

What Your Own Way Gets You!

Absalom: The Self-Appointed King

Text: 2 Samuel 16 - 18

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Series: Life of David

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Theme: Open your Bibles to **2 Samuel 16 through 18**. We will be looking at three chapters tonight. The title of tonight's message is: "What Your Own Way Gets You", and we are talking about Absalom: the Self-Appointed King.

Tonight's outline is simple.

1. Lost man's ultimate **Plan** is to get his own way, but it is eternally and infinitely dangerous.
2. There are many **Promoters of wickedness** that will support you if you choose against God.
3. Thirdly, I want you to see the **Providence** of God when you abandon yourself to His will. You can trust Him, come what may!

[Prayer for Guidance]

Introduction: The advice of Oprah and many others is "follow your heart". As we have been learning in the evening services, today's post modern mentality is if you feel it's true then it's true. The perfect guide of truth and wisdom, His Word gives us a warning about the mentality of wanting your own way!

Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (see also **Proverbs 16:25**).

Absalom was a man who tried to get his own way. He followed the guide of his unsatisfied heart until it led him to his death.

I'm here tonight to warn you that your own way leads to death. God has several terms for going our own way. It is called sin, rebellion and lawlessness, and it's wages are eternal death under the justice of God. If you choose your own way, you will be given what you want, the ultimate consequences of your sin. But trust me you have no idea what that is. You cannot comprehend the horror of sin's ultimate consequences even for a moment.

But without the grace of God we all go to our own destruction while at the same time thinking it is the best way, not knowing it is the way of death. Tonight we are looking tonight at the breathtaking account of a man pursuing his own way to the disregard of all others. Absalom is the classic illustration of someone living with themselves at the center of the universe.

My hope tonight is to look at Absalom's rebellion, and to see first that that tendency is in all of us, and we need to see how getting our own way always leads to destruction.

- I. Lost man's ultimate **Plan** is to get his own way, but it is eternally and infinitely dangerous. **Proverbs 14:12**, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (see also **Proverbs 16:25**).

Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

The flesh in us all wants our own way. We have a part of us that is unruly and insubordinate. **Isaiah 53:6**, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way..."

Matthew 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

- A. From Absalom's perspective (the **ungodly**). We come to a man with a plan to get his way. Absalom is a man that has rejected God and tried to take the universe into his own hands. It began with him taking vengeance into his own hands. When that seemed to work out after the murder of Amnon, he decides he now wants the kingdom.

He has begun a civil war of sorts with the goal being the death of his own father, the king. Absalom sent out spies through all Israel. He told his father that he was going to Hebron to worship. No, he went to Hebron because that's where David was coronated, and that's where Absalom wanted to be coronated. Now Absalom was on his way to kill his father. There was no other way around it.

Application: We all have schemes that are not of God's making but our own. These plans are always vain. We are as dumb as the dogs that I used to observe as a child in Louisiana. There was a law that you could shoot a dog if it got on your property. The dogs think they are free, but before they know it, the dog is dead. There was one lady who just waited for a dog to cross her property line. It was my friends next door neighbor. Often I would hear gun shot and then the howl of a dying dog. The dogs think they can roam freely. But the place of greatest freedom is at home in their master's care and protection.

All of us have the propensity to leave the care of our Maker's protection. As soon as we are able to, we go astray, even from the womb. Instead of surrendering to God's plans, we invent our own plan of what we are supposed to do and to be. And before we know it, we find ourselves perishing. It is only the grace and mercy of God that can save us from this.

- B. From **David's** perspective. As Absalom rebels, we have a very strange scene with Shimei cursing David. But this scene reveals David's plans. He had only one plan, and that was to trust God.

We see this in David's life. David accepts the humiliation of Shimei, as a judgment from God. Do you see why David is a man after God's own heart?

He does dumb and sinful things, but, when the LORD moves in, his attitude is always acceptance—total acceptance!

Application: Brethren, you need one main plan for your life. Total acceptance of God's will. A total surrender to Him and His Lordship. And so when it seems like if we obey God we will lose everything, we need to obey God. God can restore whatever we lose. It is God's plan, not our own. We need to surrender unconditionally to God's will.

- II. There are many **Promoters of wickedness** that will support you if you choose against God. But God has his own friends that He will use to help you in times of trouble. If you want your own way, there are many who will try and make your rebellion sound wise.

We see this with Ahithophel. Satan makes sure that there are always so-called friends around us that will support our rebellion against God. In 2 Samuel 16 we have the case of the 2 counselors. Each is an example of either a good or bad counselor.

A. A look at the **counselors**.

1. **Ahithophel**-decides to serve with Absalom. He has a great plan, a plan that will succeed to help Absalom. Remember **Ahithophel** is the father of Bathsheba, the wife now of David. He was known as one of the wisest counselors in all of Israel. **Verse 23**, "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom". Nevertheless, Ahithophel turned against David upon Absalom's coronation in Hebron. We will look at his advice in a moment. But first let's meet the godly counselor Hushai. Hushai does **not** want to help Absalom.
2. **Hushai the Archite** was told by David to go to Absalom and be a spy. So Hushai is the inside guy—the mole in Absalom's cabinet. He was to pretend that he was loyal to Absalom in order to save the true king's life. Now Hushai was up in years, because in **15:33**, David said if Hushai stayed on the run with David, he would be "a burden" to him. So Hushai offered himself to Absalom to be a trusted advisor. Hushai was there for one reason: to offer wrong advice to Absalom to prevent the greatest conspiracy ever in ancient Israel.

We see Hushai's allegiance to David in **verse 16**, "And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king."

You've got to wonder which king Hushai was wishing long life. There is no doubt his desire was for David to prosper!

Of course, even Absalom, in all his twisted depravity, could see this as a betrayal of the highest sort. Yet, he receives Hushai immediately as his advisor.

- B. A look at the **counsel**. Ahithophel and Hushai offer conflicting advice to Absalom.

1. **Ahithophel's counsel.** In **verse 20** we see the inner workings of Absalom's counsel, "Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do." Remember this guy's advice is almost on par with the revelation of a prophet, like an "oracle of God" (**verse 23**). Ahithophel's advice was renowned. So with David's men being mighty and Absalom the self appointed King, Absalom needs a plan to bring the people of Israel to his side. He needs to show that he is now in charge.
 - a. **First he deals with the People.** Ahithophel uses a pagan tradition to demonstrate that the kingdom now belongs to Absalom. It is utterly ungodly, but this was the way of the world.

Ahithophel gives this advice to Absalom: **Verses 21-22**, "And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. 22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel."

Ahithophel counsels the self-appointed king to take the concubines. What is a concubine? It was like an officially recognized mistress. In addition to David's five or six wives, he had at least ten concubines according to **2 Samuel 15:16**. This shows the great darkness that rested over the world at this time.

Ahithophel's intention is found in **verse 21**—he thought this act would bring courage to all that were with Absalom: "then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong". This was an act of abandonment and treachery toward David to convince the people that David was out of office and had utterly no control in the kingdom.

Absalom did this in a tent that was set up in public, so that no one had to guess what was going on there.

Perhaps Ahithophel is also getting revenge against David for violating his daughter (or granddaughter?) Bathsheba.

- a. Now Ahithophel deals with the Plan of Battle. Remember Ahithophel's advice is like an "oracle of God". He gives the correct advice (**17:1-4**). Ahithophel urges Absalom to attack David's troops immediately while David is still weary and weak. This is wise advice! It would have worked!!

"Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: 2 And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: 3 And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. 4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel" (**17:1-4**).

But of course, this counsel comes to nothing. **Psalm 2** reminds us that no matter how seemingly wise and brilliant our plans are, without the help of the Lord, they will ultimately come to nothing. Look at **Psalm 2:2**, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Now look at **verses 10-12**, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

2. Now look at **Hushai's counsel**. His counsel is purposely bad (17:5-14, 23). Hushai advises that the attack be delayed until a large number of soldiers throughout the land could be assembled. Then Absalom himself should lead them into battle. Hushai's plan is accepted, causing Ahithophel to go home and commit suicide by hanging. This reveals several things.
 - a. Absalom is a total novice, accepting Hushai's advice when he had just come on that day from David. He is relying on the new guy. He's got no friendship or trust or loyalty over time.
 - b. This gives David time to reorganize. Verse 15, "Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests [DAVID'S FRIENDS], Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel". Hushai sends news of Absalom's plan to David, who now has time to mobilize his army (**17:15-23**).

III. Thirdly, I want you to see the **Providence** of God when you abandon yourself to His will. You can trust Him, come what may!

- A. The **Replacement** (17:24-26): Absalom appoints Amasa to the Israelite army in place of Joab who is fighting for David. **Verse 25**, "Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab". Amasa and Joab were David's nephews. The worst seems to be on the horizon for David, but David has given himself to a total trust in God. And in the midst of the trial, we have a sign of God's care for David.
- B. The **Refreshment** (17:27-29): Three friends of David—Shobi, Makir, and Barzillai—bring him and his soldiers food in the wilderness. Look at verses 28-28, they "Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, 29 And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness."

God may put you in the vice grips and squeeze you, but it is only for your good. He will never hurt you. He will "never leave you, nor forsake you" (**Hebrews 13:5**). And He will never leave you fruitless and barren. He will provide for your needs. **Matthew 6:33**, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." God will often bring refreshment in the trial.

- C. The **Refusal** (18:1-4): David's troops urge him not to lead them in the battle, arguing that his life is worth 10,000 of theirs. **Verses 2-4**, "the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also. 3 But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city. 4 And the king said unto them, **What seemeth you best I will do**".

I love the humility of the king here. Leaders must be humble and teachable if they are to be used of God. David in all his wisdom and years is still teachable and learning. A person surrendered fully to God will be teachable. There is always a childlike nature to a follower of Jesus. We can trust and rest as a child rests in his mother's arms.

- D. The **Request** (18:5): Just before the battle, David instructs Joab, Abishai, and Ittai to deal gently with Absalom. **Verses 5**, "And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom".

We are not only commanded to love our enemies and to treat them well, but to rejoice when they treat us wrongly. **Matthew 5:11-13**, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

- E. The **Routing** (18:6-8): David's troops defeat Absalom's army in the forest of Ephraim. God fought on David's behalf! Read it for yourself in chapter 18 verses 6-8, "So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim; 7 Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. 8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured". You can trust God in adversity. You can trust God even when you are in the very hands of your enemies. You can trust Him and do good to those who want to hurt you!

- F. Now look at the **Reprisal** (18:9-18). We will look into this more next week, but ...

1. Look at the **helpless Absalom** (18:8-10): As he flees the battle on his mule, Absalom's hair gets caught in the thick branches of a large oak, and he is left dangling helplessly in the air.

Application: You can try to rebel against God, but He will win in the end. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (**Romans 14:10**). There is a judgment day, and the only way to escape the judgment of God is through the blood of Jesus Christ.

2. The **heartless Joab** (18:11-18): Disregarding David's instructions, Joab plunges three daggers into Absalom's heart. ABSALOM had NO

PROTECTION. He was utterly outside the Lord's will. He shunned God's protection. This is how he dies!

Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (see also **Proverbs 16:25**).

G. David's **Remorse** (18:19-33): David anxiously awaits news of the battle and Absalom's fate. Finally, a messenger brings him word that his enemies are defeated and Absalom is dead. Bursting into tears, David wishes that he had died instead of his son! **Verse 33**, "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Conclusion: There is an Absalom in us all. We are born wanting to get our own way in everything. Absalom had something in him that we all have in us at the moment of conception. He wanted to usurp the throne of God. He wanted to be like the most high (**Isaiah 14**). Satan wanted his way over God's way. He rebelled and took a third of the angels with him. Satan from there went to the garden to tempt Adam and Eve. He tempted them to eat of the tree God had forbidden, because then, he said, they would be the ones determining good and evil. In other words, Satan gave them the false promise that they would sit as sovereigns over their own lives.

Your own worst enemy is you! Salvation is not so much a deliverance from Satan (it is that), but much more it is a deliverance from the tyranny of self. The only way out is through salvation, and if you are saved, through a constant daily surrender to God's will. God's will is the best for you. It may not be easy. The circumstances will not always be happy. You will not always understand why God is doing what He is doing. But you can trust Him!

Though Christians have been given a new heart so that we are no longer dominated by the desires of our flesh, we have not lost the temptations in the flesh to sin against God. "...The flesh lusteth against the Spirit...so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (**Galatians 5:17**).

Let us not seek our own way tonight. It may seem right, but it leads to death! Let us seek only Christ's kingdom and His righteousness trusting only in His providential hand, come what may!