**The Advice of Ahithophel and Hushai**

2 Samuel 16:15-17:23

2 Samuel 17:14

“Absalom and all the men of Israel said, ‘The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.’ For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.”

Absalom staged a coup against David in Chapter 15 and 16. David and his official hurried to evacuate out of Jerusalem to the Jordan fords. David was fleeing with bare feet, and Shimei came cursed David, “Get out, Get out you murderer, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has given the kingdom into the hands of your son Absalom.” All these series of events seemed to show David’s crumbling kingdom. But when we study today’s passage, we are amazed at what David was doing during his escape. David ran away in a second, because he did not want to kill his son Absalom and his people. Also, in the midst of turmoil, he deployed his people in the right places. He sent Hushai back to Absalom’s camp to frustrate Ahithophel’s advice. He designated priests Zadok, Abiathar, and their sons to bring secret information to the fords. David was successful in managing the national crisis as a commander in Chief of Israel.

So far we have seen what happened to David’s side. Today’s passage shows us what happened to Absalom’s side in the exact same time frame.

Look at verses 15-20. Absalom and all the new cabinet members took over Jerusalem when David and all his men had left. Ahithophel was with Absalom.

At that time, Hushai came back to Jerusalem in Absalom’s camp as a spy from David. “Long live the king! Long live the king!” Absalom was surprised by Hushai’s appearance. “This is the love you show your friend? If he’s your friend, why didn’t you go with him?” Absalom suspected Hushai’s motives. This is a very pivotal moment. But Hushai had a way with words and answered as David had instructed him. **“18 No, the one chosen by the Lord, by these people, and by all the men of Israel—his I will be, and I will remain with him. 19 Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve the son? Just as I served your father, so I will serve you.”(v.18,19)** Hushai flattered Absalom and managed to get out of this dangerous situation. Finally, Hushai was able to settle safely into Absalom’s camp.

Look at verse 20 and 21. Absalom asked Ahithophel, “Give us your advice. What should we do?” Ahithophel gave him two pieces of advice in a row. The first advice was to have Absalom sleep with David’s concubine. **“Sleep with your father’s concubines whom he left to take care of the palace. Then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself obnoxious to your father, and the hands of everyone with you will be more resolute.”**  The purpose of this advice was to make Absalom obnoxious to his father, breaking the relation between father and son, and strengthening the army’s resolve to fight. So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.

Sleeping with your father’s concubine is not acceptable in human civilization. The Bible prohibits this **“If a man has sexual relations with his father’s wife, he has dishonored his father** (Leviticus 20:11).” We already knew what happened to Reuben who slept with Jacob’s concubine, Bilhah, and lost his birthright as a first son. Absalom did it in the sight of all Israel. This fulfilled God’s word. 2 Sam 12:11, 12 states“**This is what the Lord says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. 12 You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’**”

Here, however, the Bible does not specify that Absalom will be the close one. Interestingly, Absalom did not object this immoral and ungodly advice and did it as if he did not know anything about the Bible. Maybe he agreed to quench his lust and his ambition. Most importantly, Absalom became a king by himself at this moment. He should have set up a milestone in the first action in his throne, such as proclaiming new vision or implementing new policy. But ,in his first action, he made himself obnoxious and committed sin before Israel and God.

Alas! Absalom! He was a son of David! What an honorable and privileged title he had begotten! David was a central figure in the book of Samuel, Psalm, Kings, and Chronicles. In spite of his weakness, all these books point to King David and set him up as an exemplary man of God. Throughout the history and until Jesus’ second coming, countless people have been and will be inspired from David to come to God and tried to be like him. Why not Absalom? As David’s son, he could have had the closest relationship with David. But Absalom was ignorant about his father and by extension his father’s God as well. He had all the privilege, but eventually he lost everything.

After that, Ahithophel gave him his second advice. Look at verse 1-4. 17 Ahithophel said to Absalom, “**I would[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+samuel+16-17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-8451a)**] choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. 2 I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king 3 and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed.**”  Ahithophel’s second advice was to conduct a surprise attack with 12,000 men. This proposal seems risky and requires decisive actions. If they had taken the action, they would complete their coup and make their day. However, suddenly, Absalom remembered Hushai. “Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say as well.” Absalom wanted to hear a second opinion from Hushai.

Here we have a very important lesson. When we receive wise counsel and fail to act on it, we put ourselves in a dangerous position. Especially when we hear the word of God, and hesitate and fail to do it, then we are automatically open to the worldly and ungodly counsel. Therefore, before listening the word of God, first we need to prepare our heart with a determined mind, “I will do what God wants me to do.” If we do not prepare our heart, and with a natural status of mind, we would most likely fail to act on it. Sometimes, God’s direction is unclear because we are not clear to act on it. That is the reason Jesus’ mother prepared the servant’s heart before Jesus told them what to do at the wedding festival at Cana, “**Do whatever he tells you.**” If we set our mind before hand, it would be much more peaceful, joyful, and smooth to carry out what God wants me to do with the help of Holy Spirit.

Look at verse 7-13. Without knowing Hushai was a spy, Absalom asked Hushai’s opinion about Ahithophel’s advice. This is Ahithophel’s plan, what do you think?” If Absalom had acted like King Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel, he would have said like this. “ Husahi, I know you did not hear anything about Ahithopel’s plan. Now Tell me what was Ahithophel’s plan and what is your plan. If you get wrong, I will cut you into pieces to feed the birds.”But king Absalom was naïve. He told everything about Ahithophel’s plan. “On hearing Ahithophel’s plan, Hushai, who was an eloquent speaker, could easily negate Ahithophel’s plan.

First, Hushai paid respect on Ahithophel. “The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time.”

Then, Hushai started out his proposal with an objective fact. “8 You know your father and his men; **they are fighters**, and as **fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides** your father is an **experienced fighter**” Then, Hushai planted doubt on Ahithophel’s plan using an assertive and definitive statement. “He **will not spend** the night with the troops. 9 Even now, **he is hidden in a cave or some other place**.” It means that now David hid in a cave in the wilderness, and nobody could find him. So Absalom does not need to hurry. Furthermore in verse 9, Hushai plants fear on Absalom’s camp. Now David’s army is hidden in a cave. If they attack first, then Absalom’s army would be slaughtered and the news would spread quickly. Then the morale of Absalom’s army would collapse in a moment and they would lose the war.

Finally, Hushai proposed his own advice.  “**So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. 12 Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not so much as a pebble is left.**”

Hushai’s alternative counsel was a full- scale battle or pitched battle with gathering all Israel fighters from East to West and from South to North (pic #1). With the overwhelming numbers on his side, Absalom would lead whole Israel to demolish David’s army. It looks glorious and it seems to have a guaranteed victory. But when we think about one more time, Hushai’s plan, beautifully decorated with his rhetoric, is founded on fear and pride. David’s men were experienced and professional fighters, but Absalom’s men were not. So Absalom would need numerous armies to cover their weakness. This is Absalom’s fear. But with the great multitude, the new king Absalom could show up and direct the whole Israel army under his leadership. For newly crowned, this triggers Amsalom’s ambitions to garner more popularity among Israel. However, Hushai laid two hidden traps here. First trap is that Absalom would lose time while they drafted the army from whole Israel. Now what David desperately needed is time, time to recover from his exhausting flight and time to reorganize his army. His second trap is dragging Absalom into the battle field. Absalom’s advent in the battle field means that he would be the only target for David’s army. How many armies there are in the field, it does not matter. Just like in the game of chess, if the king dies, the game is over.

Look at verse 14. “14 **Absalom and all the men of Israel said, ‘The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.’ For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom**.”

Absalom and all the men of Israel chose Hushai’s advice over Ahithophel’s. This was not supposed to happen. Verse 23 states that Ahitohpel was highly regarded both David and Absalom. His advice was like that of one who inquires of God. So, Absalom should follow Ahithophel’s advice. But he did not. The Bible explains the reason. “For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel **in order to bring disaster on Absalom**.”

Absalom was a crown prince, and handsome young man from head to toe. He had no blemish in him. But he followed his own evil desire starting from killing his brother, stealing the people’s heart, and sleeping with father’s concubines. In the beginning his sin was not obvious because of his brother Amnon’s evil sin. But then he was tempted by his own evil desire and conceived sin. The sin grew and grew until it swallowed him up. James 1:14, 15 “**14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death**.”

Therefore, we are to be careful about what is inside in us. So we are to examine our heart before God. Once we identify any sinful motives, we should ask his mercy to wash our hearts with his blood. So we should have the sins stop growing before it is too late and redirect our eyes to Jesus. May God protect each of us from the power of sin and grow us in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Also, I can’t help bringing up David’s prayer in chapter 15, though there is no mention in this chapter. David was so hurried that he did not have time to put on shoes. But when he knew that Ahithophel was with Absalom, he desperately prayed to God. “Lord, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.” This was only one prayer in these chapters but it changed the whole direction of the war. Just before I mentioned, Absalom was supposed to pay his regard to Ahithophel following Ahithophel’s advice. But suddenly he summoned Hushai and listened to his advice. This is truly God’s sacred intervention.

You may think that since David was the man after God’s own heart so God was supposed to be with him. But current situation was way different from the past. In the past, he was fleeing from King Saul’s sin. At that time David was innocent. Now he was running way from his own sins. God had rebuked David through the prophet Nathan, “But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord,..” (2 Sam12:14). “**Utter contempt for the Lord!”**  Suppose if someone tells you, “You show me utter contempt!” Then the relationship would most likely come to an end. How about the relationship with God? David got in big trouble with God. So, when he was innocent, he was looking forward to getting the ark of God. But in chapter 15, he told the priest Zadok, “Take the ark of God back into the city… if God say ,‘ **I am not pleased with you,**’ **then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him**.’”This verse sounds like David was ready to accept the judgment of God upon him leaving not only to his throne but also his life. Now David - leaving Jerusalem to Jordan River- was just like Adam and Eve, leaving the Garden of Eden to cross the river after fallen of sin. How was David feeling at that time? He was walking through darkest valley of death. But even at that moment, David boldly prayed to God, **“Lord, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.”** God heard his prayer and frustrated Ahithophel’s advice.God is good all the time. Whether we are in righteousness or groaning in sin, he is good all the time. His love never changes. **8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us** (Romans 5:8).

 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Can sin separate us from God? Can death separate us from God? **Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=%EB%A1%9C%EB%A7%88%EC%84%9C+8%3A35-39+&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28155b)**] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Roman 8:38-39).

Therefore, through Jesus Christ we can boldly come to God all the time and ask his great love and power upon us even the moment we are walking the darkest valley. You may not get answer quickly. You may not feel anything. You may just feel his silence. But one thing is clear. He is listening to you, to your tiniest groaning. He will not miss anything and provide the good things to you at his proper time.

Look at verses 15-22. Hushai prevailed over Ahithophel. But I believe Hushai could not join the Absalom’s new cabinet meeting. So, he was not sure which advice would be chosen. Hushai urgently delivered the secret message to David through Zadok and Abiathar. “**Do not spend the night at the fords in the wilderness; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up**.” (v.16) The priests Zadok and Abiathar were closely surveiled by Absalom. So, they sent their sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, out to David. At that time Absalom’s new government put strict martial law and curfew in place. A watch man saw them moving around and report it to Absalom. This moment was critical. If they had been caught, Hushai’s true motives would be revealed and David’s location would also be exposed. However, the hand of God was with David and against Absalom. An anonymous couple outwitted the Absalom’s watchman. Finally, the two sons managed to come to King David at the Jordan fords and got them to cross over the Jordan River.

Look at verse 23. “**When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb**.”

Ahithophel knew David and his men very well. Absalom could not defeat them in a pitched battle. So he was frustrated and went to his hometown, put his house in order then hung himself.

Our lives belong to God. We have only one chance to live in this world in this whole eternity. We should take good care of our lives in all aspects, physically and spiritually, in order to reveal his glory through our lives. Therefore, no matter how hard, desperate, or frustrate we are, we should not take our lives. It is a sin of murder. Ahithophel was frustrated since his plan was not accepted. He predicted what would come. But if that was the reason, David must have hung himself numerous times already. However, whenever David faced the rock bottom in his life, he came to God and found strength in God again and again. Then his soul was renewed and reset his life in God. We have seen how fiercely David was fighting in his spiritual battle in 2 Samuel and eventually he won the victory in God.

Unfortunately, Ahithophel’s fate was different. His fundamental issue was an unforgiving heart. In Chap 15, Msn. Jangwon Seo explained what happened to his granddaughter’s family. Bathsheba was a beautiful and beloved granddaughter and his grandson-in law Uriah was a faithful, courageous, able fighter for David. Ahithophel himself was serving David as an excellent counselor. But King David used his authority to defile his granddaughter and killed his grandson-in law. King David destroyed his lovely granddaughter’s family in a snap of his finger despite knowing that Bathsheba was Ahithophel’s granddaughter. King David showed his utter contempt for Ahithophel. Ahithophel could not bear and forgive this humiliation. He let hatred and revenge grow on him. When time came, he joined Absalom’s conspiracy to take revenge.

He paid back to David just as he received. Firstly, He made Absalom sleep with David’s concubine in the public. Secondly, he tried to kill David with his own hand. Generally, counselors do not engage in real fighting (pict #2). They are not trained to kill people. They come up with strategic and plan for the army. But here Ahithophel was very different. In verse 17:2 “ **2I would attack him** while he is weary and weak. **I** **would** **strike him** with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. **I would strike down only the king**”, in this one verse, Ahithophel repeated three times “I would attack (strike).” He really meant to kill David. Humanly speaking, Ahithophel took revenge just as he received. But it shall not be with Christian. The Bible tells us to act differently. Let’s read Rome 12:19-21. “**19Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”[**[**d**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28265d)**] says the Lord. 20On the contrary:**

**“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
    if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”[**[**e**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28266e)**]**

**21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good**.

God clearly states that we should not take revenge but leave room for God’s wrath. God already saw how David had shown his utter contempt for Ahithophel’s family, so God poured out his wrath on David’s family. If Ahithophel had left room for God’s wrath and forgiven David, what would have happened? Obviously Ahithophel would not have died. He might have seen His granddaughter being a queen of David’s Kingdom. Ahithophel would have been a great grandfather to King Solomon. King David was too busy to take care of Solomon. So, Ahithophel would have been a strict grandpa and raised Solomon with discipline. Then King Solomon would not have gone astray at his old age and Israel would not have been divided in two. What a good story it might have been. This is just my imagination. We cannot change history. The fact is that Ahithophel did not forgive David, and tried to kill him, but he eventually killed himself. If we do not forgive others, we eventually end up destroying ourselves.

Forgiveness is a spiritual action just like we worship God, praise God, pray to God, and study the Bible. Only God and humans are able to forgive. The word of Jesus for us on the cross was all about forgiveness. “**Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing**.” (Luke 23:34)

Absalom’s tragedy also started with unforgiveness to his brother. An unforgiving heart is the seed of tragedy in our life, but forgiving is the seed of the blissful life.

May God bless us to practice forgiving each other as we are forgiven through Jesus Christ. May the blood of Jesus overflow in us and spread the power of forgiveness from our family, friend, community and nations.

Let’s pray.