

2 Samuel 16

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[0 : 0 0] Great. Well, we are looking at the book of 2 Samuel tonight, chapter 16. So that's page 267 in the Black Pew Bibles in front of you.

Let me invite you to turn there with me. We are working through a sermon series in the book of 2 Samuel. We got through chapter 15 last year, took a little break for the holidays, and then we'll finish it up by Easter time.

And while you're turning there, let me point out too, in the pews in front of you is a new sermon card for the sermon series in the coming months. So you can take one of those home actually. You can stick it on your fridge or wherever you stick things in your life.

You can take a picture of it and put it on your phone and then throw it away or whatever you do with things these days. You can follow along so you know it's coming up. So you can read the passage in the week and be prepared for Sundays. Once we're done with 2 Samuel, we're going to celebrate Easter and then we're actually going to be preaching through the middle portion of the Gospel of Luke and thinking about discipleship, discipleship in the real world.

As Jesus leads his followers to Jerusalem in the Gospel of Luke, he teaches them about what it means to follow him. So that's kind of where we're going in the next few months. Tonight, we're looking at 2 Samuel.

[1 : 1 7] So as we approach this passage tonight, I think we'll find it fruitful if we pause first and think about a time in your life when maybe you were at a moment of weakness or vulnerability and someone actually took advantage of you or maybe even manipulated you, deceived you, or tricked you in some way, sort of took advantage of you in a moment of weakness.

Or even think about a time when someone maybe unjustly accused you or criticized you for something that you didn't do or came at you in a way that was full of misrepresentations and untruth.

Or think about a time even when maybe someone betrayed you, like a close friend or a colleague or even a spouse or a brother or sister. Or think about a time when someone that you loved and trusted betrayed your trust and abandoned you and worked for your hurt and not for your good.

If you get a personal experience like that in mind, as unpleasant as it is, with all the emotion and all the anguish and all the anger and hurt that it brings up, then I think you'll be able to connect with our passage tonight.

Because in our text tonight, David is experiencing all of those things. David in this chapter endures all sorts of unjust reproach and betrayal.

[2 : 4 8] At this point in his life's story, he's on the run from his son Absalom. He's fleeing the city of Jerusalem, the capital. And in chapter 15 that we looked at before the holidays, we found that David in his flight was greeted mostly by friends along the way.

But now here in chapter 16, he's greeted not by his friends, but by his foes. And the chapter ends with him having been manipulated and cursed and betrayed.

So as we dive into this chapter, I want us to think about three things, three questions. First, why does all this happen to David? And why do things like this happen to us?

Second, how does David respond to this harsh reality? And then third, how can we today respond similarly?

So that's where we're going. Let's read 2 Samuel chapter 16. When David had passed a little beyond the summit, that is the summit of the Mount of Olives, which was east of Jerusalem.

[3 : 58] David's, remember, on the run from his son Absalom. When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met him with a couple of donkeys saddled bearing 200 loaves of bread and 100 bunches of raisins and 100 of summer fruits and a skin of wine.

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.

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. 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. When David came to Baharim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gerah.

And as he came, he cursed continually. Then 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.

[5 : 06] 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. 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. 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 may now this Benjaminite leave him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. 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.

So David and his men went on the road with Shimei, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. And the king and all the people who were with him arrived weary at the Jordan.

[6 : 18] And there he refreshed himself. 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.

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 the people and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be and with him I will remain.

And again, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I have served your father, so I will serve you. Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, give your counsel. What shall we do?

Ahithophel said to Absalom, go into 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 into his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. Now in those days, the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God.

[7 : 25] So was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed both by David and by Absalom. Let's pray together. God, give us your spirit, we pray tonight, so that we might understand the message of this text, apply it well to our lives, so that we might live in line with the truth of your word, and the truth of your good news, the gospel.

Help us, we pray. Amen. So as we said, David in this chapter experiences some of the hardest human relational experiences, I think, that we go through.

He's tricked, he's cursed, and in the end he's betrayed. Now, at first, it's kind of hard to parse things out, but he's tricked, you see, by Ziba, the first one he meets.

We met Ziba actually back in chapter 9. He was a servant in Saul's household, the king that preceded David, and David gave to Ziba the stewardship over what was left of Saul's house and his ancestral property, and in particular, David gave Ziba as a servant to Saul's remaining heir, Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth.

And Mephibosheth, you remember, had been injured as a child and was lame in both of his feet. And at first glance, it seems like Ziba's doing David a great favor, right?

[8 : 38] Here he is providing tasty food and drink and transportation to David and his followers when they're weary and weak on their trek into the wilderness. But, you know, when we read the rest of the story of 2 Samuel, especially if you were to skip ahead and read chapter 19, we learn that Ziba's intentions here are not what they seem.

Ziba claims that his master, Mephibosheth, has abandoned David and gone over to Absalom, but we'll find later that that's simply just not true. Mephibosheth has, it seems, remained loyal to David, and here Ziba is taking advantage of David's position of weakness and need, showing up with gifts, lying about his master, all in order to manipulate David into giving him the rights over Mephibosheth's property.

The commentator Matthew Henry wrote, no longer content to be the manager, Ziba wants to be the master. And for the time being, it works. David believes the story, he receives the gifts, and is deceived.

The next person David meets is Shimei, a descendant of Saul, who curses David. That is, he sort of calls down God's, you know, wrath upon his head, calling him a man of blood, saying that he deserves all that's happening to him because he butchered Saul's family on his way to being the king.

Now, of course, if you've been following the story of 1 and 2 Samuel, you know, actually, that Shimei's accusation isn't true. David actually has dealt incredibly honorably towards Saul and his family.

[10 : 20] I mean, you remember all those times in 1 Samuel when David refuses to lift his hands against Saul. So this reproach that Shimei flings at David along with all the stones and all the dirt, it's all unjust, it's all undeserved.

And then lastly here, there's the episode with Hushai and Ahithophel. Now, Hushai in these final paragraphs comes to Jerusalem actually as a spy on behalf of David.

So the one guy that looks like he is selling David out is actually on David's side in this chapter. He's winning his way into Absalom's court, hoping to be something of kind of a fifth column to undermine Absalom, or at least to be sort of an inside pair of eyes and ears for David who's had to run into the wilderness.

You can look back in chapter 15 to see how David and Hushai sort of plotted this risky counterinsurgency maneuver that Hushai is all about here. And next week, we're going to see how that goes in chapter 17.

But then there's this character of Ahithophel, who at one point was David's trusted and esteemed counselor, his right-hand man.

[11 : 26] And we find that Ahithophel sides with Absalom's insurrection. And he tells Absalom to do what? To go up on the roof and to sleep with David's concubines.

And that that would be a sign to all of the city that Absalom is now in control of all that was David's, down to his very household, down to his very bedroom. Absalom owns it all.

In other words, Ahithophel totally betrays David. Now, why does all this happen to David?

And why does it happen to us? Live life for any length of time and you experience people who will try to trick you when you're weak, curse you when you're innocent, and even betray us because we're no longer useful to them when something better comes along, right?

Now, you might ask, why? Why does that happen? Now, sometimes these things happen because of consequences for our own actions, right?

[12 : 29] David had blown it big time with Bathsheba, and he'd even blown it in his relationship with Absalom himself. And now, maybe we might think that David is reaping more of what he's sown. But you know, that doesn't explain all of it, either for David or for us, and it doesn't explain what's going on here in 16.

I mean, think of it. Absalom's revolt is connected to David's failure and sin. There's no getting around that. We looked at that in chapter 15. David mourns for his sin. He experienced the Lord's discipline there. But you know, here in chapter 16, it's not like Ziba's trickery or Shimei's cursing or even Ahithophel's betrayal are necessarily the result of what David did.

They're not logically connected to that in any intimate way. And so we need to see that sometimes we are going to undergo betrayal and cursing and even manipulation simply because we live in a fallen world.

We live in a fallen world and it's full of people like ourselves who are fallen and who are sinful. Why does all this happen to David?

Because tragically, this is kind of how life goes in the fallen world. We'll be sinned against. The life of the saint, you see, friends, will not be a rosy walk through fields and streams all the time smelling the glad roses.

[13 : 53] There will be descents. David is going down the Mount of Olives and figuratively, he's sort of heading down in all of these ways.

There will be valleys of darkness and betrayal. And I think it's good to be reminded of this so we aren't taken so by surprise. You know, oftentimes in our spiritual life, I think that we're like a football player who's running with the ball down the field and then suddenly we get shocked that someone from the other team is trying to tackle us.

What are they doing? Why is this happening to me? Why are they trying to crush every bone in my body? Well, that's just the reality of the game of football. When you got the ball, people are coming to get you.

And friends, Jesus is very clear that there would be times when his followers would be ridiculed, falsely accused, and betrayed. In essence, Jesus tells his followers, look, if they rejected me, there will be times when you too are rejected.

And I think that means that we shouldn't really sort of shake our fist at God when people do sinful things against us. Of course, we can and should lament and cry out to God.

[15 : 05] We should vent our emotions to him. We should do that. We should come to him with all that we're feeling and all that we're experiencing. And yet we should remember that God told us these things would happen and he's worked to prepare us.

And that this is a sad and grim reality of living in a fallen world amidst fallen people just like ourselves. People will manipulate and curse and betray.

And yet, friends, isn't it helpful to know that God's king, both then and now, isn't immune to knowing firsthand what that's like?

You see, David could be the sort of king he was, compassionate and strong, understanding and yet full of vision. He could be the sort of king he was because he knew what it was like to suffer the worst from people, because he knew exactly what it was like to stand in the shoes of the people that he led.

And friends, how much more do we have that sort of king today in the Lord Jesus who knows what it's like to walk in our shoes? And how much more can we trust him to be a faithful and knowing and loving and trustworthy king over us?

[16 : 29] So how should we respond then? If this is kind of an inevitable thing, how do we deal with it? This is the second thing that we see in our text here. And I think we see it most in David's response to Shimei.

David's being unjustly cursed here. Insults, rocks, dirt all come raining down on David's head. And when this happens to us, I think our response is often more like Abishai than like David, right?

What does Abishai say in verse 9? Essentially, how dare he? This guy's a dead dog. Now, if you were an Israelite, you didn't like dogs. They were filthy and mangy and they were sort of scavengers.

And like doubly worse would be a dead dog because you weren't supposed to touch dead things as an ancient Israelite. So this guy is like the lowest of the low in Abishai's viewing. How dare this dead dog curse my lord, the king?

And then what does Abishai say? I've got an easy way to fix this problem, David. Let me go over and take off his head. Done. No one's going to get hit with stones. No one's going to get with dirt. I'm just going to kill him. This seems to be Abishai's kind of MO, his standard way of operating.

[17 : 34] You remember back in our first Samuel series, Abishai was the guy who snuck into Saul's sleeping camp with David in the middle of the night and said, David, let me pin Saul to the ground with my spear while he sleeps.

Trust me, I'm not going to have to throw twice. I'll hit him the first time. Right? So this is Abishai. But you know, isn't that how often we respond to criticism and reproach?

If there's any amount of inaccuracy in the criticism, any amount of getting the facts wrong, okay, we don't literally take off their head. But don't we often think, how dare you?

And then proceed maybe to figuratively take off their head? Think about it. The last time someone charged you with a failure or a shortcoming, the last time someone corrected or criticized you, how did you respond?

Were you defensive? Did you lash back? Did you walk away in anger and refuse to listen? That's often how I do it.

[18 : 40] Did you think of all the stupid and wrong things that they were guilty of? But look how David responds. Two things. First, surprisingly, he listens.

And he listens as if this could maybe be God's word to him. See that in verse 10 and verse 11. David is open to the possibility that this cursing may have been prompted by the Lord.

That is, that the Lord may have something for David to actually hear in it. Even though, and get this, even though, as David points out in verse 12, that it is an unjust accusation.

Okay. Even though it's a wrong being done to him, David still attends to it as if there's still something for him to hear. Something that he needs to hear.

Friends, I think this is how we ought often to approach even some of the most unjust criticism that we face. With the humility that even if it's loaded with hatred and falsehood, that there might still be something that God has for us in it.

[19 : 53] after all, think about it, David did not spill the blood of Saul's house. That was an unjust accusation. David did not deserve that curse, but did he not still spill innocent blood when he sent Bathsheba's husband Uriah to the front lines with a letter in his hand to Joab telling Joab to pull back the forces when you get into the thick of battle so that Uriah gets killed.

David did have blood on his hands. He knew it to be true. So he heard the rebuke because he knew he was a sinner and he knew he wasn't perfect.

Now friends, maybe you've been criticized. Are you willing to hear what's true in it? Even if it's surrounded by a lot of falsehood, even if a lot of it is ungrounded?

Are you willing to listen to what God might be saying even through all the radio static and through all the stones and dirt that are falling down on your head? And what's the result?

The result of David doing this is actually that he avoids more bloodshed by just receiving the rebuke. Abishai doesn't take off Shimei's head. Now, it's not that we shouldn't ever seek to correct misunderstandings or clarify what's true.

[21 : 26] We should do that. We should do it calmly, peaceably. But friends, how much more figurative bloodshed and back and forth and grudges and bitterness in our relationships and in our churches and our communities and in our marriages and in our friendships, how much of that would be avoided if we would learn to hear and listen to rebukes even if they happen to be a little unjust?

You know, the next thing that David does in the face of all this is that he doesn't just listen. This is important. He also entrusts himself to God's justice, you see.

Look at verse 12. David is confident that whatever unjust cursing he endures, the Lord will repay him with good for the evil that he's received.

It reminds me of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, doesn't it? Matthew 5, 11. Jesus says, blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, Jesus says. Why? For your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. When we face this kind of unjust cursing, criticism, reproach, even betrayal or manipulation, you see, friends, we can respond with courage and with composure because we know that God will look at the wrong done to us and one day he will repay us with good.

[23 : 13] he will make things right. That is the sort of God he is. There is no hurt or no loss or no betrayal or no curse that has come down upon the head of the Christian that will not ultimately be made right and repaid with good in God's kingdom.

God's God's resurrection. In other words, every cross, friends, will be met with a resurrection. Lastly, then, seeing how David responds, where in the world do we get the kind of emotional and spiritual wealth to do all this?

How possibly can we listen and can we trust God's justice in all these ways? Where do we get the inner strength to respond this way? To not be like Abishai and want to just rip people's heads off?

Or, on the other hand, right, or to respond in the opposite way by just giving up when we're criticized or when we're betrayed, by just crumpling and folding and refusing to go on.

Notice that's not David's response either. He presses on to the Jordan in this text. He keeps going. He doesn't give up. Well, one of the great things about this chapter is that it's one of those episodes in David's life where we're actually given an inside look into David's heart, into David's spiritual life.

[24 : 42] And the place where we're given that is in the book of the Psalms, in Psalm chapter 3, which is attributed to this very moment in David's life. So let's look there actually. Turn with me.

It's page 448 in the Pew Bible. Let's look at Psalm 3 together and see the sort of secret of David's composure in the midst of reproach.

Psalm 3, page 448. Let me begin reading this for us. David writes, O Lord, how many are my foes?

Many are rising against me. Many are saying of my soul, there's no salvation for God, for him and God. So what's David doing right off the bat? He's crying out to God.

He's praying. And friends, that should tell us that prayer is not some sort of luxury activity for when we happen to get some free time and we're feeling sort of extra spiritual.

[25 : 41] Okay, I'll pray now. No, friends, prayer is a lifeline in the trenches of the warfare of life. And David lays it all out before God.

He's not sugarcoating one thing. He says, Lord, how many are my foes? Verse 3, But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of my head.

I cried aloud to the Lord and he answered me from his holy hill. Now notice here, David's protection and David's security, his shield, right?

That's what a shield is. His worth, his glory, his dignity and honor, the lifter of my head. His protection, his worth, his dignity, they're not in what people think of him, are they?

They're not ultimately in how great David's circumstances are. Where then are they? You, O Lord, are my shield and my glory.

[26 : 45] Yeah? And as David cries to God in prayer, he says, God answered me. Now, God did not answer him by changing his circumstances, right?

2 Samuel 16, it's not like at the end, poof, magically, David's totally vindicated. Things get bad. Things are going to get a little even worse in the story here before they get better.

But still God answers. Deep in David's soul in this moment, he gets a divine assurance that the Lord is with him.

In prayer, God speaks to his heart and comforts him and gives him strength. Look at verse 5. I lay down and slept.

I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God, for you strike all my enemies on the cheek.

[27 : 46] You break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing be on your people. David here knows and acknowledges and prays and recognizes that God will not allow evil to triumph forever.

Salvation, he says, belongs to the Lord. It's part of his essence. It's part of God's nature to be a redeeming God. Belongs to him.

Now, friends, if David knew this, deep in his bones, how much more do we, or should we? You know, David had seen God rescue him time and time again.

But haven't you and I seen God's greatest act of rescue? Not just for you and me individually, but for the whole world in Jesus Christ.

Do we not know the king who endured the most unjust reproach? The king who was truly betrayed and abandoned and mocked and scorned?

[29 : 04] But unlike David, Jesus had no sin and there was no ground for the curses that he received. None whatsoever. He was actually completely innocent.

There was no right for that army of shimmy eyes who assaulted Jesus in his passion as one after another, after another, after another, just flung down curses and rebuke and reproach on Jesus' head when he was arrested and crucified.

And yet, friends, don't we know that this king who's come and born all this unjust cursing and rebuke and reproach, don't we know that he bore these curses for us?

The apostle Paul writes in the book of Galatians, Christ became a curse for us so that we might receive God's blessing.

every curse that you and I deserved because we're sinners, every curse that the holy law of God would fling and hurl against us righteously, justly, Christ himself has absorbed as our substitute, standing in our place.

[30 : 21] And Jesus rose from the grave to prove that that curse had been undone and emptied. And that now, instead of God's curse being upon us, it's God's blessing that's upon us.

Now God's blessing is for you and for me and for everyone who repents and believes. You see, friends, this is the wellspring of David's and of our, especially as Christians.

This is the wellspring of it. Now because of what Jesus has done, the one opinion that actually matters, the opinion of God himself who made you and made me, the opinion of that God is one of a blessing over us, of approval and love.

And now we know that God will always be faithful to us and never betray us. And that God will always work for our good and never deceive us or manipulate us.

and that God will always accept us and never curse us no matter what external circumstances we might experience. Salvation belongs to the Lord.

[31 : 42] Your blessing be on your people, David says. That's what will give you the inner strength to endure the curses and betrayals of this life and to respond in humility and courage when they come.

David saw it and tasted it and experienced it. But you know, in reality, he did it from afar. He saw just shadows of what we know. But we, in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, we see it up close.

We see the substance itself, friends. So why don't we go to God in prayer together right now? And let's ask God to bury the reality of His salvation deep in our hearts so that we can respond like David did, so that we can respond like people of God's kingdom, so that we can respond like people of the King Jesus.

Let's pray together. Lord, there's so much that we ought to be bringing before you in prayer as we think about this text.

First, God, we want to just pray for your comfort and for your strength to be with those of us who are experiencing some of the realities that David experienced in this text. Lord, for those of us who are undergoing the hurt of betrayal or of unjust accusation, for those who have been manipulated or deceived, God, we ask for your comfort and your strength to be near to them.

[33 : 11] God, we also pray that you would help us, Lord, in the midst of those trying times to respond with humility and with grace. Lord, not to back down from what's true, not to shy away from clarifying misunderstandings, and yet, God, to approach these things with humility and to listen.

And, God, also to trust that you will keep account of everyone and make all things good in the end. God, most of all, we pray that what is true in Jesus Christ, for all who believe, that you have loved us and blessed us, God, that you are our shield and our glory and the lifter of our heads.

Lord, all that we have in you is so rich and so all encompassing. God, that even if we experience criticism and reproach and betrayal Lord, we have a rock that will not move because we know Jesus bore every real curse that could ever undo us.

Every curse that could really be the end of us, he has taken away and the blessing that we need is ours in him. Oh, Father, by your spirit, make these things real to us.

Help us to sense them and know them deep in our bones. And, Lord, help us as a community, as a church, together, to live out this kind of peacemaking, this kind of humility.

[34 : 54] Lord, help it to spread beyond these walls. Help us to be a counterculture in the midst of our accusatory culture where everyone's fuse seems to be so short. Lord, help us to just have a wealth of patience and listening.

God, help us even to endure unjust cursing for the sake of your kingdom. knowing that our reward is great in heaven. We look to you, Jesus, for the strength to do this.

Thank you that by your spirit you give us just that. Amen. Friends, we're going to continue to respond to God's word by singing and praying and praising together.

This song that we're going to sing.