

## Absalom Usurps the Throne & King David Flees from Jerusalem

### 2 Samuel 15

*"After this Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. <sup>2</sup> Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city are you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel." <sup>3</sup> Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you." <sup>4</sup> Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." <sup>5</sup> And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. <sup>6</sup> In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.*

*<sup>7</sup> Now it came to pass after [four] years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD. <sup>8</sup> For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'" <sup>9</sup> And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.*

*<sup>10</sup> Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!'" <sup>11</sup> And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything. <sup>12</sup> Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city—from Giloh—while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.*

*<sup>13</sup> Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." <sup>14</sup> So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword." <sup>15</sup> And the king's servants said to the king, "We are your servants, ready to do whatever my lord the king commands." <sup>16</sup> Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. <sup>17</sup> And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts. <sup>18</sup> Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king.*

<sup>19</sup> Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you are a foreigner and also an exile from your own place. <sup>20</sup> In fact, you came only yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth be with you." <sup>21</sup> But Ittai answered the king and said, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be." <sup>22</sup> So David said to Ittai, "Go, and cross over." Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who were with him crossed over. <sup>23</sup> And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness.

<sup>24</sup> There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. <sup>25</sup> Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. <sup>26</sup> But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him." <sup>27</sup> The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. <sup>28</sup> See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." <sup>29</sup> Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there.

<sup>30</sup> So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. <sup>31</sup> Then someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"

<sup>32</sup> Now it happened when David had come to the top of the mountain, where he worshiped God—there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. <sup>33</sup> David said to him, "If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. <sup>34</sup> But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I was your father's servant previously, so I will now also be your servant,' then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. <sup>35</sup> And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. <sup>36</sup> Indeed they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and

*Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear." <sup>37</sup> So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem."*

## Background Notes

After King David permitted Absalom to return from exile to Jerusalem, Absalom took full advantage of his restored position and began laying the groundwork for taking over the throne. First of all, Absalom drew attention to himself by a display of kingly appearance. He got chariots and horses for himself - probably more impressive than the chariots and horses that King David used. He also hired fifty men as escorts to go before him when he went out in his chariot.

Next, Absalom set himself up in the gate area, a strategic spot in the city, where official complaints and grievances would be registered. Absalom subtly told all who had a grievance that their claims were right and just, and if only he were in charge, justice would be done. It's easy to find fault with the administration that's in power and get a following of people with complaints, and that's exactly what Absalom did. Thus the stage was set for Absalom to declare himself king, and he chose Hebron as his key city for the announcement.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The hearts of the unfaithful are stolen by looks and talk.

Verse 6: *"So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."* How did Absalom do it? By looks and talk! Absalom was handsome, and he created a great image for himself with an impressive entourage. He reached out to the people in a personal way, by shaking their hands. And he talked a good line! He told everyone that if only *he* were the judge, all their problems would be solved. Sounds like a modern politician, doesn't he? Notice that Absalom studiously avoided saying, "if I were king" - but he left the people to come to their own obvious conclusions.

Absalom told David a lie, that he had made a vow to serve the Lord. This lie was just part of his evil plan for getting to Hebron to carry out his agenda of usurping the throne. Even the 200 men who went with Absalom to Hebron were not aware that Absalom was manipulating them (v11). Even Ahithophel, David's chief counselor, was caught up in the conspiracy (v12). Then Absalom sent men throughout all the tribes of Israel with special

instructions - upon the given signal of a trumpet blast, they were to declare to all Israel that Absalom was the new king.

So, rather than putting the city through a blood bath by staying and fighting, David decided to leave Jerusalem. All of this grief and heartache for David was part of the judgment upon him because of his sins of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 12).

But how was Absalom able to pull off this take-over? By looks and talk! The hearts of the unfaithful are stolen by looks and talk – then and today. Be careful of a good-looking, sweet-talking public figure! This is true not only in the secular world, but in the church as well. Be very careful of good-looking, sweet-talking preachers! Paul told the Galatians that even if an angel from heaven were to preach a gospel that was contrary to the Word of God, they were not to listen, and they were not to be taken in! 2 Corinthians 11:14 warns us that “...*Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*” How’s that for deceptive looks and talk? Sadly, the hearts of the unfaithful are stolen by looks and talk.

## **2. The hearts of the faithful are committed through thick and thin.**

Verse 21: “*But Ittai answered the king and said, “As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be.”*”

A number of foreigners had come into David’s kingdom, and they joined King David as he left Jerusalem to go down into the wilderness and the Jordan Valley. Included in this group of foreigners were 600 “Gittites” - men from Gath. They were Philistines from the same hometown as the giant, Goliath! Perhaps these men from Gath had joined David when he was in Philistine territory, fleeing from King Saul. In any case, David asked Ittai, their leader, “Why do you want to stay with me at a time like this, Ittai? Why not return home? You’re not obligated to stay and flee with me. You can even stay on with the new king!” What a wonderful and loyal response from faithful Ittai: “*As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be.*”

The hearts of faithful believers are committed through thick and thin. Ittai is a spiritual picture (or “type”) of a committed believer today who is loyal and faithful to the Lord, the great Son of David - especially now, when the world does not acknowledge our Lord as King. Hebrews 13:13 says, “*Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach.*” Are we willing to suffer with the Lord “outside the camp” – during His time of rejection? Let’s be willing to say like Paul, “*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” (Philippians 1:21) The hearts of the faithful are committed through thick and thin.

## **Practical Application**

### **You can serve the Lord in many different ways!**

In verses 24-37 we read about a lot of different people and the many different ways that they served King David. Many people traveled with David down to the Jordan Valley, including Ittai and his fighting men. David sent Zadok and Abiathar the priest back to Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant, along with their two sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, who were to serve David as messengers. Hushai was to serve David by staying in Jerusalem and trying to thwart the advice of Ahithophel, the counselor who had betrayed David and gone over to Absalom.

These verses are certainly a spiritual picture of the many different ways we can serve the Lord, our "Greater David." We need more "Hushais" today – believers who will thwart the statements and lifestyle of people who have betrayed the Lord – people who no longer live out the high moral standards of the Bible, or who no longer believe in the inerrancy of Scripture and a Creator God. Maybe you feel that all you can do is to serve the Lord as a "go-fer" – a "messenger boy" like Ahimaaz and Jonathan. Well, that's OK! Be encouraged! The Lord will bless you and honor you. We all can serve the Lord - in many different ways!