



“deceit, deception and deliverance”

-2 Samuel 17&18-

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“The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”

—1 Timothy 4:1 (NASB)

The reality of the world we live in today is that there will always be people who will lie to you and manipulate you in order to see their own personal agenda furthered and to confirm and secure their own heart in the position that they have taken. Yes, misery DOES love company! When we grow in knowledge and in discernment, we can learn to recognize and expose such tactics.

Much of the seductiveness of such lies comes from the fact that they contain a kernel of truth. “*You’re sad, aren’t you?*” he whispers. “*God wants you to be happy, so...*” “*Can you believe what that guy did to you? God doesn’t expect you to be a doormat does He?*” “*That church is just too tough... God is loving and gracious... so why do they always seem to be pushing you?*”

Pieces of truth and crumbs of reality. But the rest is an exaggeration, extrapolation, and imagination. Soon a supposed “truth” is ringing in your head, and you lose sight of the real truth. Your “rights” begin to trump everything, and having begun the day as a faithful follower, you end it off in the weeds.

Paul was exasperated with the people of the church in Galatia because they so often fell for this trick of the devil, in which truth is mingled with falsehood. He wrote: “*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...? ...Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*” (Galatians 3:1, 3 NKJV).

In our account in 2 Samuel 17-18, we see what appears to be everybody trying to manipulate everyone else. Everyone had an agenda. But the question...that which “separates the sheep from the goats”...is, *what was their motivation?* Motivation is a funny thing, because sometimes we fail to see it even when it is riding in the passenger seat! Motivation can range from pride, to anger, to power, to retribution, to pleasure, and so much more. The driving elements can be many, but they all have certain aspects in common. **One** is the idea of “**my rights.**” *You can’t do that to me...I have my rights!* Of course such a statement is overtly worldly and there is seemingly not a trace of Jesus in there anywhere, but we still will ‘draw and shoot’ that gun when we believe we have been unrighteously taken advantage of. Another (**two**) is driven by what we think we “deserve.” *I deserve to be happy...I deserve that fleshly indulgence.* Or “*I don’t deserve to be dealt with that way...I don’t deserve that kind of treatment...those harsh words...that kind of denial.*” Pride is such a wickedly blinding enemy!

They both have one thing in common: **ME**. When decisions, and viewpoints and pursuits and directions are motivated by the almighty ME, we are on the road of eventual pain and destruction, and on the way a lot of loneliness and emptiness. It's been shown repeatedly that one of the greatest medicines for depression is to get your eyes off of you and on to others: serve others...love others...be thankful for your life.

In the case of David, when it came time to go to battle, he "stood down" on the insistence of the trusted men around him. Their reasoning was sound, and thus despite the fact that "going to battle" was David's forte, he did not go out with the rest. He might have appeared or been accused of being a coward...He could have felt slighted or marginalized or dis-respected...*after all, He was the King!* But he didn't...he did not let his emotions and his imaginations get the better of him. He knew these men could be trusted because they had earned that trust over a long period of time and through many previous testing's where the outcome would not have been 'life or death' as it was this time! Like God does with us, they had already been "*tested in the small things before being entrusted in the bigger things.*" (Luke 16:10, Deut 8:2)

The end of the story is the seeming end of all such stories! Maybe they don't all end in such a violent death, *although many have and do!* But the end of such overt pride, arrogance, and self-centered worldview inevitably ends badly. Because inevitably my "me first, c'est la vie" approach to life will most certainly clash with the next guy's "me first, c'est la vie" approach to life, and if you have ever seen a head on car collision you can imagine the outcome here also! So for Absalom to die in such a manner, many would say was ironic. But the truth really was that such was unavoidable and inescapable. He was simply on that "road to ruin." And that road only had one ending...

The truth is that Absalom never had a chance. All this hoopla might have looked good and an exercise in showmanship, but none of it would have ever made any difference because God had quite openly chosen David. **David** was God's choice! Whether we agree or understand, he was God's choice! Therefore it was essentially over before it began. Oh, God used this event to teach David some life lessons as we will see! But the outcome was predetermined. God had spoken...

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1) **How was Absalom on the path of his own ruin? What were the signs?**
- 2) **Absalom reached out for council before He made a decision, which was wise for him to do. But how should we decide to whom we seek such counsel? What should the criteria be?** (*Track record over the long haul for one. The manifest of his or her own personal living. Do they 'walk the walk'? Do they practice what they preach? Have they PROVEN their integrity as well as having an ear for what God instructs?*)
- 3) **IS that the criteria YOU use currently when seeking council on important decisions and issues in your life?** (*If not, why not?*)
- 4) **How do you know someone can be trusted to have your best interests in mind?** (*Whether they have proven that they will tell you the hard things along with that which pleases. Will they be straight up with you and let the chips fall where they may?*)
- 5) **How should we assess and respond to the different kinds of advice people give us?**
- 6) **IS that/those factors being exercised now by you when people give you advice?**
- 7) **What does Matthew 25: 37-40 have to say as to personal motivation as well as giving and receiving council?** (*Does the council we are receiving and are the plans we are executing please and glorify God and His kingdom? Or are they just good for me personally?*)
- 8) **Throughout this passage we see God's plans being achieved through lying, deception, and intrigue...but also through kindness, faithfulness, and generosity. How does this help us see and understand how God works?** (*God is going to do whatever God wants to do. We will never deter his plans or alter his timing. He is in control no matter what manipulation we may attempt...*)
- 9) **Why did Ahithophel commit suicide? (17:23)** (*His council was rejected and his self-worth and future was apparently inexplicably tied up in a positive reception and a powerful standing. His ego and his pride killed him. He was unable to imagine life outside of the world he thought he deserved and he believed he was worthy of.*)