

CHAPTER 15

Absalom's name signifies "the peace of his father," yet he proves his greatest trouble; so often are we disappointed in our expectations from the creature. The sword entailed upon David's house had hitherto been among his children, but now it begins to be drawn against himself, with this aggravation, that he may thank himself for it, for, had he done justice upon the murderer, he would have prevented the traitor. The story of Absalom's rebellion begins with this chapter, but we must go over three or four more before we see the end of it. In this chapter we have,

- I.** The arts Absalom used to insinuate himself into the people's affections (v. 1-6).
- II.** His open avowal of his pretensions to the crown at Hebron, whither he went under colour of a vow, and the strong party that appeared for him there (v. 7-12).
- III.** The notice brought of this to David, and his flight from Jerusalem thereupon (v. 13-18). In his flight we are told,
 - 1.** What passed between him and Ittai (v. 19-22).
 - 2.** The concern of the country for him (v. 23).
 - 3.** His conference with Zadok (v. 24-29).
 - 4.** His tears and prayers upon this occasion (v. 30-31).
 - 5.** Matters concerted by him with Hushai (v. 32-37). Now the word of God was fulfilled, that he would "raise up evil against him out of his own house.", 12:11.

<051>2 SAMUEL 15:1-6

ABSALOM'S AMBITION

Absalom is no sooner restored to his place at court than he aims to be in the throne. He that was unhumiliated under his troubles became insufferably proud when they were over; and he cannot be content with the honour of being the king's son, and the prospect of being his successor, but he must be king now. His mother was a king's daughter; on that perhaps he valued himself, and despised his father, who was but the son of Jesse. She was the

daughter of a heathen king, which made him the less concerned for the peace of Israel. David, in this unhappy issue of that marriage, smarted for his being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. When Absalom was restored to the king's favour, if he had had any sense of gratitude, he would have studied how to oblige his father, and make him easy; but, on the contrary, he meditates how to undermine him, by stealing the hearts of the people from him. Two things recommend a man to popular esteem — greatness and goodness.

I. Absalom looks great, v. 1. He had learned of the king of Geshur (what was not allowed to the kings of Israel) to multiply horses, which made him look desirable, while his father, on his mule, looked despicable. The people desired a king like the nations; and such a one Absalom will be, appearing in pomp and magnificence, above what had been seen in Jerusalem. Samuel had foretold that this would be *the manner of the king*: He shall have chariots and horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots (~~1~~ Samuel 8:11); and this is Absalom's manner. Fifty footmen (in rich liveries we may suppose) running before him, to give notice of his approach, would highly gratify his pride and the people's foolish fancy. David thinks that this parade is designed only to grace his court, and connives at it. Those parents know not what they do who indulge a proud humour in their children; for I have seen more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever.

II. Absalom will seem very good too, but with a very bad design. Had he proved himself a good son and a good subject, and set himself to serve his father's interest, he would have done his present duty, and shown himself worthy of future honours, after his father's death. Those that know how to obey well know how to rule. But to show how good a judge and how good a king he will be is but to deceive himself and others. Those are good indeed that are good in their own place, not that pretend how good they would be in other people's places. But this is all the goodness we find in Absalom.

1. He wishes that he were a judge in Israel, v. 4. He had all the pomp and all the pleasure he could wish, lived as great and in as much ease as any man could; yet this will not content him, unless he have power too: *O that I were a judge in Israel!* He that should himself have been judged to death for murder has the impudence to aim at being a judge of others. We read not of Absalom's wisdom, virtue, or learning in the laws, nor had he given

any proofs of his love to justice, but the contrary; yet he wishes he were judge. Note, Those are commonly most ambitious of preferment that are least fit for it; the best qualified are the most modest and self-diffident, while it is no better than the spirit of an Absalom that says, *O that I were a judge in Israel!*

2. He takes a very bad course for the accomplishing of his wish. Had he humbly petitioned his father to employ him in the administration of justice, and studied to qualify himself for it (according to the rule, ^{<12>}Exodus 18:21), no doubt he would have been sure of the next judge's place that fell; but this is too mean a post for his proud spirit. It is below him to be subordinate, though to the king his father; he must be supreme or nothing. He wants to be such a judge that every man who has any cause shall come to him: in all causes, and over all persons, he must preside, little thinking what a fatigue this would be to have every man come to him. Moses himself could not bear it. Those know not what power is that grasp at so much, so very much. To gain the power he aims at, he endeavours to instil into the people's minds,

(1.) A bad opinion of the present administration, as if the affairs of the kingdom were altogether neglected, and no care taken about them. He got round him all he could that had business at the council-board, enquired what their business was; and,

[1.] Upon a slight and general enquiry into their cause, he pronounced it good: *Thy matters are right*. A fit man indeed to be a judge, who would give judgment upon hearing one side only! For he has a bad cause indeed that cannot put a good colour upon it, when he himself has the telling of the story. But,

[2.] He told them that it was to no purpose to appeal to the throne: "*There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee*. The king is himself old, and past business, or so taken up with his devotions that he never minds business; his sons are so addicted to their pleasures that, though they have the name of chief rulers, they take no care of the affairs committed to them." He further seems to insinuate what a great want there was of him while he was banished and confined, and how much the public suffered by his exile; what his father said truly in Saul's reign (^{<13>}Psalm 75:3) he says falsely: *The land and all the inhabitants of it are dissolved*, all will go to wreck and ruin, unless *I bear up the pillars of it*. Every appellent shall be made to believe that he will never have justice done him, unless Absalom

be viceroy or lord-justice. It is the way of turbulent, factious, aspiring men, to reproach the government they are under. *Presumptuous are they, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities,* ^{<6020>}2 Peter 2:10. Even David himself, the best of kings, and his administration, could not escape the worst of censures. Those that aim to usurp cry out of grievances, and pretend to design nothing but the redress of them: as Absalom here.

(2.) A good opinion of his own fitness to rule. That the people might say, “O that Absalom were a judge!” (and they are apt enough to desire changes), he recommends himself to them,

[1.] As very diligent. He rose up early, and appeared in public before the rest of the king's sons were stirring, and he stood beside the way of the gate, where the courts of judgment sat, as one mightily concerned to see justice done and public business despatched.

[2.] As very inquisitive and prying, and desirous to be acquainted with every one's case. He would know of what city every one was that came for judgment, that he might inform himself concerning every part of the kingdom and the state of it, v. 2.

[3.] As very familiar and humble. If any Israelite offered to do obeisance to him he took him and embraced him as a friend. No man's conduct could be more condescending, while his heart was as proud as Lucifer's. Ambitious projects are often carried on by a *show of humility,* ^{<5023>}Colossians 2:23. He knew what a grace it puts upon greatness to be affable and courteous, and how much it wins upon common people: had he been sincere in it, it would have been his praise; but to fawn upon the people that he might betray them was abominable hypocrisy. *He croucheth, and humbleth himself, to draw them into his net,* ^{<1909>}Psalms 10:9, 10.

^{<1057>}2 SAMUEL 15:7-12

ABSALOM'S REBELLION

We have here the breaking out of Absalom's rebellion, which he had long been contriving. It is said to be *after forty years,* v. 7. But whence it is to be dated we are not told; not from David's beginning his reign, for then it would fall in the last year of his life, which is not probable; but either from his first anointing by Samuel seven years before, or rather (I think) from

the people's desiring a king, and the first change of the government into a monarchy, which might be about ten years before David began to reign; it is fitly dated thence, to show that the same restless spirit was still working, and still they were given to change: as fond now of a new man as then of a new model. So it fell about the thirtieth year of David's reign. Absalom's plot being now ripe for execution,

I. The place he chose for the rendezvous of his party was Hebron, the place where he was born and where his father began his reign and continued it several years, which would give some advantage to his pretensions. Every one knew Hebron to be a royal city; and it lay in the heart of Judah's lot, in which tribe, probably, he thought his interest strong.

II. The pretence he had both to go thither and to invite his friends to him there was to offer a sacrifice to God, in performance of a vow he had made during his banishment, v. 7, 8. We have cause enough to suspect that he had not made any such vow; it does not appear that he was so religiously inclined. But he that stuck not at murder and treason would not make conscience of a lie to serve his purpose. If he said he had made such a vow, nobody could disprove him. Under this pretence,

1. He got leave of his father to go to Hebron. David would be well pleased to hear that his son, in his exile, was so desirous to return to Jerusalem, not only his father's city, but the city of the living God, — that he looked up to God, to bring him back, — that he had vowed, if he were brought back, to serve the Lord, whose service he had hitherto neglected, — and that now, being brought back, he remembered his vow, and resolved to perform it. If he think fit to do it in Hebron, rather than in Sion or Gibeon, the good king is so well pleased with the thing itself that he will not object against his choice of the place. See how willing tender parents are to believe the best concerning their children, and, upon the least indication of good, to hope, even concerning those that have been untoward, that they will repent and reform. But how easy is it for children to take advantage of their good parents' credulity, and to impose upon them with the show of religion, while still they are what they were! David was overjoyed to hear that Absalom inclined to *serve the Lord*, and therefore readily gave him leave to go to Hebron, and to go thither with solemnity.

2. He got a good number of sober substantial citizens to go along with him, v. 11. There went 200 men, probably of the principal men of Jerusalem,

whom he invited to join with him in his feast upon his sacrifice; and they went in their simplicity, not in the least suspecting that Absalom had any bad design in this journey. He knew that it was to no purpose to tempt them into his plot: they were inviolably firm to David. But he drew them in to accompany him, that the common people might think that they were in his interest, and that David was deserted by some of his best friends. Note, It is no new thing for very good men, and very good things, to be made use of by designing men to put a colour upon bad practices. When religion is made a stalking-horse, and sacrifice a shoeing-horn, to sedition and usurpation it is not to be wondered at if some that were well affected to religion, as these followers of Absalom here, are imposed upon by the fallacy, and drawn in to give countenance to that, with their names, which in their heart they abhor, not having known the depths of Satan.

III. The project he laid was to get himself proclaimed king throughout all the tribes of Israel upon a signal given, v. 10. Spies were sent abroad, to be ready in every country to receive the notice with satisfaction and acclamations of joy, and to make the people believe that the news was both very true and very good, and that they were all concerned to take up arms for their new king. Upon the sudden spreading of this proclamation, “*Absalom reigns in Hebron,*” some would conclude that David was dead, others that he had resigned: and thus those that were in the secret would draw in many to appear for Absalom, and to come into his assistance, who, if they had rightly understood the matter, would have abhorred the thought of it, but, being drawn in, would adhere to him. See what artifices ambitious men use for the compassing of their ends; and in matters of state, as well as in matters of religion, let us not be forward to believe every spirit, but try the spirits.

IV. The person he especially courted and relied upon in this affair was Ahithophel, a politic thinking man, and one that had a clear head and a great compass of thought, that had been David's counsellor, his guide and his acquaintance (^{<66813>}Psalm 55:13), his *familiar friend, in whom he trusted, who did eat of his bread,* ^{<3940>}Psalm 41:9. But, upon some disgust of David's against him, or his against David, he was banished, or retired from public business, and lived privately in the country. How should a man of such good principles as David, and a man of such corrupt principles as Ahithophel, long agree? A fitter tool Absalom could not find in all the kingdom than one that was so great a statesman, and yet was disaffected to

the present ministry. While Absalom was offering his sacrifices, in performance of his pretended vow, he sent for this man. So much was his heart on the projects of his ambition that he could not stay to make an end of his devotion, which showed what his eye was upon in all, and that it was but for a pretence that he made long offerings.

V. The party that joined with him proved at last very considerable. The people increased continually with Absalom, which made the conspiracy strong and formidable. Every one whom he had complimented and caressed (pronouncing his matters right and good, especially if afterwards the cause went against him) not only came himself, but made all the interest he could for him, so that he wanted not for numbers. The majority is no certain rule to judge of equity by. *All the world wondered after the beast.* Whether Absalom formed this design merely in the height of his ambition and fondness to rule, or whether there was not in it also malice against his father and revenge for his banishment and confinement, though this punishment was so much less than he deserved, does not appear. But, generally, that which aims at the crown aims at the head that wears it.

~~10153~~ 2 SAMUEL 15:13-23

ABSALOM'S REBELLION

Here is,

I. The notice brought to David of Absalom's rebellion, v. 13. The matter was bad enough, and yet it seems to have been made worse to him (as such things commonly are) than really it was; for he was told that *the hearts of the men of Israel* (that is, the generality of them, at least the leading men) were *after Absalom*. But David was the more apt to believe it because now he could call to mind the arts that Absalom had used to inveigle them, and perhaps reflected upon it with regret that he had not done more to counterwork him, and secure his own interest, which he had been too confident of. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to make sure of their subjects; for, if they have them, they have their purses, and arms, and all, at their service.

II. The alarm this gave to David, and the resolutions he came to thereupon. We may well imagine him in a manner thunderstruck, when he

heard that the son he loved so dearly, and had been so indulgent to, was so unnaturally and ungratefully in arms against him. Well might he say with Caesar, *Kai sy teknon* — *What, thou my son?* Let not parents raise their hopes too high from their children, lest they be disappointed. David did not call a council, but, consulting only with God and his own heart, determined immediately to quit Jerusalem, v. 14. He took up this strange resolve, so disagreeable to his character as a man of courage, either,

1. As a penitent, submitting to the rod, and lying down under God's correcting hand. Conscience now reminded him of his sin in the matter of Uriah, and the sentence he was under for it, which was that *evil should arise against him out of his own house*. “Now,” thinks he, “the word of God begins to be fulfilled, and it is not for me to contend with it or fight against it; God is righteous and I submit.” Before unrighteous Absalom he could justify himself and stand it out; but before the righteous God he must condemn himself and yield to his judgments. Thus he *accepts the punishment of his iniquity*. Or,

2. As a politician. Jerusalem was a great city, but not tenable; it should seem, by David's prayer (^{<1518>}Psalm 51:18), that the walls of it were not built up, much less was it regularly fortified. It was too large to be garrisoned by so small a force as David had now with him. He had reason to fear that the generality of the inhabitants were too well affected to Absalom to be true to him. Should he fortify himself here, he might lose the country, in which, especially among those that lay furthest from Absalom's tampering, he hoped to have the most friends. And he had such a kindness for Jerusalem that he was loth to make it the seat of war, and expose it to the calamities of a siege; he will rather quit it tamely to the rebels. Note, Good men, when they suffer themselves, care not how few are involved with them in suffering.

III. His hasty flight from Jerusalem. His servants agreed to the measures he took, faithfully adhered to him (v. 15), and assured him of their inviolable allegiance, whereupon,

1. He went out of Jerusalem himself on foot, while his son Absalom had chariots and horses. It is not always the best man, nor the best cause, that makes the best figure. See here, not only the servant, but the traitor, on horseback, while the prince, the rightful prince, *walks as a servant upon the earth*, ^{<2107>}Ecclesiastes 10:7. Thus he chose to do, to abase himself so

much the more under God's hand, and in condescension to his friends and followers, with whom he would walk, in token that he would live and die with them.

2. He took his household with him, his wives and children, that he might protect them in this day of danger, and that they might be a comfort to him in this day of grief. Masters of families, in their greatest frights, must not neglect their households. *Ten women, that were concubines, he left behind, to keep the house,* thinking that the weakness of their sex would secure them from murder, and their age and relation to him would secure them from rape; but God overruled this for the fulfilling of his word.

3. He took his life-guard with him, or band of pensioners, the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were under the command of Benaiah, and the Gittites, who were under the command of Ittai, v. 18. These Gittites seem to have been, by birth, Philistines of Gath, who came, a regiment of them, 600 in all, to enter themselves in David's service, having known him at Gath, and being greatly in love with him for his virtue and piety, and having embraced the Jews' religion. David made them of his *garde du corps* — *his body-guard*, and they adhered to him in his distress. The Son of David *found not such great faith in Israel* as in a Roman centurion and a woman of Canaan.

4. As many as would, of the people of Jerusalem, he took with him, and made a halt at some distance from the city, to draw them up, v. 17. He compelled none. Those whose hearts were with Absalom, to Absalom let them go, and so shall their doom be: they will soon have enough of him. Christ enlists none but volunteers.

IV. His discourse with Ittai the Gittite, who commanded the Philistine-proselytes.

1. David dissuaded him from going along with him, v. 19, 20. Though he and his men might be greatly serviceable to him yet,

(1.) He would try whether he was hearty for him, and not inclined to Absalom. He therefore bids him return to his post in Jerusalem, and serve the new king. If he was no more than a soldier of fortune (as we say), he would be for that side which would pay and prefer him best; and to that side let him go.

(2.) If he was faithful to David, yet David would not have him exposed to the fatigues and perils he now counted upon. David's tender spirit cannot

bear to think that a stranger and an exile, a proselyte and a new convert, who ought, by all means possible, to be encouraged and made easy, should, at his first coming, meet with such hard usage: “*Should I make thee go up and down with us? No, return with thy brethren.*” Generous souls are more concerned at the share others have in their troubles than at their own. Ittai shall therefore be dismissed with a blessing: *Mercy and truth be with thee*, that is, God's mercy and truth, mercy according to promise, the promise made to those who renounce other gods and put themselves under the wings off the divine Majesty. This is a very proper pious farewell, when we part with a friend, “*Mercy and truth be with thee*, and then thou art safe, and mayest be easy, wherever thou art.” David's dependence was upon the mercy and truth of God for comfort and happiness, both for himself and his friends; see ^{<B607>}Psalm 61:7.

2. Ittai bravely resolved not to leave him, v. 21. Where David is, *whether in life or death*, safe or in peril, there will this faithful friend of his be; and he confirms this resolution with an oath, that he might not be tempted to break it. Such a value has he for David, not for the sake of his wealth and greatness (for then he would have deserted him now that he saw him thus reduced), but for the sake of his wisdom and goodness, which were still the same, that, whatever comes of it, he will never leave him. Note, That is a friend indeed who loves at all times, and will adhere to us in adversity. Thus should we cleave to the Son of David with full purpose of heart that *neither life nor death shall separate us from his love.*

V. The common people's sympathy with David in his affliction. When he and his attendants *passed over the brook Kidron* (the very same brook that Christ passed over when he entered upon his sufferings, ^{<B801>}John 18:1), *towards the way of the wilderness*, which lay between Jerusalem and Jericho, *all the country wept with a loud voice*, v. 23. Cause enough there was for weeping,

1. To see a prince thus reduced, one that had lived so great forced from his palace and in fear of his life, with a small retinue seeking shelter in a desert, to see the city of David, which he himself won, built, and fortified, made an unsafe abode for David himself. It would move the compassion even of strangers to see a man fallen thus low from such a height, and this by the wickedness of his own son; a piteous case it was. Parents that are abused and ruined by their own children merit the tender sympathy of their friends as much as any of the sons or daughters of affliction. Especially,

2. To see their own prince thus wronged, who had been so great a blessing to their land, and had not done any thing to forfeit the affections of his people; to see him in this distress, and themselves unable to help him, might well draw floods of tears from their eyes.

2 SAMUEL 15:24-30

DAVID'S FLIGHT

Here we have,

I. The fidelity of the priests and Levites and their firm adherence to David and his interest. They knew David's great affection to them and their office, notwithstanding his failings. The method Absalom took to gain people's affections made no impression upon them; he had little religion in him, and therefore they steadily adhered to David. Zadok and Abiathar, and all the Levites, if he go, will accompany him, and take the ark with them, that, by it, they may ask counsel of God for him, v. 24. Note, Those that are friends to the ark in their prosperity will find it a friend to them in their adversity. Formerly David would not rest till he had found a resting-place for the ark; and now, if the priests may have their mind, the ark shall not rest till David return to his rest.

II. David's dismissal of them back into the city, v. 25, 26. Abiathar was high priest (^{<1025>}1 Kings 2:35), but Zadok was his assistant, and attended the ark most closely, while Abiathar was active in public business, v. 24. Therefore David directs his speech to Zadok, and an excellent speech it is, and shows him to be in a very good frame under his affliction, and that still he holds fast his integrity.

1. He is very solicitous for the safety of the ark: “By all means *carry the ark back into the city*, let not that be unsettled and exposed with me, lodge that again in the tent pitched for it; surely Absalom, bad as he is, will do that no harm.” David's heart, like Eli's trembles for the ark of God. Note, It argues a good principle to be more concerned for the church's prosperity than for our own, to *prefer Jerusalem* before our *chief joy* (^{<3076>}Psalm 137:6), the success of the gospel, and the flourishing of the church, above our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, even when they are most in hazard.

2. He is very desirous to return to the enjoyment of the privileges of God's house. He will reckon it the greatest instance of God's favour to him if he may but once more be brought back to see it and his habitation. This will be more his joy than to be brought back to his own palace and throne again. Note, Gracious souls measure their comforts and conveniences in this world by the opportunity they give them of communion with God. Hezekiah wished for the recovery of his health for this reason, that he might *go up to the house of the Lord*, ^{<1832>}Isaiah 38:22.

3. He is very submissive to the holy will of God concerning the issue of this dark dispensation. He hopes the best (v. 25), and hopes for it from the favour of God, which he looks upon to be the fountain of all good: "If God favour me so far, I shall be settled again as formerly." But he provides for the worst: "If he deny me this favour — if he thus say, *I have no delight in thee* — I know I deserve the continuance of his displeasure; his holy will be done." See him here patiently awaiting the event: "*Behold, here am I*, as a servant expecting orders;" and see him willing to commit himself to God concerning it: "*Let him do to me as seemeth good to him*. I have nothing to object. All is well that God does." Observe with what satisfaction and holy complacency he speaks of the divine disposal: not only, "He can do what he will," subscribing to his power (^{<1802>}Job 9:12), or, "He has a right to do what he will," subscribing to his sovereignty (^{<1833>}Job 33:13), or, "He will do what he will," subscribing to his unchangeableness (^{<1833>}Job 23:13, 15), but, "*Let him to what he will*," subscribing to his wisdom and goodness. Note, It is our interest, as well as duty, cheerfully to acquiesce in the will of God, whatever befalls us. That we may not complain of what is, let us see God's hand in all events; and, that we may not be afraid of what shall be, let us see all events in God's hand.

III. The confidence David put in the priests that they would serve his interest to the utmost of their power in his absence. He calls Zadok a *seer* (v. 27), that is, a wise man, a man that can see into business and discern time and judgment: "Thou hast thy *eyes in thy head* (^{<2014>}Ecclesiastes 2:14), and therefore art capable of doing me service, especially by sending me intelligence of the enemy's motions and resolutions." One friend that is a seer, in such an exigency as this, was worth twenty that were not so quick-sighted. For the settling of a private correspondence with the priests in his absence, he appoints,

1. Whom they should send to him — their two sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, whose coat, it might be hoped, would be their protection, and of whose prudence and faithfulness he had probably had experience.

2. Whither they should send. He would encamp *in the plain of the wilderness* till he heard from them (v. 28), and then would move according to the information and advice they should send him. Hereupon they returned to the city, to await the event. It was a pity that any disturbance should be given to a state so happy as this was, when the prince and the priests had such an entire affection for the confidence in each other.

IV. The melancholy posture that David and his men put themselves into, when, at the beginning of their march, they went up the *mount of Olives*, v. 30.

1. David himself, as a deep mourner, covered his head and face for shame and blushing, went bare-foot, as a prisoner or a slave, for mortification, and went weeping. Did it become a man of his reputation for courage and greatness of spirit thus to cry like a child, only for fear of an enemy at a distance, against whom he might easily have made head, and perhaps with one bold stroke have routed him? Yes, it did not ill become him, considering how much there was in this trouble,

(1.) Of the unkindness of his son. He could not but weep to think that one who came out of his bowels, and had so often lain in his arms, should thus lift up the heel against him. God himself is said to be grieved with the rebellions of his own children (^{<3950>}Psalm 95:10) and even *broken with their whorish heart*, ^{<3060>}Ezekiel 6:9.

(2.) There was much of the displeasure of his God in it. This infused the wormwood and gall into the *affliction and misery*, ^{<2780>}Lamentations 3:19. His sin was *ever before him* (^{<3510>}Psalm 51:3), but never so plain nor ever appearing so black as now. He never wept thus when Saul hunted him: but a wounded conscience makes troubles lie heavily, ^{<1800>}Psalm 38:4.

2. When David wept all his company wept likewise, being much affected with his grief and willing to share in it. It is our duty to *weep with those that weep*, especially our superiors, and those that are better than we; for, *if this be done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?* We must weep with those that weep for sin. When Hezekiah humbled himself for his

sin all Jerusalem joined with him, ^{<14226>}2 Chronicles 32:26. To prevent suffering with sinners, let us sorrow with them.

^{<1053>}2 SAMUEL 15:31-37

DAVID'S REQUEST TO HUSHAI

Nothing, it seems, appeared to David more threatening in Absalom's plot than that Ahithophel was in it; for one good head, in such a design, is worth a thousand good hands. Absalom was himself no politician, but he had got one entirely in his interest that was, and would be the more dangerous because he had been all along acquainted with David's counsels and affairs; if therefore he can be baffled, Absalom is as good as routed and the head of the conspiracy cut off. This David endeavours to do.

I. By prayer. When he heard that Ahithophel was in the plot he lifted up his heart to God in this short prayer: *Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness*, v. 31. He had not opportunity for a long prayer, but he was not one of those that thought he should be heard for his much speaking. It was a fervent prayer: "*Lord, I pray thee, do this.*" God is well pleased with the importunity of those that come to him with their petitions. David is particular in this prayer; he names the person whose counsels he prays against. God gives us leave, in prayer, to be humbly and reverently free with him, and to mention the particular care, and fear, and grief, that lies heavily upon us. David prayed not against Ahithophel's person, but against his counsel, that God would *turn it into foolishness*, that, though he was a wise man, he might at this time give foolish counsel, or, if he gave wise counsel, that it might be rejected as foolish, or, if it were followed, that by some providence or other it might be defeated, and not attain the end. David prayed this in a firm belief that God has all hearts in his hand, and tongues too, that, when he pleases, he can *take away the understanding of the aged and make the judges fools*, (^{<18217>}Job 12:17; ^{<319>}Isaiah 3:2, 3), and in hope that God would own and plead his just and injured cause. Note, We may pray in faith, and should pray with fervency, that God will turn that counsel into foolishness which is taken against his people.

II. By policy. We must second our prayer with our endeavours, else we tempt God. It is good service to countermine the policy of the church's enemies. When David came to the top of the mount, he *worshipped God*, v. 32. Note, Weeping must not hinder worshipping, but quicken it rather. Now he penned the third Psalm, as appears by the title; and some think that his singing this was the worship he now paid to God. Just now Providence brought Hushai to him. While he was yet speaking, God heard, and sent him the person that should be instrumental to befool Ahithophel. He came to condole with David on his present trouble, with his coat rent and earth upon his head; but David, having a great deal of confidence in his conduct and faithfulness, resolved to employ him as a spy upon Absalom. He would not take him with him (v. 33), for he had now more need of soldiers than counsellors, but sent him back to Jerusalem, to wait for Absalom's arrival, as a deserter from David, and to offer him his service, v. 34. Thus he might insinuate himself into his counsels, and defeat Ahithophel, either by dissuading Absalom from following his advice or by discovering it to David, that he might know where to stand upon his guard. How this gross dissimulation, which David put Hushai upon, can be justified, as a stratagem in war, I do not see. The best that can be made of it is that Absalom, if he rebel against his father, must stand upon his guard against all mankind, and, if he will be deceived, let him be deceived. David recommended Hushai to Zadok and Abiathar, as persons proper to be consulted with (v. 35), and to their two sons, as trusty men to be sent on errands to David, v. 36. Hushai, thus instructed, came to Jerusalem (v. 37), whither also Absalom soon after came with his forces. How soon do royal palaces and royal cities change their masters! But we look for a kingdom which cannot be thus shaken and in the possession of which we cannot be disturbed.