



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 15:13-16:13

Topic

Barefoot and tearing their clothing in anguish, David nevertheless instructs his servants as he flees for his life

Title

“No Shoes, No Shirt, Still Serving”

Introduction

If you’ve planned a day at the beach for body surfing and sun bathing, a storm is going to ruin your day.

But what if you’re taking a sailing class and need to complete a unit on foul weather sailing in order to pass the final exam? In that case a storm is exactly what you need.

If you’ve been a Christian even for a short time, you know that following Jesus is no day at the beach! Storms come. Some storms never subside.

Do you want to be a body surfing sun bather or a foul weather sailor? I can tell you the answer of the apostle Paul. In Philippians 3:10 he said, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, **and the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death.”

Paul’s choice was to experience the Lord in the storm. He called it “know[ing]... the fellowship of His sufferings.” The fellowship of Jesus Christ’s sufferings releases in our lives the power of His resurrection with

the result that I know Him by personal experience and not just by objective information. Information about Him gives way to intimacy with Him.

Our section in Second Samuel presents folks who wanted to know David and were willing to enter the fellowship of his sufferings. We will also see those who wanted to forgo his sufferings. It gives us the opportunity to ask two questions around which I will organize my thoughts: #1 Do You Want To Know Jesus In The Fellowship Of His Sufferings?, or #2 Do You Want To Forgo The Fellowship Of Jesus' Sufferings?

#1 Do You Want To Know Jesus In
The Fellowship Of His Sufferings?
(15:13-37)

David's treacherous son, Absalom, had been plotting to overthrow his father and seize the throne. He put his plan in motion and word came to David.

2 Samuel 15:13 Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom."

What a sad thing to hear! David's own people rejected him for someone who had done nothing for them and certainly did not love them.

It reminds you of Jesus Who, in His first coming, came to His own people but His own people rejected Him. O, how He loved them, and yet they preferred a criminal be released to them, an insurrectionist named Barabbas, while shouting for Pilate to crucify the sinless Son of God.

Jesus was a man of sorrows, we're told, acquainted with grief. If you are going to follow Him, you, too, will have every opportunity to be rejected by men, treated with contempt, experience loss and loneliness. The only question is whether you will grow closer to Him or forgo suffering for the relative comforts and conveniences of this world.

Several individuals in our story were faced with the opportunity to identify with David in his sufferings and thereby grow closer to him. We are going

to look at them fairly rapidly and make application to ourselves and our walk with the Lord

2 Samuel 15:14 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."

2 Samuel 15:15 And the king's servants said to the king, "We are your servants, ready to do whatever my lord the king commands."

Note David's heart. He would flee, become a fugitive, so that the people of Jerusalem would not be slaughtered as collateral damage in a fight with Absalom. David would bear the reproach to spare them.

His "servants" were with him. Now these were probably butlers and bakers. (Maybe a few candlestick makers!). They never signed-on for exile. They most likely could have stayed in Jerusalem and lived under the new king.

They refused. They would follow their king, submit to him, "do whatever [their] lord the king" commanded. If serving Him now meant suffering, then they would do it in order to remain with him.

Here's the lesson. When you face difficulties in your service to Jesus, it's to give you the opportunity to show that you are really all about being with Him. It doesn't really matter where you serve, or how hard it gets, because it's the fellowship with the Lord that you care about.

2 Samuel 15:16 Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house.

Why leave anyone behind to "keep" a desolate house? It showed that David anticipated his return! When, exactly, he'd return was uncertain. But in his absence they were to "keep the house."

This idea of serving an absent lord who has promised to return, does it sound familiar? It is what we are called upon to do as we await the imminent return of Jesus to resurrect and rapture the church.

Do you think they kept the house with zeal? Or do you think they slacked-off, given the situation that was unfolding and the fact that David was absent?

It's the classic situation of doing everything as unto the Lord, anticipating His any-moment return. If you slack-off, become lazy, then you're not all that excited about seeing Him, are you?

But as you maintain your pace, even accelerate, it shows a growing intimacy.

2 Samuel 15:17 And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts.

2 Samuel 15:18 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.

2 Samuel 15:19 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.

2 Samuel 15:20 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."

2 Samuel 15:21 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."

2 Samuel 15:22 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.

Another group of "servants" joins them at the outskirts. These were David's honor guard. Among them was one Ittai, a Gittite. He was a Philistine mercenary. Seeing he had only recently arrived, David told him to stay and serve whoever was "king" in Jerusalem.

David wasn't acknowledging that Absalom was the rightful king. He was simply stating that since Ittai had come as a mercenary, to be paid to serve the "king," he could still do that. What difference would it make to a mercenary?

Ah, but we learn that Ittai did not come to serve the king of Israel. **He came to serve David.** He and his entire household would serve only David.

What happens when plans and dreams fall through? You find out if you are a mercenary rather than a servant. The mercenary is discouraged, depressed, maybe even angry. The servant finds his Lord in the suffering and recommits himself to Jesus.

2 Samuel 15:23 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.

One minute they had been dwelling in the palace. The next minute, quite literally, they were wandering in the “wilderness.”

What is the “way of the wilderness” to us? We’re talking lifetime distresses, prolonged illnesses, losses of many varieties - both personal and material. We’re talking about those things for which you weep and weep and weep.

Jesus has walked there, too. He Who arose from the dead and ascended from Mt. Olivet first walked in humility, suffered in Gethsemane and then cruelly so at Golgotha. No one can comfort you like He can. Nobody knows you like He does.

2 Samuel 15:24 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.

2 Samuel 15:25 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.

2 Samuel 15:26 But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him."

The ark of the covenant, complete with the lid called the mercy seat, was the dwelling place of God among His people. Zadok was doing what he thought was right and proper in bringing out the ark to accompany David.

Zadok was told to bring the ark back. David reproofed him. It was gentle, but it was a reproof.

If you have zeal to serve the Lord, sooner or later you are going to experience the Lord telling you “No.” He’s going to put an end to your well-intentioned plans. It might even embarrass you publicly.

How will you react? Often we simply press forward - unwilling to seem defeated in the eyes of men. We make things work out in order to save face. Or we might quit serving the Lord, for a time or for good.

If we will heed the Lord we will enter into a not-my-will-but-yours-be-done fellowship that can only be experienced after His gentle rebuke.

2 Samuel 15:27 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.

2 Samuel 15:28 See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me."

2 Samuel 15:29 Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there.

Zadok had a spiritual gift. He was a “seer.” He had the gift of prophecy. It could be useful to David for Zadok to inquire of the Lord then report the Word of the Lord to him via the two sons mentioned.

Knowing how Zadok was gifted, David said, “Are you not a seer?” In other words, “Do what God has raised you up and gifted you to do.”

God says to you and I, “Are you not a husband? Are you not a wife? A father or a mother? An employee or an employer?”

Or in the church He says, “Are you not...” then reminds you of the gift or gifts, the roles and offices, He has given you.

The point I’d make here is this. In my roles, my offices, and by the gifts God has given me, am I bringing glory to Him? Am I content to “remain

there,” wherever ‘there’ is for me, and work out my salvation - **no matter how dull or difficult it may be?**

If I will do that I am exactly where Jesus was in His incarnation. He fully humbled Himself, lived a dull life for some thirty years then a difficult one for the final three and one half years. It brought glory to His Father.

2 Samuel 15:30 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.

2 Samuel 15:31 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!"

2 Samuel 15:32 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.

2 Samuel 15:33 David said to him, "If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me.

2 Samuel 15:34 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.

2 Samuel 15:35 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.

2 Samuel 15:36 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."

2 Samuel 15:37 So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.

There's obviously a lot going on here with Hushai. I want to concentrate on one thing. One word, actually. It's the word "friend" in verse thirty-seven. Hushai identified with David in his sufferings; he worshipped with him; then he left being called his "friend."

It's a fitting end to the theme we've developed in this section of verses. We've been talking about intimacy with the Lord. We've been talking about being friends more than merely followers.

You know, there are those who get upset that we might act too familiar with the Lord. They say we do not show Him enough awe and honor by being too casual. Hey, **Jesus is the One who called us His friends!**

John 9:15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends...

I'd like to be described like Hushai; wouldn't you? Wouldn't you like someone to summarize your day by saying, "So Gene, Jesus' friend, went to WalMart, and even though the devil is out and about as an insurrectionist and rebel, Gene was able to minister to people he encountered about what it means to have a personal, intimate knowledge of God."

To "know" Him by experience you must share in the fellowship of His sufferings.

#2 Do You Want To Forgo
The Fellowship Of Jesus' Sufferings?
(16:1-14)

Not everyone is ready to sign-on for this kind of fellowship. When He was on the earth "many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him" (John 6:66) when His message became difficult, when He made certain demands.

Concerning modern Christians, Stuart Briscoe wrote,

There is no shortage of people in the world today who are longing for a 'closer walk' or a 'deeper commitment.' And there is no shortage of man-made answers to these expressed needs. However, there is one thing that is distressingly common in many of these answers, **and that is the absence of any idea of cost or suffering involved.**

No cross, no crown. Still, many would rather forgo suffering. We see a couple of examples in chapter sixteen.

2 Samuel 16:1 When David was a little past the top of the mountain, there was Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine.

2 Samuel 16:2 And the king said to Ziba, "What do you mean to do with these?" So Ziba said, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who are faint in the wilderness to drink."

2 Samuel 16:3 Then the king said, "And where is your master's son?" And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.' "

2 Samuel 16:4 So the king said to Ziba, "Here, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours." And Ziba said, "I humbly bow before you, that I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!"

Mephiboseth was the crippled son of Saul, the former king of Israel. David had shown him mercy. Now Ziba speaks of his defection.

This would be a wonderful encounter except for one small detail. **Ziba outright lied about Mephiboseth!** Mephiboseth will set the record straight in Second Samuel 19:26-27.

Taking a bird's-eye view of Ziba for a moment we see someone whose goal was to get the king to reward him. He wasn't really interested in having fellowship with the king - especially not in suffering with him. He gave to the king, but what he gave cost him nothing; or at least we'd say it was not sacrificial. Let the king suffer but get something out of it for yourself was his motto.

Sadly Ziba represents far too many modern day believers. They wish to forgo suffering, give only what costs nothing or very little, yet expect Jesus to go on blessing them - especially in the physical and material realm.

One author wrote,

Many Christians are satisfied with expenditure in which there is no "shedding of blood." They give away what they can easily spare. Their gifts are detached things, and the surrender of them necessitates no bleeding. They engage in sacrifice as long as it does not involve life; when the really vital is demanded, they are not to be found. They are prominent at all triumphant entries, and they willingly spend a little money on colorful decorations - on banners and palm branches; but when "Hurrahs" and "Hosannas" change into ominous murmurs and threats, and Calvary comes into sight, they steal away into safe seclusion.

There's no real intimacy in that approach. The Lord isn't your friend, really, if you forgo His sufferings.

Then there was Shimei.

2 Samuel 16:5 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came.

2 Samuel 16:6 And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.

2 Samuel 16:7 Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue!

2 Samuel 16:8 The Lord has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!"

2 Samuel 16:9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!"

2 Samuel 16:10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

2 Samuel 16:11 And David said to Abishai and all his servants, "See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him.

2 Samuel 16:12 It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day."

2 Samuel 16:13 And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust.

A quick word about Abishai. He was a loyal, devoted servant and belongs in our first grouping. He was willing to follow David in suffering but, if he could, to end at least part of his suffering prematurely by murdering its source. David had to teach him patience in suffering - something none of us likes.

Shimei was the original proponent of your First Amendment right of free speech! A relative of Saul's, Shimei hated David for his ascent to the throne. Knowing the whole story, that God had chosen David to replace Saul who had faltered badly, we might say that Shimei's real issue was with God.

David, for a time, showed unusual kindness to Shimei.

What can we make of this? I think we can see Shimei as a nonbeliever who thinks Christians are the enemy when really his or her problem is with God. They see only the sufferings of mankind and either blame God for it or declare He is not the King He claims to be for allowing them.

For His part, God is longsuffering with them, not willing that any should perish, but rather that they would come to know Him and enjoy eternal life.

Nonbelievers think they prefer the rule of the previous king, but in their case it is Satan who stole the dominion over the earth from Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Jesus is the rightful King but they won't acknowledge it.

For our part we should show them the goodness of God. We should be Christ-like in our approach and in our response to them.

I referenced the words of the apostle Paul, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, **and the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death."

C.A. Coates wrote the following, and it is a fitting conclusion for our study:

The knowledge of Christ in glory was the supreme desire of Paul's heart, and this desire could never exist without producing an intense longing to reach Him in the place where He is. Hence the heart that longs after Him instinctively turns to the path by which He reached that place in glory, and earnestly desires to reach Him in that place by the very path which He trod. The heart asks, "How did He reach that glory? Was it through resurrection? And did not sufferings and death necessarily precede resurrection?" Then the heart says, "Nothing would please me so well as to reach Him in resurrection glory by the very path which took Him there."