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Knowing Your God

II Samuel 16

Intro: In the previous chapter, we saw Absalom make his move to unseat his father David from the throne. When David hears that Absalom is coming to Jerusalem, he quits the city with his family & loyal friends, hoping to prevent a blood bath. For the 2nd time in his life, David is running for his life but this time he's taking quite an entourage with him. On his way out of town, the king meets up with 3 of his friends. In ch16, we'll meet up with 3 of David's enemies – some obviously so but 1s more subtle. Ziba, Shimei & Ahithophel are the exact opposite of Ittai, Zadok & Hushai.

Before we jump in, let's remind ourselves of how we are to consider David. David is not just any ol' shmuck – he's **Yahweh's** chosen king. Thus, to rebel & fight against David is to rebel & fight against **Yahweh** & His kingdom. David must be viewed in terms of his office. So, Absalom's coup is not just a family squabble or even national politics; it's rebellion against **Yahweh's** anointed servant. This fact doesn't ignore David's sin or the consequences he now suffers because of it (**even by Absalom**). David's under **Yahweh's** election & His judgment but is still **Yahweh's** appointed servant. To despise, oppose or betray him is do despise, oppose or betray the God who appointed him.

1-4 - The 1st enemy we meet is Ziba, which is odd because, if anything, Ziba looks like a friend (**at least on the surface**). He shows up with plenty of relief & refreshment for everyone, just in the nick of time. Of course, it's not a banquet but something is better than nothing & the provisions at least point to the thoughtfulness of the giver. David then asks the obvious question: "Where's Mephibosheth?" Ziba is quick on the draw with an answer: "**He said he isn't coming. He's expecting the kingdom to be restored to him!**" David didn't take too kindly to that; after all he's done for him. David makes a quick decision (had to) & granted all of Mephibosheth's property to Ziba. Ziba was rightfully grateful.

So, what's going on here? Is Ziba friend or foe? When we compare Ziba's story to Mephibosheth's in ch19, we must come to the obvious conclusion that Ziba is lying thru his teeth! The truth is: Ziba left his crippled master behind so it would like he refused to support David. It's a **risky** story but

Ziba knew David wouldn't have the time or wherewithal to properly fact check it while running for his life. This was the case – in the pressure of the moment, David made a snap decision & this was the exact response Ziba was looking for.

How do we know Ziba was lying? Common sense says it'd be ridiculous for **Meph** to assume a rise to the throne when all the chaos is for Absalom's ascent. And, tho Ziba appears to be pro-David, he & his boys don't join David's escape – they go back to the farm! Just think: if David does come out on top, Ziba will be remembered for his assistance. If Absalom comes out on top, Ziba's quite ready to farm & live under a new regime. Ziba's a manipulator!

He's taking advantage of David's troubles to line his own pockets. What motivated Ziba to assist the king was **not loyalty** to David or **concern** for his well being; it was **greed** for his own personal gain.

How does this make Ziba an enemy? 1st, his lie about **Meph** had to **hurt** David & add to his distress because the last thing you want to hear at a time of crisis is that another "friend" has turned against you. 2nd, Ziba's just not good to have around. His attitude is: other people's hardships are opportunities for success. It's like a ticket scalper at the big game or a price gouger after a hurricane – nobody needs that! As believers, we must beware of Ziba's attitude subtly creeping into our relationships: in doing or saying things for the sole purpose of making us look more spiritual.

5-8- On their way thru the territory of Benjamin, David & Co. run into Shimei, who apparently suffers from diarrhea of the mouth. He hurled his stones, dirt & verbal abuse at David in particular but the whole parade had to endure it. He must have been on a ridge across or above David's path – close enough to hear, far enough away to stay safe.

Boy, did he pour it on! He accused David of everything: from being a killer to being a jerk! He laid the blame for Saul's demise squarely on David's head. Apparently he never believed David's claim of innocence over Ishbosheth & Abner's death. He seems to know exactly what **Yahweh** is doing: paying back David for all the blood he shed of Saul's family & He's giving his throne to Absalom. On the surface, Shimei seems to have the pulse of current events but in reality – Shimei is **wrong**! David actually treated Saul & his family with great love & graciousness. David was a man of war but he

wasn't a bloodthirsty man. Ironically, if David were a bloodthirsty man, Shimei would be dead where he stood. Also, David did nothing to bring Saul & his family to ruin – Saul did that all by himself! But, Shimei was **right** about 1 thing: the Lord had brought all this upon David; it was just **not** for any of the reasons he assumed.

9-14- The crowd tires of the heckling pretty quick. Abishai finally verbalizes what everyone's thinking: "**We don't need this nonsense. Let me go take off his head!**" He proposes this because he's observed that men without heads don't curse! But, instead of ordering an execution, David comes to Shimei's defense & he offers a strange rationale for it (10). Consider what David's saying: "**Leave him alone & let him curse for Yahweh has ordered him.**" How is it possible to make that statement honestly in the face of such false **public** accusations, all the while fleeing for your life?

1st, David retained the right **judicial** perspective. He's able to see the hand of **Yahweh** in every circumstance. Tho the accusations were technically false, they weren't far from the truth. Thus, the insults come at **Yahweh** direction.

2nd, David retained the right **tactical** perspective. He sees the bigger picture (11). David knew his real problem was Absalom, not this disgruntled Benjamite blow-hard. Instead of going for his head, David looked for relief elsewhere

3rd, David retained the right **theological** perspective (12). Let's camp out here for a moment because there I actually a textual problem in vs12. What exactly is it that David wants **Yahweh** to **look upon**? There are 3 possibilities:

- **affliction** (suffering, distress) found in ancient version & most English translations follow this reading.
- **eyes** (tears of my eyes) Hebrew reference in the margin, appears in a few Hebrew manuscripts.
- **iniquity** (act, guilt or punishment of) found in the traditional Hebrew text.

Why the differences? Because the Hebrew words for affliction, eyes & iniquity look similar & can be easily confused. So, which is it? Well, from the context, **affliction** fits so well, maybe too well. Think about it: who would ever want to change it? It fits so naturally. It's the word you'd expect to find here so why would a copyist ever puzzle over it or change it? But, put **iniquity** there & what happens? **Yahweh** looks on iniquity & repays with

good? That grates a bit. I can see scribes pulling their beards over that. It'd only be natural for them to assume **iniquity** was a mistake & opt for the more natural & similar looking **affliction**. It's not hard to see how **affliction** won out over **iniquity** but should it?

True, **iniquity** doesn't fit the context of **ch16** but let's go back & read **12:10-12**. Theologically, this controls all of **II Sam 13-20**. So David's use of **iniquity** fits perfectly in that greater context. David sees Shimei's cursing as what he deserves for his sin of **ch11-12**. David was granted **immediate forgiveness** but was warned of **ongoing consequences** so, from his perspective: Absalom's revolt & Shimei's abuse are just part of those circumstances.

Why bring all this up? Because herein lies the secret to David's peace: a deep-seated confidence in **Yahweh's unguessable grace!** David believes **Yahweh** has the gracious ability to look upon guilt & returning blessing instead of a curse. He seems to trust that tho the mouth of God has declared his punishment, the eye of God may long to spare him from it.

Note: David's not demanding this. He says, "**It may be...**" (*perhaps*): he's acknowledging **Yahweh's** freedom in all this; "**He may or He may not.**" But, here's the thing, David could never have conceived of this possibility unless he had already **laid hold** on the **known character** of his God. How could he ever dream of this unless he actually knew a God like that? Man just can't imagine the great scope of God's compassion for us even when He disciplines us for our sin but David tries to image it because David knew his God.

If we leave **affliction** here, which of God's characteristics does it point to? (Sympathy or pity) You can find it in scripture but it's rare. Pity is more of a human characteristic. We offer pity to a fault. But if we put **iniquity** there, what does it tell us about God? It tells us that in the grand scheme of thing, we have a God who doesn't just look on us with pity, He looks on us with love! This concept of God should give us great hope, even if we've made a royal mess of our lives. God doesn't look on you with grudging toleration; you're not doomed to the junk yard of Christian life. No matter how worthless you feel, just get a glimpse of David's God; a God that can see guilt & return good! The worst thing in the world a person can do is have an **incorrect** idea of who God is. The worst thing a **believer** can do is have a **small** idea of who God is.

15-19- Ahithophel is the Judas Iscariot of the OT (**Ps 41:9**). Can't he work for whoever he wants to? No, David is **Yahweh's** chosen king. Ahithophel had no more right to forsake David than a true disciple has to forsake Jesus.

Hushai chooses his words carefully & Absalom seems to be duped by them. He's not lying; every response is truthful when you consider he's referring to David. Absalom assumes he's referring to him but that Absalom's ago problem. Regardless, Hushai passes muster & is installed as one of Absalom's close advisors.

20-23 - What was his advice? "**Have sex with your father's concubines & everyone will know that you've made yourself stink to your father; then your supporters will be strengthened**". So, that's what they did. All knew what was going on. This was a watershed event. It was customary for a successor to inherit that wives or harems of the previous king but not for sexual relations. The possession of the king's harem was in effect the title to the throne. But, by having sexual relations with his father's concubines, Absalom was burning his bridges behind him; there was no turning back now. He had no intention of ever reconciling with his father & this decisiveness galvanized his supporters.

Ahithophel meant this to be the initial blow that topples David's kingdom but we know it's much more than that. We can't forget **12:11b-12**. Note the irony: Ahithophel's advice that was meant to overthrow David's kingdom is actually executing **Yahweh's** judgment against David's sin. Thus, there's hope for us in this passage even tho it deals with judgment on the covenant king. The betrayer is **still in God's hands**. His treacherous act only fulfills God's word.

This same dynamic was at play in the NT. **1 Cor 11:23** refers to Judas' work as **paradidomi: to hand over (betray)**. Yet Paul uses the same verb with God as the subject in **Rom 8:32**. In the 1st instance, Judas wickedly hands over Jesus but actually, God hands over His Son. Strangely enough, Judas' scheme simply carries out God's design. This has to be the ultimate humiliation for all those who adamantly oppose God & His kingdom. No matter what they threaten or devise, ultimately, they only serve to carry out God's word. This truth should never fail to bring comfort to God's people, especially when we are in the presence of our enemies. Why waste time

worrying about what they are going to do to us, they're only going to carry out & accomplish God's will, to their undying shame!

Shimei is the man who curses but, in David's world, **Yahweh** is the God who **may** reverse the curse. But in our world (NT) we need to know that He already has – **Gal 3:13!**

