

**Lies, Curses, & Betrayal: Hope in the Presence of Enemies**  
2 Samuel 16

*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.”*

**Introduction:** In his timeless classic “*Knowledge of the Holy*” on the attributes of God, AW Tozer gave the following quote: ‘**What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.**’ The truth this sentence shines light on is the fact that every person’s view of God, whether in denial or in faith, has *consequences or implications* to the rest of life in terms of how you see the world and interpret everything that happens. A **false** view or **partial** view of God will see Him as far too passive, leaving mankind as equal or having authority, or too heavy-handed, seeing God as vindictive or arbitrary on doling out pain and hard circumstances. In this, God gets blamed for everything bad in life and gets no credit for anything good that happens. A **true** or **full** view of God sees God as glorious, wrathful, gracious, kind, jealous, and merciful, full of love and compassion, getting glory in the good and hard, but never disconnected from anything that happens. The problem is, from the Garden of Eden onward, we have struggled having a Biblical view of God, leaving us struggling to find meaning in pain or purpose in suffering, and instead of running toward Him in the midst of opposition, we see Him as the source of the problem rather than our ultimate solution.

Throughout the years we’ve seen the implications of this in counseling or discipleship relationships. One friend who is with the Lord now had a hard time seeing the **grace of God**, so his struggle with lust kept him in a joyless, works-based effort, as well as being **graceless toward others**. He was quick to judge others or see the worst in others since he couldn’t imagine being freed from his sin. Another friend misunderstood the freedom that God brought in his sin when he was unwilling to confront the sin of his son, since it was the same sin he struggled with in his early years. He felt like since he committed certain sins in his past he couldn’t speak to those in others’ lives. Both friends struggled with a full and Biblical view of God and how He treats us as reconciled sons.

David had experienced a bit of a range in his view of God. He began his early life with a robust, almost brash, trust in the sovereignty of God, willing to fight a giant when everyone else cowered in fear, standing up for the name of the LORD when the Philistines denigrated it. He trusted the Lord throughout his waiting for the throne and the terror of Saul, hiding in the wilderness and NOT willing to lift his hand against the Lord’s anointed. But he also struggled practically in his trust in the Lord, both pre-sin and post. We see David covering up his sin, and once his sin was exposed, though he **repented and asked for forgiveness**, there was a palpable change in his approach to life, parenting, and leading, with a passive approach and a reluctance to challenge his son. But we also see a **newfound humility**, which comes in the form of a realistic view of self and a growing view of the majesty of God, which marked him in the rest of his life.

Once again we come to a part of David’s life where he is **on the run and in the presence of enemies**, and these turn out to be great opportunities of growth rather than reasons for pity or feeling sorry for himself. In this chapter we will see that **hope**, as with joy, **comes from a proper view of God rather than pristine circumstances**. Hope is believing the goodness, greatness, and work of God in and through His promises. We trust that in the end, after all the pain and sorrow, He will continue to hold us in His hand, never letting us go, and that every single hardship or slander or rock thrown at us in the path of

obedience will be worth it in comparison to what we gain eternally in Christ. So **in the midst of lies, curses, and betrayals, there was hope in the person and promises of God.**

### LIES OF A SUPPOSED FRIEND (1-4)

*When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine. 2 And the king said to Ziba, "Why have you brought these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness to drink." 3 And the king said, "And where is your master's son?" Ziba said to the king, "**Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.'**" 4 Then the king said to Ziba, "**Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.**" And Ziba said, "I pay homage; let me ever find favor in your sight, my lord the king."*

There is nothing like the practical care of a friend when we are in the pit of despair. A timely card, a helpful meal, or a thoughtful text can be a salve for open wounds, bringing encouragement. The power is in the thought even more than the gift itself. It is why, as a church, we try our best to engage in *visitation, or card writing, or meal providing*, because of the distinct encouragement it can be when a situation cannot be fixed.

As David was on the run, he was approached by a man from his past named **Ziba**. We were introduced to Ziba in **2 Samuel 9**, a Saul loyalist and his former servant who had taken over running Saul's property and land. He was commanded by David to care for Jonathan's son **Mephibosheth**, and his family was to steward the land as **servants rather than owners**. Though it may have seemed out of place for this man to come to David with gifts, they were welcomed, since David was lacking in the loyalty department. Perhaps having the same feeling of unease, David asked Ziba why he brought these gifts --- donkeys to ride, bread, raisins, fruit, and wine, things that would have brought comfort but not perpetual provision -- to which Ziba responded with magnanimity: these are for you and the good of your men!

Then asked the next logical question: *where is your master's son?* In Hebrew language this had a loose connotation to relative, meaning he was asking about Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. It was here that **Ziba** showed his Absalom-like shrewdness: *he stayed in Jerusalem, and he's happy you are out of there because he thinks that now is the time that he can regain his rightful kingdom!* At this, David's blood boiled, and thinking, *"that little, ungrateful twerp! After all I've done for him, bringing him in to my kingdom and family out of nothingness, having him eat at my table and giving him a living for the rest of his life...and THIS is how he repays me!!! Fine, all that I have given to Mephibosheth I give to you, Ziba!* To which Ziba, in a show of grandiose humility said, *"I pay homage, if I've somehow found favor in your sight, my king."* Seemed reasonable, and even just, if indeed Mephibosheth had turned.

But it was all a **big heaping pile of garbage!** We know according to **2 Samuel 19:24-30**, when David came back to Jerusalem (spoiler alert!) that Mephibosheth had waited patiently and loyally for David's return, mourning in solidarity the whole time. David was duped. Ziba was manipulative. And Mephibosheth paid the price.

There are **two principles we glean from this episode**. The **first** is once again the negative effects of **manipulation**. Flattery is deceit, and deception is lying, and that is the path and way of our enemy who disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13). *"Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips*

*and harbors deceit in his heart” (Proverbs 26:24)* Manipulation is hatred and deceit that comes through our words, and leads to the hurt and pain of others. *“A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin (Prov. 26:28)* This means we must not only stay away from using our words to manipulate, it means we must discern when someone is an enemy flattering us with kisses (Prov. 27:6). But how do we discern? We used Biblical, godly wisdom. This is the next thing we learn:

**Second, wisdom can be both gained and lost.** David had a high wisdom radar in the beginning of his life and kingship. You’ll recall David’s discerning of the Amalekite that took credit for killing Saul (2 Sam. 1), knowing that the more questions he asked, the more the story was flimsy and full of lies. But there seems to be a **direct correlation** to David’s spiritual condition and discernment level, which is actually a biblical truth. **James 1:5** tells us exactly how we grow in our implementation of wisdom: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”* This is necessary in understanding how to function in trials, when we are emotional, or drained. The source of wisdom is from above and is pure, peaceable, full of mercy, good fruits, impartial and sincere (James 3:17) In other words, the more we are dependent, trusting, faith-driven, and walking by the Spirit, the more we will be able exercise true, biblical wisdom. Decisions made like David did: without seeking the Lord, without seeking counsel, reacting to his emotions, and letting his tired or worn-out or spent situation to drive, will not lead to **fruitfulness but rather regret**. We want to be people who make faith-driven, Spirit-filled, wisdom-assessed, biblically-saturated decisions that seek to understand the situation and seek to glorify the Lord.

### CURSES OF A HALF-RIGHT ENEMY (5-14)

*When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a **man of the family of the house of Saul**, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> And Shimei said as he cursed, **“Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man!** <sup>8</sup> **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.”***

*<sup>9</sup> 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.”** <sup>10</sup> 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?’” <sup>11</sup> And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! **Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.** <sup>12</sup> **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.”** <sup>13</sup> So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. <sup>14</sup> And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.*

If in the first incident David met an enemy who posed as a friend, in the next incident his enemy did not hide his anger against David, making his intentions clearly known. A man named **Shimei** who was a relative of **King Saul**, saw David fleeing the city and his vengeful heart FINALLY had an outlet. He began to throw stones and curse him. He called him a **worthless man, a man of blood, who is now getting what he deserved through his son Absalom**. It’s important to understand that the contention Shimei carried against David was for the way he operated against **Saul’s household**, most likely stemming from the murder of **Abner** (2 Sam. 3:27), an evil perpetrated that David distanced himself from (2 Sam. 3:35-39).

What is interesting about this scene is NOT the fact that **Abishai** offered to silence Shimei with a scientifically proven method: detaching his head from his body. No, what is fascinating is David's response. David basically told his followers to allow this man to continue to curse him, to kick dirt at him, and to fling stones. Why? Because though Shimei was wrong about the reason he was doing it, he was right in what David deserved. In essence, David was saying, "*Shimei is wrong and angry, and he doesn't even know the half of it! If he knew all that went on in my heart and life, he would curse me twice as much.*" David knew what he deserved, and thus was not in a position or desire to defend himself, even in the midst of present innocence.

It is here that David made a profound statement which revealed a newfound, or at least restored, view of God and His grace:

***"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. (16:12)***

There are a couple of key language issues to consider first. At the bottom of your Bible, you may have a note that says, "*Septuagint, Vulgate 'will look upon my affliction'*", which some original manuscripts contain the word order that puts the action of the wrong on David, not that which was passively done to him. Another is the fact that the Hebrew word for "affliction" here is the Hebrew word ('awon') which can mean iniquity, the guilt of it, or the punishment for it.<sup>1</sup> If this is the case, what David is actually saying is "***It may be that the Lord will look on my iniquity, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing today.***" In other words, David was not having a pity party for what was happening to him, but rather he understood that his sinful actions DESERVED this response, but that God could still be gracious to him in the future. In the end, whether he was dealing with an affliction or iniquity, the response is still right: *he could receive good from the Lord, not because he earned or deserved it, but because God Himself was gracious.*

This is something we need to hear today, especially for anyone here who thinks they will NEVER be able to look up or receive good from the hand of God or reclaim a position of influence. But this is not the way God's grace works. It is the humility Peter had to learn after his egregious sin of denying Christ in public, that Christ put him in a position to lead and shepherd fellow believers. It was Paul who now operated by grace (1 Cor. 15:8-9), but who now "*put no confidence in the flesh*" (Phil. 3:3), but instead, "*counted everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.*" (Phil. 3:8). Though sin may have increased under the law, ***grace abounded all the more*** (Rom. 5:20).

*What did David cling to while he was being reviled?* That God knew the situation more than his enemy, and God would bring justice to his enemies, and that he would somehow give grace to the undeserving. Notice that he was NOT presumptuous, like he somehow deserved it or was entitled to it. He simply trusted the goodness and grace of God, taking all things from His hand, which is the safest and most secure place to be. Only those who have been humbled by their sin in light of the grace of God can see this, and when we do, we can find joy and hope, even while being reviled by those who don't even know the whole story.

### **BETRAYAL OF A DEAR FRIEND (15-23)**

<sup>1</sup> Dale Davis, *2 Samuel*, p. 204 and taken from TWOT, 2:650-501.

Now Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. <sup>16</sup> And when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" <sup>17</sup> And Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" <sup>18</sup> And Hushai said to Absalom, "No, for whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. <sup>19</sup> And again, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I have served your father, so I will serve you."

<sup>20</sup> Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "**Give your counsel. What shall we do?**" <sup>21</sup> Ahithophel said to Absalom, "**Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.**" <sup>22</sup> So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. <sup>23</sup> **Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom.**

Finally, David faced the ultimate betrayal. "Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9) David felt the sting not only from a supposed friend and a clear enemy, but now from a once TRUE friend. The final encounter has two actors or players, but the clear emphasis is on the second. **First**, we see David's TRUE friend, **Hushai the Archite**, enter into the city to begin his **double agency**. Twice the text refers to him as "David's friend" (15:37; 16:16), which is unique and rare. With this friendship, David received loyalty, encouragement, and trust – may we all have and be this type of friend. Notice that Hushai pledged his loyalty to Absalom in a way that actually never went back on David, but spoke to Absalom's pride, committing to serve the son of David as he had done faithfully with David. The hook was set for the ability to influence both the new king and counter his counselor.

But the main treachery and subject was that of **Ahithophel**, Bathsheba's grandpa and David's trusted and wise counselor. What he did next in advising Absalom was the height of deceitful, hurtful betrayal, and a scene that drips with irony. What Ahithophel advised was for Absalom to take David's 10 remaining concubines and sexually violate them on the roof of the palace! This would mean there would be no going back, and the break between father and son would be complete. Think of the number of ironies here: 1) Absalom did to David's concubines what so angered him in Amnon's actions against his sister – he became a big fat hypocrite; 2) Notice that this was the same roof that David began his downward spiral into sexual sin; 3) There was NO need to do this, since property and possession of one king to the next was typical, but this was an extreme action even for those kingdoms who did not know Yahweh. 4) Ahithophel typically had given counsel as "**if one consulted the word of God**" (16:23), but here he gave wicked counsel. YET, this also fulfilled the prophecy of God against David in 12:11, where God said what David did in secret would be done against him in the sun.

**A proper question should be posed here: where is the hope found here?** The answer is in the same place as *Judas Iscariot betraying Jesus hundreds of years later*. In fact, Jesus quoted **Psalm 41:9** in John 13:18 as Judas was in the midst of betraying Him the night before He went to the cross. Though his betrayal was prophesied, it still stung on many levels, since he had been with Jesus for three years of public, intimate, and perpetual relationship. But we also know that this betrayal was the conduit by which God's plan to put Jesus on the cross went through, accomplishing a much greater reality. In fact, when we celebrate communion together, one passage we read is **1 Corinthians 11:23**:

*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night **when he was betrayed took bread...***

Another word for betrayed here is “*handed over*”, since that is literally what Judas did with Jesus. But if that leaves us angry or frustrated, we also remember **Romans 8:32**:

*He who did not spare his own Son **but gave him up for us all**, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

This is the same word range, where God *handed Jesus over* to die, in order to offer us salvation graciously, so that we can gain Christ. This is the **hope** that we cling to in the midst of enemies taking advantage of us, or cursing us, or betraying us: ***they can lie, manipulate, and hurt, but they CANNOT separate us from the love of God, they CANNOT cut off the promises of God, and they CANNOT take away what we gain in Christ.*** That is the HOPE that we carry with us each day, and gives us the fuel we need to fight for joy in the midst of being among enemies. This is how Paul said it in the New Testament:

*12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for **which Christ Jesus took hold of me.** 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

Philippians 3:12-14