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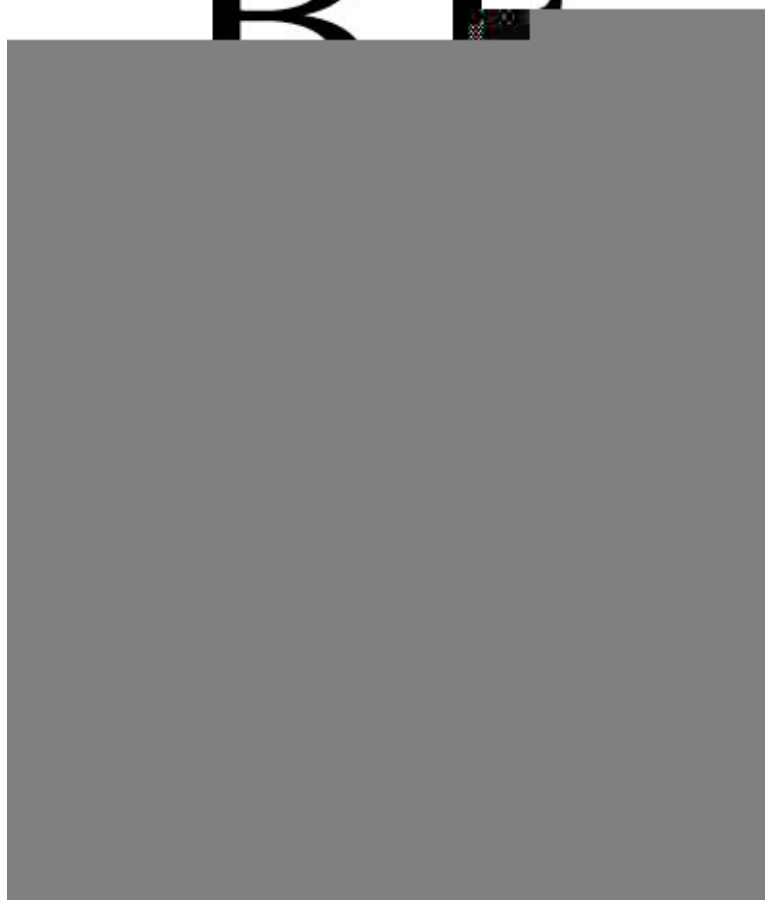
BE

RESTORED

TRUSTING GOD TO SEE US THROUGH



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BE RESTORED
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The Big Idea

An Introduction to *Be Restored* by Ken Baugh

My grandpa loved to tinker in the garage and fix things. In fact, I think his inclination was to fix something that was broken than to buy it new; there was just something in his character that couldn't discard stuff. You could have called my grandpa a pack rat and referred to his garage full of stuff as junk, but to him things that were broken and discarded by someone else provided an opportunity to fix and restore.

I think my grandpa's desire to fix and restore stuff reflected an important aspect of God's character. God does not discard broken people who have junked up their lives with sin. Instead, He wants to forgive and restore people to right relationship with Himself. God is a God of restoration, and this is the Big Idea that runs through

the defeat of Israel and the fall of their king. When David referred to the shield, was he speaking literally or metaphorically, or both? Saul carried a shield, and Israel's king was compared to a shield (Ps. 84:9; 89:18 NIV). Warriors did anoint their leather shields to preserve them, but the king was also God's anointed leader. Saul and his three sons had lost their shields and their lives, and their shields were defiled by blood.

He praises Saul and Jonathan (vv. 22–23). This is the heart of the song, depicting Saul and Jonathan as victorious warriors. Jonathan's arrows hit their mark and Saul's sword "did not return unsatisfied" (NIV).⁶ They were as swift as eagles (Deut. 28:49) and as strong as lions (2 Sam. 17:10). But to David, these men weren't just great soldiers; they were also gracious people who were beloved in life, and in death loyal to each other and to the people. From his meeting with Samuel in the medium's house, Saul knew that he and his sons would die that day in battle (1 Sam. 28:19), yet he entered the contest determined to do his best. Jonathan knew that his father had disobeyed God and sinned against David, yet he stayed at his side in the fight. Even though the army of Israel was defeated, David wanted the people to remember the greatness of their king and his sons.

He addresses the daughters of Jerusalem (v. 24). In spite of his faults and failures, during his reign Saul had brought stability to the nation. The tribes had abandoned selfish independence and competition and were striving to work together to better their lot, including their economic position. Saul's victories over enemy nations, greater safety in the towns and farmlands, and tribal cooperation all combined to make Israel wealthier. David seems to be describing the wealthy women and their luxuries, perhaps the wives of some of Saul's officers David had seen while he was serving in Saul's court. "Clothed ... in scarlet and finery" (NIV) is a familiar phrase that means "basking in wealth."

He speaks to his beloved friend Jonathan (vv. 25–27). It's common in

funeral dirges to name and address the deceased. “Jonathan my brother” (NIV) carries a double meaning, for they were brothers-in-law (David was married to Michal, Jonathan’s sister) and also brothers in heart and spirit. David and Jonathan were beloved friends who had covenanted together to share the throne, David as king and Jonathan as second in command (1 Sam. 23:16–18). To read homosexual overtones into David’s expressions of his love for Jonathan is to misinterpret his words. Solomon described the love of husband and wife as “strong as death” (Song 8:6 NKJV), and the friendship of David and Jonathan was that strong. First Samuel 18:1 NIV says, “Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.” David closed his lament by repeating the poignant refrain “How are the mighty fallen” and comparing Saul and Jonathan to weapons of war that had been lost and could never be used again.

In composing and teaching this elegy, David may have had several purposes in mind. For one thing, he gave honor to Saul and Jonathan and taught the people to respect the monarchy. Since Saul was Israel’s first king, the people might conclude that all their kings would follow his bad example and possibly ruin the nation, so David sought to strengthen the concept of monarchy. The song also made it clear to everybody that David held no grudges against his father-in-law and sovereign. Finally, David set an example for all of us to follow in paying loving tribute to those who have died in battle to protect their country.

CORONATION (2:1–4A) David was Israel’s lawful king and couldn’t remain in Ziklag since it was in enemy territory. It’s likely that Achish, the Philistine king, thought that David was still under his authority, but David knew that he must return to his own land and begin to reign over his own people. David was in the habit of seeking the Lord’s will when he had to make decisions, either by having Abiathar the priest consult the ephod (1 Sam. 23:9–12) or

by asking Gad the prophet to pray to God for a word of wisdom (1 Sam. 22:5).

David was from Judah,⁷ so it was logical that he go to live among his own people, but in which city should he reside? God gave him permission to return to Judah and told him to live in Hebron, which was located about twenty-five miles from Ziklag. By moving there, David was back with his own people but still under the shadow of the Philistines. Hebron was important in Jewish history, for near the city was the tomb of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah. The city was in the inheritance of Caleb, a man of stature in Jewish history (Josh. 14:14). Abigail, one of David's wives, had been married to a Calebite, and David had inherited her property near the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam. 25:2). Hebron was probably the most important city in the southern part of Judah, so David moved there with his men, and they lived in the towns surrounding Hebron. For the first time in ten years, David and his men were no longer fugitives. His men had suffered with him, and now they would reign with him (see 2 Tim. 2:12).

When David settled in Hebron, his return to Judah was the signal for his people to recognize him as their leader, so the elders of Judah anointed David a second time and made him king (see 1 Sam. 16:13).⁸ Had Saul's captain Abner also accepted God's will and submitted to David, a costly civil war would have been averted, but loyalty to the old regime (Abner was Saul's cousin) and a desire to protect his own interests motivated Abner to fight David instead of follow him.

While David was living in Ziklag, volunteers had come to him from the tribes of Benjamin, Gad, and Manasseh (1 Chron. 12:1–22), so he not only had a large and experienced army but also a representation from some of the other tribes. Before long, David would win the allegiance of all the nation of Israel.

In his accession to the throne of Israel, David illustrates the career of Jesus Christ, the son of David. Like David the shepherd, Jesus came first as a humble

servant and was anointed king privately. Like David the exile, Jesus is King today but doesn't yet reign on the throne of David. Like Saul in David's day, Satan is still free to obstruct God's work and oppose God's people. One day, Jesus will return in glory, Satan will be imprisoned, and Jesus will reign in His glorious kingdom (Rev. 19:11—20:6). God's people today faithfully pray "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10) and eagerly await the return of their King.

David was thirty years old when the elders of Judah made him their king, and he reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11). How blessed were the people of Judah to have such a gifted and godly leader!

APPRECIATION (2:4B–7) David was a man with a shepherd's heart who cared about his people (see 2 Sam. 24:17), and one of his first concerns was the fate of Saul and the three sons who died with him. When he asked the leaders of Judah about the burial of the royal family, they told him how the men of Jabesh Gilead had risked their lives to recover the four bodies, burn away the decayed and mutilated flesh, and then bury the bones back at Jabesh (1 Sam. 31:8–13). They remembered how Saul had rescued their city many years before (1 Sam. 11).

Jabesh Gilead was located across the Jordan in the tribe of Gad, and the men who recovered the bodies had to travel northwest and cross the Jordan River to reach Beth Shan, a round trip of perhaps twenty-five miles. It was a courageous endeavor, and David thanked them for their devotion to Saul and to the kingdom of Israel. They had displayed "kindness," and the Lord would show them "kindness and faithfulness" (NIV). Twenty-five years later, David would disinter the remains of Saul and the sons who died with him and rebury them in their native tribe of Benjamin (2 Sam. 21:12–14).

But David used this occasion as an opportunity to invite the brave men of

Jabesh Gilead to cast their lot with him. They had been valiant for Saul, and now they could be valiant for David. Some warriors from Gad had already joined David's army while he was in Ziklag (1 Chron. 12:8–15), affirming their confidence that he was God's anointed king. Unfortunately the people of Jabesh Gilead didn't choose to submit to David but instead followed Abner and Saul's weak son, Ish-Bosheth.

The people of Jabesh Gilead allowed their affection for Saul to blind them to God's plan for the nation. They had a good motive, but they made a bad choice. How often in the history of the church have God's people allowed human affection and appreciation to overrule the will of God! Jesus Christ is King and He deserves our submission, loyalty, and obedience. To put human leaders ahead of God's anointed King is to create division and weakness in the ranks of the Lord's followers and invite multiplied problems for the Lord's people. As Augustine of Hippo said, "Jesus Christ will be Lord of all or He will not be Lord at all."

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever experienced restoration in your life after something fell apart?
If so, when?
2. Restoration is one of the major themes of 2 Samuel. What was restored?

3. Read 2 Samuel 1. How did David and his camp respond to the death of Saul?
Why did they respond like this?
4. Why did this response surprise the Amalekite?
5. What were the qualities or achievements of Saul that David highlighted in his lament?
6. For what purposes might David have composed and taught the funeral song?
7. When making decisions, David sought the Lord's will. Why might a believer neglect to seek the Lord's will in decision making? Why is it essential?
8. How was the move back to Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1–7) a turning point in David's life? In the life of Israel?
9. What similarities can be seen between the life of David and that of Jesus Christ?
10. In what ways do people today “put human leaders ahead of God's anointed King” (Jesus)? What problems does this create?

Chapter Two

David Watches and Waits

(2 Samuel 2:8—4:12)

In order to govern,” said Napoleon on his deathbed, “the question is not to follow out a more or less valid theory but to build with whatever materials are at hand. The inevitable must be accepted and turned to advantage.” If this statement is true, then David was a very effective leader during the seven and a half years he ruled in Hebron. While Joab led the army of Judah, David watched and waited, knowing that the Lord would one day open the way for him to reign as king over all Israel. God called David, not only to be the king of His people, but also their shepherd and spiritual leader. David had to wait on God’s timing while patiently enduring the consequences of the selfish ambitions and reckless actions of leaders who were motivated by pride and hatred. David learned to build with the materials at hand and to trust God to use disappointments to the advantage of His people.

ABNER THE KINGMAKER (2:8–32) The key actor in this drama was Abner, Saul’s cousin and the commander of his army (1 Sam. 14:50). It was Abner who brought David to Saul after David killed Goliath (17:55–58), and who with Saul pursued David for ten years (26:5ff.). Abner was rebuked and humiliated by David when

he failed to protect the king (26:13–16), and Abner had no special love for David. The people of Israel honored David above Saul, and eventually the nation would learn that David was God’s choice as king of Israel. But David already had a commander, Joab, so when David became king, what would happen to Abner? Most of what Abner did during those seven and a half years wasn’t for the glory of God or the strengthening of Israel, but for his own self-interest. He was taking care of number one.

Abner rejects David’s kingship (vv. 8–11). The people of Judah obeyed God’s will and anointed David as their king, but Abner disobeyed the Lord and made Saul’s one remaining son, Ish-Bosheth, the king of “all Israel.” Abner knew that David was God’s choice, a gifted leader, and a brave soldier, but he deliberately rebelled against the Lord and appointed Ish-Bosheth. Israel had asked for a king “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5), and when a king died, the other nations appointed a king’s eldest son to succeed him. Three of Saul’s sons had died in battle, and Ish-Bosheth was all that remained of the royal family.

Scripture doesn’t say much about Ish-Bosheth, but it’s clear that he was a weak puppet ruler manipulated by Abner (2 Sam. 3:11; 4:1). He was certainly old enough to fight in the army with his father and brothers, but Saul left him home to protect the dynasty. (He was probably also a weak soldier.) Saul and Abner both knew that God had taken the dynasty away from Saul (1 Sam. 13:11–14). Knowing that he and his sons would die in the battle, Saul probably arranged to make his fourth son king. Ish-Bosheth may have been crowned by the general, but he was never anointed by the Lord. He is called Esh-Baal in 1 Chronicles 8:33, which means “man of the Lord.” The word “baal” means “lord” and was also the name of a Canaanite deity, so that may be why his name was changed.^{[1](#)}

Abner took Ish-Bosheth to Mahanaim, on the east side of the Jordan. This was a Levitical city of refuge where he would be safe (Josh. 21:38), and there

Abner established a capital for “all Israel.” But it’s likely that it took at least five years for Abner to persuade the tribes (minus Judah) to follow their new king. Ish-Bosheth was crowned at the beginning of David’s reign of seven years and six months and was assassinated after reigning only two years over “all Israel.” These would have been the last two years of David’s reign in Hebron. Ish-Bosheth didn’t have a long reign over “all Israel,” but everybody knew that Abner was in charge anyway.

There’s a modern touch to this scenario, for our political and religious worlds are populated by these same three kinds of people. We have weak people like Ish-Bosheth, who get where they are because they have connections. We have strong, selfish people like Abner, who know how to manipulate others for their own personal profit. We also have people of God like David who are called, anointed, and equipped but must wait for God’s time before they can serve. During more than fifty years of ministry, I have seen churches and other ministries bypass God’s chosen men and women and put unqualified people into places of leadership just because they were well-known or had connections.

Abner got what he wanted, but within a few years, he lost it all.

Abner challenges David’s army (vv. 12–17). When Abner made Ish-Bosheth king, he was actually declaring war on David, and he knew it. But by now Abner had all the tribes except Judah behind him, and he felt he could easily defeat David in battle and take over the entire kingdom. Confident of victory, Abner called for a contest between the two armies, to be held at the great cistern about twenty-three miles north of Gibeon. This was not unlike the challenge Goliath issued when he called for one of Saul’s soldiers to fight him (1 Sam. 17:8–10). But Abner was rebelling against God while David was God’s chosen leader!

This is the first time we meet Joab, David’s nephew and the commander of his army.² The two armies met at the reservoir, and twelve soldiers from the army of Benjamin faced twelve men from Judah—and all twenty-four men were

killed. That day the battlefield received a new name—“the field of sharp edges” or “the field of daggers.” Joab and Abner wasted no time getting their troops in battle formation, and “the battle that day was very fierce” (NIV). Abner was defeated that day, a portent of things to come.

Abner kills David’s nephew (vv. 18–23). Joab, Abishai, and Asahel were David’s nephews, the sons of his sister Zeruiah (see 1 Chron. 2:13–16).³ Whether on his own initiative or at his brother’s orders, Asahel went after Abner, for he knew that slaying the enemy general could mean confusing and scattering the whole enemy army. If Joab commanded the fleet-footed young man to go after Abner, perhaps he was thinking of his own future, for Abner might threaten to take his position as head of the army.

The record makes it clear that Abner had no desire to harm or kill the lad, but Asahel was persistent. First, Abner told him to turn aside and take what he wanted from one of the dead enemy soldiers. Then he warned Asahel that if he killed him, this would create a “blood feud” that could cause trouble for years to come. Abner knew Joab and had no desire to begin a possible lifelong family conflict. It was bad enough that Joab and Abner were ri

but Abner was deceived and led into the shadows. Abishai had accompanied David into Saul's camp and had seen him refuse to kill his father-in-law (1 Sam. 26:6ff.), so he knew that David would never countenance the murder of Saul's general. We wonder if Abner died thinking that David had been involved in the plot to kill him.

David honors Abner (vv. 28–39). When David heard the news of Abner's death, he immediately disclaimed any part in what his two nephews had done. In fact, he went so far as to call down a curse on the house of Joab, naming some of the plagues that Moses had warned about in the covenant (Deut. 28:25 – (vv5!c

DAVID ACCEPTED THE CROWN (5:1–5) The assassination of Ish-Bosheth left the eleven tribes without a king or even an heir to Saul’s throne. Abner was dead, but he had paved the way for David to be made king of all twelve tribes (3:17–21). The next step was for the leaders of all the tribes to convene at Hebron and crown David king.

The qualifications for Israel’s king were written in the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 17:14–20. The first and most important requirement was that he was to be chosen by the Lord from the people of Israel, a king “whom the Lord your God chooses” (17:15 NKJV). The people knew that Samuel had anointed David king some twenty years before and that it was God’s will that David ascend the throne (2 Sam. 5:2). The nation needed a shepherd, and David was that shepherd (Ps. 78:70–72). Saul had been “the people’s king” but he wasn’t the Lord’s first choice, for God had given him as a judgment against Israel because they wanted to be like the other nations (1 Sam. 8; Hos. 13:11). The Lord loved His people and knew they needed a shepherd, so He equipped David to be their king. Unlike Saul, who was a Benjamite, David was from the royal tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and was born and raised in Bethlehem. Because of this, he was able to establish the dynasty that brought the Messiah, Jesus Christ, into the world, and He, too, was born in Bethlehem.

The people who gathered at Hebron reminded David that he belonged to the whole nation and not just to the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. 5:1). At the beginning of David’s career, the people recognized that God’s hand was upon him, for God gave him success in his military exploits. Present at Hebron were representatives from all the tribes, and they enthusiastically gave their allegiance to the new king (1 Chron. 12:23–40). The total number of officers and men is 340,800, all of them loyal to David. The people remained with David for three days and celebrated God’s goodness to His people.[1](#)

The foundation of the Jewish nation was God's covenant with His people as expressed in the law of Moses, especially Deuteronomy 27—30 and Leviticus 26. If the king and the people obeyed God's will, He would bless and care for them; but if they disobeyed and worshipped false gods, He would discipline them. Each new king was required to affirm the supremacy and authority of God's law, promise to obey it, and even make a copy of it for his own personal use (Deut. 17:18–20). David entered into a covenant with the Lord and the people, agreeing to uphold and obey God's law and to rule in the fear of the Lord (see 1 Sam. 10:17–25; 2 Kings 11:17).

When David was a teenager, Samuel had anointed him privately (1 Sam. 16:13), and the elders of the tribe of Judah had anointed him when he became their king at thirty years of age (2 Sam. 2:4). But now the elders of the whole nation anointed David and proclaimed him as their king. David was not an amateur, but a seasoned warrior and a gifted leader who obviously had the blessing of the Lord on his life and ministry. After experiencing years of turbulence and division, the nation at last had a king who was God's choice and the people's choice. God takes time to prepare His leaders, and much to be pitied is the person who succeeds before he or she is ready for it.

DAVID ESTABLISHED A NEW CAPITAL CITY (5:6–10;

1 CHRON. 11:4–9) Abner and Ish-Bosheth had established their capital at Mahanaim (2:8), over the Jordan River on the boundary of Gad and Manasseh, while David's capital was at Hebron in the tribe of Judah. But neither city was suitable for a new ruler who was seeking to unify the nation and make a new beginning. David wisely chose as his capital the Jebusite city of Jerusalem on the border of Benjamin (Saul's tribe) and Judah (David's tribe). Jerusalem had never belonged to any of the tribes,

so nobody could accuse David of playing favorites in setting up his new capital.

Political considerations were important, but so was security, and the topography of Jerusalem made it an ideal capital city. Built on a rocky hill and surrounded on three sides by valleys and hills, the city was vulnerable only on the north side. The Valley of Hinnom lay on the south, the Kidron Valley on the east, and the Tyropean Valley on the west. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Ps. 48:2). “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined” (Ps. 50:2). The Jewish people have always loved the city of Jerusalem, and today it is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. To be born in Jerusalem was a high honor indeed (Ps. 87:4–6).

The Lord must have guided David in a special way when he chose Jerusalem to be his capital, because Jerusalem would play a strategic role in the working out of His great plan of salvation. God had promised the Jews that He would appoint a place where they could come to worship Him (Deut. 12:1–7), and He must have revealed to David that Jerusalem was that place. Later David would purchase property on Zion which would become the site for the temple that his son Solomon would build (2 Sam. 24). The church sees the earthly Jerusalem as a city of legalistic bondage, but the heavenly Jerusalem as a symbol of the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus (Gal. 4:21–31) and the eternal home of Christ’s people (Heb. 12:18–24; Rev. 21—22). God has set His King on the throne (Ps. 2:6), and one day He will speak in His wrath and judge those who oppose Him and His truth.

The Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem thought that their citadel was impregnable and that even the blind and the lame could defend it, a boast that made David angry. He knew that the Lord had promised Moses that Israel would conquer all the nations living in Canaan, including the Jebusites (Ex. 23:23–24; Deut. 7:1–2; 20:17), so by faith he planned his attack. He promised that the man

who entered the city and subdued it would be the commander of his army, and he even told him how to do it: Go up through the water shaft. David's nephew Joab accepted the challenge, captured the city, and became captain of David's troops. Excavations on Mount Zion have revealed a water shaft that would have been difficult but not impossible to climb. David occupied the mount and called the southern part "the city of David." In years following, David and his successors strengthened the fortress by building walls.

The word *Millo* (v. 9) means "fullness" and refers to a stone embankment that was built on the southeastern side of the mount to support additional buildings and a wall. Archaeologists have uncovered what they call "a stepped-stone structure," about 1,500 feet long and 900 feet wide, that was a supporting terrace for other structures, and they assume this was the *Millo*. Both Solomon and King Hezekiah strengthened this part of Mount Zion (1 Kings 9:15, 24; 11:27; 2 Chron. 32:5). God's blessing was on David and gave him prosperity in everything he undertook for His people.

It was probably at this time that David brought the head of Goliath to Jerusalem as a reminder of God's faithfulness to His people (1 Sam. 17:54).

DAVID FORMED POLITICAL ALLIANCES (5:11–16; 1 CHRON. 3:5–9; 14:1–7) Israel was a small nation that was distinguished from her neighbors by her special covenant relationship with the true and living God (Num. 23:7–10), and the Jews were warned not to form alliances with their neighbors that would compromise their testimony. Unless his successor bore the same name, Hiram was probably just beginning his reign as king of Tyre, for he befriended both David and Solomon during their reigns (1 Kings 5).

It's likely that David's palace was built for him after his successful wars

against the Philistines (5:17–25), and this may have been Hiram’s way of recognizing David’s accession to the throne. No doubt the Phoenician king also appreciated the fact that David had defeated his warlike neighbors, the Philistines. From a practical point of view, it was necessary for the Phoenicians to be on good terms with the Jews because Israel could easily block the trade route to Tyre, and the Phoenicians depended on Jewish farmers for their food. (See Acts 12:20.) David interpreted Hiram’s kindness as another evidence that the Lord had indeed established him on the throne of Israel.

The mention of David’s palace and his alliance with Hiram offered the writer opportunity to mention David’s family, the “house” that the Lord was building for him (Ps. 127). Deuteronomy 17:17 prohibited Israel’s king from taking many wives, but David seems to have ignored this law, as did Solomon after him (1 Kings 11:1–4). At least one of David’s wives was a princess (2 Sam. 3:3), which suggests that the marriage was for the sake of political alliance; and no doubt there were other similar marriages. This was one way to cement good relationships with other nations.

There are four lists of David’s children in Scripture—those born while he reigned in Hebron (2 Sam 3:2–5) and those born after he moved to Jerusalem (5:13–16; 1 Chron. 3:1–9; 14:4–7). His first wife was Saul’s daughter Michal (1 Sam. 18:27), who was childless (2 Sam. 6:23). In Hebron, Ahinoam of Jezreel gave birth to Amnon, David’s firstborn (2 Sam. 3:2); Abigail the widow of Nabal gave birth to Chileab, or Daniel (3:3); princess Maacah bore Absalom (3:3) and his sister Tamar (13:1); Haggith gave birth to Adonijah (3:4); Abital bore Shephatiah (3:4); and Eglah bore Ithream (3:5). In Jerusalem, Bathsheba bore David four children (1 Chron. 3:5): Shimea (or Shammah), Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon. His other wives, who are not named (1 Chron. 3:6–9; 14:3–7), bore Ibhar, Elishua, Eliphelet (or Elpelet), Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada (or Beeliada, 1 Chron. 14:7), Eliphelet.^{[2](#)}

David also had children by his concubines, so he had a large family to

manage. It's no wonder that some of them got involved in various court intrigues and brought sorrow to the king. The law clearly stated that the king was not to multiply wives, but both David and Solomon ignored this law, and both paid dearly for their disobedience. It's likely that some of the wives, like Maacah, represented alliances that David made with neighboring kings to help guarantee the security of Israel.

DAVID DEFEATED THE PHILISTINES (5:17–25; 1 CHRON. 14:8–17) As long as David was minding his own business in Hebron, the Philistines thought he was still one of their vassals; but when he became king of the whole nation of Israel, the Philistines knew he was their enemy, and they attacked him. It's probable that these attacks occurred before David relocated in Jerusalem, because he and his men went down to “the stronghold” (5:17 NKJV), the wilderness area where he had lived in the days when Saul was out to kill him (1 Sam. 22:4; 23:13–14).³ David got word of the approaching Philistine army, quickly maneuvered his soldiers, and met the invaders in the valley of Rephaim, just a short distance from Jerusalem.

As he had done before, David sought the mind of the Lord in planning his attack, probably by using the Urim and Thummim; or he may have had the prophet Gad seek the Lord's will. Assured by the Lord that He would give Israel victory, David met the Philistines two miles southwest of Jerusalem, and he forced them to retreat. They left the field so quickly that they left their idols behind, and David and his men burned them. The Philistines were sure the presence of their gods would assure them victory, but they were wrong. David gave God all the glory and called the place Baal-perazim, which means “the Lord who breaks out.”

Some commentators believe that the Gadite warriors joined David's army at this time (1 Chron. 12:8–15), and this was probably the occasion when three of David's mighty men broke through the Philistine lines and obtained for David water from the Bethlehem well (2 Sam. 23:13–17; 1 Chron. 11:15–19). It took a great deal of faith and courage for them to do this, and what they did was in response to a desire in David's heart and not an order from his lips. They obtained the water because they loved their king and wanted to please him. What an example for us to follow!

The Philistines returned to fight David a second time, and David sought the Lord's will a second time. Unlike Joshua after the victory at Jericho (Josh. 6–7), David didn't assume that the same strategy would work again. God gave him a new battle plan, he obeyed it, and the Lord gave him the victory. What was the sound in the tops of the trees? Only the wind? Angels (Ps. 104:4)? God coming to lead His people to victory? The strategy worked, and David pursued the enemy all the way from Gibeon to Gezer, a distance of fifteen to twenty miles. By this victory Israel regained the territory that Saul lost in his last battle. In subsequent campaigns, David also took back the cities the Philistines had taken from Saul (2 Sam. 8:1; 1 Chron. 18:1). David had repeated battles with the Philistines, and the Lord gave him one victory after another (2 Sam. 21:15–22).

The people had long recognized that David was a brave and skillful warrior, and these two victories added greater glory to God and honor to His servant. By defeating the Philistines, David gave notice to Israel's enemies that they had better be careful what they did to him and his people.

DAVID RELOCATED THE HOLY ARK (6:1–23; 1 CHRON. 13:1–13; 15:1—16:3)⁴

The ark of the covenant was to be kept in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, for it symbolized the glorious throne of God (Ps. 80:1; 99:1 NIV); but for over

seventy-five years, the ark had been absent from the divine sanctuary at Shiloh. The Philistines captured the ark when Eli was judge (1 Sam. 4) and then returned it to the Jews because the Lord sent judgment on the Philistines. First the ark was sent to Beth-Shemesh and then was taken to Kiriath Jearim and guarded in the house of Abinadab (1 Sam 5:1—7:1). During the reign of David, there were two high priests, Zadok and Ahimelech (2 Sam. 8:17), and it's possible that one served at the sanctuary, which was in Shiloh, and then moved to Gibeon (2 Chron. 1:1–6), while the other ministered at court in Jerusalem. David pitched a tent for the ark in the city of David, but the furnishings in the tabernacle weren't moved to Jerusalem until after Solomon completed the temple (1 Kings 8:1–4; 2 Chron. 5:1–5).

The first attempt (vv. 1–11). Why did David want the ark in Jerusalem? For one thing, he wanted to honor the Lord and give Him His rightful place as King of the nation. But David also had a secret desire in his heart to build a sanctuary for the Lord (see chap. 7; Ps. 132:1–5), and the first step would be to place the ark in the capital city. David knew that the Lord desired a central sanctuary (Deut. 12:5, 11, 21; 14:23–24; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2), and he hoped the Lord would let him build it. David's dream didn't come true, but he did buy the land on which the temple was built (2 Sam. 24:18ff.), and he provided the temple plans and the wealth and materials needed for its construction (1 Chron. 28–29).

Surely there was a political reason as well for moving the ark to Jerusalem, for it symbolized “one nation under God.” David involved all the key leaders in the land in planning the event and issued a general invitation to the priests and Levites to come to Jerusalem from all their cities. “So David assembled all the Israelites, from the Shihor River in Egypt to Lebo Hamath [or “the entrance to Hamath”], to bring the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim” (1 Chron. 13:5 NIV). Hamath marked the northernmost boundary assigned by God to Israel (Num. 34:8). It was David's hope that past divisions and tribal differences would be

forgotten as the people focused on the Lord. The presence of the ark meant the presence of the Lord, and the presence of the Lord meant security and victory.

But one thing was missing: There is no record that David sought the mind of the Lord in this matter. Relocating the ark to Jerusalem seemed a wise idea and everybody was enthusiastic about doing it, but the king didn't follow his usual pattern of asking the Lord for His directions. After all, what pleases the king and the people may not please God, and what doesn't please God will not have His blessing. David's first attempt failed miserably because the Levites didn't carry the ark on their shoulders. God had given specific directions through Moses how the tabernacle was to be erected, dismantled, and transported (Num. 4), and the major pieces of furniture were to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites who descended from Kohath (4:9–20). When they used a new cart drawn by oxen, they were following the pattern of the pagan Philistines (1 Sam. 6), not the pattern given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The lesson here is obvious: God's work must be done in God's way if it is to have God's blessing. The fact that all the leaders of Israel agreed to use the cart didn't make it right. When it looked like the ark would fall from the cart, Uzzah presumptuously took hold of it to steady it, and he was killed. But God had warned about this in the law of Moses, and every Israelite surely knew of it (Num. 1:51; 4:15, 20). There's no evidence that Abinadab was a Levite or that his sons Uzzah and Ahio were even qualified to be near the ark, let alone touch it. David quickly had the ark taken into the house of Obed-Edom, who was a Levite (1 Chron. 15:18, 21, 24; 16:5; 26:4–8, 15), and there it remained for three months.

At the beginning of new eras in biblical history, God sometimes manifested His power in judgment to remind the people that one thing had not changed: God's people must obey God's Word. After the tabernacle was erected and the priestly ministry inaugurated, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu were struck dead for willfully trying to enter the sanctuary (Lev. 10). When Israel entered the land

of Canaan and began to conquer the land, God had Achan executed for disobeying the law and taking loot from Jericho (Josh. 6—7). During the early days of the New Testament church, Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying to God and His people (Acts 5). Here, at the start of David's reign in Jerusalem, God reminded His people that they were not to imitate the other nations when they served Him, for all they needed to know was in His Word.

The church today needs to heed this reminder and return to the Word of God for an understanding of the will of God. No amount of unity or enthusiasm can compensate for disobedience. When God's work is done in man's way, and we imitate the world instead of obeying the Word, we can never expect the blessing of God. The crowds may approve what we do, but what about the approval of God? The way of the world is ultimately the way of death.

The second attempt (vv. 12–23). When David heard that the presence of the ark was bringing blessing to the household of Obed-Edom, he wanted that blessing for himself and his people. The ark belonged in the tent he had erected for it in Jerusalem. Since 1 and 2 Chronicles were written from the priestly viewpoint, the account of the second attempt is much fuller than the record in Samuel (1 Chron. 15:1—16:3). David was now determined to do God's work in God's way, so he sent the Levites on the ten-mile trip to the house of Obed-Edom, and they brought the ark to Jerusalem on their shoulders. To make sure the Lord wouldn't "break through" with another judgment, the Levites paused after their first six steps and the priests offered a bull and a fattened calf. When no judgment fell, they knew God was pleased with what they were doing (1 Chron. 17:26).⁵ When the procession reached the tent in Jerusalem, the priests offered fourteen more sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:26).

David danced enthusiastically in worship before the Lord and dressed for the occasion in a priestly linen ephod (v. 14). Later, his wife accused him of shamelessly exposing himself (v. 20), but 1 Chronicles 15:27 informs us that he was also wearing a royal robe under the ephod. Though he was not from the tribe

of Levi, David was acting as both king and priest—a picture of Jesus, the son of David, who holds both offices “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:20—8:13; Ps. 110). In the days of Abraham, Melchizedek was the king and priest of Salem (Gen. 14:17–24), and now David was

Israel. The Lord chose Israel instead of the other nations on the earth, and He revealed Himself to Israel by giving the law at Mount Sinai and speaking the Word through His prophets. The Jews were to remember the uniqueness of the Lord and not bow before the idols of the other nations. (See Deut. 4:34; 7:6–8; 9:4–5; Neh. 9:10.) God is the Lord of all nations but He did great things for Israel, His chosen people. David recognized the wonderful truth that God had chosen Israel to be His people forever!

The third part of David's prayer and praise (vv. 25–29) looked to *the future* as revealed in the covenant just delivered to the king. God gave the word, David believed it, and David asked God to fulfill that word for His people. He wanted Israel to continue as a nation and the Lord to be magnified through Israel. He asked that his house be built just as the Lord had promised (v. 27), even though it was disappointing to David that he wasn't permitted to build a house for the Lord. "Thy kingdom come" is the thrust of verse 27, and "Thy will be done" the thrust of verse 28. It wasn't enough for David simply to hear the promises and believe them; he also prayed to the Lord to fulfill them.

In his humility, faith, and submission to God's will, David is a good example for us to follow.

2. FIGHTING GOD'S BATTLES (8:1–18; 1 CHRON. 18)

This chapter summarizes the victories of the army of Israel over their enemies, events that most likely occurred between chapters 6 and 7 of 2 Samuel (see 7:1). The Lord helped David, Joab, and Abishai to overcome Israel's enemies on the west (8:1), east (v. 2), north (vv. 3–12), and south (vv. 13–14). For a parallel account, see 1 Chronicles 18–19. King Saul had fought many of these same enemies (1 Sam. 14:47).

We must look at David's military activities in the light of God's covenants with Israel through Abraham (Gen. 12, 15), Moses (Deut. 27–30) and David

(2 Sam. 7). The Lord had promised Israel the land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:17–21; Deut. 1:6–8; 11:24; 1 Kings 4:20–21), and the Lord used David to help fulfill the promise. Israel had lost territory to her enemies during the reign of King Saul, and David recaptured it, but he also expanded Israel's borders and acquired land that hadn't been conquered in Joshua's day (Josh. 13:1–7). David established vassal treaties with most of these nations and set up garrisons in their lands to maintain Israel's authority (2 Sam. 8:6). A man of faith, David believed God's promises and acted upon them for the blessing of His people.

But David's victories also meant peace and safety for the people of Israel so they could live normal lives and not be constantly threatened by their neighbors. Israel had a great work to perform on earth in bearing witness to the true and living God and bringing the written Scriptures and the Messiah into the world. Furthermore, David's victories enriched the treasury of the Lord so that the material was available for Solomon to build the temple (vv. 11–13; 1 Chron. 22). The church today doesn't use military weapons to fight God's battles (John 18:36–38; 2 Cor. 10:3–6; Eph. 6:14–18), but we could use the faith and courage of David and his soldiers and reclaim lost territory for the Lord.

West: the Philistines (v. 1). These people were the traditional enemies of the Jews and seized every opportunity to attack them. In 2 Samuel 21:15–22, at least four different Philistine campaigns are mentioned (see 1 Chron. 20:4–8), and the text describes the slaying of several giants as well as the defeating of the Philistines. Israel captured several cities, including Gath, the home of Goliath. As a youth, David had killed Goliath, but during the first campaign he was unable to slay the giant Ishbi-benob, and David's nephew Abishai had to rescue him (2 Sam. 21:15–17). David's men advised him to stop waging war personally, and he heeded their advice. Blessed is that leader who admits his weaknesses and admits when he needs to make changes! The name "Methegammah" means "the bridle of the mother city" and probably refers to a key Philistine city that

Israel captured, the location of which is a mystery to us. To “take the bridle” of anything means to gain control and force submission.

East: the Moabites (v. 2). The Moabites had been friendly to David because they thought he was Saul’s enemy (1 Sam. 14:47), and David was related to the Moabites through his great-grandmother, Ruth (Ruth 4:18–22). While living in exile, David had even put his parents in the custody of the king of Moab (1 Sam. 22:3–4). The Moabites were actually related to the Jews because Abraham’s nephew Lot was the father of their ancestor Moab (Gen. 19:30–38). Because the Moabites had hired Balaam the prophet to curse Israel and then lead Moab in seducing the men of Israel (Num. 22—25), the Lord declared war on Moab, and David was only continuing that crusade. Most conquerors would have slaughtered the entire army, but David spared every third soldier and settled for tribute from the nation.

North: the Arameans and Syrians (vv. 3–13). Zobah was located north of Damascus and was part of a confederacy of nations called “the Syrians” in some translations, but more accurately they are “the Arameans.” However, their neighbors the Syrians tried to come to their rescue and were defeated themselves, so that the whole area north to the Euphrates came under David’s authority. This gave Israel important military installations and also control of the valuable caravan routes that passed through that territory. Israel could levy duty as the traders passed through and thereby increase its income. By defeating the Arameans and the Syrians, David also made friends with their enemies and received tribute from them (vv. 6–10).

South: the Edomites (vv. 12–14). First Chronicles 18:12–13 names the Edomites as the enemy (see 1 Kings 11:14b–18), but it’s possible that the Syrians and Arameans at this time were in control of Edom and were also involved in the battle. It appears that while Israel was attacking the Syrians and Arameans in the north, the Moabites attacked them from the south, but the Lord gave Israel a great victory. Though David and Joab were the conquering leaders

in this battle, it was the Lord who received the glory when David commemorated the victory in Psalm 60. “Over Edom I will cast My shoe” (60:8 NKJV) is a metaphorical expression that may have a dual meaning: (1) God claims Edom as His territory, and (2) God treats Edom like a slave who cleans the master’s shoes. It expresses the humiliation God brought to the proud Edomites whom David conquered.

David also defeated the Amalekites (2 Sam. 8:12), a commission that his predecessor, Saul, had failed to fulfill (1 Sam. 15). From the days of Moses, the Lord had declared war on Amalek (Ex. 17:8–12; Num. 14:45; Deut. 25:17–19), and David was only continuing the crusade. Just as the Lord promised (2 Sam. 7:9), David was victorious over his enemies. David’s reputation increased dramatically because of these victories (v. 13), and David was careful to give God the glory (8:11–12).

Administration in Jerusalem (vv. 15–18).⁵ Winning battles is one thing and managing the affairs of the growing nation is quite another; and here David proved himself capable. He ruled with justice and righteousness and served all the people (v. 15). David described such a leader in 23:1–7 and compared him to the sunrise and the sunlight after rain. Certainly David brought the dawning of a new day to Israel after the darkness of Saul’s reign, and God used David to bring calm after the storm. God loves righteousness and justice (Ps. 33:5) and manifests both as He rules over His universe (Ps. 36:6; 99:4; Isa. 5:16; Jer. 9:24; Amos 5:24). David indeed was a man after God’s own heart.

A good ruler must appoint wise and skilled subordinates, and this David did. David’s nephew Joab had treacherously killed Abner (3:27–39), but David made him head of the army. We know little about Jehoshaphat or his position in David’s government. The “recorder” was probably the officer who kept the records and advised the king as would a secretary of state. He may have been the chairman of the king’s council. The scenario in Isaiah 36 indicates that the

recorder was a person of high rank (see vv. 3, 22).

Zadok and Ahimelech were both serving as priests, for the ark was in Jerusalem and the tabernacle was at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39ff.). Ahimelech the priest was slain by Doeg at Saul's command (1 Sam. 22:6ff.), and his son Abiathar survived the slaughter of the priests at Nob and joined David's band at Keilah (1 Sam. 22:20; 23:6). He accompanied David during his exile years and must have fathered a son whom he named Ahimelech after the boy's martyred grandfather. When he came of age, the boy served with his father and Zadok. You find Zadok and Abiathar working together when the ark was brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15:24, 35) and when Absalom revolted against David (17:15; 19:11–12).

Seriah the scribe ("secretary" ^{NIV}) was also known as Sheva (20:25), Shavsha (1 Chron. 18:16), and Shisha (1 Kings 4:3). The reference in Kings informs us that two of his sons inherited his position. The most remarkable appointment is that of Benaiah, the officer over David's bodyguard and a mighty warrior (2 Sam. 23:20–23), who was a priest (1 Chron. 27:5). In the Old Testament, it wasn't unusual for a priest to become a prophet (e.g., Jeremiah, Ezekiel), but for a priest to become an army officer was unusual. The Cherethites and Pelethites were exceptional mercenaries from other nations who made up David's personal bodyguard. Benaiah became an invaluable aide to Solomon (1 Kings 1:38, 44).

While not all of David's sons proved to be worthy men, he had them serving as officers in his government. It was not only good for them, but it was one way for him to get information concerning what was going on in the nation. The title "chief rulers" ("royal advisers" ^{NIV}) is a translation of the Hebrew word for "priests." Since David belonged to the tribe of Judah, neither he nor his sons could enter the holy precincts of the tabernacle and minister as priests, so the word probably means "confidential advisers." These were men who had access to the king and assisted him in directing the affairs of the kingdom.

3. SHARING GOD'S KINDNESS (9:1–13)

“The kindness of God” is one of two themes in this chapter (vv. 1, 3, 7), and it means the mercy and favor of the Lord to undeserving people. Paul saw the kindness of God in the coming of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross (Titus 3:1–7; Eph. 2:1–9), and we see in David’s dealings with Mephibosheth a picture of God’s kindness to lost sinners. David had promised both Saul and Jonathan that he would not exterminate their descendants when he became king (1 Sam. 20:12–17, 42; 24:21), and in the case of Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth, David not only kept his promise but went above and beyond the call of duty.

The second major theme is the kingship of David. The name “David” is used by itself five times in the chapter; eleven times he’s called “the king,” and once, the two are united in “King David” (v. 5). Nobody in all Israel except David could have shown this kindness to Mephibosheth, because David was the king. He had inherited all that had belonged to King Saul (12:8) and could dispose of it as he saw fit. Surely we have here a picture of the son of David, Jesus Christ, who through His death, resurrection, and ascension has been glorified on the throne of heaven and can now dispense His spiritual riches to needy sinners. The name “David” means “beloved,” and Jesus is God’s beloved Son (Matt. 3:17; 17:5), sent to earth to save lost sinners.

Finding Mephibosheth (vv. 1–4). It’s important to note that David’s motivation for seeking Mephibosheth was not the sad plight of the crippled man but David’s desire to honor Jonathan, the father. He did what he did “for Jonathan’s sake” (1 Sam. 20:11–17). Mephibosheth was five years old when his father died in battle (2 Sam. 4:4), so he was now about twenty-one years old and had a young son of his own (9:12). David couldn’t show any love or kindness to Jonathan, so he looked for one of Jonathan’s relatives to whom he could express his affection. So it is with God’s children: They are called and saved, not because they deserve anything from God, but for the sake of God’s Son, Jesus

Christ (Eph. 1:6; 4:32). God in His grace gives us what we don't deserve, and in His mercy doesn't give us what we do deserve.

David found out where Mephibosheth was living by asking Ziba, who served as an "estate manager" for Saul. Ziba answered David's questions about Mephibosheth, but he turned out to be very deceitful and lied to the king about Mephibosheth when David fled from Absalom (16:1–4) and when David returned to Jerusalem (19:17, 24–30). The combination of David's impulsiveness and Ziba's deceit cost Mephibosheth half his property.

Calling Mephibosheth (vv. 5–8). What were the lame prince's thoughts when the summons came to appear before the king? If he believed what his grandfather had said about David, he would have feared for his life; but if he had listened to what his father told him about David, he would have rejoiced. Someone had to help the young man to the palace, where he fell before David—something difficult for a person with crippled legs—and acknowledged his own unworthiness. The king spoke his name and immediately assured him that there was nothing to fear. David then unofficially adopted Mephibosheth by restoring to him the land that his father, Jonathan, would have inherited from Saul, and then by inviting him to live at the palace and eat at the king's table. David had eaten at Saul's table, and it had nearly cost him his life, but Mephibosheth would eat at David's table and his life would be protected.

The fact that David made the first move to rescue Mephibosheth reminds us that it was God who reached out to us and not we who sought Him. We were estranged from God and enemies of God, yet He loved us and sent His Son to die for us. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8 NKJV). For David to rescue and restore Mephibosheth cost him only the land of Saul, which he had never paid for to begin with; but for God to restore us and bring us into His family, Jesus had to sacrifice His life. Our inheritance is much more than a piece of real estate

on earth: It's an eternal home in heaven!

Enriching Mephibosheth (vv. 9–13). David took him into his own family, provided for him, protected him, and let him eat at his own table. It wouldn't be easy to care for a grown man who was lame in both feet, but David promised to do so. Whereas previously Mephibosheth had Ziba and his fifteen sons and twenty servants working for him (v. 10), now all the resources and authority of the king of Israel were at his disposal. Ziba and his sons and servants would still work the land for Mephibosheth and give him the profits, but those profits would be insignificant compared with the king's wealth. David's words "eat at my table" are found four times in the passage (vv. 7, 10, 11, 13) and indicate that Jonathan's son would be treated like David's son.

Mephibosheth looked upon himself as a "dead dog" (v. 8), and we were dead in our trespasses and sins when Jesus called us and gave us new life (Eph. 2:1–6). We have a higher position than that which David gave Mephibosheth, for we sit *on the throne* with Jesus Christ and reign in life through Him (Rom. 5:17). God gives us the riches of His mercy and grace (Eph. 2:4–7) and "unsearchable riches" in Christ (Eph. 3:8). God supplies all our needs, not out of an earthly king's treasury, but according to "his riches in glory" (Phil. 4:19). Mephibosheth lived the rest of his life in the earthly Jerusalem (2 Sam. 9:13), but God's children today are already citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, where they will dwell forever with the Lord (Heb. 12:22–24).

This touching event in the life of David not only illustrates the believer's spiritual experience in Christ but it also reveals to us that David was indeed a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). He was a shepherd who had a special concern for the lame sheep in the flock.[6](#)

One last fact should be noted: When some of Saul's descendants were chosen to be slain, David protected Mephibosheth from death (21:1–11, especially v. 7). There was another descendant named Mephibosheth (v. 8), but David knew the difference between the two. The spiritual application to

believers today is obvious: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1 NKJV). “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9 NKJV). “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18 NKJV).

Mephibosheth is a difficult name to remember and pronounce, but he reminds us of some wonderful truths about “the kindness of God” shown to us through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

4. DEFENDING GOD’S HONOR (10:1–19; 1 CHRON. 19)

Once again, David wanted to show kindness, but this time his attempt led to war instead of peace. His overtures to his neighbor were misunderstood, and David had to defend his own honor as well as the honor of the Lord and His people.

A public offense (vv. 1–5). King Saul’s first military victory was over Nahash and the Ammonite army when they attacked Jabesh Gilead (1 Sam. 11). Like the Ammonites, the Moabites were descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:30ff.) and therefore relatives of the Jews. How did David become friendly with the Ammonites when his predecessor was at war with them? It probably occurred when David was in exile and appeared to be at war with Saul. During those “outlaw years” (NKJV), David tried to build a network of friendships outside Israel that he hoped would help him when he became king. The phrase “show kindness” can carry the meaning of “make a covenant,”^{[Z](#)} so it may have been David’s desire not only to comfort Hanun but also to make a treaty with him.

David sent a delegation of court officials to Hanun, but immaturity and ignorance triumphed over wisdom and common sense. The inexperienced new king listened to his suspicious advisers and treated David’s men as though they were spies. (Years later, Solomon’s son Rehoboam would make a similar mistake

and follow unwise counsel. See 1 Kings 12.)

Information (v. 3). When God forbids something and calls it sin, we shouldn't try to get more information about it. "I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil" (Rom. 16:19 NKJV). David knew what the law said about adultery, so why did he send to inquire about the woman? ³ Because in his heart, he had already taken possession of her, and now he was anxious to have a rendezvous with her. He learned that Bathsheba was a married woman, and that fact alone should have stopped him from going on with his evil plan. When he found out she was the wife of one of his courageous soldiers who was even then on the battlefield, he should have gone to the tent of meeting, fallen on his face, and cried out to God for mercy. From the brief genealogy given, David should have realized that Bathsheba was plan

Nathan was catching David off guard and could study the king's response and better know what to do next. Since David had been a shepherd himself, he would pay close attention to a story about the theft of an innocent lamb, and as king, he was obligated to see that poor families were given justice.

God directed Nathan to choose his words carefully so that they would remind David of what he had said and done. The prophet said that the ewe lamb “did eat of his [the poor man's] own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom” (v. 3). This should have reminded David of Uriah's speech in 11:11: “Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife?” (NKJV). But it wasn't until Nathan told about the rich man stealing and killing the lamb that David showed any response, and then he was angry at another man's sins. (See 1 Sam. 25:13, 22, 33 for another example of David's anger.) David didn't seem to realize that he was the rich man, Uriah was the poor man, and Bathsheba was the ewe lamb he had stolen. The traveler whom the rich man fed represents the temptation and lust that visited David on the roof and then controlled him. If we open the door, sin comes in as a guest but soon becomes the master. (See Gen. 4:6–7.) David passed judgment on the rich man without realizing he was passing judgment on himself. Of all blindness, the worst kind is that which makes us blind to ourselves. “Many men seem perfect strangers to their own character,” said Joseph Butler, and David was among them.⁵ How easy it is to be convicted about other people's sins (Matt. 7:1–3)! Stealing and killing a domestic animal wasn't a capital offense in Israel, but David was so angry he exaggerated both the crime and the punishment. Until now, he had been minimizing the consequences and doing nothing, when actually what he did to Uriah was worthy of death. Both David and Bathsheba should have been stoned to death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22–24; John 8:1–6). Knowing the law, David realized that four sheep had to be given to repay the owner whose ewe lamb had been stolen (Ex. 22:1).

The verdict (vv. 7–9). The prophet realized that though David was very angry, he was also unguarded and ready for the sword of the Spirit to pierce his heart (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). With one quick thrust, Nathan said, “You are the man!” (2 Sam. 12:7 NKJV) and proceeded to hold up the mirror that revealed how dirty the king really was. Nathan explained to David why he stole Uriah’s little ewe lamb. First, the king forgot the goodness of the Lord who had given him everything he had *and would have given him more* (vv. 7–8). Second, David had despised God’s commandment and acted as though he had the privilege of sinning (v. 9). By coveting, committing adultery, bearing false witness, and killing, David had broken four of the Ten Commandments, *and he thought he could get away with it!* It was bad enough that David arranged to have Uriah killed, but he used the sword of the enemy to do it.

The sentence (vv. 10–12). David’s adultery with Bathsheba was a sin of passion, a sin of the moment that overtook him; but his sin of having Uriah killed was a premeditated crime that was deliberate and disgraceful. This may be why 1 Kings 15:5 emphasizes “the matter of Uriah the Hittite” and says nothing about Bathsheba. But the Lord judged both sins and David paid dearly for his lust and deceit. God repaid David in kind (Deut. 19:21; Ex. 21:23–25; Lev. 24:20), a spiritual principle that David expressed in his “victory psalm” after Saul died (Ps. 18:25–27).

The sword did not depart from the king’s household, and his wives were taken and violated just as he had taken Bathsheba. Indeed David did pay fourfold, for Bathsheba’s baby died, and his sons Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah were slain (2 Sam. 13:29; 18:14–15; 1 Kings 2:25). David’s beautiful daughter, Tamar, was raped by her half brother (2 Sam. 13), and David’s concubines were humiliated publicly by Absalom when he captured the kingdom (16:22). For the rest of David’s lifetime, he experienced one tragedy after another, either in his family or in the kingdom. What a price he paid for those

few minutes of passion with his neighbor's wife!

The punishments God assigned to David were already stated in the covenant God had with Israel and which the king was expected to obey (Lev. 26; Deut. 27—30). If the nation rebelled against God, He would slay their sons in battle (Lev. 26:17; Deut. 28:25–26), take away their children (Lev. 26:22; Deut. 28:18), give their wives to others (Deut. 28:30), and even take Israel out of its land into foreign exile (Deut. 28:63–68). Because of Absalom's rebellion, David was forced to flee Jerusalem and live in the wilderness. But the covenant also included a section on repentance and pardon (Deut. 30; Lev. 26:40ff.), and David took it seriously.

The pardon (vv. 13–14). The condemned prisoner knew that the verdict was true and the sentence was just, so without any argument, he confessed: “I have sinned against the Lord” (v. 13).⁶ Nathan assured David that the Lord had put away his sin. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NKJV). “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Ps. 130:3–4 NKJV).

No wonder David later wrote that the Lord “forgives all your iniquities ... [and] redeems your life from destruction.... As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:3–4, 12 NKJV).

But there was a “however” in Nathan's reply, for though God in His grace had forgiven David's sins, God in His government had to permit David to experience the consequences of those sins, beginning with the death of Bathsheba's baby. All during David's months of silence, he had suffered intensely, as you can detect when you read his two prayers of confession (Ps. 32 and 51). Psalm 32 pictures a sick old man instead of a virile warrior, and Psalm 51 describes a believer who had lost almost everything—his purity, joy, witness, wisdom, and peace—a man who was afraid God would take the Holy Spirit from

him as He had done to Saul. David went through intense emotional and physical pain, but he left behind two prayers that are precious to all believers who have sinned.

Because of Christ's finished work on the cross, God is able to save lost sinners and forgive disobedient saints, and the sooner the lost and the disobedient turn to the Lord and repent, the better off they will be. David wrote, "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found" (Ps. 32:5–6 NKJV). "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isa. 55:6 NKJV).

5. THE CHASTENING (12:15–23) Chastening is not punishment meted out by an angry judge who wants to uphold the law; rather, it's difficulty permitted by a loving Father who wants His children to submit to His will and develop godly character. Chastening is an expression of God's love (Prov. 3:11–12), and the Greek word used in Hebrews 12:5–13 means "child training, instruction, discipline." Greek boys were taken to the gymnasium early in life and taught running, wrestling, boxing, swimming, and throwing exercises that were assigned so the boys would develop a sound mind in a sound body. In the Christian life, chastening isn't always God's response to our disobedience; sometimes He's preparing us for challenges yet to come, like a coach preparing athletes for the Olympics. If there were no painful consequences to sin or subsequent chastening from the hand of God, what kind of an irresponsible world would we be living in?

Bathsheba delivered the son that Nathan had predicted would die, but David still fasted and prayed and asked God for healing for the child. The Lord didn't

interrupt David's prayers and tell him to stop interceding; after all the sins David had committed, it didn't hurt him to spend the day in prayer. During those months of silence and separation from God, David had a lot to catch up on. The baby lived only a week, and the parents weren't able to circumcise and name their son on the eighth day. Their son Solomon ended up with two names (vv. 24–25), but thj~~sz~~mon*t

family members present.

But during those two years, Absalom had perfected his plan and made arrangements for escape. His father, David, had arranged for the murder of Uriah the Hittite and had survived, so why shouldn't his son Absalom survive? Like his father, Absalom used other hands to do the deed, and at a time when the victim least expected it. David had made Uriah drunk but had failed to achieve his purpose, while Absalom made his brother drunk and accomplished what he had set out to do. Absalom followed his father's evil example and committed premeditated murder.

When Absalom gave the command and his servants killed Amnon, the princes at the feast fled for their lives, no doubt convinced that Absalom was planning to wipe out the royal family and take

However, these limitations didn't hinder the expansion of Absalom's popularity, for the people loved and praised him. The fact that he had plotted the murder of his half brother and had proved his guilt by running away meant very little to the people, for people must have their idols, and what better idol than a young handsome prince? Lack of character was unimportant; what really mattered was status, wealth, and good looks.¹⁰ In contemporary language, Absalom was a he-man, someone with machismo, and the people envied and admired him. Times have not changed.

Whatever Absalom may have had, one thing he didn't have was a large number of sons to carry on his famous name. The three sons mentioned in verse 27 must have died very young, because 18:18 informs us that Absalom had no sons living at that time. We aren't surprised that he named his daughter after his sister Tamar. Always the egotist, Absalom erected a pillar to remind everybody of his greatness.

Joab brings Absalom to the king (vv. 28–33). A deceptive “wise woman” could see the king's face, but the king's own son was banished from his presence. Absalom put up with this arrangement for two years, trusting that Joab would bring about reconciliation between himself and his father, but Joab did nothing. Absalom knew that being banished from the king's presence meant he wasn't expected to be heir to the throne, and more than anything else, Absalom wanted to be king of Israel. A shrewd man like Joab must have realized that Absalom had designs on the throne and that the prince's growing popularity could provide him the support he needed to take over the kingdom. Knowing how volatile the situation was, the discerning general stayed away from Absalom lest he give the impression he was being controlled by the egotistical prince.

After two years of waiting, during which he had summoned Joab twice and been ignored, Absalom decided that drastic action was necessary. He commanded his servants to set fire to his neighbor's barley crop, and his neighbor happened to be Joab.¹¹ This got the general's attention, for the law

required that an arsonist repay the owner of a field whose crop he had destroyed (Ex. 22:6). People knew about the fire, so Joab could visit Absalom without fear of being misunderstood.

Absalom presented Joab with two alternatives: either take him to the king and let him receive his son and forgive him, or take him to court and prove that he was guilty of a capital crime and deserved to die. Absalom would rather be slain than go on living in shameful house arrest. Joab was on the horns of a dilemma, for it was he who had masterminded Absalom's return to Jerusalem. Joab knew that the people would never permit their favorite royal personage to be tried and convicted of a crime, but how could Joab guarantee that the king would be reconciled to his son? Joab gave Absalom's message to David, and David invited his son to come to see him and received him with a kiss of reconciliation. Father and son were together after five years of separation (13:38; 14:28).

There is no record that Absalom was repentant and sought his father's forgiveness, or that he visited the temple and offered the required sacrifices. Father and son were together again, but it was a fragile truce and not a real peace. Absalom still had his hidden agenda and was determined to seize David's throne. Now that the prince was free, he could be visible in the city and enjoy the adulation of the crowds, while at the same time quietly organizing his sympathizers for the coming rebellion. David was about to lose his throne and crown, his concubines, his trusted adviser Ahithophel, and ultimately his son Absalom. It would be the darkest hour in David's life.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Why do you suppose many parents have trouble responding well to their children's sins?
2. How did David respond as he faced the problems brought on by his children?
3. When a person feels attraction to someone who is off-limits (as Amnon experienced), what should he or she do about it? What did Amnon do?
4. In what way might David's bad example have influenced Amnon?
5. How did this rape ruin Tamar's life?
6. Why didn't David or Absalom immediately confront or punish Amnon?
7. What part of David's bad example might have influenced Absalom in his act of revenge?
8. Why is revenge never the solution? In what ways is Jesus the perfect example for us regarding revenge?
9. How did David compromise between Absalom's exile and full reconciliation?

How did Absalom feel about this arrangement?

10. David's decision about Absalom was complex. What should he have done? Why?

11. What complex family situation do you need the Lord's help to deal with well?

Chapter Seven

David's Escape to the Wilderness

(2 Samuel 15:1—16:14)

It's one thing to experience God's power when you're facing giants or fighting armies, and quite something else when you're watching people tear your world apart. God was chastening David, but David knew that God's power could help him in the hour of pain as well as in the hour of conquest. He wrote in one of his exile psalms, "Many are they who say of me, 'There is no help for him in God.' But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head" (Ps. 3:2–3 NKJV).

David recognized that God's loving hand of discipline was upon him, and he admitted that he deserved every blow. But he also believed that God's gracious hand of power was still at work in his life, that the Lord hadn't forsaken him as He forsook Saul. The Lord was still working out His perfect will, and never did David rise to greater heights of faith and submission than when he was forced to leave Jerusalem and hide in the wilderness.

The passage introduces us to three kings.

1. ABSALOM—ISRAEL'S COUNTERFEIT KING (15:1–12) If ever a man was equipped to be a demagogue¹ and lead people astray, that

man was Absalom. He was a handsome man whose charm was difficult to resist (14:25–26), and he had royal blood in his veins from both his father and his mother. The fact that he had no character wasn’t important to most of the people who, like sheep, would follow anybody who told them what they wanted to hear and gave them what they wanted to have. Newspaper editor H. L. Mencken’s definition of a demagogue is rather extreme, but he gets the point across: “One who preaches doctrines he knows to be untrue to men he knows to be idiots.” Novelist James Fenimore Cooper expressed it accurately: “One who advances his own interests by affecting a deep devotion to the interests of the people.”

Absalom was not only a consummate liar, but he was a patient man who was able to discern just the right hour to act. He waited two years before having Amnon murdered (13:23), and now he waited four years before openly rebelling against his father and seizing the throne (v. 7).² When you read the “exile psalms” of David, you get the impression that at this time King David was ill and didn’t have his hands on the affairs of the kingdom, thus giving Absalom opportunity to move in and take over.³ With great skill, the egotistical prince used every device at his disposal to mesmerize the people and win their support. David had won the hearts of the people through sacrifice and service, but Absalom did it the easy way—and the modern way—by manufacturing an image of himself that the people couldn’t resist. David was a hero; Absalom was only a celebrity. Alas, many of the people had gotten accustomed to their king and now took him for granted.

Absalom’s campaign must have begun shortly after his reconciliation with his father, for now he was free to go wherever he pleased. His first move was to begin riding in a chariot pulled by horses and accompanied by fifty men who were his bodyguard and who announced his presence. The prophet Samuel had

predicted this kind of behavior by Israel's kings (1 Sam. 8:11), and Moses had warned against the acquisition of horses (Deut. 17:16). David wrote in Psalm 20:7 (NKJV), "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

Since David wasn't available to the people, Absalom met them personally on the road to the city gate when they came early each morning to have their grievances examined and their cases tried. The city gate was the "city hall" of the ancient cities (Ruth 4:1ff.; Gen. 23:10; Deut. 22:15; 25:7), and he knew there would be many disgruntled people there wondering why the court system wasn't functioning efficiently. (See 2 Sam. 19:1–8.) .

had followed Ahithophel's plan, David would have been slain and Absalom's problems solved. But David had prayed that God would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness (15:31), and God used Hushai to do just that. Note that Ahithophel put himself front and center by using phrases like "Let me now choose ... I will arise ... I will come ..." and so on. He wanted to be the general of the army because he wanted personally to supervise the murder of his enemy King David. His plan was a good one: use a small army that could move swiftly, attack suddenly at night, and have David's death as the one great goal. Ahithophel would then bring back David's followers, and they would swear loyalty to the new king. It would be a quick victory, and very little blood would be shed.

Hushai wasn't in the room when Ahithophel outlined his plan, so Absalom called him in and told him what his favorite counselor had said. Directed by the Lord, Hushai took an entirely different approach and focused on the ego of the young king. Hushai's reply isn't a series of "I will" statements about himself but rather a series of statements about the new king that couldn't help but ignite Absalom's imagination and inflate his ego. Hushai laid an effective verbal trap, and Absalom fell into it.

First, Hushai explained why Ahithophel's counsel wasn't wise "at this time," although it had been wise at other times (vv. 7–10). As for focusing only on the murder of David, Absalom knew that his father was a great tactician and a mighty warrior, surrounded by experienced soldiers who feared nothing. All of them were angry because they'd been driven from their homes. They were like a bear robbed of her cubs. (Hushai is a master of metaphor!) Furthermore, David was too smart to stay with the troops; he would hide in a safe place where he couldn't be trapped. His men would be on guard, and would set ambushes and kill anybody who came near. David's army was too experienced in war to be unprepared for a sudden attack. A sudden attack by a small army would not work. If the invading army were repulsed, word would spread that Absalom's

forces had been defeated, and then all his men would flee. Absalom would then begin and end his reign with a military disaster.

Then Hushai presented a plan that overcame all these difficulties. First, the new king himself must lead the army, and it must be the biggest army he could assemble “from Dan to Beersheba” (NKJV). This suggestion appealed to Absalom’s inflated ego, and in his imagination he could see himself leading the army to a great victory. Of course, he wasn’t a seasoned military man, but what difference did that make? What a way to begin his reign! Absalom didn’t stop to consider that it would take time to gather his forces “from Dan to Beersheba,” time that David could use to cross the Jordan River and get away. Hushai, of course, was interested in buying time for David so he could get away.

With such a large army at his command, Absalom didn’t have to depend on a difficult surprise attack, but could “fall on” David’s men over a wide area, like the morning dew that falls on the ground. Wherever David’s men fled, they would see Absalom’s forces, and there would be no escape. Instead of sparing David’s forces, Absalom’s army would wipe them out, so they couldn’t cause trouble in the future. Realizing that Absalom might be worried about the time element, Hushai answered his objections in verse 13. If during the delay in rounding up his troops Absalom heard that David had taken his men into a walled city, the task would be even easier. The whole nation would obey their new king and work together taking the city apart, stone by stone! What a demonstration of power!

Ahithophel’s matter-of-fact speech was forgotten as Hushai’s grand plan, punctuated with vivid mental pictures, gripped the hearts and minds of Absalom and his leaders. God had answered David’s prayer and confused the counsel of Ahithophel. Absalom would ride at the front of his army, intent on victory, but he would meet with humiliating defeat. “The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel

of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations” (Ps. 33:10–11 NKJV).

David’s spy system worked (vv. 15–22). David and his people were camped at the fords of the Jordan, about twenty miles from Jerusalem, and the two runners were waiting at En Rogel in the Kidron Valley, less than a mile from Jerusalem. Hushai gave the message to the two priests and told them to tell David to cross over the Jordan as quickly as possible. He was not to delay. If Absalom changed his mind and adopted Ahithophel’s plan, then all might be lost. Zadok and Abiathar told an anonymous maidservant; she took the message to Jonathan and Ahimaaz, who immediately ran a mile south to the house of a collaborator in Bahurim. However, a young man saw them leave and recognized the priests’ sons. Wanting to impress the new king, he told Absalom what was happening, and Absalom’s guards started out after the two young men.

At this point, the account reads like the story of the two spies recorded in Joshua 2. Rahab hid the two spies under stalks of flax on the roof of her house. The wife in Bahurim hid the two runners in a cistern, covered the opening with a cloth, and sprinkled grain on the cloth. The cloth looked like it was there to provide a place to dry grain in the sun. Not obligated to assist Absalom in his evil plans, the woman sent the guards off in the wrong direction, and the young men were saved. They arrived at David’s camp, gave the king the facts, and urged him to cross the Jordan immediately, which he did. The guards returned to Jerusalem empty-handed, but Absalom didn’t see their failure as a serious problem. How wrong he was!

Ahithophel took his own life (v. 23). Why? Was it because Absalom hurt his feelings by rejecting his counsel? No, it was because he knew that Hushai’s counsel would bring about Absalom’s defeat, and Ahithophel was serving the wrong king. As a traitor against King David, Ahithophel would either be slain or banished forever from the kingdom. Rather than humiliate himself and his

family in his death, he put his affairs in order and hanged himself. His suicide reminds us of what Judas did (Matt. 27:5) and points to what David had written in two of his wilderness psalms (Ps. 41:9; 55:12–15; see John 13:18). In Acts 1:15–22, Peter referred to two other psalms that concerned Judas (Ps. 109:8).

Ahithophel had been a faithful servant of the king and the kingdom until he determined in his heart to get vengeance on David for what he did to Bathsheba and Uriah. This desire for revenge so obsessed him that he ceased to be a servant of the Lord and began to serve his own sinful desires. He knew of Absalom's ambitions but kept them hidden from David, and he cooperated with the crown prince in the palace coup. But with all of his wisdom, Ahithophel was supporting the wrong king, and the Lord had to judge him. Both Ahithophel and Absalom ended up hanging from a tree. How tragic it is when a man or woman leads an exemplary and useful life and then fails dishonorably at the end. There are old fools as well as young fools, and Ahithophel was one of the old fools. All of us need to pray that the Lord will help us to end well.

Friends cared for David (vv. 24–29). David and his party forded the river and came to Mahanaim, the former capital of the ten tribes when Saul's son Ish-Bosheth was king (2:8). It was at Mahanaim ("two camps, two hosts") that Jacob saw the army of angels God had sent to protect him (Gen. 32), but David had no such vision. However, God often uses human "angels" to help His servants, and this time it was Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai. They brought provisions for the king and his people and saw to it that they were adequately cared for. God prepared a table for David as his enemies were approaching (Ps. 23:5).

Absalom's army was commanded by Amasa, who was David's nephew and Joab's cousin (v. 25). Of course, Absalom was commander in chief. How sad that son was fighting against father, uncle against nephew, cousin against cousin, and citizen against citizen. War is bad enough, but a civil war makes an even worse war. Absalom and his men crossed the Jordan, intending to meet David's army somewhere near the forest of Ephraim, about three miles northwest of

Mahanaim. The forest of Ephraim was probably named by some Ephraimites who crossed the river and settled on the western side in the region of Gilead.

DAVID'S SON WAS SLAIN (18:1–18) Knowing that the enemy was soon to arrive, David numbered his troops, divided them into three companies, and placed Joab, Abishai, and Ittai as their commanders. Whatever approach Absalom and Amasa used, David's men would be able to maneuver and help each other. David offered to accompany the army, but the people told him to stay in a place of safety in the walled city. (See 21:15–17, which occurred long before Absalom's rebellion.) "There are ten thousand of us but only one of you!" they argued. They knew that Absalom's soldiers would go after the king and not worry about the soldiers. If David stayed in the city, he could send out reinforcements if they were needed. David accepted their decisions; he didn't want to fight his son anyway.

But neither did he want the army to

Jerusalem, and instead of rejoicing at the victory God had given His people, the tribes were fighting among themselves. The “men of Israel” were the ten northern tribes, and they were angry at the southern tribe of Judah, which had also absorbed the tribe of Simeon. Israel was angry because Judah had not waited for them to arrive on the scene to help take David home. Judah had “kidnapped” the king and had ignored and insulted the other ten tribes. Judah replied that David was from their tribe, so they had the greater responsibility to care for him. Israel argued that they had ten shares in David but Judah had only two, as though the king were some kind of security on the stock market. Apparently nobody urged the tribes to call on Jehovah for His help and to remember that Gilgal was the place where Israel had made a new beginning in Joshua’s day (Josh. 3—5).

The conflict between Judah and Israel had deep roots, just like the political conflicts that divide many nations today. When King Saul assembled his first army, it was divided between Israel and Judah (1 Sam. 11:8), and this division continued throughout his reign (15:4; 17:52; 18:16). After the death of Saul, the ten tribes of Israel followed Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth, while Judah followed David (2 Sam. 2:10–11). Judah, of course, was obeying the will of God, for the Lord had named David as the nation’s next king. This tribal rivalry existed even in David’s day (11:11; 12:8). “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation,” said Jesus, “and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matt. 12:25). When Rehoboam became king after the death of Solomon, his father, the rift widened, and the kingdom divided into Judah and Israel.

All it takes to light the fires of conflict is a speech from a would-be leader, and Sheba was that leader. Being a Benjamite, he favored the house of Saul, and he was probably an officer in the northern army. If the ten tribes seceded from the kingdom, perhaps he could become commander of their army. Sheba didn’t declare war; all he did was dismiss the army and the citizens who came from the northern tribes and tell them not to follow David any longer. But in essence it

was a declaration of war, for Sheba marched through the northern tribes trying to gather a following (2 Sam. 20:14). It appears that not many people responded, and Sheba and his followers ended up in the walled city of Abel.

Joab again took command of David's troops and followed Sheba to Abel, surrounded the city, and began to lay siege to it. For the third time in the "David story," a woman changes the course of events. Abigail was the first (1 Sam. 25), and the woman of Tekoa was the second (2 Sam. 14). The wise woman called to Joab from the wall and assured him that her city was not in league with any rebels and therefore didn't deserve to be attacked. Perhaps she was thinking about the law in Deuteronomy 20:10–16 requiring that a city first be given an offer of peace before it was attacked. When Joab explained that it was only Sheba he was after, she persuaded the citizens to kill the rebel leader and save the city. However, Sheba wasn't a scapegoat; as a rebel against the king, he deserved to be slain. Sheba wanted to be head of the army, but instead, his head was thrown over the wall to the army.

The chapter closes with a second listing of David's officers (8:15–18), and two new officers are added: Adoram (or Adoniram) was in charge of the forced labor, and Ira the Jairite served as David's chaplain. The forced labor was done by prisoners of war, but Israelites were occasionally conscripted to assist with government building projects. During Solomon's reign and after, the officer in charge of these labor projects didn't have an easy time of it (1 Kings 4:6; 5:14; 12:18ff.; 2 Chron. 10:18–19).

Now we must back up a bit to discover how Joab regained the command of David's army.

2. PERSONAL CONFLICT (20:4–13)

When David heard about Sheba's call to rebellion, he immediately sent word to Amasa, his new commander (19:13), to gather the troops within three days and

come to Jerusalem. An experienced strategist, David knew that insurrection had to be nipped in the bud or it would gain momentum among the dissatisfied people in the land, and this could lead to another war. Thousands of David's subjects had been willing to follow Absalom, and it seemed that the ten northern tribes were ready to follow anybody.

But Amasa didn't show up with the army within the three allotted days, and David gave the command of the army to Abishai. Amasa had been commander of Absalom's army, so perhaps David was afraid he had turned traitor and joined up with Sheba. The most logical explanation for Amasa's delay was that the men didn't trust him and were unwilling to follow him and risk their lives. Taking Joab's officers and David's mighty men with him, Abishai quickly assembled the army of Judah and headed north to stop Sheba. Imagine their surprise when they met Amasa and his army at the great rock in Gibeon, about six miles northwest of Jerusalem. Amasa was on his way to report to David and get his orders.

Though he had no official position, Joab went along with his brother Abishai to help in any way that he could. The two men had fought together in the battle of the forest of Ephraim and defeated Absalom. Joab had no love for Amasa, who had betrayed David and led Absalom's army (17:25). Furthermore, it was Amasa who took Joab's place as commander of the troops, an appointment that must have humiliated Joab. (David made that change because it was Joab who killed Absalom.) Joab knew that he and his brother Abishai could deal successfully with Sheba's revolt but that Amasa was too weak and inexperienced to lead a victorious army.

As when they murdered Abner (3:27–39), Joab and Abishai must have quickly plotted together when they saw Amasa approaching. Joab had killed Abner¹ and Absalom, so his hands were already stained with blood. The trick with the sword gave Amasa the idea that this was just a casual meeting, but it was Joab's crafty way of catching Amasa off guard. (See Judg. 3:20–23.) Once more, the sword was at work in David's household, for Amasa was his cousin.

There was no reason why Amasa should be killed. True, he had joined forces with Absalom, but David had declared a general amnesty that included Joab, who had killed Absalom. Joab could have easily taken the command away from Amasa, but the old campaigner was of such a disposition that he preferred to destroy those who stood in his way. He wanted none of Absalom's leaders to live and create more problems for David.

Joab left Amasa lying in a pool of blood on the highway, a sight that brought the marching army to a halt. Here was their commander dead before the battle had even begun! Joab and Abishai took off after Sheba, but the army wasn't following. It was what we call today "a gaper's block." One of Joab's men was wise enough to move the corpse to the side of the highway and cover it up. Then he rallied Amasa's troops to support Joab and David, and the soldiers responded. The politically correct thing to say would have been "David and Abishai," because David had given the command to Abishai, but Joab had taken back his old position and wouldn't let it go (v. 23). Once again, David had to give in to Joab's power tactics.

We trust that somebody buried the body, for it was considered a serious thing in Israel for a body not to have proper burial.

3. ETHNIC CONFLICT (21:1–14)

The book closes with a record of two national calamities—a drought caused by King Saul's sin (21:1–14) and a plague caused by King David's sin (24:1–25). Between these two tragic events, the writer gives us a summary of four victories (21:15–22) and a list of David's mighty men (23:8–39), as well as two psalms written by David (22:1–23:7). Once again we see David the soldier, the singer, and the sinner.

Sin (vv. 1–4). Nowhere in Scripture are we told when or why Saul slaughtered the Gibeonites and thus broke the vow that Israel had made with

them in Joshua's day (Josh. 9). Joshua tried to make the best of his mistake, because he put the Gibeonites to work as woodcutters and water carriers, but Israel's vow obligated them before God to protect the Gibeonites (Josh. 10). Saul killed several Gibeonites but intended to wipe them all out, so it was a case of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Saul's religious life is a puzzle. Attempting to appear very godly, he would make foolish vows that nobody should keep (1 Sam. 14:24–35), while at the same time he didn't obey the clear commands of the Lord (1 Sam. 13, 15). He was commanded to slay the Amalekites and didn't, yet he tried to exterminate the Gibeonites. Another piece of the puzzle is that Jeiel, Saul's great-grandfather, was the progenitor of the Gibeonites (1 Chron. 8:29–33; 9:35–39), so Saul slaughtered his own relatives.

Gibeon became a Levitical city (Josh. 21:17), and the tabernacle was there at one time (1 Kings 3:4–5). The city was located in the tribe of Benjamin—Saul's tribe—and perhaps that is a clue to Saul's behavior. It was bad enough to have the pagan Gibeonites alive and well in the land of Israel, but did they have to reside in Benjamin? One of Saul's leadership tactics was to reward his men with houses and lands (1 Sam. 22:7), and perhaps to do this, he confiscated property from the Gibeonites. Whatever his motive and method, Saul in his grave brought judgment on the people of Israel as the drought and famine continued for three years (2 Sam. 21:1).

The first year of drought might have been caused by some unexpected change in the weather, and during the second year people would say, "It's bound to improve." But when for the third year the land suffered drought and famine, David sought the face of the Lord. It was written in the Lord's covenant with Israel that He would send the rain to the land if His people would honor and obey Him (Deut. 28:1–14). David knew that the sin of murder would pollute the land (Num. 35:30–34), and that's exactly what was causing all the trouble. Perhaps through his prophet Nathan or his chaplain Ira, the Lord said to David,

“It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites” (2 Sam. 21:1 NKJV). Saul had been dead for over thirty years, and the Lord had patiently waited for this sin to be dealt with.²

Retribution (vv. 5–9). When he learned the facts, David immediately offered to make restitution for the terrible sins of his predecessor, because he wanted the Gibeonites to be able to bless the people of Israel and thereby enjoy God’s blessing (Gen. 12:1–3). But the Gibeonites didn’t want money; they knew that no amount of money could ransom a murderer or recompense the survivors (Num. 35:31–33). The Gibeonites made it clear that they knew their place in Israel as servants and resident aliens, and they had no right to press their case.³ But it would take the shedding of blood to atone for the Gibeonite blood that had been shed (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:19–21; Deut. 19:21). The nation was suffering because of Saul’s sins, and if David killed just any man, that wouldn’t solve the problem. The Gibeonites asked that seven of Saul’s male descendants be sacrificed before the Lord, and this would end the drought and famine.

David knew that the Jews were forbidden to offer human sacrifices (Lev. 18:21; 20:1–5; Deut. 12:29–32; 18:10), nor did he see the deaths of the seven men as sacrifices with atoning value. We today who have the New Testament and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ view this entire episode with mingled disgust and dismay, but we must keep in mind that we’re dealing with law, not grace, and Israel, not the church. The law of Moses required that an unsolved murder be atoned for by sacrifice (Deut. 21:1–9), so how much more a known slaughter perpetrated by a king! However, we must keep in mind that the death of the seven men was not atonement but legal retribution.

Though David didn’t commit the crime, he had to choose the seven men who would die, and that wasn’t an easy thing to do. (Perhaps David thought about those who had died because of his sin—Bathsheba’s baby, Uriah the Hittite, Amnon, Absalom and Amasa.) Because of his vow to Jonathan to protect his

descendants (1 Sam. 20:12–17),⁴ the king avoided naming Mephibosheth and chose two sons of Saul’s concubine Rizpah as well as five sons of Saul’s daughter Merab, who was married to Adriel (v. 8 NIV).⁵ We aren’t told how the seven men were executed, although “fell together” (v. 9) suggests they were pushed off a cliff. This happened during barley harvest in the middle of April, and the seven corpses were exposed for about six months, until the rains arrived and the drought ended in October. To hang up a corpse was to disgrace the person and put him under a curse (Deut. 21:22–23).

Compassion (vv. 10–14). The law required exposed bodies to be taken down by sundown and buried. To be sure that Saul’s crime was sufficiently dealt with, David allowed the bodies to remain exposed until the rains came, signifying that the Lord was blessing His people again. During that time Rizpah protected the bodies of her sons and nephews, an act of love and courage. It was Rizpah who was involved when Abner abandoned the house of Saul and joined with David (3:6–12).

But David went a step further. He had the bones gathered up, along with the bones of Saul and his sons that the men of Jabesh Gilead had interred (1 Sam. 31), and brought the whole family together in their family tomb (2 Sam. 21:12–14). To have proper burial with one’s ancestors was the desire of every Israelite, and David granted this blessing to Saul and his family. Whatever questions remain concerning this unusual event, this much is true: One man’s sins can bring sorrow and death to his family, even after he is dead and buried. We must also give credit to David for dealing drastically with sin for the sake of the nation, and yet for showing kindness to the house of Saul.

4. NATIONAL CONFLICT (21:15–22; 1 CHRON. 20:4–8)

These four conflicts took place much earlier in David’s reign, probably after he made Jerusalem his capital and the Philistines opposed his rise to power. All four

involve descendants of the giants⁶ from Philistia, one of whom was a brother of Goliath (v. 19).

In the first conflict (vv. 15–17), David fought so much that he grew faint, because the Philistines would focus on him rather than the other soldiers. Ishbi-benob wanted to slay David and had a bronze spear that weighed seven and a half pounds. However David's nephew Abishai, who more than once irritated David, came to the king's rescue and killed the giant. It was then that the military leaders decided the king was too vulnerable and valuable to be sacrificed on the battlefield. The king was the “lamp of Israel” and had to be protected. (See 1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 2 Chron. 21:7.)

The second contest with the Philistines (2 Sam. 21:18; 1 Chron. 20:4) took place at Gob, a site we can't locate with any accuracy, where Israel won the battle because one of David's mighty men killed the giant. (See 1 Chron. 11:29.) The fact that the names of these giants were preserved shows that they were well-known warriors.

The third conflict with the Philistines (2 Sam. 21:19) was again at Gob, and this time the brother of Goliath (1 Chron. 20:5) is the giant that was slain. We know little about Elhanan except that he came from Bethlehem and was one of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23:24).

The fourth battle took place in Gath in enemy territory (vv. 20–22; 1 Chron. 20:6–8), and David's nephew Jonathan killed the giant who had, like Goliath, defied Israel and Israel's God. (See 1 Sam. 17:10.)

When as a youth David killed Goliath, he certainly gave the men of Israel a good example of what it means to trust God for victory. It's good to know how to kill giants yourself, but be sure to help others kill the giants in their lives.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How do you typically deal with conflict or potential conflict?
2. What four conflicts did David still need to deal with after Absalom's death?
3. A crisis can bring out the best or worst in people. What does a crisis bring out in you? What makes the difference?
4. What did Sheba say that lit the fires of conflict?
5. How did the woman of Abel act wisely to save the city?
6. What led to the meeting of Amasa with Joab and Abishai? Why did Joab kill Amasa?
7. What legal retribution did the Gibeonites ask for the sins of Saul? How should we evaluate the rightness or wrongness of this demand?
8. How did the Lord respond after the seven men were killed?

9. How did Rizpah, in her grief, show love and courage?

10. What can we learn from this episode about the Gibeonites, David, and the descendants of Saul?

Chapter Eleven

David's Song of Victory

(2 Samuel 22)
(See also Psalm 18)

First Samuel 2 records the song Hannah sang when she brought her son Samuel to serve the Lord at the tabernacle, and 2 Samuel 22 records the song of David after the Lord helped him defeat his enemies (v. 1; Ps. 18). How significant that two books full of burdens and bloodshed are bracketed by praise! No matter how dark the days or how painful the memories, we can always praise the Lord.

In this song, David offered thanks to the Lord for the many victories He had given him and for the gracious way He had worked to bring him to the throne of Israel. Note that Saul is not included among David's enemies, for no matter what Saul did to him, David never treated Saul like an enemy. It's likely that 2 Samuel 22 is the original version, but when the song was adapted for corporate worship, David wrote a new opening: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength" (Ps. 18:1). The Hebrew word used here for "love" means "a deep and fervent love," not just a passing emotion. He also deleted from verse 3 "my savior; thou savest me from violence." There are other differences, but they do not deter us from grasping the glorious message of this song of praise.

It's unlikely that this song was written just after the defeat of Saul and the beginning of David's reign in Hebron. From verse 51 we infer that David wrote this psalm after God made His dynastic covenant with him (2 Sam. 7) and gave him the victories recorded in 2 Samuel 8 and 10. We further infer from Psalm 18:20–27 that he wrote the psalm before his terrible sins in connection with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11—12), for he could never have written Psalm 18:20–27 after that sad episode.

The emphasis in this psalm is on what the Lord in His grace and mercy did for David.

THE LORD DELIVERED DAVID (22:1–19)

“Deliver” is a key word in this song (vv. 1, 2, 18, 20, 44, 49), and it carries with it the meanings of “drawing out of danger, snatching, taking away, allowing to escape.” For at least ten years before he became king, David was pursued by Saul and his army, and the record shows that Saul tried to kill David at least five times. (See 1 Sam. 18:10–11; 19:8–24.) After he became king, David had to wage war against the Philistines, the Ammonites, the Syrians, the Moabites, and the Edomites, and God enabled him to triumph over all his enemies.

David began by praising the Lord for who He is—a rock, a fortress, and a deliverer (2 Sam. 22:2)—images that certainly came out of David's years in the wilderness when he and his men hid in caves and natural fortresses. “God is my rock” (v. 3 NIV) can be translated, “My rock-like God.” The image of the Lord “the rock” goes back to Genesis 49:24 and is used often in “The Song of Moses” in Deuteronomy 32 (vv. 4, 15, 18, 30–31). Hannah used it in her song (1 Sam. 2:2), and it's found frequently in the psalms. A rock reminds us of strength and stability, that which is dependable and unchanging. No matter how David's enemies tried to destroy him, he was always guided and protected by the Lord. God was a shield around him and a deliverer in every time of danger.

The image of the rock gives way to the image of the flood (2 Sam. 22:4–7), and this leads to the vivid picture of the storm (vv. 8–20). While he was exiled in the wilderness, David certainly saw many rainstorms (see Ps. 29) that transformed the dry riverbeds into raging torrents (Ps. 126:4). No matter what the season, David was constantly fighting the strong currents of Saul’s opposition. Waves of death, floods of ungodly men, the cords of sheol (the land of the dead), and the hidden traps of death all made David’s life difficult and dangerous. No wonder he told Jonathan, “There is but a step between me and death” (1 Sam. 20:3 NKJV).

What do you do when you’re drowning in a flood of opposition? *You call on the Lord and trust Him for the help you need* (2 Sam. 22:7). David was a man of prayer who depended on the Lord for wisdom, strength, and deliverance, and the Lord never failed him. Why did God wait all those years before delivering David and putting him on the throne? For one thing, the Lord was building himself a leader, and this could be done only by means of trial, suffering, and battle. But the Lord also had His own timetable, for “when the fullness of the time had come” (Gal. 4:4 NKJV), out of David’s family the Messiah would come to the world.

When the Lord answered David’s cries and delivered him from Saul and the enemies of the people of God, it was like a great thunderstorm being released over the land (2 Sam. 22:8–20). David describes God’s intervention as an earthquake (v. 8) followed by lightning, fire, and smoke (v. 9). The Lord was angry! (See Ps. 74:1; 140:10.) Against the background of the black sky, the Lord swooped down on a cloud propelled by the cherubim.¹ The storm raged! In Scripture, a storm can picture an advancing army (Ezek. 38:9; Dan. 11:40; Hab. 3:14) or the judgment of God (Jer. 11:16; 23:19; 25:32). God’s arrows were like the lightning, His voice like the thunder, and the wind like the angry breath of His nostrils. No wonder His enemies fled in terror! David didn’t see himself as a

great commander who led a victorious army, but as God's servant who trusted Jehovah to win the victory. He gave all the glory to the Lord. God not only "came down" (2 Sam. 22:10), but He "reached down" and plucked David out of the dangerous waters.

THE LORD REWARDED DAVID (22:20–28) For at least ten years, David had been in tight places, but now the Lord had brought him out "into a spacious place" (v. 20 NIV). God could give him a larger place because David had been enlarged in his own life through his experiences of trial and testing. "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress" (Ps. 4:1). David had often cried out, "The troubles of my heart are enlarged," but at the same time, God was enlarging His servant and preparing him for a bigger place (Ps. 18:19, 36). "I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place" (Ps. 118:5 NKJV). In the school of life, God promotes those who, in times of difficulty, learn the lessons of faith and patience (Heb. 6:12), and David had learned his lessons well.

David's righteousness (vv. 21–25). A superficial reading of these verses might lead us to believe that David was bragging about himself, but this isn't the case at all. David was praising the Lord for enabling him to live a blameless life in dangerous and uncomfortable situations. Just think of how difficult it would be to keep the law of the Lord in the Judean wilderness while fleeing for your life! In all that he did, David sought to please the Lord, obey His law, and trust His promises. These verses describe David as a man of integrity (see Ps. 78:72), a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). David knew and claimed God's covenant promises and the Lord honored him. King Saul violated the terms of the covenant, and the Lord judged him.

This doesn't mean that David was spotless and always did the right thing. He had his days of despair when he fled to the enemy for help, but these were incidents in a life that was otherwise wholly devoted to the Lord. David honored only the Lord and never turned to idols. He did not dishonor the name of the Lord; he was careful to love and protect his parents (1 Sam. 22:1–4); and when he had opportunities to slay Saul, David refused to touch the Lord's anointed and commit murder. There is no evidence that during his battle years David was a thief, an adulterer, or a false witness against others. (Actually, it was Saul and his men who lied about David.) David was a generous man who didn't cultivate a covetous heart. We don't know how David honored the Sabbath when he was away from the covenant community, but there's no reason to believe that he broke the fourth commandment. Measured by the righteousness of the law, David was a man with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. 24:3–6), and he received his reward from the Lord.

The Lord's faithfulness (vv. 26–28). The Lord never violates His own attributes. God deals with people according to their attitudes and their actions. David was merciful to Saul and spared his life on at least two occasions, and the Lord was merciful to David. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). David was faithful to the Lord, and the Lord was faithful to Him. David was upright; he was single-hearted when it came to serving God. He was not sinless—no man or woman on earth is—but he was blameless in his motives and loyal to the Lord. In that sense, his heart was pure: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

Unlike Saul, David was not perverse in heart but submitted to the will of God (2 Sam. 22:27). The NIV reads, "to the crooked you show yourself shrewd," reminding us that faith is living without scheming or making excuses, two practices at which Saul excelled. The Hebrew word translated "froward" (KJV) or "crooked" (NIV) comes from a root that means "to wrestle." David didn't fight

God or God's will, but Saul did, and that's why David was exalted but Saul was abased (1 Peter 5:5–6; James 4:10).

Finally, David was humble and broken before the Lord, while Saul promoted himself and put himself first. “You rescue the humble, but your eyes watch the proud and humiliate them” (2 Sam. 22:28 NLT). Hannah touched on this important theme in her song to the Lord (1 Sam. 2:3, 7–8). When Saul began his reign, he stood head and shoulders above everybody else (1 Sam. 10:23–24), but at the end of his life, he fell on his face in a witch's house (28:20) and fell as a suicide on the battlefield (31:1–6). “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12 NKJV). David fell on his face in submission, and the Lord lifted him up in honor. Saul lifted himself up and eventually fell on his face in humiliation.

God is always faithful to His character and His covenant. Knowing the character of God is essential to knowing and doing the will of God and pleasing His heart. David knew God's covenant, so he understood what God expected of him. The character of God and the covenant of God are the foundations for the promises of God. If we ignore His character and covenant, we will never be successful in claiming His promises.

THE LORD ENABLED DAVID (22:29–43) In this stanza of his song, David looked back and recalled how the Lord helped him during those difficult years of exile.

The Lord enlightened David (v. 29). The image of the burning lamp can refer to God's goodness in keeping people alive (Job 18:5–6; 21:17). David's life was constantly in danger, but the Lord kept him alive and provided all he needed. But a burning lamp also speaks of the reign of a king. David's men were afraid that one day he would be slain in battle and the “light of Israel” be put out (2 Sam. 21:17). Even after David died, the Lord was true to His covenant

promise and kept David's lamp burning by maintaining David's dynasty (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 2 Chron. 21:7; Ps. 132:17).

But God enlightened David in another way, for He revealed His will to him through the words of the prophets and the use of the Urim and Thummim. Saul made his own decisions, but David sought the mind of the Lord. During the dark days of his exile, David could say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"² (Ps. 27:1 NKJV).

The Lord empowered David (vv. 30–35). The picture here is that of a courageous warrior letting nothing stand in the way of victory. God empowered David to face the enemy without fear, running through a troop and the barricades they put up, and even scaling a wall to take a city. God's way is perfect (v. 31), and He made David's way perfect (v. 33), because David trusted in Him. God shielded David in the battle because David relied wholly on the flawless Word of God.

David's body belonged to the Lord (see Rom. 12:1), and God used his arms, feet, and hands (vv. 33–35) to overcome the enemy. David was a gifted warrior, but it was the anointing power of the Lord that enabled him to succeed on the battlefield. Like a fleet-footed deer, he could reach the heights; even his ankles didn't turn (v. 37 NIV). God made David's arms strong enough to bend a bow of bronze and shoot arrows with great power. In the strength of the Lord, David was invincible.

The Lord enlarged David (vv. 36–43). God enlarged David's path (v. 37) and put him into a larger place (v. 20), a wonderful truth we have already considered. The remarkable statement "thy gentleness hath made me great" (v. 36) reveals David's utter amazement that Almighty God would condescend to pay any attention to him. David always saw himself as an ordinary Jewish shepherd with no special position in Israel (1 Sam. 18:18, 23), but the Lord

“stooped down” to make him great. He made David a great warrior, and David acknowledged this incredible mercy from God, but David’s greatest desire was to make Jehovah’s name great before the nations (2 Sam. 7:18–29).

The gracious condescension of the Lord is a theme that is too often neglected by God’s people. As with David, God the Father condescends to work in our lives to fit us for the work of His choosing (see Isa. 57:15), and God the Son certainly humbled Himself for us when He came to earth as a servant and a sacrifice for sin (Phil. 2:5–11). The Holy Spirit condescended to come to earth and live in the people of God. David didn’t look back on those difficult exile years and see the hardness of God but the gentleness of God. He saw only goodness and mercy following him (Ps. 23:6). The servant in the parable who called the master “a hard man” (Matt. 25:24) certainly didn’t have the same outlook as King David!

We might cringe as we read David’s description of his victories, but we must remember that he was fighting the battles of the Lord. If these nations had defeated and destroyed Israel, what would happen to God’s great plan of salvation? We wouldn’t have a Bible, and we wouldn’t have a Savior! In rebelling against the Lord and worshipping idols, these pagan nations had sinned against a flood of light, so they were without excuse (Rom. 1:18ff.). The Lord had been patient with them for many years (Gen. 15:16), but they had spurned His grace. David pursued his enemies when they tried to get away (2 Sam. 22:38, 41); he defeated them, crushed them, and ground them into the dirt. They became like mire in the streets.

THE LORD ESTABLISHED DAVID (22:44–51) It is one thing to fight wars and defeat the enemy, but it is quite something else to keep these nations under control. David not only had to unify and lead the twelve tribes of Israel, but he also had to deal with the nations

that were subjected to Israel.

The Lord enthroned David (vv. 44–46). The Gentile nations didn't want a king on the throne of Israel, especially a brilliant strategist, brave warrior, and beloved leader like David. However, God not only established him on the throne, but also promised him a dynasty that would never end. The Lord promised David a throne, and He kept His promise. He also helped David to unite his own people and deal with those who were still loyal to Saul. The word “strangers” in verses 45–46 means “foreigners” and refers to Gentile nations. The Lord's victories frightened these peoples and drove them into hiding places. Eventually they would come out of their feeble fortresses and submit to David.

The Lord exalted David (vv. 47–49). David's shout of praise, “The Lord lives” (v. 47 NKJV), was his bold witness to these subjected peoples that their dead idols could not save them or protect them (see Ps. 115). Only Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the true and living God, and David's victories and enthronement proved that God was with him. David was always careful not to exalt himself, but to exalt the Lord. David closed his song with high and holy praise for the Lord God of Israel. He exalted the Lord, and the Lord exalted him (Matt. 6:33; 1 Sam. 2:30). If we magnify our own name or our own deeds, we will sin; but if the Lord magnifies us, we can bring glory to His name (Josh. 3:7).

The Lord elected David (vv. 50–51). God's sovereign choice of David to be king, and His dynastic covenant with him, form the foundation for all that God did for His servant. Israel was called to be a witness to the nations, and it was David's responsibility to build a kingdom that would honor the name of the Lord. It's too bad that because of his sin with Bathsheba he brought reproach to God's name (2 Sam. 12:14). Nevertheless, David was God's king and God's anointed, and the covenant between God and David still stands and will ultimately be fulfilled in the reign of Jesus Christ in His kingdom.

Paul quoted 2 Samuel 22:50 in Romans 15:9 as part of the wrap-up of his

admonition to the believers in the churches in Rome that they receive one another and stop judging one another. The Gentile believers in Rome were enjoying their freedom in Christ, while many of the Jewish believers were still in bondage to the law of Moses. Paul points out that Christ came to minister to both Jews and Gentiles by fulfilling God's promises to the Jews and dying for both Jews and Gentiles. From the very beginning of the nation, when God called Abraham and Sarah, the Lord had it in mind to include the Gentiles in His gracious plan of salvation (Gen. 12:1–3; Luke 2:29–32; John 4:22; Eph. 2:11ff.).

The sequence in Romans 15:8–12 is significant. Jesus confirmed the promises made to Israel (v. 8), and Israel brought the message of salvation to the Gentiles (v. 9). Both believing Jews and Gentiles as one spiritual body now praise the Lord together (v. 10), and all the nations hear the good news of the gospel (v. 11). When Jesus returns, He will reign over both Jews and Gentiles in His glorious kingdom (v. 12). From the very beginning, it was God's plan that the nation of Israel be His vehicle for bringing salvation to a lost world. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9 NKJV) and "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22 NKJV). The Gentiles owe a great debt to the Jews (Rom. 15:27), and Gentile Christians ought to pay that debt. They can show their appreciation to Israel by praying for their salvation (Rom. 9:1–5; 10:1) and for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6), lovingly witnessing to them as God gives opportunity (Rom. 1:16), and sharing in their material needs (Rom. 15:27).

As you review this psalm, you can see what it was that thrilled the heart of David. He saw God and mentioned Him at least nineteen times. He saw God in the affairs of life, both the happy occasions and the storms that came. He saw God's purpose in his life and in the nation of Israel, and rejoiced to be a part of it. But most exciting of all, in spite of the troubles David had experienced, he still saw the gentle hand of God molding his life and accomplishing His purposes (Ps. 18:35). The enlarged troubles (Ps. 25:17) "enlarged" David (Ps.

4:1) and prepared him to take enlarged steps (2 Sam. 22:37) in the enlarged place God had prepared for him (22:20). That can be our experience as well.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Has God ever delivered you from anything bad? If so, from what?
2. In David's song of victory, what was David giving thanks for?
3. How did David describe the Lord in his song of praise?
4. What does the image of God as a rock mean to you?
5. How can you follow David's example when facing opposition?
6. God used hard times to build David into a leader. When have you noticed God using hard times to mold you?

7. How was David able to live a blameless life while Saul was pursuing and threatening him? Since every person is a sinner, in what way was David blameless?
8. The Lord empowered David to do things the Lord wanted done. Does the Lord empower you? If so, how and for what?
9. In what way did David's body belong to the Lord?
10. How were David and the nation of Israel part of God's grand, sovereign plan to include the Gentiles in salvation?
11. What are the key insights you take away from this song of praise?

Chapter Twelve

David's Memories and Mistakes

(2 Samuel 23—24)

(See also 1 Chronicles 11:10–41; 21:1–26)

The death of King David is not recorded in 2 Samuel, but in 1 Kings 2:1–12. However, 2 Samuel 23—24 records his last psalm, the names of his greatest soldiers, and the sad account of his sin of numbering the people. Chapters 21—24 serve as an appendix to 2 Samuel and seem to focus on the divine and human sides of leadership. A leader's decisions may have serious consequences, as proved by the sins of Saul (chap. 21) and David (chap. 24). Leaders must depend on the Lord and give Him the glory, as David's two psalms declare, and no leader can do the job alone, as indicated by the list of David's mighty men. Second Samuel 23—24 gives us three portraits of David that illustrate the greatness and the humanness of this leader's life.

1. DAVID THE INSPIRED SINGER (23:1–7)

At least seventy-three of the psalms in the book of Psalms are assigned to David, but his last one is found only here in 2 Samuel 23. The phrase “the last words of David” means “his last inspired written words from the Lord.” The psalm may

have been written during the closing days of his life, shortly before he died. Since the theme of the psalm is godly leadership, he may have written it especially for Solomon, but it has much to say to all of God's people today.

The privileges of leadership (vv. 1–2). David never ceased to marvel that God would call him to become the king of Israel, to lead God's people, fight God's battles, and even help to write God's Word. It was through David's descendants that God brought the Messiah into the world. From the human point of view, David was a nobody, a shepherd, the youngest of eight sons in an ordinary Jewish family; nevertheless, God selected him and made him to become Israel's greatest king. The Lord had given David skillful hands and a heart of integrity (Ps. 78:70–72) and equipped him to know and do His will. As the son of Jesse, David was a member of the royal tribe of Judah, something that was not true of his predecessor Saul. (See Gen. 49:10.)

David didn't promote himself to achieve greatness; it was the Lord who chose him and elevated him to the throne (Deut. 17:15). The Lord spent thirty years training David, first with the sheep in the pastures, then with Saul in the army camp, and finally with his own fighting men in the Judean wilderness. Great leaders are trained in private before they go to work in public. "Talents are best nurtured in solitude," wrote Goethe; "character is best formed in the stormy billows of the world." David had both. He had been faithful in private as a servant, so God was able to elevate him publicly to be a ruler (Matt. 25:21). The Lord followed the same procedure when He prepared Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, the apostles, and even His own Son (Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 5:8). Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to say, "It is a tragic thing when a young man succeeds before he's ready for it." David was ready for the throne.

God empowers those whom He calls, and He anointed David with His Spirit (1 Sam. 16:12–13). Dr. A. W. Tozer said, "Never follow any leader until you see the oil on his forehead," which explains why so many gifted men came to David and joined his band. It takes more than talent and training to be an effective

leader and to be able to recruit and train other leaders. Jesus reminded His disciples and reminds us, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5 NKJV). Religious leaders who follow the principles of what the world calls success rarely accomplish anything permanent that glorifies God. “He who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17 NKJV). It’s good to be educated by men, but it’s even more important to be trained by the Lord. “Our Lord was thirty years preparing for three years’ service,” wrote Oswald Chambers. “The modern stamp is three hours of preparation for thirty years of service.”

But the Spirit not only empowered David for battle, He also inspired him to write beautiful psalms that still minister to our hearts. When you think of the trials that David had to endure in order to give us these psalms, it makes you appreciate them even more. David made it clear that he was writing the Word of God, not just religious poetry. Peter called David “a prophet” (Acts 2:30) and at Pentecost, quoted what David wrote about the Messiah’s resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:24–36). When you read the Psalms, you are reading the Word of God and learning about the Son of God.

The responsibilities of leadership (vv. 3–7). God didn’t train David just to put him on display, but because He had important work for him to do; and so it is with every true leader. David was to rule over God’s own people, “the sheep of his pasture” (Ps. 100:3), which is an awesome responsibility. It demands character and integrity (“just” = righteous) and a submissive attitude toward the Lord (“the fear of God”). Without righteousness and the fear of God, a leader becomes a dictator and abuses God’s people, driving them like cattle instead of leading them like sheep. David was a ruler who served and a servant who ruled, and he had the welfare of his people on his heart (2 Sam. 24:17). It encourages me today to see that even secular business specialists are comparing effective leaders to shepherds who care.[1](#)

David used a beautiful metaphor to picture the work of the leader: rain and

sunshine that together produce useful fruit instead of painful thorns (23:4–7). David exemplified this principle in his own life, for when he came to the throne, it meant the dawning of a new day for the nation of Israel. In this, he reminds us of what happened when Jesus came to earth (see Ps. 72:5–7; Isa. 9:2; 58:8; 60:1, 19; Mal. 4:1–3; Matt. 4:13–16; Luke 2:29–32). With the coronation of David, the storms that Saul had caused in the land were now over and the light of God’s countenance was shining on His people. Under David’s leadership, there would be a harvest of blessing from the Lord.

With God’s help, leaders must create such a creative atmosphere that their collaborators will be able to grow and produce fruit. Ministry involves both sunshine and rain, bright days and cloudy days; but a godly leader’s ministry will produce gentle rain that brings life and not storms that destroy. What a delight it is to follow a spiritual leader who brings out the best in us and helps us produce fruit for the glory of God! Unspiritual leaders produce thorns that irritate people and make progress very difficult (2 Sam. 23:6–7).

In his song, David went beyond the principles of leadership to celebrate the coming of the Messiah (v. 5). David mentioned the covenant the Lord made with him (2 Sam. 7), a covenant that guaranteed him a dynasty forever and a throne forever, a covenant that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Luke 1:32–33, 68–79). The statements in verse 5 are best read as questions: “Is not my house right with God? Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part?” (NIV). The first question doesn’t suggest that all of David’s children were godly, for we know that they were not. It only declares that David’s house (dynasty) was secure because of God’s covenant promises. Nothing could change this covenant; it was everlastingly secured by the character of God.

In verse 5, David again used the image of fruit: “Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?” (NIV). David’s desire was that God would fulfill His promise and send the Messiah, who would be born from

David's descendants. The throne of Judah ended historically in 586 BC with the reign of Zedekiah, but that wasn't the end of David's family or the nation of Israel. The Lord providentially preserved Israel and David's seed so that Jesus Christ could be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. The nation was small and weak, but the Messiah came just the same. "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (Isa. 11:1 NIV; see 4:2, 6:13, and 53:2). However, one day the evil people of the earth will be uprooted like thorns and burned (2 Sam. 23:6–7; see Matt. 3:10, 12; 13:40–42).

2. DAVID THE GIFTED LEADER (23:8–39; 1 CHRON. 11:10–47)

Here are listed the names and some of the exploits of the leading men who followed David and stood with him during the difficult years of exile and during his reign.

The first three mighty men (vv. 8–12; 1 Chron. 11:10–14). Josheb-Basshebeth (NKJV) is named first; he was also known as Adino and Jashobeam (v. 8; 1 Chron. 11:11). He was chief of the captains in David's army and was famous for killing eight hundred enemy soldiers "at one time." First Chronicles 11:11 says he killed three hundred men. As we've already noted, the transmission of numbers from manuscript to manuscript by copyists sometimes led to these minor differences. Did the fear of the Lord drive all these men over a cliff, or did Jashobeam's courage inspire others to enter the battle, and he got the credit for the victory? How he accomplished this feat isn't disclosed, but it's unlikely that he killed them one at a time with his spear.

Eleazar (vv. 9–10) was from the tribe of Benjamin and fought beside David against the Philistines, probably at Pas Dammim (1 Sam. 17:1; 1 Chron. 11:12–13). While many of the Israelite soldiers were retreating, he remained in his place and fought until the sword was "welded" to his hand. The Lord honored the faith and courage of David and Eleazar and gave Israel a great victory, after

which the other soldiers returned to the field to strip the dead and claim the spoils. Like David, Eleazar wasn't selfish about sharing the spoils of battle, because the victory had come from the Lord (1 Sam. 30:21–25).

The third mighty man was Shammah (2 Sam. 23:11–12), who also was used of the Lord to bring victory at Pas Dammim (1 Chron. 11:13–14). But why risk your life to defend a field of lentils and barley? Because the land belonged to the Lord (Lev. 25:23) and was given to Israel to use for His glory (Lev. 18:24–30). Shammah didn't want the Philistines to control what belonged to Jehovah, for the Jews were stewards of God's land. To respect the land meant to honor the Lord and His covenant with Israel.

The second “three mighty men” (vv. 13–17; 1 Chron. 11:15–19). These three aren't named, but they were a part of the “thirty” listed in verses 24–29. This suggests that they were not the three men named previously. All people are created equal before God and the law, but all people are not equal in gifts and abilities; some people have greater gifts and opportunities than others. However, the fact that we can't achieve like the first three shouldn't keep us from doing less than our best and perhaps establishing a second three. God doesn't measure us by what He helped others do but by what He wanted us to do with the abilities and opportunities He graciously gave us.

The fact that David was hiding in a cave near Bethlehem suggests that this event took place either during the time that David was fleeing from Saul or shortly after he was made king in Hebron and the Philistines attacked him (2 Sam. 5:17; 1 Chron. 14:8). It was harvest time, which meant there had been no rain and the cisterns were empty. No water was available in the cave, and David thirsted for the water from the well at Bethlehem that he used to drink from when he was a boy. The text suggests that David spoke to himself about the water and didn't issue any orders, but the three men wanted to please their leader more than anything else. They were close enough to hear his whispered words, loyal enough to take his wish as their command, and brave enough to obey at

any cost. They traveled twelve miles, broke through enemy lines, and came back with the water. What an example for us to follow in our relationship with the Captain of our salvation!

No matter what the Lord put in David's hands, he used it to honor God and help God's people—a sling, a sword, a harp, a scepter, even a cup of water—and this occasion was no exception. When David looked into the cup, he didn't see water; he saw the blood of the three men who had risked their lives to satisfy his desire. To drink that water would demean all his men and cheapen the brave deed of the three heroes. It would communicate that their lives really weren't important to him. Instead, David turned the cave into a temple and poured the water out as a drink offering to the Lord, as he had seen the priests do at the tabernacle. The drink offering accompanied the giving of another sacrifice, such as the burnt offering, and was not offered independently. It was an act of dedication that symbolized a person's life poured out in the service of the Lord. The three men had given themselves as a sacrifice to the Lord to serve David (Rom. 12:1), so David added his offering to theirs to show them he was one with them in their devotion to Jehovah. To paraphrase his own words in 24:24, David would not treat as nothing that which had cost those three men everything. All leaders need to follow David's example and let their followers know how much they appreciate them and the sacrifices they make.

Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for us and also as a drink offering (Ps. 22:14; Isa. 53:12). Paul used the image of the drink offering to describe his own dedication to the Lord (Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6). Mother Teresa often said, "We can do no great things, only small things with great love." But doing small things because we love Christ turns them into great things. According to Jesus, whenever we show love and kindness to others and seek to meet their needs, we give Him a cup of cold water (Matt. 25:34–40).

Two special mighty men (vv. 18–23; 1 Chron. 11:20–25). Abishai (vv. 18–19) was David's nephew and the brother of Joab, the commander of David's

army. He was also the brother of Asahel, who was slain treacherously by Abner, and Joab and Abishai killed Abner, much to David's regret (2 Sam. 2—3). Abishai was a courageous man who is commended here for killing three hundred enemy soldiers. However, sometimes he had more zeal than wisdom. While in Saul's camp with David one night, he wanted to kill King Saul, an offer that David rejected (1 Sam. 26), and he also offered to cut off Shimei's head because he cursed David (2 Sam. 16:9–11; 19:21). He led the army in the siege of Rabbah (10:10–14) and saved David's life during a battle with a giant (21:15–17). Abishai was loyal to David during Absalom's rebellion and was in charge of a third of David's army (18:2, 12).² Abishai was also in charge of the second three and was held in high honor.

Benaiah (vv. 20–23; 1 Chron. 11:22–25) was a remarkable man who was born to serve as a priest (1 Chron. 27:5) but became a soldier and the commander of David's bodyguard (8:18; 20:23). In the Bible, there are priests who became prophets, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and John the Baptist, but Benaiah is the only priest named who became a soldier. He performed valiantly on the battlefield and fought some interesting battles. F. W. Boreham has a wonderful sermon about Benaiah killing the lion in which he points out that Benaiah met the worst of enemies (a lion) in the worst of places (a pit) under the worst of conditions (on a snowy day)—and he won! Benaiah was loyal to the house of David and supported Solomon when he came to the throne (1 Kings 1:8–10). When Joab tried to make Adonijah king, it was Benaiah who executed him, thus fulfilling David's command to Solomon (1 Kings 2:5–6). Solomon made Benaiah the head of his army in Joab's place (1 Kings 2:35; 4:4; 1 Chron. 27:5–6). Benaiah's son Jehoiada didn't follow a military career but became a counselor to King Solomon, replacing Ahithophel (1 Chron. 27:34).

The Thirty (vv. 24–39; 1 Chron. 11:26–47). Saul may have stood head and shoulders above everybody else, but it was David who had the kind of character and stature that attracted men who were looking for true leadership. One mark of

real leaders is that they have devoted followers and not just self-seeking flatterers and parasites. (The official term is “sycophants,” from a Greek word meaning “an informer.” The American and English slang expression would be “bootlicker.”) Saul’s officers were men he couldn’t trust and who had to be bribed into loyal service (see 1 Sam. 22:6ff.), but David’s men would have died for their leader, and some of them did.

Since ancient peoples often had two or more names that could have alternate spellings, it’s not easy to correlate the list in 2 Samuel 23 with the one in 1 Chronicles 11. Some names on the Samuel list are missing from the Chronicles list, but the latter list contains sixteen extra names (11:41–47). Perhaps they were replacements or alternates.³ Those not mentioned in the Chronicles list are Shammah son of Agee (v. 11), Elikah (v. 25), Eliam (v. 34), and Igal (v. 36). The differences between the two lists are minor, and doubtless the composition of this group changed from time to time as men died and were replaced.

In this list, the men are divided into four groups: the three mighty men (vv. 8–12), the second three mighty men (vv. 13–17),⁴ two special leaders (vv. 18–23), and “The Thirty” exceptional soldiers (vv. 24–39).⁵ But does verse 36 (NIV) record one man’s name (“Igal the son of Nathan who was the son of Hagri”) or the names of two men (“Igal the son of Nathan, and the son of Hagri”)? Except for the three men who brought David the water, the names of all the other men are given, so it seems strange that one man’s name would be omitted. It’s likely that verse 36 registers the name of one man, which means there were thirty-two soldiers in “The Thirty”—the twenty-nine named on the list, plus the three unnamed men of verses 13–17. Perhaps the term “The Thirty” was simply a code name for David’s elite soldiers, regardless of how many there were, just as “The Twelve” was a code name for the Lord’s apostles. If you add to the thirty-two men the three mighty men of verses 8–12, plus Abishai and Benaiah, you have the total of thirty-seven given in verse 39.

Two names are familiar to us: Asahel, the nephew of David and brother of Joab and Abishai (v. 24), and Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba (v. 39; 1 Chron. 11:41). Both of them were dead, but their names remained on the list of great warriors. How tragic that David took the life of one of his best soldiers just to cover up sin!

Two other facts are worth noting. First, David didn't do the job alone; he had the help of many devoted followers. We think of David as a mighty warrior, and he was; but how far would he have gotten without his loyal and gifted soldiers? Most of the men listed came from Judah. This is to be expected since Judah was David's tribe, and he reigned there before the nation was united. But "The Thirty" also included three men from Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, and several soldiers from neighboring nations. All these men recognized that God's hand was upon David, and they wanted to be a part of what God was doing. The diversity of the commanders in his army speaks well of his leadership.

Second, God noted each man, had most of their names recorded in His Word, and will one day reward each one for the ministry he performed. David's name is mentioned over a thousand times in the Bible, while most of these men are mentioned but once or twice. However, when they meet the Lord, "then each one's praise will come from God" (1 Cor. 4:5 NKJV).

Joab was commander of the entire army (20:23), but he's mentioned in this military roster only in connection with his brothers Abishai (v. 18) and Asahel (v. 24; 1 Chron. 11:20, 26). In the end, Joab was disloyal to David and tried to put Adonijah on the throne, and this cost him his life (1 Kings 2:28–34).

3. DAVID THE REPENTANT SINNER (24:1–25; 1 CHRON. 21)

Second Samuel 24:1 states that God incited David to number the people, while 1 Chronicles 21:1 names Satan as the culprit. Both are true: God permitted Satan to tempt David in order to accomplish the purposes He had in mind. Satan

certainly opposed God's people throughout all of Old Testament history, but this is one of four instances in the Old Testament where Satan is named specifically and seen openly at work. The other three are when he tempted Eve (Gen. 3), when he attacked Job (Job 1—2), and when he accused Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3).⁶

A proud king (vv. 1–9; 1 Chron. 21:1–7). There was nothing illegal about a national census, if it was done according to the rules laid down in Exodus 30:11–16 (and see Num. 3:40–51). The half shekel received at the census was used to pay the bills for the sanctuary of God (Ex. 38:25–28). As a good Jewish citizen, Jesus paid his temple tax (Matt. 17:24–27), even though He knew that much of the ministry at the temple in that day was corrupt and had been rejected by His Father (Matt. 23:37—24:1). The phrase “the people” used in 2 Samuel 24:2–4, 9, 10 refers to the Jewish military forces and is used this way in the Authorized Version of 1 Samuel 4:3, 4, 17. But the census that David ordered wasn't to collect the annual temple tax; it was a military census to see how big his army was, as 2 Samuel 24:9 makes clear. But there had been military censuses in Israel in the past, and the Lord hadn't judged the nation (Num. 1 and 26). What was there about this census that was wrong?

Joab and his captains were against the project (2 Sam. 24:4), and Joab's speech in verse 3 suggests that David's command was motivated by pride. The king wanted to magnify his own achievements rather than glorify the Lord. David may have rationalized this desire by arguing that his son Solomon was a man of peace who had no military experience. David wanted to be certain that, after his death, Israel would have the forces needed to preserve the peace. Another factor may have been David's plan to organize the army, the government, and the priests and Levites so that Solomon could manage things more easily and be able to build the temple (1 Chron. 22—27).

Whatever the cause, the Lord was displeased (1 Chron. 21:7), but He permitted Joab and his captains to spend the next nine months and twenty days

counting the Israelites twenty years old and upward who were fit for military service. Sometimes God's greatest judgment is simply to let us have our own way. The census takers left Jerusalem, traveled east across the Jordan, and started counting at Aroer in the vicinity of the Dead Sea. Then they moved north through Gad and Gilead to Israel's northernmost border, where David had conquered the territory and expanded his kingdom (2 Sam. 8). The men then went west to Tyre and Sidon and then south to Beersheba in Judah, Israel's farthest border city.

From Beersheba, they returned to Jerusalem, but they didn't count the Levites (who were exempted from military duty, Num. 1:49; 2:33) or the men of Benjamin. The tabernacle was located at Gibeon in Benjamin (1 Chron. 16:39–40; 21:29), and Joab may have thought it unwise to invade holy territory on such a sinful mission. Anyway, Saul had come from Benjamin, and there may still have been pockets of resistance in the tribe. Benjamin was too close to home, and Joab didn't want to take any chances. The incomplete total was 1,300,000 men.⁷

A convicted king (24:10–14; 1 Chron. 21:8–13). Realizing that he had been foolish in pursuing the project, David confessed his sin and sought the Lord's face. At least seven times in Scripture we find David confessing "I have sinned" (2 Sam. 12:13; 24:10, 17; 1 Chron. 21:8, 17; Ps. 41:4 and 51:4). When he confessed his sins of adultery and murder, David said, "I have sinned"; but when he confessed his sin of numbering the people, he said, "I have sinned *greatly*" (italics mine). Most of us would consider his sins relating to Bathsheba far worse than the sin of numbering the people, and far more foolish, but David saw the enormity of what he had done. David's sins with Bathsheba took the lives of four of David's sons (the baby, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah) plus the life of Uriah, but after the census, God sent a plague that took the lives of seventy thousand people. The Lord must have agreed with David that he had indeed sinned greatly.

David's sin with Bathsheba was a sin of the flesh, a yielding to lust after an afternoon of laziness (11:2; Gal. 5:19), but the census was a sin of the spirit (see 2 Cor. 7:1), a willful act of rebellion against God. It was motivated by pride, and pride is number one on the list of the sins that God hates (Prov. 6:16–19). “Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow,” wrote William Barclay, “and the parent from which all the other sins come.” Both Scripture and civil law make a distinction between sudden sins of passion and willful sins of rebellion, and treat the guilty parties differently (Deut. 19:1–13; Ex. 21:12–14). The census was willful rebellion, and David sinned against a flood of light. Furthermore, God gave David over nine months' time to repent, but he refused to yield. In the various scenes in David's history, Joab doesn't come across as a godly man, but even Joab was opposed to this project, and so were his officers. David should have heeded their counsel, but he was determined to have a census.

God in His grace forgives our sins when we confess them (1 John 1:9), but in His righteous government, He allows us to reap the consequences. In this case, the Lord even gave David the privilege of choosing the consequences. Why? Because David's disobedience was a sin of the will, a deliberate choice on David's part, so God allowed him to make another choice and name the punishment. Gad⁸ gave the king three choices and told him to consider them, make a decision, and give his answer when the prophet returned.

Between the first and second visits, David must have sought the face of the Lord, for God lowered the famine period from seven years to three years, which explains the seeming discrepancy between 2 Samuel 24:13 and 1 Chronicles 21:12. In His mercy, God shortened the days of the suffering for His chosen people (Matt. 24:22). The three punishments are named in God's covenant with Israel (Deut. 28), so David shouldn't have been surprised: *famine*—28:23–24, 38–40; *military defeat*—28:25–26, 41–48; *pestilence*—28:21–22, 27–28, 35, 60–61.⁹ In Jewish law, the unintentional sin of the high priest was equivalent to the sin of the entire congregation (Lev. 4:1–3, 13–14), so how much more would the

penalties apply to a king who had sinned intentionally! Knowing the mercy of the Lord, David wisely chose pestilence for his punishment.

A repentant king (24:15–25; 1 Chron. 21:14–30). The plague started the next day at morning and continued for the appointed three days, with the judgment angel ending his work at Jerusalem, just as Joab and his men had done (v. 8). David's shepherd's heart was broken because of this judgment, and he pleaded with the Lord to punish him instead. Why would God kill seventy thousand men and yet keep David alive? We must note that 24:1 says that God was angry *with Israel* and not with David, so He must have been punishing the people for some sin they had committed. It's been suggested that this plague took the lives of the Israelites who had followed Absalom in his rebellion and didn't want David as their king. This may be so, but the text doesn't tell us.

God permitted David to see the judgment angel hovering over Jerusalem near the threshing floor of Araunah (Ornan), a Jebusite. The Jebusites were the original inhabitants of Jerusalem, so Ornan had submitted to David's rule and become a reputable citizen of Jerusalem. We aren't told that David heard God's command to the angel to cease plaguing the people, but David knew that God was merciful and gracious, so he begged for mercy for "the sheep of his pasture" (Ps. 100:3). The elders of Israel were with David (1 Chron. 21:16), and with him fell to the ground in humble contrition and worship. It was David's sin that precipitated the crisis, but perhaps they realized that the nation had also sinned and deserved to feel God's rod of discipline.

Once again, the prophet Gad appeared on the scene, this time with a message of hope. David was to build an altar on Ornan's threshing floor and there offer sacrifices to the Lord, and the plague would cease. As king, David could have appropriated the property (1 Sam. 8:14) or even borrowed it, but he insisted on purchasing it. David knew the high cost of sinning, and he refused to give the Lord something that had cost him nothing. For fifty shekels of silver he purchased the oxen for sacrifices and the wooden yokes for fuel, and for six

hundred shekels of gold, he purchased the entire threshing floor (2 Sam. 24:24; 1 Chron. 21:25). When the priest offered the sacrifices, God sent fire from heaven to consume them as a token of His acceptance (1 Chron. 21:26; Lev. 9:24).

Knowing that the king was well able to purchase his property, why was Ornan so anxious to give it to David absolutely free? Or was his offer just another instance of traditional Eastern courtesy in the art of bargaining? (See Gen. 23.) Perhaps Ornan remembered what happened to Saul's descendants because of what Saul did to the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:1–14), and he didn't want the lives of his sons threatened (1 Chron. 21:20). The King James translation of 2 Samuel 24:23 is a bit awkward and gives the idea that Ornan himself was a king, so the NIV or NASB should be consulted.

The land that David purchased was no ordinary piece of property, for it was the place where Abraham had put his son Isaac on the altar (Gen. 22) and where Solomon would build the temple (1 Chron. 22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1). After the plague had ceased, David consecrated the site to the Lord (Lev. 27:20–21) and used it as a place of sacrifice and worship. The altar and tabernacle were at Gibeon, but David was permitted to worship at Jerusalem. The land was sanctified and would one day be the site of God's temple. David announced, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chron. 22:1), and from that time he began to get everything ready for Solomon to build the temple.

If you were asked to name David's two greatest sins, you would probably reply, "His adultery with Bathsheba and his numbering of the people," and you would be right. *But out of those two great sins, God built a temple!* Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon, and God chose him to succeed David on the throne. On the property David purchased and on which he erected an altar, Solomon built the temple and dedicated it to the glory of God. What God did for David is

certainly not an excuse for sin (Rom. 6:1–2), because David paid dearly for committing those sins. However, knowing what God did for David does encourage us to seek His face and trust His grace when we have disobeyed Him. “But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20 NKJV). What a merciful God we serve!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What qualities do you look for in a leader?
2. In 2 Samuel 23—24, David is depicted as an inspired singer, a gifted leader, and a repentant sinner. To which of these aspects of David are you most drawn? Why?
3. What is significant about the fact that God used David so powerfully even though he started out as a “nobody”?
4. What happens if a leader lacks integrity and a true fear of God?
5. Why did the three men risk their lives to get David a cup of water? What do

you think of the way David responded?

6. “Doing small things because we love Christ turns them into great things.”

What small things have you done lately because you love Christ?

7. Why was it wrong for David to take a census?

8. Why did God give David a choice of judgments? What did David choose?

Why?

9. In the midst of the plague, what message did the prophet Gad bring?

10. What were David’s two greatest sins? How did God bring good from them?

How can this fact bring comfort to us?

Chapter Thirteen

David's Legacy

[\(1 Chronicles 22—29\)](#)

David “served his own generation by the will of God” (Acts 13:36 NKJV). When you serve your own generation faithfully, you also serve future generations. “He who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17 NKJV). The legacy of David enriched God’s people Israel for centuries. Not only did David provide all that was needed for the building of the temple, he also wrote songs and designed musical instruments to be used in the worship services (1 Chron. 23:5). Even more, it was through David’s family that the Savior came into the world, “the root and offspring of David” (Rev. 22:16), so David still enriches the church today.

When we hear David’s name, we may think first of Bathsheba and David’s sins, but these chapters present David the builder, the man who risked his life to gather wealth for the building of a temple to the glory of God. He’s a great example for believers of every age who want to make their lives count for Christ and leave behind their own legacy of spiritual blessing.

SPIRITUAL MOTIVATION

Some Bible readers today might be tempted to scan these chapters, skip all the

lists of names, and go on to read about the reign of Solomon in 2 Chronicles, but to do so would be a great mistake. Think of the encouragement and guidance these chapters must have given to the Jewish remnant that returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. (See the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah.) These courageous people had to rebuild the temple and organize its ministry, and reading these chapters would remind them that they were doing God's work. God gave each detail of the original temple and its ministry to David, who then gave it to Solomon. Those lists of names helped Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest examine the credentials of those who wanted to serve in the temple (Ezra 2:59–64), and refuse those who were not qualified.

These chapters encouraged the Jews in their labors centuries ago, and they can encourage us today as we seek to build the church (Eph. 2:19–22). When you read 1 Corinthians 3:9–23 and compare it with 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29, you see parallels that ought to encourage us to build the church the way God's Word commands.¹ David knew that God's temple had to be built with gold, silver, and costly stones (22:14; 29:1–5), and Paul took these materials and applied them spiritually to the local church. They stand for the wisdom of God as found in the Word of God (Prov. 2:1–10; 3:13–15; 8:10–21). Wood, hay, and straw can be picked up on the surface, but if you want gold, silver, and jewels, *you have to dig for them*. We don't build the local church on clever human ideas or by imitating the world; we build by teaching and obeying the precious truths of the Word of God. (See 1 Cor. 3:18–20 for Paul's view of the wisdom of this world.)

Solomon didn't have to draw his own plans for the temple, because the Lord gave the plans to David (1 Chron. 28:11–12). As we read the Word and pray, the Lord shows us His plans for each local church. "Work out your own salvation [Christian ministry] with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12–13 NKJV) was written to a congregation of believers in Philippi, and though it has personal application for

all believers, the emphasis is primarily on the ministry of the congregation collectively. Some local church leaders run from one seminar to another, seeking to learn how to build the church, when they probably ought to stay home, call the church to prayer, and seek the mind of God in His Word. God has different plans for each church, and we're not supposed to blindly imitate each other.

The temple was built to display the glory of God, and our task in the local church is to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31; 14:25). When Solomon dedicated the temple, God's glory moved in (1 Kings 8:6–11), but when Israel sinned, the glory moved out (Ezek. 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23). We wonder how many local churches go through the motions of worship Sunday after Sunday, yet there's no evidence of the glory of God.

The temple was to be “a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7 NKJV), but the religious leaders in Jesus' day had made it into a den of thieves (Matt. 21:13; Luke 19:46; Jer. 7:11). A den of thieves is the place where thieves run to hide after they've done their wicked deeds, which suggests that a service in a local church can be a good place to go to pretend to be spiritual. How many local churches are known for their effective ministry of prayer? They may be houses of music, education, and even social activities, but are they houses of prayer?

The temple was built, and God honored it with His presence because the leaders and people gave their best to the Lord, sacrificed, and followed His directions. This is a good example for us to follow today. We are privileged to assist in the building of the church, and our motive must be only the glory of God.

CAREFUL PREPARATION (22:1–19)

The Lord didn't permit David to build the temple, but He did honor the preparation David made for his son Solomon to do the job. “Well begun is half done” says the old proverb, and David was careful to have Solomon, the people,

and the materials prepared for the great project. (See vv. 3, 5 and 14.)

The site, materials, and workers (vv. 1–4). We're not sure when the Lord began to give David the plans for the temple and its personnel, but the purchase of Ornan's property seemed to be the signal for action. When God sent fire from heaven to consume David's offerings (21:26), David knew that his sin was forgiven and that he was back in fellowship with the Lord. But David also perceived that his altar was now very special to the Lord, and he continued to sacrifice there instead of going to the tabernacle at Gibeon. The Lord let him know that Mount Moriah was the place where He wanted the temple to be built. It's possible that David wrote Psalm 30 at this time, even though as yet there was no actual building to dedicate. By faith, he dedicated to the Lord the property he had purchased and the building that would one day stand on it.²

David enlisted both Jews and resident aliens (1 Kings 5:13–18) to help construct the temple. This division of David's government was under Adoram (2 Sam. 20:24), also called Adoniram (1 Kings 4:6).³ The 30,000 Jewish workers cut timber in Lebanon for a month and then returned home for two months, while the 150,000 alien laborers cut and delivered massive stones from the hills, supervised by Jewish foremen (1 Kings 5:13–18; see 9:15–19; 2 Chron. 2:17–18). The fact that Gentiles worked along with the Jews suggests that the temple was indeed a house for all nations. We must not think that these resident aliens were treated as slaves, because the law of Moses clearly prohibited such practices (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33).

For years, David had been amassing the materials for the temple, the total value of which was beyond calculation. Much of it came from the spoils of the battles David had fought and won (1 Chron. 18:9–11; 26:26–28). David the warrior had defeated Israel's enemies and taken their wealth so that Solomon, his son, would have the peace and provisions necessary to build the house of God.

Solomon the builder (vv. 5–16). Some biblical chronologists believe David was about sixty years old when he inaugurated the temple building program, but

we don't know how old Solomon was. David said his son was "young and inexperienced" (22:5; 29:1 NIV), and after his accession to the throne, Solomon called himself "a little child" (1 Kings 3:7). This explains why David admonished and encouraged his son several times to obey the Lord and finish the work God had assigned to him (1 Chron. 22:6–16; 28:9–10, 20–21). David also admonished the leaders to encourage and assist their new king in this great project. David wanted everything to be prepared before his own death so that Solomon would have everything he needed to build the house of God.

David encouraged Solomon by assuring him that the temple project was the will of God; therefore, the Lord would help him finish it (vv. 6–10). God had enabled his father to fight the Lord's battles and bring about peace for Israel, and now it was time to build God's house (2 Sam. 7:9). The Lord had told David that a son would be born to him to accomplish this task (7:12–16; 1 Chron. 17:11; see Deut. 12:8–14). The emphasis David made was that the temple was to be built, not for the glory of the name of David or even of Solomon, but the name of the Lord (1 Chron. 22:7–8, 10, 19). David wanted to be sure that Solomon would honor the Lord and not build a monument to honor himself.

David further encouraged his son by reminding him of the faithfulness of God (vv. 11–13). If he would trust the Lord and obey Him fully, the Lord would maintain the peace and security of Israel and enable him to complete the project (see 28:7–9, 20). The words "Be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed" remind us of how Moses encouraged Joshua, his successor (Deut. 31:5–8, 23); the Lord repeated that encouragement after Moses died (Josh. 1:6, 9). Moses and Joshua were faithful men, and God saw them through all their trials and enabled them to complete their work. He would do the same for Solomon.

The third encouragement David gave his son was the great amount of wealth the king had accumulated for the project, along with the large number of workers

who were conscripted (1 Chron. 22:14–16). It seems incredible, but the king said he had amassed 3,750 tons of gold and 37,500 tons of silver, and that there was so much bronze and iron that it couldn't be weighed. At least Solomon wouldn't have to take up any collections!

The leaders of Israel (vv. 17–19). David ordered the leaders to cooperate with Solomon and help him complete the project. He reminded them that the peace and rest they enjoyed was only because God had used David to defeat Israel's foes and expand her borders. (Note the mention of "rest" in vv. 9 and 18 and in 23:25.) But the temple was for the Lord, so it was imperative that the leaders seek Him and have their hearts right before Him. David had his throne in Jerusalem, and he wanted the ark—the throne of God—to be there also. His only concern was that the name of the Lord be glorified.

TEMPLE ORGANIZATION (23:1—27:34)

David knew that the ministers of the temple also had to be organized and prepared if God was to be glorified. Too often local church building programs concentrate so much on the financial and the material that they ignore the spiritual, and then a backslidden and divided congregation meets to dedicate the new edifice! A gifted administrator, David organized the Levites (chap. 23), the priests (chap. 24), the temple singers (chap. 25), and the temple officers (chap. 26). David wanted to be sure that everything in God's house would be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40 NKJV). In making these decisions, David and his two priests drew lots (24:5–6, 31; 25:8; 26:13–14, 16). This was the process Joshua used when he gave the tribes their inheritance in the Promised Land (Josh. 14:2; 23:4).

But organization wasn't an end in itself, for these people were being organized for service. The phrase "for the service of the house of the Lord" (or its equivalent) is used several times in these chapters to remind us that ministry

is the major responsibility of God's servants in God's house. (See 1 Chron. 23:24, 26, 28, 32; 25:1, 6; 26:8, 30; 28:13, 14, 20, 21; 29:5, 7; 2 Chron. 31: 16.) It's one thing to fill an office, but quite something else to use that office to serve the Lord and His people.

The Levites (23:1–32; see also chap. 6). The author of Chronicles doesn't record the family struggle that occurred when Solomon became king (1 Kings 1 —2), but verse 1 indicates an earlier appointment and 1 Chronicles 29:22 a second one. However, verse 1 may simply mean that David announced Solomon as his successor, as in 28:4–5, while 29:22 describes the actual coronation. (We get the impression that Solomon's coronation described in 1 Kings 1 was very hastily arranged.) Solomon's formal public accession to the throne is described in 29:21–25.

The Levites assisted the priests in the sanctuary ministry and were required by the law to be at least thirty years old (23:3; Num. 4:3; see also Num. 8:24). Later that was lowered to twenty years (1 Chron. 23:24). The 38,000 Levites were divided into four groups, each with a specific ministry: 24,000 Levites who helped the priests in the sanctuary, 6,000 who were “officers and judges” (see 23:1–32), 4,000 who were gatekeepers (“porters” KJV; see 26:1–19), and 4,000 who were singers (see 25:1–31). There was one temple, one high priest, one divine law, and one Lord to serve, but there was a diversity of gifts and ministries, not unlike the church today. The fact that the Levites took care of the sanctuary while the priests served at the altar didn't mean that their work was less important to the ministry or to the Lord. Each servant was important to the Lord, and each ministry was necessary.

David not only organized the sanctuary musicians, but he also provided them with proper musical instruments to use in praising the Lord (1 Chron. 5; 2 Chron. 29:25–27; Amos 6:5). Nothing that the priests and Levites did in the temple was left to chance or human invention, but was ordained by the Lord.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, the first high priest (24:1–2), were killed by the Lord for devising their own form of worship (Lev. 10).

The Levitical duties are given in verses 24–32. The Israelites were at rest in their land and no longer a nomadic people, so the Levites didn't have to carry the various parts of the tabernacle from place to place (see Num. 4). The construction of the temple meant that the Levites would need new assignments. One of their tasks would be to keep the temple clean and in good repair and make sure that the temple precincts were ceremonially pure. They also saw to it that the supply of meal was available for the offerings. Whenever the daily, monthly, and annual sacrifices were offered, the Levite choir would provide praise to the Lord.

The priests (24:1–31). It was important that the priests truly be descendants of Aaron. In David's day, he had two high priests: Zadok, a descendant of Aaron through Eleazar, and Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, who was from the line of Ithamar. Abiathar was David's friend and priest during his exile days (1 Sam. 22:20ff.) and also during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. 15:24–29). Unfortunately, Abiathar wasn't loyal to Solomon and sided with Adonijah in his quest for the throne, and Solomon had to banish him from Jerusalem (1 Kings 2:22–27). Abiathar came from the line of Eli, and that line was rejected and judged by God (1 Sam. 2:30–33). The twenty-four families (clans) of priests were assigned by lot to serve in the sanctuary at scheduled times, and the rest of the time would be in the priestly cities instructing the people. This procedure was still being followed when Zacharias served in the temple (Luke 1:5–9). He was from the clan of Abijah (1 Chron. 24:10).

The musicians (25:1–31). Apart from the ritual blowing of the trumpets (Num. 10), nowhere in the law of Moses is there any mention of music in connection with Jewish worship; yet this chapter describes an elaborate organization of twenty-four courses of singers and musicians. David was a writer of psalms and a gifted musician (2 Sam. 23:1–2; 1 Sam. 16:18), and it's likely

that the sanctuary musical worship came to fruition under his direction (1 Chron. 25:6), and the Lord approved these innovations (2 Chron. 29:25). Harps, lyres, and cymbals are mentioned here (25:1), and trumpets are mentioned elsewhere (1 Chron. 13:8; 15:24, 28; 2 Chron. 5:13; 20:28). There were also choirs (1 Chron. 15:27).

Three gifted Levites were put in charge of the instrumental music and the singing in the worship services. Asaph wrote at least twelve psalms (50, 73—83) and played the cymbals (16:5). Heman was also called “the king’s seer” (2 Sam. 25:5), which suggests that he had a special gift of discerning the Lord’s will. The Lord promised to give Heman a large family (v. 5 NIV), and all his children were musicians. Jeduthun’s name is related to “Judah” and means “praise,” a good name for a choir director. Jeduthun is also associated with Psalms 39, 62, and 77.

The word “prophesy” is used three times in 2 Samuel 25:1–3 to describe the ministry of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. The word usually refers to the ministry of the prophets in declaring God’s Word. As has often been said, “The prophets were *forth*-tellers as well as *fore*-tellers.” They spoke to present needs and didn’t just predict future events. Miriam led the women in praising the Lord, and she was called a prophetess (Ex. 15:20). The root of the Hebrew word *naba* means “to bubble, to boil up,” referring to the fervor and excitement of the prophet declaring God’s message. Others say it comes from an Arabic root that means “to announce.” The point is that the men who led Israel’s sanctuary worship were not necessarily prophets in the technical sense, but they and their singers declared the Word (God’s message) with enthusiasm and joy.

Temple officers (26:1–32). These officials included gatekeepers (vv. 1–19), treasurers (vv. 20–28), and miscellaneous officials scattered outside Jerusalem (vv. 29–32). The gatekeepers were assigned to guard the temple gates, with four guards at the north and south gates and six at the east and west gates (vv. 17–18 NLT). Four guards watched over the storehouse, and there were also guards

outside the temple area. There are details about the temple area that aren't recorded in Scripture, and this makes it difficult for us to be exact in our description.⁴ It seems that the gatekeepers watched the people come and go and made sure that nobody was deliberately defiling the temple or behaving in a way that disgraced the sanctuary of the Lord.

The treasurers (vv. 20–28) guarded the two temple treasuries, one for general offerings and the other for “dedicated things” from the people, especially the spoils of war (vv. 20–28). (See 2 Kings 12:4–16.) Saul and David added to this treasury, but so did other leaders, such as Samuel the prophet and Abner and Joab, the two generals.

The third group of temple officers (vv. 29–32) were the “officers and judges” assigned to tasks away from the temple and even west of the Jordan. They kept the king in touch with the affairs of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. But these officers were also responsible to keep these tribes involved in “every matter pertaining to God” (v. 32 NIV), that is, the all-important religious events of the nation. Separated from the other tribes, the trans-Jordanic Israelites might easily grow careless about observing the annual feasts or even the weekly Sabbaths. This explains why these officers are listed among the temple workers. It's also likely that these officers were responsible to collect taxes.

MILITARY ADMINISTRATION (27:1–34)

For Solomon to be able to build the temple, Israel had to remain a strong nation, at peace with her neighbors, for young Solomon wasn't a military genius like his father, David. It was necessary to organize the army, the tribal leaders, and the managers and counselors who served the king personally.

The captains (vv. 1–15). David's army consisted of 288,000 men—not an excessively large standing army—made up of twelve divisions of 24,000 each,

so that each man served one month out of the year. However, if a military emergency arose, the entire army could be called up. Each monthly military division was in the charge of one of David's mighty men, who are listed in 1 Chronicles 11. The twelve commanders were: Jashobeam (2 Sam. 27:2–3; see 11:11); Dodai (v. 4; see 11:12); Benaiah, head of David's personal bodyguard (vv. 5–6; see 11:22–25); Asahel, David's nephew (v. 7; see 11:26); Shamhuth (v. 8; see 11:27); Ira (v. 9; see 11:28); Helez (v. 10; see 11:27); Sibbecai (v. 11; see 11:29); Abiezer (v. 12; see 11:28); Maharai (v. 13; see 11:30); another Benaiah (v. 14; see 11:31); and Heldai (v. 15; see 11:30).

The tribal leaders (vv. 16–24). Each of the tribes had a leader (Num. 1—2; 4) and the tribes were broken down into smaller units (tens, fifties, hundreds, thousands; Ex. 18:17–23), each unit with a leader. For some reason, Gad and Asher are not mentioned in this list, but to reach the number twelve, Levi is included along with both tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). The king could summon twelve men and through them eventually get the ear of all the people.

The mention of the tribes and their leaders brings to mind David's illfated census (21:1–17; 2 Sam. 24). This extra piece of information helps us understand why the numbers differ in the two accounts (2 Sam. 24:9; 1 Chron. 21:5), because Joab didn't finish the census, and not all the numbers were recorded.

The king's managers (vv. 25–31). During Saul's reign, there was some kind of tax structure (1 Sam. 17:25), but this is not mentioned in the records of David's reign. Under Solomon, the taxes became intolerable (1 Kings 4:7, 26–28; 12:1–24). David owned royal farms, orchards, vineyards, flocks, and herds, and from these he met the needs of the palace personnel. David had storehouses for his produce, and since his tastes weren't as expensive as Solomon's, what David received from the Lord went much further.

The king's counselors (vv. 32–34). Every leader needs an inner circle of counselors who will advise him, force him to examine his own decisions and

motives, and help him seek the mind of the Lord. Jonathan, David's uncle, is given high recommendations. Jehiel appears to have been tutor to the sons in the royal family. Ahithophel had been David's trusted friend and wise adviser, but he sided with Absalom in the rebellion and committed suicide when Absalom rejected his counsel (2 Sam. 15:30–31; 16:15—17:23). Hushai was the man whose counsel was accepted by Absalom, which led to the downfall of the rebel army. Ahithophel's replacement was "Jehoiada son of Benaiah." This is probably the son of David's trusted head of the royal bodyguard, Benaiah the priest. Abiathar the priest was one of David's most trusted helpers (1 Sam. 22:20–23), and though Joab and David were not intimates, David needed the head of his army in his inner circle if only to know what he was thinking. Joab didn't always have David's interests at heart.

SINCERE CONSECRATION (28:1—29:20)

No amount of human machinery and organization can take the place of heartfelt consecration to the Lord. David was going to leave the scene, an inexperienced son would follow him, and the construction of the temple was a task beyond any one man or group of men. Apart from the blessing of the Lord, the people could not hope to succeed. Leaders come and go, but the Lord remains, and it is the Lord whom we must please.

David challenged the leaders (28:1–8). David assembled at Jerusalem the leaders mentioned in the previous chapters and reviewed for them the story of his great desire to build a temple for the Lord. It's good for people to know the heart of their leader and how God has worked in his or her heart. He emphasized that it was the Lord who chose and anointed him, and who chose Solomon to be his successor. He reminded the leaders of God's gracious covenant with the house of David and of their responsibility to obey the law of the Lord. If they kept the terms of the covenant and obeyed God, He would keep His promises

and bless the nation. As long as they obeyed the terms of God's covenant, they would possess the land and enjoy its blessings.

David charged Solomon (28:9–10). Solomon had a great responsibility to set the example and obey the law of the Lord. A “perfect heart” means a heart wholly dedicated to the Lord, one that's not divided. It's unfortunate that in his later years Solomon became a double-minded man and began to worship idols, for this led to God's discipline and the division of the kingdom. For the second time, David admonished Solomon to “be strong” (22:13), and he would do it a third time before he finished his speech (28:20). Dr. Lee Roberson has often said, “Everything rises and falls with leadership.” If leadership is faithful to the Lord and trusting in Him, God will give success.

David conveyed his gifts for the project (28:11—29:9). David's first gift to Solomon was a written plan for the temple and its furnishings (vv. 11–19). While the temple followed the pattern of the tabernacle in a general way, what Solomon built was larger and much more elaborate than what Moses built. David reminded Solomon that these plans were not suggestions from the Lord; they were a divine commission. The organization of the priests and Levites was also commanded by the Lord. Moses had to make everything according to the pattern God gave him on the mount (Ex. 25:9, 40; Heb. 8:5), and so did Solomon. The plans for the temple spelled out how much material should go into each piece of furniture and each part of the building (1 Chron. 28:13–19), and nothing was to be changed.

David's second gift was another word of encouragement to strengthen Solomon's will and his faith (v. 20). Like Moses encouraging Joshua (Deut. 31), David told Solomon that the Lord would never forsake him and that he could find in God all the wisdom and strength he needed to complete the project.⁵

The third gift Solomon received from his father was a people prepared to work with him and complete the project (1 Chron. 28:21). We've seen how David organized the various levels of leaders, both civil and religious, so they

could work harmoniously and follow their new king. Just as the Lord provided skillful people to construct the tabernacle (Ex. 35:25–35; 36:1–2), so He would provide the workers that Solomon needed to build the temple of Jehovah. This promise was fulfilled (2 Chron. 2:13–14). Furthermore, all the people would listen to their new king’s commands and obey him.

David’s fourth gift was his own store of wealth that he had accumulated for the building of the temple (29:1–5). According to 22:14, the spoils of battle devoted to the Lord amounted to 3,750 tons of gold and 37,500 tons of silver. David added from his own wealth 110 tons of gold and 260 tons of silver (v. 4). This means that David was responsible for providing 3,860 tons of gold and 37,760 tons of silver. But the king then urged his leaders to give generously to the “building fund” (29:6–9), and they contributed 190 tons of gold, plus another 185 pounds, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron, as well as precious stones. This sounds like Paul’s “gold, silver, and precious stones” (1 Cor. 3:12). The remarkable thing about the leaders and their offering is that they gave willingly and “rejoiced with great joy” at the privilege! This time we’re reminded of Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 8:1–5 and 9:7.

David called on the Lord (29:10–20). This magnificent prayer begins with praise and adoration to the Lord (vv. 10–14). God had blessed David richly, so he blesses God thankfully! His words are a short course in theology. He blesses the God of Israel and acknowledges His greatness, power, glory, victory, and majesty. God owns everything! God is sovereign over all! His name is great and glorious! But who are David and his people that they should be able to give so lavishly to the Lord? After all, everything comes from Him, and when we give, we only return to the Lord that which He has graciously already given to us.

In contrast to the eternal God, David declares that he—the king!—is like any other human, an alien and a stranger on the earth. God is eternal, but human life is brief and nobody can prevent the inevitable hour of death. (Here David sounds like Moses in Psalm 90.) Since all things come from God, and life is brief, the

wisest thing we can do is give back to God what He gives to us and make an investment in the eternal.

He assures the Lord that the offerings came from his heart and the hearts of his people, and that they gave joyfully and with sincerity. David prays that his people might always have hearts of generosity, gratitude, and joy, and that they might always be loyal to their God. In other words, may they worship God alone and not make wealth their God.

Like any godly father, David closed his prayer by interceding for his son Solomon, that he would always be obedient to what was written in the law, and that he might succeed in building the temple to the glory of God. (“Palace” in v. 19 means “any large palatial structure.”) He then called on the congregation to bless the Lord, and they obeyed and bowed low and even fell on their faces in submission and adoration. What a way to begin a building program!

JOYFUL CELEBRATION (29:21–25)

The next day, David provided sacrifices for the Lord and a feast for his leaders. The burnt offerings were sacrificed to express the people’s total dedication to the Lord. But David also offered fellowship offerings, and a part of each sacrifice was used for a fellowship meal. It was a joyful occasion that climaxed with the coronation of Solomon. It was very important that the representatives of all Israel agree that Solomon was God’s appointed king; otherwise, he could never have led them in the building of the temple. David was anointed privately by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13) and publicly at Hebron on two occasions (2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3), so he was anointed three times. At Solomon’s celebration, Zadok was anointed high priest, which suggests that Abiathar was set aside. Eventually Abiathar turned traitor and supported Adonijah and was sent into retirement (1 Kings 2:26–27, 35).

The book closes on a sober note as it records the death of King David. A

Russian proverb says, “Even the greatest king must at last be put to bed with a shovel.” True, but some bring glory to God even from the grave! From that day on, the Jewish kings were all measured against David (1 Kings 3:3; 15:5; 2 Kings 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2).

David’s legacy is a long one and a rich one. He unified the nation, gave the people peace in their land, and extended the borders of the kingdom. God chose him to establish the dynasty that eventually brought Jesus the Savior into the world. He provided much of the wealth that was used to build the temple, and the king who constructed it. He also purchased the site on which the temple would be built. God gave David the plans for the temple, and David recruited the workers to build it.

David wrote songs for the Levites to sing as they worshipped God, and he also provided the musical instruments. He organized the temple ministry and taught the people that the worship of God was the number-one priority for them and the nation. Before he died, he encouraged Solomon, challenged the leaders, and gave to the new king a united people, enthusiastic about building the house of God. Today we learn from David’s life both what to do and what to avoid. We read and meditate on David’s hymns, and sometimes we sing them to *Be Restored!*

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How is David’s life and faith still enriching the church today?

2. What parallels can be drawn between the building of the temple and the building of the church?
3. In what ways did David encourage his son Solomon concerning the building of the temple?
4. What aspect of the church was foreshadowed by the variety of people fulfilling duties in the temple?
5. Ultimately, serving God is what's important, and an organized building project is valuable only to the extent that it contributes to God's service. How can you contribute to your church's service to God?
6. What four gifts did David give Solomon?
7. What gifts will you give or leave behind for your children and your church?
8. What can we learn about God and life from David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10–20?
9. How would you summarize David's legacy?

10. What are the most important things you have learned from your study of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles? What will you do in response to what you've learned?

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. It's interesting that 1 Samuel records the scene of a messenger bringing bad news of defeat to Eli the priest (1 Sam. 4), and here a similar messenger brings what he thought was good news to David the king. Eli keeled over and died, but here the messenger was slain. In 1 Samuel, the ark was taken by the enemy, but later recovered by Israel; here the bodies of the royal family were taken and later recovered and buried.
2. Saul's death reminds us of Revelation 3:11: "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (NKJV).
3. King Saul's namesake, Saul of Tarsus, began his ministry by falling (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14), but at the end of his life, we see him standing boldly with his Lord (2 Tim. 4:16–17).
4. The KJV gives the impression that David wrote this song to encourage young men to learn how to use the bow, but the Hebrew text doesn't support this. The elegy was called "The Song of the Bow" possibly because of the reference to Jonathan's bow in verse 22. The name identified the tune that was used to sing the song. Certainly David wasn't encouraging the archers to practice more because Saul and Jonathan lost the battle, because his song extols their military prowess.
5. The Hebrew word translated "glory" can also be translated "gazelle." David saw Saul as a majestic deer that had been slain on the mountain.
6. "The sword devours" (i.e., eats, drinks) is a familiar metaphor in the Old Testament (Deut. 32:42; 2 Sam. 2:26; 11:25; Isa. 31:8; Jer. 12:12). Saul's sword devoured much blood and was satisfied.
7. It appears that the tribe of Judah, while cooperating with Saul and the other tribes, had been maintaining somewhat of a "separated" posture in those

days (see 1 Sam. 11:8; 15:4; 17:52; 18:16; 30:26).

8. David was anointed three times: first privately by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13), then publicly by the elders and people of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4), and finally publicly by the whole nation (5:3).

CHAPTER 2

1. The name “baal” also belonged to Saul’s granduncle (1 Chron. 9:36); and Jonathan’s lame son, Mephibosheth, was also called “Merib-Baal” (1 Chron. 8:34).
2. Joab was David’s nephew, but David didn’t seem to have much control over him (see 2 Sam. 3:39; 18:5, 14.) At the end of David’s reign, Joab conspired to make David’s son Adonijah the next king; when Solomon took the throne, he had Joab executed for treason (1 Kings 2).
3. According to 2 Samuel 17:25, Zeruiah was either David’s half sister or stepsister. Whoever she was, Zeruiah certainly was the mother of three remarkable men.
4. First Chronicles 27:7 tells us that Asahel’s son Zebadiah succeeded his father as commander of his division.
5. There’s an interesting pattern in 2 Samuel in which you find a list of names (children or officials) at the end of historical sections: 1:1—3:5; 3:6—5:16; 5:17—8:18; 9:1—20:26.
6. The situation reminds us of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). Abner, the “prodigal soldier,” was coming home, and David gave him a banquet. Joab, the faithful “elder brother,” might say to David, “I’ve been faithful to you and risked my life, and yet you never gave me a banquet!”

CHAPTER 3

1. How could this many people converge on Hebron and eat and drink for three

days without upsetting the town and its economy? Where would all the food come from? First Chronicles 13:1 may give us the answer. While the chronicler gives us the totals of the military units loyal to David, perhaps only the officers of these military units attended the coronation, a total of about 3,750 men. Not every soldier was present, but every soldier was represented and through his officer gave his allegiance to the new king.

2. The name “Eliphelet” is found twice in the list and is also given as “Elpelet.”
3. If the brave deed of the three mighty men occurred at this time, then David was in the cave of Adullam (2 Sam. 23:13).
4. Some Old Testament scholars put this event later in David’s career, after David’s sin with Bathsheba and his numerous battles against his enemies (2 Sam. 8—12). See *A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles* by William Day Crockett (Baker Book House, 1964).
5. It’s not likely that these sacrifices were offered after every six steps as the procession moved toward Jerusalem. That would have made for a very long journey and would have required a great number of sacrifices. Once David was sure of God’s approval, they marched on with confidence.

CHAPTER 4

1. The word “covenant” isn’t used in 2 Samuel 7 but David used it in 23:5 when referring to the revelation given to him through Nathan.
2. Most scholars have concluded that Bathshua and Bathsheba were the same person. It was not unusual for a person in the ancient world to have more than one name, or the name have more than one spelling.
3. First Chronicles 22:8 and 28:1–3 inform us that the fact that David shed much blood was another reason why God chose Solomon to build the temple.
4. In His covenant with Abraham, God promised him many descendants and later compared their number to the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16) and the

stars of the heaven (Gen. 15:1–6), suggesting an earthly people and a heavenly people. The Jews are God’s earthly people and are promised an earthly kingdom, but all who trust Christ are of the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:1–18) because all of us are saved by faith, not by obeying the law.

5. This is the third of four “official lists” found in 2 Samuel, and each one closes a major division of the book: 1:1—3:5 (David’s sons in Hebron); 3:6—5:16 (David’s sons in Jerusalem); 5:17—8:18 (David’s officers in Jerusalem); and 9:1—20:26 (David’s officers later in his reign). See also note 5 in chapter 2.
6. One school of interpreters feels that David was only putting Mephibosheth under “house arrest” to make certain that he didn’t create any problems in the kingdom. Subsequent events proved that it was Ziba the manager who needed to be watched. And how much damage could a crippled young man do to Israel’s greatest king? David brought Mephibosheth to his palace table, not to protect himself but to show his love to him for his father’s sake.
7. Kindness (mercy) is sometimes connected with the making of a covenant. (See Deut. 7:9, 12; Josh. 2:12; 1 Sam. 20:8, 14–17; Dan. 9:4.)
8. Keep in mind that 2 Samuel wasn’t written in chronological order, and verses like 8:12 are summaries of wars that the writer describes later.
9. In a prior battle, David was nearly killed by a giant named Ishbi-benob, and his nephew Abishai rescued him. At that time, the military leaders told David not to go to war anymore (2 Sam. 21:15–17), and he complied. His appearance at the Syrian campaign (10:15–19) was to take charge of troop movements but not to engage in hand-to-hand combat.

CHAPTER 5

1. There is no account of David’s great sins found in 1 Chronicles. The book was written from the viewpoint of the priesthood; the emphasis is on the greatness of the kings, not their sins. David and Solomon are described as

“ideal rulers.”

2. Isaac Watts, “Divine Songs for Children” (1715).
3. The word *sent* is repeated often in chapters 11 and 12. See 11:1, 3, 4, 5, 6 (twice), 14, 18, 22, 27; 12:1, 25, 27. David’s sins kept a lot of people on the move!
4. *Professor Blaiklock’s Handbook of Bible People*, by E. M. Blaiklock (London: Scripture Union, 1979), 210.
5. Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons* (Charlottesville, VA: Ibis Publishing, 1987), 114.
6. Saul used the words “I have sinned” three times, but didn’t mean them (1 Sam. 15:24, 30; 26:21). David said “I have sinned” seven times (2 Sam. 12:13; 24:10, 17; 1 Chron. 21:8, 17; Ps. 41:4; 51:4). David was the Prodigal Son of the Old Testament, who repented and “came home” to find forgiveness (Luke 15:18, 21). For others who used these words, see Exodus 9:27; Numbers 22:34; Joshua 7:20; 2 Samuel 19:20; and Matthew 27:4.
7. As with Jonah and the city of Nineveh, God’s decree of judgment can be interrupted by the repentance of the people involved. (Nineveh didn’t fall until over a century later.) The prediction that Bathsheba’s baby would die was fulfilled that week because God chose to act at that time. God’s character and purposes don’t change, but He does change His timing and His methods to accomplish His purposes.
8. Since Scripture gives no definitive revelation on the subject of infant salvation, theologians have wrestled with the problem and good and godly believers disagree. For a balanced and compassionate theological study, see *When a Baby Dies* by Ronald H. Nash (Zondervan, 1999).

CHAPTER 6

1. Even after his death, Absalom’s name and memory reminded people of evil

(2 Sam. 20:6; 1 Kings 2:7, 28; 15:2, 10; 2 Chron. 11:20–21).

2. It's likely that David's second son, Chileab (or Daniel), died young, for apart from the royal genealogy, he is not mentioned in the biblical account (1 Chron. 3:1).
3. Perhaps she was thinking of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 20:12), but that was before the law of Moses.
4. When Dinah was raped (Gen. 34), it was her full brothers Simeon and Levi who avenged her (see Gen. 29:32–35; 30:17–21).
5. The Hebrew for "Amnon" is a diminutive form: "Has that little Amnon been with you?" Absalom didn't hide his utter dislike for his half brother.
6. Did anybody know that Solomon was God's choice for the next king? Perhaps not, for the Lord hadn't revealed it. According to some chronologists, Solomon's birth occurred before Amnon's sin against Tamar, but Bathsheba had given birth to three other sons before she gave birth to Solomon (2 Sam. 5:14; 1 Chron. 3:5; 14:4). God promised David that one of his sons would succeed him and build the temple (2 Sam. 7:12–15), but it isn't recorded that He announced the name of the son at that time. Amnon and Absalom had already been born, and the announcement sounds as if the designated son would be born in the future. First Chronicles 22:6–10 indicates that at some point the Lord had told David that Solomon would be his successor (see 28:6–10; 29:1). Whether they knew it or not, both Amnon and Absalom were fighting a losing battle.
7. It seems strange that Jonadab would make this announcement, because by doing so, he was almost confessing that he knew something about the plot. However, David and his servants knew that Jonadab was Amnon's confidant, and no doubt they concluded that he and Amnon had discussed Absalom's attitude and concluded that there was danger in the air. Jonadab was too shrewd a man to implicate himself before the king.
8. See "Of Revenge" in *The Essays of Francis Bacon*.

9. God solved this problem for lost sinners by sending His Son to die on the cross, and thus He upheld the law but at the same time provided salvation for all who trust Christ. See Romans 3:19–31.
10. How heavy was the hair that Absalom’s barber cut from his head? It all depends on the weight of the “royal shekel” (v. 26). If it was 11.5 grams, then the haircut produced about five pounds of hair. Baldness was ridiculed in Israel (2 Kings 2:23).
11. The parallels between Absalom and Samson are interesting. Both were distinguished by their hair, for Samson was a Nazirite (Judg. 13:1–5), and both set fields on fire (Judg. 15:4–5). The loss of his hair caused Samson’s defeat (Judg. 16:17ff.), and it’s probable that Absalom’s thick hair helped to trap his head in the tree branches, where Joab found him and killed him (2 Sam. 18:9–17).

CHAPTER 7

1. The word “demagogue” comes from two Greek words: *demos* (people) and *agogos* (guiding). A true leader uses his authority to help people, but a demagogue uses people to gain authority. Demagogues pretend to be concerned about the needs of the people, but their only concern is to get into power and enjoy the fruits of their dishonesty.
2. Hebrew texts vary from “four” to “forty.” If forty is the correct number, we don’t know the starting point—forty years from what event? Some chronologists date Absalom’s rebellion at between 1023 and 1027 BC. This would be approximately forty years from David’s anointing by Samuel, but why select that event? It seems reasonable to accept “four” as the correct number and date it from Absalom’s reconciliation with his father (14:33).
3. Most students identify Psalms 3, 4, 41, 55, 61–63, and 143 as “exile psalms,” and some add Psalms 25, 28, 58, and 109. Both Psalms 41 and 55 indicate

that David was not well, and see 61:6–7. If indeed David was ill, then he was unable to meet the people and hear their problems; and Absalom took advantage of this situation.

4. David once lied about attending a feast as a device to deceive King Saul (1 Sam. 20:6). Thus do our sins find us out.
5. David faced a similar test when he was serving as commander of the bodyguard of Achish, king of the Philistines (1 Sam. 29).
6. David's statement "Behold, here am I" reminds us of Abraham (Gen. 22:1, 11), Jacob (Gen. 31:11; 46:2), Moses (Ex. 3:4), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4, 16), and Isaiah (Isa. 6:8). It is a statement of surrender.
7. *God Tells the Man Who Cares* (Christian Publications, 1970), 9.
8. It was at Bahurim that David's wife Michal said good-bye to her second husband as she was returned to David, and the man wept bitterly (3:13–16). Now it was David who was weeping.

CHAPTER 8

1. In 279 BC, the army of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, defeated the Romans at Asculum at such great cost that he said, "One more such victory and we are lost."
2. For a detailed study of the speeches of Ahithophel and Hushai, and why God used Hushai's counsel, see chapters 1–4 of my book *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination* (Baker Books).
3. The word in 18:14 translated "darts" in the KJV and "javelins" in the NIV can mean rod, staff, or even scepter. They were probably javelins sharpened at one end. Joab thrust them into Absalom's body, and then the ten men around the tree finished the job.
4. The scene reminds us of Eli the priest waiting at the gate for news concerning the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 4:12ff.).

5. This is the familiar Hebrew word *shalom*, which among other things means “peace, health, well-being.” David uses the word in his questions: “Is the young man Absalom *shalom*?” (vv. 29, 32).
6. *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 24, 505.

CHAPTER 9

1. “The people” in 2 Samuel is a phrase that identifies David’s followers, especially his army. See 15:17, 23–24, 30; 16:14; 17:2–3, 16, 22; 18:1–4, 6, 16; 19:2–3, 8–9, 39. Another term for his army is “the servants of David” (2:13, 15, 17, 30–31; 3:22; 8:2, 6, 14; 10:2, 4; 11:9, 11, 13, 17; 12:18; 15:15; 16:6; 18:7, 9; 19:6; 20:6).
2. Shimei identified himself with “the house of Joseph” (v. 20), and this is the first time this phrase is used in the Old Testament. It refers to the ten tribes headed by Ephraim, Joseph’s younger son. The ten northern tribes were often called “Ephraim” or “sons of Joseph.”
3. The KJV translation “to Jerusalem” in verse 25 should read, “from Jerusalem.”
4. The “Absalom episode” began with David kissing Absalom after his son’s two years of house arrest (14:33), and ended with David kissing Barzillai.
5. *Henry IV, Part 2*, act 3, scene 1.

CHAPTER 10

1. Joab killed Abner because Abner had killed Joab’s brother Asahel, and it was done near Gibeon, where Joab met Amasa (2:12ff.). Perhaps the memory of his brother’s murder aroused Joab, even though Amasa had nothing to do with it.
2. Why the Gibeonites didn’t bring the matter before David much earlier is a mystery, for as resident aliens in the land, they had their civil rights. During the first part of his reign, David was securing and extending the kingdom,

and in the last years he was dealing with the troubles caused by his own sins, so perhaps it took time to get the king's ear. By sending drought and famine, the Lord kept the terms of the covenant (Lev. 26:18–20; Deut. 28:23–24).

3. The law of Moses gave resident aliens certain rights, and Israel was warned not to oppress the strangers in the land (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 24:17). Apparently neither Joshua's vow nor the law of Moses restrained Saul from trying to liquidate the Gibeonites.
4. But David also made a similar promise to Saul (1 Sam. 24:20–22), and here he was having Saul's descendants slain. However, the killing of five men wasn't the equivalent of wiping out all of a man's family.
5. We're told in 6:23 that Michal died without having any children, so the text should read Merab (see NIV). She was Saul's daughter by Ahinoam (1 Sam. 14:49) and was married to Adriel (1 Sam. 18:17–19).
6. The Hebrew text reads "descendants of Rapha." The word means "giant" (Deut. 2:11, 20; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; 17:15; 1 Chron. 20:4, 6, 8).

CHAPTER 11

1. In Ezekiel 1, the prophet saw God's glorious throne on a magnificent crystal platform, with cherubim at each corner, like "wheels" carrying the throne from place to place. The image of God's throne like a chariot reminds us that He can come down from heaven to help His people and nothing can thwart Him.
2. Light as an image of God is frequently found in Scripture (Ps. 84:11; Isa. 60:19–20; Ezek. 1:4, 27; Dan. 2:22; Mic. 7:8; Mal. 4:2; Luke 2:32; John 8:12; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 1:5; Rev. 21:23).

CHAPTER 12

1. In the Old Testament, God viewed the rulers of Israel as shepherds, which

explains passages like Jeremiah 10:21, 12:10, 23:1–8, 25:36; Ezekiel 34:1–18; Zechariah 10:2, 11:15–17. The word “pastor” means “shepherd.”

2. Second Samuel 8:13 gives David credit for the great victory against the Edomites, while 1 Chronicles 18:12 attributes the victory to Abishai. The inscription of Psalm 60 states that Joab was also a part of the event. It's likely that David was in charge and Joab and his brother Abishai commanded the field forces. It was customary in those days for the king to get the credit for such victories (see 2 Sam. 12:26–31).
3. For an excellent comparative chart of David's mighty men, see pages 478–479 of the Old Testament volume of *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck (Victor).
4. Some students think that the three who brought the water from the Bethlehem well were the men named in verses 8–12, but verse 13 seems to indicate they were a different trio, a part of “The Thirty.”
5. The two terms “The Three” and “The Thirty” are found frequently in this chapter. For “The Three” see verses 9, 13, 16–19, 22, 23; for “The Thirty” see verses 13, 23–24. In 1 Chronicles 11, “The Three” are mentioned in verses 12, 15, 18–21, 24, 25; and “The Thirty” in verses 15, 25, and 42.
6. For a study of these four appearances of Satan and how they apply to believers today, see my book *The Strategy of Satan* (Tyndale House).
7. First Chronicles 21:5 records 1,100,000 men, but we need to remember that Joab didn't complete the census (1 Chron. 27:23–24) and different sums were recorded at different times during the nine months of the survey. Also, note that 2 Samuel 24:9 specifies “800,000 valiant men,” that is, an experienced standing army, while there could have been another 300,000 men who were of age but not seasoned in battle. This gives us the 1,100,000 total of 1 Chronicles 21:5.
8. The prophet Gad first appears in Scripture after David fled from Saul (1 Sam. 22:5). He must have been an expert on Jewish liturgy because he assisted

David in organizing the Levites for their part in the temple worship services. He also kept an official record of the events of David's reign (1 Chron. 29:29).

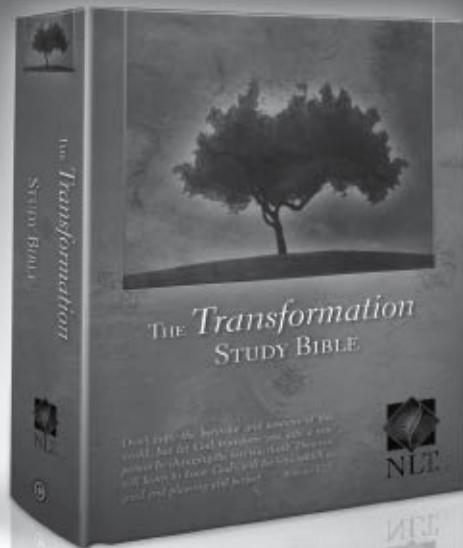
9. More than once God sent plagues to Israel to chasten His people (Num. 11:31–34; 14:36–38; 16:46–50; 21:4–9; 26:9–10). Of course, this was in agreement with His covenant, which the people had broken.

CHAPTER 13

1. It's too bad that many well-meaning preachers misinterpret 1 Corinthians 3:9–23 and preach about “building your life.” You can make that application, but the basic interpretation has to do with building the local church. For an exposition of this passage, see my book *Be Wise* (Victor).
2. The psalm certainly fits David's experiences described in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21. His pride led him to sin and the nation was under the penalty of death. But God answered his plea for deliverance, and His anger lasted for a short time.
3. Adoram wasn't a popular man. After Solomon's death, Solomon's son Rehoboam took the throne. The people were tired of Solomon's taxes and vast building programs, and they stoned Adoram to death (2 Kings 11:18).
4. First Chronicles 26:18 in the KJV has been a popular verse with people who like to criticize the Scriptures: “At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar.” What does “Parbar” mean? Many Hebrew scholars say it means “colonnade” and refers to an area west of the temple proper. The NLT reads, “Six were assigned each day to the west gate, four to the gateway leading up to the Temple, and two to the courtyard.” A footnote says that “courtyard” could also be translated “colonnade,” but “the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.”
5. Forgive a personal note at this point. Back in the fifties, when I was pastoring

my first church, the Lord led us into a building program. I'm not a builder and I have a problem even reading a blueprint, and I was very worried. One day in my personal devotional time, during the course of my regular Bible reading, I came to 1 Chronicles 28:20, and the Lord gave it to me as His promise of success. It carried me through.

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