

# Having the Heart of a Bear

Second Samuel 16–17

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • June 14, In the year of our Lord, 2015

## **Prelude:**

### **I. [Background to Second Samuel 16–17]**

## **Persuasion:**

### **I. Second Samuel 16.1–4 – Ziba Supports David**

**1** When David was a little past the top of the mountain, there was Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine. **2** And the king said to Ziba, “What do you mean to do with these?” So Ziba said, “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 are faint in the wilderness to drink.” **3** Then the king said, “And where is your master’s son?” And Ziba said to the king, “Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.’” **4** So the king said to Ziba, “Here, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours.” And Ziba said, “I humbly bow before you, that I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!”

- A. As David fled Jerusalem from his son Absalom,
1. who had taken over the kingdom,
  2. David went over the Mount of Olives and
    - a) Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan,
    - b) met David with donkeys and food and drink.
- B. David questioned Ziba on two things:
1. First, what he meant to do with the food, and
    - a) Ziba said he gave the donkeys for the king’s household, and
    - b) he gave the food for the young men and
    - c) he gave drink for the faint to drink.
  2. Second, David asked Ziba where his master’s son, Mephibosheth, was.

- a) Ziba claimed that Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem,
  - b) believing that the kingdom would be restored to him that day.
- C. David accepted what Ziba said and
- 1. gave all that belonged to Mephibosheth to Ziba, and
  - 2. he apparently accepted it humbly.

## II. Second Samuel 16.5–13 – Shimei Curses David

**5 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. 6 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. 7 Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: “Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! 8 The Lord has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!” 9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!” 10 But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’” 11 And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. 12 It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day.” 13 And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust.**

- A. Another man from the house of Saul,
- 1. believed David suffered for the fall of the house of Saul,
  - 2. as though David had slaughtered the family of Saul, but
    - a) we know that is not true.
    - b) David supported Saul.
- B. David did shed much blood, but

1. he was not a bloodthirsty man.
  2. Shimei cursed David,
    - a) threw stones at him and his people, and
    - b) kicked up dust against David.
- C. Abishai, as bloodthirsty as his brother Joab,
1. asked permission of his uncle, King David,
  2. to behead Ziba, but
    - a) David questioned what he was to do with the sons of Zeruiah.
    - b) David saw that his son and Shimei were after him, and
      - (1) David knew that the hand of the Lord was in it, because
      - (2) the Lord had said that He would do this to David.

### III. Second Samuel 16.14–19 – Absalom Questions Hushai’s Loyalty

**14 Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there. 15 Meanwhile Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem; and Ahithophel was with him. 16 And so it was, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, “Long live the king! Long live the king!” 17 So Absalom said to Hushai, “Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?” 18 And Hushai said to Absalom, “No, but whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel choose, his I will be, and with him I will remain. 19 Furthermore, whom should I serve? Should I not serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father’s presence, so will I be in your presence.”**

- A. So then, David and his people refreshed themselves at that time, because
1. they were weary, as you can imagine, for
  2. they were fleeing for their lives.
- B. Hushai approaches Absalom and Ahithophel, but
1. Absalom questions Hushai’s loyalty to his friend David.
  2. Why did Absalom not question Ahithophel?

- a) Hushai explained why he left David to follow Absalom, but
- b) Hushai gave an answer that would open Absalom up to him.

#### **IV. Second Samuel 16.20–23 – Ahithophel Disgraces David**

**20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give advice as to what we should do.”**  
**21 And 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 are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong.”** 22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel. 23 Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

- A. Absalom asks Ahithophel to give advice on what to do next.
  1. He advises going into his father’s ten concubines, and
  2. Absalom did it in a tent on top of the house,
    - a) that way, everyone would know of David’s displeasure with his son.
    - b) This fulfilled Nathan’s prophecy.
- B. The advice of Ahithophel was so good
  1. that people typically compared it to
  2. inquiring at the oracle of God.

#### **V. Second Samuel 17.1–4 – Ahithophel Fights His Old Friend**

**1 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. 3 Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace.”** 4 And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

- A. Ahithophel advised further
  1. that he take 12,000 men,

2. showing how many have joined the rebellion, for
  - a) this would not be all of them, but
  - b) choice men capable of fighting David and his army, and
    - (1) that with the 12,000 he pursue his old friend,
    - (2) then strike him while he is tired and afraid.
- B. Everyone would flee from David as Ahithophel's army went only after David.
  1. Then the rest of the people following David
  2. could be brought back to Absalom.
    - a) David's son Absalom liked the idea, and
    - b) so did the elders of Israel!

## **VI. Second Samuel 17.5–13 – David, The Man With the Heart of a Bear**

**5 Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too." 6 And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, "Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up." 7 So Hushai said to Absalom: "The advice that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. 8 For," said Hushai, "you know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are enraged in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father is a man of war, and will not camp with the people. 9 Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some other place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' 10 And even he who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men. 11 Therefore I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there shall not be left so much as one. 13 Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there."**

- A. Absalom, we say wisely, but do not like to admit it,
  1. sought more advice on this matter.

2. Therefore, he asked Hushai.
- B. Hushai explained why the advice of Ahithophel was not good, because
1. David and his men were mighty men,
    - a) enraged in their minds, and
    - b) they would be like a bear robbed of her cubs.
  2. David was also a man of war and knew not to stay with the people, and
    - a) that he was probably already hiding some place.
    - b) David could then fight better,
      - (1) coming out of hiding places, and
      - (2) defeating the army of Absalom, and
        - (a) any survivors, even valiant survivors,
        - (b) their hearts will melt.
- C. Hushai advised Absalom to go into battle.
1. Hushai gave the impression
  2. that this would lead to victory, but
    - a) since he will pass on the information,
    - b) it will only lead to Absalom's defeat.

### **VII. Second Samuel 17.14–16 – Hushai Saves David's Life**

**14 So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel." For the Lord had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring disaster on Absalom. 15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. 16 Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.'"**

- A. Everyone liked Hushai's advice better than Ahithophel's, and
1. it was all of the Lord anyway, for

2. He was determined to bring down Absalom.
- B. Hushai sent messenger/spies to report to David what was happening,
1. telling him not to spend the night in the wilderness on the West side of the Jordan, but
  2. to cross over the Jordan and save his life and those with him.

### **VIII. Second Samuel 17.17–22 – Spies Hide**

**17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city; so a female servant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. 18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom. But both of them went away quickly and came to a man's house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it. 19 Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the thing was not known. 20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" So the woman said to them, "They have gone over the water brook." And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21 Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, "Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel advised against you." 22 So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan.**

- A. A boy reported to Absalom about spies in Jerusalem.
- B. They went to a man friendly to them,
1. hid in his well, and
  2. the man's female servant covered the opening of the well where the spies went, and put grain on it.
- C. The woman sent Absalom's servants on a wild goose chase, and
1. they could not find the spies,
  2. so they went back to Jerusalem.
- D. After Absalom's servants left,
1. the spies went to David, and

2. told him what he needed to know,
  - a) mainly that he should cross the Jordan quickly.
  - b) They all managed to escape.

### **IX. Second Samuel 17.23 – Ahithophel Disgraced**

**23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.**

- A. Ahithophel did not know rejection, and
  1. it hurt when it happened.
  2. People treated his advice
    - a) as though it came straight from God.
    - b) You can imagine what that would do to a man's self-importance.
- B. The pain of the rejection hurt him so badly,
  1. he went home,
  2. put his house in order, and
  3. hung himself.

### **X. Second Samuel 17.24–29 – Many Support David**

**24 Then David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. This Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26 So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead. 27 Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched grain and beans, lentils and parched seeds, 29 honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who were with him to eat. For they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."**

- A. David continued to move, going to Mahanaim.
- B. Absalom soon followed after him.
- C. Absalom made Amasa captain of the army,
  - 1. since Joab was with David.
  - 2. [The identity of Amasa]
- D. Absalom and Israel camped in the land of Gilead.
- E. In Mahanaim, three men supported David, giving him what he needed,
  - 1. beds, basins, and other vessels.
  - 2. Also plenty of food.
- F. These men knew that David and his people
  - 1. would be hungry, weary, and thirsty,
  - 2. since they had been in the wilderness.

### **Exhortation:**

#### **I. Some Will Bless You; Some Will Curse You**

- A. Someone said that one day you are the pigeon and
- B. another day you are the statue.
  - 1. Therefore, treat compliments as perfume,
  - 2. to be smelled but not swallowed.
    - a) Let curses slide off you like water on a duck's back, because,

**2 Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow,  
So a curse without cause shall not alight.  
(Pro 26.2)**

- C. Solomon revealed why the Lord allows this,

**13 Consider the work of God;**

**For who can make straight what He has made crooked?**

**14 In the day of prosperity be joyful,**

**But in the day of adversity consider:**

**Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other,  
So that man can find out nothing that will come after him.  
(Ecc 7.13–14)**

1. He does not want us to have faith in tomorrow.
2. He wants us to find our life in Him.

D. Therefore, do as Paul did,

**11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need (Phi 4.11–12).**

## **II. Do Not Believe the First Report**

A. Why would Ziba go out to David?

1. Why would Mephibosheth think
  - a) that the kingdom was going back to him
  - b) when Absalom clearly was taking the kingdom.
2. Yet, what Ziba said sounded like it could be the truth.
  - a) Therefore, David believed it.
  - b) Beware of hastily accepting news that sounds credible.

B. Shimei made the same mistake,

1. believing that David suffered for the fall of the house of Saul, but
2. David suffered for other reasons.
3. Later, Shimei will apologize.

C. Nicodemus reminds us of a vital truth,

**51 “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?” (John 7.51).**

1. Please apply this to what you hear in the news, and

2. what you hear from those around you,
  - a) especially if it seems to be true.

### III. Do Not Think Highly of Yourself

A. Paul taught this truth,

**3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith (Rom 12.3).**

1. If you violate that truth,
2. the Holy Spirit shows what will happen,

**2 When pride comes, then comes shame;  
But with the humble is wisdom.  
(Pro 11.2)**

**23 A man's pride will bring him low,  
But the humble in spirit will retain honor.  
(Pro 29.23)**

B. Ahithophel proves the futility of thinking highly of yourself.

C. Absalom proves the futility of thinking highly of yourself.

D. Joab proves the futility of thinking highly of yourself.

### IV. If you need to repent

A. for accepting a false witness or

B. for thinking highly of yourself,

1. let us pray for you.
2. Becoming a Christian means
  - a) denying yourself and
  - b) exalting Jesus as Lord.