

(Through the Bible) 2 Samuel 17-24

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores David's trials during Absalom's rebellion, emphasizing submission to God's will and the complexities of leadership and family loyalty.

Duration: 1:21:31

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:22

Topics: "Spiritual Preparation", "Gods Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a message to share when preaching or serving the Lord. He uses the story of David and his son Absalom to illustrate this point. Despite being a good runner, Ahimaz lacked a message, highlighting the need for preparation and knowledge before going out to serve. The speaker also discusses how David accepted the judgment of God upon his life and did not try to defend himself. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared and submitting to God's judgment.

Transcript

Last week we left David in very sad shape. His son Absalom had rebelled against him, had gone down to Hebron and had gathered Israel to his support, who he had gradually been sort of enticing away from his father. And when he felt that he had enough strength, he announced his kingdom and began moving with his troops towards Jerusalem.

And David, rather than having a direct confrontation with his son Absalom, began to flee from Jerusalem with a great company of people with him, leaving the city of Jerusalem, going through the valley of the Kidron, and up over the Mount of Olives, covering his head with a handkerchief and weeping, as he went. At this particular time, it seemed that it gave David's enemies all a chance to come out and get their licks in against David. And Shimei, who was one of the relatives of Saul, came along, cursed David, threw rocks at him and his company, and Abishai, one of David's generals, wanted to go up and take the guy's head off, but David said, you know, maybe God's laid upon his heart to curse me, let him go.

And we notice that David was very resigned to all of these things that were happening. He accepted them as really God's judgment against him for his sin. For when David sinned against the Lord, and Nathan the prophet came to David, Nathan told him that because of this sin, the sword will not depart from your house, but your very children will rise up in rebellion against you, and your wives will be humiliated in the sight of all of the people.

And so the fact that his own son is now rising up against him, David accepted this as just a part of God's judgment. So rather than trying to fight God's judgment upon his life, David is submitting himself totally to the judgment of God. He makes no endeavor to defend himself against this judgment of God, but he accepts it.

And when his men would stand up and fight, he'd say, maybe God is meaning this as a part of his judgment. And, you know, let the licks fall where they will. And he received this in a very submitting way, submitting himself unto God in these things, and submitting the whole case unto God.

In this submission to the Lord, David is extremely honorable. And it is just really remarkable to me how that David, this tremendous man of war and valor and all, just really makes no endeavor to fight or to hold up his cause, but yields even to this, to the extent that he allows this Shimei to run along the hillside above him, throwing rocks at him and cursing him and all. So we left David at that point fleeing from Jerusalem and his counselor of old times, Ahithophel, turning unto Absalom and joining with Absalom against David.

And of course, we pointed out that this actually was the basis of one of David's psalms concerning, it was you, my own equal, who turned against me. If it had been an enemy, I could have taken it. But you, my friend, we went into the house of God together and David lament over Ahithophel turning from him.

Now, as we get into chapter 17, Ahithophel, formerly David's counselor, is now advising his son Absalom. And he tells Absalom, now the best thing to do is to let me have 10,000 men and let me pursue after David immediately and we will catch him while he is weak and while he is tired. And the men that are with him will flee from him and I'll only kill David.

And the rest of the people, when they see that David is dead, they'll have no further cause to fight and so they will all submit to you as king. And so Ahithophel was counseling Absalom in this way. And the counsel seemed good to all of the men to attack while the opportunity was there.

And while it seemed right, while David was fleeing, while he was weakened and in this weakened state, catch him now, kill only David and then the rest falling into Absalom. So Hushai, who was David's friend, who David sent back to sort of countermand the counsel of Ahithophel. Hushai then suggested that, no, he said the counsel of Ahithophel isn't good for David and his men, they are valiant men.

You know how tough they are. And they are right now like a lion that has been robbed of her little cubs. They're like a lion that have been cornered.

You attack them now and they're going to be vicious. Their backs are against the wall and they're going to be even more valiant than normal. If you seek to attack them now, what's going to happen is that with their backs against the wall, they're going to be fighting like everything.

And after they wipe out the first contingent, then news is going to spread through all of Israel that your unit that went out to capture David was wiped out. And all of Israel is going to be afraid because they know how tough and how valiant David and his men are. So he said, don't attack them right away, but wait and summon together all of Israel.

Get the whole nation down here that you might go with a great invasion against David. And thus take him and let Absalom lead the armies against David. And so that the people will see that Absalom is able to lead the people into war and all.

So the council of Hushai seemed to be good and they all went along with Hushai's council to wait and gather all of Israel together and then let Absalom lead in the battle against David. So David did have his men stationed in Jerusalem, his CIA, and they said to these two fellows, run and tell David what the council of Ahithophel was and all and let him know what's going on. So these two fellows went out to, well, they said, go tell this wench and let her go tell him and all.

And so the story goes how they hid in a well and so forth. But Ahithophel was a sore loser because he saw that his advice wasn't followed. Verse 23, When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and he arose and went home to his house, to his city.

He put his house in order and hung himself and died and was buried in the sepulcher of his father. That's what you call a poor loser. Absalom didn't follow his counsel.

And so the guy went home, set his house in order and committed suicide. Now, probably Ahithophel was wise enough to realize that Absalom was so vain that the council of Hushai actually catered to the vanity of Absalom. Let Absalom lead the armies, you know, so that people can see how wonderful Absalom is.

And he probably at this point realized, I've made a blunder in hitching myself to Absalom's rising star. This young guy doesn't have enough sense. And he probably realized that Absalom was going to fall.

And thus he figured if Absalom fell, then it would be his neck in the noose anyhow, because of the fact that he had dealt so treacherously with David and turned against David, his friend, the one that he had counseled and the one that had been so close to him. And he realized that when Absalom was destroyed, that he would also probably be destroyed by David for this treacherous turnaround on his part. And therefore, rather than fall into the hands of David, realizing that Hushai's counsel was going to lead to disaster, he was only seeking to bail out before the disaster came.

Ahithophel, a very wise man noted for his counsel. He shows certain wisdom in that he set his house in order, got everything all prepared, but then he shows great folly in taking his own life. Wise men often do stupid things.

And Ahithophel is a classic example. So Absalom led the troops over Jordan and all of the men of Israel with him as he was pursuing after his father David. And Absalom made Amasa the captain of his host instead of Joab.

Now Joab, of course, was captain or general over the armies of Israel under David, Joab and his brother Abishai. But now Absalom makes Amasa the general over the armies of Israel. And Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead, which is the area up around the southern end of the Sea of Galilee over on the Jordanian side.

And it came to pass when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shelbi the son of Nahash, of the children of Ammon and Micah, the Gileadite, brought beads and basins and earthen vessels and wheat and barley and flour and parched corn and beans and lentils and parched pulps and honey and butter and sheep and cheese of the cows for David and for the people that were with him to eat. For they said, the people are hungry and weary and thirsty in this wilderness. So David numbered the people that were with him and he set the captains over the thousands and captains over the hundreds.

And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, a third part under Abishai who was the brother of Joab and a third part under Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go

forth with you myself also. So now David is preparing to defend himself and he divides the people that were with him, the men of war, into three companies and David volunteers to go with them.

And they said, no, you shouldn't go into battle with us. You stay back here because really you're the one they want. If we should fall in battle, it doesn't make any difference.

You know, they're really not after us. They're only after you. And if you go out there, you're just going to put yourself in jeopardy because you're the one they're after.

And so we'll go out and we will fight for you. And so the king called Joab, David called Joab and Abishai and Ittai, his generals. And he said, deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.

And so he orders them, now look, you know, deal gently with him. Even though Absalom had rebelled against his father, yet he was still his son. And David still had a great love for his son Absalom.

And so the people went out into the field against Israel. And they met them in the woods of Ephraim. And the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David.

And there was a great slaughter of 20,000 men. For the battle was scattered over the face of all the country. And the woods devoured more people that day than the day before.

And the sword of David was greater than the sword. And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom wrote upon a mule.

And the mule went under a thick bow of a great oak. And his head caught hold of the oak. And he was taken up between heaven and earth.

And the mule that was under him went away. Now you remember that Absalom grew hair profusely. In fact, when they would shave his head every year, there were three to four pounds of hair.

And they would shave his head and pull it and all each year. And he had three to four pounds of hair. And so hair can be an attractive thing, but it can also be a disastrous thing.

And for Absalom, it was a disaster as he was riding on his donkey, riding under this branch of an oak tree, his hair got caught in the oak. And the donkey kept going and he was there swinging by his hair from that oak branch. And a certain man saw him and he told Joab and he said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanging on an oak.

And Joab said to the man that told him, You saw him? Why didn't you smite him? And I would have rewarded you ten shekels of silver and a girdle. And the man said to Joab, If you give me a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I wouldn't put forth my hand to touch him because I heard what David told you, that you shouldn't touch his son Absalom. And I would have wrought falsehood against my own life, for there is no matter that is hid from the king.

And thou thyself would have set yourself against me. So the guy says, Tom, you think I'm crazy? I know David, nothing's going to be hid from him. He doesn't want his son Absalom touched and you yourself would witness against me.

So Joab said, I shouldn't wait with you. And he took three darts in his hand and he thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was still alive there in the midst of the oak. And the ten young men that bear

Joab's armor circled about and smote Absalom and they killed him.

And Joab blew the trumpet and the people returned from pursuing after the Israelites where Joab restrained the people. And they took Absalom and cast him into a great pit and they threw a lot of great heap of stones upon him. And during Absalom's lifetime, we read that he had made a sort of a tower, a monument and named it after his own name.

And this pillar he called Absalom's place. Now, there is in Jerusalem today in the valley of the Kidron down beneath the, what they call the pinnacle of the temple, which is the corner of the mount that Herod built for the temple in his day. There is down there in the bottom of the Kidron, a sort of a burial place, a pillar, a monument that is called Absalom's tower.

However, most of the noted archaeologists say that it dates to some period after Absalom and is not in reality the tower that is mentioned here in the Bible. However, by making it a biblical thing, more people go down to look at it. But Absalom had a pillar that he had erected a monument and had set up in a valley.

For it said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance. Now, this is interesting because the scripture said that he had two sons. And so, either his sons, both of them died young or he built the pillar before his sons were born.

And one of the two, we don't know which it might be. So Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok said to Joab, let me run and tell David the news. And Joab said to Ahimaaz, nah, you'll run some other day.

And he called Cushie and he said, go and tell the king what you have seen. And so, Cushie bowed himself and began to run. And Ahimaaz came back again, he said, I want to run, please let me run.

I want to go tell the king. And finally, Joab said, okay, run. And Ahimaaz was a faster runner.

And so, before long, he overtook old Cushie as he was puffing along and left him in the dust. And David was sitting in the gate of the city. And the guy up on the tower called down and he said, there is a runner coming, he's by himself.

And David said, if he's by himself, then he bears news. And pretty soon he called, he said, there's a second runner coming by himself. The first runner looks like the running of Ahimaaz.

And David said, oh, if it's Ahimaaz, it's good news. And so, Ahimaaz came puffing in. And Ahimaaz was called by David over to him.

And he said to David, everything is well. And he fell down to his, on his face before the king and said, blessed be the Lord thy God, which has delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my Lord the king. It's all well.

You know, God has taken care of those men that have lifted up against you. David said, how is Absalom? And he said, well, he said, I saw a great tumult of people. But how's Absalom? Well, I really don't know.

I just saw a crowd. He said, ah, stand back because old Cushie was puffing in about this time. Now, here's an interesting thing to me.

Ahimaaz could run well. He was a good runner. He was faster than Cushie.

But his problem, he didn't have any message. Now, it doesn't really matter how well you can run. You need to have a message when you get there.

I think that some of us many times make the same mistake. We say, I want to run. I want to serve the Lord.

Oh, I want to go out and serve the Lord. You know, I've been saved for two weeks now. And we go out prematurely before we really have something to share.

But so anxious we are to run that we get involved in areas where we are not really qualified. And I see it over and over again. People coming and say, let me run.

Let me run. I want to go. I want to go out and preach.

I want to go out and share. It doesn't matter how well you might run. It's important that you have a message when you get there, that you have something worthwhile to share.

And that is why so often we say, no, just sit and learn, sit and prepare yourself, sit and grow in your knowledge so that when you go out, you'll have a message to share. So, Cushai then told David that his son Absalom was slain in the battle. And David was very moved.

He went up to his chamber over the gate. And as he went up, he was crying, saying, oh, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom. Would to God I had died for thee, oh Absalom, my son, my son.

David's grief for his son Absalom. And David was there in his chamber wailing over Absalom. So, they told Joab, David's really wailing over Absalom's death.

And Joab came in to David and he said, all right now David, let's cut this out. He said, these men have gone out and hazarded their lives for you. And they have brought you victory over your enemies.

But now they are sneaking back into town like they were criminals. Because of your great grief for Absalom, you're actually making them ashamed of what they have done. And if you don't change your behavior in a hurry, they're all going to turn against you.

None of them will ever go out and hazard their lives for you again. So, you get out there among them, dry your tears, and go out and congratulate them on the battle and all. Or else you're going to really lose out completely now.

Because these men who have been so loyal to you will surely turn against you. This was actually good advice on Joab's part. And so, David went out among the men there in the gate and greeted them and so forth.

And did really the right thing for these men who had hazarded their lives for David. Now, there began then a movement of bringing their king back. Actually, they had more or less turned from David.

Israel had turned. Jerusalem had turned. But now they have started a movement to bring David back.

And so, David came back to the Jordan River as he was returning to Jerusalem. And the first one to meet him at the Jordan River was this guy Shimei. Who was throwing rocks and cursing him on his way out.

And now that David is coming back, Shimei is down there to visit him and to greet him and to welcome him back. And he fell down before the king, verse 18, even as he came to the Jordan River. And he said to David, Let not my Lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my Lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.

For thy servant doth know that I have sinned. Therefore, behold, I am come this first day in all of the house of Joseph to go down to meet my Lord the king. And Abishai, who wanted to take off his head earlier, said to David, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed? And David said, What do I have to do with you, you sons of Zariah? That you should this day be adversaries unto me.

Shall there be any man put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? Therefore, David said to Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king swore unto him. And the next one to meet him was Mephibosheth, who was the son of Jonathan.

And they had told David a lie. The servant of Meshuvath told David a lie, saying that Meshuvath had pledged allegiance to Absalom or was trying to take over the kingdom himself after David fled. And so Mephibosheth came to David and David said, Well, how come you turned against me? And Mephibosheth said, That was a lie.

I didn't turn against you, David. I'm crippled. And he said, I needed a donkey to ride on, and they deceived me.

And they didn't bring me a donkey, and therefore I was stuck. But and so David forgave him when he found out that it was all just a lie that had been told to him about Mephibosheth. And so they bring back David the king.

And this man that had met him and offered him all of these foods and dainties, all David sought to bring back and to be with David in Jerusalem. The guy said, Hey, man, I'm 80 years old. I'm happy here, you know, and I'm too old to enjoy the dancing girls and all at this point.

Why should I come back to Jerusalem? I just soon die here where I am. And so David thanked him for all of his goodness and left him. Now, there had been a continual sort of division between the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah.

And this division, of course, was manifested in the beginning of David's reign. David reigned for seven years over Judah before he reigned over all of Israel. And now that there has been this division in the kingdom, this old rivalry rises again.

And there is this fellow in the northern kingdom, of course, later on under David's grandson Rehoboam, there came the complete break. And Jeroboam became king of Israel and Rehoboam the king of Judah. And from that time on, there were actually two nations.

They never were united again, except in a few battles. The kings would get together in battles. But quite often, more than not, they were fighting against each other rather than fighting with each other.

And it became a definite divided kingdom. Interestingly enough, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where God promises to restore the nation, God promises in the restoration of the nation that they would be one nation, not two, when they were restored. And of course, since 1948, in the restoration of the nation Israel, you don't have the northern tribes versus the southern tribes.

But there is a definite unity of all of the nation of Israel. The scriptures have been totally fulfilled as they are unified as a nation, one ruler over them and a unified nation, just as was predicted by Ezekiel so many years ago. But in chapter 20, this division is manifested by this particular fellow by the name of Sheba, who was of the tribe of Benjamin.

And he blew a trumpet in Israel, which always was the signal gathering people to his cause. And he said, we have no part with David, nor in the inheritance of the son of Jesse. Every man to your tent, O Israel.

In other words, he was calling for a rebellion against David. And so, every man of Israel left David and went up to follow Sheba. But the men of Judah stuck with their king.

And David came to his house at Jerusalem. And he took the 10 women who he had left in charge, who were his concubines, who were humiliated by Absalom there on the roof. And David put them in a ward.

And he fed them, but he would not have relations with them after that. So, they were as though living in widowhood from that time on. Now, David had asked Amasa to be one of his generals.

Over his army. Amasa was the one who was the general under Absalom. But when Absalom was killed, David asked him to be one of his generals.

But Joab really wanted nothing to do with that. And so, David said to Amasa, assemble me the men of Judah within three days and present them here. So, Amasa went out to assemble the men of Judah, but he tarried longer than the set time which had been appointed.

And David said to Abishai, now will Sheba do us more harm than Absalom did. Take thou the Lord's servant and pursue after him, lest he gets into fenced cities and escapes us. And so, there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Philethites, and all were mighty men.

And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue after Sheba, the son of Bitri. And when they were at a great stone, which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them and Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins and the sheath thereof. And he went forth and it fell out.

And Joab said to Amasa, are you in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. But Amasa did not take heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand, so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib or in the heart, and he killed Amasa. So, Joab and his brother Abishai pursued after Sheba.

And one of Joab's men stood by him and he said, he that favors Joab and it is for David, let him go after Joab. And Amasa wallowed in his own blood there in the midst of the highway, and each man that came up sort of stopped, so they finally threw his body over in the bushes and covered it. And Joab went ahead, pursuing after Sheba who got into a city.

And Joab set up to besiege the city. And a wise woman within the city said, listen to me, why should you destroy a whole city in Israel and all of us mothers of Israel? And Joab said, hey, I don't want to destroy you. I only want that guy that rebelled against David.

And she said, well, just wait and we'll give him to you. So she talked to the men of the town and she said, look, why should we get wiped out? You know, those guys are tough. They'll wipe out our city.

Why should we shelter this guy Sheba? Just because he wants to do his own thing against David. And so they cut off Sheba's head and tossed it over the wall to Joab. And Joab returned then unto David without attacking the city.

Now, in chapter 21, it is recorded that at this time, there were three years of famine in the land. And so David sought the Lord, why the famine? And the Lord said the famine was in judgment because of the treatment of Saul of the Gibeonites. For Saul had killed many of the Gibeonites.

Now, this is interesting to me because when Joshua was coming in to conquer the land, God said to Joshua, don't make a covenant with any of the people in the land. You're not to make any treaties, any covenants, wipe them out. So after the conquest of the city of Ai, there came to Joshua these old men with worn out shoes, with moldy bread in their hands and ragged clothes.

And they said, we've come from a long distance because we've heard of your fame and how that God destroyed the Egyptians and how God is with you. And our leaders have sent us to you to make a league with you that we'll not attack you and you're not to attack us. And Joshua said, well, where are you from? Oh, they said, we're just a long way off.

In fact, when we left home, this bread was hot in our hands, but look how moldy it is. These sandals were brand new. Look how worn out they are.

And the Bible says they took stock of their vituals and inquired not of the Lord. And they made the covenant with them. They made the mistake that we so often make using just our own good judgment instead of seeking God for wisdom and advice.

We look over a situation and say, oh, well, that's all right. It's obvious, Lord, what you want me to do here. I don't need to really bother you about this.

I'll take care of this matter. I can see what's going on here, Lord. And we don't inquire of the Lord.

There is that verse of the song, oh, what needless pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. And that is so true.

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