

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## Our God Reigns II Samuel 17

**Intro:** In **ch16** we talked about the danger of believers having too small an idea of who God is. That's an excellent thought to keep in mind as we move into **ch17** because this chapter deals with 2 of the more lofty aspects of God's nature: sovereignty & providence. These particular divine characteristics don't get much air time in pulpits these days but if we can begin to get a grasp on their meanings, our view of God will increase & so will our faith & confidence in Him.

**Sovereignty:** supreme power; freedom from external control or other controlling influences; absolute right to do all things according to His own good pleasure. Our God **rules & overrules**. God is in charge of the entire universe all the time. He is *free* & *able* to do **all** that He wills & **whatever** He wills & He *cannot be* **successfully opposed** (**Ps 115:3; 135:5-6**). The concept of the sovereignty of God is an exalting doctrine because it presents to us a very big God.

**Providence:** from 2 Latin words – *pro* (beforehand) & *videre* (to see); God sees beforehand, but He also provides! Providence is simply God's gracious oversight of the entire universe. God's providence rules on every level; **cosmic:** Peter says salvation thru Jesus Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (**I Ptr 1:20**); **world:** God decides who rules on earth (**Dan 2:21**); personal: He's not too busy to consider the needs of His children (**Lk 12:6-7**)

They may seem like the same thing but their not; God's sovereignty & providence are distinct characteristics of His nature. I guess you could say that **Sovereignty** is the **power to act** & **providence** is the **act of exercising that power**. Another difference is that God's sovereignty is seldom visible while His providence is almost always recognizable.

---

**1-4-** Let's remind ourselves who we're dealing with here. In **16:23** we learned that Ahithophel's advice was always so good, it was like it came directly from God Himself. Now, he's offering Absalom some crucial advice. He proposes a 4-step plan in which he assumes the majority of the risk. **1)** I'll take a sizeable force & pursue David immediately; **2)** I'll strike while

David's men are still exhausted & chase them off; **3)** I'll only kill David; **4)** all will return in peace.

Everyone's impressed & rightly so! This was a great plan & humanly speaking – it was foolproof; it couldn't fail. What could be better than a battle plan from the guy who always knows what's best? But Absalom's still a little curious...

**5-14a**- Why had Absalom done this? Why had he made that fateful inquiry, the 1<sup>st</sup> step of his slide into destruction? Note: he didn't just ask Hushai's opinion on the matter, he told him what Ahithophel had proposed, asked him to review it & critique it & then respond. Remember, Hushai is David's inside man (undercover agent) & now he has the advantage of knowing exactly what the enemy is planning & has the opportunity to try & punch some holes in it.

1<sup>st</sup> Hushai appeals to: **logic** (8-9a) - David's an experience fighter & the truth is you can't kill him if you can't find him.

**Caution** (9b-10) – David's reputation still serves him. If his men have the first success, your army will falter & vanish. **Vanity** (11) – Hushai makes Absalom the center focus, which fell right in line with Absalom's philosophy of life. Ahithophel knew how to be successful against David but Hushai knew how to be successful with Absalom. Ahithophel said "**I will... I will... I will...**" but Hushai said to Absalom, "**you go.**" Ahithophel knew how to pull off a successful revolution but Hushai knew how to stroke an over-indulged ego. Ahithophel's smart but Hushai's cunning.

**Vengeance** (12) – your reign would be more secure without the entire pro-David loyalist hanging around: destroy 'em!

Hushai's appeals & reasoning seemed to do the trick. In fact, the declaration was that Hushai's advice was better than Ahithophel's! That's got to be the 1<sup>st</sup> time anyone's ever said that! What an amazing accomplishment; what an unforeseen turn of events! But, did this all happen simply because Hushai was so sharp & could think so quick on his feet?

No, there's a secret behind his success & the writer shares it with us in **vs14b**.

**14b**- There's the explanation for the whole scene. While it seems like everything just fell into place for Hushai & David, it was luck, fate or good

fortune – it was **ordained by God**. This fact may present some difficult questions. Each character acted on his own accord, for his own reasons (good or bad) but in the end, God rules & overrules. The main aspect of God's sovereignty here is that it is **hidden**. There's no flashing light or fanfare, just this brief, matter-of-fact mention. The rebellion against **YAHWEH**'s appointed king is over. Why? Because **YAHWEH** has ordained it.

While this is comforting & encouraging to us, the reader; we need to realize that David knew nothing of this. In fact, neither did anyone else. Do you see the big picture? While David's desperately running for his life, **YAHWEH**'s in the background meticulously executing the demise of his enemies. More often than not, that's the way God works in our lives. His rule is invisible; His sovereignty is hidden behind all the decisions, activities & crises of daily life. We only see the next problem that needs addressing but thru it & over it & behind it all, God rules. God is never absent from our lives but neither is He always obvious.

Of course, David doesn't see any of this. What do you do when the circumstances of your life seem to run contrary to the promises of God? **Trust God!** David couldn't **see YAHWEH** working for his benefit but he knew what **YAHWEH** had promised him (**I Sam 28:17; II Sam 3:18, 5:2**). Consider Job's case. Here was a man who was hit by all kinds of calamity that caused him to question God's justice. Yet, the reader is made aware of the fact that, while Job's calamity wasn't brought on by God, it was certainly **instigated** by Him. All this may seem troubling to us until we hear the conclusion presented in **James 5:11**. Some days we can look at our circumstances & think "God has resigned," He's no longer on the throne ruling the nations. On the contrary, He is still on the throne of heaven & His intention is to show you compassion & mercy. It should comfort you to know that in all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is behind the scenes, plotting for your joy! Our God reigns! He always has & He always will!

---

**15-22-** Remember, we know the secret (14b) but nobody else does, not even Hushai. He may have been dismissed before the decision was made to heed his advice. All he can do is alert David to Ahithophel's plan & explain his attempt to counteract it & buy David some time. All the players are in the dark so **YAHWEH**'s plan really is hidden. But this section gives us some consolation because it provides a small story about **YAHWEH**'s providence:

His working *for* His people (**David**). Sovereignty is hidden but providence brings sovereignty out so we can get a quick look at it. The tables have turned in David's favor but he doesn't know it. This may give him a hint.

There's some tension in this cloak-&-dagger story. It not only relates a narrow escape worthy of the best spy novels, it also provides a small sign that **YAHWEH**'s working for David's benefit. These little providences can be great encouragements in the believer's life & they should be. The Ruler who set the plan of salvation in motion before He even created the universe; who sets up & removes kings & rulers also is concerned about the most minute details of our individual lives. It staggers the imagination but it really shouldn't. In the midst of our harrowing circumstances & our every day humdrum, God is working for our benefit. We may rather do without the nail-biting cliff-hanger stuff but that just comes with the territory. It only serves to remind us not to get too comfortable, we're not home yet.

---

**23-** This bare-bones obituary is free of embellishment or hype. It simply reflects Ahithophel's calculating & deliberate style. He was as efficient & methodical in his death as he was in his business. But why did he do it? Some say he secretly desired to be the puppet-master behind the throne & when his most critical advice came up short, he checked out. I don't know: you might take your bat & ball & go home but why end all chance for a come-back? It's more likely that Ahithophel, in all his wisdom, could see the handwriting on the wall. As soon as Absalom rejected his advice, he knew the game was over. If Absalom followed Hushai's advice, he would fail. David's crack troops would wipe out Absalom's army, Ahithophel would be implicated in the revolt & executed for the traitor that he was.

While Ahithophel's death is tragic, it also serves to strengthen the faith & encourage the hope of God's people. How? Ahithophel wasn't just some disgruntled politician that changed parties – he made himself an enemy of **YAHWEH**'s chosen king; thus, he was an enemy of **YAHWEH** & His kingdom. And now, his carcass is being hauled off to the graveyard. Ahithophel's end is a sign of what will eventually happen to all the enemies of Christ & His kingdom. You can't attack the kingdom of God without being pulverized by the power of God (**sooner or later**). A sovereign God cannot be successfully opposed. All who try will die & rot in the garbage dump of history because God guards His own.

**24-29-** David may have his **enemies & traitors** but he also has **friends & supporters**. These 3 are notable: **Shobi** - most likely brother to numb-skull Hanun of **ch10** (appointed replacement vassal); **Machir** – Saul supporter (housed Mephibosheth [9:4-5]); **Barzillai** – wealthy old man (**80** [19:31-37]). They arrive with a banquet & other amenities.

What a diverse trio: 1 was a pagan (**Shobi**); 1 was a former Saul loyalist (**Machir**) & 1 was literally on death's door (**Bar**) but yet; they are each **YAHWEH**'s servant because they stand beside **YAHWEH**'s chosen king & they do so at considerable risk because the outcome of the looming showdown has yet to be decided. Absalom's mustering an army from the whole of Israel but these 3 guys come out into the open & stand by David – they choose to support the 1 **YAHWEH** has chosen! They each had plenty to lose but despite the risks, all that seemed to matter to them was to remain loyal to the 1 to whom they owed allegiance.

Israel had a covenant king & they had no right to abandon him. The disciples of Jesus today stand in the same covenantal relationship with Him, the son of David & God's appointed king. No matter how heavy the assault on His authority & rule is; no matter how much He is demeaned or despised, we're under order to keep on confessing Him & supporting His subjects.

God's kingdom is under attack in ch17 but it's also under His protection. As God's people, we should take sweet comfort in that. Our ultimate security doesn't rely on any freedom from personal disasters or any guarantee that our own country will never falter. No, our ultimate security relies solely on the fact that our God has established a kingdom & it will stand forever.

-----

Note the discrepancy in Ahithophel's character: **he put his house in order & hanged himself**. The first show he was a prudent man, the second proves he was a fool. It's a strange mix of discretion & desperation, of mindfulness & madness. How can a man be wise enough to carefully arrange his worldly affairs & still be wretched enough to take his own life after? We might shake our heads in disbelief but the reality is, the spirit of Ahithophel is alive & well & thriving in the world today. Millions spend every effort to set their house in order & thru spiritual neglect, destroy their very souls. Many will agonize constantly over which money market account will pay the best interest yet they refuse to look to the best interest of their hearts. They spend their lives gathering up broken shells & throw away

priceless diamonds. They save their money but squander their happiness.  
They guard their possessions & lose their souls. 😊