

# Cursed

2 Samuel 16:5-13; 19:16-23; 2 Kings 2:8-44

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This morning I want to look at an obscure character who plays a key role in a peculiar episode that took place during the latter years of King David's reign in Israel. Second Samuel 16. This little subplot in the life of King David has always fascinated me, and it involves a seedy little man whose name you might not even be familiar with: *Shimei*. We meet him here for the first time in 2 Samuel 16, where he shows up with a foul mouth and a bad temper, taunting and insulting David. And even before this guy crawls out of the woodwork, David is already at a low point emotionally. If you are still turning there (2 Samuel 16), I want to explain the historical background of this passage.

The incident described here occurred at the ultimate low point in the history of David's reign as king. Here's what was happening in Israel at the time: Saul has been dead and David has been reigning as uncontested king in Israel for about 30 years by now. His adultery with Bath-Sheba is at least a decade in the past. David had repented of his sin and received God's forgiveness. Some of you will remember from our study of Psalm 51 (David's prayer of repentance)

that God forgave him for his sin with Bath-Sheba, but the prophet Nathan told David that he would still suffer some of the consequences of his sin. Nathan's prophecy, in 2 Samuel 12:11, was, **"I will raise up evil against you out of your own house."** That prophecy was fulfilled in the rebellion of David's beloved son Absalom. It was the most agonizing heartache of David's life. He was publicly humiliated, but more than that, his private grief over Absalom was filled to the brim with the kind of utterly despondency that simply cannot be expressed in words—one of those **"groanings which cannot be uttered."**

Shimei's story is actually set against the backdrop of David's dethronement and the agony of his personal anguish over Absalom's rebellion. So let's just take a brief look at Absalom's defiance against David. Absalom, despite the intense love David had for him, nearly overthrew the kingdom of Israel.

Absalom deliberately defied his father as *openly* as possible. According to 2 Samuel 16:22, Absalom set up a tent on the roof of the royal palace. And he would go there in broad daylight with David's wives and concubines and defile them so that all of Israel knew what was happening.

This was Absalom's way of openly declaring his utter contempt for David's authority. And David knew the Lord had permitted all of this to happen in chastisement for his sin against Uriah and his adultery with Bath-Sheba. Back in

chapter 12, verses 11-12, God had said this to David through the mouth of the prophet Nathan: **"Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun."**

If God forgave David, why did He permit this to happen? For one thing, it was important for the vindication of public justice. If God let David off scot-free after such a heinous crime, God's own reputation would suffer. For another thing, this is a vivid reminder that forgiveness does not necessarily erase sin's *consequences*. And that is one of the main points we learn from this whole account with Shimei. Sinful acts have consequences, and although divine forgiveness guarantees that the sinner will never face *judgment* for sin, it is not a guarantee that we will escape the consequences of our sin. A man whose sin destroys his marriage can find forgiveness from God, but he may have to live the rest of his life with the consequences of a broken marriage. A drunk driver who causes an accident that costs him his leg can find forgiveness for his sin in Christ, but that won't give him his leg back. Sin's consequences *often* continue to afflict us even after we have received God's full and free forgiveness. That is the nature of sin. The thief on the cross was fully forgiven by Christ as he hung there, but that didn't win him any reprieve for his crimes against Rome.

In this case, David sought and found pardon for his sin. He was even permitted to remain on the throne. But the consequences of his sin—in terms of its bad example on David's own sons, and David's loss of respect among the people of Israel—were inevitable consequences of David's sin. He could not escape those consequences. They became a burden David bore for the rest of his life.

And so it was that from the same rooftop where David first lusted after Bath-Sheba, Absalom sinned against his father. What David had done secretly, his own son did to him openly.

That's why this was the absolute low point of the Davidic reign. In effect, David was deposed. Absalom rallied evil men to his side, and David was forced to flee Jerusalem. I want you to see how this happened. Turn back a page to 2 Samuel 15.

Absalom had cooked up a very clever conspiracy against David. Here's how he turned the people against the king: Verse 2 says Absalom used to rise early and stand in the road next to the gate; and when anyone came to the king for judgment, Absalom would engage the person in conversation, find out the details of the case, and then say (vv. 3-4), **"See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you.'** Then Absalom would say, **'Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a**

**dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice."**

So he was deviously making people think David had lost interest in justice. The poor and disenfranchised were suffering, he claimed, and David was doing nothing about it. The implication was that David didn't care about the people of Israel. Absalom was also promising that he, Absalom, would make sure justice would prevail, if only he could get the authority to do it.

Finally, after several years of doing this behind David's back, Absalom told David he needed to go to Hebron to pay a vow. Hebron is a full day's journey south of Jerusalem, in the hill country of Judah, so it put Absalom at a comfortable distance from David's armies and the circle of men around David who were loyal to the king. And from Hebron, Absalom immediately launched an open campaign to overthrow David and take over the kingdom for himself. Because of the long, quiet campaign he had waged to undermine respect for David, Absalom was able to get a sizable rebellion going in a remarkably short time.

Now let me be clear: Absalom's rebellion was an utterly wicked plot. It was totally unjustifiable by any standard. Absalom was himself a wicked man whom the Lord would judge severely for this sin.

But still there's a sense in which all of this was a consequence of David's sin with Bath-Sheba. David as

reaping what he had sowed. If he had not sinned, the people's respect for him would not have been so precarious. But once the incident with Bath-Sheba was uncovered, the people of Israel evidently found it a little easier to believe the lies Absalom was spreading about his own father.

Absalom's rebellion forced David to flee Jerusalem. Verse 12 says,

**the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.**

**13 And a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom."**

**14 Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword."**

**15 And the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides."**

**16 So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left ten concubines to keep the house.**

So David and his household and many of his loyal friends fled Jerusalem. This would save the city from destruction in a battle with Absalom. It would also give David time to assemble a defense against the rebels.

But it was a humiliating and heartbreaking moment for David. He was distraught with grief that his own beloved son would rebel this way. He was covered with shame for having to flee his own city under such circumstances. He was in mourning over the tragedy of the whole situation.

But most of all, David was burdened with the knowledge that this was a consequence of his own sin. He instantly saw the chastening hand of God in all of this. Verses 17-18 describe how hundreds of people were prepared to follow David into exile. But David tried to send them back. Verse 19: **"the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why do you also go with us? Go back."**

Verse 23: **"And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness. And Abiathar came up, and behold, Zadok came also with all the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God."**

This time David was emphatic. Verse 25: **"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 let me see both it and his dwelling place."** Every action David takes here is an expression of humble penitence. Right away he understood these events as a reproof from the hand of God. His guilt was gone when the Lord forgave him years ago, but he still felt the weight of responsibility for what he had done and he humbly accepted the consequences. That's why he

tried to send his loyal followers away. He wasn't looking for anyone to champion his cause or vindicate his name; he wanted to be alone with his grief. He sent the ark back because it seemed inappropriate to drag the symbol of God's presence into this exile that he had brought upon himself. Verse 30 says, "**David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went.**" The head-covering, bare feet, and weeping are all emblems of penitence.

That's the theme that permeates the context here: shame and regret in the knowledge that David's sin had unleashed all these troubles. David is not looking for anyone else to blame, and he is not asking anyone else to risk anything in his defense. He is fleeing his palace, all his possessions, and the city he had built in utter disgrace and mourning. This was the worst trouble he had ever faced, and for the first time, he could not protest that he didn't deserve it. You'll remember that as a younger man he had spent several years fleeing and hiding from king Saul. But now he was on the run from his own son. This must have been a moment of unimaginable grief for him.

Our text introduces us to this character Shimei. His story is given to us in Scripture like a 3-act drama. He appears three times—once here, once in chapter 19, and finally in 1 Kings 2. I want to look at each of these three passages and



piece Shimei's story together. It's a great object lesson about forgiveness, true repentance, and the consequences of sin.

## 1. SCENE 1—2 SAMUEL 16

Starting with verse 5 we read this:

**When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually.**

**6 And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.**

**7 And Shimei said as he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man!"**

**8 The LORD has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood."**

The reason for Shimei's hatred against David is clear. Verse 5 says he was "**of the family of the house of Saul.**" Shimei lost whatever status he had when the throne was taken from Saul, ending any hope of a dynasty for that family. Saul's clan tried to usurp David after Saul died, but that effort failed. According to 2 Samuel 2:10, "**Ish-bosheth, Saul's son [took the throne and] reigned [for] two years. But the house of Judah followed David.**" Ish-bosheth was beheaded by some men who

thought they were doing David a favor. But David was not pleased and made Ish-bosheth's killers pay with their lives.

Nevertheless, Shimei blamed David, and that's what this whole tirade is about. He is not only accusing David of wrongfully usurping Saul's throne; he is suggesting that David is to blame for Saul's death. That's what it means in verse 8, when he suggests that **"the blood of the house of Saul"** is on David's hands. Verse 8: **"Your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood."** Twice he calls David a **"man of blood,"** and he also calls him **"worthless,"** using a Hebrew word that means a lot more than "worthless." It has connotations of deliberate evil. The King James Version translates it **"thou man of Belial."** It is a profound insult.

The reality was the opposite of what Shimei claimed. On more than one occasion when David had opportunity to take Saul's life he spared him. In the end, Saul took his own life, and according to 1 Samuel 1:11-12, when he learned of Saul's suicide, **"David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword."**

So Shimei's charges were not only false; what he claimed was the polar opposite of the truth. These were deliberate lies and gross insults against David. Shimei was pouring vinegar

in David's wounds. He was a coward and a scoundrel, and he chose this moment in order to intensify David's pain.

When David did not lash back, Shimei was emboldened. He turned up both the volume and the passion. The text says **"he cursed continually."** That describes a steady stream of profanity mixed with these insults. **"He threw stones at David."**

Abishai, one of David's nephews, was with David. Verse 9: **"Then Abishai the son of Zeruah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.'" I get that. Under slightly different circumstances, even David might have approved that suggestion. He had the legal power to do so. An insurrection was underway that threatened the fabric of the kingdom, and Shimei was inciting more rebellion. To berate the King of Israel (God's anointed ruler over His people) was in the same category as blasphemy against God. Moses' law (Exodus 22:28) says, "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people." Ecclesiastes 10:20 adds this: "Even in your thoughts, do not curse the king." That's a principle some evangelical Americans need to bear in mind.**

Anyway, look at David's response to Abishai in verse 10: **But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah? If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"**

**11 And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.**

**12 It may be that the LORD will look on the wrong done to me, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today."**

This is actually a striking echo of an earlier incident, when Saul was trying to Kill David. One night David and some of his men sneaked into Saul's camp and found Saul sound asleep. Saul's spear was stuck in the ground next to his pillow. Abishai was there that night, too, and in 1 Samuel 26:8 Abishai looks at Saul asleep and says to David, "**God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear.**"

On that occasion, David (who was a man of solid Calvinist conviction) said, "**Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? . . . the LORD will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should put out my hand against the LORD's anointed.**"

That was David at his most Christlike. His tendency was to respond with grace in situations like this. Like Jesus, "**When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly**" (1 Peter 2:23). This, I think, is one of

the main reasons God describes him as "**a man after his own heart.**" David was a merciful man.

David's response when Abishai wanted to strike Saul dead reminds me of that incident in Luke 9:54 when James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven against an entire village of Samaritans. And I also think of Peter in Gethsemane, amputating the ear of the high priest's servant.

David's response here in our passage is strikingly similar to what Jesus said on that occasion (John 18:11): "**Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?'**"

There's difference, though. Jesus was about to bear the sins of others. David's response here is driven by a deep conviction of his own sin. Knowing that his own sin had unleashed these events, he chose to bear Shimei's mockery with grace and self-control. David he knew very well that he was not *blameless*. He was profoundly conscious of the fact that Absalom's rebellion was the aftermath of his own sin with Bath-Sheba. He was innocent of the blood of Saul, but he was not innocent of the blood of Uriah (Bath-sheba's husband). David's guilt before God had been washed completely clean, "**whiter than snow.**" But now the earthly consequences of that decade-old sin had caught up with him.

So David showed forgiveness to this wicked man who deserved no forgiveness whatsoever.

Sincere sorrow over our sins has a way of making us behave in a Christlike fashion. Here David consciously quieted any anger he might have felt, because, first of all, he knew he deserved a rebuke like this.

Second, he saw the hand of divine Providence in placing Shimei there at this moment. Verse 10: **"He is cursing because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.'" Verse 11: "! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to."** Here is the practical aspect of Calvinist conviction at work. David saw the sovereign, providential hand of God in his circumstances—even in an odious situation like this.

Understand what David was saying. He was not suggesting God was in any way responsible for Shimei's sin. As a sin, it was unjustifiable, wicked, and completely evil. David is not implying that God condoned or concurred with or approved of Shimei's evil intentions and wicked behavior. As a *sin* it was a violation of the divine will.

However, as a *rebuke*, Shimei's curse was an affliction from the hand of the Lord. God permitted it; He used it as a chastening and a reminder, to humble David and to call back to mind what a great wickedness David himself had been forgiven for. David had in effect murdered Uriah. What David did was far worse than what he suffered. And the pain of *this* suffering evoked gratitude for the Lord's great mercy.

Plus, David's sin was a terribly poor example to his children, and it called David's character into question in the

eyes of the whole nation. In that sense, David's sin contributed to Absalom's delinquency.

Furthermore, from David's perspective, if Absalom, his own son, was trying to kill David and usurp the throne, what was it to David if a two-bit scoundrel like Shimei merely insulted him? Look at verse 11: **"Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite!"**

Tribulation works what? *Patience* (Romans 5:3; James 1:3). And so David shows a tremendous amount of patience to Shimei. He chose to overlook the insult. He unilaterally and unconditionally forgave. He simply turned the other cheek. This was a godly response.

And even though when David walked away, Shimei followed along and continued to curse and throw dirt, David *still* refused to punish. Verse 13: **"So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust."**

Let me say this about forgiveness: There are times when the right thing to do with an offense is simply to refuse to take notice of it. Turn the other cheek. Bear the offense humbly.

Love dictates that this is the way we ought to treat the vast majority of offenses against us. First Corinthians 13:5 says, Love **"does not take into account a wrong suffered."** Love **"is**

**not irritable or resentful." "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (v. 7).**

Listen to 1 Peter 4:8: **"Love covers a multitude of sins."** You know what the most loving response to most personal offenses is? Simply refuse to take offense. Bear the wrong. Turn the other cheek. Overlook the wrong you have suffered. Cover the sin. Forgive unconditionally.

That is what David did here. It is the most Christlike response to a personal slight, even an intentional one like this.

David just walked away. Verse 14: **"And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan."** That was the end of the episode.

Now we move to Scene 2. Turn over to chapter 19.

## **2. SCENE 2—2 SAMUEL 19**

David was ultimately victorious over Absalom's rebellion. Even the victory was sad for David, because it cost him his beloved son. The nation was now in a state of disarray. It's interesting to note that David did not return immediately to Jerusalem. In fact, he waited until he was invited by the people to return. And 2 Samuel 19:14 says David sent a message to the elders of Judah that **"swayed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man, so that they sent word to the king, 'Return, both you and all your servants.'"**



So David prepared to enter Jerusalem. He camped at the edge of the Jordan in Gilgal. Verse 15 says all the men of Judah came there to conduct him across. This would have been a huge throng of people. They were preparing to usher David into Jerusalem in victory.

Now put yourself in Shimei's shoes for a moment. David will have to pass through Shimei's village again on his way back to Jerusalem. The last time he came through he was discouraged and depressed. It seemed then as if all Israel was against him, and Shimei added to David's shame by pelting him with rocks and dust and insults.

But this time, David is returning as a conqueror. All Israel is celebrating his victory and acknowledging his right to rule. Shimei, who had been bold and arrogant when David was on his way out, must have been trembling with fright now that David was on his way back.

So Shimei came to David to seek peace. He traveled to the Jordan where David was camped. Verse 16 says,

**Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, from Bahurim, hurried to come down with the men of Judah to meet King David.**

**17 And with him were a thousand men from Benjamin.**

[Benjamin was Saul's tribe, so these were men from Shimei's clan. They all had much at stake because of Shimei's rebellion.] **And Ziba the servant of the house of**

**Saul, with his fifteen sons and his twenty servants, rushed down to the Jordan before the king, 18 and they crossed the ford to bring over the king's household and to do his pleasure. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was about to cross the Jordan, 19 and said to the king, "Let not my lord hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. Do not let the king take it to heart. 20 For your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore, behold, I have come this day, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king."**

That's a pretty good repentance speech. This is the right way to ask for forgiveness. He admitted he had sinned. The offense was public; so was his submission to David. he fell on his face to show his humility. He acknowledged that he deserved the king's wrath, and he asked David not to impute the iniquity to him. In other words, he wanted forgiveness.

As good as his performance is, however, this was most likely not genuine repentance. Shimei was acting only in his own self-interests. His repentance was verbal only. You can be pretty sure that if David had been defeated by Absalom, Shimei would have boasted about what he had done. But now that David was returning in triumph, Shimei saw the wisdom of trying to make peace.

Remember how when Shimei was cursing David, Abishai wanted to put him to death? Here again Abishai points out that justice might be best served by Shimei's execution.

Verse 21: **"Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered, 'Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?'"**

David's reply was very similar to his earlier rebuke of Abishai. Verse 22: **"But David said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?'"**

David is still showing grace. He had already extended forgiveness to Shimei, and he was not about to revoke that demonstration of mercy in the midst of his victory. Verse 23: **"And the king said to Shimei, 'You shall not die.' And the king gave him his oath."** Having already shown mercy, even without any expression of repentance from Shimei, David now formally affirmed his forgiveness.

This was a conscious, deliberate choice David was making to overlook Shimei's offense. David would not punish him. He would not hold the sin against him. He gave him his word as king, and he affirmed it with an oath. This was a day of celebration, not retribution.

Shimei benefitted greatly from David's gracious forgiveness. He could have been put to death. Open disrespect against a king was a crime punishable by death in

every known culture of the time. In Shimei's case, the sin also involved blasphemy against God, for David was the rightful king God had anointed over Israel.

This brings up an important point about forgiveness. Human forgiveness can forgive human offenses. But when I forgive you for an offense you commit against me, that does not necessarily absolve you of sin against God. If your transgression includes an offense against God, you will still have to answer to Him for it. I can choose to overlook an offense, but I cannot grant absolution for your soul. Only God can do that, because in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, he has paid in full for the sins of all who will truly repent and trust Christ as savior.

I cannot grant you forgiveness for a sin against God. Luke 5:21: "**Who can forgive sins but God alone?**" We don't believe in a priestly forgiveness of sins. No mere human can absolve another person of sin before God. And forgiveness before God requires a perfect sacrifice—payment made in blood, for "**without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins**" (Hebrews 9:22). That's why Christ died: to be that perfect sacrifice.

Slights and personal insults can be forgiven at the human level, but the sin in such actions must be dealt with before God. If not, He *will* demand full justice. That is precisely what happened to Shimei. His story does not end here. We move to scene 3.

### 3. SCENE 3—1 KINGS 2

Years have elapsed. David is on his deathbed. And he is tying up some loose ends before he dies. He summons Solomon to his bedside. Solomon will become king after David dies. So David gives him a final charge (v. 2):

**I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man,  
3 and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn,  
4 that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, "If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel."**

David then hands Solomon several unfinished duties. There are some people whose offenses need to be punished, and others whose good deeds need to be rewarded.

One of the people David names is Shimei. Verse 8:

**And there is also with you Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a grievous curse on the day when I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by**

**the LORD, saying, "I will not put you to death with the sword."**

**9 Now therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man. You will know what you ought to do to him, and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol.**

This passage troubled me when I read it for the first time. This was literally David's last request. Verse 10 (the very next verse) goes on to say, **"Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David."**

Now, doesn't this seem incongruous? David had sworn to Shimei that Shimei would not be killed for cursing David. David had forgiven the offense. Shimei had even expressed repentance and received a formal grant of forgiveness from David.

And notice that David had not forgotten his promise. Verse 8: **"I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.'"**

Yet he orders Solomon to make sure Shimei does not die a natural death. What is this? Is David reneging on his oath, right here on his deathbed?

Not at all. David kept his promise to Shimei. He did not kill him. He let him live. And this order to Solomon for Shimei to be killed has nothing whatsoever to do with personal retribution. Don't get the idea David is using Solomon to get personal revenge against Shimei.

But as king in Israel, David was responsible to make certain that no one blasphemed God openly. David could forgive Shimei's personal offense against him, but both public justice and divine law *still* had a claim on him. David could overlook the personal transgression; but a public act of overt hostility to God still demanded to be punished.

So until Shimei sought *God's* forgiveness for his blasphemy, Shimei stood in danger of divine judgment. As a mere man, David could forgive a personal slight. But as king over Israel, he could not allow someone to blaspheme Jehovah and get off scot-free. Shimei needed to be punished, not for the sake of David's glory, but for God's.

There's a parallel here with David's own situation. God forgave David for his sin with Bath-Sheba. But he did not remove all the consequences, lest God's own honor be sullied among the Gentiles.

Notice the words of David's promise (verse 8): "**I will not put you to death with the sword.**" David had give Shimei many more years than the scoundrel deserved. He had permitted him to live when Shimei should have been punished. David had fulfilled his promise in every sense, and evidently none of it had any beneficial effect on Shimei's character, and David could see that. So having sworn to Shimei that he would not kill him, David hands the responsibility off to Solomon.

None of this was motivated by a desire for personal revenge, but by a zeal for the glory of God and the purity of the nation. David had done what he promised to do, but now on his deathbed, he could not neglect his kingly duties any longer. In fact, it seems to me that David purposely waited until his last breath before ordering that Shimei should be punished after he was gone. This way, no one could say that David did it to preserve his own honor or to satisfy his own thirst for retribution.

Solomon dealt with the situation wisely. He honored David's forgiveness of the cursing incident, and he devised a way whereby Shimei might prove whether his heart was now right before God.

Verse 36:

**[Solomon] sent and summoned Shimei and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever.**

**37 For on the day you go out and cross the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall die. Your blood shall be on your own head."**

**38 And Shimei said to the king, "What you say is good; as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.**

As long as Shimei kept his promise, he would be OK. He could live within Jerusalem and move around to his heart's delight. But if he ever left the city—if he even crossed the



Kidron valley—he would forfeit his life. Look what happened:

**It happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei's servants ran away to Achish, son of Maacah, king of Gath. And when it was told Shimei, "Behold, your servants are in Gath,"**

**40 Shimei arose and saddled a donkey and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants. Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath.**

See how easily he broke his word! Remember that parable Jesus told about the servant who was forgiven a massive debt, but then he went out and found a fellow servant who owed him money, and grabbed him by the neck and had him thrown in prison till he could pay? That's pretty much what happened here. Shimei, who had been forgiven so much, was furious when one of his slaves ran away, and he tracked him down all the way to Gath, in the land of the Philistines. That's a long way from Jerusalem, 27—a long day's journey. So it wasn't as if he just put one toe over the line.

Solomon heard about it, too. Verse 41:

**when Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned,  
42 the king sent and summoned Shimei and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, 'Know for certain that on the day you go out**

and go to any place whatever, you shall die'? And you said to me, 'What you say is good; I will obey.'

43 Why then have you not kept your oath to the LORD and the commandment with which I commanded you?"

44 The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your own heart all the harm that you did to David my father. So the LORD will bring back your harm on your own head.

45 But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever."

46 Then the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck him down, and he died. So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

Solomon states the whole issue in just a few words in verse 44. Heres how the King James version says it: "**Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to.**" Shimei's *heart* was never cleansed of the wickedness He had committed against God.

Here's the ironic thing: God is, if anything, more willing to forgive than David was. Psalm 86:5: "**You, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.**" Nehemiah 9:17: "**You are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**" Isaiah 55:7: "**Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will**

**abundantly pardon." Micah 7:18-19: "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."**

Shimei had all those years of opportunity, because of David's forgiveness, when he might have sought God's forgiveness, too. He could have turned at any time to God and sought forgiveness. But he did not. So in the end he suffered the due penalty of his sins.

That is the way with most sinners. We care a great deal what men think, but we trouble ourselves too little with what God thinks. Shimei would go all the way to the banks of the Jordan to seek David's pardon, but he would not even enter his own closet to repent before God.

And judgment finally caught up with him. This man, whose life had been extended for many years because of the goodness of David, squandered all those years presuming on the goodness of God. He settled accounts with David, but he had never settled accounts with God. So in the end, judgment caught up with him.

**Second Corinthians 6:2: "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Hebrews 3:7-8: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."**

David and Shimei make a stark contrast. David had received *God's* forgiveness for his sin when he repented the moment his sin was exposed. But he bore the earthly consequences for that sin for the rest of his life.

Shimei, on the other hand, had sought and received earthly forgiveness. He was released by David from the immediate consequences of his sin, but he was bound by God to eternal judgment for that sin, as long as Shimei remained unrepentant before God. And he dragged that guilt and his enmity against God with him all his life, until finally it destroyed him.

This is an occasion for self-examination for all of us. What kind of forgiveness have you sought for your sins? Have you looked for an earthly, temporal release from your sin's consequences, or have you gone to God to be cleansed of the eternal guilt?

Are there notable sins in your past that you have never taken to God and sought His forgiveness and full cleansing? If so, those sins might be weighing you down right now, accumulating consequences which will one day overwhelm you and destroy you the way Shimei was destroyed.

If you are a Christian and have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior, thank God—He has borne the weight of your guilt and removed your sin (all of it) as far from you as the east is from the west. There may be remaining consequences that you cannot escape, but the good news is that God promises

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grace to sustain you through that as well. James 4:6: "**He gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'**"