

Study #19

2 Samuel 17:1-18:33

Text:

- v. 1 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David.
- v. 2 I would attack him when he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king
- v. 3 and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed."
- v. 4 This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.
- v. 5 But Absalom said, "Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say."
- v. 6 When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, "Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion."
- v. 7 Hushai replied to Absalom, "The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time.
- v. 8 You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops.
- v. 9 Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, "There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom."
- v. 10 Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.
- v. 11 "So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba - - as numerous as the sand on the seashore - - be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle.
- v. 12 Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive.
- v. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not even a piece of it can be found."
- v. 14 Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel." For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

- v. 15 Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, “Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so.
- v. 16 Now send a message immediately and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords in the desert; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’
- v. 17 Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En Rogel. A servant girl was to go and inform them, and they were to go tell King David, for they could not risk being seen entering the city.
- v. 18 But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So the two of them left quickly and went to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it.
- v. 19 His wife took a covering and spread it out over the opening of the well and scattered grain over it. No one knew anything about it.
- v. 20 When Absalom’s men came to the woman at the house, they asked, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” The woman answered them, “They crossed over the brook.” The men searched but found no one, so they returned to Jerusalem.
- v. 21 After the men had gone, the two climbed out of the well and went to inform King David. They said to him, “Set out and cross the river at once; Ahithophel has advised such and such against you.”
- v. 22 So David and all the people with him set out and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, no one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.
- v. 23 When Ahithophel saw that his advise had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his home town. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.
- v. 24 David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel.
- v. 25 Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Jether, an Israelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruah the mother of Joab.
- v. 26 The Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.
- v. 27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Makir son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim
- v. 28 brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley, flour and roasting grain, beans and lentils,
- v. 29 Honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from cows’ milk for David and his people to eat. For they said, “The people have become hungry and tired and thirsty in the desert.”

- 18:v.1 David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.
- v. 2 David sent the troops out - - a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, "I myself will surely march out with you."
- v. 3 But the men said, "You must not go out, if we are forced to flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city."
- v. 4 The king answered, "I will do whatever seems best to you." So the king stood beside the gate while all the men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands.
- v. 5 The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.
- v. 6 The army marched into the field to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim.
- v. 7 There the army of Israel was defeated by David's men, and the casualties that day were great - - twenty thousand men.
- v. 8 The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest claimed more lives that day than the sword.
- v. 9 Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.
- v. 10 When one of the men saw this, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree."
- v. 11 Joab said to the man who had told him this, "What! You saw him? Why didn't you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warriors belt."
- v. 12 But the man replied, "Even if a thousand shekels were weighed out into my hands, I would not lift my hand against the king's son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.'
- v. 13 Joab said, "I'm not going to wait like this for you." So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree.
- v. 15 And ten of Joab's armor bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him and killed him.
- v. 16 Then Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them.

- v. 17 They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes.
- v. 18 During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King's Valley as a monument to himself, for he thought, "I have no son to carry on the memory of my name." He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom's monument to this day.
- v. 19 Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run and take the news to the king that the Lord has delivered him from the hand of his enemies."
- v. 20 "You are not the one to take the news today," Joab told him. "You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king's son is dead."
- v. 21 Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off.
- v. 22 Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, "Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite." But Joab replied, "My son, why do you want to go? You don't have any news that will bring you a reward."
- v. 23 He said, "Come what may, I want to run." So Joab said, "Run!" Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite.
- v. 24 While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone.
- v. 25 The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, "If he is alone, he must have good news." And the man came closer and closer.
- v. 26 Then the watchman saw another man running, and he called down to the gatekeeper, "Look, another man running alone!" The king said, "HE must be bringing good news, too."
- v. 27 The watchman said, "It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok." "He's a good man," the king said. "He comes with good news."
- v. 28 Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, "All is well!" He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, "Praise be to the Lord you God! He has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."
- v. 29 The king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king's servant and men, your servant but I don't know what it was."
- v. 30 The king said, "Stand aside and wait here." So he stepped aside and stood there.
- v. 31 Then the Cushite arrived and said, "My lord the king, hear the good news! The Lord has delivered you today from all who rose up against you."

- v. 32 The king asked the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man.”
- v. 33 The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you - - O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Introduction:

I would not lose the hard things from my life,
The rocks o’er which I stumble long ago,
The griefs and fears, the failures and mistakes,
That tried and tested faith and patience so.

I need them now. They make the deep-laid wall
The firm foundation stones on which I raise
To mount therein from stair to highest stair
The lofty towers of my house of praise.

Psalm 69 is a DEEP, DARING & DISCERNING hymn of DIRE DISTRESS. It is filled with expressions which set forth the great grief of the poet:

1. The waters are come in unto my soul.
2. I sink in deep mire.
3. I am weary of my crying.
4. I am in trouble.
5. Reproach hath broken my heart.
6. I am poor and sorrowful.

Psalm 88 is a psalm of TEARS. If all the tears shed by humans could be gathered together, they would form an ocean. If all the pain suffered by mankind could be collected and exploded in any given instant, the impact would rock the earth and crack the ground. As far as we know, the holy angels do not weep, for they know no personal misery; and tears are the silent language of misery and grief. The language of the eye is more telling than that of the lips. Where words fail, tears may tell the sad tale. There may be grief which bleeds inwardly but cannot vent itself in tears, but then the heart alone weeps. We live in a world of tears. Jesus wept. But for these tears the heart of Christ would have been broken before he reached Calvary. His tears were the safety valve of his crushed and loving heart. His tears streamed because of the woes and troubles of others.

Many are the hard things which have been hurled at the head and heart of David, the man after God's own heart. Accused of every wrong and wickedness under the heavens, his wonderful trust, patient hope and quiet confidence in God has never wavered. In these darkest days and in this most trying hour, his faith in his God is holding fast.

Psalm 42:1-3

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Whence shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’”

Psalm 91:1-4

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.’ For it is he who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you may seek refuge. His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.”

Psalm 102:5-7

“Because of the loudness of my groaning, my bones cling to my flesh. I resemble the pelican of the wilderness; I have become like an owl of the waste places. I lie awake; I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.”

Psalm 119:143

“Trouble and anguish have come upon me, yet thy commandments are my delight.”

Psalm 119:176

“I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.”

Psalm 149:4

“For the Lord takes pleasure in his people. He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.”

Thus far in this particular series of the life of David, we have seen David face the horrible consequences of a broken, distant relationship with his son Absalom.

In our last episode we saw Absalom prepare a conspiracy for taking over the kingdom of Israel away from his father.

How different all of this would be if David could have just taken time to be with Absalom and affirm his love for him and to encourage him.

(Love is spelled T-I-M-E.)

Ron Lee Davis says, “But you can and should affirm your child when he’s down, when he’s failed, when he’s made a mistake, when he’s disobeyed, when he’s sinned, when he’s hurting, when he feels useless or misunderstood. We appreciate what a person does, but we affirm who a person is. Affirmation is forgiveness, encouragement, consolation, inspiration, acceptance, and unconditional love. Affirmation is saying to your child verbally, through touching, through a smile and eye contact and through quiet times of friendship and just being together, ‘you are my child and I love you, and I will always love you no matter what you do.’”

(Cheated, cursed, and chastened.)

In the closing of our last episode, Absalom made the final breach with his father when he took to himself the ten concubines of the king that had been left behind to care for the needs of the palace.

17:v. 1 Ahithophel said to Absalom, “I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David.

Ahithophel has been giving Absalom counsel and advice all along the way. He is the one about whom David wrote in Psalm 41:9.

“Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”

It is interesting that the Lord Jesus uses this same verse in the Upper Room when JUDAS BETRAYS HIM. There are some interesting parallels between Ahithophel here in the Old Testament and Judas in the New. They both became suicides in the end.

Ahithophel has just counseled Absalom to take David's ten concubines unto himself, and now his next counsel is, "I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David."

You will notice in all of this dialogue that Ahithophel and Absalom neither one refer to David as 'your father' or 'my father,' but he's referred to as 'David' or as 'the king.'

- v. 2 I would attack him when he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king.

Ahithophel's vengeance and wrath is poured out just against David, and he is the one whom they are taking issue. In order to save the lives of all of the people with him, he is focusing his complete attention in his counsel upon killing David.

- v. 3 and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed."

Ahithophel is pointing out the fact that the whole problem here is that David is being sustained and protected by all of his loyal followers. Once you deal with the king or the leader, the followers will scatter and everything will be okay.

- v. 4 This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

Isn't it amazing how hard Absalom's heart has become toward his father? He doesn't even feel a twinge of sadness or pity for his father when he is described as being 'weary and weak.' Our text in verse 4 says, "This plan seemed good to Absalom."

- v. 5 But Absalom said, "Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say."

Here Absalom is sovereignly directed to seek a second opinion before action is taken.

- v. 6 When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, "Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion."

- v. 7 Hushai replied to Absalom, "The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time.

Actually, Ahithophel's plan probably would have succeeded but God had a hand in this by having Hushai there to confuse Absalom.

Psalm 75:6,7

“For promotion comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south, but God is the judge. He puts down one, and sets up another.”

Winter points out, “The Lord appoints man's ways. The writer of the Scriptures says that the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel. The ways of man are in the hand of God. He does not overrule their freedom of the will. But he does bring about his will and purpose. Consequently, man should entrust his affairs to the guidance or Almighty God.”

v. 8 You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs.

(“Your father.”)

You will notice that Hushai affectionately refers to David as Absalom's father, as he speaks here. He likens David's men and David himself as 'like a wild bear that's been robbed of her cubs.'

The verse continues:

“Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops.

Ahithophel says that you need to go in pursuit tonight, but you would have a hard time finding David because he will not spend the night with the troops.

v. 9 Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, “There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.”

Hushai says, “You've got to be careful because if David make the first attack, then those who hear about it will immediately report that there's been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.” When they hear things like this, they will change sides and become loyal to David, in other words.

- v. 10 Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.

Even your toughest men, Absalom, are going to melt with fear when they know David has the upper hand.

- v. 11 So I advise you; Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba - - as numerous as the sand on the seashore - - be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle.

(I'm surprised he doesn't have the strains of the battle hymn of the republic playing softly in the background.)

Here Hushai draws a big dramatic picture. He uses the northern and southern boundaries of the land in his speech, and he uses the words from the Abrahamic Covenant - - "as numerous as the sand on the seashore" - - Absalom, we want to get you a huge army, and we want you yourself leading them into battle.

All this counsel subversively has in mind buying time for David to flee to a point of refuge and a place of staging so that he can be prepared for the battle, as well.

- v. 12 Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive.

Hushai says, "It's not just enough to get David, but we're going to attack them wherever they can be found, and we're going to not let any of his men be left alive."

- v. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not even a piece of it can be found."

If David should go into a city, then because of the magnitude of this military operation that Hushai is describing, they will bring their ropes and will drag the city into the valley so that there is not even a piece of it that can be found.

Hushai's counsel sounds just as merciless as that of Ahithophel's, but he has a two-fold motive behind the counsel which he is giving:

1. To give David more time to escape.

2. To get Absalom in the fight in person.

You can really tell how much Hushai knows Absalom and how filled with vanity he is, because he draws this big, huge picture of a military operation that is so successful it totally destroys anything in its way. It appeals to the flesh and to human nature to have a picture like this put before you.

(Gigantic war machine grinding up and leveling everything in its path.)

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

Absalom and everybody else chose sides with Hushai the Arkite, and the reason is given in the two-fold statement in the last part of verse 14:

1. The Lord determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel.
2. In order to bring disaster to Absalom.

Theodore Epp points out, “Ahithophel and Absalom found out what Job had written many years before to the effect ‘that the triumph of the wicked is short, and that the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment’ (Job 20:5). What they did not find out was what David wrote in Psalm 16:11 ‘Thou will show me the path of life, and in thy presence is fullness of joy. At thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.’”

The Lord is able to frustrate and to bring disaster as he pleases.

Jeremiah 32:27

“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too difficult for me?”

- v. 15 Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, “Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so.

(Sets the spy network in motion!)

As soon as Hushai finishes with his audience with Absalom, he goes to the priests as had been previously arranged and tells them what Ahithophel had advised and what he had advised as a counter-plan.

- v. 16 Now send a message immediately and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords in the desert; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’”

Hushai’s counsel and advice to David is really a preventative measure just in case Absalom changes his mind and does mobilize and move out immediately. “Do not spend the night at the fords in the desert; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.”

2 Samuel 15:31

“Now someone told David saying, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ And David said, ‘O Lord, I pray. Make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness.’”

David’s prayer is answered here in these circumstances that take place.

You can’t help but see a fantastic chain of people and events that got the message to David as to what they planned; and he safely passed to the other side of the river Jordan to Mahanaim.

- v. 17 Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En Rogel. A servant girl was to go and inform them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they could not risk being seen entering the city.

Jonathan and Ahimaaz are the sons of Zadok and Abiathar, the priests. These priests were to give the messages to a servant girl, who was to go to En Rogel, which was just outside of the city of Jerusalem, on the border between Benjamin and Judah.

You can really see the underground network at work in this situation to bring about David’s ultimate deliverance. Hushai, after giving his counsel to Absalom, speaks to Zadok and Abiathar, who in turn give the message to a servant girl, who takes it to Jonathan and Ahimaaz; and because of an unexpected even, others have to be involved in the successful transmission of the message.

- v. 18 But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So the two of them left quickly and went to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it.

A young man happened to see Ahimaaz and Jonathan and went immediately and told Absalom.

Ahimaaz and Jonathan immediately left, and they went to the house of a man in Bahurim. This is northeast of Jerusalem a few miles. This man had a well in his courtyard, and so they climbed down into it.

(Shimei came out from Bahurim!)

- v. 19 His wife took a covering and spread it out over the opening of the well and scattered grain over it. No one knew anything about it.

Now the man's wife does the work of disguising the well as being the hiding place by covering it with some kind of tarp or something and scattering grain over it so that no one knew anything about it.

- v. 20 When Absalom's men came to the woman at the house, they asked, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" The woman answered them, "They crossed over the brook." The men searched but found no one, so they returned to Jerusalem.

The woman says, "They crossed over the brook." She probably is making reference to the Brook Kidron. So she actually sends the representatives of Absalom's secret police off in the opposite direction toward the brook.

- v. 21 After the men had gone, the two climbed out of the well and went to inform King David. They said to him, "Set out and cross the river at once; Ahithophel has advised such and such against you."

How refreshing it must have been to David to see Jonathan and Ahimaaz and to hear them come with this message of what was going on in the palace.

- v. 22 So David and all the people with him set out and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, no one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.
- v. 23 When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his home town. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father's tomb.

Carl Laney points out, "When Ahithophel saw that his counsel to Absalom had not been followed, he took his own life. Two factors probably contributed to his suicide:

1. He was humiliated by the rejection of his advice.

2. He could probably foresee Absalom's defeat and knew that he would then be accountable to David for his disloyalty."

So back in Jerusalem Ahithophel, in a fit of jealous rage and disappointment, goes down to the old homestead and sets his house in order; because Absalom had not taken his counsel, commits suicide.

Ackroyd says, "A question remains about Ahithophel. Why did he join the conspiracy at all? The supposition that he was grandfather to Bathsheba is without adequate basis. Nothing in the narrative suggest any connection between them. The idea that he resented what David had done is pure conjecture. His position as counselor to David reveals him as a close supporter who transferred his allegiance, just as we find Joab and Abiathar supporting Adonijah in 1 Kings 1. No reasons are given. We are invited to see the hand of God at work removing the threat to David and Ahithophel as an instrument of God in this."

Gehrke says, "Once the clear thinker Ahithophel learns that Absalom has preferred Hushai's pretentious strategy to his own sound plan, the unerring logic of his mind drives him to despair. What can a wise man do when fools reject his wisdom and prefer folly? Since he knows that Absalom's cause is lost, and since he is powerless to halt the approaching disaster, with typical precision, he goes home, sets his affairs in order, and commits suicide. Hence, Ahithophel has been called the Judas of the Old Testament. He betrayed the anointed of the Lord and then took his own life, dying an accursed death."

Theodore Epp has an interesting comment: "God raises men or lowers them as he wills. Nebuchadnezzar learned this truth. God allowed madness to come upon him so that he lived like an animal in the fields. His lesson was to the intent that the living may know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. Sometimes one nation is brought to prominence in order to punish another nation. Then that nation in turn is tested, and if necessary, brought low. We too in our own country cannot escape this principle in God's dealing with the nations. God may allow us to be brought under the judgment of the hand of evil men until we know that God rules in the heavens."

- v. 24 David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel.

Mahanaim is about 50 miles northeast of Jerusalem on the east side of the Jordan.

Our text also tells us that Absalom has crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. So now both of them are on the east side, probably about 20-30 miles apart.

Winter raises the question, “Why did Ahithophel commit suicide? Ahithophel had shown himself to be a very wise counselor. He had directed David correctly and was attempting to do the same for Absalom. He knew that Absalom was taking the wrong step and there was nothing but ruin ahead. Ahithophel probably foresaw that there was nothing but a traitor’s end ahead for himself. When Hushai was taken completely into Absalom’s confidence, he would be in a position to ask for Ahithophel’s head. Suicide seemed the best escape for the discredited old counselor.”

Why did David go to Mahanaim? David’s treatment of the men who murdered Ishbosheth would incline the people towards David in a favorable way. His friendship toward Mephibosheth would also strengthen his relationships with these people. More than this, David had shown himself a true friend of Abner. The people of the city were more than likely following Abner, not Ishbosheth. All of this kindness towards them and their true leaders had completely won the hearts of the people on Mahanaim. Besides all this, Mahanaim was a well-fortified city.

Vos points out, “David the fugitive found a new base of operations at the strong town of Mahanaim in Gilhead, the old capital of Ishbosheth.”

v. 25 Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Jether, an Israelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nabash and sister of Zeruiah the mother of Joab.

Amasa is another of David’s nephews in the military. Abigail and Zeruiah were sisters of David.

v. 26 The Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilhead.

This is probably now about 10 miles south of David on the east side of the river.

v. 27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Makir son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim

v. 28 brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils,

- v. 29 honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from cows' milk for David and his people to eat. For they said, "The people have become hungry and tired and thirsty in the desert."

Not only was Mahanaim favorably disposed toward David but these three very special friends go out of their way to assist and support David by providing for all of the things which are necessary to take care of their physical needs.

(So different from Ziba & Shimei & Absalom!)

1. SHOBI is the brother of Hanun the king, who reproached David's men when they came on a mission of love and kindness back in 2 Samuel 10.

Eccles. 11:1

"Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days."

2. The second man that is mentioned here is MAKIR son of Ammiel from Lo Debar.

These are the folks that opened up their home to the handicapped son of Jonathan by the name of Mephibosheth. It was to this location that David sent to bring Mephibosheth to the palace.

Shobi probably had to travel the farthest, a little over 30 miles northwest to Mahanaim from Rabbah in the land of the Ammonites.

3. The third friend that meets him is BARZILLAI the Gileadite from Rogelim.

(Benefited from David's economic policies over the last 30 years.)

This town is north of Mahanaim just a few miles, and Barzillai is coming south.

Winter points out, "Most of the leading men stayed with David. Joab, his captain, remained faithful, as did his brother Abishai. Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, were with David. Ittai the Gittite, a valiant soldier, remained faithful. Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the young sons of the priests, were on David's side, as were the leading men in Gilhead, Shobi, Makir, and Barzillai.

“Ahithophel was the outstanding man who back Absalom. With him was Amasa, a descendant of the family of Jesse, who become Absalom’s captain, Shimei, the man of Benjamin who was opposed to David, and may be considered as a supporter of Absalom, Ziba and Mephibosheth had stayed behind hoping that he could receive the throne since he was a descendant of Saul. The realization of such aspirations would be highly improbable, and Ziba must have been attempting to ingratiate himself with David by report which he brought to him.”

Alexander Whyte, in speaking of Barzillai, says the following, “Barzillai is a beautiful old man in a beautiful incident in a far from being beautiful time. Now to begin with, Barzillai was a true highlander in his splendid loyalty to David in his distress. Many men who had sat at David’s table and who had held their hands at David’s royal liberality, many such men hedged and held back until they should see whether David’s sun was to set, never to rise again or not. ‘Where is thy master,’ said David to Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth. But Barzillai was not Mephibosheth. There was no lameness in Barzillai’s allegiance to David. Barzillai did not wait to see how the wind would blow. The old hero took his ancient tower and his great estate and his own future and the future of his family all in his hand that day and had Absalom succeeded, Barzillai would have been and outlawed and a sequestered man. But Barzillai had steered all his eighty years by the fixed stars of truth and righteousness and duty and loyalty, and he would steer by the same sure stars to the end.”

These three very special friends said the reason they brought all these supplies is because “the people have become hungry and tired and thirsty in the desert.”

It has not been an easy fifty-mile trip from Jerusalem to Mahanaim, and certainly they have run out of supplies. Because they have been hastening so fast to get to Mahanaim, they have become hungry, tired and thirsty.

(#19 | David | cheated, cursed, & chastened | Shobi, Makir, Barzillai)

There is a great lesson here in these friends who come to David’s aid, and that is people just never do forget loving acts of kindness.

(1 Cor. 10:13 | The Lord knows just how much you can take.)

18:v. 1 David mustered the men who were with him and appointed over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.

David being an old military man, calls all of his available forces together and then he appointed commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds so that they could be an organized and discipline regiment.

- v. 2 David sent the troops out - - a third under the command of Joab, a third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruiah, and a third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told the troops, "I myself will surely march out with you."

After the old experienced general gets the men organized under commander of thousands and hundreds, and then ultimately under a three-fold command of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, the king told his troops, "I myself will surely march out with you."

(Feel the old adrenalin pumping. The butterflies! The call for conflict! Just one more time! The clashing of swords! The flight on the arrow! The cries of victory!!)

David is probably in his early sixties when he makes this statement. I am sure he doesn't want to make the same mistake that he did when he was fifty years old and stayed in Jerusalem and got into all that trouble.

- v. 3 But the men said, "You must not go out; if we are forced to flee, they won't care about us. Even if half of us die, they won't care; but you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better now for you to give us support from the city."

Here his men tell him that he shouldn't go out because they are going to be out just to get him and that he would be worth ten thousand of the men if they happened to have to flee and they would just try to get David. So it would be better now for you to give us support from the city.

- v. 4 The king answered, "I will do whatever seems best to you." So the king stood beside the gate while all the men marched out in units of hundreds and of thousands.

The king listens to the counsel and does what his men say, "I will do whatever seems best to you."

(Sensitive, submissive, sincere. In fellowship, not fighting authority.)

What a colorful and graphic picture it must have been for the king to stand beside the gate and watch the units of hundreds and thousands walk out under the triple command of Joab, Abishai, and Ittai.

- v. 5 The king commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, “Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the troops heard the king giving orders concerning Absalom to each of the commanders.

Ackroyd says, “The order overheard by the whole army was to be of importance in the moment of battle. The appeal reveals the continuing affection of David for the rebel who had nearly cost him his life and kingdom.”

Now we are engaged again in a civil war similar to what we had back in chap. 3 & 4 when David was ruling in Hebron, and Ishbosheth and Abner were ruling in Mahanaim.

The terrible thing about it is it's brother against brother.

David is so concerned about Absalom that he asks his three captains to be sure and deal gently with the boy Absalom. David loved his son very much. He was the king but he also was a father. But what a contrast this was to the way in which Absalom meant to deal with David.

(Kill him when he is weak and weary!)

You have a feeling inside as you see David's organized, disciplined military machine moving out to battle, that there is going to be a great victory in store.

Gehrke points out, “Absalom, on the other hand, has at his disposal a less-experienced, more cumbersome citizen army. It is commanded by his cousin Amasa, who is also a nephew of David and a cousin of Joab. He is, as we soon see, no match for Joab in military competence or statesmanship.”

- v. 6 The army marched into the field to fight Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim.

The forest of Ephraim is northeast of Mahanaim several miles, and since Absalom is coming up from the south, perhaps it was David's military plan after consulting with Joab and surveying the terrain, to lure Absalom's men into a self confidence by retreating toward the forest.”

- v. 7 There the army of Israel was defeated by David's men, and the casualties that day were great - - twenty thousand men.

(20,000 needless deaths.)

Absalom's army is in wild confusion. His troops, panic stricken, tried to dash through the woods and were entangled and destroyed. This was a thick, almost jungle-like forest, and scholars think that many of the Israelites died in the pits and bogs and wild animals got them in this thick forest.

- v. 8 The battle spread out over the whole countryside, and the forest claimed more lives that day than the sword.

Evidently, this dense jungle really cause these men in their panic-stricken state, to lose all direction and orientation, and many more lives were lost there than by the actual sword in the field of conflict.

- v. 9 Now Absalom happened to meet David's men. He was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom's head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair, while the mule he was riding kept on going.

It is interesting that Absalom is riding on a mule also. He has left his chariot and horses behind, evidently.

Vos speaking on this verse says, "While he was fleeing, Absalom happened to run into some of David's followers, as he was riding his mule, which is a mark of royalty. His head became wedged between two branches. When he raised his hands to dislodge himself, he let go of the riddle, and the unrestrained mule kept on going. More than likely, he was riding without a saddle and simply slipped off the beast's back and hung suspended in midair. The text does not say he was caught by his hair, but historian Josephus stated that e probably had a helmet over his hair on this occasion, so his hair would not have caught in the branches."

Whereas Ahithophel was left hanging in chap. 17, now Absalom is left hanging in chap. 18.

- v. 10 When one of the men saw this, he told Joab, "I just saw Absalom hanging in an oak tree."

Naturally, this man has heard the command to deal gently with Absalom, so he in fear and wanting to be faithful to the king's command, comes and reports to his commander Joab what he has seen.

- v. 11 Joab said to the man who had told him this, "What! You saw him? Why didn't you strike him to the ground right there? Then I would have had to give you ten shekels of silver and a warriors belt."

Joab is totally oblivious to David's instructions.

He immediately starts singing:

“Hang down your head, Tom Dooley,
Hang down your head and cry.
Hang down your head, Tom Dooley,
Poor boy you're bound to die.

This time tomorrow,
Reckon where I'll be.
Down in some lonesome valley,
Hangin' from a white oak tree.”

- v. 12 But the man replied, “Even if a thousand shekels were weighed into my hands, I would not lift my hand against the king's son. In our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, ‘Protect the young man Absalom for my sake.’

Ackroyd points out, “The man's reply is shrewd. Not only does he remind Joab of David's explicit orders and thereby show his respect for the royal command, he is well aware that high officers have a way of disclaiming responsibility when it comes to the point. If I had dwelt him a treacherous blow, or possibly if I myself acted treacherously, you would have kept well out of it. More literally and precisely, you would just have stood there.”

It was not in Joab's nature to deal gently with anyone, certainly not with this presumptuous cousin of his who had shown him no gratitude for having him recalled from Geshur and who had burned up his field to get his attention.

Even though Joab really had no right to kill him because of David's command, he did a service both to David and his country because the death of Absalom ended the civil war.

- v. 13 And if I had put my life in jeopardy - - and nothing is hidden from the king - - you would have kept your distance from me.”

You would have loved it if I had done your dirty work, and then you could pass the responsibility on to me so I would suffer the consequences of disobedience to the king.

- v. 14 Joab said, “I'm not going to wait like this for you.” So he took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom's heart while Absalom was still alive in the oak tree.

1. For Amnon
2. For David
3. For my barley field

Hercus points out, “No such scruples deterred the general. In Absalom’s death he saw an end to the present disturbances and security in the future for himself. If the prince were saved, and in due time occupied the throne, the commander who had opposed his cause and inflicted upon him this severe defeat could never hope to be received into favor or advance to a high place. In view of his own interests, the king’s command weighed little with him. So after chiding the messenger for being so unnecessarily conscientious, he went himself to the spot, and neither with his own hand or by the hands of his attendants dispatched the unfortunate prince.”{

- v. 15 And ten of Joab’s armor bearers surround Absalom, struck him and killed him.

As soon as Joab had thrown his three javelins, the ten of Joab’s armor bearers immediately got around Absalom, struck him and killed him.

- v. 16 The Joab sounded the trumpet, and the troops stopped pursuing Israel, for Joab halted them.

As soon as the vile deed is done, Joab then sounds the trumpet for the pursuing to stop.

- v. 17 They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap o rocks over him. Meanwhile, all the Israelites fled to their homes.

- v. 18 During his lifetime Absalom had taken a pillar and erected it in the King’s Valley as a monument to himself, for he though, “I have no son to carry on the memory of my name.” He named the pillar after himself, and it is called Absalom’s Monument to this day.

The only real monument for Absalom is a pile of rocks in a forest that marks his final resting place.

Absalom’s death is a very humiliating and terrible thing. He was a very conceited man, and as a result of that, he set up a pillar. This took place before he had any sons, and even before he began to plot against David. He wanted a tombstone that would remind future generations of him. They remembered him but not in the way that he had hoped. He was not even buried in that place he had prepared but in an unmarked grave, except for a

heap of stones. In a way, that was shameful to a man of his position and pretensions.

All those stones that they put over his grave was like saying, “Here’s a man who deserves stoning for his crime against the king.”

They didn’t want to bring his body to the king because it would have added to his grief, and maybe they were afraid of David’s wrath, so they just threw it into a pit in the woods.

Ahithophel and Absalom found out the truth, that “the pleasures of sin are for a season, but the pleasures of God are for eternity.”

Winter asks the question, “What had caused Absalom’s bad career? David had set a bad example for his son by his sin against Uriah with Bathsheba. Such a great crime could hardly be kept from members of the family. And this may have led to a lack of respect for David on the part of all his children. Absalom, particularly, had been blessed with a good physique, which led to vanity. He had selfishly misused the popularity he won by his decision and appearance. David had been lenient with him when he had killed Amnon by failing to take the vengeance which the law commanded, that of the death of a murderer. Wicked counselors had aided Absalom in his rebellion, and he finally met his death in the rugged forest of Ephraim.”

Laney points out, “The rest of chapter 18 records the report of some good news and some bad news to David - - Joab’s victory and Absalom’s death.

The tragedy of Absalom was one of the consequences of David’s sin with Bathsheba. Although David’s sin was forgiven, he still reaped its inevitable and unhappy consequences in his life.

Vos says, “Perhaps it would be useful to pause at this point to ask why a person who possessed the many good qualities that Absalom did should go so far astray. Of course, final answers can never be given to such a question; and sons and daughters of the best of homes do lose their moorings. But some contributing factors are evident:

1. Absalom was the product of a mixed marriage. His mother was a pagan woman, Maacah of Geshur.
2. His father was preoccupied with the responsibilities of state and his extensive warfare. There is no indication in scripture he had any time for Absalom.

3. He grew up in the unsatisfactory environment of the harem with its quarrels and sometimes cutthroat competition between maternal groupings.
4. There is no hint that Absalom had any personal relationship with God.
5. The incomplete forgiveness of his father, which forced him to live in Jerusalem for two years without seeing the king did irreparable harm to Absalom.

v. 19 Now Ahimaaz son of Zadok said, "Let me run and take the news to the king that the Lord has delivered him from the hand of his enemies."

Ahimaaz, along with Jonathan, have had a vital part in this campaign in sneaking out of En Rogel to Bahurim and hiding there to get away from Absalom's men, and then successfully taking the warning message to David. Ahimaaz feels like he has had a vital part, and he just wants to cap it off by taking the news to the king that the Lord has been the one who has delivered him from the hand of his enemies.

v. 20 "You are not the one to take the news today," Joab told him. "You may take the news another time, but you must not do so today, because the king's son is dead."

Ahimaaz was a young priest and one of those who had brought David the message of Absalom's intentions initially, and he wanted to tell David the good news that the kingdom was safe now. Joab knew David better than Ahimaaz did, and he was afraid that David might not receive the news well and might even be driven to kill Ahimaaz.

v. 21 Then Joab said to a Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed down before Joab and ran off.

Joab sends a Cushite, or a black slave, to tell David the news of what has happened.

v. 22 Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, "Come what may, please let me run behind the Cushite."

Ahimaaz begs still to go. Maybe he wanted to spare David and cushion the news a little before the Cushite came and brutally told him that his son was dead.

The rest of verse 22 gives the reply of Joab:

“But Joab replied, “My son, why do you want to go? You don’t have any news that will bring you a reward.”

Ahimaaz, why do you want to do this? Because there’s not any good news that is going to bring you a reward in coming to David with the message of the outcome of this conflict.

v. 23 He said, “Come what may, I want to run.” So Joab said, “Run!” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite.

This is a great MARATHONER’S verse: “Come what may, I want to run.”

Stan Cottrell is an ultra-marathoner who wrote a book No Mountain Too High and in it he says, “I didn’t realize it then, but I was already learning to climb mountains when people said I couldn’t. And that’s one of the most valuable lesson I have learned about life. Just because people say you can’t do something, doesn’t make it so. When Western Kentucky awarded me a scholarship to run cross-country, I was happier than a new rooster in a hen house. From then on, I knew nothing would stop me from going to college.”

Ahimaaz must have been doing some running in the area before and knew the geography quite well because he went b way of the flat land and he outran the Cushite.

v. 24 While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone.

(I wish he would have been doing this when Joab & Absalom came back to Jerusalem after 3 years in exile in Geshur 6 years ago!)

The picture here is the picture of David waiting eagerly for some message to come from the field of battle. One of the watchmen noticed a man running alone, and of course, this is Ahimaaz.

v. 25 The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, “If he is alone, he must have good news.” And the man came closer and closer.

You can really understand David’s anxiety and concern. He wants to hear good news that the victory has been secured by his armies and that Absalom is safe.

David is going to hear some good news and some bad news. The good news is the battle has been won by his forces. But the bad news is that Absalom is dead.

- v. 26 Then the watchman saw another man running, and he called down to the gatekeeper, and called down to the gatekeeper. "Look another man running alone!" The king said, "He must be bringing good news too."

David is just wanting so badly to believe the best and to resist having to accept anything bad from the forces in the field.

- v. 27 The watchman said, "It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok." "He's a good man," the king said. "He comes with good news."

This is the third time that David tries to assure himself and the people waiting that the messenger certainly comes with good news.

- v. 28 Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, "All is well!" He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, "Praise be to the Lord you God! He has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."

Ahimaaz does put David to rest with good news, "All is well!" And then he makes a wonderful statement, "Praise be to the Lord your God! He has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king."

He outran the Cushite and yelled that all was well, then he praised God for the victory. He was trying to get David's mind on the fact that God had his hand in this.

- v. 29 The king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king's servant and me, your servant, but I don't know what it was."

Notice David's first question is about Absalom. He is more of a father than a king right now, and he isn't interested in his own glory or victory, but he is filled with anxiety for his child.

Ahimaaz tells him that he doesn't know the details, but that the man coming would be able to tell him more specifically about Absalom.

- v. 30 The king said, "Stand aside and wait here." So he stepped aside and stood there.

- v. 31 Then the Cushite arrived and said, “My lord the king, hear the good news! The Lord has delivered you today from all who rose up against you.”
- v. 32 The king asked the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man.”

The Cushite is gentle as he can be with the news, and David goes to pieces. He has won a war and regained a throne, but he’s lost his son. And he just gives himself up to his grief and hurt.

- v. 33 The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you - - O Absalom, my son, my son!”

(How different is David’s response to the death of Uriah the Hittite: “The sword devours some as well as others” That’s the breaks!)

David expresses his grief as he wails, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you - - O Absalom, my son, my son!”

This is the confession of a broken-hearted man who knew that he had killed his son by his own sins. Of course, Absalom and others were responsible too but David must have felt tremendous guilt over his failures with Absalom, and his sin that led to all of this in the first place.

We can certainly appreciate his suffering at this point because these are probably the saddest words recorded in the Bible. It’s too late now to resolve the breach between father and son.

Don’t ever let a conflict between you and your children go on. Get some counseling, forgive each other, do whatever it takes to restore the relationship.

Winter points out, “Time and time again David had demonstrated his love for Absalom. David must have felt responsible for Absalom’s bad career. In the first place, David himself had not been able to punish Amnon for his sin because he had himself committed such a sin. In the second place, he would not punish Absalom for avenging his sister’s honor. In the third place, David’s sending Hushai to Absalom had defeated Ahithophel’s counsel and brought ultimate defeat to Absalom. David must have felt that he had failed miserably as a father.”

F. B. Meyer summarizes this period of David's chastening in the following words: "Many were the afflictions of God's servant, but out of them all he was delivered. When he had learned the lesson, the rod was stayed. He had been chastened with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But God did not take away his mercy from him as from Saul. His house, his throne, his kingdom, in spite of many conflicting forces, being made sure. Thus always the rod, the stripes, the chastisement, but amid all, the love of God carrying out his redemptive purpose, never hastening, never resting, never forgetting, but making all things work together till the evil is eliminated and the soul is purged. Then the afterglow of blessing, the calm ending of the life of a serene sundown."

Dr. Paul Jorden says, "As we see this very touching scene of David crying out from his broken heart, and wishing he had died for Absalom, I can only say there is no way you can die for your son if you are not to live for your son. David did not live for Absalom."

John Davis says, "The concluding words of chap. 18 should be a sober reminder to all believers that sin has far-reaching and tragic consequences. Surely David did not anticipate uttering the words recorded in verse 33 when he engaged in an adulterous act with Bathsheba. The pitiful cries of David are a solemn warning that there is a price attached to sin and disobedience."

Alexander Whyte says, "O my son, Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' Yes, that is love, no doubt. That is the love of a heartbroken father, no doubt. But the pang of the cry, the innermost agony of the cry is remorse. 'I have slain my son! I have murdered my son with my own hands. I neglected my son Absalom from a child. With my own lusts I laid his very worst temptation right in his way. It had been better Absalom had never been born. If he rebelled, who shall blame him. I David drove Absalom to rebellion. It was his father's hand that stabbed Absalom through the heart. O Absalom, my murdered son - - would God thy murderer had been in thy place this day.' And the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, 'O my son Absalom! My son, my son!'"

2 Samuel 12:18-23

"On the seventh day, the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, 'While the child was still living, we spoke to David but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate.' David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. 'Is the child dead?' he asked. 'Yes,' they

replied. 'He is dead.' Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request, they served him food, and he ate. His servants asked him, 'Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat.' He answered, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live. But not that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.'"

Psalm 77:2

"In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. In the night my hand was stretched out without weariness. My soul refused to be comforted."

Psalm 121

"I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From whence shall my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;
The Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
The Lord will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your soul.
The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth forever."

After forty years of walking with the Lord Corrie ten Boom wrote, Trustingly I put my hand in His hand like a sad child who knows his father does not make mistakes."

Herman Weiskopf in his book His Five Smooth Stone describes the grieving process of the five parents whose children were killed in a serious automobile accident: "When I try to handle things by myself, that's when it's the hardest," Mary Jane says. 'As soon as I put things in God's hands, I seem to

be able to manage better. As much as some people have helped, and some of them were marvelous, it still comes down to the fact that you have to face your grief alone, and that the only lasting help comes from the Lord.”

Early in 1982, May Jane said, ‘If anyone had told me three years ago that I’d still be grieving, I would have said that person was crazy. This third year was the worst for me. Just the other day I said to Howard, “I’ve got to let go of the memories.” You have to go on with your lives. It’s easy to say. I’m just having a hard time with it. I can’t help it if I believe that Eric was special. I miss him.’

“Every day with your children is precious,’ Howard said that day. The trouble is you don’t miss the water until the well is dry. There is a vast abyss between logic and emotions. Where we draw the line I confess I do not know. I cry and then the tears stop. Then I discover that a sea of tears changes nothing.”

Arthur Gordon in his book A Touch of Wonder says, “Dwight Eisenhower’s mother was a deeply religious woman. When the future president was a boy, she would say to him, ‘Life deals the cards. The way you play them is up to you.’ ACCEPT, FORGET, MOVE ON. Some great Americans have ordered their lives along those lines. Abraham Lincoln once told a visitor that in the fiery crucible of the Civil War, he did the best he could, regardless of criticism, and would do it to the end. ‘If the end brings me out all right,’ he added, ‘what is said against me won’t amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.’ Perhaps in the long run, the beginning of wisdom lies in the simple admission that things are not always the way we would like them to be, that we ourselves are not so good or so kind or so hard-working as we would like to believe, and yet - - and yet - - with each sun that rises, there’s a new day, a new challenge, a new opportunity for doing better.

‘O Lord,’ goes one variation of Reinhold Neibuhr’s prayer, ‘grant me the strength to change things that need changing, the courage to accept things that cannot be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference.’”

Beth Jamison in her book Hold Me Tight says, “I would rather walk in the dark with him than walk alone in light. I would rather walk by faith in him than walk along by sight.”

Conclusion:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

- Lesson #1: In a crisis, real friends are invaluable.
- Lesson #2: God can frustrate the plans of man and bring disaster into their lives.
- Lesson #3: The Lord can PROTECT and PROVIDE so that the message gets through.
- Lesson #4: People just never do forget loving acts of kindness.
- Lesson #5: David has learned to listen to counsel.
- Lesson #6: The consequences of sin live long after the act of forgiveness.

Lewis B. Smedes in his book How Can It Be All Right When Everything is All Wrong says, "I must trust you to understand me. You do not need to wait to die before you experience hell. We have our mini-hells, too, many of them planted like the four-corner towns you find along Route 83 in southern Arkansas, at the most any crossroad or our private pilgrimages. Mini-hells are as real as the absolute pit, only less final; they are the hells of our feelings, and it is just as amazing to feel God in them as in the big one down the pike. The point is: to feel yourself in God's hands in the pit of your personal hell is to know it is all right when everything is totally wrong. But does it really happen? Is God himself - - the real one - - there, at the depths, in the hard place, where everything is wrong as hell? Was the old Hebrew only romanticizing when he expected God's hand to hold him up while he sank through the black hole of Hades, slipping down the frozen excrement of hell, the no-man's land of the lost? I can only tell you that when I felt God, I really did feel him; I did not feel a feeling that felt like a feeling of God. I was nestled in the hands of God, strong fingers cupping me in the tactile grip of love. Do not expect me to argue the point. Do not expect me to calculate the odds, weigh the evidence for God in hell. You will just have to indulge me as I tell you what I felt."