

The God Who Secures Our Future

2 Samuel 17-18

I. INTRO

- A. I woke up on Friday morning at 4am thinking about Romans 8
 - 1. Romans 8:1, There is, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus → maybe my favorite verse in the Bible
 - a) No condemnation = no expectation of death, wrath, punishment.
 - 2. But this is what I was chewing on... "There is therefore now no condemnation...but there are still consequences."
 - B. We know David's heart, but we don't know everyone else in the story
 - 1. David was a "believer" (for lack of a better word) and he did gnarly things
 - 2. It is entirely possible that Amnon, Absalom, Joab, Ahitophel, etc., were "believers" as well, despite the evil they did. We don't know.
 - C. There's a tension in this story. A tension of new creation, promise, redemption, freedom... and the scar of sin (sin you did or sin against you)
 - 1. David... covenant... sin... forgiveness (Ps 51)... fallout and consequences
 - 2. Ahitophel → granddaughter → David's forgiven, life as normal → mounting frustration → sin leaves scars
 - 3. Absalom → sister raped → Amnon killed → David inactive → No consequences → sin leaves scars
 - 4. Israel → promise and covenant → rebellion → civil war → sin scares
 - 5. God makes promises... Sin leaves scars... how do these go together?
 - 6. God can forgive you for a life of drug use, but it might reap the consequences of sickness
 - 7. God can forgive a lifetime of bad parenting or being a terrible spouse → but it might reap consequences in your family
 - 8. God can forgive David, but his family can still bear the burden of his sin
 - 9. God can forgive David, but Ahitophel might still burn with anger and want him dead
 - 10. God can forgive David, but it doesn't mean he was right to ignore Amnon's sin
 - 11. God can forgive David, but it doesn't mean that Absalom will
 - 12. God can forgive David, but his sin results in civil war and death
 - D. But 2 Samuel 17-18 shows us that **God fulfills His promises... but sin still leaves scars in this life.** No condemnation, but consequences
 - E. We have a God who fights for us, secures our future, and is always so good
 - F. Yet we live in a world where suffering and consequences are still real.
- II. 2 Samuel 17 → Nation is in rebellion, Absalom has usurped the throne (now what?)
- A. *[1] Ahithophel said to Absalom, "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*

discouraged and throw him into a panic, and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, [3] and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace.” [4] And the advice seemed right in the eyes of Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

1. Ahithophel presents the perfect plan:
 - a) Strike while David is weak and scattered
 - b) Simple Goal: kill only the king → scatter the resistance
2. Humanly speaking, David is finished. This is a really good plan.
3. But God is in the midst... God is working in the details... He is fulfilling promises (2 Sam 7), and if God is for David, none can stand against him

B. [5] Then Absalom said, “Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say.”

1. Hushai is a spy from David. David sent him back into the city and prayed in 15:31 that Ahithophel’s counsel would be counted as foolishness

C. [6] And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “Thus has Ahithophel spoken; shall we do as he says? If not, you speak.” [7] Then Hushai said to Absalom, “This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good.” [8] Hushai said, “You know that your father and his men are mighty men... [recap his speech]... [14] And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom.

1. Ahithophel’s plan was logical and clear. It was good advice
2. David didn’t pray that Ahithophel would give bad advice; he prayed that it would be counted as foolishness! This is exactly what happens.
3. Hushai appeals to Absalom’s pride and fear...
 - a) They are might men... like a bear robbed of her cubs
 - b) He’s an expert in war...
 - c) Let’s gather, go out in full force, and crush him in battle
4. Hushai is just trying to delay while David gets organized.
5. But the narrator tells us why Ahithophel’s plan fails: 2 Sam 17:14 — *For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom.*
6. God fulfills his promises...
7. God fights for David by overturning Ahithophel’s counsel
8. God fights for David by using Hushai’s emotional appeal
9. God doesn’t only work through miracles, signs, and wonders → he works through normal, everyday scenarios, to accomplish his purposes

D. [15] Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, “Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so have I counseled. [16] Now therefore send quickly and tell David... <Priests → servants → runners → woman hiding spies.> [22] Then David arose, and all the people

who were with him, and they crossed the Jordan. By daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

1. David has this whole network of spies who are working for him
2. David crosses Jordan safely.
3. God fulfills his purposes and promises
4. God fights for David through this network of David's loyal servants who carry the news to him, risking their lives for their king
5. This is also God at work → God protecting the spies, protecting the runners, protecting the servants, etc

E. [23] When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.

1. Ahithophel realizes what Absalom doesn't yet understand → the rebellion is doomed to fail
2. He realizes that he hitched his cart to the wrong horse, and this will end with shame, failure, and execution
3. Faced with his own sin, he takes his life
4. God fulfills his promises... but sin still takes its toll. He's a traitor.

F. [24] Then David came to Mahanaim... and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, [28] brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, [29] honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

1. David crosses, arrives at Mahanaim, and is cared for by Barzillai
2. God continues to fight for David and protect him
 - a) He thwarted counsel, he protected spies, and now he provides in the wilderness

III. 2 Samuel 18

A. [1] Then David mustered the men who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. [2] And David sent out the army, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the men, "I myself will also go out with you." [3] But the men said, "You shall not go out. For if we flee, they will not care about us. If half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore it is better that you send us help from the city." [4] The king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood at the side of the gate, while all the army marched out by hundreds and by thousands. [5] And the king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders about Absalom.

1. David structures the army wisely
2. Command: "Deal gently with Absalom."

3. We see the tension in his heart: King must defend the kingdom, but the father still loves the rebellious son.
 - a) This reminds me of God. God loves humanity, even in their rebellion, showing love and common grace, but he's also just
 - b) He must be just, he must punish the wicked // as a good judge and king, he won't just look the other way
 - c) David might love Absalom, but there are still consequences
- B. *[6] So the army went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. [7] And the men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the loss there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. [8] The battle spread over the face of all the country, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword.*
 1. David's men are seasoned warriors... But guess what? God is fighting
 2. The forest devoured more people that day than the sword!!!
 3. Sometimes God preserves his people through normal things like hindered advice and loyal friends, provided food, and a network of spies
 4. Sometimes God steps in and does the miraculous!
 5. We all love to see the miraculous, but it's called miraculous for a reason → it rarely happens. God works through the ordinary more frequently!
 6. But there's a great loss → 20,000 brothers of Israel die!
 7. Look at the impact of Ahitophel, Absalom, Amnon, and David's sin.
 8. Is there forgiveness for David and others? Yes, but sin leaves its toll
- C. *[9] And Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was suspended between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. [10] And a certain man saw it and told Joab, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." [11] Joab said to the man who told him, "What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground?... [14] And [Joab] took three javelins in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak. [15] And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him.*
 1. Absalom, who had great, beautiful rock hair
 2. Absalom, who was handsome and stunning
 3. Absalom, who was arrogant, manipulative, and proud
 4. Absalom is caught in a tree by his own hair (glory/pride)
 5. Absalom is suspended between heaven and earth, the son of David
 6. He is pierced w/ 3 spikes his rebellion as he is surrounded by soldiers
 7. Absalom shows us what happens when a rebellious son dies for his own sin, which also helps us see how different Jesus' death is
 - a) The son of David, the son of the king
 - b) Absalom... suspended... pierced... cursed (tree)
 - c) Not as an innocent sacrificial lamb, like Jesus, but for his sin
 - d) Absalom pays for his own sin; he reaps what he has sown
 8. God always fulfills his promises and purposes, but sin has a heavy cost

D. [31] And behold, the Cushite [sent from Joab] came, and the Cushite said, "Good news for my lord the king! For the LORD has delivered you this day from the hand of all who rose up against you." [32] The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you for evil be like that young man." [33] And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

1. David cries, "I wish I had died instead of you."
 - a) It's hard to imagine how David feels right here
 - b) What sin has cost David's family is intense
2. On the one hand, there is external victory → this is good for David, good for the kingdom, and it is God's will (2 Sam 7:14)
 - a) God has fulfilled his purposes
3. On the other hand, it's David's son...
 - a) Sin has consequences (David, Ahitophel, Absalom, Israel)
4. David wants a substitution for his beloved, but he cannot give it.
5. There was no way out of this predicament
6. David, the king, mourns over his son

IV. SUMMARY

A. BIG IDEA: God fulfills His promises... but sin still leaves scars in this life.

B. There are three realities you should be walking away with today:

1. You should feel secure in (not afraid of) God's sovereignty

- a) Passive fatalism says outcomes are fixed and unavoidable, so human choices, obedience, prayer, or effort don't really matter
- b) Biblical sovereignty is active providence; it says that God is in control → your actions matter because God works through them.
- c) This is what we see in chapters 17 and 18, as a sort of anti-fatalism
 - (1) God saves David through his friends... through spies... through wisdom... through military strategy... with fighting trees... with good timing... God is FOR David
- d) God is FOR you, and he uses ordinary means to accomplish extraordinary things for his covenant people and kingdom

2. Be realistic about the devastating consequences of sin and the inevitability of suffering in this life.

- a) David is forgiven, but:
 - (1) His family collapses
 - (2) His nation experiences civil war
 - (3) His son is dead
- b) Forgiveness doesn't mean no consequences in this life
 - (1) Forgiveness means that there's no eternal wrath on the horizon for you
- c) No condemnation, but there are consequences

d) Today... we should fight for holiness... b/c sin will ruin your life

3. Stand amazed at Christ's sacrificial death for you.

a) Sin cost Absalom and Ahitophel their lives

b) David wished he could die in Absalom's place, but he couldn't

(1) Maybe some of you feel that way for others around you...

you wish you could solve it, fix it, substitute yourself for it

c) Remember this. David wished he could die for Absalom, but Jesus actually did die in yours.

(1) The cost of your sin was paid by an "always so good" God

(2) Your hope is Jesus. Your family's hope is Jesus.

d) David mourned over a rebellious son he could not save.

(1) God gave His Son to save rebels like me and you

e) Your future is not secured by your performance, but by faith in the Son of God. Will you ask him to forgive you? Will you surrender?

f) If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, behold the new has come.

(1) This doesn't mean your life will be perfect

(2) It doesn't mean bad things will never happen to you

(3) It does mean your future is secure in the arms of a loving Father.