



## How to Use the Prophets & Kings Reading Guide

We hope you find this reading guide beneficial. Pastor Andrew is always encouraging the congregation to read the book(s) we are going through along with the series, and we wanted to provide a tool that would both encourage you and help you in that endeavor.

This reading guide breaks down 2 Samuel, so you can read through the book throughout the Prophets & Kings series. We have also provided an introduction to 1 & 2 Samuel to help you get an understanding of the general context. Read through that before you begin the daily reading. Here are the steps:

- 01 Pray for Wisdom**

Paul says that only the Spirit can know the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11), and James says that it is God who gives wisdom (James 1:5). So, praying to God for wisdom in studying his word is essential to Bible reading.
- 02 Read the Passage/Commentary**

Read the verses selected, and try to interpret them on your own. Then, after you have thought about them, read the commentary for the day to see if there were some things that you missed.
- 03 Pray the Bible**

Were there things that the passage told you about God that you can praise and thank him for? Were there things taught about the Christian life that you struggle to obey? Pray for the desire and the strength to obey those things.



## A Small Note about the 2 Samuel Introduction

You may or may not know that 1 and 2 Samuel were actually written as one book, but they were split when the OT was translated into Greek because the scrolls weren't quite long enough. And so, the following introduction is a very brief overview of the context of Samuel as a whole and what has happened leading up to the start of our beginning passage: 2 Samuel 4.

## Setting the Scene

After delivering the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt through Moses and bringing them into the Promised Land by the hand of Joshua, God provided the people of Israel with judges to lead them in their conquering of the rest of the land of Canaan. Yet, even before God brought them into the land, he made a covenant with them that if they obeyed his commands and worshiped him only, they would live forever in the land with peace and fruitfulness (Deut. 28:1-9). But if they disobeyed, curses would come upon them in the form of oppression by foreigners, famine, and disease (Deut. 28:47-48).

It wasn't too long after they made it into the Promised Land, still inhabited by the Canaanites, that the people began worshiping other gods. God then sent the surrounding peoples to come oppress the Israelites. Then, weary from oppression, Israel would cry out to God for salvation, and God would see their suffering and send a new judge to come and deliver them. But soon after, they would turn back to other gods. This cycle is the driving theme of the book of Judges. The book ends on a very somber note: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). What the people needed was not a temporary judge, but a king who would be obedient to the word of God, leading his people to do the same so that they could flourish in the land that God had promised. The book of Samuel is the record of God addressing this problem.

## 1 Samuel

The Book of 1 Samuel picks up the story where the book of Judges left off. The beginning speaks of the background of Samuel the prophet and how, before Samuel was called, "the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision" (1 Sam 3:1b). After Samuel's call, and as he is maturing, things get worse. The corrupt priesthood died for their sin, Israel lost a battle with the Philistines, and the ark of God is captured with the understanding that "the glory [of God] has departed from Israel" (1 Sam. 4:22). The curses of the covenant have come. Is there a faithful king who will bring restoration and healing to Israel?

God calls Samuel to be his prophet and to bring the word of the Lord to the people. The Israelites clamor for a king (1 Sam. 8:19-20), but their desire was for a king like the other kings of the world who would give them military victory. So, God has Samuel appoint for them Saul (1 Sam. 9), a man after Israel's own heart. But the story of Saul is not a good one. Saul, while having some military victory, is ultimately disobedient to God, and God rejects him (1 Samuel 13). God then anoints David as king, a man after his own heart, a man who would submit himself to God and allow God to fight his battles for him (1 Sam. 15-16).

Saul becomes infuriated that David has the favor of God on him and pursues David to kill him. Meanwhile, David forms a deep bond of friendship with Saul's son Jonathan, the heir to Saul's throne. Jonathan helps David escape the wrath of his father, and the rest of 1 Samuel is about Saul's pursuit of David (1 Sam. 18-30) and David conquering parts of the land by God's hand. Saul experiences great military losses while David is gaining victory and acclaim. At the end of 1 Samuel, Saul and three of his sons (Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchi-shua) are killed in battle by the Philistines. It is the very people that Saul was afraid to fight in the battle with Goliath who bring Saul to his end.

## The Opening of 2 Samuel

The first three chapters are setting up the great reversal. David will be faithful where Saul failed. When God had commanded Saul to eliminate the Amalekites, Saul disobediently spared one of their kings (1 Sam. 15), but in the beginnings of 2 Samuel, David has an Amalekite killed that is seeking to win David's approval by claiming to have killed Saul. David is confirmed as king by the people of the south (Judah) while Saul's remaining son, Ish-bosheth, is named king over the north (Israel) by the commander of Saul's army, Abner.

The forces of Saul and of David begin fighting each other for control of the kingdom. Yet, because of an internal conflict, Abner, Saul's commander, decides to join David. But some of David's men, to the great agony of David, use this as an opportunity to kill Abner in revenge. All that is now stopping David's reign over all Israel, to unite the north and the south under God, is Saul's remaining son and grandson, Ish-bosheth and Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan.

This catches us up to our first passage, 2 Samuel 4. Saul's commander Abner has just been killed, and Ish-bosheth, upon hearing the news, knows that his own reign and life are drawing near an end. He is becoming terrified of his future, but his end won't come by the decision of David.

## Read 2 Samuel 4:1-12

1 When Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died at Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed. 2 Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of raiding bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon a man of Benjamin from Beeroth (for Beeroth also is counted part of Benjamin; 3 the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there to this day). 4 Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth. 5 Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ish-bosheth as he was taking his noonday rest. 6 And they came into the midst of the house as if to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. 7 When they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and put him to death and beheaded him. They took his head and went by the way of the Arabah all night, 8 and brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron. And they said to the king, "Here is the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life. The Lord has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring." 9 But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, "As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, 10 when one told me, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news. 11 How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and destroy you from the earth?" 12 And David commanded his young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hanged them beside the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.

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It appears that Baanah and Rechab saw the kingdom of Ish-bosheth as a sinking ship. The Lord had certainly given favor to David, and the time for his rule over all Israel was close. So, seemingly to try and get into the good graces of David, they murder Ish-bosheth and proclaim joyfully to David that it was the Lord who had avenged David through their hands; now, the entire kingdom could be his. But over and over again in the book of Samuel, David shows that he knows the Lord and his desires, and murder is not one of them. David would not stoop to unjust war to take the kingdom by his own hands—God had given him everything. While it was ultimately God who allowed the murderous action of Baanah and Rechab for his purposes of bringing the man after his own heart to power, David had one thing on his mind: faithfulness. Even though the people were doing "what was right in their own eyes," David showed that he was the godly king that Israel needed. And so, David justly brings them under capital punishment for their murder. No matter what God is doing, we are called

to be faithful to what he has commanded us, and David, here, provides a good example of that by waiting for the Lord to bring him the kingdom he promised. Lastly, look at verse 4 and remember Jonathan's son Mephibosheth as he appears later in the story.

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## Read 2 Samuel 5:1-5

1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. 2 In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'" 3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. 4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

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After Ish-bosheth's murder, the rest of the tribes of Israel sent their elders to David to pledge their loyalty to him at the capital of Judah, Hebron. Several things happen here: 1) the tribes of Israel appeal to David based on their "flesh and bone" relationship to David, 2) they acknowledge that David was their true leader in battle even when Saul was king, and 3) they recognize that God called David to be Israel's "shepherd" and "prince." With these acknowledgments from the people, David (called King David for the first time) makes a covenant with the northern tribes of Israel and becomes their king. And so now, the man after God's own heart, the Lord's anointed, has become king over all God's people. Who has God, in his word, called us to honor, respect, or submit to that we aren't: parents (Eph. 6:1), pastors (Heb. 13:17), governmental authorities (Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-14)?

## Read 2 Samuel 5:6-8

6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"—thinking, "David cannot come in here." 7 Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. 8 And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack 'the lame and the blind,' who are hated by David's soul." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house."

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David, seeking to have his capital be Jerusalem and not Hebron, moves to take the city from the people who currently live there, the Jebusites. The only time that Jerusalem is ever mentioned in the Old Testament before 2 Samuel is in Gen. 14:18 when it talks about the King of Salem who is also a priest to God Most High—God has some special connection to this city. The interchange between the Jebusites and David leaves commentators perplexed. The most obvious answer is that the Jebusites felt so secure in Jerusalem that they were not afraid to tell David that even "the lame and the blind" will be able to keep his forces out. But David was successful and took Jerusalem, also called Zion. David's response is hard to interpret, but it seems as if he sarcastically was using the terms "blind and lame" to address all of the Jebusites since they were unable to keep him out of Jerusalem.

## Read 2 Samuel 5:9-16

9 And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward. 10 And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him. 11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also carpenters and masons who built David a house. 12 And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. 13 And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David. 14 And these are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, 15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, 16 Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

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David takes Jerusalem for himself, naming it the City of David and building it up, and David's renown and power as king grows among his people and to other nations because the Lord is with him. His broad reach is seen when another king, Hiram, the king of Tyre, sends David supplies and workers to build a temple for him. David saw all of these events and noticed two things: 1) that God had surely made him king over Israel, and 2) that God had done this for the sake of the people of Israel, since God had made a promise to their ancestors (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) to bring his people into this land and to make them flourish (Deut. 6:10-11). But David is still human, and we see a glimpse of sin in King David's heart as he multiplied wives in direct disobedience to God's requirements for future kings of Israel (Deut. 17:17). Even the most anointed servants of God are not guaranteed to remain faithful and must fight against the temptations of the world constantly.<sup>i</sup>

## Read 2 Samuel 5:17-25

17 When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. 18 Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. 19 And David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?" And the Lord said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." 20 And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood." Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. 21 And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away. 22 And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. 23 And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. 24 And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." 25 And David did as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer.

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The Philistines, who see David and the Israelites as the blockage in the way of conquering the land, try to face David and defeat him so that the newly-united Israelite kingdom might be plunged into chaos. But the following stories of David's attacks on the Philistines show one major point, David was submitted to doing things God's way and allowing God to bring him the victory. The line in verse 25 is a stark contrast to the reign of Saul, "David did as the Lord command him." God's anointed was finally ruling over Israel. When it says in verse 21 that the Philistines left their idols there and David's forces carried them away, it was a showing that the gods of the Philistines had been defeated. Yahweh (i.e. the name of God) was victorious.

## Read 2 Samuel 6:1-5

1 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim. 3 And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, 4 with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark. 5 And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

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The ark of God was associated with the presence of the Lord. It seemed only right that after David conquered Jerusalem and established his capital there that the presence of the Lord ought to rest within the city of David. The ark had caused trouble for the Philistines after they captured it, bringing tumors among the people because they were not in covenant with God (1 Sam. 5). So, the Philistines returned it to the Israelites, and it eventually resided in Abinadab's house in Kiriath-jearim (here called Baale-judah) (1 Sam. 7:1). So, David and his chosen men went to retrieve the ark and bring it to Jerusalem. The worship and celebration of all Israel was out of joy and thanksgiving that God had given them great victory in the land and was finally coming to rest in the city that was seen as the center and symbol of the Israelite kingdom. The glory of God had returned, and God's chosen ruler was in place. Yahweh is a God who is faithful to his promises.

## Read 2 Samuel 6:6-11

6 And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. 7 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God. 8 And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. 9 And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" 10 So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David. But David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11 And the ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

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Many people look to a passage like this and say, "See. The God of the Old Testament is all wrath and condemnation." But there are some interesting things here that make it much deeper. First of all, we must understand that God had given particular commands as to how the ark was to be moved. It was not to be driven on a cart but placed on the shoulders of Levites with poles. David himself admits this error in 1 Chron. 15:12-15 (cf. Num. 4:15). Had the ark not been on a cart, Uzzah wouldn't have had to try to keep it from falling. But God shows that Uzzah presumed too much when he touched the ark, which carried with it God's holiness. A sinner cannot live in the presence of God, and so God must be worshiped carefully according to his commands. But thank the Lord that in Jesus Christ, we are cleansed of our sin by the blood of his sacrifice, and we can now come into God's presence with boldness and confidence (Heb. 10:19-22). David asks, "Well how in the world can the ark come to me in Jerusalem? Am I not a sinner like Uzzah?" And so, they put it in Obed-edom's house, and the Lord blesses the whole household because of it. God's presence means blessing for those who are in a right relationship with him.

## Read 2 Samuel 6:12-15

12 And it was told King David, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing. 13 And when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal. 14 And David danced before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. 15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn.

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The blessing of Obed-edom's house proved to David that God was not angry with them. He desired to bless them with his presence, but he would be honored as holy and worshiped according to his demands. No one ought to be casual around God. He is our Father, but he is also our Creator and Ruler. The Israelites learned their lesson as we see that the people "bore" the ark instead of putting it on a cart. As David understood what was about to be completed in the bringing of the ark into the city, he began to worship with all that he had. The note that David was wearing a linen ephod is to show that, in this instance, he was acting in the office of priest, inviting people to worship God with him. Although not a Levite, the king of Israel often performed priestly duties. This seems to be a clear allusion to the coming king from David, Jesus Christ, who is both our king and great high priest. The presence of God among his people brought great joy and worship to the Israelites. Now that God has given Christians his intimate presence by giving them of his Holy Spirit, we ought to worship the Lord just as fervently as David.

## Read 2 Samuel 6:16

16 As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart.

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There is nothing explicit in this verse that tells us why Michal despised David, but there is a literary cue.<sup>ii</sup> The author refers to her as the “daughter of Saul,” even though she was the wife of David. There was no longer any chance for the line of Saul to regain the kingdom, and now David’s reign was coming in full, and God was blessing it. One can imagine that she was disgusted that David could celebrate so heartily when the line of Saul had come to such a tragic end. She also might have been bitter about David’s tearing her away from her last husband (2 Sam. 3:13-16). Are we resentful of God when he does powerful things through others and not through us?

## Read 2 Samuel 6:17-19

17 And they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. 18 And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts 19 and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house.

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David, here, in his installing the ark of God in Jerusalem, continues in role of priest by sacrificing for the people and proclaiming blessings over them. But he also takes the role of king by feeding his people.<sup>iii</sup> This ought to push our thoughts to the Lord’s Supper where the food and drink that Jesus offers his people also signifies the sacrifice that he would make before God for his people (Luke 22:14-20). And all of Israel would have been celebrating and expecting the kingdom of God—God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule—to come in full at any time. God’s presence had returned to the Promised Land under his appointed ruler, David.

## Read 2 Samuel 6:20-23

20 And David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" 21 And David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord—and I will celebrate before the Lord. 22 I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor." 23 And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

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The focus on this text is often on David's dancing so hard that he exposed himself. But if we are careful readers, then there is reason to not take everything at face value. Michal is once again referred to as the daughter of Saul, and she starts with a sarcastic comment: "How the king honored himself today . . ." It could be understood that she embellished what she saw because she despised David. But regardless, David responds that he did not uncover himself before the servant girls but before God. He saw his worship as pure, and he uncovers her heart posture by reminding her that it was God's choice that he was set as king above Saul and above all his house (Michal's brothers), and he will celebrate God because of this. The statement that David is going to become even more debased in Michal's eyes is probably a prophetic statement that Michal would bear him no children to be heirs. And verse 23 confirms that she didn't. The line of Saul would come to end, and David's throne (as we shall soon see) will be established forever.

## Read 2 Samuel 7:1-3

1 Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, 2 the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” 3 And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

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God had, for the most part, given David rest from his struggle for a kingdom. He was the established king in Jerusalem, the kingdom was unified, and no one was trying to take his throne. It is in this period of rest that David’s thoughts turn to God and worship.<sup>iv</sup> David had an enormous palace, but he had only put the ark of God in a tent. How could this thing be? Nathan the prophet, seeing David’s desire to build God a temple as a good desire, tells David to go through with his plans. When God has given us success and rest, and all seems to be right with the world, where does our mind go? Does it go to the things of God? Or does it go to our own visions for the future?

## Read 2 Samuel 7:4-7

4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, 5 “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. 7 In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?””

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It appears that Nathan had only spoken out of wisdom before but then later receives a direct word from God to give to David. God asks David to think through all of the history of Israel and see if he’s ever asked for a house (or temple) to be built for him. He’s not that type of God. He is a humble God who seeks to dwell with his people in their joys and sufferings.

## Read 2 Samuel 7:8-11

8 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

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What is it that David did to make himself great? God called him from the pasture and made him king. It was God who cut down David's enemies. It is God who is working for the reputation of David. It was God who brought the Israelites into the Promised Land and will plant them there in peace. It is God who will give David rest from his enemies. And so, just as it has always been, God will do it all for David. David will not make for God a house, but God will make David a house, a dynasty. In 1 Chron. 22:8 God tells David that it is because David is a man of war that he will not build God a house. God's house will be built by a Prince of Peace. First, a physical temple will be built by David's son Solomon (which means peaceful), but ultimately, God's spiritual house will be built on and through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:20-22).

## Read 2 Samuel 7:12-17

12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” 17 In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

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This is the covenant with David. It is one of the most important passages for understanding the rest of the Scriptural timeline. While what God says here will be true in the near term in Solomon and Solomon’s descendants, the idea that God will establish David’s throne and kingdom “forever,” means so much more. In the centuries to come, Israel and Judah will be conquered and brought into exile in foreign lands because of their idolatry. During the period of the exile, prophets begin to speak of a root of Jesse (David’s father; Isa. 11:1-5) who would restore the kingdom to Israel and be the fulfillment of all of God’s promises to David. This person came to be known as the anointed one (Hebrew: Messiah Greek: Christ). It is this covenant with David that establishes that the Messiah would be a son of David.

## Read 2 Samuel 7:18-29

18 Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? 19 And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God! 20 And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God! 21 Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. 22 Therefore you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? 24 And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God. 25 And now, O Lord God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. 26 And your name will be magnified forever, saying, 'The Lord of hosts is God over Israel,' and the house of your servant David will be established before you. 27 For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. 28 And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. 29 Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever."

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David's pattern for worship here is something to be modeled. 1) He acknowledges that it was God who accomplished everything for him, and this brings David to the humble truth that he was not worthy of such things. 2) David says that all these things were small for God and that he planned to do even more for his people. This leads David to praise God for his greatness and his holiness and his redemption. 3) David prays God's promises back to God, showing his desire for God to do all that he has said he would do. Much of the great prayers in Scripture are based on asking God to bring to his people everything that he has promised them, and it's something we should get in the habit of doing.

## Read 2 Samuel 8:1-14

1 After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines. 2 And he defeated Moab and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground. Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute. 3 David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates. 4 And David took from him 1,700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstringed all the chariot horses but left enough for 100 chariots. 5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians. 6 Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. 7 And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 And from Bethah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took very much bronze. 9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, 10 Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to ask about his health and to bless him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him, for Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze. 11 These also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, 12 from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13 And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. 14 Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.

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This section of Scripture gives us an opportunity to point out something to think about when we read "boring" sections of Scripture like lists of battles or genealogies or censuses. Most of the time these sections are not just for the sake of making you want to skip that day in your reading plan; they are montages pointing to how God is fulfilling his promises. Here, God is giving David victory over the peoples of the land, confirming his promises to Abraham (Gen. 17:8). And, while we might be appalled at what David did in war (and that's right because violence is a result of the fall), these wars fall under God's bringing these nations under judgment for their sin (Deut. 9:4-5).

## Read 2 Samuel 8:15-18

15 So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people. 16 Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder, 17 and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary, 18 and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and David's sons were priests.

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This is the high-water mark of the history of Israel as a nation.<sup>v</sup> The man after God's own heart, God's anointed ruler, was finally bringing justice to the land and the people that were promised Abraham. The kingdom was advancing, and as we saw in the verses yesterday, other kings were honoring God's king. David's chosen men were running things; all was right. This was a return to Eden and the true kingdom of God. But it wouldn't last.

## Read 2 Samuel 9:1-13

1 And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" 2 Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant." 3 And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." 4 The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar." 5 Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 6 And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant." 7 And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." 8 And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" 9 Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. 10 And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. 11 Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. 12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. 13 So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.

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There is actually an interesting point to this passage. David had made promises to both Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:13-15) and Saul (1 Sam. 24:20-21) that he would not completely cut off all of Saul's offspring, but his promises to Jonathan are of most importance here. Jonathan says to David, "If I continue to live, show me kindness from the Lord, but if I die, don't ever withdraw your kindness from my household—not even when the Lord cuts off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth" (1 Sam. 20:14-15 CSB). So here is David, having had most of his enemies defeated and Jonathan having been slain in battle, and he thinks back to this promise that he made to Jonathan to show faithful kindness to his house. And so, he asks if any of Saul's house is left. He then pours out his love upon Mephibosheth. David's actions are like those of Yahweh<sup>vi</sup> who is always faithful to his promises and lavishes his love upon those who are in a covenant with him.

## Read 2 Samuel 10:1-19

1 After this the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place. 2 And David said, "I will deal loyally with Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father dealt loyally with me." So David sent by his servants to console him concerning his father. And David's servants came into the land of the Ammonites. 3 But the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think, because David has sent comforters to you, that he is honoring your father? Has not David sent his servants to you to search the city and to spy it out and to overthrow it?" 4 So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half the beard of each and cut off their garments in the middle, at their hips, and sent them away. 5 When it was told David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return." 6 When the Ammonites saw that they had become a stench to David, the Ammonites sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob, 12,000 men. 7 And when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the host of the mighty men. 8 And the Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the gate, and the Syrians of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the open country. 9 When Joab saw that the battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the best men of Israel and arrayed them against the Syrians. 10 The rest of his men he put in the charge of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed them against the Ammonites. 11 And he said, "If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. 12 Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to him." 13 So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. 14 And when the Ammonites saw that the Syrians fled, they likewise fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem. 15 But when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. 16 And Hadadezer sent and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the Euphrates. They came to Helam, with Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. 17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan and came to Helam. The Syrians arrayed themselves against David and fought with him. 18 And the Syrians fled before Israel, and David killed of the Syrians the men of 700 chariots, and 40,000 horsemen, and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there. 19 And when all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and became subject to them. So the Syrians were afraid to save the Ammonites anymore.

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David, as the representative of Yahweh's kingdom, seeks to bless the other nations through his compassion.<sup>vii</sup> God's kingdom in the Old Testament was always supposed to have a worldwide impact of blessing, and the author is showing that impact here. But David's actions are seen as sinister to these people outside of God's kingdom, and they respond violently. War breaks out. Upon an Israelite victory, the Ammonites and Syrians fled, but the Syrians then made peace with David and submitted themselves to him. This is an early reflection of a commonly misunderstood saying of Jesus. When Jesus is talking about counting the cost, he talks about the king who sees if he has enough forces to win against another king, and when he sees that he doesn't, asks for terms of peace (Luke 14:31-33). This whole story points ahead to the time when God's kingdom is growing in the world through Christ. Some will remain enemies of the new king (like the Ammonites), but some will see that Jesus is the true, victorious king, and they will make peace with him through believing in the blood of his cross and will submit to his lordship.

J U N E 1 6

## Read 2 Samuel 11:1

1 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

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While we might be tempted to read quickly over this passage, I hope that if you know the story, this passage makes you uncomfortable. Certainly, this passage is better understood when you know what's coming. But if you don't know what's coming, the author gives the careful reader enough to say, "uh oh." Up until now, David was usually tied closely to the battles his armies were waging. Yet, during this particular spring time, when "kings go out to battle," Joab and Joab's servants and even all Israel are in the fight. But where is the king? The author lets us know where, and this information will change the course of David's story forever: he remained in Jerusalem.

## Read 2 Samuel 11:2-5

2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. 3 And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

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David's remaining in Jerusalem had turned into inactivity. The text says he arose from his couch late in the afternoon, probably signaling his waking from a long nap to take a walk on the roof.<sup>viii</sup> While there is, upon first reading, an innocence to the beginning of the whole thing, perhaps we should not rule out that there might have been intentionality behind both David and Bathsheba's actions. David was walking on the roof (perhaps to survey his kingdom and the power that he held), and Bathsheba, probably well aware that David could see her, was not being careful with her actions. As soon as David desired her, he used his power to make sure that he would have her. We can't know whether Bathsheba resisted or went willingly, but we do know that she went and became pregnant by David. We must ask ourselves if, in our alone time, we are becoming lazy in the things of God and opening ourselves to temptation and sin. Are we giving the devil a foothold (Eph. 4:27)?

## Read 2 Samuel 11:6-13

6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

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David, worried about having his sin found out, brings Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, home from war and tells him to go home and "wash his feet." In this culture, "feet" was often a euphemism for genitalia<sup>x</sup>, and is essentially a command from David to go sleep with his wife. It seems that David's hope is that Uriah would sleep with Bathsheba, and therefore, when Bathsheba had a child, he and all Israel would just assume it was Uriah's. But Uriah is faithful to the king and Israel, even when David makes him drunk (probably in another attempt to get him to go to his wife). This must have worried David to the point of fury with Uriah. Oh, how we are so quick to try to cover our sin in many ways! And if the one we sinned against chooses to be kind to us, it is almost too much to bear. It will either lead us to confession and repentance or harden us in our resolve to hide our sin. For David, it will be the latter.

## Read 2 Samuel 11:14-17

14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." 16 And as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. 17 And the men of the city came out and fought with Joab, and some of the servants of David among the people fell. Uriah the Hittite also died.

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See here the destructive nature of sin. Not only does David command his general, Joab, to make sure Uriah falls in battle, he sent this letter to Joab in the hands of Uriah! What cruelty. He obviously believed that Uriah would not read the letter, but one wonders whether David, in his guilt, wanted to be found out. Sin wants to take us to the fullest extent of evil. Puritan theologian John Owen, in his classic *Mortification of Sin*, said something to the effect that every lust would be adultery if it could; every hatred would be murder. What we see here is that David had the immediate power to make his lust adultery and his hatred murder. Even the anointed king of Yahweh was not free from the corrosive power of sin. This was not the true final kingdom of God because the human heart was still bent towards evil from its youth (Gen. 8:21).

## Read 2 Samuel 11:18-27

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. 19 And he instructed the messenger, "When you have finished telling all the news about the fighting to the king, 20 then, if the king's anger rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'" 22 So the messenger went and came and told David all that Joab had sent him to tell. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men gained an advantage over us and came out against us in the field, but we drove them back to the entrance of the gate. 24 Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also." 25 David said to the messenger, "Thus shall you say to Joab, 'Do not let this matter displease you, for the sword devours now one and now another. Strengthen your attack against the city and overthrow it.' And encourage him." 26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. 27 And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

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Joab sends news to David that what he had ordered has been done, and Uriah is dead. Worried about Joab's conscience, David seeks to soothe it by essentially saying, "That's what war does, Joab." After giving Bathsheba time to grieve, David takes her officially as his wife, and she gives birth to his child. But the last simple sentence at the end signals a great change for the rest of the book. No longer is David pleasing in the sight of the Lord (which showed him as God's true king instead of Saul), but he is overcome by sin and acts in ways contrary to what Yahweh wanted from his anointed one.

## Read 2 Samuel 12:1-6

1 And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

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God sends the prophet Nathan to tell David a parable. A rich man who has everything is unwilling that he should part with anything he owns but rather steals from a poor man everything he owned (one ewe lamb). David is enraged by this parable and says that this rich man has done a great injustice. He ought to pay back the lamb he stole with four lambs, and not only that, but he should pay with his death. This rich man did not have pity on the man who had very little. It's quite amazing that David didn't understand the meaning of this parable, which we'll see tomorrow.

## Read 2 Samuel 12:7-9

7 Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

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At the end of chapter 7, we saw David recounting all the things that God had done for him and praising God for it. But, like the rich man in Nathan's parable, David wasn't content with all that God had given him. Go back and read through God's enumerating all that he had given David. These are the words of a loving, concerned father. God even says that had David just told God that what he had received was too little, God would have given him more. Yet, David in his discontent for what the Lord had given, and his lust for the beautiful Bathsheba, disregarded the word of the Lord like his predecessor Saul had. Not only had he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Uriah killed, he had him killed disgracefully by a people outside of God's kingdom. This tragedy should make us weep that the man after God's own heart could fall so far. But we all know that we are not any better. How often has discontent with the things God has blessed us with led us to sinning against him to get something that we desired?

## Read 2 Samuel 12:10-14

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11 Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" 13 David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die."

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One of God's promises for Israel's faithful obedience in the land is peace. But since David was unfaithful, while the rest of Israel had seemingly remained faithful, God tells David that his house (palace/family) will be filled with violence. God himself "will raise up evil against" David and his offspring. God is also going to take David's wives and give them to someone else—publicly. It is at this moment that David shows himself very much unlike Saul—he comes to genuine repentance. How do we know that it is genuine? God removes David's sin from him. According to the law of Israel, David was supposed to be put to death (Lev. 18:20, 29) for adultery. But Yahweh forgives David and lets him live. But the child that is born from this unholy union will die. This is a great reminder that in our pride, we think that our sin will bring disaster on us alone, not realizing that it often has dire consequences for those around us as well. If you want to see the Psalm that corresponds to David's repentance, read Psalm 51.

## Read 2 Samuel 12:15-25

15 Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. 16 David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 17 And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. 18 On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm." 19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." 20 Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. 21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." 22 He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' 23 But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." 24 Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him 25 and sent a message by Nathan the prophet. So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

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We are often quick to "let God off the hook." But we are quicker than the word of God is itself. This passage says that God himself struck David and Bathsheba's son with a life-threatening illness. As Christians, our first assumption must be that in whatever God does he is just. If we think that it seems unjust, it's because we're mistaken and don't have all the relevant information. This obviously was an act of judgment on David because of his sins. David, having repented and knowing God to be a gracious God, humbles himself in fasting and prayer on behalf of his son, pleading for God to heal him. You can imagine how he must have felt knowing that it was his sin that brought this on. But what David does should be a model for our own prayer life. Even if we think that something is beyond hope, we know that God is gracious and can do all things, so we ought to be begging God for these things. And, even, may we be like David who, after receiving God's "no," goes and worships God! What faith and endurance. After all of this, God blesses David with another child with Bathsheba, the great Solomon. The Lord loves Solomon and calls Nathan the prophet to tell David to name him Jedidiah (Loved by the LORD). David seems to be restored, but God's word that he would bring violence to David's house and cause David's wives to sleep with another man still stand.

## Read 2 Samuel 12:26-31

26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and took the royal city. 27 And Joab sent messengers to David and said, "I have fought against Rabbah; moreover, I have taken the city of waters. 28 Now then gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called by my name." 29 So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah and fought against it and took it. 30 And he took the crown of their king from his head. The weight of it was a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone, and it was placed on David's head. And he brought out the spoil of the city, a very great amount. 31 And he brought out the people who were in it and set them to labor with saws and iron picks and iron axes and made them toil at the brick kilns. And thus he did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

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After David is restored from his sin, we see the Ammonites defeated, and David going out into battle and waging the decisive victory. Yahweh's anointed king is flourishing once again. Yet, God's prophecy of punishment (12:10-12) still hangs in the air.

## Read 2 Samuel 13:1-11

1 Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar. And after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. 2 And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. 3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother. And Jonadab was a very crafty man. 4 And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." 5 Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'" 6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand." 7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." 8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes. 9 And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him. 10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. 11 But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister."

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Getting the people in this story and their relation right in our minds isn't easy, but it's important. Absalom and Amnon were both sons of David who had different mothers. Absalom and Tamar were full siblings, making Tamar a half-sister of Amnon. Jonadab, the "very crafty man," was David's nephew and cousin to Absalom, Amnon, and Tamar. Needless to say, trouble is brewing in David's house. Most of us have let the great desire for something beautiful and valuable lead us to do some crazy things. What Amnon does (at the suggestion of his cousin!) is not only crazy but abhorrent. Amnon knew that to sleep with his half-sister was an abomination before God's eyes (Lev. 18:9, 29-30), but he is so sick with lust that he does whatever is necessary to satisfy it. He almost mirrors his father David in his actions as he calls the woman of his desire to his house to sleep with her. And not only that, it is David himself who sends her! (Although he probably had no idea.) We must beware to never let our temptations grow and fester in us to the point of having such lack of self-control. If your desire for sin is growing, meet with your Community Group leader or a Christian counselor.

## Read 2 Samuel 13:12-19

12 She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. 13 As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." 14 But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. 15 Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up! Go!" 16 But she said to him, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. 17 He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence and bolt the door after her." 18 Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves, for thus were the virgin daughters of the king dressed. So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. 19 And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

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There is no easy way to say it, this is rape. Tamar's pleas at the start show that this was not consensual. She even tried to talk Amnon out of it by saying that David might give her to Amnon in marriage. (Although it's doubtful that she really thought he would do this.) And not only that, she asks him to consider what shame it would bring upon her, for to be violated would mean that she would be deemed unmarriageable<sup>x</sup>; she would be a stain on society. If he truly loved her, he would have wanted what was best for her<sup>xi</sup>, but this was purely lust. Amnon commits his evil, and immediately is filled with rage and sends her away—a sin Tamar considers worse than the rape. Is this not common with sin? Often after we've committed a grave sin, we are angry at everything and everyone else but ourselves. Amnon was probably furious that he had to force Tamar to give him what he wanted and that his actions did not give him the fulfillment he longed for. Sin never does.

## Read 2 Samuel 13:20-29

20 And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. 21 When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. 22 But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had violated his sister Tamar. 23 After two full years Absalom had sheepshearers at Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24 And Absalom came to the king and said, "Behold, your servant has sheepshearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your servant." 25 But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you." He pressed him, but he would not go but gave him his blessing. 26 Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" 27 But Absalom pressed him until he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28 Then Absalom commanded his servants, "Mark when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him. Do not fear; have I not commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant." 29 So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each mounted his mule and fled.

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When Absalom tells his sister to "not take this to heart," it would be easy to think that Absalom is excusing Amnon from his evil. But more than likely, he is telling her that he will take vengeance on Amnon, but she will have to wait.<sup>xii</sup> Something sinister also lurks at the bottom of Absalom's heart. Amnon was David's firstborn and was heir to David's throne. We can't assume that Absalom's motive was vengeance for his sister only, but perhaps a desire to be king. And notice that David's anger at Tamar's rape is not translated into action. He does nothing. However, Absalom sets up his plot and has his sheep-shearers and brothers kill Amnon. Violence had come to King David's house just as God had said.

## Read 2 Samuel 13:30-39

30 While they were on the way, news came to David, "Absalom has struck down all the king's sons, and not one of them is left." 31 Then the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the earth. And all his servants who were standing by tore their garments. 32 But Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, said, "Let not my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for Amnon alone is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day he violated his sister Tamar. 33 Now therefore let not my lord the king so take it to heart as to suppose that all the king's sons are dead, for Amnon alone is dead." 34 But Absalom fled. And the young man who kept the watch lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain. 35 And Jonadab said to the king, "Behold, the king's sons have come; as your servant said, so it has come about." 36 And as soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king's sons came and lifted up their voice and wept. And the king also and all his servants wept very bitterly. 37 But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son day after day. 38 So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead.

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A false report comes to David that all of his other sons have been killed by Absalom. It is Jonadab (the one who counseled Amnon on how to rape Tamar) who tells David the truth that it was only Amnon who was killed. It makes the reader wonder whether it was not Jonadab himself who directed Absalom in this plot against his brother. Absalom, fearing the wrath of his father for murdering his firstborn, flees. And David's response is again, one of inaction, longing to go to his son but staying put and mourning. It seems that David was "comforted" by the death of Amnon, perhaps showing us that David's heart was set at ease since justice had come for Tamar, cleansing his sin from Israel. But now his heart was troubled about Absalom. What should the king do? David's continued reluctance to bring his own sons to justice under God's law leads to great tragedy. Where can our "love" for others hinder our obedience to God?

## Read 2 Samuel 14:1-24

1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart went out to Absalom. And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman and said to her, "Pretend to be a mourner and put on mourning garments. Do not anoint yourself with oil, but behave like a woman who has been mourning many days for the dead. 3 Go to the king and speak thus to him." So Joab put the words in her mouth. 4 When the woman of Tekoa came to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and paid homage and said, "Save me, O king." 5 And the king said to her, "What is your trouble?" She answered, "Alas, I am a widow; my husband is dead. 6 And your servant had two sons, and they quarreled with one another in the field. There was no one to separate them, and one struck the other and killed him. 7 And now the whole clan has risen against your servant, and they say, 'Give up the man who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed.' And so they would destroy the heir also. Thus they would quench my coal that is left and leave to my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth." 8 Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you." 9 And the woman of Tekoa said to the king, "On me be the guilt, my lord the king, and on my father's house; let the king and his throne be guiltless." 10 The king said, "If anyone says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall never touch you again." 11 Then she said, "Please let the king invoke the Lord your God, that the avenger of blood kill no more, and my son be not destroyed." He said, "As the Lord lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground." 12 Then the woman said, "Please let your servant speak a word to my lord the king." He said, "Speak." 13 And the woman said, "Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in giving this decision the king convicts himself, inasmuch as the king does not bring his banished one home again. 14 We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God will not take away life, and he devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast. 15 Now I have come to say this to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid, and your servant thought, 'I will speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his servant. 16 For the king will hear and deliver his servant from the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together from the heritage of God.' 17 And your servant thought, 'The word of my lord the king will set me at rest,' for my lord the king is like the angel of God to discern good and evil. The Lord your God be with you!" 18 Then the king answered the woman, "Do not hide from me anything I ask you." And the woman said, "Let my lord the king speak." 19 The king said, "Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?" The woman answered and said, "As surely as you live, my lord the king, one cannot turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has said. It was your servant Joab who commanded me; it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your servant. 20 In order to change the course of things your servant Joab did this. But my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God to know all things that are on the earth." 21 Then the king said to Joab, "Behold now, I grant this; go, bring back the young man Absalom." 22 And Joab fell on his face to the ground

and paid homage and blessed the king. And Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord the king, in that the king has granted the request of his servant." 23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24 And the king said, "Let him dwell apart in his own house; he is not to come into my presence." So Absalom lived apart in his own house and did not come into the king's presence.

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We obviously should not let the parallel of this story with Nathan the prophet's parable, convicting David of his sin with Bathsheba, escape us. Once again, someone has to show David his wrong. Now, it is Joab who hires this woman and sets up the whole thing. She tells a fictional story about how she is worried about what might happen to her after her husband has died, one of her sons has killed her other son, and now the whole town is out to kill the son that remains. If this last son is killed, she would be left weak and impoverished with no one to care for her. Once David gives the pronouncement that no one will kill her son, she tells David that this sentence has convicted himself for he had not even pardoned his own son. David then allows Absalom to return, even though he could never be in David's presence. One wonders what Joab's plan in orchestrating this was; the text simply does not tell us. But the story with Nathan was a parable from God, and this story was from Joab, who is not considered a prophet, so we can't automatically assume his motives to be pure.

## Read 2 Samuel 14:25-27

25 Now in all Israel there was no one so much to be praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26 And when he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of every year he used to cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king's weight. 27 There were born to Absalom three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar. She was a beautiful woman.

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The idea of Absalom's physical attractiveness here should awaken us to something. Beautiful people often gather people's sympathy and support more than those who are plain.<sup>xiii</sup> They tend to be handed the world for no reason at all other than they are nice to look at. We must think back to earlier in the book of Samuel when David's oldest brother was not chosen by God even though he looked like a king because God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:6-7). The author puts this description of Absalom in this book for a reason. We should remember it.

## Read 2 Samuel 14:28-33

28 So Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, without coming into the king's presence. 29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but Joab would not come to him. And he sent a second time, but Joab would not come. 30 Then he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. 31 Then Joab arose and went to Absalom at his house and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" 32 Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent word to you, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to ask, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still." Now therefore let me go into the presence of the king, and if there is guilt in me, let him put me to death.'" 33 Then Joab went to the king and told him, and he summoned Absalom. So he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom

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This passage makes us wonder if Joab's intentions for David's bringing Absalom back was simply to calm David's heart, since he doesn't answer Absalom's requests to have a meeting with the king. But we must remember that with Amnon dead, Absalom is in line for the throne. If it continues that he cannot come into David's presence, then David might appoint another son in his place. Absalom cannot settle for this and so, burns Joab's field to get his attention. Absalom gets his meeting with his father, the king, and seems to be granted forgiveness by the kiss of David, although what this symbolizes is not clear. Still, David does not punish his son for his murder and continues to show his weakness in dealing with his own house.

## Read 2 Samuel 15:1-6

1 After this Absalom got himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2 And Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way of the gate. And when any man had a dispute to come before the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And when he said, "Your servant is of such and such a tribe in Israel," 3 Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man designated by the king to hear you." 4 Then Absalom would say, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice." 5 And whenever a man came near to pay homage to him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. 6 Thus Absalom did to all of Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

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The beautiful Absalom wins the heart of the people by essentially spreading the lie that, yes, David is king, but he really doesn't have anyone appointed to be able to hear their case and give them justice. All this implies David's incompetence. Absalom mentions that if he himself were king, surely they would get a hearing. He's a true politician. One has to wonder whether if David had punished Absalom and restored him under his care, if Absalom would be doing such a thing.

## Read 2 Samuel 15:7-9

7 And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the Lord, in Hebron. 8 For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the Lord will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the Lord.'" 9 The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.

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If we were careful readers of 2 Samuel, we would remember that David was anointed king of Judah at Hebron (2 Sam. 2:1, 4) and anointed king over all Israel at Hebron (2 Sam. 5:3). So, for four years Absalom has been winning the hearts of the people, and now he must go to Hebron. It should hit us in the face that Absalom is going to try to come for his father's throne. Perhaps even David should have sniffed this out, but instead, he sends Absalom to Hebron in peace.

## Read 2 Samuel 15:10-12

10 But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!'" 11 With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. 12 And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

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Our suspicions are confirmed as Absalom makes a play for the throne at Hebron by sending secret messengers to declare his ascendancy. He takes 200 men with him who know nothing of this plan, and he even calls David's counselor, Ahithophel (Bathsheba's grandfather<sup>xiv</sup>), who probably had a grudge against David. Absalom's following continues to grow aided by his charisma and beauty.

## Read 2 Samuel 15:13-23

13 And a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom." 14 Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword." 15 And the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides." 16 So the king went out, and all his household after him. And the king left ten concubines to keep the house. 17 And the king went out, and all the people after him. And they halted at the last house. 18 And all his servants passed by him, and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king. 19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why do you also go with us? Go back and stay with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile from your home. 20 You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, since I go I know not where? Go back and take your brothers with you, and may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness to you." 21 But Ittai answered the king, "As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be." 22 And David said to Ittai, "Go then, pass on." So Ittai the Gittite passed on with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. 23 And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness.

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David, upon hearing the news of Absalom's treachery, calls his loyal people to flee. This is not the strong military leader of old. All of this is a result of David's great sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah as the Lord continues to confirm Nathan's prophecy that the sword (violence) will not depart from David's house. We do see that the generous and loving heart of David for his people remains as he tells a group of his servants to remain in the peace and comfort of Jerusalem. But a touching scene happens when this group vows to stay with God's anointed no matter what may come. Even when things are going bad, will we remain loyal to God and trust that he will work it out?

## Read 2 Samuel 15:24-37

24 And Abiathar came up, and behold, Zadok came also with all the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God until the people had all passed out of the city. 25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place. 26 But if he says, 'I have no pleasure in you,' behold, here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him." 27 The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Go back to the city in peace, with your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." 29 So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they remained there. 30 But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. 31 And it was told David, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O Lord, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." 32 While David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and dirt on his head. 33 David said to him, "If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me. 34 But if you return to the city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so now I will be your servant,' then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel. 35 Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So whatever you hear from the king's house, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36 Behold, their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son, and by them you shall send to me everything you hear." 37 So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

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The priests and Levites came out of the city carrying the ark of God. But David mentions that if God remains with him, he will bring David back to the city to see the ark, so the ark should remain in Jerusalem with the priests. This also serves double duty for David as the priests Abiathar and Zadok and Zadok's sons could be David's eyes and ears within the city. Also, David hears that his counselor, Ahithophel, had gone to Absalom's side, so he sends Hushai the Archite to remain to pledge himself as a counselor to Absalom in order to counteract the counsel of Ahithophel.

## Read 2 Samuel 16:1-4

1 When David had passed a little beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, bearing two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine. 2 And the king said to Ziba, "Why have you brought these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who faint in the wilderness to drink." 3 And the king said, "And where is your master's son?" Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.'" 4 Then the king said to Ziba, "Behold, all that belonged to Mephibosheth is now yours." And Ziba said, "I pay homage; let me ever find favor in your sight, my lord the king."

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Ziba, the servant/caretaker of Mephibosheth that we met in chapter nine, has brought the king and his people donkeys and some of the food that he was supposed to give to Mephibosheth (9:10). Why? To express his own loyalty to David because it seems that Mephibosheth saw the uprising of Absalom as an opportunity to get his kingdom back. After all that David had done for him is Mephibosheth repaying David by becoming a traitor? David honors Ziba's loyalty by giving what he promised Mephibosheth to Ziba.

## Read 2 Samuel 16:5-14

5 When King David came to Bahurim, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera, and as he came he cursed continually. 6 And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. 7 And Shimei said as he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man! 8 The Lord has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned, and the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood." 9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head." 10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruah? If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David,' who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" 11 And David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my own son seeks my life; how much more now may this Benjaminite! Leave him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. 12 It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done to me, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing today." 13 So David and his men went on the road, while Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went and threw stones at him and flung dust. 14 And the king, and all the people who were with him, arrived weary at the Jordan. And there he refreshed himself.

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Perhaps the most important thing to see here is the wrongness of Shimei's cursing. Surely Shimei was mad at the fall of Saul and his family, but David was innocent of their blood and was given the kingdom by Yahweh; he did not take it on his own initiative. Also, Absalom's temporary securing of Jerusalem was because of David's adultery and the murder of Uriah not because of anything else. Yet, David overlooks the errors in Shimei's cursing and takes it on the chin, seeing that God had led Shimei to do this for reasons that may become apparent to David later. David rests in God's grace as he thinks that God may perhaps repay him with good for Shimei's wrongful cursing. Can you hear the echoes of the truly innocent man, Jesus, having lies shouted against him and the condemnation "Crucify him!" piercing the air? The people of the fallen kingdom were condemning the king of God's kingdom for the sins they brought on their own heads. Yet Jesus, "for the joy that lay before him, . . . endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2 CSB)." God certainly repaid Jesus good for the wrongful cursing he endured.

## Read 2 Samuel 16:15-19

15 Now Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. 16 And when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, "Long live the king! Long live the king!" 17 And Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" 18 And Hushai said to Absalom, "No, for whom the Lord and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. 19 And again, whom should I serve? Should it not be his son? As I have served your father, so I will serve you."

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Hushai pledges his loyalty to Absalom for the sake of David. As David's spy, he must fool Absalom into thinking that he is firmly in his corner. But if we read carefully, Hushai is not lying as much as being intentionally vague.<sup>xv</sup> He will be loyal to the one whom the Lord and the people have chosen (he remains loyal to David), yet he will serve Absalom (at the order of Absalom's father).

## Read 2 Samuel 16:20-17:6

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your counsel. What shall we do?" 21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened." 22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. 23 Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the word of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom. 17:1 Moreover, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged and throw him into a panic, and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king, 3 and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride comes home to her husband. You seek the life of only one man, and all the people will be at peace." 4 And the advice seemed right in the eyes of Absalom and all the elders of Israel. 5 Then Absalom said, "Call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say." 6 And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "Thus has Ahithophel spoken; shall we do as he says? If not, you speak."

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This section is all about the counsel of Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather. It is clear that Ahithophel hates David and wants to do whatever is necessary to humiliate him. But little does Ahithophel know that he is being used by God for another purpose. Remember in 2 Samuel 12:11-12, Nathan the prophet told David this: "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" Compare that to verse 22 in today's reading. So, surely he is giving Absalom counsel from God. Next, his counsel is to let he and 12,000 attack and kill David. Absalom liked this advice, but we must remember that David had placed Hushai in Jerusalem to counteract Ahithophel's counsel (2 Sam. 15:34).

## Read 2 Samuel 17:7-14

7 Then Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good." 8 Hushai said, "You know that your father and his men are mighty men, and that they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. Besides, your father is expert in war; he will not spend the night with the people. 9 Behold, even now he has hidden himself in one of the pits or in some other place. And as soon as some of the people fall at the first attack, whoever hears it will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' 10 Then even the valiant man, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt with fear, for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are valiant men. 11 But my counsel is that all Israel be gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, as the sand by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. 12 So we shall come upon him in some place where he is to be found, and we shall light upon him as the dew falls on the ground, and of him and all the men with him not one will be left. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble is to be found there." 14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the Lord had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the Lord might bring harm upon Absalom.

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This passage is very interesting because it seems that the counsel of Ahithophel was actually good (v. 14), and the attack on David may have actually been successful. But God "ordained" that the counsel of Hushai would win out in the minds and hearts of Absalom and the Israelite elders. Therefore, Absalom will gather all of Israel together and go and battle David himself.

## Read 2 Samuel 17:15-23

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, "Thus and so did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so have I counseled. 16 Now therefore send quickly and tell David, 'Do not stay tonight at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over, lest the king and all the people who are with him be swallowed up.'" 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were waiting at En-rogel. A female servant was to go and tell them, and they were to go and tell King David, for they were not to be seen entering the city. 18 But a young man saw them and told Absalom. So both of them went away quickly and came to the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard. And they went down into it. 19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth and scattered grain on it, and nothing was known of it. 20 When Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house, they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" And the woman said to them, "They have gone over the brook of water." And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21 After they had gone, the men came up out of the well, and went and told King David. They said to David, "Arise, and go quickly over the water, for thus and so has Ahithophel counseled against you." 22 Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they crossed the Jordan. By daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan. 23 When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.

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This section only makes sense if we understand that Hushai did not expect for his counsel to be followed. He informs the priests as if Ahithophel's counsel was Absalom's course of action, and they send messengers to David to get him to flee (v. 22). Yet, Absalom had decided to wait and follow the advice of Hushai. Tragically, Ahithophel, possibly foreseeing Absalom's downfall for not following his advice,<sup>xvi</sup> realizes that his time is up. He sets his things in order and takes his own life. Perhaps most tragically is the thought that this would not have happened if David never committed adultery with Bathsheba. Much like Adam's sin in the garden, David's adultery reverberates with many terrible consequences throughout the kingdom.<sup>xvii</sup>

## Read 2 Samuel 17:24-29

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan with all the men of Israel. 25 Now Absalom had set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Ishmaelite, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruah, Joab's mother. 26 And Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead. 27 When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, 29 honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

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Absalom, following Hushai's counsel, begins pursuing his father. Thankfully, David still has many who are loyal to him, and they provide he and his people with much needed supplies for rest and the regaining of their strength. Because of David's sin, the kingdom is once again split, and David is being pursued by his rival for the throne like during the time of Saul.<sup>xviii</sup> Even when we are truly repentant, our sins have consequences.

## Read 2 Samuel 18:1-5

1 Then David mustered the men who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. 2 And David sent out the army, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the men, "I myself will also go out with you." 3 But the men said, "You shall not go out. For if we flee, they will not care about us. If half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore it is better that you send us help from the city." 4 The king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood at the side of the gate, while all the army marched out by hundreds and by thousands. 5 And the king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders about Absalom.

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Looking like the David of old, we see his quick decision making in give his army orders. He himself even wants to lead the troops and go to the battle, but they give him the wise counsel that these men are really only after him, so he should stay back.<sup>xix</sup> David, always soft-hearted toward his children, gives orders to his commanders to deal gently with Absalom. The author notes that "all the people heard" this. If someone didn't abide by his command, they would know.

## Read 2 Samuel 18:6-8

6 So the army went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. 7 And the men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the loss there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. 8 The battle spread over the face of all the country, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword.

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Evidence of who the Lord is with is often who he is fighting for. The evidence given in this short passage that Yahweh was still on the side of David was not only the victory that the men of David achieved, but also that more of Absalom's men had fallen by the dangers of the forest than with the sword. In the OT, God often wins his people's battles by supernatural means rather than through their military efforts because he wants to show himself as the one who really brings the victory.

## Read 2 Samuel 18:9-18

9 And Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was suspended between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. 10 And a certain man saw it and told Joab, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." 11 Joab said to the man who told him, "What, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have been glad to give you ten pieces of silver and a belt." 12 But the man said to Joab, "Even if I felt in my hand the weight of a thousand pieces of silver, I would not reach out my hand against the king's son, for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, 'For my sake protect the young man Absalom.' 13 On the other hand, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof." 14 Joab said, "I will not waste time like this with you." And he took three javelins in his hand and thrust them into the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the oak. 15 And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him. 16 Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the troops came back from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained them. 17 And they took Absalom and threw him into a great pit in the forest and raised over him a very great heap of stones. And all Israel fled every one to his own home. 18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself the pillar that is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's monument<sup>3</sup> to this day.

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God obviously delivered Absalom into the hands of David's men. The first man to see him decided to heed the word of David and not to strike his son. But Joab, who probably took it upon himself to do what needed to be done (knowing that David had been reluctant to punish his sons in the past), kills Absalom himself. And then Joab's ten armor-bearers join in on the action. How will David respond? Was David's command to deal gently with his son sinful tolerance or was it a reflection of the grace of Yahweh? Was Joab right in bringing Absalom to justice? This shows how sin often creates morally impossible situations. Absalom deserved death because of his murder. Joab's killing of Absalom in war-time situation was not a sin that God would have counted against Joab's account, and ultimately as Sovereign, he brought judgment on Absalom through Joab. But wasn't Joab disobedient to God by being disobedient to God's anointed king? Often these historical narrative parts of Scripture are simply explaining what happened and not informing as to who is right. Sin pollutes everything. The people felt, though, that something had been done wrongly since they all fled after the death of Absalom.

## Read 2 Samuel 18:19-33

19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Let me run and carry news to the king that the Lord has delivered him from the hand of his enemies." 20 And Joab said to him, "You are not to carry news today. You may carry news another day, but today you shall carry no news, because the king's son is dead." 21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran. 22 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "Come what may, let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why will you run, my son, seeing that you will have no reward for the news?" 23 "Come what may," he said, "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and outran the Cushite. 24 Now David was sitting between the two gates, and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he lifted up his eyes and looked, he saw a man running alone. 25 The watchman called out and told the king. And the king said, "If he is alone, there is news in his mouth." And he drew nearer and nearer. 26 The watchman saw another man running. And the watchman called to the gate and said, "See, another man running alone!" The king said, "He also brings news." 27 The watchman said, "I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "He is a good man and comes with good news." 28 Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, "All is well." And he bowed before the king with his face to the earth and said, "Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king." 29 And the king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, your servant, I saw a great commotion, but I do not know what it was." 30 And the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. 31 And behold, the Cushite came, and the Cushite said, "Good news for my lord the king! For the Lord has delivered you this day from the hand of all who rose up against you." 32 The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And the Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up against you for evil be like that young man." 33 And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

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Even though David had time and again failed to discipline his children, which ended up in Absalom's death, we see the devastated heart of a loving father. Though Absalom had been seeking to kill David, the news that reached the king's ears pierced his soul. It seems as if Joab was not willing to send Ahimaaz to bring the news of Absalom's death to David because he feared what might happen to this Israelite. So, he sends a loyal Cushite instead. David, in the midst of grief, does not respond to the news violently but with weeping. This is the very culmination of all the dire consequences of David's sin and is a turning point towards David's restoration. Time and again, we see that even after repentance, we might suffer great consequences for sin. But if one has truly

repented, these consequences will work out to train us and strengthen us to endure in the future. God is a loving father who does not, like David, refuse to discipline his children (Heb. 12:5-11).

J U L Y 1 9

## Read 2 Samuel 19:1-8a

1 It was told Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." 2 So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard that day, "The king is grieving for his son." 3 And the people stole into the city that day as people steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle. 4 The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" 5 Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, "You have today covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who have this day saved your life and the lives of your sons and your daughters and the lives of your wives and your concubines, 6 because you love those who hate you and hate those who love you. For you have made it clear today that commanders and servants are nothing to you, for today I know that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. 7 Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the Lord, if you do not go, not a man will stay with you this night, and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now." 8a Then the king arose and took his seat in the gate. And the people were all told, "Behold, the king is sitting in the gate." And all the people came before the king.

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The bravery of Joab is shocking here. Everyone in the Israelite camp had heard David's command not to kill Absalom, and so they tip-toed into the city ashamed, hoping not to incite the king's rage against them in his devastated state. And yet, Joab comes into the king and sternly says, "David, go out there and thank the people for their service. You are making them feel shame when they brought you victory. It's almost like you hate them for staying loyal to you. If you don't show them appreciation, everyone will desert you." The king meets Joab's request half way by coming to the people and standing before them, but he says nothing. Perhaps he is too broken to say anything.<sup>xx</sup>

## Read 2 Samuel 19:8b-15

8b Now Israel had fled every man to his own home. 9 And all the people were arguing throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom. 10 But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why do you say nothing about bringing the king back?" 11 And King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests: "Say to the elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his house, when the word of all Israel has come to the king? 12 You are my brothers; you are my bone and my flesh. Why then should you be the last to bring back the king?' 13 And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? God do so to me and more also, if you are not commander of my army from now on in place of Joab.'" 14 And he swayed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man, so that they sent word to the king, "Return, both you and all your servants." 15 So the king came back to the Jordan, and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and to bring the king over the Jordan.

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Apparently, there was some time after Absalom's defeat where David had not returned to Jerusalem. There was an argument among all the tribes of Israel whether David should come back to rule over the people. David blames the priests for having not invited him back yet. Eventually, David devises a political solution with personal implications. Many people of Judah had gone over to Absalom, and so, to win them back, David puts Amasa, who was the commander of Absalom's armies, in charge of his armies, replacing Joab. Obviously, this was a smart political move that won the hearts of the people but also was probably punishment to Joab for disobeying his command not to kill Absalom.<sup>xxi</sup> Then David is invited back, and he starts to move back to Jerusalem.

## Read 2 Samuel 19:16-23

16 And Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, from Bahurim, hurried to come down with the men of Judah to meet King David. 17 And with him were a thousand men from Benjamin. And Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons and his twenty servants, rushed down to the Jordan before the king, 18 and they crossed the ford to bring over the king's household and to do his pleasure. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was about to cross the Jordan, 19 and said to the king, "Let not my lord hold me guilty or remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem. Do not let the king take it to heart. 20 For your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore, behold, I have come this day, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king." 21 Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" 22 But David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?" 23 And the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king gave him his oath.

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King David is certainly being restored as we see his fall being reversed. As he is coming back into Jerusalem, Shimei, who was cursing David violently on his way out of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 16:5), is the first to greet him and ask for forgiveness. Abishai remembers Shimei's cursing and recommends capital punishment, but David is willing to grant forgiveness. Spiritually, we want to see ourselves in David here, granting forgiveness to our enemies (which we should do). But we should more readily take the example of Shimei. How many times have we cursed Jesus, Yahweh's anointed, through our mouth and through our lives? The accuser reminds us that we deserve death, and we do. But we constantly find a King in Jesus who is ready to extend mercy to those who curse him. And he promises that those who trust in him "shall not die."

## Read 2 Samuel 19:24-30

24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. He had neither taken care of his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came back in safety. 25 And when he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?" 26 He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame. 27 He has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like the angel of God; do therefore what seems good to you. 28 For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord the king, but you set your servant among those who eat at your table. What further right have I, then, to cry to the king?" 29 And the king said to him, "Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba shall divide the land." 30 And Mephibosheth said to the king, "Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home."

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Continuing in the reversal, we see a restoration of David and Mephibosheth. We gain new information that Ziba had lied to David about Mephibosheth's defection (2 Sam. 16:1-4). David seems to believe Mephibosheth's story as his physical state must have looked quite haggard from grief that the king had left and his servant, Ziba, had betrayed him. David restores half of the land that he had given to Ziba to Mephibosheth, but Mephibosheth shows that he only desires to be with the king by saying that Ziba, the lying servant, could have it all. This is also the author showing the genuine nature of Mephibosheth's testimony for it resembles the story of Solomon's judgment concerning who was giving the correct testimony about being the mother of a certain baby (1 Ki. 3:16-28).

## Read 2 Samuel 19:31-40

31 Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim, and he went on with the king to the Jordan, to escort him over the Jordan. 32 Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. He had provided the king with food while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man. 33 And the king said to Barzillai, "Come over with me, and I will provide for you with me in Jerusalem." 34 But Barzillai said to the king, "How many years have I still to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? 35 I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern what is pleasant and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen to the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? 36 Your servant will go a little way over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay me with such a reward? 37 Please let your servant return, that I may die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother. But here is your servant Chimham. Let him go over with my lord the king, and do for him whatever seems good to you." 38 And the king answered, "Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do for him whatever seems good to you, and all that you desire of me I will do for you." 39 Then all the people went over the Jordan, and the king went over. And the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own home. 40 The king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. All the people of Judah, and also half the people of Israel, brought the king on his way.

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Barzillai was loyal to David for the entirety of his fleeing from Absalom. He helped the king from his own riches to sustain him. Upon David's return, David seeks to repay him for his kindness by inviting him to Jerusalem. But Barzillai is so old that he will not value the gifts of David as they ought to be valued. He won't be pleased by what is pleasing, he's lost his sense of taste, and he's going deaf. But Barzillai sends Chimham with David, and David will bless Chimham as if he were Barzillai himself. Then the king continues on his return to Jerusalem with all of Judah (the South) and half the people of Israel (the North). Even though David is being restored to his rule, the kingdom has been fractured.

## Read 2 Samuel 19:41-43

41 Then all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, "Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away and brought the king and his household over the Jordan, and all David's men with him?" 42 All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is our close relative. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?" 43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, "We have ten shares in the king, and in David also we have more than you. Why then did you despise us? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?" But the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

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The division of the kingdom shows itself in this argument between Judah and Israel. The two southern tribes of Judah are accused by the ten northern tribes of Israel to be trying to win favor with David by escorting him back to Jerusalem.<sup>xxii</sup> Judah denies this by saying they are escorting him because he is their relative (David was from the tribe of Judah) and not to gain any special favor. They have not taken food or gifts from the king. But the northern tribes answer back by saying essentially, "If David is king over all Israel, then we have ten tribes who are under David, and you only have two. And besides, after Absalom died, we were the first to mention that David should come back. Shouldn't we have the right to escort him back to Jerusalem?" But the tension is not resolved, and Judah seems to be getting pretty heated.

## Read 2 Samuel 20:1-3

1 Now there happened to be there a worthless man, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjaminite. And he blew the trumpet and said, "We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel!" 2 So all the men of Israel withdrew from David and followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah followed their king steadfastly from the Jordan to Jerusalem. 3 And David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to care for the house and put them in a house under guard and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood.

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Sensing the tensions building up to the point of breaking, Sheba announces that Israel has no portion or inheritance in David. What this means is a bit theological, but it's important to understand. "To be 'in the king' . . . is to be part of the people over which he rules, but also part of the people who are defined by him, by what has happened to him, by what the one God has promised to him."<sup>xxiii</sup> By Sheba's declaring that they have no portion or inheritance in David is a declaration that no matter what blessings or land or dynasty that God has promised to David, Israel was going to go their own way. Yet, Judah stayed loyal. What Israel did is essentially what those who called for the crucifixion of Jesus were doing. They were saying, "If this is truly the Messiah, we want no part in what is coming to him!" Christians who have come to faith are "in Christ;" the future of God's true king becomes the future of his people. Lastly, David deals with the concubines who slept with Absalom by giving them a house and providing for their needs but also by putting them under

## Read 2 Samuel 20:4-13

4 Then the king said to Amasa, "Call the men of Judah together to me within three days, and be here yourself." 5 So Amasa went to summon Judah, but he delayed beyond the set time that had been appointed him. 6 And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he get himself to fortified cities and escape from us." 7 And there went out after him Joab's men and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men. They went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. 8 When they were at the great stone that is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened on his thigh, and as he went forward it fell out. 9 And Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. 10 But Amasa did not observe the sword that was in Joab's hand. So Joab struck him with it in the stomach and spilled his entrails to the ground without striking a second blow, and he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri. 11 And one of Joab's young men took his stand by Amasa and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab." 12 And Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the highway. And anyone who came by, seeing him, stopped. And when the man saw that all the people stopped, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field and threw a garment over him. 13 When he was taken out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

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The motivations behind the actions in this story are not given to us, so we must do with what we are given. David sends the commander, Amasa, that he replaced Joab with to gather the men of Judah in three days to fight Sheba and Israel. But Amasa doesn't show, so he sends Abishai, Joab's brother. But then Joab shows up with his own army, kills Amasa, and one of Joab's warriors tells the men of Judah that if they want to fight for David, they need to join Joab. So, Joab regains control of David's army through his own exploits, showing that David is still a weak ruler in comparison to his former self.

## Read 2 Samuel 20:14-22

14 And Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-maacah, and all the Bichrites assembled and followed him in. 15 And all the men who were with Joab came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah. They cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart, and they were battering the wall to throw it down. 16 Then a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, 'Come here, that I may speak to you.'" 17 And he came near her, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your servant." And he answered, "I am listening." 18 Then she said, "They used to say in former times, 'Let them but ask counsel at Abel,' and so they settled a matter. 19 I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the heritage of the Lord?" 20 Joab answered, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! 21 That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba the son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David. Give up him alone, and I will withdraw from the city." And the woman said to Joab, "Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall." 22 Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.

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Joab's pursuit of Sheba has led him to a town called Abel. His men create a siege around the city and seek to break down the wall. Obviously not knowing what could happen after the wall comes down, a wise woman seeks to persuade Joab not to continue with what he is doing. She talks about her own loyalty to David and the peaceful and motherly qualities of the city itself. Would Joab destroy a city with such history? Well, the woman's wisdom must have convicted Joab because he denies wanting to harm the city (even though the author tells us he was trying to tear a city wall down) and says that he is only after Sheba. The woman realizes that it is just one man that is causing this distress for her city, so she takes decisive action to convince the people of the city with her wisdom that if they behead Sheba, then the armies of David would leave. This is not the first time we see the actions of a wise woman in the book of Samuel (see 1 Sam. 25 and 2 Sam. 14). The Biblical narrative quite often elevates women well above the sinful way they were treated by men in ancient times. Sheba is beheaded and Joab returns to Jerusalem.

## Read 2 Samuel 20:23-26

23 Now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; 24 and Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder; 25 and Sheva was secretary; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests; 26 and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest.

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Today's reading is a simple reminder that what we are reading is history. Yes, these accounts are filled with allusions to the coming Messiah, and theological themes are pervasive in the text, but this was first a book written to Israel about the ascendancy, fall, and restoration of God's king for Israel. Yet, this mark punctuates a long section of David's life, showing that much of his court survived even through all the trouble caused by his affair and murder.

## Read 2 Samuel 21:1-2

1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the Lord. And the Lord said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." 2 So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites. Although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had sought to strike them down in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.

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God had promised that if Israel would be faithful to him that the land would be fruitful (Deut. 28:11), and if they were disobedient, God would bring famine as a curse (Deut. 28:23-24). So, at a certain point during David's reign, there was a famine which lasted for three years. David, a man of God, asks God why these things were happening. God says that Saul fought against the Gibeonites even though Israel had made a treaty with them to spare them (Josh. 9:15). The sin at stake was not the killing of the Gibeonites, as the Israelites were supposed to conquer them when they came into the land, but they went against their word not to kill them. Do we understand the weight that God puts on our keeping our promises? So, David reaches out to them to see how he could make restitution.

## Read 2 Samuel 21:3-8

3 And David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? And how shall I make atonement, that you may bless the heritage of the Lord?" 4 The Gibeonites said to him, "It is not a matter of silver or gold between us and Saul or his house; neither is it for us to put any man to death in Israel." And he said, "What do you say that I shall do for you?" 5 They said to the king, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel, 6 let seven of his sons be given to us, so that we may hang them before the Lord at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the Lord." And the king said, "I will give them." 7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the Lord that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. 8 The king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite;

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In Numbers 35:33 we see this: "You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it." The Gibeonites understand that for the death of their people by the hands of Saul (in violation of Israel's treaty with them) they could not ask for money as restitution. <sup>xxiv</sup> And since Saul had died, they ask for seven of his descendants (seven being a number that symbolized completion, and so it would make complete atonement for Saul's murder). David gives two of the sons born to one of Saul's concubines (a different Mephibosheth), and five of his grandchildren. David spares the Mephibosheth we've seen earlier in the book because of his promise to Jonathan. David will not atone for a broken promise by breaking another promise.

## Read 2 Samuel 21:9-14

9 and he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the mountain before the Lord, and the seven of them perished together. They were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest. 10 Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell upon them from the heavens. And she did not allow the birds of the air to come upon them by day, or the beasts of the field by night. 11 When David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, 12 David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, on the day the Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa. 13 And he brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan; and they gathered the bones of those who were hanged. 14 And they buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan in the land of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father. And they did all that the king commanded. And after that God responded to the plea for the land.

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We must summarize this quickly because there is something of great importance we have to discuss. The Gibeonites hang the descendants of Saul for all to see to atone for Saul's bloodshed. David, to appease their mourning mother, buries them with the bones of Saul and Jonathan. While this type of violence is strange and barbaric to us, ever since Genesis 9:5, God has required a life for the unrighteous taking of a life—someone made in the image of God killing another in the image of God is the highest crime. And so, we see this principle followed through in this story of David's reign (albeit in strange ways). But we must hear the echoes of the gospel. Because of our guilt, God had the unfaithful Jews hang Jesus on a cross at Mount Calvary to provide atonement for the guilty (Acts 5:30). Violence is a result and consequence of sin, but it also bought our freedom.

## Read 2 Samuel 21:15-17

15 There was war again between the Philistines and Israel, and David went down together with his servants, and they fought against the Philistines. And David grew weary. 16 And Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of the giants, whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of bronze, and who was armed with a new sword, thought to kill David. 17 But Abishai the son of Zeruah came to his aid and attacked the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, "You shall no longer go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel."

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If there was a sign that the kingdom of God had not been established in full, it's that the people are still at war with the Philistines who have been plaguing Israel since the beginning of the book of Samuel. Not only that, but there is another giant like Goliath who seeks to fight David and, it seems, has the upper hand until David's men rescue him. They then tell David that he will not accompany them in battle anymore for they feel if he is killed that the light of the knowledge and presence of God would leave Israel.

## Read 2 Samuel 21:18-22

18 After this there was again war with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was one of the descendants of the giants. 19 And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. 20 And there was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number, and he also was descended from the giants. 21 And when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down. 22 These four were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

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This is a trouble passage for us. It says that Elhanan, not David, killed Goliath. There are many arguments as to what has happened here, but the best explanation is that there was a scribal error in the manuscript. How do we know this? Because a parallel passage, 1 Chron. 20:5, says that Elhanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath.<sup>xxv</sup> This section of Scripture seems to be showing us that the coming of God's kingdom will be accompanied by the defeat of the powerful, dark forces in the world. And we know that through our salvation in Jesus we have victory over Satan and his forces (Rev. 12:10-11).<sup>xxvi</sup>

**Read 2 Samuel 22:1-4**

1 And David spoke to the Lord the words of this song on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. 2 He said, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, 3 my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. 4 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

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The next few days cover this song of David that he wrote when he finally realized that God had saved him from defeat and death and won his battles for him (probably from a time period early on in David's reign). We ought to watch the example of David, a man after God's own heart, in his praise. For the church, most of us aren't fleeing physical enemies but spiritual ones. The Lord is our rock, the cornerstone of our faith. He is the one who protects us from Satan and his demonic powers; he is the one who has taken us from the hands of sin and eternal death. All who call on the name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2:32).

**Read 2 Samuel 22:5-7**

5 "For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me; 6 the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. 7 "In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears.

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Many of David's songs are actually both true of himself and prophetically true of the Messiah. We can see the agony of Jesus on the cross in David's words here. But when we are united to Christ, whatever is true of Jesus is true of us. When we come to realize our sin and separation from God, we realize how doomed we were to eternal destruction. Our future is bleak; there is nothing we could do to make up for the grave sin of chasing after our own passions in rebellion to God. But this is the place we must come to. Salvation will only be received rightly when we come to the Lord in humility and desperation to be saved. Isaiah 66:2 says that the Lord looks upon the one who is "humble and contrite in heart." When we realize we have nothing, God hears our pleas and offers us everything.

## Read 2 Samuel 22:8-16

8 "Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because he was angry. 9 Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. 10 He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. 11 He rode on a cherub and flew; he was seen on the wings of the wind. 12 He made darkness around him his canopy, thick clouds, a gathering of water. 13 Out of the brightness before him coals of fire flamed forth. 14 The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice. 15 And he sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning, and routed them. 16 Then the channels of the sea were seen; the foundations of the world were laid bare, at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

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Here we see David painting with words a vision of God as the mighty warrior coming to trample David's enemies. All of creation, even the angels, are at God's beck and call. The Lord is furious and wrathful against the enemies of his people, and he has and he will move awesomely to make sure that their salvation is completed, vanquishing every foe by his rebuke and the breath of his nostrils. But perhaps we are best to see God's ultimate move to destroy sin and death by Jesus' death on the cross. For at the crucifixion, God had come down, and there was an eclipse of the sun (Matt. 27:45), and after he breathed his last breath, there was a great earthquake (Matt. 27:51).

**Read 2 Samuel 22:17-20**

17 “He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. 18 He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. 19 They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. 20 He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.

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For David, without the Lord’s help, he would surely have been overcome by his enemies. That is why David was often living in caves as he was fleeing from Saul, but Yahweh saved his anointed from those who would take his life such that he could stand safely and secure in the light. Ultimately, when death seemed to overtake Jesus, the Lord brought him out of the tomb in life, and so will he do for us. And it is because the Lord delights in his people that he acts to save. Meditate on his delight for you today.

**Read 2 Samuel 22:21-25**

21 “The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. 22 For I have kept the ways of the Lord and have not wickedly departed from my God. 23 For all his rules were before me, and from his statutes I did not turn aside. 24 I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt. 25 And the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight.

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Knowing what we know about David’s life, it’s hard to read these words. But this is most likely written before his fall, and to be righteous doesn’t mean that he was without sin (because they had the sacrificial system to cleanse from sin and guilt). All it means is that he had walked in faith before God (Gen 15:6). But this shows us why we should read these words as pointing beyond David to the Messiah. For Jesus was the only one who was truly righteous and without sin. He is the only one deserving a reward for his pure life. But he has promised us that if we place our faith in him, we share in his righteous standing before God. The rewards that he earned by his faithful life are given to us (Rev. 3:21).

## Read 2 Samuel 22:26-46

26 "With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless; 27 with the purified you deal purely, and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous. 28 You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down. 29 For you are my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness. 30 For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. 31 This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. 32 "For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? 33 This God is my strong refuge and has made my way blameless. 34 He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. 35 He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. 36 You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your gentleness made me great. 37 You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip; 38 I pursued my enemies and destroyed them, and did not turn back until they were consumed. 39 I consumed them; I thrust them through, so that they did not rise; they fell under my feet. 40 For you equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me. 41 You made my enemies turn their backs to me, those who hated me, and I destroyed them. 42 They looked, but there was none to save; they cried to the Lord, but he did not answer them. 43 I beat them fine as the dust of the earth; I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets. 44 "You delivered me from strife with my people; you kept me as the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me. 45 Foreigners came cringing to me; as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me. 46 Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses.

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God was with David through all his battles. He was David's true strength and victory. He had humbled the prideful Saul and exalted the humble David, as he always does. God gave David such a great victory that even nations outside of Israel began to serve him. But how much truer is this of Jesus? Jesus defeated the strongest enemies of Sin, Satan, and Death through his cross and resurrection. And now, the gospel goes out to the whole world, bringing salvation even to those who are not Jews. All over the earth are found those who have given up their fight and bow their knee to Jesus.

## Read 2 Samuel 22:47-51

47 “The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation, 48 the God who gave me vengeance and brought down peoples under me, 49 who brought me out from my enemies; you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from men of violence. 50 “For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, and sing praises to your name. 51 Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.”

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When we think about the great victory that God has won over his enemies and for us, his people, it should lead us to praise and thankfulness. It should also lead us to declare the truth of God’s promises for us. Verse 51 points back to God’s covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:15-16).

## Read 2 Samuel 23:1-7

1 Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: 2 “The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. 3 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, 4 he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. 5 “For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? 6 But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; 7 but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.”

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This is perhaps one of the last poetic writings that David wrote. It is similar to the ending of the book of Ecclesiastes in that he shows that when all of life is weighed, it is the fear of the Lord that matters (Ecc. 11:13). Here David applies that wisdom to how kings rule. If a king rules justly in the way of the Lord, God will bless him and his people. If the person does not rule in the “fear of God,” then that person is “worthless,” and they will be overthrown and plagued with violence.

## Read 2 Samuel 23:8-12

8 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the three. He wielded his spear against eight hundred whom he killed at one time. 9 And next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel withdrew. 10 He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword. And the Lord brought about a great victory that day, and the men returned after him only to strip the slain. 11 And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. 12 But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the Lord worked a great victory.

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There is not much “special” to take away from this outside of the fact that although these mighty men struck down many men by themselves, it was the Lord who brought the victory. No matter how strong we are against our foes, without God, we will lose every time.

## Read 2 Samuel 23:13-17

13 And three of the thirty chief men went down and came about harvest time to David at the cave of Adullam, when a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. 14 David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. 15 And David said longingly, "Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" 16 Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and carried and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it. He poured it out to the Lord 17 and said, "Far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

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While this is primarily a story of the heroic deeds of David's men, it says more about David than it does of the men. While it seems preposterous that David would refuse to drink the water that his men had gotten for him, we have to remember that David is king. How easy it might have been to use his kingly authority to order these men to complete every action that he desired (like the other kings of the world), and yet he pours out the water as a sacrifice to God. David was once caught up in getting all that he desired; he ordered his men to bring him Bathsheba and to allow Uriah to be killed in battle. Now, mature and knowing that sin creeps so close at the door, David refuses to give in.<sup>xxvii</sup> Sometimes it takes our fall to learn how to act before God in the future.

## Read 2 Samuel 23:18-23

18 Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruah, was chief of the thirty. And he wielded his spear against three hundred men and killed them and won a name beside the three. 19 He was the most renowned of the thirty and became their commander, but he did not attain to the three. 20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a valiant man of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds. He struck down two ariels of Moab. He also went down and struck down a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. 21 And he struck down an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but Benaiah went down to him with a staff and snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. 22 These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and won a name beside the three mighty men. 23 He was renowned among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. And David set him over his bodyguard.

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We have more mighty exploits of David's warriors; these are men of David's thirty (there were actually thirty-seven), although none of these men attained the height of David's special three. (It's interesting that Jesus also had a special three in Peter, James, and John.)

## Read 2 Samuel 23:24-39

24 Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, 25 Shammah of Harod, Elikah of Harod, 26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, 27 Abiezer of Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite, 28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai of Netophah, 29 Heleb the son of Baanah of Netophah, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the people of Benjamin, 30 Benaiah of Pirathon, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, 31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth of Bahurim, 32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, 33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, 34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, 35 Hezro of Carmel, Paarai the Arbite, 36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, 37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah, 38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.

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Here's a list of David's closest men. The most interesting of all is that Uriah, the man David had killed, is listed among these. The commentator, Robert Barron, is certainly right that this is to show that even though David was a man after God's own heart, he was not the ultimate king of Israel who would usher in God's kingdom.<sup>xxviii</sup> Another descendant of Jesse was still to come.

## Read 2 Samuel 24:1-3

1 Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah." 2 So the king said to Joab, the commander of the army, who was with him, "Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the number of the people." 3 But Joab said to the king, "May the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see it, but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?"

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This last episode can be troubling to us. The author says that in God's anger against Israel he incited David to take a census of the people. Why would God do such a thing? But we see from a parallel account, 1 Chron. 21:1-3, that it is actually Satan who leads David to take the census. What is happening is very much like the story of Job; in God's judgment for Israel's sin (the content of which the author does not tell us), he allows Satan to move David to take this census. Joab, knowing that this census would be sinful (1 Chron. 21:3), seeks to persuade David against it. It was most likely sinful because it was a way for the king to see whether God was being faithful in growing the kingdom of Israel. Instead of walking by faith, David was trying to walk by sight.<sup>xxix</sup> When we are being tempted not to trust in God and gain his promises by our own effort, we must listen to the counsel of our church family for Satan can easily blind us to the truth.

## Read 2 Samuel 24:4-10

4 But the king's word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel. 5 They crossed the Jordan and began from Aroer, and from the city that is in the middle of the valley, toward Gad and on to Jazer. 6 Then they came to Gilead, and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites; and they came to Dan, and from Dan they went around to Sidon, 7 and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites; and they went out to the Negeb of Judah at Beersheba. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9 And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: in Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000. 10 But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

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David's men go out and take the census (although according to 1 Chron. 21:6, Joab resented David for commanding something so sinful). But after hearing the results of the census, David knew that he had sinned by not trusting the Lord. David's repentance upon feeling his guilt is a model for us. We often want to flee from God and think that he doesn't want us in his presence after we sin, but what he desires for us to do is to humble ourselves before him, confess our sin, and ask for forgiveness.

## Read 2 Samuel 24:11-17

11 And when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 "Go and say to David, 'Thus says the Lord, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.'" 13 So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me." 14 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man." 15 So the Lord sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men. 16 And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, "Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house."

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This is the only time in the Scripture that God ever allows someone to choose the punishment that he will bring for sin. It says something of David's trust in God that he would rather take God's wrath—hoping for his mercy—than violence from his enemies. So, David states the punishment he doesn't want and allows God to choose between the famine or the pestilence (fatal disease). The Lord sends an angel to bring this disease across the whole area that David had recorded in the census, thereby showing David that the numbers of the people of Israel will be determined by him alone. And when the angel moves to strike Jerusalem, the Lord relents, and David sees that the people's blood is on his own hands. So, he moves to make restitution.

## Read 2 Samuel 24:18-25

18 And Gad came that day to David and said to him, "Go up, raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." 19 So David went up at Gad's word, as the Lord commanded. 20 And when Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming on toward him. And Araunah went out and paid homage to the king with his face to the ground. 21 And Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the Lord, that the plague may be averted from the people." 22 Then Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. 23 All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the Lord your God accept you." 24 But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25 And David built there an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.

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The Lord directs David as to how he is to make atonement for his sin. He buys a threshing floor and builds an altar on it and sacrifices to God so that the Lord relented from sending the plague against Jerusalem. Just like in the story of the Exodus, Israel had to sacrifice in order that the angel of death might pass them by. The representative king of Israel sacrifices that the angel of death might not come against Jerusalem. But here, we see echoes of Jesus. Jesus went outside of the city of Jerusalem to make atonement by the sacrificing of himself (Heb. 13:12-13). It was not Jesus' sin for which the angel of death is sent against the rebels of God, but it is our sin that is laid on him that he atones for. If David was truly the representative of the people, it should have been he who offered himself for the people, but he was not perfect and could not achieve full redemption. The true king of Israel was still to come. The story of 2 Samuel ends on this question: David is not the king who will bring the kingdom of God in full, but will any of his offspring?

- i I expanded the idea from Bill T. Arnold, NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel
- ii Ibid.
- iii Robert Barron Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: 2 Samuel
- iv Ibid.
- v Ibid.
- vi Ibid.
- vii I expanded the thoughts of Robert Barron Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: 2 Samuel
- viii Ibid.
- ix Ibid.
- x Ibid.
- xi Ibid.
- xii Ibid.
- xiii Ibid.
- xiv Ibid.
- xv Ibid.
- xvi Ibid.
- xvii Ibid.
- xviii Ibid.
- xix Ibid.
- xx Ibid.
- xxi Ibid.
- xxii Bill T. Arnold, NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel
- xxiii N.T. Wright Paul and the Faithfulness of God
- xxiv Bill T. Arnold, NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel
- xxv Ibid.
- xxvi Robert Barron Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: 2 Samuel
- xxvii Ibid.
- xxviii Ibid.
- xxix Raymond Dillard, quoted in Bill T. Arnold, NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel