

Message #24

II Samuel 17:15-29

In Proverbs 20:24 we read, “Man’s steps are ordained by the Lord, how then can man understand his way?” Martin Luther said, “All the works of God are unsearchable and unspeakable, no human sense can find them out...no mortal creature can comprehend God in his majesty...How should we be able to comprehend or understand the secret counsels of God’s majesty, or search them out with our human sense, reason or understanding. ...I, for my part, admit myself a fool...” (*Table Talk*, p. 40).

God’s sovereign work is way beyond our ability to grasp. His ways are not our ways. That point is clearly seen when we study this part of the life of David.

What we have here is a political power that hates David and wants David dead. They have the numbers and they have the momentum. It looks like for David it is all over. But of course that was not the sovereign plan or will of God.

The people in power had come up with a plan to get David. They were going to gather up all the military men from Dan in the far north to Beersheba in the far south. This massive military would be led by Absalom and their goal was to track down David and kill him.

For David, it looks bad. But God was on David’s side and even though for a while there was a proud and arrogant man named Absalom sitting as it were in the White House, God was going to take him down and take him out.

It does not matter how bad things look, no one can stop or thwart the sovereign plan of God for someone’s life. God has a plan and His plan will win. God watches over His elect. He knows what they need and when they need it.

God can turn minds and circumstances any way He wants to accomplish His purposes and even though most don’t realize it, He is doing that right here. What we see is this:

GOD SOVEREIGNLY RAISES UP PEOPLE TO HELP PROTECT AND SUPPORT DAVID, AND HE ELIMINATES DAVID’S ENEMIES SO THAT HE COULD ULTIMATELY BRING DAVID BACK TO JERUSALEM AS KING.

David has been run out of town. Absalom had a meeting with Ahithophel, who wanted him to give him 12,000 men to go track down David some 20 miles away. It was a good plan. But in an amazing turn of events, Absalom wanted to hear from Hushai, who came up with another plan and Absalom decided his plan was better. He would round up a massive military and lead them to get David.

So as we come to this text, there are six historical facts we want to observe:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Hushai informs David what is happening. **17:15-17**

We may recall that Hushai was a very close friend of David, and he had stayed in Jerusalem to be an informant for David (15:34), and also to try to stop any plan of Absalom.

At this point, Absalom had agreed to Hushai's plan and had rejected Ahithophel's plan. But Hushai was well aware that that could change, so he wanted to get word to David ASAP. Absalom was a fickle man and he could decide to change his mind and revert back to Ahithophel's plan, so he wanted to warn David.

David had two trustworthy Aaronic priests still in Jerusalem, who were Zadok and Abiathar, so Hushai went to them and told them what Ahithophel wanted to do (take 12,000 men and go after David) and what Hushai said they should do (lead a massive military army to go after David).

According to **verse 16**, Hushai said that they needed to send word to David quickly and tell him not to spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but to cross over the Jordan or else he and his people will be destroyed. The fords were located about 20 miles from Jerusalem, where David was resting.

Jonathan and Ahimaaz were the two sons of the priests, who could be trusted. Zadok and Abiathar could not risk being seen traveling to see David or going to En-rogel. So the priests sent a servant girl out to the well, where Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying to tell them what to tell David.

En-rogel was a place where there was a spring or well in the Kidron Valley about a quarter of a mile from Jerusalem. Apparently this servant girl had the responsibility to go get some water for the priests.

Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying by the well so the priests wanted the servant girl to inform them what to do.

God's sovereignty does not negate human responsibility. Even though Zadok and Abiathar are priests, they cannot just walk out in the open and go find David and talk to him. They needed to use common sense in the situation in which they found themselves.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – Jonathan and Ahimaaz are seen by a young man who tells Absalom. **17:18-20**

Some young man was watching the servant girl. He saw her informing Jonathan and Ahimaaz and he immediately went to and told Absalom. He was a young man who probably thought this will be a good PR move for me to tell Absalom. Again, it is important to remember the sovereignty of God. No one can beat the sovereignty of God no matter what they try to do.

Jonathan and Ahimaaz immediately departed and came to a man's home in Bahurim, who had a well in his own courtyard and they went down into it.

Bahurim was located just one mile south of Jerusalem. The man must have been wealthy, because he had his own courtyard and his own well.

The man who owned the house was obviously a supporter of David, so he hid the two in his well or cistern. The wife of the man, who also was a Davidic supporter, put a covering over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it.

According to **verse 20**, when Absalom's servants came looking for the men and asked her where they were, she said, "they have crossed the brook of water." She sent them out in the wrong direction. So they crossed the brook looking for the men but could not find them.

There are some rigid legalists who contend that it is wrong and unethical to lie and throw these guys off track. Well they are out to kill innocent boys and they are out to assassinate God's king. This is a heroic act and one in which this woman is honored in Scripture.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – Jonathan and Ahimaaz go and inform David. **17:21-22**

After the coast was clear, Jonathan and Ahimaaz came out of the well and went and reported to King David and told him to cross over the Jordan River. That would mean they would have to travel across the dangerous Jordan River through the night.

We may recall that David is exhausted, but they needed to act fast. When David learned that Ahithophel had turned against him, he got all of those with him and they traveled through the night and by dawn the next day they had all crossed the Jordan.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Ahithophel commits suicide. **17:23**

Obviously at this point, Ahithophel knew that his plan had not been implemented. He had not been given 12,000 men or a commission to go after David.

When Ahithophel learned that Absalom had not listened to his counsel, he saddled his donkey and went to his home, got everything organized and committed suicide by hanging himself.

Ahithophel realized that David was the true King of God and he had been a traitor. He apparently could not live with himself and the potential consequences.

He realized that Absalom didn't follow his counsel and he also realized that David had escaped and if he came back to Jerusalem, his days were numbered. If David came back to Jerusalem, he would either be banished or executed, so he took his own life.

There are seven suicides in the Bible:

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| 1. Ahimilech – Judges 9:54 | 5. Ahithophel – II Sam. 17:23 |
| 2. Samson – Judges 16:20-30 | 6. Zimri – I Kings 16:18 |
| 3. Saul – I Sam. 31:4 | 7. Judas – Matt. 27:7 |
| 4. Saul's armor bearer – I Sam. 31:5 | |

At least two on the list will be in heaven: 1. Saul – I Sam. 28:19

2. Samson – Heb. 11:32

What Ahithophel says is that you could have been a person who was once right with God and once loyal to the word of God and work of God, but you can end up a dishonorable disaster. At one point, this Ahithophel was a top advisor and counselor to David.

But, just because you know the Lord and you know you did things for God, does not automatically mean your life will end as a faithful, honored servant of God. We all need to stay close to the word of God and apply it all the way through life.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Absalom chases David. **17:24-26**

David was now on the east side of the Jordan and he went to Mahanaim. This was a walled city by the Jabbok River. This was the place where Ish-bosheth had at one time governed Israel (II Sam. 2:8).

Absalom, by this point, had formed a massive army and it wasn't long until they too had crossed the Jordan, chasing David. Absalom and all his men crossed the Jordan.

According to **verse 25**, Absalom put Amasa in charge of his army. Amasa was David's nephew and cousin to David's own military commander who was Joab. Amasa was the son of Abigail and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite (II Chron. 2:17). So what is happening here is David is being hunted by his own son, Absalom, and by his own nephew, Amasa.

According to **verse 26**, Absalom and his massive army camped just north of Mahanaim, in the land of Gilead. What that would mean is that there were those in this land who supported Absalom or at least tolerated them.

To the human eye it does not look good for David. But when things don't look good, remember God is still sovereign.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – God raises up a friend for David to support him and his men.
17:27-29

David had lost some friends, but God raised up new ones. Do you not see the sovereign hand of God at work here?

Many Israelites who were living on the east side of the Jordan supported David. Some of these people were very wealthy. Shobi, and Machir, and Barzillai, were three men who were financially wealthy and they all supported David and his men.

They brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds, honey curds, sheep and cheese. They supplied them with food and drink because they were very hungry and thirsty.

It may have been this in part that caused David to write Psalm 23 when he wrote, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

God literally did sovereignly supply David's needs in the presence of enemies.