

## **Bible Readings**

### **2 Samuel 16:15-18:18**

#### **New International Version**

##### **The Advice of Ahithophel and Hushai**

<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel was with him. <sup>16</sup> Then Hushai the Arkite, David's confidant, went to Absalom and said to him, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

<sup>17</sup> Absalom said to Hushai, "So this is the love you show your friend? If he's your friend, why didn't you go with him?"

<sup>18</sup> Hushai said to Absalom, "No, the one chosen by the LORD, by these people, and by all the men of Israel—his I will be, and I will remain with him. <sup>19</sup> Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve the son? Just as I served your father, so I will serve you."

<sup>20</sup> Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give us your advice. What should we do?"

<sup>21</sup> Ahithophel answered, "Sleep with your father's concubines whom he left to take care of the palace. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself obnoxious to your father, and the hands of everyone with you will be more resolute." <sup>22</sup> So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

<sup>23</sup> Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel's advice.

**17** Ahithophel said to Absalom, "I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. <sup>2</sup> I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king <sup>3</sup> and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed." <sup>4</sup> This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

<sup>5</sup> But Absalom said, "Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say as well." <sup>6</sup> When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, "Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion."

<sup>7</sup> Hushai replied to Absalom, “The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time. <sup>8</sup> You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops. <sup>9</sup> Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.’ <sup>10</sup> Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.

<sup>11</sup> “So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. <sup>12</sup> Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive. <sup>13</sup> If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not so much as a pebble is left.”

<sup>14</sup> Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

<sup>15</sup> Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, “Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so. <sup>16</sup> Now send a message at once and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords in the wilderness; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’”

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En Rogel. A female servant was to go and inform them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they could not risk being seen entering the city. <sup>18</sup> But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So, the two of them left at once and went to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it. <sup>19</sup> His wife took a covering and spread it out over the opening of the well and scattered grain over it. No one knew anything about it.

<sup>20</sup> When Absalom's men came to the woman at the house, they asked, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

The woman answered them, "They crossed over the brook." The men searched but found no one, so they returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>21</sup> After they had gone, the two climbed out of the well and went to inform King David. They said to him, "Set out and cross the river at once; Ahithophel has advised such and such against you." <sup>22</sup> So David and all the people with him set out and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, no one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

<sup>23</sup> When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So, he died and was buried in his father's tomb.

### **Absalom's Death**

<sup>24</sup> David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. <sup>25</sup> Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of Jether, an Ishmaelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruah the mother of Joab. <sup>26</sup> The Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

<sup>27</sup> When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Makir son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim <sup>28</sup> brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils, <sup>29</sup> honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from cows' milk for David and his people to eat. For they said, "The people have become exhausted and hungry and thirsty in the wilderness."

**18** David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. <sup>2</sup> David sent out his troops, a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, "I myself will surely march out with you."

<sup>3</sup> But the men said, “You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won’t care about us. Even if half of us die, they won’t care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city.”

<sup>4</sup> The king answered, “I will do whatever seems best to you.”

So, the king stood beside the gate while all his men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands. <sup>5</sup> The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.

<sup>6</sup> David’s army marched out of the city to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. <sup>7</sup> There Israel’s troops were routed by David’s men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. <sup>8</sup> The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest swallowed up more men that day than the sword.

<sup>9</sup> Now Absalom happened to meet David’s men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom’s hair got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in mid-air, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

<sup>10</sup> When one of the men saw what had happened, he told Joab, “I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree.”

<sup>11</sup> Joab said to the man who had told him this, “What! You saw him? Why didn’t you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warrior’s belt.”

<sup>12</sup> But the man replied, “Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lay a hand on the king’s son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.’ <sup>13</sup> And if I had put my life in jeopardy—and nothing is hidden from the king—you would have kept your distance from me.”

<sup>14</sup> Joab said, “I’m not going to wait like this for you.” So, he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom’s heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree. <sup>15</sup> And ten of Joab’s armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him.

<sup>16</sup> Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them. <sup>17</sup> They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes.

<sup>18</sup> During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King's Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, "I have no son to carry on the memory of my name." He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

## Sermon

### **Broad is the Road that Leads to Destruction (2 Sam 16:15-18:18)**

**18-Oct-20**

It would be good to have your **Bibles opened** at **2 Samuel chapter 16** - starting at **verse 15** - and we're going through to **chapter 18 verse 18**.

And we're continuing the **story of David** and his **rebellious son, Absalom**.

Let me **pray** before we begin...

Let's pray...

## Context

- Last week we saw that David's son, **Absalom**, conspired to take the kingship from his father **David**, by going on a **campaign to win over the people of Israel**
- And he **succeeded** - he **stole the hearts of the people** - that's in 2 Samuel 15:5-6

## [PowerPoint 1]

<sup>5</sup> *Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss*

him. <sup>6</sup> Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

- And **Absalom** also persuaded the tribes of Israel to follow him
- So, **David** had to **flee Jerusalem** with his household - otherwise he would have been killed
- Everything was going Absalom's way - nothing can stop him?
- Even David's chief adviser **Ahithophel** (Bathsheba's grandfather) abandoned David and joined Absalom
- As David fled Jerusalem - he turned to **God** and prayed that **Ahithophel's** advice would be **foolish** advice - that's in 2 Samuel 15:31

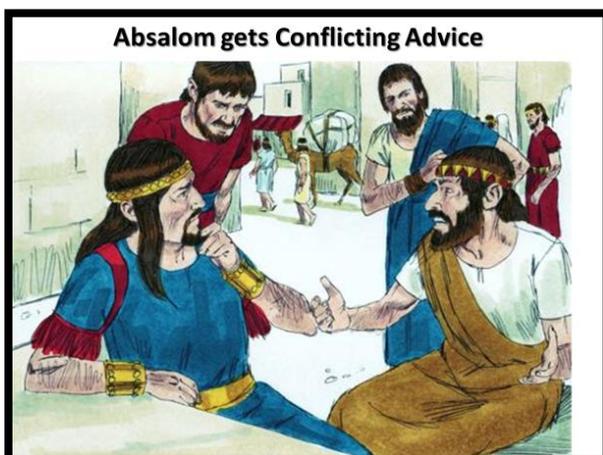
[PowerPoint 2]

Now David had been told, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." So, David prayed, "LORD, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness."

### Conflicting Advice of Hushai & Ahithophel (16:15-17:14)

- Which brings us to today's passage
- And **Absalom** receives advice from two advisers

[Powerpoint 3-Conflicting Advice]



- We'd better establish who the 2 advisers are:
- 1<sup>st</sup> adviser is a guy called Hushai
- We came across him last week
- Hushai is a close friend of David's - David's confidant
- Hushai had wanted to flee Jerusalem with David
- But David had a better idea - and sent him to Absalom
- To pretend to be a help to Absalom - and to also frustrate any advice Absalom got - and to also spy on Absalom - a bit like a MI5 spy
- So, we see in 16:15-19 - that Hushai makes the perfect spy
- He is able to convince Absalom that he's left David's service and happy to serve Absalom - he does this by tickling Absalom's ego - saying Absalom has been chosen as king - by God and by the people
- Absalom is so proud - he doesn't even realize this is not true!
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> adviser is Ahithophel
- He was David's chief adviser but he changed to Absalom's side last week
- And remember Ahithophel is Bathsheba's grandfather
- And it's likely he had no trouble changing from David's side to Absalom's side because he wasn't impressed with David stealing Bathsheba from Uriah and having Uriah killed.
- Ahithophel gives some strange advice to Absalom - 2 Sam 16:21-22
- Ahithophel advises Absalom to sleep with David's 10 concubines that David left behind at the palace when he fled Jerusalem

- **Ahithophel's reasoning** is - to make sure there's no turning back for **Absalom** - if Ahithophel has put himself in Absalom's camp - he **wants** to **make pretty sure** that **Absalom is committed**
- As verse 21 says - by Absalom sleeping with David's concubines this will **make him obnoxious to his father, David** - some translations say - a stench to David's nostrils - AND - Absalom's **supporters will also have to stick with Absalom** - **they won't be able to turn back to David** - now that Absalom has done this
- Ahithophel's advice is both **contrary to God's Law** [it's adultery] - and it's **treason** [disloyalty to the king]
- Despite the fact that it's wrong, **Absalom sleeps with David's concubines in broad daylight**
- We shouldn't be surprised about this - **God foretold this** in 2 Sam 12: 11 - **Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight**
- **Ahithophel's advice** we are told in v23 is normally like getting **advice from God** - but not this time - it is ungodly advice
- Why is Ahithophel's **advice so wrong?**
- Well because **God answered David's prayer** from 2 Sam 15:21 when he prayed - **turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness**

### Applications

- **God is in control** of the situation - not Absalom, not Ahithophel - and not us in our lives - **God is sovereign in all things**
- **God answers prayers when they are according to his will**

- We should not listen to **ungodly advice** - that is **clearly contrary** to **God's word** - as Ahithophel's advice was

### Moving into chapter 17

- And **Ahithophel offers Absalom advice** on how to **achieve victory** over his father, David
- **Ahithophel says he would choose 12,000 men and pursue David now - whilst he is disorganized** - and he would **strike down David** - so that all David's men would then come over to Absalom's side
- Although this **seemed like a good plan** to Absalom and the elders of Israel
- **Absalom also seeks the advice of Hushai** (David's confidant)
- **Hushai thinks quickly and says Ahithophel's advice is not good**
- Because David and his men are **brilliant fighters and experienced**
- What **Hushai advises** is to **gather all the men of Israel**
- This is **cunning by Hushai** as it will **buy David time to organize his army**
- Also, **Hushai suggests that Absalom should lead the army into battle himself**
- This **tickles Absalom's ego** - the idea of him leading the battle and **being a war hero like his father** is too tempting
- Surprisingly, **Absalom and the elders - v14 - key verse again - prefer Hushai's advice over Ahithophel's advice**
- But we shouldn't be surprised as v14 continues to say - **for the LORD had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom**

### Application

- The Lord has already determined what will happen
- God knows the heart of David - he has repented - David has never been a vengeful person (not to Saul or Absalom)
- And God also knows the heart of Absalom - and knows he doesn't care what happens to his father
- And God knows our hearts too
- As Gal 6:7 says: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows

### Absalom Chooses Hushai's Advice (17:15-23)

- With Absalom choosing Hushai's advice
- The priests Zadok and Abiathar - send their sons Jonathan and Ahimaaz to warn David
- And even though they get spotted
- They hide in a well in the house of a man in Bahurim
- And the man's wife conceals the opening of the well by spreading a cover over it and putting food out

[Powerpoint 4-Warn David]



- When the coast is clear - **Jonathan and Ahimaaz** inform King **David** to **cross** the River **Jordan** with all his people before it's too late!
- This is all too much for Ahithophel (v23) - he **knows** that **Hushai's** plan **will end up** with **Absalom** killed - and then he will be done for - so **Ahithophel** **commits suicides**

### Application

- See how **God** protected **Jonathan and Ahimaaz** so that they could warn David
- No one can thwart God's plans
- As **Isaiah 14:27** says: For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?
- And **Job 42:2** says: I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
- And as **Jeremiah 29:11** says: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
- **God** is for David and against Absalom - why? **Heart!**
- **God** is always for His people - and if God is for us - who can be **against us**  
(Rom 8:31)

### Absalom's Destruction (17:24-18:18)

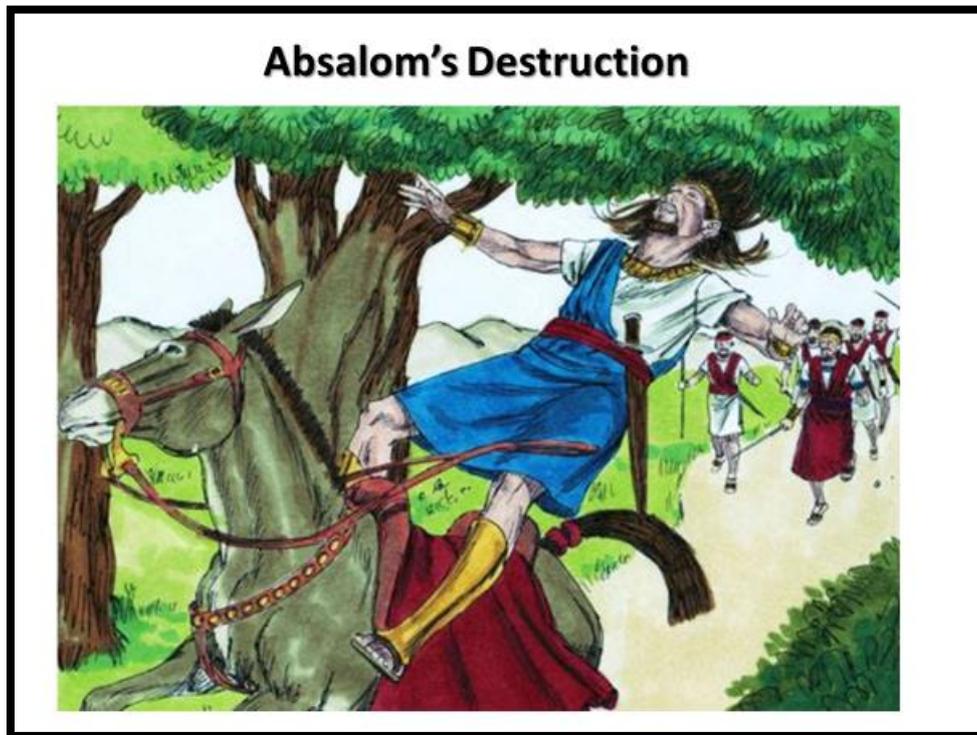
- We can see a mile off what is going to happen as David crosses the River Jordan in v24 and heads to Mahanaim.
- David even gets some **unexpected help** from clans in the north - v27-29

- They bring **bedding, pottery** and heaps of **food** - to refresh David and his travelling party

### Application

- As Psalm 34:10 says: **The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.**
- We shouldn't be surprised that God provides for David - **David has drawn near to God after his repentance and suffering the consequences of his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah**
- As Lam 3:25-26 says: **The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.**
- It's good to wait on the Lord - **His timing is always perfect**
- As we hit **chapter 18**
- David **organizes** his men into **3 groups**
- **1/3 under Joab, 1/3 under Abishai and 1/3 under Ittai**
- And the **men recognize** that it would be **best if David does not lead the battle**
  - **Because he is too valuable to lose in battle**
  - **He can support the armies from the city**
  - And **because it would be difficult for David to fight his own son**
- **Before the battle - David shows his compassion for his son**
- See v5 - **"Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake."**
- The **battle is a wipeout** - **David's men are victorious with 22,000 casualties**
- **Absalom comes to a sticky end**

[Powerpoint 5-Absalom]



- **See V9** - as he rides his mule under an oak tree
- His beautiful long hair - his pride and joy - gets caught in the tree
- Talk about a bad hair day!
- And he's left dangling in mid-air - literally between heaven and earth
- His life is in the balance
- **Joab** and his men finish Absalom off - despite David's orders to be gentle
- It's ironic that **Absalom's hair** which he prides so much is his downfall!

Applications

- As **Proverb 16:18** says: **Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.**

- **Absalom's pride and arrogance were his downfall**
- **A lesson for us - to remove any ego, pride or arrogance in our hearts - they will cause us to fall**

We can only conclude that **tragically, Absalom took a path that led him to destruction**

### A Warning for Us (Matthew 7:13-14)

- And that's a warning for us
- **Jesus talks about something similar in Matthew 7:13-14 [Turn there now]**

[Powerpoint 6]

**<sup>13</sup> "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

- **Jesus says - just like Absalom - we have a choice**
- **A choice of a wide gate or a narrow gate**
- **The wide gate leads to a wide road - and many go this way**
- **This wide road seems easy - because we can do whatever we want - just like Absalom did**
- **We can ignore God - we can be lawless, selfish, arrogant - over indulge ourselves - and get whatever we want - the world is our oyster - this road seems so inviting**
- **BUT - at the end of the road - it's destruction - and Hell to pay - literally**

- Whereas the **other choice** is a narrow gate - that's the gate Jesus wants us to choose - not so many people go this way
- This **narrow gate** leads to a narrow difficult road - and it doesn't seem so attractive at first
- This road calls us not to be selfish
- This road calls us to follow God's rules
- This road is also difficult - because we have to give up things and leave them at the gate - we have to give up the things that Absalom had - like lawlessness, selfishness, arrogance, pride, overindulgence, revenge and hatred - and strive to follow Jesus' example
- This road is also difficult - because we may have to suffer - we will be **persecuted for following Jesus** - we may have to lose friends or family to follow this road - this road will cost us.
- This road calls us to put God first - and calls us to realize that we are sinful - and **need a saviour** - God's son Jesus -
- This road says we can't make it on our own we need Jesus
- Remember Jesus said - **I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me** (John 14:6)
- And remember He also said: **apart from me you can do nothing** (John 15:5)
- But even though this narrow road is difficult and costly
- At the end of this narrow road - is Paradise - the **Bible calls this place Heaven**
- **Revelation 21:1-5 describes Heaven like this:**

[Powerpoint 7-Rev 21:1-3]

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

[Powerpoint 8-Rev 21:4-5]

<sup>4</sup> ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

<sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

- **Jesus wants us to choose the narrow gate to the narrow road to Heaven - where the benefits are literally out of this world**
- **It's a warning for us**
- **We don't want to follow Absalom's broad road to destruction**

Let's pray...