

**Title:** Faith in God's Sovereignty  
**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 15  
**Series:** The Promise of the Messianic Kingdom

1. Introduction:

- a. Having been unjustly restored by his father, Absalom immediately went to work. Our section opens with Absalom intending to seize what does not belong to him, the kingdom.
  - i. Initially, his attempt seems harmless because Absalom does not use force. Absalom is clever and dashing and knows how to work the crowd. However, by power or deceit, his evil is the same.
  - ii. In attempting to seize the kingdom, Absalom shows us again that he has no love for God or His Word. Although David had his faults, we must remember that he was still the Lord's anointed king. In attempting to overthrow David, Absalom was fighting against God.
    1. **Daniel 2:21A** He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings...
- b. Beloved, even though our text opens with betrayal and scheming, it closes with hope and faith in God. We learn that the sovereignty of God is all-encompassing, and as believers, we are to submit to God's sovereign decrees, no matter what they might be.
  - i. **Romans 8:28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

2. Verses 1-12: Absalom's Rebellion: After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. (2) And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And when he said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel," (3) Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you." (4) Then Absalom would say, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice." (5) And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. (6) Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. (7) And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron. (8) For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the LORD.'" (9) The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. (10) But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!'" (11) With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. (12) And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's

counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

a. As the darling of Israel's new generation, Absalom carefully cultivated his image. The chariot, horses, and servants he appointed for himself would not necessarily arouse suspicion; they may have been understood as a prince's prerogative.

i. The moment he had been restored, even though he was not king, Absalom set up a spectacular display of royalty and became the talk of the town.

b. Absalom wasn't merely showing off. He worked the crowd. He prioritized being up early and standing outside the courthouse, starting conversations with those coming and waiting to have their cases decided. He would ask what the issue was and then listen sympathetically. He would agree with the grieved party that they had a legitimate case (even if they didn't). That was only part of Absalom's supposed caring approach. Absalom would then say, "**Despite your convincing case, no one is assigned to you by the king to hear it.**" In other words, the king does not care for you. This was meant to start a revolt and dissatisfaction among the people. Then, he closed with an, "**Oh, that I was the judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.**" Finally, instead of the people bowing to him as the king's son, Absalom would reach out and kiss the people.

i. So Absalom was a self-important, flattering malcontent who fermented rebellion to overthrow

his father. The problem is that the people fell for his act and longed for him to be king.

- c. If we think about it, Absalom's tactics are still used by politicians today. We often see them:
  - i. Photographed while at the fair.
  - ii. Listening attentively and with feigned concern.
  - iii. Kissing babies
  - iv. Flipping hamburgers at a bar-b-cue.
- d. Unfortunately, this kind of manipulation always seems to work, and the Bible tells us that Absalom **stole the hearts of Israel**.
  - i. This was not an honest transaction. It was thievery. He was stealing valuable property on false pretenses. Gaining a heart by hypocritical means or securing the confidence of another by lying promises is a grave sin. Absalom broke the ninth and tenth commandments without any remorse. He was a covetous, thieving liar.
- e. But not only was Absalom a covetous, thieving liar, but he was a guilty blasphemer as well. He openly breaks the third commandment. He takes the name of the Lord in vain. Like so many today, He used the name of God only when it suited him.
  - i. Absalom's worst sin was using the Lord's name to further his cause. The Bible tells us that **at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron. (8) For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the LORD will**

**indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the LORD.”**

- ii. This was an act of religious hypocrisy amounting to profanity.
  - 1. It shows how good Absalom was at deceiving his father. Absalom knew the depth and sincerity of his father's faith. He knew that nothing would be more significant to David than to find evidence of faith in his son. So, he used the name of the Lord to further his rebellion and disobedience. The wickedness of Absalom was great.
  - 2. We must understand that the same great sin is involved in every act of religious hypocrisy, in every instance in which we pretend reverence to God to secure a selfish end.
- f. However, even in Absalom's deception, God teaches us his truths. There are two here for us to consider.
  - i. Truth # 1 - God's Word always comes to pass. In other words, we see the sovereignty of God. Absalom and his carefully crafted rebellion directly resulted from God's threatened disaster over David's sins in 2 Samuel 12.
    - 1. **2 Samuel 12:10-11A** Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' (11) Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house...

- ii. Truth # 2 - Absalom's deed is a wrong and despicable act of rebellion against God's kingdom for which he alone is responsible. In other words, he is not absolved from his wickedness because of sovereignty. So, we have the truthfulness of God's word versus the wickedness of Absalom's act—sovereignty vs. human responsibility.
1. As humans, we are accountable for the sins we commit. Absalom will be held responsible for his wickedness. But how do we reconcile these two seemingly opposite truths together? The biblical answer is clearly laid before us. Peter packed both sides of this issue into the sermon on Pentecost:
  2. **Acts 2:23** this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.
  3. **Isaiah 10:5-7** Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury!  
(6) Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.  
(7) But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few;
- iii. God ordained it, and yet Abasalom is guilty of doing it.

3. Verses 13-18 - Faith In God's Word - And a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom." (14) Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword." (15) And the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides." (16) So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left ten concubines to keep the house. (17) And the king went out, and all the people after him. And they halted at the last house. (18) And all his servants passed by him, and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king.

a. When David receives word of Absalom's betrayal, he says, **"Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword."**

i. The writer seems to use the story of David's flight to highlight David's faith.

b. But why run? David had repented and was now walking in obedience. The context makes this clear. We could ask, "Was David not promised God's protection and help? Should he not cast himself on God, who had been his refuge and strength in every need?"

- i. There is no doubt that David did cast himself upon God. We see it in this chapter. And yet he still fled from Absalom. Why?
- ii. David must have remembered the chastisement of God through Nathan the Prophet.

1. **"Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house."**

2. That chastisement was now being fulfilled, and while it lasted, the joy and comfort of God's presence was interrupted.

- a. So David understood that what was ultimately happening was God's doing. He submitted to it and left the kingdom.

3. However, God was still with him, even carrying him through the valley of the shadow of death. Like the Apostle Peter, he was brought to the very verge of destruction, but God's unseen hand was stretched out to save him at the critical moment.

- a. David understood **Psalms 103:9-11** He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. (10) He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. (11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

4. Verses 19-23 - Faith must be devote - Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile

from your home. (20) You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where? Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you.” (21) But Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be.” (22) And David said to Ittai, “Go then, pass on.” So Ittai the Gittite passed on with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. (23) And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness.

a. David stops Ittai the Gittite, a fugitive from Philistia’s city of Gath. David will not allow Ittai to act under compulsion. He had only served David for a brief time. Why should he share in David’s sudden disaster? David graciously releases Ittai to serve the new king and enjoy an everyday life. However, Ittai refuses.

- i. Ittai uses a double oath to put his answer in bold print to underscore how seriously he means his words. David had urged him to return and stay with the king, i.e., Absalom, but Ittai insisted only David was the king. Ittai’s allegiance is only for the man appointed by God.
- ii. **2 Samuel 15:21** But Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD lives, and **as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be.**”

- iii. Ittai holds nothing back from David—even his children share the hazards of Ittai’s faithfulness in David’s uncertain future.
  - 1. **2 Samuel 15:22B** So Ittai the Gittite passed on with all his men and all the little ones who were with him.
- iv. Ittai’s devotion to the king is what is expected from us regarding King Jesus. Ittai’s words echo the words of Paul in **Philippians 1:20** as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.
- v. Ittai is a faithful servant. There is irony here. David’s son is unfaithful (conspiring), yet a stranger who owed David nothing is faithful (risking everything). Ittai is willing to share in David’s deliverance or doom. His heart is entirely for the king. Ittai chooses to suffer with the true king rather than enjoy the pleasure under a false king.
  - 1. This is the very call of Christianity, defined in **Hebrews 11:24-26** By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (26) He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

5. Verses 24-29 - Faith surrenders to Sovereignty - And Abiathar came up, and behold, Zadok came also with all the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God until the people had all passed out of the city. (25) Then the king said to Zadok, “Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place. (26) But if he says, ‘I have no pleasure in you,’ behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him.” (27) The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Are you not a seer? Go back to the city in peace, with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. (28) See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” (29) So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there.

a. After Ittai, the priests Zadok and Abiathar come to David. They are carrying the ark of God. The presence of the sacred ark would symbolize that God was indeed for David and not for Absalom. However, David remembered how badly it went with Israel in the days of Eli and his sons when the ark was carried into battle as some sort of amulet instead of the symbol it was. David wanted to avoid this same mistake.

b. David’s Faith is openly displayed for us here:

i. **Then the king said to Zadok, “Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place. But if he says, ‘I have no pleasure in you,’ behold,**

**here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him.”**

- ii. David will not allow the appearance of ‘I have the ark, therefore I have God.’ David was teaching his people something incredible. His restoration (should it happen) did not depend on whether he had God’s furniture but on whether he had God’s favor. Everything rested on grace.
- iii. He submits to God’s sovereignty. God will show grace, or he will not. Whatever the case, David is submitted. Listen to that submission, “...**here I am, let God do to me what seems good to him.”**
- iv. Beloved, this is not weak surrender but glorious submission. Here is the freedom of faith in the will of God. Everything depends on God.

6. Verses 30-37 - Faith prays - But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. (31) And it was told David, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” And David said, “O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” (32) While David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and dirt on his head. (33) David said to him, “If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. (34) But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so now I will

be your servant,’ then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. (35) Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So whatever you hear from the king's house, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. (36) Behold, their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son, and by them you shall send to me everything you hear.” (37) So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

a. We read that both the king and the people were in great distress. **David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up. He had his head covered; and he went barefoot; and all the people that were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as well.** The scene is stark and full of emotion. David is distraught. His own son wants him dead. David's covered head and bare feet were symbols of humiliation. They were a humble confession on the king's part that the affliction which had come to him was well deserved. He agrees with God's chastisement. When we sin, this is hard to do but essential.

i. It is as if David confesses, Oh, what a sinner I have been! How unworthily I have acted toward God. Whatever God does to me because of my sin is less than what my sin deserves.

1. **Ezra 9:13A** And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved...

ii. So David is suffering for his sins, but he is the rightful king. It is always tragic when God's people want something different than what God has given. Ungratefulness has always led to much sin.

1. We see the rejected king ascending the Mount of Olives, and he is weeping. This same scene of rejection will be repeated thousands of years later. The Holy Descendant of David, the rightful king, Jesus Christ, will also be rejected.

a. **John 1:10-11** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. (11) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

b. **Isaiah 53:3-6** He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own

way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- i. Christ's rejection leads to our forgiveness.
- iii. Beloved, we again see the similarities between David and Jesus.
  1. Both true kings are rejected by the people they have loved and served.
  2. Both weep in agony.
  3. Both pray on the Mount of Olives.
  4. Both make or will make a triumphant return.
  5. David saw, and Jesus will see those who rejected them be ashamed.
  6. The key difference is that David experienced rejection because of his sins, and Jesus experienced rejection because of our sins.
- b. David hears bad news about Ahithophel. Ahithophel has betrayed the king. We might ask, "Why would a trusted confidant do such a thing?"
  - i. The Bible records that Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather.
  - ii. **2 Samuel 11:3** And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"
  - iii. **2 Samuel 23:34** Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,
  - iv. Ahithophel, like Absalom, had harbored unforgiveness and bitterness in his heart. David's sins come full circle.

- c. Immediately, David prays: **O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.**'
- i. There was good reason for David's concern. Ahithophel was incredibly wise and a master strategist.
  - ii. Beloved, pay close attention to the text. No sooner does David pray that he receives an answer. We learn that prayer in the midst of strife is crucial.
- d. Hushai, David's special confidant arrives at the scene.
- i. Who would have guessed that David's prayer would be answered through this disheveled civil servant, Hushai? But God, in his providence, had sent an answer to David's prayer even before David had prayed.
    1. Our passage is incredible. God is attentive to the prayers of distress of his saints. He answers those prayers, maybe not as we thought he would, but perfectly according to our needs.
    2. Although God did not turn Ahithophel's advice to foolishness (as David prayed), God will, in the coming chapters, turn Absalom into a fool for rejecting it.
    3. Ahithophel's advice could have been the end of David, but God the Holy Spirit moved David to pray, and God the Father, in His Sovereignty, used that prayer to deliver his servant. The Bible teaches us that we should be prayerfully dependent people.

- a. **Romans 8:26** Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.
- b. **John 14:26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

7. Benediction:

- a. **Isaiah 45:6** that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other.

**Public Reading of Scripture:  
Isaiah 45:1-7**