

“Ahithophel or Jesus?”
2 Samuel 16:20 – 17:23

- I. Introduction – let’s walk through this story slowly together so that we are sure of some of the details. I’m sure it’s a story that is unfamiliar to many of us.
 - A. At this later point in David’s life, the kingdom is in disarray.
 - 1) David’s third son Absalom launches a rebellion against his father and David is forced off the throne.
 - 2) David flees Jerusalem for his life. It seems that Absalom is on the way to victory.
 - B. Then Absalom turns to one of his counselors, Ahithophel, who was known to be very wise.
 - 1) Absalom asks him, “What should we do next?”
 - 2) Read 16:21-22.
 - 3) Absalom heard that part of Ahithophel’s advice and went ahead and did just that.
 - a) This is important because it is a fulfilling a prophecy spoken years earlier by the prophet Nathan.
 - b) Read 2 Samuel 12:11-12.
- II. Which brings us to our first point this morning; What we do in secret will always come out in the open.
 - A. We think we’ve covered our tracks. We think we’ve got it under control. We think nobody will ever find out; that no one will know.
 - 1) But God shows us that we’re just deceiving ourselves. Our sin will find us out.
 - 2) Whatever you sow, that’s what you will reap.
 - B. As a loving father to his kids he is saying, “this is the way it works.”
 - 1) Sin will track you down.
 - 2) And sin will make itself known openly.
- III. Let’s continue the story.
 - A. Ahithophel gave Absalom more advice.
 - 1) You’ve shown disdain for your dad publicly.
 - 2) Now let me deal with your dad personally.
 - a) Give me 12,000 men and let me run David to ground.
 - b) Then I will personally kill him.
 - 3) If you let me do this you will consolidate your power and control the kingdom totally.
 - B. That sounded good, but Absalom sought out more advice and got it.
 - 1) Another advisor said that Absalom should not pursue David, but establish control of Jerusalem before moving out.
 - 2) When Absalom took this advice rather than the advice from Ahithophel, Ahithophel knew that Absalom would not remain in power.
 - 3) Ahithophel had been a trusted advisor of David’s before joining forces with Absalom and now he knew that the guy he had sided with wasn’t very bright.
 - C. Ahithophel’s response was to go home, put his affairs in order and hung himself.
 - 1) Ahithophel knew; “you didn’t follow my advice and now David’s going to come back and get you. I know.”

- 2) I might as well hang myself, because when David catches me I'm dead anyway.

IV. Now the plot thickens.

- A. Why is Ahithophel so important? Why did he (of all Absalom's generals) want to deal with David personally? What was his bone to pick?
 - 1) David and Ahithophel were close. Look at what David says in Psalm 55
 - 2) Read Psalm 55:12-14.
- B. In our words it would be as if David were saying, "We went to church and sat there together Sunday after Sunday. We prayed together and studied together. You were my friend, my equal, my guide. How could you do this to me?"
- C. Jesus takes up a similar theme when he says In Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."
 - 1) Jesus is saying that if you are angry with your brother it is like murder.
 - 2) You may not run a sword through them physically, but if you're angry or bitter, you will speak words that will kill.
- D. Our second point is this, Bitterness puts us on the path to murder.
 - 1) Strong words, but true.
 - 2) Jesus said that if you get caught up in anger and bitterness you will assassinate someone's character. You'll want to take them down a level or two.
 - 3) You'll try to murder their reputation. The gossip you share because you're angry and bitter makes you technically guilty of murder.

V. And Ahithophel shows us that this is true.

- A. Ahithophel had been harboring bitterness toward David. He was angry with David for many, many years and David didn't even know it.
 - 1) In 2 Samuel 23:34 we find that Ahithophel had a son whose name was Eliam.
 - 2) In 2 Samuel 11:3 we read that Eliam had a daughter. Her name was Bathsheba.
- B. Put the pieces together. Ahithophel was the grandfather of a woman named Bathsheba.
 - 1) Bathsheba was the woman whom David had a one-night stand with. David had an adulterous affair with her.
 - 2) David tried to cover up that sin by sending Bathsheba's husband to his death in battle. He was senselessly murdered.
- C. Here lies the root of Ahithophel's bitterness.
 - 1) How could it be that David would be the one that would do this to my family?
 - 2) Why would he bring such shame on my granddaughter?
 - 3) And now its more than a decade later.
 - 4) Eleven years later and this anger and bitterness is festering in Ahithophel's spirit.
- D. If we allow bitterness under the surface of our souls, it will eventually bear fruit that is brutal, bloody and awful to behold.
 - 1) It may take a month, a year, or decades, but it always outs itself.

- 2) You could even argue that Ahithophel had a right to be angry. That his cause was just.
 - a) Even so, you must recognize the price you will pay.
 - b) You will get swallowed up by your own bitterness – that’s what Jesus was trying to warn us of.
- VI. How do we fight feelings of bitterness? We combat bitterness with constant forgiveness.
- A. In Matthew 18, Peter asks Jesus a questions about forgiveness.
 - 1) Peter asks, “Do I have to forgive someone 7 times?
 - a) Peter was probably proud as a peacock. 7 times!
 - b) The rabbis taught that you only had to forgive 3 times.
 - 2) Jesus says, “Not 7 times. 70 times 7.”
 - a) Jesus is not saying, keep track.
 - b) 488, 489, 490, one more and that’s it!
 - c) Jesus is saying, don’t even keep track.
 - d) Just forgive, and forgive, and forgive some more.
 - B. Later in Matthew 18, Jesus tells another story of a servant who is forgiven a great debt yet refused to forgive a small loan to a friend.
 - 1) The servant that was forgiven is thrown into prison and his debt restored.
 - 2) Jesus says in v.35, “this is how my heavenly father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”
- VII. Our fourth point, we torment ourselves when we fail to forgive.
- A. We suffer.
 - 1) You will be tormented by your own bitterness.
 - 2) It’s like taking a bottle of poison, swallowing it, and waiting for the other person to die.
 - B. The story of Harry Havens of Indiana (1930)
 - 1) He was angry at his wife and said, “I’m going to bed. I’m going to stay there for the rest of my life and I don’t want to ever see you again.”
 - 2) He went to bed and put a blindfold around his head and he stayed there for 7 years.
 - 3) He got up when the bed started to get uncomfortable.
 - C. That’s what bitterness does, it blinds you and holds you in place.
 - 1) Jesus tries to tell us in Matthew 18, let it go. Give it up.
 - 2) If you don’t, you’ll torment yourself inside. You’ll imprison your soul.
 - 3) Here’s the irony in the story of Ahithophel.
 - a) David doesn’t die in this story.
 - b) Ahithophel does.
 - c) Bitterness and anger doesn’t hurt them. It hurts you.
 - d) It might bother them for a day or two, but ultimately they’ll do better while you get hung up.
- VIII. Fifth, Bitterness doesn’t pay, even when it’s justified.
- A. Ahithophel had a justifiable reason to be angry.
 - 1) Justified, but the price was too high.
 - 2) His hurts turned into hate and bitterness set in.
 - B. When you stoke the fire and fan the flames of your anger, it grows into a brutal bloody beast inside of you.
 - 1) It makes you caustic, cynical, it affects your body.
 - 2) It affects your stomach, your heart, your blood pressure.
 - 3) That’s not what God wants for you.

- 4) God wants you to have a merry heart that does good, like medicine.
 - C. Bitterness just doesn't pay. Even if your reason is justifiable.
 - 1) Ahithophel had a good reason, and that good reason ate him up unto death.
 - 2) It's a terrible price that you have to pay for your bitterness.
- IX. Finally, we have a choice. Will we follow the example of Ahithophel or Jesus?
- A. We do have a choice. There are two roads to take.
 - 1) Ahithophel or Jesus.
 - a) Similar in some alarming ways
 - b) Both had their counsel rejected.
 - c) Both had justifiable reasons to feel angry and betrayed.
 - d) Both rode into the city on donkeys, put their houses in order, hung from a tree and were buried in a sepulcher.
 - 2) But there the similarities end. Because they made two different choices.
 - B. Our choice is the same.
 - 1) I can go Ahithophel's way and harbor bitterness in my heart and let it lead me inexorably to murder and maybe even death.
 - 2) Or I can the way of Jesus. The one who took the bitterness, the sin, the hostility, the abuse, whatever it might be onto himself.
 - a) That's key. As Christians we do not need to be bitter or angry or upset.
 - b) But someone's got to pay!
 - c) Someone has paid. Jesus did. He paid the price for the sin that was done to you and the hurt that was caused you.
 - C. That's why we call the gospel Good News.
 - 1) Whether its my sin, or the sin done to me, Jesus has dealt with it.
 - 2) Imagine the freedom of going through a lifetime (a day, a month, even a year) saying, "No problem. It's covered. It's paid for. I don't have to be stressed or depressed or bitter or angry."
 - 3) "Jesus paid the price for my sin and he paid the price for those guys sins as well."
 - 4) And I can be free.