffer. They're gonna put you in prison. They're gonna take your life if they can. Follow Me." (Luke 21:12) Well, maybe not. It just doesn't sound as promising, early on. He said to them, "If you were of the world, the world loves you. But because you're not, I've chosen you out of it, the world's going to hate you. And a servant's not going to be greater than his master. And if they persecuted Me, they're going to persecute you" (John 15:19-20). See, that's not good sales. It's not good sales, but it moves the hearts of the people that know the Lord. So, he didn't sugarcoat all of our callings. No bed of roses. And like David, the church is in many ways, in the world, exiled, and it's going to take some real commitment to walk with the Lord. I don't know if you've been following the persecution that has just picked up again in China against the underground church. They have bulldozed or blown up or arrested hundreds of pastors. And so the

church has gotten together in agreement to say, "If they arrest one of us, ten will come and stand in their place." And it's been a remarkable time of revival but huge payment, tremendous cost to these church pastors in China that are pastoring people of hundreds and two hundreds, five hundreds. But they're makin' the right choice. And if you walk with Jesus, you'll make the right choice.

But I think for David and these guys that are joining David right at this point, it must look like, "Gosh, I hope we're right." Oh, no, they were right. And David would be that man. David would eventually be reinstated to the throne. The worst in the will of God is far better than the best outside of it. I guess that's my point. Right? You go with the Lord no matter what it costs you because the flesh can promise a lot, but.....I want you to know the end of the story - Absalom ends up dead, and David's walkin' with God. That's the end of the story. Today, I think, we see Jesus kind of in exile from His rightful throne; Satan, the prince of this world, enlisting followers, reaping havoc. Be assured Jesus is coming to set up His throne, and then we'll be glad we made the right choice. But I think any spineless person can live after the flesh, but it takes guts to walk with Jesus. The word "Ittai," by the way, his name means "be with me" or "stand near me." Kind of a cool name. We're going to have to stand with the Lord. I remember Pastor Chuck, when we were in church there at Costa Mesa, used to always say, "Any dead fish can float down river by the current. But if you want to live for Jesus, you've got to swim upstream. That's some work to do." So David recognized, verse 22, Ittai's faith, and I think he receives him gladly at a point where, I'm sure, this must have been very hard on him with his son so rebellious. This must have been really an encouragement to David.

Verse 23, "And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness. There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. Then the king said to Zadok, 'Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: "I have no delight in you," here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him.' The king also said to Zadok the priest, 'Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.' Therefore Zadok

and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there" (waiting, really, for Absalom to show up). Good to see that the priests and the high priests were, at this point, standing with David as well. In other words, spiritually the nation was heading in the right direction. Absalom didn't care about their spiritual well-being. He couldn't have justified his actions if he wanted. But notice what David says to these men, "Take the ark, that place where you worship the LORD, where you inquire of the LORD, where you sacrifice to the LORD. Put it back in Jerusalem." That's where the LORD had chosen to put His name - not running in the wilderness - He'd put His name in Jerusalem. And so David did not want to look at the ark, like the children of Israel did years earlier, as some kind of amulet or rabbit's foot or some lucky charm. "That wouldn't do me any good. It has nothing to do with the ark; it has everything to do with the God of the ark. So, if the LORD is gonna save me, then I can come back and worship here, where He has put His name. And if not, then He can wipe me out. But there's nothing....the ark with me is gonna do no good. It's my relationship with God." And so David orders the ark to be taken back to Jerusalem. "If God gives me unmerited favor, and I'm allowed to come back and worship, the ark will be here. Everything depends on His will, and I look forward to that."

And I want you to notice, especially verse 25 and verse 26, here's David's heart (in his early 60's). He acknowledges his dealings with Him, he agrees to God's terms, he is no longer in rebellion, he's a broken man - and that's good. It is one of those turning points in David's life, a time of restoration. He accepts God's will in all of these circumstances. In fact, if you take notes in your Bible, you might want to write in the margin Psalm 3, Psalm 38 and 39 and 40 and 41 and 51 and 52 and 53. They were all written here - on the run, outside the city, wondering what God was going to do - a songwriter, David, a poet, he expresses his heart. And if you'll read those - what did I give you? - four, six, seven of them or so, seven psalms - you'll find David having tremendous faith at a time when everything that was important to him was on the line: his reputation, his years of service to the people, his family, his children, his honor and the rebellion of his son that he loved, though he was certainly angry with him. Everything that you....we said historical books are meant to....because they're written as narrative, you have to stand with the people to learn. Right? It's not doctrinal statements. They're explanations of life experiences. And so you stand with David, and you go, at a time when David probably could have felt most discouraged in all of his life, "It's my fault, I've lost everything. My years of service, the last 45 years, have come to this. I've got nothing to show for it. I've got everything to risk." And what he does is this. He

says, "Take the ark back, and let's see what God is going to do with me. It's got to stay with the city where God has put His name. If the LORD delights in me, then I'll be fine. If He doesn't, what can I do?" And so he enlists the priests, Zadok and Abiathar. He enlists them to be runners. "Can you come out where I am in the wilderness and tell me what's goin' on? You don't have cell phones. We need someone to tell us what's goin' on." And so, looking to the LORD, David is broken and yet, in his brokenness, he is made whole. This is about as good of a place as you can find yourself. Right? Whatever God wants to do. If you can get to that place, you're doin' good. What is it that Job said in all of his tragedy, there in chapter 13? "Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him" (Job 13:15). When Jonah came to preach in Nineveh, he didn't want the people to repent because he hated them; and so his forty days and judgment with a big smile on his face, asking no one to repent. It was the king of Nineveh who gathered the people together and called them to repent, and he said (Jonah 3:9), "Who knows if God won't maybe turn and relent from His fierce anger? Maybe we won't perish. But let's go lay our lives before the LORD and see what He'll do." He was broken, and he was brought to the end of himself. When Joel was sent by the LORD to speak to the nation of Israel, the LORD said (Joel 2:12-14), "Tell them that they should turn to Me with all of their hearts, with fasting and weeping and mourning, that they should rend their hearts and not their garments. And if they'll turn to the LORD that He'll be gracious and slow to anger and of great kindness, and He'll relent of doing of any harm. Who knows if He'll turn and leave a blessing to us?" And so Joel said to the people, "Throw yourself on the mercy of the court."

Well, David is at a place - and I don't know if you're in that place tonight - but it's a great place to be where you just go, "God, do whatever You want," where you're just kind of putty in the Lord's hands. Right? You're just yielded to His will. You have a will, you have a desire, but you're gonna let the Lord be the Lord.

So the priests obediently go back to Jerusalem. David heads, with a great company of people and family, into the wilderness without an assurance of his future at all, except if you go read those seven psalms. In his heart, he's convinced it's gonna work out. I'm not sure he knows he's gonna live through it, but he's just sure that he's right where he's supposed to be.

So we read, in verse 30, "So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up;" (this was not easy) "and he had his head covered and went

barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up." Remorse, humility, tears, but tremendous faith. It's just not a very good time. What a sorrowful time to be in that position with his son.

"Then someone told," verse 31, "David, saying, 'Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.' And David said, 'O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!' " Now I said to you earlier, Ahithophel ministry-wise might have been David's best friend, and he might have been his best friend for decades. He's been his counselor over the years. He had been a great help in bringing the Word of God to bear. They had shared lots of experiences together. I suspect this was as hard as it could be, the guy he.... "You'll never turn on me." Oh, but he did. But it shouldn't have been unexpected. If you're with us later, in chapter 23, we're given a list of some of the names of David's faithful fighting men. And one of them, in that list in 2 Samuel 23:34, was a fellow named EIAM, (who was a son of Ahithophel), who would have a daughter named Bathsheba (a granddaughter to Ahithophel), who would marry Uriah the Hittite, a grandson (by marriage) to Ahithophel. So I don't doubt at all that this has been in his heart for a long time. Though he had been David's friend, he couldn't forgive him for this either. And so to him this was the natural way to get even, if you will. And David hears the defection. He prays that the LORD would take the counsel of Ahithophel, which had always been good, and turn it into nothing. Next week, in chapter 17:14, God will do just that. He will take Ahithophel's counsel and turn it into nothing. And eventually, Ahithophel will be so frustrated, he'll go out and take his own life because things didn't go his way.

Verse 32, "Now it happened when David had come to the top of the mountain, where he worshipped God" - (notice that his heart is right) "there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. David said to him, 'If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, "I will be your servant, O king; as I was your father's servant previously, so I will now also be your servant," then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Indeed they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear.' So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem." So, interesting. They were

going.....notice we read in verse 32, he is worshipping; verse 30, he's weeping. Weeping and worshipping. How about that? Hushai is another friend of David's. You read about him in 1 Chronicles 27:33. He was a cabinet-level post. But David now says to him, "Why don't you go back and be a spy? We've got to know what's going on in the government." He was going to be David's mole, if you will. "Send out any information you get through the priests' sons. They can run back and forth, they're pretty quick. You stay there, and you'll be a blessing to me. You go with me, you'll just be a liability. I'll just do nothing but worry about you." And so he sends him back into the city to kind of watch what's gonna happen and what's gonna be said.

So, put yourself in David's spot. You're 61, 62 years old. Even serving the LORD, called to be a king since you were 15. You've ruled for thirty years, much of it running for your life. You've made some blunders - big ones - and you've done some really good things. And now you feel like your whole life is falling apart, and yet you've repented to the LORD, you've turned back to God in your old age. You want to do things right. Everything's out of your control. And so David now has to settle into the wilderness with a band of people that certainly can't be called an army, though they would give their lives for him, and he goes to settle in and to see what God's gonna do. He will write in Psalm 3:5, "I lay myself down to sleep and then I awoke because the LORD sustained me." He didn't have much to go on other than his faith. He didn't have much encouragement; there weren't many people to lean on. Here's an old guy by himself. He had years of experience, but also he now has to truly learn to practice what he preaches. He finds that what Paul will write to the Hebrews in chapter 4:9-10 that "there remains a rest for the people of God. If you enter into His rest, you cease from your own labors." And David does that. He's kind of forced to do that. He could have stayed and fought, I guess, and that might have been the way that the world would handle it. But he's just gonna let God have it. And here's a pretty good example of a man that...you know how we talk about not worrying, just let the Lord handle it? And it sounds good but harder to do, isn't it? So worry doesn't add anything of value. What did Jesus say? "By worrying, can you add a cubit to your stature?" (Matthew 6:27). Can you grow by 18", basically. Well, no, you can't. Well, then quit trying. He's gonna let God have it. Psalm 37, he writes in verse 5, "Commit your way to the LORD, trust in Him, He'll bring it to pass." He wrote that on the road. These are psalms from the road, with David.

So, let's leave David in the wilderness tonight. Absalom is rolling into town with thousands of troops, lots of muscle, pomp and circumstance, murder in his eyes. David is out the backside, heading for the wilderness, under dark circumstances, pressed in on every side - some of it due to his own sinfulness - no way out, no strength left to fight, and just lettin' God have His way. It's an amazing picture, isn't it? It'd make a great painting, except I don't paint.

Maybe tonight you are in a position, though, like David. You've done some dumb stuff. Your life is a little bit tougher than maybe it needs to be. You believe God is at work. You have been forgiven. But now you've got to kind of wait for the Lord to work things out. That's hard. Well worth it but difficult. But learn from David that that's the best place you can be. You submit your life to His tender care, men might forsake you, others can disappoint you, still others maybe run away and change sides when the going gets tough. But God won't. He's faithful, isn't He? Always so.

And then next week we will take two chapters so that we don't leave this poor man out there too long. And we'll read how the coup turned out, and except for Absalom's death (which is in chapter 18), we'll get the whole story of how the LORD met the faithfulness of His old man, David, in all of his dilemma. So read ahead, shall we? And then we'll have communion. Celebrate God's victory.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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