

2nd Samuel Chapter 15 – John Karmelich

1. This chapter deals with the issue of “suffering and comfort”. First, let me summarize the chapter:
 - a) One of King David’s sons, whose name is Absalom rebels against David. Absalom is the grown son of the king. He organizes a successful mutiny to the point where the king and his loyal staff are run out of town. In the next chapter, Absalom plots to kill his father and those that are loyal to him. And you thought you had problems with your kids. ☺
 - i) An underlying theme of this chapter is the emotional pain David went through. Imagine having your children rebel against you to a point where they actually try to hunt you down and kill you!
 - b) The remainder of the chapter is about the friends who stand by King David. The rest of the chapter tells individual stories of people who are willing to support the king, even thought it could mean their life.
2. This chapter deals with the issue of standing up for what-is-right in difficult situations.
 - a) One of my favorite cliché’s on this topic is, “People are like teabag’s. You never know what flavor they are until you put them in hot water” (Jon Corson).
 - b) It’s one thing to take a stand for King David when things are good. It’s quite another to take a stand for David when it could cost you your life. The Israelites are on the verge of a civil war between David and his son. Choosing David at this point was a life-threatening situation.
 - c) Standing up for what-is-right usually means you are unpopular. Real leaders are the ones who do what is right and not what is popular.
 - d) Let’s apply this to our faith: In much of the world today, “taking a stand” for Jesus is a life-threatening situation. We as Americans live in a freedom-of-religion world and tend to take that for grant it. The application for us is we get too embarrassed to take a public stand for Christ. The desire to be liked often prevents us from being a public witness.
3. This chapter also deals with the issue of comforting those who are going through suffering. From David’s standpoint, “friends” is what he needed to get through this.
 - a) I know that during the difficult times of my life, just having friends “there” helped. It doesn’t matter what they say or don’t say. It is just the fact that those you love stand by you during the times of trials makes a difference.
4. The main lesson today is about having the “guts” to take a stand when times get tough.
 - a) David was being rejected as the king. We’ll talk about why that is when we get there. Just know that most of the text in Chapter 15 and the first half of Chapter 16 spends very little time focusing on the “why was David rejected” question. Most of the text is a list of the people willing to stand by the king during this time.
 - b) It is almost as if God is saying in this text, “I am so proud of all of these people. It’s easy to have faith when things are going well. I (God) am allowing David to go through this rough time, and look at all of these wonderful people willing to stand with David!”
5. OK, how do we “practically” have the guts to stand up during the difficult times? Let’s face it, we all want to be liked. How do we take a stand for Jesus or whatever-is-right when we know it will cost us popularity and possibly far worse?
 - a) First, I can’t emphasize enough the importance of being “well grounded” in bible-reading time and prayer time. The more you “know” God, the more you are willing to take a stand for Him. Like any healthy relationship, this takes time and commitment. A healthy marriage requires lots of time and hard work. The same applies to our relationship with God. Yes, the initial commitment for salvation is instantaneous, but a healthy relationship requires time. Being grounded in the word also gives one a better understanding of right-and-wrong about life and will give us the boldness to do the right thing.

- b) Second, it is important to develop good friendships with other Christians. These are people you can pray for and have them pray for you. This is about accountability.
 - i) If you are Christian and married, your spouse should be first on this list. I would argue that we also need friends of the same sex. I'll also argue from experience that Christian married men and women should never have intimate friendships with those of the opposite sex. That situation is tempting and robs the marriage.
 - c) Finally, pray for boldness. The disciples of early church did this. The early church faced ex-communication by family members, jail, and death just for believing in Jesus. What is recorded in Acts 4:29-4:31 is the church praying for boldness to go forth and preach Jesus.
 - i) The reason this is important is that having the courage to stand up for God doesn't come from self-discipline or a natural ability. It is God-given and we need to ask God for the courage to be bold, especially during such difficult times.
 - d) My point here is the more time you spend with someone, the more you trust them and the more you are willing to defend them and stand by them when things get tough.
 - i) In this story, times get tough and those willing to take a stand do the right thing. If you have a heart for God, then you will stand by Him during those rough times.
 - ii) What is interesting to read about in this chapter is we have some of David's "long time friends" and "short time friends" willing to take a stand. What mattered was they were all willing to "doing the right thing at the right time".
 - iii) In a few cases, this even meant spying. Remember that if they were caught, it would be a death sentence. We will read of a few people David asked to go spy on his son Absalom. Again, notice the boldness of people willing to do what is right.
 - e) I'll end my introduction with a true story: Before the fall of Communism in Russia, it was (essentially) illegal to practice Christianity. You could get sent to prison for such an action. There was a group of Russian Christians meeting secretly. All of a sudden, some soldiers came bursting in, with machine guns. They ask, "Are you Christians?" Slowly, but surely, all of the people stood up and raised their hand, willing to take a stand for Christ. The soldiers then said, "Us too! We are here to join you!" Those Christians, willing to risk their lives by saying "yes", were rewarded for their boldness. Grant it, they may have had to change their underwear, but their faith paid off. ☺
6. Chapter 15, Verse 1: In the course of time, Absalom provided himself with a chariot and horses and with fifty men to run ahead of him. ² He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would call out to him, "What town are you from?" He would answer, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." ³ Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you." ⁴ And Absalom would add, "If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice."
- a) Let's recap the last few chapters leading to these verses:
 - i) David committed adultery with a girl named Bathsheba. He had her husband killed in order to cover up the affair. God forgave David of these sins after David had confessed them. At the same time, God announced punishment on David by saying he'll have trouble in his own house for the rest of his life.
 - ii) Next, we read one of David's sons named Amnon. Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar. Tamar had a full-brother named Absalom.
 - iii) Absalom was angry that his father, King David wouldn't do anything about it.
 - iv) Tamar's full-brother Absalom, eventually killed Amnon in revenge.
 - v) Absalom ran for his life and sought refuge in a foreign country. Absalom's grandfather (through his mother) was the king of that country.

- vi) David eventually said it was ok for Absalom to come on, but David refused to see Absalom. Like the situation with Amnon, David ignored the problem and never gave any punishment to Absalom other than personal banishment from his sight.
- vii) Finally, two years after Absalom was back home, David “saw” Absalom again and they on speaking terms.
- b) This leads us to Verse 1 of this chapter. These are the verses where Absalom is planning his rebellion against David.
 - i) What is interesting to note is Absalom’s motivation is never discussed. We can logical speculate that Absalom didn’t respect his father David. Let’s face it, if Absalom had respect for David, he wouldn’t have rebelled in the first place. I’m sure David’s lack-of-justice attitude toward his family had a lot to do with it.
- c) What we do infer of Absalom is that he is a “planner”. He took two years after the rape-incident to plot the murder of his half-brother.
 - i) He also lived three years in exile from the king and another two years back home under banishment from the king’s sight. I’m guessing Absalom thought during those years: “You know, I (Absalom) am next in line to be the king. I’m not going to wait for the old man to die off. I’m going to take over as soon as I can. I’m going to do it right and not mess up like my dad!” When I’m king, there will be justice in the land! It’s time for me to plan out my strategy to take over.”
- d) In these verses, we are reading “Step 1” of Absalom’s plan to take over the throne. Let me start with some background information:
 - i) The scene takes place in Jerusalem. The city was surrounded by high walls. When anyone wanted to come to Jerusalem, they had to go through the city gates.
 - ii) One reason an Israelite would want to come to Jerusalem was for “justice”.
 - iii) Let’s say you had a litigation issue against someone. You wisely choose not to get a lawyer. ☺ (OK, I made that part up.) If an Israelite could not get justice in their hometown, that person had the right to go appeal his case to the king. The “officials” of Jerusalem (or any town of that era) did their business at the gate. You would bring your issue to the gates of the city and those “officials” would decide whether your case was worthy of bothering the king.
- e) With all of that said, what we have here is “Absalom the politician”.
 - i) Absalom would get up early every morning. He would go outside the city gates. That way, he could catch people before they got to the city officials. He would then wait for everyone and anyone who came near the city gate with a “problem”.
 - ii) Absalom would say to whoever showed up (paraphrasing), “Hi there. Where are you from? (Verse 2). Oh, what a pretty town that is! Hey, I happen to be the prince you know. I can get your case right to the king. What is your issue?”
 - iii) After listening to the case, Absalom would say, “Well, you certainly are in the right! You deserve justice. Oh, if I were the judge, (hint hint) there would be justice in this land and I would make sure you win your case!”
 - iv) In other words, Absalom became your typical slimy politician. ☺ He could care less about the guys court-case. He just wanted to win their favor and gain popularity. He made negative remarks about David in an indirect way without actually invoking David’s name.
 - v) In summary, Absalom is on a political campaign to be liked without telling David what is going on.
 - vi) If all of this is confusing, it might help to re-read these verses, with the understanding of “Absalom the politician” in mind.

7. Verse 5: Also, whenever anyone approached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. ⁶ Absalom behaved in this way toward all the Israelites who came to the king asking for justice, and so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
- For an Israelite to talk to a prince, the proper greeting was to bow down. This was a sign of respect to the king in power.
 - Absalom would then stop him from bowing down by grabbing their hand and kissing it. It was a politically way of saying, "Hey brother, you don't have to bow before me, I'm a fellow Israelite just like you are".
 - Absalom's motivation for all of this was to gain popularity prior to the mutiny.
 - The last part of verse 6 says, "So he (Absalom) stole the hearts of the men of Israel".
 - John's translation: The plan is working. Absalom was gaining favor.
 - I doubt the vast majority of people expected or wanted Absalom to overthrow David. It was more like, "This kid Absalom is ok. I like the fact that he promised me justice. He'll be a good king one day after David dies."
 - My question is "Where was David during all of this?"
 - The king couldn't have been that naïve. I'm sure some of David's advisors were saying, "Your highness, Absalom stands outside the city gate and advices those that are coming to you for justice."
 - Just like the previous lesson, notice David's lack of involvement. I can just picture David thinking, "Oh, isn't that great! He is going to be king one day. It is good for him to learn how to judge. Boys, let Absalom be!"
8. Verse 7: At the end of four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron and fulfill a vow I made to the LORD. ⁸ While your servant was living at Geshur in Aram, I made this vow: 'If the LORD takes me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron.' " ⁹ The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he went to Hebron.
- Absalom spent four years (Verse 7) being a politician. This is the time frame Absalom spent working on his popularity. This goes back to my description of, "Absalom the planner". I suspect Absalom plotted this out for years. He thought, "I need to slowly but surely win the hearts of the people. When the time is right, then I'll go make my move to take over the kingdom."
 - Absalom's plan was to begin his mutiny in the City of Hebron. This happens in Verse 10. In the meantime, Absalom needs an excuse to go to Hebron with a large entourage. Therefore, he tells David he needs to go to Hebron to worship God to fulfill an old vow.
 - To paraphrase Absalom, "Hey dad, back when I was in exile, I prayed, "Lord, if you would let me come home, I will offer sacrifices to you in Hebron." Now that I'm back, I need to go fulfill that vow. So, dad, can I have car keys please? " ☺
 - Why did Absalom pick the City of Hebron to announce his mutiny against David?
 - If you remember, Hebron was the original capital of the tribe of Judah when David was "only" king over Judah. When David became king over all of Israel, David moved the capitol to Jerusalem. (Reference: 2nd Samuel 5:5, et.al.).
 - Therefore, Hebron lost its economic base when the government moved its center to Jerusalem. It lost its prominence and economic power. Absalom probably thought, "Hebron is the perfect place to announce my mutiny. This will "imply" that I'm setting up the government in Hebron again. The local townsfolk's will accept me as it is good for their economy." (Grant it, this is speculation.)
 - So why did Absalom ask permission in the first place? Why didn't he just go?
 - Absalom wanted David to be as unsuspecting as possible for as long as possible. Treason is a death sentence. David was aware of Absalom's growing popularity. This was all about keeping David "off the trail" as long as possible.
 - Verse 11 says that Absalom had an entourage of 200 people. Absalom needed an excuse to leave with a large number of people.

- e) One technical note before I move on. The King James Version of the bible says that Absalom waited forty years and not four years. In Hebrew, there is a one-letter difference between the words “four” and “forty”. This is a case of a copyist error. There are other ancient, alternative bible translations that argue for “four years”.
 - i) This is a reminder that I believe the “original autographs” of the bible text are the Word of God. Through the centuries, the amount of text corruption is still less than 1% and the errors are very minor and easy to detect like this one.
 - f) Let’s finish the “rebellion” story and then discuss the applications.
9. Verse 10: Then Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, `Absalom is king in Hebron.' " ¹¹ Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently, knowing nothing about the matter. ¹² While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing.
- a) Here is the actual point of mutiny by Absalom. Absalom goes to Hebron. He gives the signal for a bunch of trumpets to be blown. Those horn blowers (think of the medieval “town criers”) announce Absalom is the new king.
 - b) The text says that Absalom got 200 men to go along with Absalom. The text specifically mentions that these guys were just “invited guests” and had no idea that Absalom was planning this act of treason. The idea politically is that when Absalom announces he is king, it “appears” that all of these officials go along with the idea because they are there.
 - c) Verse 12 says that Absalom sent for “Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor.”
 - i) Ahithophel was a popular and wise consultant to King David. He is mentioned in the “ending credits” of Chapter 23 of 2nd Samuel. He will be a prominent character in the next lesson.
 - ii) There are many names to keep track of in this chapter. The way I remember Ahithophel is the word “hit”. This guy was a big “hit” in Israel! It’s silly, but it will help keep the names straight.
 - iii) Why did Ahithophel agree to take sides with Absalom? We don’t know. We do know that he was the grandfather of Bathsheba. (Ref.: 2nd Samuel 11:3 and 23:34). He may have been still angry over that incident and took sides with Absalom.
 - d) OK, let’s talk about the rebellion itself. What is to be learned from this?
 - i) Absalom broke one of the 10 commandments: “Honor your mother and father”. (Exo. 20:12) I’m pretty sure mutiny counts as a violation of this commandment. ☺
 - ii) Yes Absalom had a right to be angry about David’s lack of justice and David’s “bad parenting skills”. What Absalom doesn’t have is the right to take over the kingship on His timing. If you recall in 1st Story, David never took the timing of his kingship into his own hands. David waited until after Saul died and the people picked him.
 - iii) I get the impression that Absalom still believes in the God of Israel. “Believing” and “obedience” are designed to go together. If Absalom did believe in the God of Israel, then he should have obeyed the commandment to honor his father despite his father’s sins. My point here is David’s actions don’t justify mutiny.
 - a) I can just hear Absalom praying, “You know Lord, David has murdered and deserves to die. We need justice in this land. It is time for me to take over as King and do your will. Guide me as I commit mutiny, Amen!” ☺
 - b) My point of this silly prayer is that we can justify all sorts of actions that are against God’s will.

- e) This is a good lesson for fathers to read to their sons. Chapters 15-18 deal with the mutiny of Absalom and Absalom's death for that mutiny (Chapter 18).
 - i) If you go to Israel today, there is a grave marker set up for Absalom. A tradition among religious Jews is for fathers to take their sons on a field trip to Absalom's grave and then, together, throw rocks at the grave. It is a sign of condemnation of Absalom's action for mutiny against his father.
 - f) I should also discuss here the topic of Absalom's mutiny and "God's will". God did tell David he would be punished for his affair with Bathsheba in Chapter 12. Absalom can't blame God for his mutiny. Absalom can't say, "It's not my fault I rebelled against David. God wanted to punish David and use me for that punishment". One of the things we have to accept is the "double-sided-coin" of "God's will" and "personal responsibility". Yes, God knows all things and God ordains things. At the same time, God holds us personally responsible for those actions. It is impossible to reconcile, but something we have to accept as fact.
 - i) For example, did Jesus know Judas would betray him? Yes. (Ref.: Matthew 26:23)
 - ii) Did Jesus say Judas would suffer for the betrayal? Yes. (Ref: Matthew 26:24, et.al.)
 - iii) My point is we can't use the excuse to God, "It's your fault I'm like this. You made me this way!" God expects obedience and as "accountable adults", we can't blame our parents or society for our actions. There comes a point in life of accepting responsibility for our own actions.
 - g) Before we move on to Verse 13, I want you to put these verses in perspective:
 - i) There are 12 verses that deal with Absalom's rebellion.
 - ii) There are 41 verses in Chapters 15-16 that deal with the friends of David who are willing to stand by the king during this mutiny.
 - iii) That tells me the emphasis of this text is on the loyalty-issue. Yes, there are things to learn from Absalom's rebellion, but one has to put these verses in perspective.
10. Verse 13: A messenger came and told David, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."
¹⁴ Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword."
- a) Verse 13 is where David first hears of Absalom's rebellion.
 - i) Notice what David doesn't say: "Gather up the troops! Let us nip this in the bud here and now!" ☺
 - b) David's first reaction is to run. Why is that?
 - i) First, David recalled (speculation on my part) the prediction that he would be punished by God for the actions of Bathsheba and killing her husband. Therefore, somehow, David thought it was his fault and it was time to run.
 - ii) Second, the text does say that David didn't want a bloody battle in Jerusalem. David cared for the city he loved and didn't want it harmed by a civil war.
 - iii) Third, David did care for the life of his wives and other children. Absalom killed his half-brother Amnon. That means that Amnon would be willing to kill other brothers and David himself. David was fleeing to protect the family.
 - iv) Remember this was David's son who is rebelling. If it was a stranger trying to take over David's throne, he would have probably stayed and fought. As much as David hated what Absalom was doing, David still loved him as a son.
 - a) That is a good "mini-model" of God's love for us when we sin. God never stops loving us, although He is "hurt" by our rebellion.
 - v) Remember David knew how to be on run. If there was one thing David was an expert on, it was how to be a fugitive. David spent roughly a decade being on the run from King Saul. Never underestimate how past events in our life can prepare us for some other future event!

- c) Here comes an important lesson for us (time to pay attention! ☺)
 - i) David put the results of this mutiny in God's hands. David is saying in effect, "Yes, I deserve to be punished because of my past actions. I know that God the Father still loves me and wants the best for me. Personally, I feel safer in the hands of God than in the hands of men. If God wants me dead, he can strike me dead at any time. If God wants Absalom to be king, maybe this is God's timing. My job at this point is to stand back (i.e., run for my life) and watch God work.
 - ii) One of the difficult aspects of the Christian life is to discern God's will at any given moment. Sometimes "God's will" is to stay and fight. Sometimes it is to run. Both are listed in David's life at different points. We don't always know. Sometimes we just have to "pray, learn our bible for wisdom and use our brains as what's best to do at any given moment". This is what David did here.
 - iii) David decided in effect, "Absalom will kill us all if we don't run".
 - a) David didn't know the extent of Absalom's popularity.
 - b) David didn't know who in the army was loyal to him or Absalom.
 - iv) We don't have a burnish bush telling us every day, "Make a left turn at the next light." ☺ David made the best decision he could under the circumstances with the knowledge he had at hand. That is what God expects of us. Yes, we have to pray and seek Him, but "given that", we have to make the best decision we can given the information we have at hand.
- 11. Verse 15: The king's officials answered him, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king chooses."
 - a) Notice what the royal officials did not say: "Your history old man. Time to put you out to pasture while we go hang out with the new king." ☺
 - b) My point is the king's officials showed their loyalty to David. Don't take that lightly. They realize that could mean their own death if Absalom goes into power.
 - c) Why would these officials back David? After all, the guy is guilty of adultery and murder. How are David's sins any worse than Absalom's sins?
 - i) Part of the answer is David confessed and repented of his sins. Absalom did not.
 - ii) Second, there is no indication it was "God's will" for this treason to happen. Yes, it was God's will to suffer for David's sins, but it was not God's will for Absalom to be king. How do I know this? I read ahead. ☺ Absalom is killed in Chapter 18.
 - d) This is the first group of people we read about that stands by David at a time of trouble.
 - i) Don't underestimate that. The remainder of this chapter deals with people willing to stand by David during this crisis. This action speaks volumes for these king's officials. It shows they are willing to put their trust in God when times get rough.
- 12. Verse 16: The king set out, with his entire household following him; but he left ten concubines to take care of the palace. ¹⁷ So the king set out, with all the people following him, and they halted at a place some distance away. ¹⁸ All his men marched past him, along with all the Kerethites and Pelethites; and all the six hundred Gittites who had accompanied him from Gath marched before the king.
 - a) What we are reading here is a mass exodus of the king, the king's officials, the king's personal armor guard, etc. all leaving the palace to make a run for it.
 - b) Verse 16 mentions that David left 10 concubines home to take care of the palace.
 - i) A concubine is like a wife, but without the privileges. It is a personal woman-servant to a husband, but without the benefits of being a wife. (I can just hear my women readers saying sarcastically, "Gee, where do I sign up?" ☺)
 - ii) Some speculate that David thought it would be over soon and that is why these ten women were left at home to take care of the palace.

- iii) The main reason this verse is mentioned is that when Absalom takes over, he has sexual relations with them (Chapter 16). More on that in the next lesson.
 - c) Next, we have this reference to “Gentile supporters”: The Kerethites, the Pelethites; and all the six hundred Gittites”.
 - i) Back before David was the king, he was living in exile in Philistine country.
 - ii) Apparently, David made friends with these groups. These are “soldiers for hire”, i.e., mercenary soldiers that were loyal to David.
 - d) So what’s the point? The point is that not only were there Jews loyal to David during this time of treasons, but “converted Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews)” who were willing to stand by David during this time of crisis.
 - i) If you want to find out who are your true friends, wait until a time of crisis and see who stands by you. These people are listed among the “credits” in the last chapters of this book because they took a stand with David when things got tough.
 - ii) Remember these guys were soldiers. David agrees to let them, and their families come along as they would be an asset to David for protection.
- 13. Verse 19: The king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why should you come along with us? Go back and stay with King Absalom. You are a foreigner, an exile from your homeland.²⁰ You came only yesterday. And today shall I make you wander about with us, when I do not know where I am going? Go back, and take your countrymen. May kindness and faithfulness be with you."
 - a) From Verses 19 to 22, we are introduced to a character named “Ittai the Gittite”.
 - i) (I have to admit I love saying “Ittai the Gittite” out loud. It would be a cool name for say, a musician. “And introducing, on drums, Ittai the Gittite”. ☺)
 - ii) Ittai the Gittite was the leader of this band of soldiers that wanted to stand by David during this time of exile.
 - iii) Ittai will eventually be rewarded for his service. We’ll read of him in later chapters becoming one of David’s generals. (Reference 2nd Samuel 18:2).
 - b) To paraphrase David here: “Ittai, thanks for the nice gesture. It seems like only yesterday that you and your men moved to Jerusalem. Let’s face it, this is not your war. You’re not even Jewish. You were exiles from your own homeland. Why should you have to suffer my fate wandering around like an exile?”
 - c) Notice David was not sitting around having a pity-party. David was not crying, “Yes, I need all the help I can get. Please come along!” Instead, David, during this time of crisis and heavy emotional pain, was still thinking what was best for others.
- 14. Verse 21: But Ittai replied to the king, "As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be."²² David said to Ittai, "Go ahead, march on." So Ittai the Gittite marched on with all his men and the families that were with him.
 - a) First thing I want you to notice is Ittai said, “As surely as the LORD lives”.
 - i) The text says that Ittai was a recent sojourner to Israel.
 - ii) Ittai was an outcast of his own country. That means he worshiped foreign gods.
 - iii) Here is Ittai saying “As surely as the LORD lives”.
 - a) I am sure we will meet this guy in heaven one day. This is a guy who trusted in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - b) Not only did he give “lip service” to the true God, but also he was willing to take a stand for God when things got tough. That’s more than I can say for many people who claim they are Christians.

- b) After Ittai pledges his loyalty, David agrees to let Ittai and his men come along.
 - i) I don't think David was testing Ittai. I take the text at face value and think that David was concerned for Ittai's safety. David thought it was not necessary for Ittai to get involved in this civil war. When David learned that Ittai was willing to take a stand, I can here David thinking, "This is my kind of guy. He's not willing to take no for an answer. He's willing to do the right thing no matter what the cost."
 - ii) (Here comes the mini-sermon. ☺) God is doing the same. God is always looking for people willing to step out in faith no matter what is the cost and risk. The reason Ittai the Gittite gets this "bible credit" is he is a wonderful example of those willing to take a stand for God, especially during a time of crisis.
 - c) By the way, there is a subtle "editorial comment" all through out this chapter.
 - i) There is a constant reference to David as "the king" in this section. If you just read the text without all my commentary, you will notice that David is constantly and consistently referred to as "the king". It is the writer's way of saying, "David is the king until God says otherwise, no matter what Absalom thinks he is doing."
15. Verse 23: The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by. The king also crossed the Kidron Valley, and all the people moved on toward the desert.
- a) This would make a great scene for a movie. Here comes this big parade of people, leaving the king's palace, making a run for their life. This is a parade of soldiers, royal officials, Jews and Gentiles, family members, children and king David. Along the countryside were people were crying as they passed by. These other people were confused. They didn't know which side to take. They just were watching their great king, the one who built Israel into a great empire, now having to leave because of the threat of his son.
16. Verse 24: Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city. ²⁵ Then the king said to Zadok, "Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. ²⁶ But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him."
- a) Now we are introduced to the high priest of the day, named Zadok. There was a brief mention that he was the priest back in Chapter 8, Verse 17.
 - b) While David and his supporters were leaving town, the High Priest and his assistants, the Levites were willing to join David. They had the most holy symbol of the presence of God, the "ark of the covenant" with them. They probably wanted all the people to see the ark as they paraded by. It was the priests way of saying to all these people, "God is with you wherever you go."
 - c) Remember that most of this chapter is about people willing to show loyalty to David despite the mutiny attempt. Here is the high priest and all the court officials saying with their actions, "What your son is doing is wrong and we're willing to go with you."
 - d) In Verse 25, David tells the priests in effect, "If there is one thing I have learned from my years of being on the run from King Saul, is to put the results in God's hands. Listen, all of you priests, thanks for the gesture of the willingness to come with me. I want all of you to stay. The people of Israel need you, and the presence of God more than I do. God's presence needs to preside over the people, not an exiled king. If God wants me to come back, He will make it happen. If God does not want me to come back, then, I shouldn't. Thanks for the support, but I want you to go back to do your duties."
 - i) These lessons are not only good examples of standing by friends in times of trouble, but they are also moments where we see David shine. A reason David is a "man after God's own heart" despite all of his sins, is that David is willing to trust God with the results of his life.

- ii) Notice David still decides to run. David didn't say, "Let's go fight Absalom and put the results in God's hands. My point is there are times to fight and times to run. My point here is that despite whatever decision David makes that at moment, David is trusting that God is working in his life and will work out the results.
- 17. Verse 27: The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Aren't you a seer? Go back to the city in peace, with your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan son of Abiathar. You and Abiathar take your two sons with you.²⁸ I will wait at the fords in the desert until word comes from you to inform me."²⁹ So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and stayed there.
 - a) Let me paraphrase David here, "Hey Zadok, first of all, I appreciate your gesture of wanting to come with me, but thanks, but no thanks. There is one thing you can do. You are also a prophet and have a gift for prophecy (a.k.a., a "seer", Verse 27). If you are loyal to me, use that gift to find out what Absalom is up to and somehow, get word to me out in the desert. I want you, your assistant Abiathar and each of your sons to help me out.
 - b) This verse is includes as we'll read of them doing this in next lesson.
- 18. Verse 30: But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up.
 - a) The City of Jerusalem is surrounded by hillsides. It is high in elevation. To leave Jerusalem, one has to travel uphill through hillside or mountain passes.
 - b) Everybody was showing signs of remorse. David had his head covered and was walking barefoot, which is a cultural sign of remorse. They are also signs to pay homage to God.
 - c) Verse 30 mentions the "Mount of Olives". Yes, that's the same Mount of Olives that Christians read of in the New Testament. Olive trees existed at this location at the time of David's, which was a 1,000 years before Christ.
 - d) For those that like "bible typology (i.e., study of word-pictures), you can have a field day with this one: Here is the "King of Israel" being rejected by the people. Some Jews and some Gentiles stand by the king even though he is rejected as king. The Mount of Olives was the place where Jesus went up into the sky with the promise to come back again. (Acts 1:12). Here is the rejected king also "leaving" by the way of the Mount of Olives.
 - i) The New Testament says the "Volume of the book is written of me (Jesus)" (Hebrews 10:7). Most of that is through word-pictures. We have one here.
 - ii) Jesus wants you to accept Him as your king out of your free will. David also, never forced the Israelites to accept Him as king. David never killed Saul to speed up the process. David waited for the Israelites to accept him as king. Now that the majority of Israelites were rejecting David, he "walked away" (in a sense) like Jesus did, not wanting them to accept the kingship out of force.
- 19. Verse 31: Now David had been told, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." So David prayed, "O LORD, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness."
 - a) Back in Verse 12, we read of this guy Ahithophel. He was a respected consultant in Israel and people respected his advice. (Remember my nickname: "he was "a hit").
 - b) Now David finds out this guy is siding with Absalom.
 - i) David does not curse out Ahithophel.
 - ii) David does not say to his soldiers, "Somebody go back and cut his head off".
 - iii) Instead, David turns to God and prays that Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom be "foolish". That means his counsel is not of God's will and not God-inspired.
 - c) This brings up an interesting theological question: Is it ok to pray "negative things" about people? Here David is praying to put-down Ahithophel. In fact, if you read through the Psalms, you can sense David's anger at times and his curses of his enemies. (In fairness, most of those Psalms end on a positive note, once David gets his perspective right.)

- d) Notice David didn't pray for Ahithophel's death sentence. Ahithophel was still a Jew and man who feared God. David knew it was wrong for his son Absalom to commit mutiny. David knew it was wrong for Ahithophel to support him. David put all of that in perspective and said to God in effect, "Lord, Ahithophel is a well respected man in Israel. It's hard for me to blame him, given his granddaughter was Bathsheba. (I commented on this earlier in the lesson). Still, Lord, if it is your desire for me to still be king, you take care of Ahithophel. You can take his reputation for wise counsel and turn it into foolish counsel. Lord, if it is your will, do it."
20. Verse 32: When David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him, his robe torn and dust on his head. ³³ David said to him, "If you go with me, you will be a burden to me. ³⁴ But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; I was your father's servant in the past, but now I will be your servant,' then you can help me by frustrating Ahithophel's advice. ³⁵ Won't the priests Zadok and Abiathar be there with you? Tell them anything you hear in the king's palace. ³⁶ Their two sons, Ahimaaz son of Zadok and Jonathan son of Abiathar, are there with them. Send them to me with anything you hear."
- a) Now we read of another man willing to take a stand for David: Hushai the Arkite.
- i) This was one of David's trusted counselors.
 - ii) If you recall, I used the nickname "hit" to describe Ahithophel.
 - a) I'll use "hush" for Hushai. David asks Hushai to spy for him in Verse 34. This nickname may help you remember that "Hush" is a spy for David.
 - iii) David says to Hushai in effect, "Listen, Hushai, if you really want to help me, go back and be a spy for me to Absalom. The high priest Zadok and his right-hand man Abiathar are also spies for me. Go work with them. Use these priests as messengers to find out what is going on with Absalom and what is his plan.
 - iv) In the next lesson, we're going to read of the "consultant" Ahithophel giving advice and the "consultant" Hushai giving advice. Hushai is actually a spy for David and wants to give advice that would give David time to run for his life.
- b) Let's stand back and put all of this in perspective:
- i) This chapter has story after story of people willing to take a stand for David.
 - a) Some of them David asks to tag along.
 - b) Some David asks to stay back at home and be spies for David.
 - c) The point is when things are getting rough, here are people willing to take a stand for what is right. They are all risking their lives to do the right thing.
 - ii) Think about all of this from David's perspective. I can't imagine the pain of having one's own son rebelling against you to a point of wanting to kill you.
 - iii) During such times, what gets you through it, is having friends who are willing to just "be there" for you. They are willing to do whatever you say out of love for you. They are willing to risk their own lives in support.
 - iv) In my introduction, I used the cliché, "People are like teabags. You never know what flavor they are until you get them in hot water." Well, David's in "hot water". This chapter records for us a bunch of heroes who show their faith during the tough times.
21. Verse 37: So David's friend Hushai arrived at Jerusalem as Absalom was entering the city.
- a) This verse is mentioned as in Chapter 17, we'll read of Absalom having a conversation with Hushai. Hushai has to convince Absalom he is as loyal to him as he was to his father. Hushai needs to get on Absalom's good side in order to be a good spy.
 - b) We'll come back to Hushai in the next lesson.

22. OK, time to wrap this up. Let's do a quick recap:
- a) These chapters focus on David's son Absalom, who rebels against the king. He spends years gaining the popularity of the majority of the Israelites, and then formally rebels. His next step is to go kill his father.
 - b) David realizes all of this and instead of fighting, decides to flee. This is partially because David doesn't want to have to kill his son and partially because David doesn't want a bloody civil war in Jerusalem.
 - c) Most of the chapter focuses on "hero stories" of people willing to take a stand with David despite the crisis. The lesson for us is about having the boldness to take a stand for God when things get tough in our life. Further, these are good lessons in friendship. When people are down, just "being there" does wonders for them and helps them to get through such a crisis.
23. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, during the times in our lives when the bottom falls out, give us the strength to get through such times. Help us to remember that You are still on the throne, and still have a purpose for all we go through. During such times, provide us with the friends who can give us comfort. Further, give us the wisdom what to say to them as you did to David. Finally, give us the boldness to take a stand for You. It is easy to say we believe in God when things are good, but it takes courage and boldness to take a stand for You during the tough times. We know that such courage and such boldness can only come from Your power, and not our own strength. Guide us, so that such events in our lives bring You the glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.