

19. The end of the traitor

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The most well-known traitor of human history would be Judas Iscariot. He not only betrayed his Friend and Teacher but also betrayed the God of the universe. The mind-boggling thing about this is that God fully knew and allowed him to be born.

Matthew 26:24 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.

The end of the ultimate traitor Judas was hanging himself on a tree. We find an extreme similarity between Judas and Ahithophel's account. They both betrayed the one who loved them. They both hung themselves. Ahithophel betrayed king David; Judas betrayed the Son of David, the King of kings.

Unfortunately, I find many traitors will face the same ugly end like Judas don't even know that they are traitors to themselves.

A. THE ADVICE OF AHITHOPHEL AND HUSHAI

2 Samuel 17:1-4 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. 3 Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace." 4 And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Ahithophel realized that the fleeing king was in a vulnerable situation. He counseled Absalom to pursue and kill David and his followers before they would regain strength. He thought the twelve thousand men that he asked for would likely have had an easy time defeating the weary troops of David.

Despite his well known wise counsel, Ahithophel underestimated the loyalty of David's crack troops. Ahithophel might have been able to catch David offguard in a surprise raid, but David's loyal warriors would not have allowed them to have an easy victory.

Speaking of advice, let's think about 3 guidelines that we must use when we take advice from others:

1) Try not to take advice from unbelievers

Please note that unbelievers cannot understand the ways of God and the reasons you want to honor God in your life. Their advice is limited to temporal, self-centered, and come from an earthly perspective, not to mention ungodly.

2) Look at the reason (s) behind people's advice

This can be tricky. But evaluate the situation from their perspective and see if they have any advantage from you to take their advice. If they have an ulterior motive behind their advice, you might reconsider their advice and politely discard it.

3) Keep their advice in the context of the Scripture

Even if their advice is godly without any ulterior motive, you must keep everything in the context of the Scripture.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

B. A COUNTER ADVICE FROM HUSHAI

2 Samuel 17:5-10 Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too." 6 And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, "Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up." 7 So Hushai said to Absalom: "The advice that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. 8 For," said Hushai, "you know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are enraged in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father is a man of war, and will not camp with the people. 9 Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some other place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' 10 And even he who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men. 11 Therefore I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there shall not be left so much as one. 13 Moreover, if he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there." 14 So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel." For the Lord had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring disaster on Absalom.

It is remarkable evidence of the hand of God and answers to David's prayer in the last chapter that Absalom even asked for another opinion after such tactically sound advice from Ahithophel.

Hushai refers to the David of the past, not the David of the present – not strong and mighty. But he hoped that Absalom would vividly remember the David of the past. He effectively painted the picture that David and his men were dangerous and should not be attacked quickly. We can imagine while he said all this, he was desperately praying that God would indeed answer David's prayer and defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

Dan to Beersheba means the whole country, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, a distance of about 150 miles.

Hushai's advice sounded good, but it was not for Absalom's benefit, rather for David's benefit. It would give David time to regroup. David is in a very vulnerable position and desperately needs time. God was at work on David's behalf. Hushai's suggestion fanned Absalom's ego. He wanted to prove that he is a mighty soldier like his father David. In Ahithophel's plan, Ahithophel would lead the battle. But in Hushai's plan, Absalom gets to be the main honcho in the battle.

God was in control. The throne of Israel belonged to Him, and He could grant it or deny to anyone at His will. Men cannot escape God. They go their own way, but that way never sets them free from the authority and the invincible power of God.

As you can tell, Absalom had pride, not confidence in the Lord. Actually, he did not have any relationship with the Lord. He was a very good looking politician who

knew how to make a smooth talk. This type of people would surround himself with anyone who fans his ego instead someone who would give the correct, but sometimes even painful advice.

Do you know the difference between confidence in the Lord and pride? This is what I see:

- Confidence in the Lord – full trust; belief in the powers and capabilities that is given by the lord, trustworthiness
- Pride – A high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority, whether as cherished in the mind or as displayed in bearing, conduct, etc.

C. RUN FOR YOUR LIFE, DAVID

2 Samuel 17:15-22 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. 16 Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.' " 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city; so a female servant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. 18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom. But both of them went away quickly and came to a man's house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it. 19 Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the thing was not known. 20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" So the woman said to them, "They have gone over the water brook." And when they had searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21 Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, "Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel advised against you." 22 So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan.

En Rogel was a spring or well south of Jerusalem at the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valley.

This is exactly what David had in mind when he sent Hushai and the priests back to Absalom last chapter. The whole nation had not gone over to Absalom, especially since he publicly disgraced David's concubines.

D. THE END OF THE TRAITOR

2 Samuel 17:23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.

Ahithophel did not kill himself over hurt feelings because his counsel was rejected. Instead, he was smart enough to know that under Hushai's plan Absalom would fail. It means that Ahithophel would be charged in treason by David. He knew that he would receive an execution as a traitor and didn't want to face it.

Ahithophel committed suicide, and we know that suicide is a sin because it is self-murder. Yet suicide should not be regarded as an unforgivable sin as some Christian

denominations teach their congregation. Anyone who does commit suicide has given in to the lies and deceptions of satan, whose purpose is to kill and destroy according to John 10:10.

Suicide is always the ultimate act of cowardice. It is the last resort of the man who dare not stand up to life.

Please pay attention to this very remarkable character, Ahithophel: *'He put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died.'* To put his house in order, it showed that he was a prudent man. To hang himself, proved that he was a fool. Here is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, sound mind, and madness.

Here is a man who has enough wisdom to arrange his worldly affairs with care, and yet he is dumb enough to take his own life afterward.

Millions of people set their lifestyles in order, but destroy their souls. They look well, work hard, make impressive financial portfolios but where they are most required they are clueless. They save their money that perishes but squander their eternal lives. They are guardians of their estates but traitors of their own souls.

Many people will go down to their graves like this traitor Ahithophel. Taking care of everything except their own souls. This is the end of the traitor against their own lives. Sealing their own fates.

E. ABSALOM'S CHASE AFTER DAVID

2 Samuel 17:24-26 Then David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. This Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Jithra, an Israelite, who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26 So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.

Now Absalom was the head of Israel's army. It was good for Absalom's ego, but not good for a victory on the battlefield. Absalom's ego ensured his ruin.

Absalom has never been a warrior. If you remember, he didn't have enough guts to kill his half-brother Amnon. He had his servants to do his dirty work. He is nothing more than a spoiled rotten prince who cares nothing of others.

F. MORE SUPPORTERS FOR DAVID

2 Samuel 17:27-29 Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched grain and beans, lentils and parched seeds, 29 honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who were with him to eat. For they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

These otherwise obscure men are given special mention because they helped David in a time of great need. Friends in need are friends in deed.

These helpers of David were not dramatic powerful warriors, but they helped David in this crisis as much as the bravest soldiers. They were specially sent by God to comfort David in his affliction.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) We need to remember to keep our relationship with Christ as the foremost priority because we can betray Christ ourselves.

Many people are concerned about what they have, what they can do to show off whatever they have to others, yet they completely forget the most important thing – the relationship with the Savior.

2) Men cannot escape God.

They go their own way, but that way never sets them free from the authority and the invincible power of God.

3) Friends in need are friends in deed.

Ecclesiastes 4:10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.

We get to know who the true friend is when we are down and out.