

**THE SEVEN STEPS OF DAVID'S
ESCAPE FROM ABSALOM
II SAMUEL 15:13–16:14**

OR
THE RESULT OF FORGIVEN SIN

by

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The rebellion from Absalom's viewpoint

I want to say at the very beginning of this chapter that Absalom's viewpoint is completely in error. Absalom did not see that God was doing anything about injustices. Absalom also believed religion was a farce, and that friendship was to be bought and sold to the highest bidder. Absalom never understood that God's judgment was upon David and his family, II Sam. 12:11. Absalom was doing what every lost person does and what many saved people do: he was looking *only* at the immediate situation, never thinking that God was doing anything. It is important to see *what* happened, but it is more important to see *why* it happened, Psalms 103:7, *He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.*

It is also important to understand that the majority of Israelites should have disagreed with Absalom, yet they willingly went along with his rebellion. Actually, the majority of people simply follow whatever leader is in front of them, not thinking about God's will, or the consequences of their actions. They saw the death of David and Bathsheba's son, and David's public humiliation and knew God had chastened David. I would think the majority would understand that David was a faithful worshipper of God, and that Absalom was completely in the wrong. Yet those facts make little difference to the majority of people. One very important fact to remember is that God was bringing His judgments upon David and his household. I Samuel 12:11 declares, *Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house...*

I believe Bathsheba's father was one of the people who was more willing to follow God than to follow the whim of the people. His name appears only twice in the entire Bible. Once in II Sam. 11:3 where he is identified as the father of Bathsheba; and secondly in II Sam. 23:34 where he appears as one of David's mighty men. I believe Eliam saw the judgment of God upon David and his daughter, Bathsheba, through the death of his grandchild. Unlike Ahithophel or Absalom, Eliam remained true because he saw David's repentance and the judgment of God upon him. Uriah the Hittite also appears in the list of David's mighty men, verse 39.

It all boils down to this. The people of God came to see that God judged David's sin. People that didn't serve God (like Shimei, II Samuel 16:5-14) didn't see that God judged David's sin. They were incapable of understanding the judgment of God.

Notice that the entire episode concerning David's sin with Bathsheba and the subsequent judgment of God is revealed only in the book of II Samuel, not in the Chronicles of the Kings. Comparing II Sam. 11:1-2 with I Chron. 20:1 reveals that these two passages are talking about the same subject, the battle at Rabbah. Then compare II Sam. 24:1 with I Chronicles 21:1, and it is discovered that these two passages are talking about the same event, Satan provoking David to number Israel. Therefore all the events concerning David's sin with Bathsheba and God's judgment upon him were not recorded in the Chronicles of the Kings.

Why? There are three reasons. First, these sins have to do with the personal life of David, not with the nation of Israel. David's sin with Bathsheba not being recorded in I Chronicles reflect the external power of the kingdom continues to increase even as the internal power disintegrates. The power of the nation of Israel continues to increase, even

while David as an individual struggles with the consequences of personal sin. It is indeed a blessing from God that the nation of Israel is not judged of God because of the sin of their king when he acts as an individual. II Samuel 24 and I Chronicles 20, records when David sins while performing his duties as a king, the people of Israel *are* judged.

Second, I Chronicles 20:1 states *...Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah...* God gave victory to Israel when their king had committed a private sin. God knew about David's sin, but didn't stop his public blessings because of private sin. God allowed an innocent man, Uriah, to die in a successful battle.

Third, David continued to act as a king when he (and Bathsheba) knew they had committed adultery. David went about his business, and Bathsheba went about hers. They tried to act like nothing had happened. All their "acting" didn't work. A sinful act had been committed, and God would bring His judgment.

Another point that should be made is that the people of Israel completely trusted David as king even though they saw his sinfulness and repentance. It is a fact that people, even leaders, sin. It is also a fact that followers, as well as leaders, must be forgiven and granted forgiveness. After forgiveness is given, then comes a time of healing when trust is restored. How much time it takes to restore trust depends upon the severity of the sin, and how many people are affected.

There are some sins, however, that will cause a leader to lose the position in which God has placed him. It is possible for a leader to disqualify himself from his position. King Saul found this out when he disobeyed the clear command of God and refused to kill all the Amalekites, I Samuel 15:9. He lost the anointed power of God, the God given right to rule Israel, and eventually lost his life.

Preachers today can disqualify themselves for the position in which God has placed them. Pastoral qualifications are given in I Tim. 3:1-7. When a pastor fails to meet these qualifications, he disqualifies himself from the pastorate. He may continue pastoring, just like Saul continued being king of Israel, but the power of God will not be with him like it was before. God forgives sin, even gross sin. People ought to forgive sin, even gross sin. But it takes time for trust to be restored. Some sins are so gross that trust can never be restored.

What Absalom saw

It is important to understand Absalom's world from his viewpoint. That way, we will be able to understand why he did what he did. We must understand that Absalom displays no evidence of saving grace. He shows no evidence of God working in his life, except to reveal the judgment of God upon his father.

Religion Is Worthless

The first thing I want to notice about Absalom is that he believed religion was worthless. I am well aware that Absalom offered peace offerings, II Sam. 15:12, but he was *not* worshipping. Absalom saw giving sacrifices and peace offerings as a political drawing card. He was like Jessie Jackson "preaching" in black churches, not about Jesus Christ and His power to save, but about "white enslavement" and "black freedom." In I Kings 1:5-9, Adonijah, the younger brother of Absalom, also prepared 50 men to run

before him, conferred with disgruntled servants of David, and offered “peace” offerings as a means of declaring himself king. There was a *pretence* about worship in these offerings, but no real worship.

Second, there is no doubt that Absalom was well aware of the sin of David and Bathsheba. There is no doubt that he saw David trying to cover up his sin by having Uriah killed. He saw the hypocrisy of Bathsheba coming in to be David’s wife; but he failed to see the genuineness of David’s repentance. He failed to see God’s judgment on David and Bathsheba when their child died. He failed to see the public humiliation of David because of his sins.

II Sam. 13:21 records that David showed great wrath when Amnon raped Absalom’s full sister, Tamar. Absalom probably didn’t see this great wrath, he only saw that David did nothing about it. II Sam. 1:23 records that two full years go by with David doing nothing when Absalom finally took matters into his own hands. Tamar moved into Absalom’s house and he saw her every day, knowing the injustice she had suffered, and no doubt his anger grew stronger every day. Finally, he had waited as long as he could. He took matters into his own hands.

There is no doubt that Absalom didn’t understand *why* King David did not avenge the rape of his daughter. Absalom did not understand that this is part of the judgment of God upon David and his family. David knew that God was allowing these evil things to happen, and patiently submitted himself to God. David may have thought he could do nothing about Tamar’s rape because it fit so closely with his own sin. But we ought to remember that our own sinfulness doesn’t make any difference in judging others. Sin is still sin, regardless who commits it. Our own sinfulness doesn’t really make any difference in judging others. We are not to judge *people*, but *actions*. What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong, regardless who does it. At any rate, David’s not judging and punishing this very obvious crime caused things to get worse, not better.

After Absalom killed Amnon, his half-brother and Tamar’s rapist, II Sam. 13:28,29; he fled to grandpa’s house: Talmi, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur, II Sam. 13:37,38. While he lived at Geshur, he didn’t know that David longed to come to him, or that David was comforted concerning Amnon because he was dead, II Sam. 11:39. If David had only shown Absalom his true feelings, many troubles might have been avoided.

Friends Are To Be Used

Absalom not only believed that religion is worthless, he also believed that friends were to be used, to be bought and sold. In II Sam. 15:1-6, Absalom paid men to run before him and announce his coming. In verse 3-6, Absalom believed he could do things for people and they would become his “friends,” at least they would make him king. Absalom was a true politician - buying votes with favors, and purchasing friends with money.

It is noteworthy that Absalom’s failure to understand true friendship was the very thing that caused his downfall. II Sam. 16:16-19 records the meeting of Hushai and Absalom and his company as they enter Jerusalem. “*And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king. 17 And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy*

kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend? 18 And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. 19 And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence." Absalom could change friends easily, and thought everybody else could do the same. He believed power brought friends, and since he had proclaimed himself the new king of Israel, he was not surprised or even suspicious that Hushai left David and would cleave to him. When I was growing up, there was a popular song entitled, "If you've got the money, honey, I've got the time." The song told about a person who had plenty of time to spend with the individual that had plenty of money to spend. Absalom believed this about Hushai. Because Absalom now had the throne, Hushai would forsake David and become his friend.

The psychology of Absalom concerning true friendship made it impossible for him to see that Hushai might try to trick him. This was exactly what happened in II Sam. 17:5-7 when Absalom called Hushai, told him what Ahithophel had counseled, and asked his advice. *"Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith. 6 And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not; speak thou. 7 And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time."* The advice that Hushai gave seemed better than Ahithophel's. It was this advice that lured Absalom onto the battlefield, where, caught and hung by his hair in an oak tree, Joab put three darts into his chest. This advice also caused Ahithophel to "reach the end of his rope," and hang himself.

In II Sam. 16:20-22 Ahithophel gave Absalom counsel to go in unto his father's concubines. The advice given by Ahithophel would show all Israel that Absalom abhorred his father. Absalom took this advice, and went in to the concubines. This was no doubt a political move, but it was also a very self-gratifying action on the part of Absalom. It is important to note that these women would be "political casualties." In II Sam. 20:3, David returned to his throne, and put these women in ward where they would live in widowhood the rest of their lives.

Absalom did not object to Ahithophel's advice; therefore, he did not care if all Israel knew he hated his father. Even worse, he had a wife and children, who saw his unfaithfulness, just like David's children saw David's unfaithfulness. Absalom committed the same act that caused all David's trouble. Absalom did not understand the love a husband and wife have for each other, because David did not show *his* understanding of that same love. By comparing Absalom's abhorrence of David and David's love for Absalom (Compare II Sam. 16:20-22 with II Sam. 18:5 and 33) it can easily be seen how God's love makes a difference. Of course, David blamed himself for Absalom's rebellion, instead of realizing that Absalom did what he did by himself. David didn't instruct him to do it.

Absalom saw that Ahithophel, who was David's chief counselor, could also be bought. As far as Absalom was concerned, everybody had his price. Absalom probably didn't understand exactly what Ahithophel's price was, but as far as he was concerned, the only loyalty anybody has was to themselves and what they could gain. Ahithophel had served

David faithfully, and Absalom naively assumed he will faithfully serve him. This “type” of person has their motives, but they are not honorable.

Absalom was typical of lost people who are struggling to “make it,” but never succeed. They are always trying to reach the greener grass on the other side of the fence, but never enjoy what they already have. Like a lot of people today, Absalom put his trust in materialism, but didn't stop to think he would die and leave it all to another. James 4:13-15 states, “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: (14) Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. (15) For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” It is important to remember that we can only fulfill our plans for tomorrow **if the Lord will that we live.**

To be completely fair, it is important to understand that Absalom had a pretty hard life. Like most of us, the problems in his life were mostly caused by his own sinfulness. II Sam 14:25-27 has this to say about the physical attributes of Absalom. *But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. (26) And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight. (27) And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.* Absalom had a beautiful body, but his heart was as cold as stone.

Nothing is said of Absalom's wisdom and piety. All here said of him is, that he was very handsome. A poor commendation for a man that had nothing else in him valuable. Many a polluted, deformed soul dwells in a fair and comely body. And we read that he had a very fine head of hair. It was a burden to him, but he would not cut it as long as he could bear the weight. That which feeds and gratifies pride, is not complained of, though uneasy. May the Lord grant us the beauty of holiness, and the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit! Only those who fear God are truly happy.

Absalom's life could have been better structured if he had only given more thought to his inward appearance and less to his outward appearance. So it is with us.

The weight of Absalom's hair is 200 shekels. “If the shekel be allowed to mean the common shekel, the amount will be utterly incredible; for Josephus says that “two hundred shekels make five {mine:}” and the {mina,} he says, “weighs two pounds and a half;” which calculation makes Absalom's hair weigh twelve pounds and a half! But it is probable that the king's shekel was that which Epiphanius and Hesychius say was the fourth part of an ounce, half a {stater,} or two drachmas: the whole amount, therefore, of the 200 shekels is about 50 ounces, which make 4 lb. 2 oz. troy weight, or 3 lb. 2 oz. avoirdupois. This need not be accounted incredible, especially as abundance of oil and ointment was used by the ancients in dressing their heads. Josephus informs us, that the Jews also put gold dust in their hair.”

II Sam. 14:27 records that Absalom was married and had four children, three boys and one girl. “*And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.*” According to II Sam. 18:18, all

the sons evidently died young because Absalom raised this stone, declaring that the pillar would be for his remembrance. *“Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.”* II Sam. 14:27 states that Absalom named his only daughter, Tamar, probably after his full sister, Tamar, who lived with him for two years after she was raped by Amnon. While Absalom had these “soft” feelings toward his family, and all these family tragedies, he also had very hard feelings against Amnon, and after two full years had him killed. II Sam. 13:23-29. There is no mention of what happened to Absalom's wife.

It is apparent from the scriptures that Absalom thought that King David was protecting Amnon, who had committed a crime worthy of death. After two full years, Absalom invited all the king's sons and the king to go to Baal-hazor for sheep shearing. King David didn't want all of them to go lest Absalom take the responsibility for their safety. Absalom then asked for only Amnon to go. This request would let David know exactly what Absalom had on his mind, but in spite of David's misgivings, he finally consented to let all his sons go with Absalom. It is likely that David thought Amnon would be safer with all the king's sons present. When Absalom had Amnon killed, and David heard about it, he wept very sore. II Sam. 13:36. Absalom would take this weeping as wrong, because, to Absalom, it was weeping for a rapist. Absalom would interpret David's weeping as though David thought more of Amnon than of all the other sons who were righteous.

According to II Sam. 13:39, David was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead. But David said nothing to Absalom about his feelings. Absalom fled to his grandpa's house, Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur, because he expected to be punished for killing Amnon. He stayed there three full years.

Absalom would probably have remained with the King of Geshur if it hadn't been for Joab, who devised a plan to encourage David to ask Absalom to return to Jerusalem. So finally, after three years, Absalom came back to Jerusalem, but David refused to see Absalom face to face for two full years. Joab again came before David, after Absalom burnt his barley field, and Joab persuaded David to meet with Absalom.

The meeting between David and Absalom was very sad. Absalom always referred to David as king, never as Father or David. See II Sam. 14:24, 28, 32, 33. The fact was that Absalom and David didn't have a father-son relationship; they had a king-servant relationship. It is true that Absalom was a servant to David the king, but he was his son *first*.

II Sam. 14:33 states that the reunion was very formal, and not what Absalom needed at all. *“So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.”*

Read II Sam. 14:28,29 very carefully. *“So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face. (29) Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.”* It is very important to notice that Absalom did nothing to

come before the king. I suppose Absalom thought David ought to come to him, or perhaps he thought that David didn't want to see him since David said in verse 24, "...*Let him turn to his own house...*" While Absalom didn't think of David as his *father*, but as his *king*, verse 28, it appears that David thought of Absalom as his son, not necessarily as a rebel. In II Sam. 18:5 David instructed his armies to "...deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom..." When Absalom was dead, David grieved greatly saying, "...O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!..."

It should be a very natural thing for a son to go to his father. An invitation shouldn't be necessary. Instead of going to David as a son goes to his father, Absalom attempted to go to David as *king*. A careful reading of verses 29-33 shows that Absalom wanted to go before the king, not before his father. *Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come. (30) Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. (31) Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire? (32) And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me. (33) So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.* Verse 32,33 says Absalom wanted to see **the king**, not his **father**! This is very sad. There must have been a "big hole" in the hearts of David and Absalom! This depicts the breakdown in family relations in David's family. As far as I can find, Absalom never addressed David as *father*, only as *king*.

II Sam. 14:25-26 reveals the only thing Absalom had going for him was the admiration of the people because of his physical beauty. "*But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. (26) And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.*" This was probably why he began to think he would make a better king than David. In order for him to be king, he had to convince people that he would be better to them than David. He needed to act like a leader, whether he really was a leader or not. He decided to flatter the people, and in II Sam. 15:1-6, he told the same story to every man that came to the king for help. "*And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. (4) Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! (5) And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. (6) And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.*" Absalom understood a basic principle of mankind. They do not follow a leader because that leader will do what is right and good for them. They follow a leader because that leader promises to do something or give them something.

Absalom was a true politician, giving the people what they want, not what they need. Absalom was like a lot of preachers today who preach what the people *want* to hear, not what they *need* to hear.

There was nothing in Absalom's past that would disqualify him from being king. It is true that Amnon died at his command, but Absalom didn't personally kill him. While we might think that Amnon shouldn't have died in the first place, that was not the command of God. Amnon raped Tamar, and should die for his crime. Even in executing Amnon, Absalom was behaving as a leader: giving commands that others obey.

As a sort of "side note" to the story, it should be noted that II Samuel 15:7 states, "*And it came to pass after forty years...*" There is some disagreement as to what this forty years represents.

There are those that declare that the King James Bible is in error on this verse, and should read four years instead of forty years. Many commentaries declare II Samuel 15:7 should read four years, as do most of the modern versions of the Bible. Some believe II Samuel 15:7 reflects a mistake in the interpretation of the King James Version of the Bible. Some even go so far as to state that this verse indicates that the King James Bible is not inspired, that it should be discarded in favor of the more modern versions.

It seems consistent to me, however, to believe that the King James Bible is inspired, that it is God's Word for us, and the text correctly states forty years. Whether I understand exactly what the forty years represents isn't really important. It is more important that I believe the Bible is true, that it is the very words of God Himself.

II Timothy 3:16, 17 openly and plainly declares, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" The Bible is my guide, and it is good for me to be instructed by the Bible. It is not good for me to try to instruct, or change, the Bible, which is the Word of God. I would never try to correct God, or give Him instruction in anything at all. So why would I try to correct His Word? I don't need to change the Bible to fit my understanding. I need to change my understanding to fit the Bible.

As far as to what the forty years represent, I do not believe the forty years has reference to the length of David's reign over Israel. David only ruled forty years, therefore it would be impossible to say that Absalom waited forty years to put David off the throne. David would already be off the throne and dead. The forty years *could* be the age of Absalom when he rebelled against his father, but according to I Chronicles 3:1-4, David had six children born in Hebron. Absalom was one of those children. Absalom was probably in his late twenties, or early thirties when he rebelled against David.

When II Samuel 15:7 states, "*And it came to pass after forty years...*" it could mean that after David was forty years old (about the time David committed adultery with Bathsheba), then some time passed, then Absalom's rebellion came to fruition. The rebellion of Absalom began long before he took over the throne and caused David to escape. The seed of Absalom's rebellion actually began when David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

The forty years of II Samuel 15:7 could also represent forty years from the anointing of David by Samuel.

1. **Easton's Bible Dictionary – On-Line Bible – Article: 26473 – Solomon .** Peaceful, (Heb. Shelomoh), David's second son by Bathsheba, i.e., the first after their legal marriage II Samuel 12:1ff. He was probably born about B.C. 1035, I Chronicles 22:5 29:1 He succeeded his father on the throne in early manhood, probably about sixteen or eighteen years of age. (WWR—If Solomon was born about B.C. 1035, he was closer to 20 years old when he began to reign, as his reign began in B.C. 1015. If Solomon was born in B.C. 1035, and David began his reign in B.C. 1055 at the age of 30, David would be about 50 when he committed adultery with Bathsheba.) Nathan, to whom his education was intrusted, called him Jedidiah, i.e., "beloved of the Lord" II Samuel 12:24,25 He was the first king of Israel "born in the purple." His father chose him as his successor, passing over the claims of his elder sons: "Assuredly Solomon my son shall reign after me." His history is recorded in I Kings 11ff. and II Chronicles 1:1ff. His elevation to the throne took place before his father's death, and was hastened on mainly by Nathan and Bathsheba, in consequence of the rebellion of Adonijah I Kings 1:5-40 During his long reign of forty years the Hebrew monarchy gained its highest splendour.

2. James Ussher in **The Annals of the World**, page 61, states that David committed adultery with Bathsheba in 1035 BC, the child was born in 1034 BC, and Solomon was born in 1034 BC. On page 58, Mr. Ussher states the anointing of David as king takes place 40 years before the rebellion of Absalom. He gives no reference as to the source of this information. On page 62, he states the rebellion of Absalom occurred in 1023 BC, but again, gives no reference as to the source of his information. In the Editor's Preface, paragraph three, the following is stated, "The format used for the footnoting is explained in the bibliography at the end of this work. In most history books, it is very difficult to tell where the material came from. Separating the editorials from the facts would challenge even Solomon. This is not true of Ussher's work. It contains more than twelve thousand footnotes from secular sources and over two thousand quotes from the Bible or the Apocrypha. There is very little editorializing and most editorial comments come from the original writers themselves. We were able to verify about 85 percent of the footnotes pertaining to secular history. The documents for the remaining footnotes are so rare, we did not pursue them." The bibliography, on page 883 states in the first paragraph, "We would give our eye-teeth to have all the books Ussher referred to in preparing his history. Alas, some of the material is now lost forever and was destroyed in a fire in Dublin in 1922."

Whether the forty years of II Samuel 15:7 refers to the age of David, or the amount of time since he was anointed by Samuel seems to make very little difference in the whole scheme of things. A few of the differences are:

- Instead of David committing adultery with Bathsheba at age 40, he commits adultery at age 50.
- Instead of Absalom dying about age 19, he is approximately 29 years old.
- Instead of Solomon being made king at age 27 or 28, he is approximately 19 years of age.

Step Number 1 Leaving Jerusalem II Samuel 15:13-18

II Samuel 15:13-18, *And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. 14 And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword. 15 And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint. 16 And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house. 17 And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. 18 And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.*

Why Did David Leave His Throne?

God gave David this throne. He didn't seek it, or even desire it. God gave David the throne of Israel because God said He looked on the heart, not on the outward appearance. Why would David leave that which God gave him? Did David wonder if God would take it away from him as part of the judgment concerning Bathsheba? It is difficult to understand what David was thinking, but it is not impossible. It is possible to learn a great lesson about spiritual discernment by answering this question.

David left his throne because he believed Absalom's rebellion was a part of God's judgment against him. David remembered Nathan's words in II Samuel 12:11, *Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house...* When Absalom began his rebellion, David immediately related that to the judgment of God, and place himself and his throne in the hands of God, and left the throne. David's leaving the throne was not a sign he was forsaking Israel, but a sign of his complete trust in God to put who He wanted on the throne. Putting himself in the hands of God was very typical of David as he was a man after God's own heart.

It is very important to understand that David understood the situation he finds himself in was the result of his own sin. The rebellion of Absalom started back in II Samuel 11 when David committed adultery with Bathsheba and tried to cover it up by killing Uriah the Hittite. The consequence of this sin is found in II Samuel 12:10,11, *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. 11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.*

Not only would the nation of Israel have war as long as David was alive; God would also raise up evil out of David's own house. Some of the evil things that happened in David's own family are as follows.

II Samuel 13, Amnon, the son of David by Ahinoam "fell in love" with Tamar, the daughter of David by Maachah. Amnon is half-brother to Tamar, and Absalom is full

brother to Tamar. Amnon followed the advice of Jonadab, his first cousin, who advised him on getting “near” Tamar. When Absalom found out that Amnon had raped Tamar, he did nothing for two full years. This lapse of time allowed David plenty of time to punish Amnon for his crime. But David did nothing. Absalom then invited all the king’s sons to a sheep shearing and killed Amnon. Absalom then fled to his grandfather’s house, the king of Geshur. In II Samuel 14, Joab, the head of David’s army, devised a scheme to reconcile David and Absalom. The scheme worked, but not very well. David refused to allow Absalom to see his face, II Sam. 14:24. After two years of living in Israel, Absalom burned Joab’s barley field, forcing Joab to confront the king with Absalom’s need to see his father. David finally consented and let Absalom come to him, but the reunion wasn’t good. Absalom wasn’t satisfied, so four years later; he devised the plan of taking over his father’s throne.

It is important to notice that Absalom’s life was void of love, direction, and family ties with David. He was raised in the king’s house, which was very public. His father had multiple wives and was busy with political affairs and didn’t have much time to give to his children. Absalom saw the religion of his father, but also saw the stain of sin on David’s reputation as a result of adultery. David and Absalom didn’t have a close relationship and this caused Absalom to seek elsewhere for advice, which he got from his peers. Although Absalom married and had three sons and one daughter, II Sam. 14:27, apparently all the sons died before adulthood, II Sam. 18:18.

The rebellion of Absalom evidently took David completely by surprise, even though it was well known by others. II Samuel 15:14 reveals that David understood the viciousness of his son. David knew that Absalom would kill every person in Jerusalem to get to the king. Absalom had no love for his father, although David had much love for his son. But it must be remembered that David didn’t show Absalom his love, or try to teach him the right way. A part of the judgment of God for his sin with Bathsheba is that David’s own family will break his heart. This is a terrible judgment indeed.

The People David Left Behind

It must be noted in verse 16 that David left ten women, which were concubines to keep the house. David might have left these women by chance, but God caused him to so that the prophecy given by Nathan in II Sam. 12:11 would come to pass. The prophecy was that David’s neighbor would lie with his wives in the sight of the sun. The prophecy was fulfilled in II Samuel 16:20-22 as Absalom followed the counsel of Ahithophel.

The People That Left Jerusalem With David

When David left Jerusalem, verse 18, the Cherethites, the Kings executioners, and the Pelethites, the Kings couriers, went with David. The Cherethites, the Kings executioners, were not in charge of killing people. As the king’s executioners they saw that the king’s orders were carried out. The Pelethites, the Kings couriers, had the responsibility of carrying the messages of the king to the correct place. Both groups were the king’s bodyguards, lead by Benaiah, II Samuel 8:18. They pursued Sheba in II Samuel 20:7, and their presence helped establish Solomon as the King to take David’s place, I Kings 1:38,44. These people followed David at the risk of their own lives, for Absalom would kill them if he got the chance, but their presence with David was an open testimony to all Israel that David was the rightful king.

There are also 600 men from Gath, a city of the Philistines, that followed David. In I Samuel 22:2 about 400 men followed David when he went to the cave Adullam. Ittai the Gittite was probably the leader of these men. In verse 20 David told Ittai to return to Jerusalem and take his brethren with him. David didn't want anybody to go through his troubles with him because he knew God was chastening him.

**David's reaction to
"in-family"
and
"out-of-family"
rebellion**

David didn't rebuke family members when they rebelled against him personally, or when they rebelled against him as king. When Absalom rebelled against his father, there is no record that David ever rebuked him for it. When Adonijah, the younger brother of Absalom, followed in the footsteps of his older brother and rebelled against David, I Kings 1:6 states that David ...*had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?...* It would be natural for a father to correct his son when there is obvious error, but David didn't. Why didn't David rebuke him?

Also notice that when Absalom rebelled against David's authority as king of Israel, David didn't fight against him, but left the throne and the country. When Adonijah rebelled against David being king, David didn't leave Jerusalem, mainly because he was too old and infirm for the trip. He simply established Solomon as king and that ended Adonijah's attempt for the throne.

Now notice a seeming contradiction in David's actions. In II Samuel 20, Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite (this was the tribe Saul was from) said that he would be king. This incident occurred shortly after David returned to his throne after Absalom was killed. But this time David reacted very strongly. He not only openly voiced his displeasure at Sheba, but sent his army to stop his rebellion! Sheba fled to Abel, a city in Israel. The inhabitants of the city cut off his head and threw it over the wall to Joab, who was waiting outside the gates. Thus the rebellion of Sheba was completely crushed.

My question is: Why did David react one way to rebellion in his family, and a totally different way to rebellion *outside* his family. Is he being partial to his family by letting them get by with things he will not allow those outside his family to get away with? This was my first reaction, and I must say when I thought this, I was greatly disappointed with David. He was a man after God's own heart. How could he have been so outwardly biased and lenient toward the sins of his own family, while holding others to a stricter standard? Surely, this is not God's way. Surely, this is not the way God wants or expects us to be.

The answer to my dilemma came when I read again II Sam. 12:11. The judgment of God came upon David *and his household* because of his sin with Bathsheba. This judgment followed David all the remaining days of his life. When David's sons rebelled against him, David knew this was the judgment of God, therefore didn't fight what they did because to fight what they did, was to fight God who brings judgment. David didn't have to fight or to try to stop the rebellion of his sons because he, and his authority to rule was in God's hands. If God wanted him off the throne, He would put him off. If God

wanted him to continue ruling, God would let him continue to rule. David was not being lenient with rebellion in his own household, nor was he holding others to a stricter standard than his family. He was simply submitting himself to the judgment of God.

This helps explain the great grief David felt for Absalom when Joab killed him. David knew that Absalom's rebellion and subsequent death were the result of his sin with Bathsheba. David knew that Absalom's ruined life was not just because of his son's sin, but was primarily caused by David. This was *almost* more than he could stand.

When Sheba rebelled against David's right to rule, David knew this wasn't a part of the judgment of God. He knew this was Sheba's problem, and that if this rebellion wasn't "nipped in the bud," more rebellion would soon follow. In the rebellion concerning Sheba, David was dealing with men, but in the rebellion of Absalom and Adonijah, he was dealing with God.

David, a man after God's own heart, was able to ascertain the will of God in circumstances around him. When he wasn't able to ascertain the will of God, he willingly put himself in the hands of God, knowing that God understood his lack of discernment, and that God's perfect will would be done.

Step Number 2

Ittai the Gittite going with David

II Samuel 15:19-23

II Samuel 15:19-23, *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. 20 Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee. 21 And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. 22 And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. 23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.*

Who is Ittai the Gittite? A Gittite is a resident of Gath, a Philistine city. Ittai's name appears only 9 times in the entire Bible. Eight times with the spelling "Ittai" and once with the spelling "Ithai." According to II Samuel 15:18-22, Ittai was a leader in the city of Gath, one of five royal cities of the Philistines, Joshua 13:3, I Samuel 6:17, and the native city of the giant, Goliath. According to I Samuel 27:4,7, David dwelt at Gath a full year and four months while running from Saul. It was probably during this time that David and Ittai became acquainted. The scriptures tell us that Ittai had been recently exiled from Gath and had found refuge in Israel, II Samuel 15:19.

There is no scripture that tells why Ittai had been exiled from his native country. It seems probable he was exiled as a matter of national security. Ittai met David when he was running from Saul and dwelt among the Philistines. They became fast friends and it is very likely Ittai was converted to Judaism by David. When Saul was killed and David was anointed king of Israel, the Philistines could not allow Ittai, who was a close personal friend of the King of Israel to remain with them. Just as the princes of the Philistines required Achish to cast David and his army away from them when they fought Israel, I Samuel 29, so they would cast away all of David's friends

There is a statement made in the record about David's mighty men which shows the strong influence David had on Ittai and his family. II Samuel 23:29 records Ittai as one of David's mighty men by stating, *Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin.* This passage also records that Ribai, the father of Ittai lived at Gibeah, one of the cities of Benjamin. I Chronicles 11:31 backs up this thought stating, *Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah, that pertained to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite,* These two passages are strong indications that Ittai's father, Ribai, also left the Philistine city of Gath when Ittai left and lived in Gibeah, one of the cities of Benjamin.

Why do I think Ittai of II Sam. 23:29 and I Chronicles 11:31 is the Ittai before us? First of all, he was one of David's mighty men. Secondly, notice the wording of II Samuel 23:29 and I Chronicles 11:31. II Samuel 23:29 declares, *...Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin.* I Chronicles 11:31 states, *...Ithai the son of*

Ribai of Gibeah, that pertained to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite. When David gave the native city of every other person in his list of mighty men, an example of the wording is: *Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash*, verse 30. This wording leads me to believe Ittai was not a native of the city, but had recently come to live there.

His conversion to Judaism and his admiration for David was apparent from verse 21, *“And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.”* He was probably the leader of the 600 men mentioned in II Samuel 15:18, for verse 22 reads, *“And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him.”* It is quite remarkable to note that David had 600 men in his charge when he lived in Gath, I Samuel 27:2, and that there were 600 men with him at this time. It is certainly true “those things we give to others always return to us.” According to II Samuel 18:2, David set a third of the people under Joab, a third under Abishai, and a third under Ittai. Ittai proved himself to be one of David’s valiant men, II Samuel 23:29, and I Chronicles 11:31, and more faithful than many of the Israelites by birth.

It should also be noted that Ittai brought all his children and, it is presumed, their mothers. This indicates Ittai was with David for the “long haul.” It is very possible, that, being an exile from the Philistines, and a newcomer to Israel, he didn’t know who to leave his family with. He knew he could trust David, therefore brought his entire family into exile with him.

What is the significance of Ittai?

The nation of Israel is supposed to be an example of God’s kingdom to all the nations of the world. They have been called by God to preach the everlasting gospel to all the people of the world. David understood this principle and portrayed Godliness while living in the pagan Philistine nation. Israel, as a nation, will eventually turn completely away from the mission God has given them, causing God to turn from them, organize His church and turn to the Gentiles.

1. Salvation and eternal rewards are free to all. (a.) Before a person can be saved, they must hear about the Saviour. Ittai, no doubt, became acquainted with the salvation story from David. When trouble came into his life and he was exiled from his native country, he sought help from the only place he knew, King David from Israel. Before a lost person can be saved, they must hear about the Saviour. That person may not be saved immediately, but when the Holy Spirit begins to trouble them, they will seek help from the only place they can get help. (b.) Once a person is truly saved, they will always be saved. Ittai had no desire to return to Gath, and a saved person has no desire to return to his old life. Ittai would stay with David until death and the saved person will stay with Christ until their death. (c.) Every saved person will be sanctified. Ittai may have been considered a failure in Gath, but not in Israel. Just because this old sinful world rejects a person does not mean he cannot be a success for Christ, for God gives power to overcome every obstacle.

2. He is a symbol of the Gentiles who will be grafted into the true vine. Ittai is not a Jew, but a “man without a country,” being exiled from his native land. We don’t know why he was exiled, just that he was. His search for a new permanent home ended when

he found Israel. So it is with all Gentiles. There is no “continuing city” except that city established by God. Our search for a permanent dwelling is established and satisfied when God in His gracious mercy adopts us into his family.

3. Those that are first shall be last, and those that are last shall be first. The Jews considered themselves to be God’s children by birth. They shunned all contact with those “beneath them”; thinking they were better than everybody else. But David, like God, does not give rewards to Israelites just because they are Israelites. Rewards are given according to works, not according to station in life. So if your birth is not “high,” your works for God can be. Live according to faith, obeying God’s precious Word and your reward will be great.

4. God will always send help during times of trouble. The brook Kidron means “turbid, torrent, or dusky place.” This is referring to the flood of darkness David and the faithful of Israel were cast into. The company is going toward the wilderness, a savage, untamed place full of the uncertainties of tomorrow. It was when David and his followers were going through this terrible darkness that Ittai and his faithful followers appeared. David did not expect Ittai to help him at all; for he had just recently come to Israel. David did not realize the depth of Ittai’s commitment to God, to Israel, and to her great king. So it is with us. There are those dark times that come into our lives, when those whom we love and have tried to help have turned against us and it seems every circumstance is against us. Then God in his infinite mercy and wisdom sends us somebody who is completely committed to our well being, almost out of the clear blue, to help us. That person will always remain in our hearts as a true friend because this friend came from God.

5. A new convert can overcome a lot more of Satan’s attacks than we think. Ittai was a stranger to Israel, an exile from his own country, a recent proselyte and a new convert. We would normally think a person such as this would need to be protected from the evil around them, but the Spirit of God in a new convert (be it a child or adult) is just as strong as the Spirit of God in an old convert. Let us learn that God gives great grace to new converts, so they will be able to fight the good fight of faith and win the victory.

Step Number 3

The Ark of God, Zadok and Abiathar return to Jerusalem

II Samuel 15:24-29

II Samuel 15:24-29, And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. 25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation: 26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him. 27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me. 29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there.

In the last chapter, we found that God sent Ittai to David as a help and comfort. Ittai was not the only friend that appeared. The Bible records that a great company of priest and Levites followed David. They followed their king while he sat on the throne and they would follow their king into exile.

The reunion was no doubt joyous because David welcomed their support. The appearance of the priests, the Levites, and the Ark of God would give David great comfort. But there was something about the presence of the Ark that bothered David. He would remember I Samuel 4:1-22. This passage tells the story of Israel losing the battle against the Philistines, and rejoicing greatly when the Ark of God was brought to them. The next day they again lost the battle and the Ark of God was taken captive by the Philistines. The reason? Israel was trusting the Ark of God instead of trusting the God of the Ark. God troubled the Philistines much while the Ark was in their country. Dagon, the god of the Philistines, lost its hands and head. Many Philistines got sick and died. The Philistines returned the Ark of God to Israel and David attempted to move the Ark to Jerusalem. II Samuel 6:1-11 records the story of this move. Although there was much preparation, great rejoicing and worship, the move was wrong. Uzzah was killed for his error of touching the ark. On the second try, when David did things God's way, the ark was successfully brought into Jerusalem, and David danced before the Lord, not just because the Ark of God was brought into Jerusalem, but because the God of the ark was brought into Jerusalem. The Ark of God is a symbol of the grace of God.

David understood there is only one way to handle the Ark of God and that is God's way. David understood there was more involved than friendship or having the Ark of God with him. David longed for more than the Ark of God to be with him, he longed for the God of the Ark. It was for this reason that he ordered Zadok to return the Ark of God to its rightful place.

It may seem strange to us that at the lowest time, David would send the priests and the Ark of God back to Jerusalem. One would think that David, being the spiritual man he was, would feel a great necessity to have the priests and the Ark of God near him. Rather

it was *because* David was spiritually minded that he sent the Ark of God back to Jerusalem. David knew God had established Jerusalem as the place where He was to be worshipped. David wanted God to be with him, but he wanted more to be with God, and Jerusalem was the proper place to be with God. David was saying, "Let me roam wherever in this world it pleases God for me to roam, but let God be established so all Israel can see Him." David knew that if God was pleased with him, He would bring him back to Jerusalem as king, and if not, so be it. If we would be a man after God's own heart, we would be like David. Let our lives be unstable, but let God reveal his unalterable perpetuity to the entire world.

Step Number 4
David's prayer concerning the counsel
(not the person) of Ahithophel
II Samuel 15:30-31

II Samuel 15:30-31, *And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up. 31 And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.*

Psalms 55:12-14 records that David was hurt because Ahithophel, his friend, turned against him. *For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: 13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. 14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.* Ahithophel had been David's chief counselor for many years, and his turning to Absalom was something David evidently hadn't considered. It was a shock to David to learn about various people who turned against him, but Ahithophel's treachery was worse than most. One very important reason for David's being stunned at Ahithophel was that he and David had worshipped God together. He didn't think those that had worshipped God with him would turn against him, but that isn't always the case. When it happens, it is a great shock. More reasons for David's consternation over Ahithophel's treachery will be revealed throughout this chapter.

David does not pray that Ahithophel be turned into foolishness but that his *counsel* be turned into foolishness. Notice: David wishes no harm on Ahithophel as a person, but that his **counsel** be turned into foolishness. David has separated his feelings for Ahithophel from what he desires concerning Ahithophel's counsel. If we are to be a person after God's own heart, this is what we must also do.

David praying that Ahithophel's counsel be turned into foolishness presents a very interesting insight into II Samuel 17:23, *“And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.”* Notice the deliberate actions of Ahithophel to end his life. Why would a man commit suicide just because his advice was rejected in favor of a better plan?

To answer this question, we will first reveal the position of Ahithophel in David's kingdom, then we will uncover the position of Ahithophel in David's family.

First, notice the position of Ahithophel in David's kingdom. I Chronicles 27:33, *“And Ahithophel was the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite was the king's companion.”* The passage in I Chronicles 27:25-34 gives the “cabinet” during the reign of David. Ahithophel started out as counselor to the king, and after his suicide, Jehoiada and Abiathar took his place. Ahithophel must have been an excellent counselor since it took two men to replace him, II Samuel 27:34. As further proof of Ahithophel's skill at

counseling, read II Samuel 16:23, *“And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counseled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.”* This scripture does not say that Ahithophel inquired of God, but that his counsel was *as if* he had inquired of God. The Bible indicates that God had to intervene in Ahithophel’s counsel or David would have been killed, II Samuel 17:14, *“...For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.”* Notice that the counsel of Ahithophel was good, not bad. The intent of the Lord was not to bring evil upon Ahithophel or David, but upon Absalom.

Ahithophel went with Absalom in his rebellion against David. II Samuel 15:12, *“And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.”* Why would Ahithophel stop giving counsel to David and help with the rebellion?

The answer is found in Ahithophel’s position in David’s family. II Samuel 23:1-39 gives the record of David’s mighty men. Verse 34 states, *“Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite.”* Now read II Samuel 11:3, *“And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”* Please note: Eliam was the father of Bathsheba and Ahithophel is her grandfather!! Ahithophel, Bathsheba’s grandfather, was not considered by David as being a mighty man, but his son, Eliam, the father of Bathsheba, was. What did Eliam do to be considered a mighty man? His name is mentioned only two times in the Bible. One time is II Samuel 23:34, where he is mentioned as one of David’s mighty men, and the other is II Samuel 11:3. From the evidence produced in these scriptures, the only thing Eliam did to be included as one of David’s mighty men was to be the father of Bathsheba, but I think it was the “way” he was the father of Bathsheba. Ahithophel, Bathsheba’s grandfather, and Eliam, Bathsheba’s father, had completely different attitudes concerning David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba. Eliam apparently forgave and tried to make the best of a bad situation, but Ahithophel did not forgive. Reading between the lines, which is risky business in scripture, it seems Ahithophel was biding his time until he could really hurt David. When Absalom began his rebellion, Ahithophel saw an opportunity to destroy David, therefore began giving counsel to Absalom. When his counsel was rejected, Ahithophel saw that his chance to destroy David was ended. This was what caused him to commit suicide, not that his counsel was rejected.

It is very interesting to think what this story would have been like if Ahithophel had forgiven David, instead of holding in his anger. If Ahithophel had been honest in discussing his feelings with David, his life would certainly not have ended in suicide. The time he lived would have been spent with happier thoughts. How tragic is the life and end of the person that refuses to forgive! We might think that having an unforgiving spirit won’t affect us, but we are only fooling ourselves. When we live with an unforgiving spirit, every day and every night for the rest of our life is affected. This is why the model prayer links asking forgiveness to our forgiving those that are indebted to us.

There is one other thing we ought to consider concerning Ahithophel. I do not believe he was a true worshipper of God, although he had all the outward signs. Notice in II Samuel 15:12 that Ahithophel came to Absalom "while he offered sacrifices." Absalom also had an outward show of religion, but his heart was far from God. If Ahithophel was a true worshipper of God, he would not have taken part in Absalom's false worship. As further proof of Ahithophel's false religion, what was the very first advice he gave Absalom? II Samuel 16:20,21, "*Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong.*" Ahithophel's counsel fulfilled the prophecy of Nathan, II Samuel 12:11, which caused Absalom to commit adultery; for he had a wife and children. Comparing II Samuel 14:27 with II Samuel 18:18, it appears Absalom's three sons died before manhood. I think it is very fair to conclude that if Ahithophel's worship of God had been true, he, like his son, would have forgiven David and the whole story of Absalom's rebellion would have been different. How tragic are the consequences of not forgiving!! How hard unforgiven sins make the heart!!

The two counsels Ahithophel gave Absalom.

1. II Sam. 16:21-23, Ahithophel advised Absalom to go in unto his father's concubines. This advice did two things. (1) It shows us the depravity of Absalom and Ahithophel, who would defile these women and David in such a way as this. (2) There is no doubt in my mind that Ahithophel gave this counsel as a way of getting back at David for defiling his granddaughter, Bathsheba.

2. II Samuel 17:1-3, Ahithophel's counsel concerning killing David contains the personal pronoun "I." "*I will arise and pursue...I will come upon him...make him afraid...I will smite the king only...I will bring back all the people.*" Ahithophel was not a warrior; he was a counselor. He was not a young man, but an older man, physically incapable of performing the feats he described. To determine Ahithophel's age, notice that he had great-grandchildren! Ahithophel's son was Eliam, his grand-daughter was Bathsheba, and she had children, at least one of which had died, which were the great-grandchildren of Ahithophel. His hate for David, and his desire for vengeance, nourished by his bitterness; was so strong he could find rest only when he had personally killed David, watching him die slowly and painfully.

Neither Absalom nor Ahithophel had any regard for the anointed of the Lord. Ahithophel would reason that he hadn't caused David to leave the throne; Absalom had done that. Absalom was doing God's will by being the instrument of chastisement against David. Both Absalom and Ahithophel forgot that God always punishes the instrument He uses to punish His children!

Step Number 5
David sends Hushai the Archite
back to Jerusalem
to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel
II Samuel 15:32-37

II Samuel 15:32-37, *And it came to pass, that [when] David was come to the top [of the mount], where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head: {33} Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me: {34} But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; [as] I [have been] thy father's servant hitherto, so [will] I now also [be] thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. {35} And [hast thou] not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, [that] what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell [it] to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. {36} Behold, [they have] there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's [son], and Jonathan Abiathar's [son]; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. {37} So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.*

This is the first place David worshipped.

(1.) It may seem inconceivable to us that David would even have a desire to worship in these very unfavorable circumstances. I have known, and I am sure you have known, people who will not come to church to worship when things go wrong. I'm not talking about sickness; I'm talking about serious or not so serious problems. Sometimes people won't come to church to worship if they are just tired. Most of the time when a loved one dies; the family won't come to church because of the heartache involved. Now, think about this just a minute. Aren't we supposed to go to God for help during trying times? Doesn't God accept our worship of Him when we don't "feel" like worshipping? Isn't God able to help us during times of stress? When King David, a man after God's own heart, had committed adultery with Bathsheba and Nathan the prophet told him the child would die, and the child did die, what did David do? II Samuel 12:20, "*Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.*" Was God pleased with David? Yes! Will He be pleased with us if we follow the example David left us? Yes!

(2.) Sometimes we think worshipping God makes things easier, but it is very important to notice the particular chain of events that takes place after David worships. Up to this point, David had received much sympathy from those around him. Everybody had been very kind to David, standing behind him and reaching out to help him in any way they could. But as soon as David worships God, Hushai appeared and left, and then two events take place. (a) Ziba lied about Mephibosheth and (b) Shimei felt the urge to curse David. This teaches us that often our troubles only start when we begin to look to God. The world hates God and His Word and will fight those who desire to serve Him. Do not think it strange that things go wrong when you do right. Remember Job, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, who suffered because they were faithful, not unfaithful.

Who was Hushai the Archite? Primarily, he was the answer to David's prayer. In II Samuel 15:31, David prayed that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, and immediately Hushai appeared. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be an answer to somebody's prayer?

Hushai's name appears only 14 times in the entire Bible, yet he holds the distinctive title of being the "king's friend," II Samuel 16:17, or "the kings' companion," I Chronicles 27:33.

The kind of friend Hushai was to David becomes very clear in II Sam. 15:32 when he appeared before David with his coat rent and dirt upon his head. Hushai was very much disturbed that his friend David had been "dethroned" by Absalom. He displayed the grief of his heart by these outward actions. Now notice David's reaction to Hushai's grief in verse 33, "*If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me.*" That is a very remarkable thing to say to someone who is your friend, and who has come to help you through troubling times! Hushai didn't come to be a burden to David, but a help. He had come to give David comfort, but was told he would be a burden if he stayed. What was Hushai's reaction to David's statement? He didn't get mad, and didn't get his feelings hurt. He was a *true* friend. David and Hushai were together in their friendship, and both wanted God's best. The best was that Hushai return to Jerusalem to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel.

Notice in verse 34 David gives Hushai exact words to say to Absalom: *..I will be thy servant, O king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant.* Observe that David, for the first time in a long time, recognized Absalom as his son. During all the trouble between Absalom and David, Absalom referred to David only as king, while David occasionally referred to Absalom as his son. It was really too bad that the father-son relationship had broken down. Absalom needed a father, not necessarily a king. David needed a son, not a rebel.

The following scriptures show Absalom referring to David as king, not as father.

1. II Sam. 13:24, "*And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go with thy servant.*"
2. II Sam. 14:24, "*And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.*"
3. II Sam. 14:28, "*So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.*"
4. II Sam. 14:32, "*And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.*"
5. II Sam. 14:33, "*So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.*"
6. II Sam. 15:7, "*And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in*

Hebron.”

7. II Sam. 15:9, “*And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.*”

After David spoke to his friend Hushai, referring to himself as the father of Absalom, Hushai returned to Jerusalem, cleansed himself to remove any outward sign of his grieving over David, and met Absalom, Ahithophel, and their followers as they return to Jerusalem from Hebron. Compare II Sam. 15:9 to II Sam. 16:15. Hushai greeted Absalom and his company shouting, “*God save the king, God save the king.*” When Absalom asked him why he hadn’t gone with David, Hushai gave the answer David gave him. “*Nay; but whom the LORD, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father’s presence, so will I be in thy presence.*” Notice that Hushai didn’t refer to David as the “king of Israel,” the “former king of Israel,” or “David”; but as “thy father.” I believe Hushai was attempting to show Absalom, in this very subtle way, that he was rebelling against his own father, not against some unknown monarch.

Hushai continues to use the expression, “thy father,” when God used him to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel. Notice II Sam. 17:8, “*For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people.*” Then notice II Sam. 17:10, “*And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men.*” It was no accident that Hushai continually used the expression “father,” He was a true friend of David and understood his grief over his beloved, yet rebellious son: Absalom. He was a true friend that looked into the eyes of David, heard his speech, and then looked deeper into his heart to see what he was truly feeling. Such a friend was Hushai.

All of Hushai’s life seems to have been lived for this particular time of trouble in David’s life. Of the 14 times his name is mentioned in the Bible; 12 of these involve this incident. It should be noted that God answered David’s prayer because Absalom was completely taken in by Hushai’s feigned friendship.

Hushai did not push his advice, or his friendship upon Absalom. Instead he left the presence of Absalom at a very crucial time. Why did he leave? Because Hushai was trusting God, not his personal skills. In II Samuel 17:14, Ahithophel gave counsel to Absalom in the *absence* of Hushai. *Then Absalom called for Hushai to come in and give counsel. Hushai’s counsel was better than Ahithophel’s ...For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.* Notice that the counsel of Ahithophel was good. Remember that he was such an able counselor that when he committed suicide it took two counselors to take his place, II Samuel 27:34, and that his counsel was if a man had inquired at the oracle of God, II Sam. 16:23.

Hushai seemed to have been a quiet, refined individual, who didn’t stand out in a crowd. He seemed to have a great deal of influence on his family as his son Baanah was also a servant of the King’s court. Baanah was one of twelve people who supplied

victuals for King Solomon and his household, I Kings 4:16.

I think there is a very important point to notice concerning friends. David was the King of Israel, and as such had many people coming and going before him. He was very well known and it would be supposed that most people liked him. After all, he was a man after God's own heart. But it was during times of trouble that his real, true friends appeared to help him. So it is with us. There may be many people around us, but during times of trouble they all seem to disappear. Those people that remain are our real, true friends. Don't be too surprised if there aren't many left. In John 6, Jesus fed 5,000 people. When He left them, they sought Him all that night until the next day. When Jesus preached the true Word, they didn't believe on Him and went away. In John 19:25, there were only those few women and John who stood at the foot of the cross. Everyone else had forsaken Christ, but the apostles did come back. When Christ appeared after his resurrection, the largest crowd he met with was about 500 brethren, I Corinthians 15:6. When he gathered with his disciples at Galilee, some that were there doubted, even when they saw the living Jesus Christ with their own eyes, Matt. 28:17. Don't despair if you find you don't have very many true friends in your life. Just be glad God has given you the friends you have.

Step Number 6 The Lie of Ziba II Samuel 16:1-4

The name Ziba means “station,” “plantation or strength.”

II Samuel 16:1-4, *And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. 2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. 3 And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. 4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.*

Ziba's name occurs only in conjunction with David leaving his throne when Absolon rebelled against his father and tried to establish his kingdom in the place of David's.

There are three circumstances to notice concerning this man's life. The first is when he is introduced to us in II Samuel 9. The second is his treachery toward Mephibosheth in II Samuel 16. The third is the “cover-up” of his treachery in II Samuel 19. His life is a story of a man who is very prosperous, but isn't happy with his prosperity. He wants more and more.

II Samuel 9

It is good to re-examine some of the details of the house of Saul and David to understand the attitude of Ziba, to really understand why this man did what he did.

God had established David in his kingdom. Many good things had happened to ensure the throne. When David first became king, the house of Saul anointed Ishbosheth as king. They believed the house of Saul was to continue being king of Israel, and rebelled against David who had been out of the country, running for his life, living with the Philistines.

The Benjamites, like all people, are patriotic. They naturally want the king of all Israel to be from their tribe. Their status as a “major” tribe is greatly enhanced when the king is a Benjamite.

There were probably many rumors about the unfaithfulness of David, and the help King Saul had given him, even to giving him his daughter, Michal, to wife. It would probably be told that David had forsaken Michal, and Saul had, therefore, given her to another man.

Other rumors would speak of David's “loyalty” to the Philistines and how he had spent many years living with them. It would be supposed that this friendship had tainted his Jewish standards as he had lived among the “heathen” for so long. There would be fear that a king who wasn't completely Jewish would contaminate their nation with paganism. Therefore, the tribe of Benjamin anointed Ishbosheth, and some other tribes

anointed David.

When Ishbosheth was murdered, David did a strange thing which, more than likely, wasn't understood by the descendants of Saul. It probably wasn't talked about much either. David, II Samuel 4:12, ordered his young men to kill the murderers! If the household of Saul did talk about David's having the murderers of Ishbosheth killed, they probably said he did that to shut them up, to permanently seal a conspiracy to take over the complete nation of Israel.

The house of Saul didn't introduce a new king from the ranks of the elite. They let Abner do it. I suppose all the people of power and importance who were eligible to be king were afraid they would also be killed. I know there was much fear in the house of Saul, because it was the custom for a new king to kill all the descendants of the former king. This was supposed to establish the new king's kingdom. After Saul's death, Abner, the commander of Saul's army, proclaimed Ishbosheth king. He reigned for two years. II Samuel 4:1-7 records that he was finally murdered by his own captains. The name Ishbosheth means "man of shame." Originally his name was Eshbaal, as recorded in I Chronicles 8:33, which means "man of Baal." The repugnance with which Baal worship was regarded by the faithful in Israel frequently led to the substitution of the word for shame in the place of the name of the Canaanite deity.

It must be remarked here, that David didn't kill anybody when he became king. Even though the house of Saul didn't introduce a new king, that didn't mean they didn't want to. They were simply fearful for their own lives, therefore they backed off as far as they could, trying to keep a low profile in hopes David would either forget them, or consider them non-threatening.

Another way God established David as king of Israel was allowing him to soundly defeat the Philistines. This may not seem like a very important statement to us, but it certainly was to the Jews. Not only were the Philistines the enemies of the Jews, but David, the king of Israel, lived with them during the reign of Saul. Anybody who had a thought that David would compromise Israel because of friendship with the Philistines would have that thought put to rest.

David also brought the ark of God to Jerusalem. This would quiet any lingering doubts about David's faithfulness to God. To an Israelite, anybody who was faithful to God must also be faithful to Israel. So when David brought the ark to Jerusalem, it was a double confirmation that he would lead Israel to the correct worship of God. The people of Israel could certainly look forward to a good time of true worship and increased strength for their nation. David's kingdom was growing stronger and stronger, not only as people became used to him being king, but also his daily life gave great evidence of his faithfulness to God and the nation of Israel.

It was at this point that David wanted to show kindness to the house of Saul. II Samuel 9:1 declares, *And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?* David wasn't going to show kindness to the house of Saul because of the person of Saul or the person of Jonathan, but to honor the covenant made between David and Jonathan. David and Jonathan were very special friends, and David simply wanted to remember their covenant and their relationship by showing kindness to someone in Saul's house. I know some would wonder what David

really had on his mind. I know any descendant of Saul would have been very nervous at the very mention of his household, but I also believe the servants of David wondered what was going to happen. The first thought they would have was that David was now established in his kingdom, and he would get vengeance for the many years of running from Saul, and all the trouble and trials. Everybody knew there were descendants of Saul, but none of them stepped forward to receive the kindness David intended to give. Instead, the Bible records that they (I suppose "they" are some of the servants of David) called a servant of Saul's house unto David. Verse 2, *And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he.* A person suspicious of David's motives would probably think that David wouldn't kill a servant, as a servant doesn't make decisions. The servant follows the orders of their master.

There were other descendants of Saul, but apparently they were not known by David at this time. II Samuel 21, which is some years after II Samuel 9, records that the Gibeonites had prayed to God because Saul had killed many of that city in his zeal to appease Israel. When David inquired of God why Israel was suffering a famine, the story of Saul's destroying many Gibeonites in spite of the covenant between them and Israel, was told. The Gibeonites asked for seven sons of Saul to be given to them, that they might hang them up in Gibeah. David gave them seven of the sons of Saul. I don't know when David found out about the other descendants of Saul, but it seems probable that he knew there were more of them than Mephoboshith. When the sons of Saul were hanged by the Gibeonites, they were appeased, God was appeased, and the famine ceased from the land of Israel. David let the other descendants of Saul live in peace. If the Gibeonites hadn't asked for the death of seven sons of Saul, there is no doubt they would have continued living.

I believe Ziba was a very important man in Saul's household. When it came time to select somebody to represent their household before the king of Israel, this man was chosen. He was a mature, prosperous individual with children and servants of his own, and had probably dealt with wisdom. He was familiar with the history of Saul and David's reign.

David then inquired as to the descendants of the house of Saul. If anybody would know, it would be their servant, Ziba. It is amazing to me that Ziba mentioned only one descendant of Saul, and that was Mephibosheth. It may have been that Ziba believed David wanted to know *only* about the descendants of Jonathan. If this is what Ziba was thinking, then it is perfectly understandable that he would mention Jonathan's only son. Mephibosheth was lame, being injured when his nurse dropped him as she fled when Saul was killed, and David became the new king of Israel. This might have been an attempt to summon pity from David because of this feeble man. It was probably meant to show David that none of the descendants of Saul had any strength to attack him, or to cause him any trouble. If David's plan was to kill the descendants of Saul, they might figure this man's life wasn't worth much anyway, because he was lame upon his feet. He couldn't work at a normal job, and probably had to be supported by the family.

When Mephibosheth appeared before David, the things that happened appeared to be a real surprise to all. David gave all that pertained to Saul to Mephibosheth, and

instructed Ziba to take care of the land for him. Mephibosheth was given permission to eat at the king's table, and Ziba would work for him. Verse 10 records that Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants. This was a complete change for Ziba. I really don't know if he was given more or less responsibility, but I do know that he didn't like the change. He told the king he would do what was asked of him, but I believe this man was watching for a chance to change the situation. It must be understood that David, at this point, believed that Ziba and Mephibosheth were all that was left of the house of Saul. At least these were all the people that want to speak up at this time.

II Samuel 16

And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. 2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. 3 And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. 4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

It is amazing to read in verse 1 that Ziba brought all the food and animals for the king and his household. The fact is that Ziba had no intention of joining David on this excursion. Ziba would return to Israel and his prosperity while "his king" was running for his life. Compare this to Ittai the Gittite, and Hushai, David's friend, who were plainly going to travel with David, but were told to return to Israel. The outward appearance of Ziba's gifts to David betrayed the inward malice of his heart.

It should also be cited that Ziba didn't mention that Mephibosheth must be carried everywhere he goes, and Ziba was the servant to make sure this was done. Instead of stating this truth, Ziba made up a terrible story about Mephibosheth waiting at Jerusalem for the death of David and Absalom, trusting for the small chance that the kingdom of Israel would fall to him. I don't know where Ziba got the idea to say that Mephibosheth was staying in Jerusalem because he thought he was going to be made king, but that is what he told David. This was the only time any problem occurred with Ziba. It was very doubtful the descendants of Saul would choose Mephibosheth to be the next king. There were other sons of Saul that were more fit than a cripple. When David heard Ziba's speech, he gave all that belonged to Saul's house to Ziba.

I personally believe this was what Ziba was waiting to hear. There is no doubt in my mind that Ziba was the kind of person who was continually looking for an opportunity to get ahead, and this was a good opportunity. He was covering both sides of the fence at a single stroke. If David came back into his kingdom, he had all the possessions of Saul, and David would probably "get rid" of Mephibosheth. If he didn't come back, some other son of Saul would probably be made king. Ziba would probably lose all the possessions of Saul, but he would still be in a position of power.

II Samuel 19

II Samuel 19:16, 17, *And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hastened and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David. 17 And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.*

Ziba met the returning king with all the show of power and authority at his command. He gathered together his fifteen sons and twenty servants, and they all came over Jordan to meet the king and accompany him back to Israel. It is very interesting that Ziba was with Shimei and a thousand men of the tribe of Benjamin. All of these were rebels against King David and God's will. They stood before the king in all their regal splendor, trying to impress him with their greatness, yet hidden within their blackened hearts remained the seed of betrayal.

It should be noticed that Ziba said nothing to the king, although Shimei had much to say. Ziba would wait until the king spoke to him, but David said nothing. Ziba was probably hoping his silence would show his innocence while the talkative Shimei shows his guilt. It didn't work. Ziba's silence spoke volumes about his treachery and there is no doubt in my mind that King David realized it, but said nothing. When a person is caught in a lie, there is nothing left but silence. Any attempt to clear up the lie with another lie only clarifies the lie.

II Samuel 19:29, *And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.*

In II Samuel 19:24-30, Mephibosheth appeared before David, not beyond or at the River Jordan, but at the palace in Jerusalem. He didn't cleanse himself before he appeared before the king, and his appearance was worse than a beggar. He had not dressed his feet (cut his toenails to clean the filth caused by walking barefoot or in sandals) nor trimmed his beard (shaving the unruly parts, or caused it to become untangled) nor washed his clothes from the time the king left until that very day. There is no doubt Mephibosheth's unkempt bodily condition revealed the intense grief he had been going through because of his king's absence. This was in complete contrast to Ziba who appeared before David beyond Jordan with everything in perfect order.

Neither Ziba nor Mephibosheth spoke to the king. Both waited until the king spoke to them. As David looked upon the filthy condition of Mephibosheth, he must have realized that a person couldn't get this dirty in a short time. The long toenails and disarrayed beard spoke of Mephibosheth's sorrow while David was away. His physical condition made evident to David that while Mephibosheth wasn't with him in the flesh, he was certainly with him in the spirit. How could David, or any man for that matter, look upon this crippled, filthy man and believe he was lying?

David nevertheless asked Mephibosheth why he didn't go with him. I suppose David wanted to compare Ziba's story with Mephibosheth's. Mephibosheth told of Ziba's deception with words spoken from his heart. The anguish of his heart was clear to David. He asked for nothing, only that his king be back on the throne. He had enough, let Ziba take all.

This story also answers the question: What do you do when you know somebody is lying, but can't tell who? David didn't try to find out who lied, but seemingly took both

men at their word. He separated them, because they couldn't work together. David will leave the final outcome with God. This is what we ought to do. The name of Ziba isn't mentioned in the Bible again.

Mephibosheth is mentioned only one other time. This was in II Samuel 21. There was a famine in the land which lasts for three years. When David inquired of God, he was informed that the famine was caused by the Gibeonites, Joshua 9:3-27. When David called the Gibeonites, they told him it was because Saul massacred many of them despite the covenant between them and Israel. They demanded seven sons of Saul to be turned over to them that they might hang them up before God. David agreed to this, and in verse 7 and 8 David spares the sons of Mephibosheth because of the covenant between Jonathan and himself, I Samuel 20:14,15.

Step Number 7
The cursing of Shimei
II Samuel 16:5-14

II Samuel 16:5-14, *And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. 6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. 7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: 8 The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. 9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. 10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? 11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. 12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day. 13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust. 14 And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.*

The cursing by Shimei takes place as David came to the city of Bahurim. Little is known about the location of this city except that it is on the East side of the Mount of Olives. It is probably a city of Benjamin for it is often connected with a Benjamite.

Question # 1

Who is Shimei?

We know nothing about this man except that he is the son of Gera, of the house of Saul, II Samuel 16:5, and some of the circumstances of his life as outlined in this scripture. His name means "Jehovah is fame or famous" and is a very popular Hebrew name, being especially common among the Levites. There are some things we can know about Shimei and people like him from this scripture.

(1) He is representative of the kind of people whose sole purpose in life is to condemn the innocent. David had family trouble, and the family trouble had caused him to have kingdom trouble. He left his God-given throne, and his God-given family. He was weeping, and worshipping God. He was confused, and unsettled about the next move. Ziba had just lied and left, and David was confused about Mephibosheth. It is during times of intense stress that these kinds of people appear "out of the woodwork" to heap more misery upon God's children. They are probably the lowest humans living, as far as judging right and wrong are concerned. These are derelict, manipulative people who cannot see the truth, even when they look straight at it.

(2) II Samuel 16:5 proclaims Shimei was of the house of Saul. II Samuel 2:8,9 states that when Saul died and David became King, *...Abner, the captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim; and made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.* The house of Judah followed David. II Samuel 3:1 declares *Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.* Ishbosheth was killed in II Samuel 4:5-8 and in chapter 5, verses 1-5, David was officially established as king over all Israel. The house of Saul was no longer counted as a "royal family" in Israel. Shimei and all his household were "left out in the cold." It is likely that the loss of prestige, power, and wealth that belong to a "royal family," caused Shimei to become very bitter. His bitterness was so intense that even the truth could not penetrate the shell of hate he had built toward the house of David.

In all fairness to the Benjamites, and to the inhabitants of Bahurim, we should note that everybody in Bahurim doesn't think like Shimei. Read II Samuel 17:15-21 how an unnamed woman in Bahurim protected Jonathan and Ahimaaz, allowing them to bring a vital message to David. The lesson of the unnamed woman is that men may not know who you are, or what you do, but God sees all and will reward accordingly.

Question # 2

Why did he curse David?

He couldn't see the truth when he was looking straight at it. David had been established by God as the rightful ruler of Israel, but Shimei:

(1) said that David was a bloody man. Shimei believed that David had shed much innocent blood, especially of the house of Saul. Shimei was evidently unaware (or most likely just refuses to be aware) that David had shown kindness to Saul's son, Mephibosheth, by giving him everything that *...pertained to Saul and to all his house...but Mephibosheth...shall eat bread alway at my table...* II Samuel 9:9,10. David, because of kindness toward the house of Saul, II Samuel 9:1, had done all he could to take care of the living descendants of Saul.

(2) said that David was a man of Belial. Anybody who lived in the kingdom of David and hadn't read the Psalms of David was very unlearned indeed. Anybody who lived in the Kingdom of David and didn't know he was a man who was trying to obey God wasn't aware of the real facts.

(3) said that God was punishing David for killing Saul. David was innocent of the blood of Saul, even though Shimei was convinced the opposite. David was not in the battle when Saul was killed, but was chasing the Amalekites, who had spoiled his city, Ziklag, taken the women captive, and burned the city. II Samuel 1:1,2 records that David did not even hear about Saul's death until three days later. Shimei conveniently forgot Saul was the one trying to kill David. Isn't it amazing how the facts are changed to suit what one desires to believe? Shouldn't we be very careful lest we become like Shimei?

(4) said that the judgment of God was upon David because he took the throne away from Saul. According to Shimei God was taking the throne away from David and giving it to Absalom. There is no scripture that teaches this, so where Shimei got this idea can only be surmised. Shimei, and people like him, do not need scripture or facts to reach

conclusions. In their eyes, they are wiser than the wisdom of the Word and are able to discern what they consider to be the truth.

The trouble is: truth changed in the eyes of Shimei. When David was leaving Jerusalem, Shimei's "truth" caused him to violently accuse David. When David returned to Jerusalem, Shimei conveniently forgot his "truth" and meekly submitted himself to his returning king. To Shimei, he was right on both occasions.

Question # 3

Why did David let him curse?

Abishai, who will become one of David's thirty heroes, said in verse 9, "*Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.*" David's reply is found in verses 10-12, "*And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.*"

1. Verse 10, Because God told Shimei to curse. We sometimes have a hard time understanding that God may give anybody permission to curse, but this is what David said. It is certainly not in the perfect will of God for Shimei to do this evil thing, but God is allowing it to happen.

2. Verse 10, Who can stop him? If we try to stop this man from cursing, isn't that the same thing as trying to stop the will of God from being carried out?

3. Verse 11, If my son is seeking my life, why shouldn't this Benjamite also seek my life. David was not willing to strike out against his son, Absalom. He was unwilling to strike out against Shimei, who was also a part of the judgment of God. Why didn't David defend himself? He knew Absalom's rebellion was the result of his sin with Bathsheba. This brings up a very interesting point. If we have committed sin and then asked God to forgive us and He does forgive us, must we still pay the consequences of that sin? Yes!! David was reaping the physical consequences of forgiven sin. The spiritual consequences are laid on Christ at Calvary, forgiven and forgotten, but the physical consequences will be paid on this earth.

4. Verse 12, God may look on my affliction. Note the word, "may." David was completely at God's mercy, knowing he didn't deserve His help. It is good when our friends see our affliction, but it is better when God sees it. Our friends may be able to help us temporarily, but they can help us wrong. God has permanent help for us, and it is the right kind.

5. God may return good for the cursing. David believed that if he patiently endured these terrible circumstances, God would see his broken-ness and send blessings instead of cursing. No wonder God, in Acts 13:22, proclaims David as a "*...a man after mine own heart...*".

Shimei's Apology

In II Samuel 19:16,17, Shimei makes a very wise move. He, probably unknowingly,

followed the scripture given by Christ in Matthew 5:25, “*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.*” To reinforce the strength of his position, and to help safeguard his life, he appeared first, before any of David’s other accusers came to him. He didn’t come to David alone, but in the company of the men of Judah, a thousand Benjamites, Ziba and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. These dissenters didn’t arrange themselves in a group by themselves, but mingled with the people of Judah, the kingly tribe. They were all putting their lives on the line for each other. David might have very quietly killed Shimei, and perhaps one or two more dissenters, but it would be very difficult to quietly kill over one thousand men who are mixed and mingled with the faithful of Judah. This is the exact same situation presented in the parable of the tares. The tares (children of Satan) are mingled with the wheat (children of God). God doesn’t want the tares removed from the wheat until the time of judgment, lest the wheat also be destroyed. David saw and understood the strategy, yielded himself because he didn’t desire to kill the innocent along with the guilty. He knew he was king, and they knew he was king, that was enough for today. Tomorrow would be another day, and the guilty would be punished later. So unbelievers will not be punished while believers are still on the earth. Their judgment will come later.

The End of Shimei

Shimei continued to live peaceably under David’s reign and doesn’t cause any more problems. As David came to the end of his life, he encouraged his son, Solomon, concerning his reign over Israel. David instructed Solomon to kill Joab for his disobedience and for the deaths of Abner and Amasa, I Kings 2:5,6. He instructed Solomon to show kindness to Barzillai the Gileadite, and to do *something* to Shimei so that his hoar (white, old age) head would come to the grave without blood.

Solomon, obeying the command of his father reached an agreement with Shimei that he would move to Jerusalem and never pass over the brook Kidron, I Kings 2:36-38. Shimei, however, remained an authority unto himself, and after three years of living peaceably in Jerusalem, decided to forget the covenant he had made with God and Solomon and traveled to Gath to retrieve two run-a-way servants. (Just a little side thought right here, but if Shimei had treated his servants better, they might not have run away. This just goes to show that Shimei is a very hard man to deal with.) Solomon called him before his throne, repeated the terms of the agreement and had Benaiah kill him. This didn’t hurt the authority of Solomon, but helped to establish him as king of Israel.

Even though the change of opinion makes little difference in the final outcome, it is still important to be as accurate as possible when dealing with the Word of God. We will all be judged by how we handle his precious word, and I do not want to take any part of his inspired, preserved word lightly.