

Sermon on 2 Samuel 16:5-14
The LORD's Curse Upon King David

Morning Prayer Service
Hillsdale OPC, Hillsdale, MI
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Theme - The LORD curses King David through the curse of Shimei.

A. (vv. 5-8) Shimei arrogantly delivers the LORD's curse

B. (vv. 9-12) King David humbly submits to the LORD's curse

C. (vv. 13-14) God's people patiently endure the LORD's curse

Our passage this morning is often seen as one of the more perplexing episodes in the life of King David. It provides us with a perfect illustration of the principle, “The bigger they are, the harder they fall” – because these verses show the bitter results in David’s life of his failure to carry out his duties as the LORD’s anointed King over Israel. King David was to represent the sovereign reign of God over Israel. He was to fear the LORD and to keep His commandments. But you know the sad story. David sinned with Bath-Sheba and then ordered the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite, and because of this God brought cursing and chastisement into his life. For David, this failure meant many things – it meant personal humiliation, a divided family, and civil war. But it also brought suffering, shame, and ridicule to the lives of his closest friends and supporters. Worst of all, His failures gave opportunity for the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme His holy name. The great irony is that David, who at one point in scripture is called “a man after God’s own heart” is in 2nd Samuel 12 also called someone who *despised the LORD and His commandments*.

But is it any less ironic that we too, as those who have been exalted to the high office of sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus Christ; that we too fail to faithfully carry out our duties in our office as believers? That we too bring humiliation upon ourselves, grief to our families, scandal upon the church, and shame to the great name of our Savior? What happens then, when *we* really blow it – when *we* sin so badly that we bring shame upon the name of our Savior? Keep in mind that Scripture answers this question from two general perspectives. Psalm 103 teaches that God is merciful and gracious and will not keep His anger against us forever. But Hebrews 12 is equally clear that the Lord chastens those he loves. Keeping these two perspectives before us, let us explore the teaching of 2nd Samuel 16:5-14 that *the LORD curses King David through the curse of Shimei*. And as we consider the Lord’s curse on David, I’d like us to look at it as three scenes in an unfolding drama in the history of our

redemption. In Scene I *Shimei arrogantly delivers the Lord's curse (vv. 5-8)*; in Scene II *David humbly submits to the Lord's curse (vv. 9-12)*; and finally in Scene III *God's people patiently endure the Lord's curse (vv. 13-14)*. Let's look in verses 5-8 at Shimei's arrogant delivery of the Lord's curse.

I. Shimei arrogantly delivers the Lord's curse (vv. 5-8)

If we don't know the history, we'll miss the full significance of the story. The first thing we need to realize as we break into the story of Shimei cursing David is that it is part of a much larger and incredibly tragic story in 2nd Samuel. Israel has been plunged into civil war – again. King David's own son Absalom has seized the throne. In David, Israel finally had a King of God's own choosing who was to lead them to victory and give them rest in the promised land. In 2nd Samuel 7 the LORD had even made a special promise to King David that *His house, his kingdom, and his throne* would be established forever! But now look what was happening! How do we make sense of the chaos in Scene I? King David and his royal entourage are fleeing the royal city Jerusalem. At the same time David's very own son Absalom has seized his father's throne. It must have looked to the people like the end of the covenant promise to David and to Israel. And what are we to make of this man Shimei – a man modern psychologists might say had “anger management issues” – a man from the family of former King Saul, now cursing King David and raining stones down upon him? Why is all this happening? Well, the blame lay squarely on the shoulders of King David. King David had become his own worst enemy. In spite of all the grace that the Lord had shown to him, David had shown contempt for the LORD in more than one way. Back in 1st Samuel chapter 16 the prophet Samuel had anointed David to be the King over Israel. To be the LORD's anointed was to hold a very special office in the land of Israel. The Holy Spirit had come upon him and he had become the one chosen by God to deliver His people from

their enemies. As the Lord's anointed king David was to be a shepherd to God's people, He was to defeat their enemies; he was to administer justice and righteousness in the land. He was to show the world what the kingdom of God was to look like. He was to lead Israel in being God's light to the Gentiles and in bringing the blessing of Abraham to the nations. He was to be a man who feared the Lord and who was careful to observe all the words of the law of Moses. Most importantly, He was to be a shadow and a type of the Messiah who was yet to come, the Great King who would fully and finally deliver Israel and give her final rest from her foes. But when David sinned with Bath Sheba, and ordered a cover up by killing her husband Uriah, David failed dramatically in his calling as a Shepherd-King; as one who had a divine calling to protect God's people and to administer justice in the fear of the LORD. So in the aftermath of David's sin with Bath-Sheba, the Lord had promised to spare David's life and throne, but pronounced several punishments against him. *The first* was that the sword would never depart from his house, and *the second* was that the Lord would raise up adversity against David from within his own house. Both of these punishments are fulfilled in Absalom's rebellion against his father David. And so now David is forced into exile from the promised land. The one who was to bring rest in the promised land is now rejected as king and sent into exile.

All of this is necessary background information to understand the full story – which brings us to the perplexing question of what are we to make of this curse of Shimei? Exodus 22:28 says, “*You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.*” While it is clear that Shimei personally is sinning by cursing David, a ruler of the people, a close examination of the text shows that the LORD is ultimately behind this curse.

Who exactly then is this Shimei character, and why is he cursing the LORD's anointed? In verse 5 as David comes to Bahurim we read that Shimei is from the family of

the house of Saul. Back in 2nd Samuel 5 all the elders of Israel had recognized David as King after a long and bloody civil war with the house of Saul. Saul had been rejected by the Lord as the first king of Israel, and the Lord had replaced him with David. It is here that we can begin to see Shimei's personal reasons for cursing King David with such vigor and with such arrogance. Shimei would have hated David because of the many years of war between the house of David and the house of Saul. Shimei clearly has his own personal and political agenda for cursing and stoning King David. So just imagine the scene as King David and hundreds of his supporters stream out of Jerusalem. It's an incredible contrast to 2 Samuel 6 when David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem with great fanfare and rejoicing – now its quite the opposite. The Ark of the Covenant is the symbol of God's presence with and blessing upon His people – but now David abandons the Ark and flees Jerusalem amidst the curses of his enemies. This troop fleeing with David would have been a mixed bag of soldiers, royal family members, and the families and children of foreign soldiers who were serving David. As they straggle along they are weeping, their heads are covered in humiliation, and David the Great King is walking along the rocky trail barefoot – a very public display on David's part of humiliation and mourning. The land is dry and dusty, and they are travelling a rugged, rocky, winding road. As they approach the town of Bahurim, a town which would have been loyal to the house of Saul in the war between David and Saul, out comes this man Shimei cursing and throwing rocks down on the entire party of refugees. Shimei says in essence, *“Get out of here you bloodthirsty man! The LORD is repaying you for all the blood of the house of Saul. Now you're getting yours! You stole the kingdom from Saul and now your own son is stealing it from you!”*

As David is being exiled from the Promised Land, its important to see the significance of what Shimei does in both cursing and stoning David. Remember that both

cursing and stoning were solemn punishments from God brought upon covenant breakers. In cursing King David, Shimei is not simply calling David names or saying he hopes bad things happen to him. *Shimei becomes the instrument in the hand of the God who made the covenant, to chastise the king who broke the covenant.* We will see explicitly in verses 10-11 that the Lord himself is cursing David through Shimei's arrogance. The Lord is saying to David through Shimei's curse, "*You deserve the curse of death due to your covenant breaking! You deserve to be rejected by your people because you have rejected me! You deserve to be exiled from the land!*" So there is great significance to the fact that Shimei curses David.

But there is also great significance in the fact of Shimei throwing stones at David. Remember that stoning in Israel was the covenantal death penalty. It meant the permanent removal from the church by the death of one who had shown contempt for the Lord. If the Church was to do this today it would be like excommunication by firing squad! In the stoning of David by Shimei the Lord is delivering a symbolic death sentence upon David; and later verses show that David will soon be expelled from the Promised Land and rejected as the Lord's anointed one – at least on a temporary basis. This in turn becomes a vivid picture of what would eventually happen to God's people when their hearts turned away from the Lord. As David was now justly exiled and cursed, so too one day would all of God's people be carried away into a foreign land and rejected by the Lord – the northern kingdom to Assyria, the southern kingdom to Babylon. King David was the Lord's anointed – the head of the Old covenant people of God – and because they were bound together in a special covenant bond – as it went with the king, so it also went with the people.

This unique bond between king and people also then sheds light on an even greater significance to this story of David's cursing, rejection and exile; for hidden in David's story

is a reflection of the story of Jesus and His covenant people. David's cursing, rejection, and exile is the foreshadowing of the cursing, rejection and exile of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the LORD's Anointed – the head of the Church, the new covenant people of God. As the New Covenant anointed King – unlike King David – King Jesus was *faithful in all things*. And yet inspite of His blamelessness, Jesus was cursed and rejected by His own people, and crucified unjustly as a criminal outside the camp, outside the city. Just like King David before Him, King Jesus was driven out of the royal city of Jerusalem. But the sad truth is that the curse upon David was for His own sins, while Jesus suffered for the sins of others. Ultimately Jesus – like David – suffered the curse of the Father, not for His own sins but for your sins and my sins. Jesus is the true King and covenant head who satisfies both justice and mercy in the cross. Brothers and sisters, take comfort in the cursing and rejection of Jesus. Like David, we deserve to be cursed, stoned, and banished from the covenant community for our sins. But in Christ we have one Who has taken our curse upon Himself, and given to us instead His very own righteousness. When you fail in your office of believer, you have a perfectly righteous King who has kept the Law of God perfectly you. Through faith in Jesus Christ, rather than being banished from the Promised Land, we enter into the Promised Land, we're given rest from our sin and our guilt, and by His Spirit are being made into pleasing citizens of the kingdom of God on the earth.

So next we want to take a look at David's response to all of this. We have seen that Shimei has arrogantly delivered God's chastening curse to David, although he certainly has his own evil motives. David the Lord's anointed is rejected as king and is banished from the land of Promise. But how will David respond? In verses 9-12 I want us to notice *that David humbly submits to the Lord's curse*. Let's look at verses 9-12 again.

II. David humbly submits to the Lord's curse (vv. 9-12)

Again, we need to try to keep a picture of this scene before us. Shimei is standing on a hill or a ridge opposite David and his people. Like a coward, he is bombarding them with rocks from a safe distance, and probably would have been very difficult to reach given the terrain. Verse 9 shows the violent reaction of David's lieutenant Abishai. Abishai was David's nephew and was referred to as the "chief of the thirty" – an elite group of warriors who fought for King David. You can imagine how angry Abishai must have been. He's credited elsewhere in scripture with killing 300 men with the spear – so he knew how to kill people. He's dying to get at this guy and he can't take it any more! "*Why should this dead dog curse my Lord the King!?*" he says to King David. And then he begs David, "*Please let me go and take off his head!*" There is certainly no question as to Abishai's theology of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth! Abishai wants to bring back the Kingdom to David by force. In fact Abishai is to David as the Apostle Peter was to Jesus in the Garden of Gethesemane – at the beginning of our Lord's banishment from the Royal City!

But in stark contrast to Abishai's violent rejection of the Lord's curse, David humbly submits to it. He sharply rebukes Abishai in verse 10 and says, "*Let him curse, because he LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.'*" And again in verse 11 he restrains all the people by acknowledging that the Lord had ordered Shimei to curse David. Here is a marvelous transition point in the drama; David – cursed and exiled for failing in His kingly office – virtually excommunicated for despising the LORD – this same David now humbly submits to the verdict of heaven. At long last, by the Holy Spirit's power, David is beginning again to act like the LORD's anointed. He commits Himself to Him who judges righteously. Although Shimei had his own wicked reasons for cursing David, David's eyes were opened to see that the curse of Shimei was really the curse of the LORD. David was coming face to face with the reality of his own failures as a public representative of the Lord. This is the

problem with all earthly rulers – ultimately they fail us – whether a pastor, an elder, father, mother, brothers and sisters in the Church!

But the goal of seeing David's failures for what they were is not so much to condemn him as it is to point us to the perfect reign of the coming King Jesus! David's kingship was never meant to be the final or the ultimate kingship for Israel. David's kingdom was to point forward to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the true King of Kings who perfectly reigns over the entire world. And what a great contrast there is between the kingship of David and that of Jesus! *While David failed to shepherd the people, Jesus is called the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the Sheep. King David failed to lead the people in battle, but King Jesus came and destroys all of his and our enemies. King David failed to take his office as the Lord's anointed seriously, and brought shame upon himself, his people, and his God. But King Jesus is the great king whose entire life was fully governed by an awareness of His office as Messiah.* Jesus knew who He was, and He knew why He came. He even said in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." Brothers and sisters, your Savior Jesus has come as the Righteous King who died the accursed death on the cross – this is the work of the father he came to finish. The courtroom of heaven rightfully and justly pronounced the guilty verdict on King David, and David humbly submitted to that verdict. But even David's *humility* will not do to atone for either his own guilt or for that of the people. *And so heaven must pronounce another guilty verdict – this time on Jesus.* And although Jesus did not deserve this guilty verdict – this curse of the covenant – for any sin He had committed – He humbly submitted to the death penalty in our place, and for our saving benefit! He did it for you! By our sins we have brought the curse of God upon ourselves. But Jesus comes as the King and Good Shepherd, and succeeds where King David failed. In Galatians 3:13 it says that

“*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us...*” Jesus submitted to the curse of the law in our place, to take away our guilt and to restore us to God. Verse 12 shows the beginnings of this restoration to God by the Spirit’s work in the life of David. By the Spirit’s power in verse 12 David begins properly to fear the Lord and to fulfill his calling as the Lord’s anointed. In verse 12 David says, “*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.*” David has been chastened and humbled by the Lord, and so he appeals to the judgment of the Lord with respect to the cursing of Shimei; *in other words, He submits to the verdict of heaven.* As Christ suffered unjustly for our sins, so David now is willing to suffer the unjust aspects of Shimei’s curse and to entrust the whole matter to the Lord. David begins to exhibit what we might call an ethics based on the Cross – a lifestyle marked out by a gracious forbearance, the denial of personal rights, and submission to the verdict in heaven. Although he might have had a legal right to let Abishai take off Shimei’s head – and later on Shimei will come to justice – David now begins to paint us a beautiful picture of the self-denial of the Cross in the words of Jesus in Luke 6:27: “*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and bless those who curse you...*” How does God’s kingdom come, David wants to show us – Through striking down our enemies with the sword? – *whether it be a sword of steel or the sword of our tongues* – or through humble submission to the court of heaven? Always remember then, that the kingdom of the Lord’s anointed one is first and foremost a kingdom of grace! If we really believe this it will come out in how we respond to those who provoke us. We too sometimes suffer unjustly from others. Other times our suffering is caused by our own sinfulness and our own indifference to our calling as citizens in the kingdom of God. Sometimes the Lord has to bring our whole world crashing down in front of us to get our attention like he did with David – sometimes He brings a Shimei into

our lives to get our attention. But when we look to King Jesus – united to Him by faith, we can begin to fulfill *our* very own Kingly office – *our calling as a “royal nation.”* By the Spirit’s power your life can become a living picture of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Look to Jesus, the one who accepted curses from his enemies, and instead blessed them in return. In the midst of a hostile world which will curse you and rejoice in your failures and your sins – be encouraged, because the Holy Spirit can help you who have faith in Jesus to give grace to those who curse you. So we’ve seen how the Lord chastened King David through the curse of Shimei, and how David was enabled by the Spirit to humbly submit to the Lord’s chastening. Now we’ll see in verses 13 and 14 Scene III – *how God’s people patiently endured the Lord’s curse.*

III. God’s people patiently endure the Lord’s curse (vv. 13-14)

In verse 13 notice that in spite of David’s humility and submission to the verdict of heaven, Shimei still did not go away. The stones kept coming, the curses kept echoing through the ravines, taunting them as they stumbled and dodged along the rocky path – teaching us very clearly that those who oppose the Lord and His anointed are not about to be impressed by the humility of God’s people. Shimei was not impressed by the grace shown to him by King David. To Shimei and the world around us, our submission to the Lord’s chastening is only a sign of our weakness. But verse 13 demonstrates how those who attach themselves to the Lord’s anointed patiently endure the Lord’s curse – and it is in this patient endurance of suffering that God’s people find rest and comfort. See – ultimately in verse 14 they reach a place of refreshing. Ironically this place of refreshment is at the edge of the Jordan, at the very outskirts of the Promised Land. We would think that refreshment would come from the interior of the Land of Promise – in the Temple in Jerusalem. But ironically, rest and refreshment in verse 14 is found in the wilderness, outside the traditionally expected

place of refuge. But its really no different in the lives of all who take their stand with Jesus Christ. Remember that Jesus was crucified *outside the city – beyond the gates of Jerusalem – a heavenly king who had been ousted by rebel sinners from His rightful place as the heir to the throne of David.* At the cross of Calvary our great King Jesus was cursed for us, cast outside the camp of the people of God, excommunicated for our sins.

So what about you? Will you follow Him outside the camp and gladly bear His reproach? Will you find your rest with Jesus outside the camp? Ironically, when you follow this rejected Savior, your personal reproach before God is taken away. Your shame is removed and your guilt is cleansed. When we can't even rule our own selves righteously, King Jesus gives us His Spirit to help us to live like citizens of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Where the world curses us, and stones us and flings dust at us, the Spirit enables us to walk as our Savior walked, in the way of suffering and reproach. This is *not* the most popular part of the gospel. But our Lord Jesus Christ, cursed for us, *invites you* to share in His life. He invites you – *and enables you to* – to begin living the life of heaven now, to enter into the life of the Triune God now, and to begin to experience the blessings of the heavenly age to come – right now.

But this sharing in His life is also a sharing in His death, a sharing in His sufferings, a sharing in His reproach. To go with Jesus outside the camp and participate in His sufferings is the high privilege of every Christian. First Peter 4:15 and 16 say this: “*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, or an evildoer. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.*” Does the reproach of Christ repel you? Or are you willing to suffer with Him, whatever the cost? Brothers and sisters, when we align ourselves with the LORD's anointed, the world will throw stones at us and curse us. But the good news is that where we fail to carry out our office of believer, Jesus Christ, Great David' greater Son perfectly fulfills His

office as King on our behalf. *Rest in Christ the King alone, because He does for us, what we could never do for ourselves!* Let us pray together.