Choose Like Ittai!

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday July 8th, 2018

Text: II Sam. 15:1-23

### Intro

1. In our day-to-day lives, decisions and judgment calls are made.
   1. There are choices that must be made – choices with eternal consequences: choose wisely!
2. “Choose like Ittai!” ***(Who is Ittai?)***
3. *II Sam. 15:1-23:* 
   1. This is one of the darkest days in the life of King David, and we come to a profound lesson from a rather obscure character in the history of God’s people: Ittai.
   2. Absalom comes back from several years in exile after having murdered his own step-brother *(II Sam. 13).* But when he returns, he sets out to undermine the reign of his father. His plan unfolds in the opening verses of II Sam. 15, and by the time the chapter is over, King David is fleeing from the city. As Absalom starts to rally support, a man by the name of Ittai faces a very important decision…
4. Consider the choice that Ittai was facing, and apply it to our situation today, and see that we must “choose like Ittai!”

#### The Choice Ittai Was Facing

* 1. II Sam. 15:17-20: We can understand Ittai’s dilemma.
     1. He joined up with King David as an outsider. We know that Ittai was a Philistine (vs. 18). The Philistines had been enemies of God’s people for many years, going all the way back to the Exodus from Egypt. But not only was Ittai a Philistine, he was also from the city of Gath and was one of David’s 600 men! (I Sam. 23:13; 27:2).
     2. Remember a Philistine from Gath? Many years earlier, as a teenager, David (the runt of the litter) killed Goliath the Philistine from Gath who was taunting God’s people *(I Sam. 17).* David had a rather interesting relationship with the Philistines from Gath! (I Sam. 21:10-15; 27:3)
     3. But for some reason, Ittai, also a Philistine from Gath, had just recently joined up with King David, and so he is now in a very precarious situation. He can’t really go back to Gath—those people hated King David—David had humiliated their nation and their little village in particular *(I Chr. 20:4-8: David’s men, including his nephew, killed Goliath’s brother and many other giants in Gath),* and so Ittai is now in the position of either running with a rejected king who is on his way out to the wilderness or he can join up with Absalom, a quick-talking politician.
  2. First, consider King David:
     1. Unlike most modern politics, we normally don’t kill the outgoing king. But in the ancient world, David knew that this was a distinct possibility (II Sam. 15:14: Absalom would kill the inhabitants of the city).
     2. David could see that the tide had turned, and so instead of staying to fight, instead of harming so many innocent people, he decided to leave Jerusalem.
     3. As a shepherd, even as the legitimate king, David wanted what was best for the people, and so he fled from the capital city in disgrace.
  3. Second, consider Absalom:
     1. II Sam. 14:25: This was a man with **“Fabio’s hair!”** He was known for his beautiful hair. Most people get a haircut and then have the hair thrown away.
     2. II Sam. 14:26: But not Absalom! Can you imagine weighing your hair after your yearly haircut? This man was vain. The hair from his yearly haircut weighed in at about 5 pounds. That’s a lot of hair! He was so proud of his hair—he used it to gain popularity.
     3. II Sam. 15:1: Absalom hired 50 men as bodyguards, and these men would run around with him, making him look important. There are people today who hire paparazzi to make themselves look important, to look special. Absalom was a guy who would have done this!
  4. Absalom was a cunning (“smarmy”) politician (as slick as they come).
     1. He did not say, “Hey, I’m getting ready to overthrow my popular father as king, so I need you to come join my side.”People would have never signed on for something like that!
     2. II Sam. 15:4-5: He put himself in just the right spot at just the right time of day just as men were coming to the king to settle their disputes, “Oh, I wish I could be judge! I know what I would decide in your case!” Absalom would then end each meeting with a kiss. We talk about politicians kissing babies. Absalom would have loved that!
     3. II Sam. 15:6: *“In this manner Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel.”*
  5. Ittai faced a choice:
     1. On one hand, Absalom, the slick, long-haired, promise-making, baby-kissing politician,
     2. On the other hand, King David—a father running from his own son, an Israelite fleeing from his own people, a king rejected by the nation, a loser on his way out.
     3. And yet even to David, the choice is obvious. On his way out of Jerusalem in disgrace, King David stops at the last house (II Sam. 15:17), and as he looks over those who are leaving with him, he notices Ittai the Gittite, and King David almost seems surprised. He is shocked that such a new follower would want to follow him out into the wilderness in exile (II Sam. 15:20).
     4. So the king gives Ittai an out, he gives him permission to stay, to become a follower of Absalom, to stay with the new king, to switch sides while there is still time. No hard feelings. No one would blame Ittai for going back. After all, Ittai has a family (II Sam. 15:22).
  6. Ittai was faced with a choice—the Ittai choice we must all face at one time or another!

#### Like Ittai, We Choose Whom We Serve

* 1. II Sam. 15:21: Ittai’s choice:
     1. Ittai was only with David for one day, yet he was willing to die just for the opportunity to be with his king. *(New converts today make the same choice!)*
     2. A choice between two ways of life, a choice between two ways to serve, a choice between two rulers, a choice between two masters. *(Josh. 24:15)*
     3. THIS IS A CHOICE WE MAKE every time we get up in the morning, every time we go to work, every time we go to school! (Mt. 6:24; Rom. 6:16)
  2. It’s a choice we make all the time:
     1. **The Absalom Factor:** popularity, success, pleasure, glamour, and attraction—we feel the pull of those who appear to be on their way up to the top.
     2. Adults and teenagers all want to be on the inside, want to be included, not excluded. That pull is represented by Absalom.
     3. **The David Factor:** the rejected king, a small group of losers headed for the wilderness. No one is eager to jump on board with a rejected king!
     4. No one wants rejection—not on the playground, not in middle school, not in high school, not in college, not in the workplace, not in our neighborhoods. No one wants to follow someone who is on the way out. No one wants to bet it all on a loser!
  3. Mt. 26:56: The disciples of Jesus faced a similar challenge at the crucifixion.
     1. When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the garden, *“…all the disciples left Him and fled.”*They all ran away! Perhaps they wondered whether they had come down on the wrong side, and so they turned and ran away.
  4. Today—we look around at the seeming weakness of God’s kingdom, and like Ittai and the disciples, our faith is also being tested.
     1. *Mt. 7:14:* Jesus Christ, the Almighty King, warned us in advance that, *“…the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*
     2. Even those in the religious world who think they’re right are headed in one direction, but Jesus is headed in another – *Mt. 7:21-23*
     3. The King has promised (Mt. 5:11) that if we choose to follow Him, we will be insulted, and persecuted, we will be slandered. *(Not popular)*
     4. Jn. 17:14: Jesus said if we choose like Ittai, we will be *“hated”* by the world.
  5. The choice will always be before us: The world or God – Choose like Ittai!

#### Choose Like Ittai!

* 1. The dilemma is this: To either stick with the Lord or to give up following Jesus so that we can start following the world. *(Mk. 8:36: What profit if gain world but forfeit one’s soul?)*
  2. Choose like Ittai!
     1. A choice between life and death.
     2. II Sam. 15:21: Ittai was not deceived by Absalom’s smooth speech, and so he replied to the king, *“As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be.”*
     3. In this dark chapter of David’s life, perhaps this statement caused him to remember the words made by his own great-grandmother, Ruth to Naomi, (Ruth 1:16-17).
     4. Another foreigner who pledged loyalty to a child of God.
  3. King David accepted Ittai’s loyalty (15:22-23), *“Therefore David said to Ittai, “Go and pass over.” So Ittai the Gittite passed over with all his men and all the little ones who were with him.”*
     1. Ittai became another of the exiles who were fleeing from Jerusalem, and he went on to become one of David’s most trusted generals.
     2. II Sam. 18:2, 5: David also rewards Ittai for his loyalty. When David went to battle Absalom, Ittai is still there and is commanding 1/3 of David’s army!
  4. Ittai was a man of amazing spiritual strength.
     1. David was in no position to promise any kind of reward, no salary, no prize, no security for his family. And yet Ittai could say to King David that whether in life or in death, **“I am sticking with you!”**
     2. He saw the choice between Absalom and David and what each stood for. He knew that if Absalom won, nothing decent, nothing true, nothing honest, nothing upright would ever be safe in Israel again.
     3. So when everyone turned against God’s anointed king, Ittai did the unpopular thing: the thing that everyone else ridiculed—he stayed with God’s choice!
     4. Whether it was in the capital city or in the wilderness, Ittai made his choice.
     5. At the time, all he could see was the wilderness. It looked bad. And so the Ittai choice took some amazing courage.
  5. What did Ittai choose?
     1. He chose honor over seeming success, truth over pleasure, integrity over wealth, self-respect over popularity.
     2. These are all choices that we are asked to make today. Ittai understood that the ways of God are more important than the ways of the world and nothing in this world is worth the loss of doing what is right.
  6. ***This is what Jesus expects His followers to choose!***
     1. *Luke 9:23:* *And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*
        1. The cross symbolizes our willingness to choose like Ittai, the choice to give up anything, even our lives, for the glory of following Jesus.
     2. *Mt. 8:20: Jesus gave no security promises!*
        1. Yet He expects His followers to stay with Him even if death is what it takes and rewards them for their loyalty (Rev. 2:10; II Tim. 4:6-8)!
  7. No matter how bad the situation seems, choose like Ittai: Choose to serve God!

## Conclusion

1. As we apply the account of Ittai the Gittite (Not an Israelite, but a Gentile) to our situation today, we realize that in a symbolic way our King has also left the city, and we must choose to join Him!
2. Heb. 13:12-14: *“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.”*
   1. Whether new converts or seasoned saints, we choose to be “faithful until death” to receive the reward of eternal life! *(Rev. 2:10)*
3. Absalom’s rebellion ultimately failed and he died a humiliating death *(II Sam. 18).*
   1. Remember that long, flowing hair? His source of pride was his undoing and brought about his downfall! (II Sam. 18:9, 14: He died in disgrace!) *Seeming Success!!*
4. Rebellion against God will fail!
   1. Jesus will return a 2nd time and not as a Lamb for sacrifice for sin, but as a conquering King for judgment! (II Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 9:27-28) *Rebellion against God will fail!*
5. Those with the courage of Ittai will follow the true King into the wilderness! (Heb. 13:12-14)
   1. Saints are committed to God’s King, even when it doesn’t look good—in spite of ridicule and rejection. *(The world is NOT bigger than God!)*
   2. We have been saved to serve God *(Titus 2:14),* and God’s way can be very difficult—the road of self-denial.
   3. It takes courage to be Godly without first checking to see whether it is popular, to follow God despite the cost.
   4. This is not a choice for wimps or whiners. ***It takes courage and strength to choose like Ittai!***
6. Our mission every day is to be an Ittai for Christ:
   1. To pray and to choose that we will do for God what Ittai did for King David—to stand up and do what is right, doing whatever it takes, regardless of the cost.
   2. Carry your cross! Follow Jesus! (Luke 9:23)
   3. II Cor. 5:14-15: As Paul said, *“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”*
   4. Just as Ittai did for David, we do for Christ—standing firm and doing whatever it takes, whatever that means for us.
7. **As we go through life and its many decisions, let us all resolve to choose like Ittai!**
8. If not a Christian, you can be if you repent and be baptized! *(Acts 2:38)*
9. If you are a child of God with sin in your life, you can be forgiven if you repent! *(I Jn. 1:9)*
10. Whatever your request, let it be known ***NOW*** while we stand and sing!