

David Flees Jerusalem

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[0 : 0 0] turn with me to the second book of samuel chapter 15 and verse 18 page 320 second samuel 15 and verse 18 and all the servants passed by him and all the kerethites and all the pelethites and all the 600 gittites who had followed david from gath passed on before the king then the king said to itai the gittite why do you also go with us go back and stay with the king for you're a foreigner and also an exile from your home you came only yesterday and shall i today make you wander about with us since i go i know not where go back and take your brothers with you and may the lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you but it i answered the king as the lord lives and as my lord the king lives wherever my lord the king shall be whether for death or for life there also will your servant be some time ago i came across a photograph on the internet and the photograph was of a large house a house that once had been a very beautiful house a very stately house that had been well designed and it had been well situated in a lovely place in the united states of america but this photograph showed the house in ruins it had completely collapsed in on itself and the story was how the house collapsed it collapsed because of termites over the years over a long period of time there had been termites little insects gnawing away at the structures of the house the frame of the house it was a wooden frame and these insects were unbeknown to the owner and the person who lived in the house gnawing away eating away moment by moment day by day month by month year by year the person who lived in the house had absolutely no idea of what was happening but what was happening was that his house was becoming more and more brittle and fragile and it got nearer and nearer the moment when at last it collapsed that's what was happening in this chapter you remember the last time we looked at chapter 13 and 14 we saw how absalom lived for a while in exile until by job's design he arranged for absalom to be brought back to israel but even having been brought back absalom was still not content because his heart was set on the kingdom itself he was a driven man but he was also a very patient man and he was also an astute clever person who was also very manipulative he knew exactly what to do but he was in no hurry about it in fact if he had been in a hurry he would never have been successful for years he spent outside the king's court but he used his time profitably as far as he was concerned

because every person who had a complaint or an issue to bring before the king that they wanted to bring before the king absalom would meet with that person and listen to them and treat them as if they were his best friend he would take them seriously he would enter into whatever issue they had whatever complaint they had and within minutes that person would feel that at last someone is taking me seriously he also endeared himself to them he showed the personal side of royalty he showed the human side of royalty by accepting that person as his own personal friend but what he was really doing was winning the ones and the twos and as he won the ones and the twos over that long period of time he eventually won the kingdom to himself the termites were gnawing away at the structure of the house

David was living in the house he hadn't a clue what was happening until the moment that by absalom's design the revolution happened the rebellion happened and when the messenger came to David in verse 13 the rot had set in the house was collapsing the messenger said the hearts of the men of Israel have gone after absalom then David and said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem arise and let us flee or else there would be no escape for us from absalom and there comes the turning point in the fortunes of David well in actual fact the turning point came in chapter 11 you remember when David made that fatal error of judgment when he fell into the arms of Bathsheba and lost the trust of his household and many within his kingdom and God said to him he said the sword will not depart from your house this was the fulfillment of the word of God now you might ask and perhaps I've asked this before

I can't remember but you might ask well does that make God responsible for Absalom's actions is God somehow behind all of the evil and the sin that is taking place and the answer to that of course is no God is not the author of evil or sin and yet God in his sovereignty is overseeing and ordering the events in his own mysterious way we don't understand the sovereignty of God in order to bring his own plan and purpose to pass and if ever there's an example of God bringing his purpose to pass meanwhile through the means of the evil and the sinfulness of humankind it is when Jesus died on the cross if ever there was evil in the world displayed it was when they turned against the son of God himself and when they falsely accused him and crucified him at Calvary and yet this was the plan and the purpose of God for our salvation what's important about this chapter is and why it's important for us to follow this chapter is the same reason as why as what we've seen before that David is the covenant king of God's covenant people and so for Absalom and all those who were behind it to rise up against David was more than just a political rebellion it was more than just an expression of discontent on their part

David being the covenant king represented God it was God who had anointed him and placed him on the throne of Israel that made David an incredibly important man because God had raised him up for that purpose so to rise up against David was to rise up against God's anointed and to rise up against God's anointed was to rise up against God himself this was an act of rebellion not just against David but against God it was an act of extreme sinfulness these people who were and we don't know how many there were there were a good number of them large enough to force David out of his house and out of his home and out of Jerusalem and to force him into exile these people had rebelled not only against their king but they had rebelled against their

[8 : 55] God and so the events that happened is important for us to follow these events in order for us to see how God in his providence and into sovereignty overrules and we'll see how the story ends of course in due time when Absalom in chapter 18 is brought to an end he is killed and David is restored back to the kingdom but meanwhile what we see in this chapter is David in his suffering David who is a man who is despised and rejected no longer is he sitting on the throne but he is a man who is hated by his kingdom by those who had who had risen up against him and what this chapter brings out as much as anything else is that this crisis it exposed those who were David's enemies once and for all if there had been any doubt or any suspicion there was no doubt and no suspicion anymore this was the moment in which

David's enemies came to the fore and they came to light and everyone knew who his enemies were but this was also the moment in which David's friends came to the fore and in which there was a in which there was a distinction a clear dividing line between those who were for David and those who were against David it must have been the easy option to be against David that was the popular movement that was where all the crowds were the rebels cause had seemingly won the day to be for David to stick with him in a time of unpopularity and a time of rejection was to choose to suffer with David without knowing what lay ahead there were dangers ahead no one knew we know the end of the story but they didn't they didn't know what was going to become of David he could be killed and all those who had who had supported him could equally be killed so to follow

David was actually to take your life in your hands it was far more popular to stay in Jerusalem and to take the side of Absalom you had to choose it's one thing to be a supporter of David when he is king and when things are going well and he's popular as he was in years gone by there's no cost to following a popular David and there's no cost to following a popular Jesus but when David is despised and rejected and when the majority it seems have sided with the rebel king and when turned against David that's when it's difficult and painful and costly to stand alone and to follow David and that's when it's difficult and costly to follow Jesus as a man who is despised and rejected a man who is hated by the world and when to follow

Jesus means you're going to be marginalized and mocked and sidelined and when you will have to stand on your own and you don't know what lies ahead of you can you see the analogy can you see how relevant this passage is for the new testament and for us this evening and can you see how this challenges us you and I this evening whose side are we on are you on David's side or are you on the rebel side or should I say or should I talk about it in new testament language are you on Jesus side the God ordained appointed anointed covenant king or are you on the side even if it's the majority side of those who have rebelled against him tonight the world follows a rebel cause they have rejected Jesus and all the appearances very often are that they're the ones in the majority they're the ones who are triumphing they're the winning side to follow the rebel cause is the

easiest thing you could possibly do to follow

David means danger and being mocked it means being identified with what appears to be the losing side but if the if the losing side is God's side then really do we have a choice at all tonight we are being called the gospel calls us to stand on the side of the Jesus who carried his cross from Jerusalem to Golgotha the Jesus who says to you tonight if any man will come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me or in the words of the apostle Paul when he said to Timothy share in suffering for the gospel share in the suffering for the gospel and if I was to try and dilute that in any way

[14 : 35] I'd be sinning if I was to try to say to you that to follow Jesus is easy and it will require no cost whatsoever it will require no suffering I'd be lying to you it would be deception and I would be contradicting the word of Jesus himself to stand with him is to stand alone with a small band of companions who are not very cool there's something about a communion that brings out who we are and demands a stand doesn't it that's because communion is the reminder of what Jesus suffered the despised and rejected saviour who is still to this day despised and rejected so I want us this evening to look at the two sorts of people those who were for David and those who were against

David and I hope that those who stood with David will be encouragement to us tonight as we consider our stand our allegiance the bond that there is between you and I in faith to the Lord Jesus and I want us to see also very briefly those who refuse to take a stand with David and those who took the other side and how they help us to understand where we are this evening in relation to Jesus Christ first of all I want us to meet who David who were David's friends and the first of these is Ittai the Gittite you'll find his story in chapter 15 and in verse 18 these are the first people we're introduced to the Kerithites and the Pelithites now these were not Israelites they were foreigners they had come from a pagan background some scholars believe that they came from one of the islands in the

Mediterranean or some of them were Philistines those who had once been enemies of David and they had come over and Ittai the Gittite well the Gittites were the Philistines those who had once been David's sworn enemies and they reckon that at some point perhaps when David was living in Ziklag remember in the old days before David became king how at one period of his life he had lived in Ziklag amongst the Philistines and these men these people these people these Gittites had recognized something in David that really drew them and they wanted to follow him and they wanted to go where he went and they wanted to give allegiance to him because they saw something majestic that they'd never seen in any other person and that's because he represented God himself and so it's not hard for us to understand how they saw something very special and very unique in David and they came over there's something deeper than political allegiance here there's something spiritual going on something in which God has opened up something he's stirred them up to give them to see his reality and his power that's what he does in the gospel when God's word speaks to someone and when they're drawn to see Jesus who he really is something happens I can't explain it something just registers and we're given we get to see the truth of the gospel we can't prove it scientifically not everything can be proved scientifically but we just know that these are the words of everlasting life we know what our deepest longings are and what our human discontentment is with the life that we have here in this world a life that is full of questions deep questions that cannot be answered by formulas but can only be answered by God himself when God's word speaks to us and the power of the Holy Spirit something happens to open up our hearts just like it I and draws us into a relationship with Jesus Christ by faith in which we whatever come come what may I want to follow him as the Lord lives says it I and as my Lord the King lives wherever my Lord the King shall be whether for death or for life there also will your servant be that's a statement of faith did you also recognize that in these words they're almost identical to what David's ancestor Ruth said when her mother-in-law Naomi was bringing her back from Moab into Israel after the death of her husband and as they stood on the border you remember that great story that conversation between Ruth and her mother-in-law when her mother-in-law encourages her to go back and to find a husband back in the old country in her old country of Moab where she had come from and while her her sister-in-law Orpah was content to go back as soon as Ruth saw what was happening she just couldn't she couldn't live with that because she had become an Israelite she had come to love the Lord the God of Israel and so for her the very prospect of going back to her own life and her old habits and her old culture was out of the question

altogether and she had to say these words you remember what she said do not urge me to leave you Naomi do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you for where you go I will go and where you lodge I will lodge your people will be my people and your God will be my God where you die I will die and where you are buried there would I be buried and may the Lord do so to me and more also of anything but death parts me from you that was the pledge that was a promise that was a step of faith in which

[20 : 53] Ruth was not only promising herself to her mother-in-law to look after her but she was coming to God and saying to the Lord you're mine I want you more than anything else to be my God I want me to be your people your daughter your your your servant and that's what a person says isn't it in relation to Jesus Christ I want you to be my God I want you to be my Savior I want more than anything else for you to be my Lord they're similar to another occasion and when Jesus was with his disciples in John chapter 6 and you remember the rebellion that took place there the hundreds of people that that appear to follow Jesus until he started saying things that were unpopular and at that moment many of them turned away they turned their back on Jesus and they didn't want him anymore and Jesus said to the 12 disciples will you also go away and

Peter said to whom else shall we go you have the words of everlasting life these are the words of faith by which we're accepting we don't understand everything we may be full of questions and yet by faith faith is what takes hold of Jesus and follows him Jesus said in John chapter 12 he said whoever loves his life loses it and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life if anyone serves me he must follow me and where I am listen to this where I am there will my servant be also where are you tonight in relation to Jesus Christ are you with him whose side are you on do you take up your cross daily having denied ourselves and are we following him it's one or the other we're either on

Jesus side we're either for him or against him and then secondly there were the two priests Zadok and Abiathar we find them later on in the chapter they were carrying the ark of God and when David saw them he stopped them he said I don't want the ark of God to come with me take it back into Jerusalem and this is what he said he said carry the ark of God back to the city and if I find favor in the eyes of the Lord he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place but if he says I have no pleasure in you behold here I am let him do to me what seems good to him so there was Zadok and Abiathar whom he sent back to Jerusalem along with the ark of God now remember what the ark of God was it was the piece of furniture that sat in the most holy place of the tabernacle and then later on in Solomon's time it was to be put into the most holy place in the temple and it was the item of furniture that you did not touch you did not look at it had to be covered all the time you remember what happened when Yuzah touched the ark of

God and there was it was the throne the place that God called his throne and where he chose to locate himself in the middle of his people Israel there's no time to go into his description or anything but it was a box with angels golden angels on the mercy seat or the atonement cover and the angels wings they they it was a very beautiful piece of furniture and this was the throne of God why was it that David didn't want the throne of God with him as he made his way in exile across across the Kidron Valley why was it surely surely he would want to take comfort out of this piece of furniture that represented the presence of God surely the last thing he would want to do is to send it back to Jerusalem and into the hands of his enemies but remember that that's not the way David thought that's the way that's the way their forefathers thought you remember there was a fatal occasion way back in first Samuel chapter four where during a an ill-fated war with the Philistines when the Israelite army were losing somebody had the bright idea of let's bring the ark of God because they imagined that the ark of God the ark of the covenant would somehow secure their victory over the

Israelites they were using it as a lucky charm they believe that if they had the physical presence of the ark of God then they would have the physical presence of God because they believe that God equals the ark or the ark equals God so therefore wherever the ark is God is and so therefore God in order to get God on your side you had to have the ark with you they were miserably wrong and God had to show them that at great cost how wrong they were how wrong their theology was God is not confined to any one space or time and what they were trying to do was they were trying to they were trying to somehow atone for their own sinfulness because God was judging them for their sinfulness by somehow believing that the ark would be the resolution to all their problems it couldn't be and David recognizes this he's saying it's not about the ark it's about God and what the

ark represents is what is important it's not

[26 : 54] I'm not saying the ark wasn't important the ark was important in its own place but people are so superstitious I guess that David was trying to protect the people who were following him from any any notion of superstition that they might have and he's trying to teach them that they must be put that they must that the ark takes its own place as God say so people can be so superstitious of all kinds of things can't they including communion let me take liberties here I know I'm taking liberties I know I'm trying to equate this with what we're going to be doing next week but I don't think I'm too far off the mark I know I'm taking liberties but people can be very superstitious about communion and some people have the idea that somehow taking the bread and the wine somehow draws the presence of God like a magnet and the way you win favor with God or more favor with God is to take communion you don't win favor with God by taking communion neither do you somehow draw his presence into a communion service by taking the bread and the wine by themselves the bread and the wine they represent what Jesus did at Calvary where our hope lies and when we eat the bread and the wine we are by faith we are relying and depending by faith on his death his broken body and his shed blood the shed blood that was the blood that was shed at Calvary the elements the actual precise elements they are important because of what they tell us but in themselves they are bread and wine and that's all they remain it's the

Jesus whose body was broken and whose blood was shed who saves us and who brings us together in fellowship and who brings us to remember in faith what he did for us and so I would hope that there is no element of superstition in us and David helps us and he protected his people from their natural sinful superstitious inclination Zadok and Abiathar were to take the ark back because David's hope lay in the God with whom he was in covenant and then there was Hushai the archite Hushai was one of the trusted friends of David and he was a person who David could trust and he was given the task of going back to Jerusalem and to and in in being a David's representative unbeknown to Absalom he was given the task of being David's representative in Jerusalem he was to go back behind enemy lines and he was to use his position for the for the good of

David and for the good of Israel for the glory of God isn't that a reminder of what our responsibility is as God's people in the world in a world in which we often feel vulnerable and weak and timid we feel we're not up to the task of being God's people in a hostile world where there are enemies all around us and we're at any moment in time we could make it we could say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing and end up we feel bringing disaster well that was the position that Hushai was given by David because David commanded him to go back into behind the enemy lines and represent him there and I believe that by that those of us who stand with David's greater son Jesus Christ also have a responsibility in this world to serve God and to witness for him no matter and very often at a time like this we are reminded of how of how vulnerable we are but our strength comes from the Lord Hushai could never do this if it wasn't for the strength and the guidance and the providence that God would give him each one of us must be a Hushai working for the Lord behind enemy lines we go to the end of chapter 17 I'm not going to go there this evening we'll get there in due time we find other friends of David people who who brought him sustenance and provision for him I was going to but the time is going rapidly I want us to just mention in a word the three enemies of David three men who were shown to be in opposition to David first of all Ziba the man who lies Ziba was the servant of Mishphibosheth you remember how

David showed covenant kindness to Mishphibosheth who was the grandson of Saul and who sat at the king's table every day now Ziba is coming and apparently Ziba is coming with a story that Mishphibosheth has betrayed David and he wants to stay in Jerusalem to serve Absalom because according to Ziba Mishphibosheth wanted his kingdom to be restored to his dynasty to Saul's dynasty this of course was wrong this was a lie it was all meant to gain something for Ziba instead of instead of telling the truth which was I'm quite sure that Mishphibosheth was simply unable to join himself with David and then there's Shimei verse 5 to 14 the man who accuses the man who brings back the past to David and the man who showers him and notice it says he throws stones at David and his followers and who accused him of all kinds of violence and wrongdoing of the past he wanted to bring back everything that David had done to him and you remember how Abishai he wanted to take his head off he wanted to cut his head off right there and then and he wanted to kill Shimei but then David says once again this is in the Lord's hands don't touch him he was able to say see how somehow God was in control of what was going on not only so but that he was he was

ordering the events even the the events that were designed to demoralize David and to bring him down because it was in that darkness David was somehow able to see that God brings blessing out of curses themselves and I wonder tonight if there are some of us here and again in the light of what we're going to be doing next week when we think of our own past sometimes this is the very occasion that the devil uses to bring our past right up to date and to accuse us of everything we've done both as an unbeliever in the past and as a believer in order to completely weaken us and to demoralize us and to show us that we are the last place we want to be or that we should be is at the table of the Lord well I hope that we find strength in where David found his strength the grace of the covenant keeping God the God who doesn't change the God from whom nothing can separate us the God who is in covenant relationship with us who has pledged himself to his people through the [35 : 09] Lord Jesus Christ once and for all nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus and lastly Ahithophel Ahithophel was David's trusted most trusted advisor and this was what I think got to David got to David got to David more than anything else possibly even more than Absalom there was always a problem with Absalom dating back years wasn't there but Ahithophel was somebody who up until up until yesterday had been his most trusted advisor you could say that this was the second person close to David who turned against him it's one thing for David's enemies to turn against him the philistines it's another thing when his friends turn their back on him and want him dead what an earth-shattering blow this must have been for David there's possibly nothing so distressing as betrayal something that stays with you and questions again and again and again why why is this happening how can I understand when someone I trusted with my life someone I told my innermost secrets to someone who shared my confidence how can I understand when someone in that position has turned out to be my enemy and how can I ever trust anyone again

David asked that question in the psalm that we've been singing that's why we sang psalm 55 if enemies insulted me their taunts I could abide or if a foe against me rose then from him I would hide but it is you my closest friend a man whom I well knew we once enjoyed sweet fellowship as to God's house we'd go many people understand what betrayal is in their own experience they understand the devastating effect that it has on a person how it scars a person for life there is someone else who knows what betrayal is none other than Jesus himself and yet even his betrayal like David's was in the plan of God for our salvation when Paul describes the night in which Jesus took bread he describes it as the night in which he was betrayed his betrayal came to be a hallmark of his suffering but another way of reading and interpreting that verse is the night in which he was handed over there are the two things that are happening on that night there is the friend of Jesus who is turning against him and selling him to his enemies abandoning him giving him over but there is also the handing of the father in heaven of Jesus to be crucified in order for us to be saved on the night that Jesus was betrayed he took bread and that's what brings of course amongst other things that was brings this chapter into

Jerusalem itself it brings it into Calvary itself it was a mark a foretaste if you like in the plan of God in the mysterious plan of God there is a peculiar foretaste a foreshadowing of David's greatest son and what he would suffer not for his own sin we've seen all along that what David is suffering here in this chapter it goes back it goes back to when he fell in chapter 11 Jesus suffered through no fault of his own but he suffered by taking our sin upon himself and bearing it and becoming guilty of it so that by his wounds we would be healed are you for him or are you against him are you with him or not that's the question in which God's word comes to us this evening and challenges us where are you in relation to Jesus Christ let's bow our heads in prayer our father in heaven we thank you once again for your your word to us the word that sometimes comes to us painfully we feel the pain of conviction because we know that we are completely undeserving of your mercy we know that we have a past that very often is brought before us and yet Lord we can say we pray to be able to say with

Itai the Gittite that wherever you are there will your servant be we ask oh Lord that we may be able to say that about Jesus and that we might be with him by faith following him whatever the cost and whatever comes our way in your providence forgive our sin we pray in Jesus name Amen