

# Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

## #2 Ittai the Gittite: From Stranger To Commander

King David, a type of Jesus Christ, had been king of Israel for many years. Unbeknownst to him, his son Absalom was leading a rebellion against him and had been turning the hearts of the people away from his father in order to overthrow his reign and steal the throne.

Background: 1. Absalom fled to Geshur [~70 miles NE from Jerusalem] after the murder of his half-brother, Amnon. This plotted revenge was 2 years after the rape of his sister by Amnon.

2. Absalom stays in Geshur for 3 years. He desires to return to Jerusalem.

However, he cannot until King David gave permission.

3. David finally gives the "ok" signal for Absalom to return to Jerusalem.

However, there were restrictions placed on him: he had to remain on his own land [basically house arrest] and he could not go to the palace and see his father.

II Samuel 14:28 "And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem; and he saw not the king's face.

4. Joab intervenes for Absalom who can now go before the King after a total of 5 years.

II Sam. 14:33 ...Absalom came before the King, bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom. THEN, Absalom puts his conspiracy plan into action.

5. David was about to lose his throne and crown, his concubines, his trusted adviser Ahithophel and ultimately his son Absalom. It would be David's darkest hour.

### II Sam. 15:1-6 Absalom's Conspiracy

1. Absalom undermined popular confidence [planned a coup] in the Lord's anointed for 4 years.

- Secured military weapons and supporters 15:1; I Kings 1:5
- Criticized David's administration 15:2-3
- Promised to rule better than David 15:4
- Exercised personal charm & flattery 15:5-6

He told the people what they wanted to hear & gave them what they wanted to have.

Within 4 years, his magnetism drew a large number of devoted followers.

Even after being reconciled to his father, Absalom seemed to have no desire to develop a relationship with him; he only wanted his inheritance. He only wanted the kingdom, not the king.

II Sam. 15:7-12 Absalom's Final Preparations : His Plan: Lead a military revolution against David.

15:7-8 Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.

Absalom chose Hebron, his birthplace, as the place to announce his rebellion.

His support was probably strongest there. Increased number of followers!

But Absalom began to send spies throughout Israel. Planning while offering sacrifices!

"Whatever the reason, he exhibited the same patient scheming and relentless determination which he had already shown when he set out to avenge the rape of his sister in chapter 13. The leopard had not changed his spots. It becomes clear he had no affection for his father. He appears to have been a cold, ruthless and above all ambitious man."  
Where was David? [980-976 BC] He was building his palace in Jerusalem, constructing a new dwelling place for the ark and making preparations for the temple. [I Kings 5:9-12]  
No wonder David was surprised when Absalom's coup began.

David Prepares To Depart From Jerusalem: II Sam. 15:13-23

II Sam. 15:13 And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

Not knowing the extent of the rebellion, David prepares to flee Jerusalem with the palace guard including David's personal body guard. David was willing to risk his own life and abandon his own throne in order to protect the citizens of Jerusalem and the city itself.

II Sam. 15:17-18 And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.

This 1<sup>st</sup> major group of those loyal to David, who would accompany him as he fled from Jerusalem were foreigners, Gentiles. They were not recent followers. Their association with David goes back to his days spent hiding out from Saul, in the land of the Philistines. These were men who "had come with him from Gath."

Background Info: When David was a fugitive from Saul, he lived near Gath [Gittites] in Philistine territory for about 16 months. [I Sam. 21-31]

- The groups were composed of 600 fighting men, and their families.
- They were exiles from Gath, the birthplace of Goliath who was the champion of the Philistines who had hounded and ruled the nation of Israel for many years.
- The defeat of their champion, Goliath, heralded the start of Israel's deliverance from their power.
- Knew him as an ethical leader who cared for his fighting men and their families.
- These foreigners were loyal to David even when his own son & people deserted him.

David stops in surprise when he sees Ittai the Gittite, a foreigner who had just arrived yesterday in Jerusalem, along with his family and servants.

Ittai from Gath came to Jerusalem to be part of David's personal and palace guards.

II Sam. 15:19-20 Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king [Absalom]: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. <sup>20</sup> Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee.

1. David tests Ittai to make sure he understands what he is committing himself to.
2. David could only offer his company and hardship to Ittai as David wandered the mountains of Israel in rejection.

This is where Ittai the Gittite shines on the pages of Biblical history: II Sam. 15:21  
"But Ittai replied to the king, 'As surely as the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether it means life or death, there will your servant be.'"  
This Gentile's testimony of fidelity to David is one of the great confessions of faith and faithfulness in the Bible. His response was reminiscent of Ruth to Naomi when Naomi tried to send Ruth back to her people.

3. In the sight of his own people, Ittai declared himself as a supporter of the rejected David. Consider: Remarkable loyalty! Many of the other inhabitants of Gath must have loathed David for his defeat of their champion. David's own people were in open rebellion against him. It would appear as though GOD is FIRST in his life. He believes that David is the God-ordained king of Israel and he will be true to him regardless of what circumstances arise.

Fully committed to King David: whether David was the king in a plush palace in Jerusalem or a deposed ruler in a country town east of the Jordan River.

Although a stranger and not of Israel, Ittai was more faithful than many who were Israelites by birth. His fidelity brought him a position of great trust [II Sam. 18:2].

Just as by birth and nature Ittai was one of Israel's enemies, so we by birth and nature are sinners and consequently set ourselves as enemies of God.

Col. 1:21-23 "You, who were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works..."

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: <sup>23</sup> If Ye Continue In The Faith Grounded And Settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

Rom. 5:6-10 Paul reminds us that it was while we were sinners and enemies that God demonstrated His love towards us. He gave His only Son to die as a sacrifice for us so that salvation can be offered freely to those who trust in Him.

Ittai, once an enemy of David, allies himself with David in a very clear and public way! He had changed sides and was not afraid to let everyone know he had.

Ittai, an exile, was born in a different kingdom but transferred his life into a new kingdom.

Ittai had also counted the cost of his action. When questioned by David, Ittai declared he would stay with David "whether in death or life." His life would be utterly different from this point.

He had already willfully decided three key issues for his life. He determined -

- who his King was
- where his allegiance belonged, and
- to whom his life belonged.

Consider: My life should be markedly different once I have publicly declared my allegiance to my Lord Jesus. Certain places and events should no longer interest me.

Question: Am I prepared to accept the fact that sacrifices will have to be made in my life?

Consider: In this dark hour when family members, trusted counselors, and David's nation deserted him, here was a foreigner who declared his loyalty. Ittai put his life and the lives of his men and their families into peril for David. David could hardly speak; he said simply, II Sam. 15:22 "Go ahead, march on." [passed over; cross over = 9x]

And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. David remained while Ittai and his families went forward; thus putting himself between Ittai's company and any armed pursuit from Jerusalem.

Picture that desperately sad scene as the aging King David, his family, counselors and loyal followers fled the palace at Jerusalem to escape Absalom's murderous coup. Heartbroken, eyes downcast, and clothes torn in mourning, they go out through the gate of the very city that David himself had taken in battle. They make their way towards the brook Kidron.

Note: Years later another rejected king, our Lord and Savior, would go over this same brook on the night He was betrayed. [John 18:1]

Because of Ittai's devotion to David, Ittai will be given a position as a commander of the armies of Israel along with Joab and Joab's brother Abishai [II Sam. 18:2]. However, before this honor was given to Ittai, his commitment to be with the king no matter what the cost meant passing through the Kidron Valley (the valley of mourning) toward the desert [II Sam 15:22-23].

II Sam. 15:23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.

King David, being rejected by his people, leaves his throne, crosses the Kidron Valley and ascends the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Christ, being rejected by His people, leaves Jerusalem after the Last Supper, crosses the Kidron Valley and ascends the Mount of Olives.

Question: What is the significance of passing over the Kidron?

1. During the divided kingdom, there were at least 3 cleansings of the Temple and the Jerusalem rooftops to remove the altars of idols that had been erected during times of spiritual backsliding.

- I Kings 15:12-13 King Asa = 3<sup>rd</sup> king of Judah ~911 BC  
Destroyed the idols and burned them in the Kidron Valley
- II Chron. 29:16 King Hezekiah ~716 BC  
Had the idols and other uncleanness removed and carried out to Kidron
- II Kings 23:6 King Josiah ~622 BC  
Hilkiah, the high priest, removed the idols and reduced them to dust in the Kidron

1. The Kidron was also called "The Valley of The Shadow Of Death."

- Scores of burial sites: Jewish, Christian & Muslim
- They believe the resurrection will begin there.

Many scholars view the Kidron Valley as a major location in "ends times" prophecy.

- Christians believe Jesus Christ will return to earth on the Mount of Olives, cross over the Kidron Valley, and reenter the City of Jerusalem as King of Kings.
- Jews believe that the Messiah will come from the East, pass over the Mount of Olives and through the Kidron Valley before arriving on the Temple Mount.

MacArthur: When Jesus walked through the Kidron Valley on the way to Gethsemane [John 18:1], it was at the time of Passover. [would have been spring]

Note: The afternoon before Passover would have been the sacrificing of the lambs on the altar of the temple. John MacArthur: "Historical records of Jesus' time indicate that as many as  $\frac{1}{4}$  million lambs were slain in a typical Passover season. This would require hundreds of priests to carry out the task. There would be a lot of blood from 250,000 lambs along with the water used in the ritual cleansings." Where does all that go?

- ❖ Drains from the altar area carried it to the Kidron Valley located just outside the Temple mount walls.

- ❖ Kidron means "black brook" or "gloomy brook" = crimson-stained banks

Consider: Surely He was moved by the symbolism the valley held in terms of the sin of mankind: the false idols and the sacrificial lambs' blood. It was a fresh reminder of the cup he was about the drink and the purpose for which He came: to die as the perfect sacrificial lamb for our sins that we might be reconciled to God.

3. When Absalom attempted to usurp the throne from his father David, David fled Jerusalem and crossed the Kidron to the Mount of Olives and into the wilderness.

II Sam. 15:30 And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot:

His closest advisor Ahithophel, had also betrayed him and allied himself with Absalom.

Jesus Christ agonized in the garden located on the west slope of the Mount of Olives. At the same hour, Judas, one of His own disciples, was betraying Him and arranging for His arrest.

1. David is only a few hundred yards from the City of David.

2. Walking barefoot = the shameful exile on which he is now embarking

Consider: Was David feeling the weight of guilt as his son defied God's will and broke his father's heart?

II Sam. 12:6,10 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. Nathan the prophet: "The sword shall not depart from your household."

David repented, but he still must face the consequences of forgiven sin.

- Bathsheba's baby had died.
- Amnon had been murdered.
- Absalom will be killed by Joab.
- Adonijah will die later.

David tasted once again the pain of forgiven sin.

15:30c and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

Ittai illustrates Christians who are willing to lose their lives just to be in the presence of the King. They have nothing if they don't dwell in the King's presence. They have left all, including their goals and ambitions, to follow their King. Ittai made great progress as he stayed close to the King. Ittai, who was willing to follow David, was later given great authority in the kingdom, while Absalom, the king's heir, lost his life while pursuing his selfish ambitions.

Ponder: What progress have I made in my Christian life? The truth is that we can never stand still; If you are not growing, you will be carried along by the currents that power the culture all around us.

1. A recurring theme in the NT is Growth and Progress. It is NOT to secure our salvation! My salvation in Jesus Christ is absolutely and eternally secure in His finished work.

2. Peter admonishes ALL believers:

II Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

3. Paul wrote: Phil. 3:10 That I May Know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; [Yet Paul Knew Him!] Some Christians make steady growth and progress in their spiritual lives.

Others don't appear to make much progress at all? What makes the difference?

- The Word of God + Power of The Holy Spirit = Growth in our lives

Eph. 4:15-16 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: <sup>16</sup> From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

- We are to grow and help others grow as well.

4. Like Ittai, we are called to be soldiers. With our Lord rejected, we are effectively in enemy territory. Satan, the prince or ruler of this world will resist at every opportunity God's work in this world. He will never miss an opportunity to attack our faith and Christian witness.

II Tim. 2:3-5 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

Eph. 6:11 "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Truth: If I am unprotected and vulnerable, it is because I have failed to use the armor God has provided for me.

Ittai's loyalty and devotion to David still challenge us today. Am I willing to make the commitment to follow closely and serve the Lord Jesus faithfully in spite of the circumstances?

II Sam. 18:2 Ittai Loyalty Faithful = Exalted Position In The King's Army

May we be modern day Ittai's. Let our motto be "As the Lord liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be" [II Sam.15:21]

Luke 9:23-24 And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. <sup>24</sup> For whosoever will save His life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.