



The Guilt of Sin: David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 15-16)

Notes: Week Eight

*** Please note that Scripture Studies (SS) and the Sermon Focus aim to be similar, but the objective of our Scripture Studies is to lead you through the book of 2 Samuel **chapter by chapter** whereas the Sermon focus deals with various **themes** found in 2 Samuel.*

2 Samuel 15-16 (HCSB)

Absalom's Revolt

15 After this, Absalom got himself a chariot, horses, and 50 men to run before him. ² He would get up early and stand beside the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone had a grievance to bring before the king for settlement, Absalom called out to him and asked, "What city are you from?" If he replied, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel," ³ Absalom said to him, "Look, your claims are good and right, but the king does not have anyone to listen to you." ⁴ He added, "If only someone would appoint me judge in the land. Then anyone who had a grievance or dispute could come to me, and I would make sure he received justice." ⁵ When a person approached to bow down to him, Absalom reached out his hand, took hold of him, and kissed him. ⁶ Absalom did this to all the Israelites who came to the king for a settlement. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

⁷ When four^[a] years had passed, Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go to Hebron to fulfill a vow I made to the LORD. ⁸ For your servant made a vow when I lived in Geshur of Aram, saying: If the LORD really brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship the LORD in Hebron."^[b]

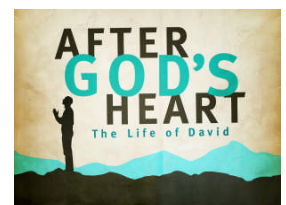
⁹ "Go in peace," the king said to him. So he went to Hebron.

¹⁰ Then Absalom sent messengers throughout the tribes of Israel with this message: "When you hear the sound of the ram's horn, you are to say, 'Absalom has become king in Hebron!'"

¹¹ Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with Absalom. They had been invited and were going innocently, for they knew nothing about the whole matter. ¹² While he was offering the sacrifices, Absalom sent for David's adviser Ahithophel the Gilonite, from his city of Giloh. So the conspiracy grew strong, and the people supporting Absalom continued to increase.

¹³ Then an informer came to David and reported, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."

¹⁴ David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, "Get up. We have to flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! Leave quickly, or he will soon



overtake us, heap disaster on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”

¹⁵ The king’s servants said to him, “Whatever my lord the king decides, we are your servants.” ¹⁶ Then the king set out, and his entire household followed him. But he left behind 10 concubines to take care of the palace. ¹⁷ So the king set out, and all the people followed him. They stopped at the last house ¹⁸ while all his servants marched past him. Then all the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and the Gittites—600 men who came with him from Gath—marched past the king.

¹⁹ The king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why are you also going with us? Go back and stay with the new king since you’re both a foreigner and an exile from your homeland. ²⁰ Besides, you only arrived yesterday; should I make you wander around with us today while I go wherever I can? Go back and take your brothers with you. May the LORD show you kindness and faithfulness.”

²¹ But in response, Ittai vowed to the king, “As the LORD lives and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king is, whether it means life or death, your servant will be there!”

²² “March on,” David replied to Ittai. So Ittai the Gittite marched past with all his men and the children who were with him. ²³ Everyone in the countryside was weeping loudly while all the people were marching past. As the king was crossing the Kidron Valley, all the people were marching past on the road that leads to the desert.

²⁴ Zadok was also there, and all the Levites with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set the ark of God down, and Abiathar offered sacrifices^[c] until the people had finished marching past. ²⁵ Then the king instructed Zadok, “Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, He will bring me back and allow me to see both it and its dwelling place. ²⁶ However, if He should say, ‘I do not delight in you,’ then here I am—He can do with me whatever pleases Him.”^[d]

²⁷ The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Look,^[e] return to the city in peace and your two sons with you: your son Ahimaaz and Abiathar’s son Jonathan. ²⁸ Remember, I’ll wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.” ²⁹ So Zadok and Abiathar returned the ark of God to Jerusalem and stayed there.

³⁰ David was climbing the slope of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he ascended. His head was covered, and he was walking barefoot. Each of the people with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they ascended.

³¹ Then someone reported to David: “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.”

“LORD,” David pleaded, “please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!”

³² When David came to the summit where he used to worship God, Hushai the Archite was there to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. ³³ David said to him, “If you go away with me, you’ll be a burden to me, ³⁴ but if you return to the city and tell Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, my king! Previously, I was your father’s servant, but now I will be your servant,’ then you can counteract Ahithophel’s counsel for me. ³⁵ Won’t Zadok and Abiathar the priests be there with you? Report

everything you hear from the king's palace to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. ³⁶ Take note: their two sons, Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan, are there with them. Send me everything you hear through them." ³⁷ So Hushai, David's personal adviser, entered Jerusalem just as Absalom was entering the city.

Ziba Helps David

16 When David had gone a little beyond the summit, ^[i] Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant, was right there to meet him. He had a pair of saddled donkeys loaded with 200 loaves of bread, 100 clusters of raisins, 100 bunches of summer fruit, and a skin of wine. ² The king said to Ziba, "Why do you have these?"

Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, the bread and summer fruit are for the young men to eat, and the wine is for those to drink who become exhausted in the desert."

³ "Where is your master's grandson?" the king asked.

"Why, he's staying in Jerusalem," Ziba replied to the king, "for he said, 'Today, the house of Israel will restore my grandfather's kingdom to me.'"

⁴ The king said to Ziba, "All that belongs to Mephibosheth is now yours!"

"I bow before you," Ziba said. "May you look favorably on me, my lord the king!"

Shimei Curses David

⁵ When King David got to Bahurim, a man belonging to the family of the house of Saul was just coming out. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he was yelling curses as he approached. ⁶ He threw stones at David and at all the royal ^[g] servants, the people and the warriors on David's right and left. ⁷ Shimei said as he cursed: "Get out, get out, you worthless murderer! ⁸ The LORD has paid you back for all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you became king, and the LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. Look, you are in trouble because you're a murderer!"

⁹ Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut his head off!"

¹⁰ The king replied, "Sons of Zeruiah, do we agree on anything? He curses me this way because the LORD ^[h] told him, 'Curse David!' Therefore, who can say, 'Why did you do that?'" ¹¹ Then David said to Abishai and all his servants, "Look, my own son, my own flesh and blood, ^[i] intends to take my life—how much more now this Benjaminite! Leave him alone and let him curse me; the LORD has told him to. ¹² Perhaps the LORD will see my affliction ^[j] and restore goodness to me instead of Shimei's curses today." ¹³ So David and his men proceeded along the road as Shimei was going along the ridge of the hill opposite him. As Shimei went, he cursed David, and threw stones and dirt at him. ¹⁴ Finally, the king and all the people with him arrived ^[k] exhausted, so they rested there.

Absalom's Advisers

¹⁵ Now Absalom and all the Israelites came to Jerusalem. Ahithophel was also with him. ¹⁶ When David's friend Hushai the Archite came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!"

¹⁷ "Is this your loyalty to your friend?" Absalom asked Hushai. "Why didn't you go with your friend?"

¹⁸ "Not at all," Hushai answered Absalom. "I am on the side of the one that the LORD, the people, and all the men of Israel have chosen. I will stay with him. ¹⁹ Furthermore, whom will I serve if not his son? As I served in your father's presence, I will also serve in yours."

²⁰ Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give me your advice. What should we do?"

²¹ Ahithophel replied to Absalom, "Sleep with your father's concubines he left to take care of the palace. When all Israel hears that you have become repulsive to your father, everyone with you will be encouraged." ²² So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and he slept with his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

²³ Now the advice Ahithophel gave in those days was like someone asking about a word from God—such was the regard that both David and Absalom had for Ahithophel's advice.

Footnotes:

- a. [2 Samuel 15:7](#) Some LXX mss, Syr, Vg; other LXX mss, MT read *40*
- b. [2 Samuel 15:8](#) Some LXX mss; MT omits *in Hebron*
- c. [2 Samuel 15:24](#) Or *Abiathar went up*
- d. [2 Samuel 15:26](#) Lit *me what is good in His eyes*
- e. [2 Samuel 15:27](#) LXX; MT reads *Are you a seer?*
- f. [2 Samuel 16:1](#) = Mount of Olives
- g. [2 Samuel 16:6](#) Lit *all King David's*
- h. [2 Samuel 16:10](#) Alt Hb tradition reads *If he curses, and if the LORD*
- i. [2 Samuel 16:11](#) Lit *son who came from my belly*
- j. [2 Samuel 16:12](#) Some Hb mss, LXX, Syr, Vg; one Hb tradition reads *iniquity*; alt Hb tradition reads *eyes*; ancient Jewish tradition reads *will look with His eye*
- k. [2 Samuel 16:14](#) LXX adds *at the Jordan*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*¹

2 Samuel 15-16

2 Samuel 15

15:1 By gathering chariots, horses, and men, Absalom took steps to enhance his position in the eyes of the people.

15:2 The city gate was the site of the city's important business transactions.

15:3 Absalom listened to the petitions that citizens planned to take to the king. He ostensibly sympathized with them over the fact that the king did not have anyone to help them with these concerns.

15:4 Absalom used the word judge, but he really intended for the people to think of him as "king." He insisted he would dispense justice better than his overburdened father.

15:5-6 Absalom prevented people from bowing to him, and he greeted them with a kiss (almost as equals). This stole the hearts of the men of Israel, many of whom began to believe that Absalom understood their problems better than David did.

15:7 Some manuscripts read "40 years" instead of four years while others read "40 days," but the HCSB reading seems most likely.

15:8 The law urged prompt fulfillment of a vow ([Dt 23:21](#)), so the passage of four years since Absalom's vow ([2Sam 15:7](#)) could have raised questions in David's mind. On the other hand, Hebron, located 19 miles south of Jerusalem, was Absalom's birthplace.

15:10 The sound of the ram's horn across the land, combined with Absalom's messengers shouting Absalom has become king in Hebron, would enable news of Absalom's assuming the throne to spread quickly. Absalom probably hoped he could get to Jerusalem and take power before David could prepare to defend himself.

15:12 David's adviser Ahithophel was one of the king's wisest men, making the conspiracy of Absalom even more strong.

15:14 David summoned his servants with him in Jerusalem and insisted they all needed to flee at once. He knew Absalom and his forces would head straight for the capital and attack it if necessary.

15:17 David and his officials stopped at the last house (perhaps the house at the edge of Jerusalem), probably to get organized for their flight eastward.

15:18 On Cherethites and Pelethites, see note at [8:18](#). David's influence among the Philistines had gained him the loyalty of 600 men... from Gath.

15:19 Ittai the Gittite was an exile from Philistia who had cast his lot with David, perhaps during David's flight from Saul ([1Sam 18-31](#)).

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), *WORDsearch* CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 15-16".

[15:21](#) David excused Ittai from accompanying him, but Ittai swore by the Lord and the king that he would stay with David whether it meant life or death for him. David's integrity still garnered respect.

[15:23](#) The Kidron Valley skirted Jerusalem's eastern edge, separating the city from the Mount of Olives. Once David and his associates reached the top, they could travel the road that leads to the desert (lit "wilderness"), most likely the ascent of Adummim that connected Jerusalem with Jericho in the Jordan Valley.

[15:24](#) The ark of the covenant of God was probably brought to ensure God's presence and as a mark of David's legitimate right to reign. Zadok and Abiathar (see note at [8:17](#)) stood by the king who had endorsed their respective ministries and the ministries of the Levites ([6:12-18](#)).

[15:25-26](#) David determined that the ark of God properly belonged in Jerusalem, God's city. It would remain there, and it was up to God to either restore David to his throne in Jerusalem or not. The king was content to leave the matter in God's hands.

[15:27](#) David created a spy network that included Zadok, Abiathar, and their respective sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan.

shalom

Hebrew Pronunciation [shah LOAM]

HCSB Translation peace

Uses in 2 Samuel 16

Uses in the OT 237

Focus Passage [2 Samuel 15:9,27](#)

Shalom is in an important OT theological word family. The root occurs in all Semitic languages with meanings similar to Hebrew. *Shalom* usually means *peace* ([Gen 15:15](#)) and can function adverbially (*peaceably*) and adjectivally (*peaceful*). *Safety* ([Zech 8:10](#)) is also a frequent connotation (*safe, safely*). The noun indicates *welfare* ([1Sam 17:18](#)), *assurance* ([1Sam 20:42](#)), *prosperity* ([Isa 9:7](#)), *success* ([Isa 45:7](#)), or *strength* ([Ps 38:3](#)). *Shalom* can be a *favorable answer* ([Gen 41:16](#)) or *allies* ([Ps 69:22](#)). Other adverbial ideas are *well* ([Gen 29:6](#)), *quietly* ([1Sam 29:7](#)), *completely* ([Jer 13:19](#)), and *all right* ([2Sam 18:29](#)). Adjectivally, *shalom* can mean *satisfied* ([Ex 18:23](#)), *secure* ([Job 5:24](#)), or *unscathed* ([Jer 43:12](#)). "Asking about *shalom*" is *greeting* ([1Sam 30:21](#)) or asking *how someone is* ([1Sam 10:4](#)). "Men of *shalom*" are people *trusted* ([Jer 20:10](#)) or *trusted friends* ([Jer 38:22](#)). "Speaking *shalom*" is speaking *in friendly ways* ([Ps 28:3](#)).

[15:28](#) The fords of the wilderness were shallow places where the Jordan River could be crossed.

[15:29](#) Absalom would probably assume David's supporters had fled. He may not have suspected Zadok and Abiathar of siding with his father.

[15:30](#) Covering the head and walking barefoot were signs of deep personal anguish.

[15:31](#) The news that Ahithophel had joined the conspirators with Absalom was a blow to David's cause. The king's prayer for God to turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness was a prayer of great faith because Ahithophel's advice was taken to be like a word from the Lord ([16:23](#)).

[15:32](#) Hushai would end up being the answer to David's prayer ([v. 31](#)).

[15:34-35](#) Hushai's role was to counteract Ahithophel's counsel (no small task in light of [16:23](#)) and to report everything to Zadok and Abiathar.

[15:36](#) Ahimaaz and Jonathan would then relay any information they received from their fathers directly to David.

[15:37](#) Hushai and Absalom arrived in Jerusalem at the same time. The decisive moment when Absalom had to choose between Hushai's counsel or Ahithophel's counsel is delayed by [16:1-14](#) and resumes at [16:15](#).

2 Samuel 16

[16:1](#) A little beyond the summit on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, David's delegation could not be seen by Absalom or anyone else in Jerusalem. Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant, had earlier arranged for Saul's estate to be restored to his master ([9:1-10](#)). Now he brought provisions for David's group, but with a different motive.

[16:3](#) David expressed surprise that Mephibosheth had not come with him and others from his palace. Ziba informed David that Mephibosheth was staying in Jerusalem because he was hoping to take advantage of the situation to regain Saul's kingdom.

[16:4](#) The truth of Ziba's assertion could not be substantiated, but David, in his turbulent emotional state, decided he believed Ziba and rewarded him with Mephibosheth's estate.

[16:5](#) Bahurim was a nearby Benjaminite village. Shimei son of Gera is unknown except for his actions related to Absalom's revolt and David's flight ([19:16-23](#)) and his sentence during Solomon's reign ([1Ki 2:8-9,36-46](#)).

[16:8](#) The phrase blood of the house of Saul might have assumed that David participated in either Saul's death or Ish-bosheth's death. Some interpreters believe David's giving of Saul's descendants to the Gibeonites for execution ([21:5-9](#)) had happened already, and that Shimei may have been alluding to that.

[16:9](#) Abishai was disturbed that someone would curse... the king (cp. [19:21](#)), and he offered to kill Shimei as he had offered to kill Saul several years before ([1Sam 26:8](#)).

[16:10](#) Do we agree on anything? is literally "What to me and to you?" It may be rhetorically asking what interests David and Abishai have in common (cp. [19:22](#); [Jdg 11:12](#); [1Ki 17:18](#); [2Ki 3:13](#); [2Ch 35:21](#); [Jn 2:4](#)). This expression reveals David's exasperation with the sons of Zeruiah his sister, here more specifically focused at Abishai. The sentence that begins with He curses me this way may also be translated as "if he curses me this way" and suggests that David was unsure of the source of Shimei's words ([v. 11](#)).

[16:11](#) David highlighted his desperate situation. He was under threat of death from his own son Absalom, so perhaps Shimei's words were also part of God's instruction to the king.

[16:12](#) David thought that perhaps if he bore Shimei's curses with patience, the Lord would restore goodness to him.

[16:14](#) David and his officials were exhausted from the long journey and from the stress of Shimei's cursing as they traveled, so they took a much-needed rest.

[16:15](#) Now is probably better translated as "meanwhile" to communicate the fact that even as David was fleeing, Absalom and his supporters arrived at Jerusalem. The conspirators took the city without a fight because David's forces had fled.

[16:16](#) The account now picks up from [15:37](#). Hushai and Absalom entered Jerusalem about the same time, and Hushai's greeting, Long live the king, was the beginning of his attempt to convince Absalom he was on his side.

[16:17](#) Absalom questioned Hushai's loyalty because he knew of Hushai's faithful service to his father, David.

[16:18](#) Hushai's reply was more vague than Absalom realized. David—not Absalom—was the one whom the Lord had chosen ([1Sam 16:12](#)).

[16:19](#) Hushai promised Absalom that just as he had served faithfully in David's presence, he now would continue to serve in the same way at Absalom's side.

[16:21](#) Absalom's lying with his father's concubines would be a visible sign to everyone that Absalom was taking over the kingdom (including the harem) from David ([12:8,11](#)). Doing so would also sharpen the division between Absalom and his father and encourage others to forsake David and join Absalom.

[16:22](#) In the sight of all Israel fulfilled God's words to David through the prophet Nathan ([12:11](#)).

[16:23](#) The advice Ahithophel gave was normally like someone asking about a word from God. This time, however, his counsel was politically wise but immoral since David was still alive ([Lv 20:11](#)).

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

2 Samuel 15-16

2 Samuel 15

15:1-19:43 Absalom's Rebellion. This long section of 2 Samuel is divided into six parts: (1) Absalom's conspiracy and proclaiming himself king ([15:1-12](#)); (2) David's escape from Absalom, and the people he met on the way ([15:13-16:14](#)); (3) the war council where the competition between Ahithophel and Hushai determines David's fate ([16:15-17:23](#)); (4) David's favorable reception at Mahanaim ([17:24-29](#)); (5) the battle and the death of Absalom ([18:1-19:8a](#)); and (6) David's return to Jerusalem ([19:8b-43](#)).

15:1-12 Absalom's Conspiracy. Absalom plans his conspiracy and proclaims himself king.

15:1 a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. Absalom's self-exalting pride stands in contrast to David's humility ([1 Sam. 26:9-11](#); [2 Sam. 7:18](#); [15:25-26](#)). Later Adonijah behaves similarly, exalting himself, "saying 'I will be king'" ([1 Kings 1:5](#)). See also [1 Sam. 8:11](#).

15:3 there is no man designated by the king to hear you. Absalom's statement must be somewhat of an exaggeration, for the widow of Tekoa got a hearing, and if it were known that there was no chance of a hearing, people would not have come.

15:4 Oh that I were judge in the land! Absalom is appealing to the tradition of the king as "judge" (cf. [Prov. 31:9](#); [Isa. 11:3-5](#)), which is closely bound to the concept of the Lord as judge ([Ps. 96:10](#); [Isa. 33:22](#)), not to the judgeships of the previous era (as seen in the book of Judges). Thus Absalom is saying, "Oh that I were king!" (see [1 Sam. 8:5](#)). This is in line with his chariot and runners ([2 Sam. 15:1](#)). Since Absalom's conduct was public ("beside the way of the gate," [v. 2](#)), news of what he was doing must have quickly reached David, but he did nothing to stop it (see notes on [13:21](#); [14:24](#)).

15:7 Hebron, the chief city of Judah, was where David ruled as king of Judah ([2:4](#)) and where Absalom was born ([3:2-3](#)).

15:10 The phrase **the tribes of Israel** sometimes refers to all of Israel, and at other times refers to Israel as opposed to Judah. Here, it refers to all of Israel, including Judah. It is clear that Judah participated in the rebellion. Absalom raises his revolt in Hebron, and his named associates—Ahithophel of Giloh ([15:12](#); see [Josh. 15:51](#)) and Amasa, David's nephew ([2 Sam. 17:25](#))—are both from Judah. Furthermore, in [19:11](#) David asks why the elders of Judah are reluctant to bring him back. In [chs. 15-18](#), "Israel" usually means "Absalom's side," while David's side is referred to as "David's servants" or "the army."

15:12 These **sacrifices** were apparently part of a coronation ceremony (see [1 Sam. 11:14-15](#); [1 Kings 1:9-11](#)) formally asserting Absalom's kingship ([2 Sam. 15:10](#); [16:16](#)).

15:13-16:14 David's Escape from Absalom. This section describes David's flight from Jerusalem to the Jordan River. [Psalm 3](#) is said to have been composed in response to this occasion. David flees Jerusalem, lest the city be destroyed. On the way he meets a loyal band of foreigners, the priests Abiathar and Zadok, his friend Hushai, Mephibosheth's servant Ziba, and the Benjaminite Shimei.

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 15-16".

15:18-20 The **Cherethites** and the **Pelethites** are David's bodyguard ([8:18](#)). The **Gittites** (i.e., men from Gath) are not likely David's own 600 men who had gone with him from Israel to Ziklag ([1 Sam. 27:2](#)), since they had come **yesterday** ([2 Sam. 15:20](#)), that is, recently, and could **go back** to their homes.

15:23 The **brook Kidron** runs just east of Jerusalem; the Mount of Olives ([v. 30](#)) is to the east of the brook.

15:24-37 Though David leaves the city, by the providence of God he is able to set up a messenger system—Hushai, to Zadok and Abiathar, to their sons (via a maid, [17:17](#)), to David ([15:36](#)).

15:25-26 **Carry the ark of God back into the city.** David does not try to use the ark as some sort of “good luck charm,” in contrast to the attitude of the elders in [1 Sam. 4:3](#). Perhaps he realizes that Absalom's rebellion is partly the result of his own sins ([2 Sam. 12:10](#)), and he does not know how far the Lord intends to punish him (**let him do to me what seems good to him**). His symbols of mourning and penitence and acceptance of malice ([15:30](#); [16:10](#)) are probably related to this. Since he also considers the rebellion wrong, however, he is willing to use prayer and the human opportunities God gives him ([15:28](#), [31](#), [34](#); see [Neh. 4:9](#)).

15:27 **Are you not a seer?** Perhaps David is implying that Zadok does not know precisely what God will do about David (see note on [vv. 25-26](#)); or maybe he is indicating that Zadok, because the people hold him in honor as a seer, will be allowed to pass safely into the city, where he will be most useful to David.

15:28 The **fords of the wilderness** were at the west bank of the Jordan River.

15:30 Going **barefoot and with his head covered** were signs of mourning (cf. [Est. 6:12](#); [Isa. 20:2](#)). **weeping as he went.** David had many reasons to weep: his own misfortunes and the dangers he now faced; the troubles now facing Israel and his own family, for which he was partly responsible; and the dishonor that would surely come to God as a result of all this.

15:31-32 **Ahithophel** was David's trusted counselor ([v. 12](#); cf. [16:23](#)), but now he was **among the conspirators**. This led David to pray, “**O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.**” His prayer was answered in the very next verse by the arrival of Hushai, who would prove invaluable to him (see [16:15-17:23](#) and [notes](#)).

15:33-36 **whatever you hear... tell.** Although earlier David may have questioned Zadok's “seeing” ([v. 27](#)), it is clear that what Zadok and Abiathar “hear” from the undercover work of Hushai in Jerusalem ([v. 34](#)) will benefit David and his followers ([vv. 35-36](#); cf. [17:15-16](#), [22](#)).

15:37 **David's friend.** “Friend” may be a title because it is not the normal word for “friend” and it seems to be one kind of royal official described in [1 Kings 4:5](#). David is called the friend of Hushai in [2 Sam. 16:17](#), however, so it also expresses a relationship.

2 Samuel 16

16:1-4 **Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth** (the disabled grandson of Saul, whom David had taken into his care; see [ch. 9](#)), arrives with provisions for David and his people. Ziba implies that the gifts are entirely his idea, and that Mephibosheth himself sees David's plight as an opportunity to reclaim the kingdom (**Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father**). Mephibosheth will later present a somewhat different version of the situation ([19:24-29](#)). As the next section and [ch. 20](#) show, some Benjaminites still felt animosity toward David, so David may have been very unsure about

Mephibosheth's loyalty. **Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours.** David judged too quickly, without opportunity to hear a defense from the accused Mephibosheth. Cf. notes on [13:21](#) and [14:24](#). The list of food items in [16:1](#) is similar to the list in [1 Sam. 25:18](#).

[16:5](#) **Shimei** is apparently a prominent man ([19:16](#)). **Bahurim** is a Benjaminite town on the north side of the Mount of Olives, though it did have inhabitants who supported David ([17:18](#)). Shimei will act very differently the next time he meets David ([19:16](#)).

[16:8](#) Shimei was probably blaming David for the deaths of Abner ([3:26-30](#)) and Ish-bosheth ([ch. 4](#)), and possibly for the deaths of Saul's sons and grandsons ([21:1-9](#)) or even that of Saul himself, though he is not necessarily accusing David of actual complicity in the deaths. Since the writer of Samuel goes to great lengths to absolve David from complicity, one can surmise that some people harbored ill will toward David because of the house of Saul, even at the time 1-2 Samuel was written.

[16:9](#) As always, Abishai is ready to act (cf. [1 Sam. 26:8](#)). Cursing a ruler is forbidden in [Ex. 22:28](#).

[16:10](#) **What have I to do with you?** David's point is that he and Abishai do not see things the same way, and it would be disastrous for him to take Abishai's advice.

[16:11](#) **let him curse, for the LORD has told him to.** David expresses his trust in God's providence (cf. [15:25-26](#); [16:12](#)). He still wonders whether all this opposition is the Lord's just punishment for his sin, and he humbly endures the abuse.

[16:12](#) **It may be... that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing today.** Cf. the opposite perspective in [Prov. 24:17-18](#): "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls... lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him" (cf. [Prov. 26:2](#); also [1 Pet. 2:19-23](#); [3:9](#)).

[16:14](#) **arrived weary at the Jordan.** The journey was 21 miles (36 km) from Jerusalem to the Jordan, and the road descended about 3,500 feet (1,067 m).

[16:15-17:23](#) **Ahithophel and Hushai.** The writer resumes his account from [15:37](#). For "Israel," see note on [15:10](#).

[16:15-17](#) As the rebellious **Absalom** arrives in Jerusalem, **Ahithophel**, who has deserted to him from David (see note on [15:31-32](#)), comes with him. Soon **Hushai**, a **friend** of David (see notes on [15:31-32](#); [15:37](#)), arrives as well, proclaiming "**Long live the king!**" **Why did you not go with your friend?** (i.e., David; cf. [15:37](#)). Understandably, Absalom questions the sincerity of Hushai's greeting.

[16:18-19](#) **No... I will serve you.** Hushai probably knows it will be hard to convince Absalom that he has forsaken David and is now supporting Absalom.

[16:21-22](#) Following Ahithophel's advice, Absalom publicly had sexual relations with several of David's **concubines** who had been left behind to "keep the house" ([15:16](#)). Such an outrageous action would indeed have **strengthened... the hands** of Absalom's followers, as he made it clear that he was claiming the throne. Nathan had prophesied such an event (cf. **in the sight of all Israel** with "in the sight of this sun," [12:11](#)), and the rooftop of [16:22](#) may have been the very rooftop from which David had seen Bathsheba ([11:2](#)).

[16:23](#) The high estimation of Ahithophel's advice suggests that Hushai has a difficult task before him, in which he can succeed only with the help of the Lord.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

2 Samuel 15-16

Chapter 15

15:1ff David wrote several psalms during the days of Absalom's rebellion. Some of them are [Psalms 39, 41, 55, 61, and 63](#).

15:2 The city gate was like city hall and a shopping center combined. Because Jerusalem was the nation's capital, both local and national leaders met there daily to transact business and conduct government affairs. The city gate was the perfect spot for this because government and business transactions needed witnesses to be legitimate, and anyone entering or leaving the city had to enter through the gate. Merchants set up their tent-shops near the gate for the same reason. Absalom, therefore, went to the city gate to win the hearts of Israel's leaders as well as those of the common people.

15:5, 6 Absalom's political strategy was to steal the hearts of the people with his good looks, grand entrances, apparent concern for justice, and friendly embraces. Many were fooled and switched their allegiance. Later, however, Absalom proved to be an evil ruler. We need to evaluate our leaders to make sure their charisma is not a mask covering graft, deception, or hunger for power. Make sure that underneath their style and charm, they are able to make good decisions and handle people wisely.

15:9 Absalom went to Hebron because it was his hometown ([3:2, 3](#)). Hebron was David's first capital as well, and there Absalom could expect to find loyal friends who would be proud of him.

15:14 Had David not escaped from Jerusalem, the ensuing fight might have killed him as well as many innocent inhabitants of the city. Some fights that we think necessary can be costly and destructive to those around us. In such cases, it may be wise to back down and save the fight for another day—even if doing so hurts our pride. It takes courage to stand and fight, but it also takes courage to back down for the sake of others.

15:14 Why couldn't David just crush this rebellion? There were several reasons he chose to flee: (1) The rebellion was widespread ([15:10-13](#)) and would not have been easily suppressed; (2) David did not want the city of Jerusalem to be destroyed; (3) David still cared for his son and did not want to hurt him. We know that David expected to return to Jerusalem soon because he left 10 of his concubines to take care of the palace ([15:16](#)).

15:17, 18 David had many loyal non-Israelites in his armed forces. The men from the Philistine city of Gath were apparently friends David had acquired while hiding from Saul. "The king's bodyguard" is also translated "the Kerethites and Pelethites"; these men were also from Philistine territory. Although Israel was supposed to destroy wicked enemies, the nation was to welcome foreigners who came on friendly terms ([Exodus 23:9](#); [Deuteronomy 10:19](#)) and to try to show them the importance of obeying God.

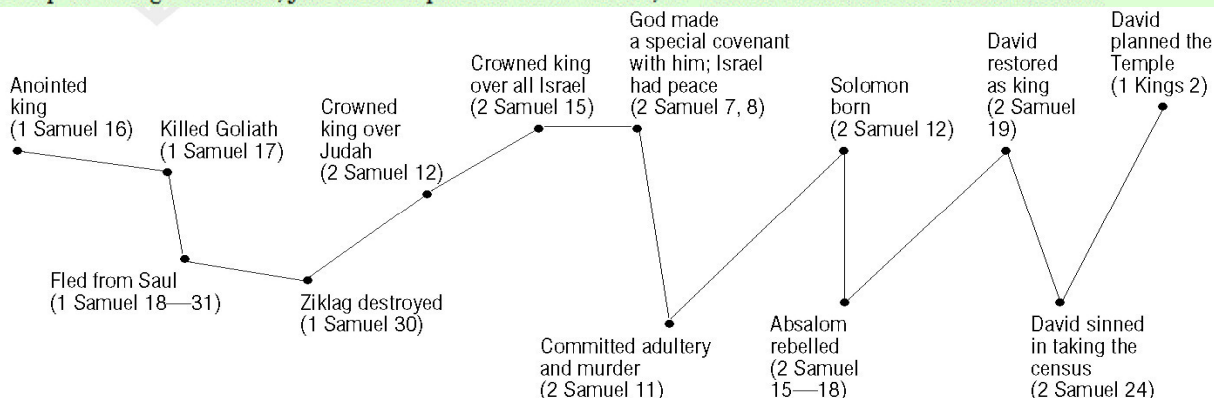
15:24, 25 The priests and Levites were also loyal to David.

15:27-37 David needed spies in Absalom's court to inform him of Absalom's decisions. By sending Hushai to Absalom as a supposed traitor to David, Hushai could offer advice contradictory to Ahithophel's advice. Ahithophel was Absalom's adviser (he was also Bathsheba's grandfather).

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 487-490.

Highs and Lows of David's Life

The Bible calls David a man after God's own heart ([1 Samuel 13:14](#); [Acts 13:22](#)), but that didn't mean his life was free of troubles. David's life was full of highs and lows. Some of David's troubles were a result of his sins; some were a result of the sins of others. We can't always control our ups and downs, but we can trust God every day. We can be certain that he will help us through our trials, just as he helped David. In the end, he will reward us for our consistent faith.



Chapter 16

[16:3](#) Saul was Mephibosheth's grandfather. Most likely Ziba was lying, hoping to receive a reward from David. (See [19:24-30](#) for Mephibosheth's side of the story.) For the story of Mephibosheth, see [chapter 9](#).

[16:4](#) David believed Ziba's charge against Mephibosheth without checking into it or even being skeptical. Don't be hasty to accept someone's condemnation of another, especially when the accuser may profit from the other's downfall. David should have been skeptical of Ziba's comments until he checked them out for himself.

[16:5-14](#) Shimei kept up a steady tirade against David. Although his curses were unjustified because David had had no part in Saul's death, David and his followers quietly tolerated the abuse. Maintaining your composure in the face of unjustified criticism can be a trying experience and an emotional drain, but if you can't stop criticism, it is best just to ignore it. Remember that God knows what you are enduring, and he will vindicate you if you are in the right.

[16:21, 22](#) This incident fulfilled Nathan's prediction that because of David's sin, another man would sleep with his wives ([12:11, 12](#)). (See the note on [3:6, 7](#) for the cultural significance of this act.) [16:23](#) Ahithophel was an adviser to Absalom. Most rulers had advisers to help them make decisions about governmental and political matters. They probably arranged the king's marriages as well because these were usually politically motivated unions. But God made Ahithophel's advice seem foolish, just as David had prayed ([15:31](#)).