

ZIBA: A Scheming Manipulator

2 Samuel 16:1-4

On the surface, this meeting between David and Ziba appears to be straightforward and honest. But, it was actually a well-planned scheme to manipulate David's favor.

ZIBA'S BACKGROUND — We were introduced to Ziba in 2 Samuel 9.

1. Ziba was previously a servant of Saul's son, Jonathan (9:1-2). After Jonathan's death, Ziba was probably enjoying the "good life" living off Jonathan's estate. Ziba was in control of Jonathan's property. No one gave him orders.
2. David inquired of Ziba if there were any left of the house of Saul that he could show the kindness of God to (9:3-5). Ziba answered that Mephibosheth was left.
3. David desired to show kindness to Mephibosheth, for Jonathan's sake, and instructed Ziba and his sons, to "*till the land for him*" (9:10). "*And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth*" (9:12).

Ziba seeks to capitalize on the political unrest and David's emotional distress to manipulate the situation for his own advantage. Ziba was a political opportunist.

I. **Ziba's SUPPLIES** (v. 1).

- How did he get to the top of the hill before David with all those supplies. Was he "tipped off" in advance concerning Absalom's plot.
 - A. While David welcomed the provisions, he received them under false pretense. Ziba had ulterior motives. They were given to make him "look good" before David and then profit from it. He was using gifts (taken from Mephibosheth) and lies to manipulate David's favor (see Prov. 17:23—"A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.").
 - B. David and his followers fled from Jerusalem so quickly, they did not bring much in the way of provisions. So the sight of all this

good food and drink must have seemed like a blessing from God. This is exactly what Ziba intended David to believe.

C. Ziba is not loyal to David—He is loyal only to himself!

II. Ziba's SUBTLETY (vs. 2-3).

➡ David asks two questions:

- A. *"What meanest thou by these?"* Ziba's answer was a rouse to cover his real intentions.
- B. *"And where is thy master's son?"* Ziba lied through his teeth that Mephibosheth was using David's demise as an opportunity to seize the throne for himself.
 1. Would Absalom actually put Mephibosheth on the throne????
 2. How could this crippled man stage a revolt against David anyway? This lame man would have to defeat both David and Absalom to get to the throne himself.
 3. How could David fall for Ziba's lying slander? ANSWER: David was depressed, and depression clouds a person's perception of others.
 - At no other time would David have accepted this. David's perception of Mephibosheth is colored by his emotional distress.
 - Depression distorts our judgment and makes us willing to believe things we would not believe otherwise... accept things we would not accept... trust people we would not trust... doubt the people we should be trusting.

III. Ziba's SLANDER (v. 3).

➡ It was later David learned Ziba had pulled the wool over his eyes—Fast forward to "the rest of the story" (cf. 19:24-30).

- A. This does not sound like one who is plotting a rebellion to me.
 1. From the day David left, to the day he returned, Mephibosheth was in mourning.
 2. Mephibosheth was one of the first to go see David when he returns.

3. Here we see the love Mephibosheth had for David. When offered the land and riches of this world, he responds, "No, it is enough just to have you back home."
 4. There is no better picture of a New Testament believer than this.
- B. Ziba's slander sprang from his covetousness (1 Tim. 6:10). He covets what David gave to Mephibosheth. Ziba was not content to manage the property of Mephibosheth. He wanted it for himself.

IV. David's SUSPICION (v. 4).

- David was impressed by Ziba's "act" of "loyalty." "*Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth.*" The lying manipulator responds with, "*I humbly beseech thee...*" What a hypocrite!
 - **David misjudged Mephibosheth.** Because he had already been betrayed by his own son and his trusted counselor, Ahithophel, **David tends to believe the worse**— "Even Mephibosheth has turned against me!" How prone we are believe the worse during hard times.
- A. David was too hasty in his judgment of the situation. Proverbs 14:15—"*The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.*" Don't be too quick to believe the allegations that are brought against another person! Jesus said, "*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*" (John 7:24).
 - B. The Bible says, "*receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses*" (1 Tim. 5:19 cf. Dt. 19:15). If someone has something to say against another, it is always best to have the one being accused present to vindicate himself. Otherwise, it is just GOSSIP!

A Pastoral Trap (By Ken Blue)

Several years ago a man came into my office to complain about one of our Sunday school teachers. He mentioned the teacher's name, and said, "Some people are complaining about this teacher, and say if you don't do something

about it, they are going to leave the church.” My first emotion was the feeling of my blood beginning to boil. I had seen this kind of setup by the devil before.

However, don't be too alarmed when someone says, “some people are saying...” It is usually, only him and his wife. I stood up and said, “If you think I am going to this lady with the complaints of others, you are crazy. Let them bring her to me with their accusations, and then I will listen. Otherwise, they can all leave.” They did not come, nor did they leave, and the problem resolved itself. In fact, it was later found out that he and his wife were two of the most destructive people in the church.

Never take sides with the accuser, against the accused. He will go directly to the accused, and let them know what you said. Now, you have a greater problem. No matter how tempted you are to give your opinion, don't do it!

Accusers who bring you their slanderous gossip want to get your finger prints on their murder weapon. So, don't step into their trap. Let the accusers bring the accused to you.

Always insist that the accusers bring the accused and their complaint at the same time. Otherwise, forget it. Beware of the person who brings the accusation to you. Usually, it is his wife who is jealous, or upset at the other person. In fact, say to the accuser, “Obviously, you are concerned for this person, let's pray for the teacher.” Then ask him to lead in prayer. Case closed.

SUMMATION: Ziba was no friend of David despite the show of generosity and loyalty he put on. He simply waited on the other side of the Mount of Olives until David appeared, so that he could use the David's trouble to get what he wanted. Ziba's timing and preparation was perfect.

Be careful about believing a negative report, especially when it is designed to put someone in less than a favorable light!