YOUR FATHER IS A FIGHTER AND THOSE WITH HIM ARE BRAVE

2 Samuel 17:1-29

Key Verse:

Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.

—2 Samuel 17:10

Good morning. Today I would like to focus on verse 10. Let’s look at it again. “Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.”

In today’s passage we see how the Lord helped David and his men. It was a time when they were their weakest. But they were made strong. Isn’t it very interesting? When they were weak, they became so strong. It sounds contradicting: to be both weak and strong. How is it possible?

I think we would like to just be strong (as opposed to weak and strong). I don’t like to be weak. I know my weaknesses well and they give me trouble. I know that because of them I might fail at things. Knowing my weaknesses gives me doubts about my actions or decisions at times, or even renders me unable to make proper decisions or take proper action. Also, it hurts my pride. I have to depend on others and ask for help. I cannot do everything on my own all the time. It also makes for awkward situations. Last week I expressed my weakness to others. I didn’t want to do something someone told me to do, because I felt at my physical limits right now. Simply, I was too tired to try to do something more. But I offended someone who actually works their body more than I do, so they believe. So, I apologize to this person for offending them.

The truth is, I also don’t like others to be weak. Weak people have to depend on others. They also have the high possibility to fail or become unreliable. Ideally, everyone would be strong and wise. I would gladly have such people around me. But we see in today’s passage that it is God’s way to take the weak things and foolish things and make them strong and wise to reveal his power.

Actually, we do need to be wise, strong and brave because we have to stand with Jesus. Similar to David, Jesus is the king. But he was rejected and submitted himself in weakness. Now, we are waiting for him to return. When he returns he will do so as the king of kings and lord of lords. In the meantime, we need to be faithful and stand with him, rather than giving up and going to the other side. We have to be able to stand do what he wants us to do until he returns. Today’s passage helps us by showing God’s help to David and his men.

Look at verses 1-4.

[1] Ahithophel said to Absalom, “I would choose twelve thousand men and set out tonight in pursuit of David. [2] I would attack him while he is weary and weak. I would strike him with terror, and then all the people with him will flee. I would strike down only the king [3] and bring all the people back to you. The death of the man you seek will mean the return of all; all the people will be unharmed.” [4] This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the elders of Israel.

These verses tell us first Ahithophel’s advice to Absalom. Ahithopel, used to be on David’s side. But when Absalom rose to power, he defected.

We see from his advice that he was a brilliant man and very smart. He wisely tried to exploit David’s moment of weakness and weariness. And he knew to strike right away, without delay. He said that they should have gone even that night with twelve thousand men. Ahithophel was brilliant. It may look scary to have such a man against you. He was exactly right. They should have taken David out as he advised, including not killing others, just David and in that way have all the people go to Absalom.

His advice shows us how weak and weary David really had become. David was a strong fighter. Who could harm David? In the past, the people used to sing about David, “David has slain his tens of thousands.” But now, with twelve thousand men, they could slay David. He was on the run. He really was weak and weary. We saw in the previous chapter how he was weeping as he was going down the road, leaving Jerusalem. He was barefoot. He didn’t even have the strength to put his shoes on. And all those who with him were weeping too and had covered their heads.

If this kind of person is against you, what can you do? He’s too smart. You might think that you’re dead meat. At this low point, his weakest point, what can David do? He didn’t do anything. But the Lord helped David through Hushai.

Look at verses 5-14.

[5] But Absalom said, “Summon also Hushai the Arkite, so we can hear what he has to say as well.” [6] When Hushai came to him, Absalom said, “Ahithophel has given this advice. Should we do what he says? If not, give us your opinion.”

[7] Hushai replied to Absalom, “The advice Ahithophel has given is not good this time. [8] You know your father and his men; they are fighters, and as fierce as a wild bear robbed of her cubs. Besides, your father is an experienced fighter; he will not spend the night with the troops. [9] Even now, he is hidden in a cave or some other place. If he should attack your troops first, whoever hears about it will say, ‘There has been a slaughter among the troops who follow Absalom.’ [10] Then even the bravest soldier, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a fighter and that those with him are brave.

[11] “So I advise you: Let all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba—as numerous as the sand on the seashore—be gathered to you, with you yourself leading them into battle. [12] Then we will attack him wherever he may be found, and we will fall on him as dew settles on the ground. Neither he nor any of his men will be left alive. [13] If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it down to the valley until not so much as a pebble is left.”

[14] Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Arkite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.

These verses tell us Hushai’s advice to Absalom. Hushai was David’s friend. He tried to go into exile with David, but David sent him back to Absalom as a kind of mole and spy, to help David.

We see here that Hushai painted a very different picture of David and his men. He called them fighters, brave, experienced, fierce like wild animals, and wise. Interestingly, he compared David to a bear whose cubs were robbed. Have you seen a bear defend her cubs? Here is a short video clip. Hushai convinced Absalom and his company that David was like a bear. He is that fierce and will strike you strongly if you come near him or his people. Absalom and his company were convinced. The fear of David, the strong man, and his brave men, was put into their hearts so that they were afraid and changed their strategy. They were fully convinced and said that Hushai’s advice was better.

In some respects, what Hushai said was also true of David and his men. In fact, Hushai himself was one of David’s brave men. There he was, standing before Absalom in Jerusalem, and trying to frustrate Ahithophel’s advice. There were also the two priests Zadok and Abiathar, as well as their sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz. Hushai was risking his life, and he did it with wisdom and strength.

What happened was truly amazing. In that short time David, who was so weak and weary to them, became so strong and brave so that they were afraid and changed their strategy. David didn’t do anything but he became so strong!

Verse 14 tells us that it was the Lord’s help. Again, it says, “For the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.”

This tells us that it was the Lord who made Hushai wise at that moment, wiser than Ahithophel.  It was the Lord who made David and his men so strong when they were so weak, although David and his men did not do anything at that time. The Lord gave strength and wisdom to Hushai. He was brave because of the Lord’s help.

If we think about how the Lord gave wisdom to Hushai, it is also quite amazing. Just recently, Hushai met Absalom. At that time Absalom thought that Hushai was kind of foolish because he didn’t keep his loyalty to his friend, David. Absalom had only known that David and Hushai were good friends. Hushai looked like someone who didn’t know how to show friendship and love properly. But God made him to be wiser than Ahithophel. He made a foolish person wiser than the wisest person.

We learn that this is God’s way, to take weak and foolish things, and make them wise and strong for his purpose.

1 Corinthians 1:27 says,

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

Since what happened was from God, as God had determined to do, it shows us that Hushai was acting by faith in God. By faith he was brave and took up the task of going to Absalom, giving advice to him, and trying to frustrate the advice of Ahithopel. He did not rely on his own wisdom or strength, but he was relying on God. When he relied on God, he became brave and could speak. He didn’t have a script prepared in advance, but God gave him the wise words to say at the right time. By faith God made him wiser than the wisest person.

Therefore we learn to rely on God and trust in him. Since we rely on him, it shows that being foolish or weak is not a bad thing, as we might think they are. Actually, it is not important whether we think we are weak or strong, wise or foolish. But what matters is having faith in the Lord who gives wisdom and strength.

If we just look at people for how they are, then, yes, being foolish and weak really are bad. But to God, such people are perfect to carry out his work and power so that he might be revealed through them.

Why does God shame the wise and the strong? It is to reveal his wisdom and power. By using the foolish and the weak, he shows this very clearly. He also humbles them and brings glory to himself. Therefore, when we are humble and rely on God, then we can be brave and strong. Because we know that it is not our strength or wisdom that wins and brings victory, but it is all God who uses even the foolish and weak people to accomplish his purpose.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we need to stand firm until Jesus returns. We have to serve his purpose. In a sense, this is quite foolish to the world. To be faithful to Jesus can us look foolish.  At times, your friends may not understand. Your family may not understand. Your church members may not understand. Even you may not understand. Do you ever feel foolish while on the campus? When you’re inviting students to a Bible study, or even while in Bible study?

I do! When I was a student I didn’t have any problem. I had a gung-ho attitude. I was a student, this was my campus, and I was like a soldier of Christ. I was going to evangelize my class. But now, I get asked, “Are you a teacher?” I reply, “No.” I also get asked, “Are you a student?” I reply, “No.” Then the question becomes, “What are you then?” Then, I think that is a good question and I feel foolish.

But God makes the foolish (foolish for him), wise (for him). So that each of us can serve him. Being weak or a fool is not reason to shrink back, but more reason to have faith with the great expectation of seeing God’s power. However, don’t be a fool for sin or selfish pleasure, etc. The Bible says that that’s the away of death.

James 1:5 says,

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

I love this verse. It is perfect for me. First, it says, “If any of you lack of wisdom…” He acknowledged that they may, and even know that they may, lack wisdom. And it is okay. Second, it says, “you should ask.” Third, it says, “He will give.” And it says that he gives generously to all and without finding fault.

The Lord doesn’t receive your prayer and then respond, “Hang on, let’s check this list first to see if there is any fault in you. Otherwise I cannot give you wisdom.” Just ask, and he’ll give generously to you.

We find fault with ourselves (and especially with others). We know our own bad record. But God doesn’t find fault. Instead, he gives to the one who asks. Since God gives, and he gives generously without finding fault, then we can surely be brave. We will not be lacking in wisdom at all. You can be wise according to God’s generous giving. So then why not be brave and go speak for him and witness of Jesus? In this way we show our faith in Jesus. For we have to go out and do something and pray.

Once, Jesus even told his disciples not to worry about what to say, for he would give them words to say.

Luke 12:11-12 say,

[11] “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, [12] for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

Jesus acknowledged their weakness. He knew that they might worry or have a lack of words at the necessary time. Yet, he didn’t say, “Why will you worry or have a lack of words?” Instead, he said that they should not worry and that he would supply the words to them by the Holy Spirit. He would fully supply them with that they need, including the right words to say at the right time.

They would be arrested and questioned by others. They would be before those with power and authority. They would be weak. But it was okay. He would give them words and teach them what to say by the Holy Spirit “at that time.” He says, “at that time,” meaning, not giving words ahead of time, because he just wants them to have faith in him all the time and to stand firm, even in their time of weakness.

David was very weak here. But he prayed. He relied on God.

2 Samuel 15:31 says,

Now David had been told, “Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.” So David prayed, “Lord, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.”

Now, it says in verse 14 here, "for the Lord had determined to frustrate the good advice of Ahithophel in order to bring disaster on Absalom.”

David’s prayer was answered. In this way, David became strong by prayer and faith. Ahithophel’s advice was considered by David and Absalom to be like the voice of God. But his advice was changed to foolishness, just as David had prayed.

To pray is wise. It is very powerful. No one could outsmart Ahithophel. But by prayer, Ahithophel’s advice was turned to foolishness. David applied his faith in prayer and became very strong and effective. Prayer may seem weak and ineffective. It requires us to ask help from God and wait on his answer. But prayer is not weak or ineffective at all. In fact, it is the way to trust in God and see his power revealed.

After telling his disciples to not worry about words to say, Jesus went on to say, in Mark 13:13,

Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

He confined that they would have a difficult time, even being hated by everyone. Yet, he told them to stand firm to the end. Standing firm then is to stand by faith in Jesus Christ, not in ourselves—not in our wisdom, strength, experience or smarts. If we really have faith in Jesus like this we can make a firm stand.

Also, when we apply this faith, we might treat each others differently. For example, because we don’t want another person to be weak, we try to mold them and train them to be this perfect and strong person. And then we become judgmental towards others and demanding of them, rather than loving, and serving, and forgiving, especially if they don’t become the strong and perfect person we wanted. We may quickly judge others for being weak, as if they cannot serve the Lord or be used by him.

Of course, we do our best to build each other up. But we must also trust in Jesus to help this person, as much as that person, and as much as you and I want to be helped by God. He is the helper for all, especially the weak and the foolish.

We like to look to so-called “spiritual giants.” Such people are truly impressive. But here we can look to God who uses foolish and weak people. Such people are not giants at all. But the weak and foolish are the very instruments to reveal the Lord’s power. So, I am glad for myself and others. Through faith in him we become strong and wise, although otherwise we are not.

So we should have faith in him for this person as much as we do for ourselves.

You know your weakness, and I know my weakness. Don’t you believe that God will help you? If you don’t, then believe it. Especially, if you think that you are foolish or weak. And if he helps you, he will help me, and he will help all those who trust in him.

Look at verses 15-22.

[15] Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, “Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the elders of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so. [16] Now send a message at once and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords in the wilderness; cross over without fail, or the king and all the people with him will be swallowed up.’”

[17] Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En Rogel. A female servant was to go and inform them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they could not risk being seen entering the city. [18] But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So the two of them left at once and went to the house of a man in Bahurim. He had a well in his courtyard, and they climbed down into it. [19] His wife took a covering and spread it out over the opening of the well and scattered grain over it. No one knew anything about it.

[20] When Absalom’s men came to the woman at the house, they asked, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?”

The woman answered them, “They crossed over the brook.” The men searched but found no one, so they returned to Jerusalem.

[21] After they had gone, the two climbed out of the well and went to inform King David. They said to him, “Set out and cross the river at once; Ahithophel has advised such and such against you.” [22] So David and all the people with him set out and crossed the Jordan. By daybreak, no one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

Here we see more brave and strong people, Jonathan and Ahimaaz. They also risked their lives for David and his people. God helped them. And they helped David and his people to get to safety in time. They risked their lives for each other. They were truly brave.

We notice how they used their faith. By faith they became brave. And they used their bravery to serve others. They didn’t demand from David to be strong or brave because he was the king. Instead, they served at the risk of their lives to help David.

Look at verse 23.

When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.

Ahithophel was so smart, but he wasn't wise because he didn’t stand on the Lord’s side.

His case shows us that true wisdom is to fear the Lord and do what is right in his eyes. He was so smart. He was brilliant. But being smart or experienced does not make one wise, as Ahithophel’s example shows us.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom…

The Lord makes someone wise. And it is the beginning of wisdom to fear the Lord. In this case, we see how Hushai stood on the Lord’s side and relied on him. Ahithophel was foolish because he didn't fear the Lord and stand to do what is good. He was afraid of people, not the Lord.

Look at verses 24-26.

[24] David went to Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. [25] Absalom had appointed Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Amasa was the son of Jether, an Ishmaelite who had married Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah the mother of Joab. [26] The Israelites and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

Absalom brought “all the men of Israel” out against David. He had already appointed a new army commanded, Amasa, who was David’s nephew. Even more of his family was coming out against him. Again, they could have felt too weak and defeated. “All the men of Israel” had come out with Absalom against David, including more family members.

What could he do? How could he get back a kingdom that has come out all at once against him?

This reminds us of Jesus who faced similar rejection. It was his own people, the Jews, who arrested him, brought false charges against him, and then handed him to Pilate, demanding that Jesus be crucified. But Jesus was not discouraged. He looked to God with faith. Like David, he went to the Mount of Olives, prayed and submitted himself to God. He went to the sufferings, but he endured.

Hebrews mentions Jesus’ endurance and faith as an encouragement for us.

Hebrews 12:1b-3 say,

[1b] And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [3] Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Jesus was not discouraged. And we should not be discouraged as well. Rather, we can be encouraged through looking at Jesus who suffered. Jesus endured opposition from sinners and was victorious. He is our focal point so that we would not grow weary and lose heart. The words “so that…” show that focusing on him is the way to not grow weary and lose heart. This is an acknowledgment that we will face troubles and sufferings and oppositions and weak times so that we might be weary and want to lose heart. But at that time we should fix our eyes on Jesus, not on the troubles. Jesus endured and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. It means that he was victorious and exalted. The cross is the weakest point, but he was then exalted to the highest point, the throne of God. It is an encouragement for us. The same power of God will also help us and give us life and victory. Jesus endured a cross and suffered shame. He really went through them. He knows what it is to be weak. So we are encouraged because he can help us with understanding and power.

Jesus still faces opposition. It was not just once, but he will in the future as well.

Revelation 17:14 says,

They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.

Again, he will face opposition and again he will triumph. The nations think that Jesus is weak because they see him as the Lamb. But he is also the Lord of lords and King of kings.

We also notice who is with him: his “called, chosen and faithful followers.” They are not just called or chosen, but faithful follower. So we are called to be faithful so that we would be with Jesus in his victory.

Jesus understands and helps us.

Hebrews 4:15 says of his understanding,

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

He can empathize (understand) us because he was also subject to weakness.

Look at verses 27-29.

[27] When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Makir son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim [28] brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley, flour and roasted grain, beans and lentils, [29] honey and curds, sheep, and cheese from cows’ milk for David and his people to eat. For they said, “The people have become exhausted and hungry and thirsty in the wilderness.”

Here we see that David received empathy and help. These people mentioned were all related to Saul in one way or another. They experienced the losing of a kingdom, defeat, and weakness. They also experienced kindness from David. So they now came out to support him. They could help him with understanding and gentleness. They already knew the exhaustion, hunger and thirst in the wilderness. So when they heard about David they understood what he might need, and so supplied him with empathy.

Helping and supporting others with empathy is Jesus’ way.  We can help others by toughening people up, We can also help by understanding them and helping them gently. We can provide what they need freely. We can be humble and remember our own weakness, just as Jesus does. This is also an act of faith, because we trust in God to help others to mature in their faith, to become strong, to do what is right in his eyes, and to stand firm by faith in him, and that God would work in others, especially in ways that we cannot.

We see in this passage how their faith made them wise, brave, strong, and helpful.

Hebrews 11:32-34

[32] And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, [33] who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, [34] quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

David is listed among the people here. Notice, that it says, “whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle.” These describe David and his men well.

This teaches us how to apply. So we learn to apply our faith in standing for Jesus, testifying about him, and in helping each other with empathy, understanding and gentleness.

Our fight then, is not a physical fight, but a spiritual fight. It is a fight of faith. Paul encouraged Timothy to fight the good fight of the faith, just as Paul himself had done. Now, Paul was considered as such a great and powerful and strong man for Jesus. He was a so-called “Spiritual Giant.” Yet, he liked to make himself weak and even boast about his weaknesses, especially to the Corinthians.

He said first,

in 1 Corinthians 2:3,

**I came to you in weakness** with great fear and trembling.

He always made himself a fool,

1 Corinthians 4:10 says,

**We are fools** for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! **We are weak**, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!

He shared this attitude with them,

in 1 Corinthians 9:22,

**To the weak I became weak**, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

He didn’t go to weak people and demand that they be strong. Rather, he became weak like them in order to help them. This is how Jesus helped us, by becoming weak. So Paul followed Jesus’ way. But he boasted about it because when he followed this way, it was how he experienced Jesus’ grace and power more deeply.

So, he said to them,

(2 Corinthians 11:30)

If I must boast, **I will boast of the things that show my weakness.**

(2 Corinthians 12:5)

I will boast about a man like that, but **I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.**

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 say,

But [Jesus] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.** That is why, for Christ’s sake, **I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Being strong is not the key to being strong. He said that when he is weak, then he is strong. The crux of the center is the word “then.” When he is weak, **then** he is strong. So the requisite is being weak first.

He even came to understand about the resurrection body through being weak.

1 Corinthians 15:43 says,

it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

His conclusion is that Jesus is the wisdom and power of God for all who believe.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25 say,

[22] Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, [23] but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [24] but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. [25] For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Therefore, by faith Christ is our wisdom and power from God. Specifically, we look to Christ crucified. The cross looked like foolishness to those seeking wisdom. It is not wise to give up one’s life, especially for others. The cross was a stumbling block to those looking for power. He showed himself as weak and killed by others. But there, Christ crucified, is the wisdom and power of God. In that act of weakness and foolishness, is the wisdom and power of God for all who believe was revealed. By his death he saves all who believe in him. He forgives their sins and empowers them by the Holy Spirit. This salvation reveals God’s wisdom and power. So, too, then, all of the wisdom or power we need is in him who was crucified. If we need wisdom, we look there. If power, we look there.

This calls us to act as Jesus did, to pray to him, and to rely on him in serving the Lord. As we rely on him, we can stand firm to the end.

So, we learn that the fight is not a physical fight, but a spiritual fight. It is a fight of faith. We learn today how God makes the foolish wise and the weak strong by faith in Jesus Christ. We learn to apply our faith and stand firm for Jesus, testifying about him, and supporting each other in love, humility and understanding. Through this we can experience his grace and power in its perfect form, and be faithful until Jesus’ returns. Thanks to God for Jesus who is our wisdom and strength.