

“David’s Secret Weapon”  
2 Samuel 16:15-19  
(Preached at Trinity, October 13, 2019)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verses 1-14** focus on David’s flight from Jerusalem. **Verse 14** brings this section to an end.  
**2 Samuel 16:14 NAU** - "The king and all the people who were with him arrived weary and he refreshed himself there."
2. With **Verse 15** the scene changes to the situation at Jerusalem. Absalom arrives with a heart of victory. He is accompanied by Ahithophel. Like Hushai, Ahithophel had been a friend of David. He had been David’s trusted advisor. But his loyalty turned out to be false. Like too many, he was willing to switch allegiances if he thought it to his advantage.
3. David had received the grave news of Ahithophel’s betrayal. His prayer turned imprecatory.  
**2 Samuel 15:31 NAU** - "Now someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness."
4. With the arrival of his friend, Hushai, David began to craft his defense as well as plan for his offense. He commissioned Hushai as a spy. It was a bold and dangerous move.  
**2 Samuel 15:32-34 NAU** - "It happened as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn and dust on his head. <sup>33</sup> David said to him, "If you pass over with me, then you will be a burden to me. <sup>34</sup> "But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so I will now be your servant,' then you can thwart the counsel of Ahithophel for me."
5. Now as we turn our attention back to Jerusalem we find Hushai has arrived to faithfully carry out his charge.  
**2 Samuel 16:16 NAU** - "Now it came about when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, "*Long* live the king! *Long* live the king!"
6. Absalom was obviously suspicious.
  - A. How could one who had been loyal to David suddenly turn against him? If Hushai so easily betrayed David, his friend, could Absalom trust him?  
**2 Samuel 16:17 NAU** - "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"
  - B. But as we’ve often seen, corruption in our own heart makes it difficult for us to condemn it in others.  
Did not Absalom betray the loyalty he owed to his own father?  
And isn’t it true that Ahithophel also abandoned his loyalty to David?  
Why not believe the same to be true about Hushai?

7. Hushai's words were cunning and deceptive—but were they lies?
- A. When Hushai shouted “Long live the king” he wasn't lying. He was referring to David! Absalom wrongfully assumed he was referring to him.
- B. Hushai flattered the pride of Absalom. Didn't Israel choose Absalom over David? Would it not prudent for Hushai to serve Absalom?  
**2 Samuel 16:18 NAU** - "Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain."  
 God chose David. David was God's anointed. And Israel was a theocracy. Their duty was to accept God's choice. So when Hushai pledged loyalty to the one the LORD and Israel had chosen he was actually pledging loyalty to David.  
 It was a clever word of deception.
- C. **Verse 19** is even more crafty. Is it not true that Hushai had come to offer his services to David's son as a way of continuing his service to David?  
**2 Samuel 16:19 NAU** - "As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence."
- D. Most important as we look at the deception and stretching of the truth in this passage, Absalom was the enemy of God's anointed King and Hushai was active in exercising military deception.
8. This places before us a question that has troubled students of the Bible. Was it proper that Hushai went so far in his deception, even to the point of lying? The Bible neither commends nor condemns Hushai here.  
 This has been the style of the writer.
- a. In **Chapter 5** we read of David's many wives and concubines without any commentary on the practice.
- b. We also don't find any commentary regarding the suicide of Ahithophel in **Chapter 17**. Silence is not a commendation.
- c. This leaves us to uncover the truth with a clear Biblical theology.
9. We find many examples of lies in the Bible, almost always without statements condemning the action.  
 Sometimes we read of actual lies, sometimes of deception without actually speaking a lie.
- A. The Bible commends the Hebrew midwives who deceived Pharaoh. While it was true the Hebrews often delivered without the help of a midwife, their words were clearly mean to deceive.  
**Exodus 1:19-21 NAU** - "The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them." <sup>20</sup> So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. <sup>21</sup> Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them."
- B. And the Bible also commends Rehab. It doesn't actually commend her lies, but rather her faith in trusting her life into the care of the God of Israel.  
**Hebrews 11:31 NAU** - "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."

9. While the Bible may not give commentary on every occurrence of lying, the Law of God stands clear:

**Exodus. 20:16 NAU** - "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

The Catechism gives us clarity on the meaning of the command.

Q. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man and of our own and our neighbour's good name, especially in witness-bearing.

10. The Bible actually has much to say about speaking lies.

A. The Bible equates it with wickedness.

**Psalms 58:3 NAU** - "The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth."

B. It is equated with Satan

**John 8:44 NAU** - "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

C. It is among those sins consistent with those who are cast into hell

**Revelation 21:8 NAU** - "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

D. At least Two of the abominations God hates deals with this commandment

**Proverbs 6:16 NAU** - "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: <sup>17</sup> Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>18</sup> A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, <sup>19</sup> A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers."

11. The Ninth Commandment requires all that promotes truth and prohibits falsehood and dishonesty.

This brings us to the issue of situational ethics. Are we ever permitted to set aside God's Law in the case of certain situations? The answer is NO. We are not ever permitted to set aside God's Law.

At the same time, we are to obey according to Biblical parameters.

A. We are not permitted to set aside the Fourth Commandment. But the Fourth Commandment permits the exceptions of necessity and mercy. With these two exceptions, we are not setting aside the Sabbath. We are obeying it according to the Biblical parameters. Necessity or mercy may require work on the Sabbath. This doesn't mean, however, that we can arbitrarily declare an activity a necessity. Going to a restaurant to eat after church in most cases does not meet the criterion of necessity.

- B. The Sixth Commandment forbids the taking of a human life. But the Bible allows the civil authorities to bear the sword for the defense of its citizens and for justice. This means that the agents of the magistrate are permitted to carry out the work of the magistrate. It is estimated that between 90,000 and 146,000 died in Hiroshima and between 39,000 and 80,000 died in Nagasaki. They were victims of war. The pilots of the aircraft that dropped the bombs did not violate the Sixth Commandment, although our military allows for a person to refuse to take up arms in violation of their conscience.
- C. What about the Ninth Commandment? The Ninth Commandment forbids the speaking of that which is untrue. But are also certain parameters in obeying this command.  
For example, while we are not permitted to speak lies, we are permitted to withhold the truth from those of whom we do not owe the truth. In fact, it is essential that we withhold truth from those who have no right to it—the need to know principle.  
**Proverbs 11:13 NAU** - "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter."
- D. The intent of the Ninth Commandment deals with telling the truth, especially in witness bearing. We are not permitted to make false statements about our neighbor. We must always speak that which is true.  
But the Ninth Commandment is not an absolute prohibition against all deception. Not all deception is sin.
1. The civil authorities may use deceptive methods in the course of carrying out military campaigns. Military strategy often demands withholding truth, concealing truth, and at times giving information designed to be deceptive.
    - a. Spies are often used by nations which demands deception and the withholding of truth. Hushai was David's spy, David's secret weapon.  
Deceit is permitted, withholding truth is permitted. But speaking lies and falsehood is denied by the Ninth Commandment.
    - b. This may seem strange in our day where we find it easy to set aside God's Law if it is expedient for us to do so. Political lying is a way of life. Our leaders speak one lie after another. But does God permit it?  
Even nations should speak truth. Treaties should be honored. A nation's promises should be kept.
    - c. David was at war with Absalom and Hushai was his agent.  
Deception was prudent but lies were in violation of God's Law.
  2. Police sometimes use deception in the interrogation of suspects. They are acting as agents of the civil authorities. But lies should be avoided.
    - a. Undercover work demands carefully crafted deception.
    - b. There is a difference between lies and deception. Interrogators can deceive and withhold truth, but not lie. This may put a tremendous burden upon law enforcement, but God's Law cannot be violated in the interest of obtaining justice. God's justice will ultimately prevail.

- c. Following God's demand for truth would end the practice of unjust plea bargaining—getting the suspect to admit to the offense for a reduced sentence, even if it means admitting to something they did not actually do. Such admissions are lies.
  - 3. Again, not all deception is sin. Even a game of football demands deceiving your opponent. The strategy in many games demands deception and the withholding of information. The card game of Hearts would not work out well if I had to divulge that I possessed the dreaded Queen of Spades. It is information your opponents do not have the right to know. At the same time, you are not permitted to actually lie about the cards you are holding.
- 12. Just like necessity and mercy should not lead us to arbitrarily set aside the Sabbath, we are not permitted to arbitrarily set aside the Ninth Commandment.
  - 1. There are sometimes a fine line between a deception and a lie. Great caution must be exercised.
    - a. Was David's word to Achish a deception or a lie? There is no doubt David was using a military tactic, but was it in violation of the Ninth Commandment? It was more than deception. It was a lie.  
**1 Samuel 27:9-12 NAU** - "David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing. Then he returned and came to Achish. <sup>10</sup> Now Achish said, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David said, "Against the Negev of Judah and against the Negev of the Jerahmeelites and against the Negev of the Kenites." <sup>11</sup> David did not leave a man or a woman alive to bring to Gath, saying, "Otherwise they will tell about us, saying, 'So has David done and so *has been* his practice all the time he has lived in the country of the Philistines.'" <sup>12</sup> So Achish believed David, saying, "He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever."
    - b. What about his words to Ahimelech the priest? David is functioning as God's anointed but are his words to be justified? They were not merely deception or the withholding of truth. They were an open lie? The Bible uses this as an example of necessity and mercy on the Sabbath but does not justify David's lie.  
**1 Samuel 21:1-2 NAU** - "Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?" <sup>2</sup> David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.'"

3. There are other Biblical examples where deceit cannot be justified. We cannot justify Rebecca and Esau's deception of deceiving Isaac even though Rebecca was acting on faith upon God's promise. It was far more than deceit. It was an open lie.  
**Genesis 27:18-19 NAU** - "Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" <sup>19</sup> Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me."
13. The Ninth Commandment does not require the speaking of everything we know. Everyone does not have the right to know everything we know. This is where the principle of "Need to Know" is important. You can be a faithful witness without revealing everything you know.  
 Hushai was not required to divulge David's plan in sending him.
- A. If I am in the process of counseling a member and another member asks me to share the details I am under no obligation to tell him. In fact, it would be improper if I did. They don't have a need to know. They don't have the right to know.
- B. On the other hand, if in the course of counselling I discover that a crime has been committed and I am asked by law enforcement, I must tell them what I know. They have a need to know. They have the right to know.
- C. Hushai was loyal to King David, God's true king. Absalom did not have a right to know David's plans.
14. What are some principles we can draw from this passage?
- I. God's Law is absolute.
1. We are not permitted when we should or should not obey.  
 God does not give us that authority
2. God's standard of righteousness and of condemnation is His Law. Sin is transgression of God's Law.
- II. The great intent of the Ninth Commandment is the protection of our neighbor
1. God always defends life  
 The Sixth Commandment is a recognition of the value placed upon human life. Human beings were created in the image of God.  
 Calvin: "We are commanded, if we find anything of use to us in saving our neighbors' lives, faithfully to employ it; if anything harmful, to ward it off; if they are in any danger, to lend them a helping hand. If you perpetrate anything by deed, if you plot anything by attempt, if you wish to plan anything contrary to the safety of a neighbor, you are considered guilty of murder."<sup>1</sup>
2. Sometimes in the care of our neighbor we will withhold truth from those who seek to harm them. But we are not permitted to lie.  
 The Ninth Commandment commands the principle of maintaining the sanctity of truth.

---

<sup>1</sup> Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol.1*, Edited by John T. McNeill, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 405-406.

John Murray wrote: “When we speak of the sanctity of truth, we must recognize that what underlies this concept is the sanctity of the being of God and the living and true God. He is the God of truth and all truth derives its sanctity from him. This is why all untruth or falsehood is wrong; it is a contradiction of that which God is.”<sup>2</sup>

3. The great focus of the Ninth Commandment is upon not speaking in a manner that does not bring harm to others.  
Calvin: “Let us not malign anyone with slander or false charges, nor harm his substance by falsehood, in short, injure him by unbridled evil speaking. We should help everyone as much as we can in affirming the truth, in order to protect the integrity of his name and possessions. This commandment is lawfully observed when our tongue, in declaring the truth, serves both the good repute and advantage of our neighbors.”<sup>3</sup>
4. We should maintain a principle of maintaining truth at all costs. But at times we are permitted to withhold truth or deceive those to whom we do not owe the truth. This is particularly true in the protection of our neighbor.  
Concealing the truth is not the same thing as speaking a lie.  
John Murray: “It is necessary to guard jealously the distinction between partial truth and untruth. We must remember that biblical ethic is built upon fine distinctions. At the point of divergence the difference between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood, is not a chasm but a razor’s edge.”<sup>4</sup>
5. Again, John Murray writes: “Scripture warrants the concealment of truth from those who have no claim upon it. We immediately recognize the justice of this. How intolerable life would be if we were under obligation to disclose all the truth. And concealment is often an obligation which truth itself requires. Men often forfeit their right to know the truth and we are under no obligation to convey it to them.”<sup>5</sup>

**Proverbs 11:13 NAU** - "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter."

#### Conclusion:

1. May we understand clearly that God’s Law is absolute and God demands absolute obedience. May we have clear resolve to obey under every circumstance.
2. And may God grant us great wisdom to measure accurately the fine parameters of obedience. May we comprehend the right application of necessity and mercy in keeping the Sabbath. And may we comprehend the fine line between deception or withholding the truth and speaking a lie.

---

<sup>2</sup> Murray, John, *Principles of Conduct*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 125.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol.1*, Edited by John T. McNeill, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 411.

<sup>4</sup> Murray, John, *Principles of Conduct*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 141.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.