

Message #30

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Life of David

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DAVID AND HEARING VOICES
IN THE MIDST OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

The Bible says that there is a spiritual war going on in the world around us. The Apostle John (PROJECTOR ON--- 1 JOHN 5:19) wrote in 1 John #5 v. 19 to fellow Christians, **“We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”** We saw in the sermon series on John’s Gospel that the apostle often uses the term “world” to refer to the human system in operation around us which excludes God.

In a similar vein the Apostle Paul (EPHESIANS 6:12) writes in Ephesians #6 v. 12, **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”** Paul uses a compound Greek word here that is literally translated as **“the world forces over this present darkness.”** C. S. Lewis writes, **“There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.”** (*Hostage to the Devil*, pp. 192-193) (PROJECTOR OFF)

The world system in our day would try to convince us that we live in a material universe only. The conflicts in our day are merely personal and political and philosophical and economic. The battles in our day are between Republicans and Democrats, Trump and Biden, capitalism and socialism, racism and black lives matter, opening up schools and keeping them closed, the United States and China.

These may be the scenes and the settings for spiritual warfare, but the Bible tells us that there is a deeper reality in play. There is a war in our world between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between God and Satan. Ultimately this war reaches for our individual hearts and challenges us to decide: Whom will we serve? God or Satan? Truth or falsehood? Self or others? God or money? God or some other idol?

The passage before us this morning describes an important scene in this great cosmic conflict. God appointed David to be king over the nation of Israel. The divine intent was that God's blessing upon this ruler and upon this kingdom would tell the world about the reality of the God who is really there. God gave specific promises to David that he would have a dynasty that would last forever.

While David had a heart for God, he was flawed. He messed up big time by committing adultery with Bathsheba and then killing her husband Uriah. He eventually confessed his sin, and God forgave him. But the Lord explained that there would be negative consequences for what he had done which would involve disruption in his family. We have seen that David's oldest son Amnon raped his half sister Tamar. David did nothing about it. So Tamar's full-blooded brother Absalom killed Amnon. That made him next in line to the throne. David again did not do much. There was eventually an uneasy reconciliation between David and Absalom. We saw last week in #15 that Absalom's underlying resentment boiled over into a coup attempt. Absalom forced David to flee from Jerusalem. We will now see how this conflict plays out. In the process we will hopefully find lessons that will help us to deal with spiritual warfare.

I.A.

In the first eight verses of 2 Samuel #16 (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE VOICE OF OPPONENTS) (which is found on p. 268 in the black Bibles under many of the chairs) we encounter THE VOICE OF OPPONENTS. In #16 vv. 1-4 we meet ZIBA (I. THE VOICE... A. ZIBA)

David was taken by surprise by the revolt of Absalom. This oldest surviving son was the consummate politician. He had movie star good looks. He had cleverly worked to undermine his father's authority. He passed out promises left and right which he could never keep. He managed to get capable leaders on his side. When the coup was launched, David recognized that he was in grave danger. In fear he fled the city with his closest advisors and troops and supporters. He sent the chief priests back to the city and asked them to serve as spies. He recruited a top advisor by the name of Hushai to go back to Jerusalem and to undermine the advice of Absalom's top advisor, Ahithophel.

We take up the story then with v. 1: **"When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine."** David and company are fleeing to the east of Jerusalem (DAVID 19 MOUNT OF OLIVES) toward the Jordan River. Just beyond the summit they encounter Ziba, who has probably more than just a couple of donkeys--- the Hebrew word can sometimes mean more than just a couple. (DAVID 19 FLIGHT) Their flight will eventually take them to the far side of the Jordan River.

We met Ziba back in #9 of this book. David learned from this former official in the administration of King Saul that Saul's son Jonathan had a surviving son named Mephibosheth. David had earlier vowed to Jonathan that he would be good toward any of his surviving descendants. So David put Ziba in charge of administering King Saul's estate for the benefit of Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was also told that he could eat at the king's table.

According to v. 2, **"And the king said to Ziba, 'Why have you brought these?' Ziba answered, 'The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness to drink.'"** So Ziba seems to be providing practical help for David.

Verse 3: **"And the king said, 'And where is your master's son?' Ziba said to the king, 'Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.'"** Ziba is accusing Mephibosheth of disloyalty to David. This charge should have raised red flags in David's mind. How could Mephibosheth get the idea that this coup was going to result in him being made king? He was a descendant of Saul. This current dispute was only within the family of David and within the tribe of Judah. How could he think that these coup leaders were going to turn to someone from the house of Saul. It did not make sense.

Later we will find out that Mephibosheth will deny this story. It seems doubtful that it is true. But David is under great stress. He sees Ziba show up with practical help, and the king makes a snap decision. According to v. 4, **"Then the king said to Ziba, 'Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.' And Ziba said, 'I pay homage; let me ever find favor in your sight, my lord the king.'"**

This is probably not such a wise decision. In Proverbs #18 vv. 13 and 17 (PROVERBS 18:13,17) we find these words of wisdom: **"If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."** Perhaps Solomon had this incident in mind when he recorded these words.

What is Ziba's motive in providing this help? I suspect that he is playing both sides. He is giving provisions to David. They are probably not actually his resources, but rather Mephibosheth's. We also find out later that Ziba does not actually go with David. (PROJECTOR OFF) He goes back home. If Absalom wins this conflict, then Ziba has not really lost out on anything. Absalom will probably never

know how he helped David. If David wins, then Ziba can claim David's promise. Ziba is not really a friend. He is only looking out for himself. He is like the lobbyist who pays off both sides of a political contest.

It is likewise good to check our motives when we encounter people going through spiritual battles. Are we truly trying to support them, or are we just trying to make ourselves look good? Do we say that we are praying for people and just toss out those religious words, or do we truly make it a point to pray for the people in the midst of spiritual warfare?

B.

In vv. 5-8 we meet SHIMEI (PROJECTOR ON--- II. A. B. SHIMEI), whose voice is clearly that of an opponent. We read in v. 5, **"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."** Bahurim was just east of the Mount of Olives.

Shimei was a relative of King Saul. It is probably thirty years since Saul died, but Shimei is still bearing a grudge. The nation of Israel has expanded. There were signs of national prosperity, but Shimei was not enjoying the perks that he might have had if his relative Saul had still been in charge. He was cursing God's appointed leader.

This was contrary to God's revealed will. (EXODUS 22:28) In Exodus #22 v. 28 the law of God said, **"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people."** Even when Saul was trying to kill David, David would not curse Saul. Clearly this Shimei is an opponent.

Verse 6 in our passage says (PROJECTOR OFF), **"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."** They were forming a shield to protect the king, even like the Secret Service sometimes does today to protect the president.

According to vv. 7 & 8, **"And Shimei said as he cursed, 'Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! 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.'"**

This is why it is important to understand history. Shimei is promoting three falsehoods. He is claiming that David is responsible for killing people in Saul's family. That is just not true, according to the Biblical account that we have. Saul chased David all over the countryside, but he would not hurt Saul, even when he had a couple of clear opportunities to do that. Second, Shimei claims that David stole Saul's throne. God gave the throne of Israel to David, and he waited patiently for God to give it to him. Third, God has not given the kingdom to Absalom. That will be clear in what follows.

In a similar way today too many of our countrymen do not understand history. Some are tearing down statues even of Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses Grant and Columbus and the Founding Fathers of our country. The claim is that they are all evil and racists. The truth is that they were all imperfect, and yet most of these people made significant contributions toward the positive development of our country. By the standards of perfection even Martin Luther King should not have a statue. For he was also flawed. Critics could point out that he was a serial adulterer and was not faithful to his wife. Yet most of us would rightly recognize that he was also heroic and made positive contributions to the cause of civil rights.

There was a certain truth to Shimei's claim that David was a man of bloodshed. He had wrongly killed Uriah. He was a military man who had led his troops in killing many people. This was the reason that the Lord had said that he was not the one to build a temple in Jerusalem.

The devil and his forces are likewise effective in finding reasons to attack us spiritually. They typically use a mix of lies and truth. They work on our mind and our spirit. They try to convince us that we are no good and are beyond hope. Revelation #12 v. 10 (PROJECTOR ON--- REVELATION 12:10) gives us some insight into their tactics. We read there, **"...the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."**

I shared with you last week about how I was fired from a church. I obviously had opponents who thought that I was not fit to be a pastor, at least not in that place. I was certainly not a perfect pastor, and certainly the devil was right there trying to convince me to get out of the ministry. He can do that kind of thing and more to any of us who are Christians.

II.A.

In vv. 9-19 of #16 (II. THE VOICE OF SUPPORTERS) we come to THE VOICE OF SUPPORTERS. In vv. 9-14 we find reference made to ABISHAI AND OTHERS (II. A. ABISHAI AND OTHERS) Look at v. 9: **"Then**

Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.'"

Abishai is the brother of General Joab. He is obviously a supporter of David. He has been quick to defend David in the past. On a couple of occasions he was willing to cut down King Saul. David restrained him on those occasions, as he does now. But it is good to have supporters. Abishai has noticed that people without heads tend to stop cursing.

Verses 10 & 11: **"But the king said, 'What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" 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.'"** We see here that there are other servants beside Abishai who stand ready to defend the king.

David is clearly upset and depressed. He hears the curses from Absalom and Shimei not so much as coming from them as coming from the Lord. He is remembering the consequences of the Lord promised in #12 when He explained that there would be a certain judgment that would result from his wrongdoing.

In v. 12 David continues, **"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."** The original text here is uncertain. There are three Hebrew words which all look very similar. The first word means "affliction, or distress." This word appears in the early Greek translation of the Old Testament. The second word means "tears." It appears in some Hebrew manuscripts. It has a similar meaning to the first word. The third word appears in most Hebrew manuscripts. It means "iniquities" "It may be that the Lord will look on my iniquities." I am inclined to think that this was the original reading. It is easier to explain from this word how the other words developed. For it initially appears to be the harder reading. Yet it makes sense in the broader context.

David recognizes that he is being disciplined for his sins. Absalom's revolt and the cursing from Shimei are what he deserves--- not for any wrong that he has done to the house of Saul, but for what he did with Bathsheba and Uriah and how that was not only a sin against them but also against God. Yet David has come to know YHWH as a God of undeserving grace. He is unsure about what the Lord will do in this situation. He recognizes God's freedom to do with David what He will. But He is hopeful that the Lord might replace cursing with grace.

This is the story of what the Son of David, Jesus Christ, did for us. He bore the curse of God for our iniquities by dying on the cross in our place. As the Apostle Paul (GALATIANS 3:13) explained it in Galatians 3:13, **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--- for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’...”** When and if we trust in this Jesus, we can have forgiveness for our sins.

There is hope also for us true believers, like David, who have made a mess of our lives, who fear that God has only a grudging toleration of us, that we are doomed to a junkyard Christian existence. But perhaps, as with David, God can and will look at our guilt and return good to us. Such is the nature of God’s grace toward us in Jesus.

Back in v. 13 of our text we read, **“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.”** There is only one route from Jerusalem to the Jordan River to the east. (DAVID 19D) It involves going down the Wadi Qelt, which is what we would call a wash. Such it is that Shimei could have been on the other side of the valley, throwing things at David. (DAVID 19F)

It is always easier to cast stones at someone from a distance, from a crowd in Portland or Seattle, or from electronic media like Twitter or Facebook, rather than up close and in person. (PROJECTOR OFF)

The story continues in v. 14: **“And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.”** Eventually David and his retinue arrived safely on the other side of the Jordan. But it would probably take them a while to get there.

B.

In vv. 15-19 we find that there is the voice of another supporter who is working for him. This is HUSHAI. (PROJECTOR ON--- II. A. B. HUSHAI) According to vv. 15 & 16, **“Now Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. And when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, ‘Long live the king! Long live the king!’”** This is David’s high level advisor going to work for David. His words are ambiguous. He is actually working for David, but he gives Absalom the false impression that he is on his side.

Verses 17 & 18: **“And Absalom said to Hushai, ‘Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?’ And Hushai said to Absalom, ‘No, for whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain.”** Hushai’s words are still ambiguous. Absalom has a little bit of doubt. But Absalom is full of himself and open to flattery.

Thus Hushai declares in v. 19, **“And again, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I have served your father, so I will serve you.”** Clearly Hushai is being deceptive. Yet God will use this deception to thwart Absalom’s evil purposes. In the midst of spiritual conflict the Lord provides us with the voice of supporters.

III.

From v. 20 of #16 through v. 4 of #17 we hear THE VOICE OF THE BETRAYER. (III. THE VOICE OF THE BETRAYER) According to vv. 20-22, **“Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, ‘Give your counsel. What shall we do?’ Ahithophel said to Absalom, ‘Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.’ So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.”**

This is the fulfillment of the judgment which God announced through the prophet Nathan back in #12 vv. 11 & 12. (2 SAMUEL 12:11) There the text said, **“Thus says the Lord, ‘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. (1 SAMUEL 12:12) For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.”**”

Ironically it was from the roof of this palace that David saw Bathsheba. It was perhaps there where he had relations with her. Now Absalom is involved with these ten concubines here. It was typical for kings in the Ancient Near East in a change of dynasties to claim the previous king’s harem. But here Absalom is taking his father’s wives. This was a clear violation of God’s law (LEVITICUS 18:8) revealed in Leviticus #18 v. 8: **“You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness.”**

What is the effect of this? It provides a clean break. There is no going back now for Absalom and his fellow conspirators. (PROJECTOR OFF) In the movie “Dr. Zhivago” the main character is asked why it was necessary to kill all of the royal family of the Romanovs at the beginning of the Russian Revolution. Omar Sharif replies, **“It’s to show there’s no going back.”**

Verse 23: **“Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.”** Ahithophel was very wise, but wisdom can be used for evil purposes.

In the first four verses of #17 we are told, **“Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, ‘Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged and throw him into a panic, and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace.’ And the advice seemed right in the eyes of Absalom and all the elders of Israel.”**

Ahithophel is offering to take the lead. He may not be a military leader, but he is older and wiser than perhaps all of the other conspirators. He sees the opportunity to attack while David’s people are not yet organized. His intent is also just to get David. By striking quickly, Ahithophel hopes to avoid further bloodshed and division, and to be able to incorporate the rest of King David’s people into the new administration. Yet he is acting against God’s anointed king and his former friend. He is a betrayer. Jesus will later compare him to Judas Iscariot.

IV.

We come then to THE QUIET VOICE OF GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL CARE in vv. 5-14 of #17. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. THE QUIET VOICE OF...) According to vv. 5 & 6, **“Then Absalom said, ‘Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say.’ And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, ‘Thus has Ahithophel spoken; shall we do as he says? If not, you speak.’”** It was very helpful for Hushai to hear the details of Ahithophel’s proposal. It will enable Hushai to formulate a plan to counter Ahithophel’s advice.

Verse 7: **“Then Hushai said to Absalom, ‘This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good.’”** Literally Hushai says, “No good, the counsel that Ahithophel has given.” Thus he grabs Absalom’s attention.

Verse 8: **“Hushai said, ‘You know that your father and his men are mighty men, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the people.’”** Hushai appeals to Absalom’s inside knowledge of his father. Absalom

knows his father better than his counselor Ahithophel does. Also he needs caution in approaching David. Ahithophel is a little reckless in his advice. He hasn't quite thought things through.

Verses 9 & 10: **“Behold, even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits or in some other place. And as soon as some of the people fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.’ Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men.”**

When you send out search teams to find your father, one of them may stumble upon the king. The danger is that he and those with him could wipe out such a group. When news of that spreads, the fear produced could have a domino effect upon all of the other people with Absalom.

Verse 11: **“But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person.”** You need to lead this effort. You need to do this thing in a big way. If you let Ahithophel lead the troops, he will get the glory of capturing and killing David. You need to lead a big and glorious battle to begin your reign, and you need to get the glory of getting your father.

Hushai continues in vv. 12 & 13, **“So we shall come upon him in some place where he is to be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground, and of him and all the men with him not one will be left. If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there.”** It is better to wipe out all of these supporters of your father so that there is no opposition when you come to the throne.

Notice that the record of Ahithophel's advice is short and succinct. Hushai, at least in the account that we have here, gives a more detailed appeal to Absalom, which plays upon his vanity and pride, and leads ultimately to his downfall.

Verse 14 concludes our passage: **“And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, ‘The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.’ For the Lord had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring harm upon Absalom.”** Until now the only reference to God in this whole passage was a statement of David in #16 v. 12 where he expressed hope in God.

Absalom and his advisors have not been seeking the Lord's direction. There has been no appeal to Him for help. There has been no mention of God's direction in their planning or His involvement in these events. But now we have a quiet assurance that God is in charge. (PROJECTOR OFF)

That is what we need in the midst of spiritual battle. We will hear the voice of detractors and opponents. The voice of the great accuser, Satan, will be heard. Because we are never sinless, the evil one will make his voice heard. God may seem to be silent in the midst of spiritual conflict. But hopefully we will have supporters. Hopefully we will persevere in doing what is right, and we will remember that we can depend upon the providential care of God.

David will come out of this episode as a stronger and more mature follower of the true God. He will go on to experience a further flourishing of his kingdom. He will go on to write psalms that will be included in God's inspired record of revelation.

When my wife and I were kicked out of our church in the Midwest, we learned to trust God in a new way. We were left high and dry with limited finances, with a new baby and a house on our hands. We could not find a buyer for it in over a year. Yet we had relatives who took us in. The first day after we moved in with them, I had a job offer. We never missed a mortgage payment. I got experience in working in the computer industry. Our needs were met. Our house eventually sold, and we found another pastorate.

As a result of David's experience he left us with the inspired words of Psalm 3:

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

3 O Lord, how many are my foes!

Many are rising against me;

2 many are saying of my soul,

"There is no salvation for him in God."

**3 But you, O Lord, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.**

**4 I cried aloud to the Lord,
and he answered me from his holy hill.**

**5 I lay down and slept;
I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.**

**6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.**

7 Arise, O Lord!

Save me, O my God!

**For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.**

**8 Salvation belongs to the Lord;
your blessing be on your people!**