

## 2 Samuel 1–5

These chapters describe the events leading up to David's coronation as king of Israel. You will want to read 1 Chron. 10:1–14, 11:1–19, and 14:1–8 for parallel accounts.

### I. David Sorrows over Saul's Death (1)

A lesser saint would have rejoiced that his enemy was slain, but David was a man after God's own heart and felt keenly the tragedy of Saul's sin. Of course, David's dear friend Jonathan was also dead; the sin of a disobedient father had brought judgment upon innocent people. We have already noted the lessons of Saul's death in our study of 1 Samuel, but it would be profitable to consider some of the other details.

Note that an Amalekite brought the news and claimed to be the one who finally took Saul's life. Had Saul obeyed the Lord in 1 Sam. 15 and slain *all* of the Amalekites, this would not have happened. The sin we fail to slay is the one that slays us. See Deut. 25:17–19.

David's lamentation is touching; see Prov. 24:17. This "Song of the Bow" connects with Jonathan's use of the bow (1 Sam. 20:20ff). There are no unkind words about Saul in this song. David's chief concern is that the Lord's anointed has been slain and the Lord's glory has been dimmed. He is anxious that the unsaved enemy not rejoice over this victory. "How are the mighty fallen!" is his theme (vv. 19, 25, 27). In 1 Sam. 10:23, Saul "stood higher" than any other man, but now he had fallen lower than the enemy!

### II. David Struggles against Saul's Family (2–4)

We now begin those "political intrigues" that plagued David throughout all his life. Even though David sought the mind of God, he could not escape the plots and plans of others; and because he was indebted to these men, it was difficult for him to oppose them. David's march to the throne was a difficult one.

#### A. *The murder of Asahel (chap. 2).*

Joab, Abishai, and Asahel were all sons of David's half-sister Zeruah (1 Chron. 2:16 and 2 Sam. 17:25). Thus, they were David's nephews as well as valued men in his army. David first reigned over Judah, his own tribe, with his headquarters at Hebron. However, Abner, the commander of Saul's army, had made Saul's son Ishbosheth the king over the other tribes. He relocated the capital over the Jordan River in Mahanaim to protect himself and the new king from David's men. Of course, Abner had personal interest in the household of Saul since he was Saul's cousin (1 Sam. 14:50). It was to his advantage to see Ishbosheth reign, but he was deliberately rebelling against God's Word when he crowned him. God had made it very clear that David alone was to rule Israel. Perhaps Christians today are like the Jews of that day: we permit our King to reign over only a part of our lives, and the result is conflict and sorrow. Abner's murder

of Asahel was the prelude to the “long war” between the two kings (3:1). As we shall see, the two remaining brothers avenged this death, much to David's grief.

*B. The murder of Abner (chap. 3).*

David's many wives were chosen in direct violation of Deut. 17:15–17. Some students believe that this expression of David's lust eventually led to the many family problems that plagued his later days. Amnon violated his half-sister Tamar (chap. 13); Absalom rebelled against David and tried to capture the crown (chaps. 13–18); and Adonijah tried to wrest the kingdom from Solomon (1 Kings 1:5ff). Abner had problems with lust too; for he took one of Saul's concubines and incurred the displeasure of the pretended king. This led to a disruption between Abner and Ishbosheth. Abner tried to make a peaceful agreement with David, but the “sons of Zeruah” plotted against him and killed him (vv. 26–30). While Joab did the actual killing, it is likely that his brother was in on the plans. Joab's hands were stained with blood before his own death came; for he not only killed Abner, but also Absalom (2 Sam. 18:14) and Amasa (2 Sam. 20:10). David asked his son Solomon to deal with Joab, and he did (1 Kings 2:5–6, 28–34). How different history would have been had Abner lived, it is difficult to tell. Certainly Joab held unusual power over David, particularly after he assisted the king in his murderous plot against innocent Uriah (11:14ff). Note, however, David's godly conduct in the matter of Abner's death.

*C. The murder of Ishbosheth (chap. 4).*

This was the turning point: when Ishbosheth died, the way was wide open for David to rule over the entire nation. However, it must be noted that David did not approve of the method the sons of Rimmon used, and he had the murderers slain because of their crime. David knew that God was able to elevate him to the throne; he would not do evil that good might come from it (Rom. 3:8). These three murders are evidence that David's road to the throne was a bloody one. What a contrast to our Savior who shed His own blood, and not the blood of others, to gain His throne! See 1 Chron. 22:8 for God's evaluation of David's career.

### **III. David Succeeds to Saul's Throne (5)**

David had reigned seven years in Hebron over the tribe of Judah; now he was to reign over the entire nation for thirty-three years, making a total of forty years. This was David's third anointing—Samuel had anointed him at home in Bethlehem, and the men of Judah had anointed him at Hebron (2:4). See Ps. 18 for David's song of victory after God had defeated all his foes and given him peace. This is a good Psalm to read when you are in trouble, for it shows how the Lord brings us out and leads us into a place of greater blessing. Certainly David did not enjoy his many trials, but he could look back and thank God for them.

The king now needed a capital city, and he chose Jerusalem. This stronghold had not been captured previously (Josh. 15:63; Jud. 1:21) and the Jebusites were arrogant and defied David to attack. “The lame and the blind could defeat you!” they taunted, but David and his men turned their taunts into cries of defeat. First Chron. 11:5–8 tells us

that Joab was the man God used to open the city. There are students who feel that David's men crept into the city unawares through the water system, but some archaeologists maintain that the *water system was not located at that point*. It seems clear from the text that David did use the water tunnel as his means of entry and that Joab carried out the king's master plan.

No sooner was David established in his own city than the old enemy, the Philistines, returned. How true this is in our personal lives: Satan waits for the "peace after the storm" to attack us again. David knew that the Lord's will was the only way to victory, so he immediately consulted Him. Note that the second attack (vv. 22–25) was different from the first, and that David was wise enough to seek God's guidance again. God led him in a new way. We must take care not to keep "carbon copies" of the Lord's will, but to seek Him anew for each new decision.

Certainly it was God's will that David reign over the entire nation, just as it is His will that Christ be Lord over all of our lives. Any part that is left outside His will is going to rebel and cause trouble. We are "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh" (5:1; Eph. 5:30), and we ought to invite Him to reign over us. Only then will we have complete peace and victory.

David's road to the throne covered many years and many trials, but throughout that journey he put God first and never sought vengeance or retaliation against Saul. God saw it that David was protected and promoted according to His time and plan. He will do the same for us if we will but trust Him.

## 2 Samuel 6

You will want to read 1 Chron. 13, 15, and 16 as you study this chapter, since they give additional information about this important event in the life of David. Psalm 132:1–6 tells of David's intense desire to honor the Lord by returning the ark of the covenant to its proper place. For nearly twenty years, the ark had been in Kirjath-jearim (Baale of Judah, see 1 Sam. 6:21–7:2); so David prepared a special tent for it in Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:1) and prepared to return the sacred ark to its home. It took more than three months for him to finish the task (6:11).

### I. David Displeases the Lord (6:1–11)

Certainly it was a noble desire on David's part to bring the ark to Jerusalem, but it is possible to have "zeal without knowledge" and do a good work in a wrong way. To begin with, David did not consult the Lord; he consulted his political leaders (1 Chron. 13:1–4; note 2 Sam. 5:19 and 23). It appears that his main motive was to unify the nation under his rule rather than to glorify the Lord. Note in 1 Chron. 13:3 that David criticizes Saul for neglecting the ark. Perhaps this statement had something to do with the behavior of Saul's daughter, Michal, as recorded in 6:20ff. All the leaders and all the congregation agreed to David's plan, but this did not make the subsequent actions right.

David's next mistake was to ignore God's Word. Instead of asking the Levites to bear the ark on their shoulders (Num. 3:27–31; 4:15; 7:9; 10:21), he followed the worldly example of the Philistines and put the ark on a new cart (1 Sam. 6). God would permit the Philistines to use this method, since they were not His covenant people, instructed in the Word. But for the Jews to ignore the divine commands and imitate the heathen nations, was to invite disaster. How many Christians and local churches today “conform to the world” (Rom. 12:2) instead of “following the pattern” given by God from heaven? (Ex. 25:40) All of the people were enthusiastic and joyful, but this did not make their method right in the eyes of God. Israel wanted to be “like the other nations” (1 Sam. 8:5), and it led to tragedy.

Naturally, the human method of doing God's work eventually fails: the oxen stumbled and the ark was in danger of falling! This led to the third mistake: a man who was not a Levite touched the ark (see Num. 4:15). God had to judge him immediately or else sacrifice His glory and permit His Word to be violated. David's reaction to this sudden judgment reveals that his heart was not completely right with God in the matter; for, first he was angry, then he was fearful. Instead of pausing and seeking God's will to discover the reason for the judgment, David stopped the procession and quickly disposed of the ark. First Chronicles 26:1–4 indicates that the family of Obed-edom belonged to the Levitical family and could safely care for the ark.

One mistake led to another! How important it is to determine God's will and then follow God's way in accomplishing that will.

## **II. David Displays His Zeal (6:11–19)**

During the three months' interim, David undoubtedly searched his heart and confessed his sins. He certainly turned to the Law to discover God's instructions for carrying the ark (1 Chron. 15:1–2, 12–13). God was blessing the household of Obed-edom, and David wanted that blessing for the whole nation. This time he prepared the tent and also saw to it that the Levites were properly prepared for their task.

It is thought that Ps. 24 may have been composed to celebrate this event. From 1 Chron. 16:7ff we discover that Ps. 105 also grew out of this happy event. David was used of God to give expression to the joy of his heart, and his song glorified the Lord. The king laid aside his royal robes and led the procession in the humble garments of a Levite. The Levites took six paces and then paused, waiting to see if God would accept them; when no judgment came, they offered sacrifices and then proceeded the rest of the way to Jerusalem. It is obvious that David's “dancing” before the Lord was a spontaneous expression of his joy that the ark of God was restored to the people. Was it undignified for David to act in this way? Certainly not! While his actions are not given as examples for us to follow, we dare not go to the other extreme and rule out all outward expressions of joy and praise in our worship of God! While some believers may carry such activities to extremes, others may be guilty of grieving the Spirit by a false sobriety. Finally, David's “dancing” is in no way an excuse for modern “dancing”; for his actions were done before the Lord to glorify Him.

David blessed the people and gave them gifts to celebrate the return of the ark. Years before “the glory had departed”; now the Lord of Hosts (God of armies) was back in the midst of His people again. No wonder David rejoiced!

### III. David Disciplines His Wife (6:20–23)

We have noted before that Michal, Saul's daughter, was never a suitable wife for David. She belonged to Saul's family and never really exhibited any faith in the God of Israel. First Samuel 19:13 indicates that she worshiped idols. David did not take her as his wife because of the leading of the Lord; he "won her" by slaying Goliath (1 Sam. 17:25) and by fulfilling Saul's murderous requirements (1 Sam. 18:17–27). This life-time alliance with the family of Saul meant trouble from the very beginning, as all ungodly alliances do (2 Cor. 6:14–18). The conflict between David and Saul is an illustration of the battle between the flesh and the Spirit, and for David to be united to Michal meant yielding to the flesh.

It takes little imagination to see why Michal despised her husband. Certainly her sinful attitude had been growing within for years. She resented being married to her father's armor bearer as the "prize" for victory. She resented the fact that David had other wives (see 3:2–5; 5:13–16), all of whom were chosen after her marriage to David. Her father had died shamefully, and his enemy now reigned victoriously over all Israel. Of course, beneath all these reasons lay the basic reason: she was an unbeliever who did not understand or appreciate the things of the Lord (1 Cor. 2:14–16). She wanted David to display his royal power in great pomp and ceremony; he preferred to take his place with the common people and glorify the Lord.

Her harsh words to David after a great time of praise must have cut him deeply. It is usually true that Satan has a "Michal" to meet us whenever we have been rejoicing in the Lord and seeking to glorify Him. Her wicked words revealed a wicked heart, and David knew that she must be dealt with. "If your hand offends you, cut it off!" He realized that Michal would never help him in the work of the Lord; therefore, he put her away and refused to give her the privileges of marriage. For a Jewish woman to die without children was, of course, a great shame to her. David answered this fool according to her folly (Prov. 26:5).

When others criticize us, and we know our hearts and motives are right, we should not get discouraged. Had David been like some saints, he would have said, "All right, I just won't serve the Lord anymore! Even my wife doesn't appreciate it!" No, instead, we find in the next chapter that David planned to do even more and build a temple for the Lord. This is the proper spirit for the Christian, to honor the Lord regardless of what obstacles Satan may put in the way.

## 2 Samuel 7

Two phrases in this chapter summarize the main lesson: "your seed" (v. 12) and "your throne" (v. 16). This Davidic covenant (also given in 1 Chron. 17) is important to the program of God, because in it God promises certain special blessings to the Jewish nation through David. In His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15), God had promised a seed, a land, and a blessing to all nations through Israel. In this covenant, God reveals that the promised Messiah would come through David's line (Rom. 1:3) and would rule from David's throne over the promised messianic kingdom.

## I. A Noble Purpose (7:1–3)

The days of exile and danger are over, and David is enjoying rest and blessing in his own house. The king is fellowshiping with the prophet Nathan, and they are discussing the things of the Lord.

David always had a love for the house of God (Ps. 132), and his desire was to build a beautiful house for the Lord. God would not permit this (1 Chron. 22:8), but He would acknowledge David's love, inasmuch as this desire was in his heart (1 Kings 8:18). Nathan did not know God's express will in the matter, so he merely commended David and encouraged him to do what was in his heart. Both David and Nathan kept their hearts open for God's leading; and, when the Lord spoke, they listened and obeyed. We ought always to encourage one another in spiritual matters and provoke one another to good works (Heb. 10:24–25).

David truly was "a man after God's own heart," for he had the Word of God and the house of God uppermost in his heart. Would that more of God's people were like him!

## II. A Wonderful Promise (7:4–17)

Nathan must have been meditating on the Word "in the night" (Ps. 119:55) when God spoke to him. How often God speaks to us when it is dark! See Gen. 15. "You have visited me in the night" (Ps. 17:3). God gave Nathan a message for the king, and this message involved several important factors.

### A. *God's grace* (vv. 5–10).

How gracious God was to "dwell in a tent" during the years since the nation had come out of Egypt! He had not asked for an elaborate temple, as housed the gods of Egypt. No, He had "humbled Himself" and dwelt in the tabernacle, journeying with His people and going before them to open the way. John 1:14 says, "And the Word (Christ) became flesh and *tabernacled* among us." Another evidence of God's grace was His treatment of David. God had called him from the pastures and put him on the throne. God had given him victory over all his enemies. God had brought Israel into a place of blessing and they would not be moved again (v. 10, where the verbs ought to be past tense, "I *have* appointed a place").

### B. *God's purpose* (vv. 11–16).

Please note that the word "house" has a double meaning in this passage: (1) a material house, the temple, v. 13; and (2) a human house, David's family, vv. 11, 16, 19, 25, 27, 29. It is customary to speak of a royal family as a "house," such as the "House of Windsor" in Great Britain. David wanted to build God a house of stone, but God was going to build David a royal house, a family that would reign on his throne.

The terms of this covenant are important because they involve the purposes of God in sending Jesus Christ to the world. We must note, first, that some of this covenant was fulfilled in Solomon, David's successor on the throne; see 1 Chron. 22:6–16. God did put Solomon on the throne, in spite of the wicked plots of others in the family, and God

did enable Solomon to build the beautiful temple. When Solomon and his descendants sinned, God kept His promise (v. 14) and chastened them; see Ps. 89:20–37. It must be noted as well that there are some matters in this covenant that can apply only to Jesus Christ. God states that the throne would be forever (v. 13) and that David's house and kingdom would be forever (v. 16). But David does not have a descendant upon his throne today. In fact, there is no throne in Jerusalem. Did God not fulfill His promises? God states in Ps. 89:33–37 that He would never break His covenant with David, even though He might have to chasten David's children.

The ultimate fulfillment of these promises is in Jesus Christ. Read carefully the message of the angel to Mary in Luke 1:28–33, and note that God promises Christ the throne and the kingdom of David. Some “spiritualize” these verses and apply them to the church today; but if the rest of the angel's message is to be taken literally, what right do we have to spiritualize the throne and the kingdom? Led by the Spirit, Zacharias states clearly that Christ would fulfill the covenants made to the fathers (Luke 1:68–75). It is our conviction that Christ will fulfill this Davidic covenant when He sits on David's throne and rules during the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1–6). It is then that all the great kingdom promises in the OT Prophets will be fulfilled. The apostles in Acts 15:13–18 understood that God would build David's house (tabernacle) again *after* God was finished visiting the Gentiles and calling out a people for His name (the church).

### **III. A Humble Prayer (7:18–29)**

David received the message from Nathan, then went in to pray, asking God to fulfill His Word (vv. 28–29). How much more we would receive from lessons and sermons if only we spent time with God afterward and “prayed the message in.”

God enjoys giving His children “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” David had asked permission to build an earthly temple; God responded by promising him an eternal kingdom! This tremendous act of grace left David humbled before the Lord, and in his prayer, the king praises the greatness of the Lord. He realized the privileged position of Israel (vv. 22–24). Oh, that God's people today would understand how great God is and what great things He has done for His own! Yet David's concern was not that his name be praised, but that the name of the Lord be magnified (v. 26; see Phil. 1:20–21). “You have spoken; now perform the promises!” prayed David. Like Abraham, David was “fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Rom. 4:21).

Was David disappointed because God would not permit him to build the house? Perhaps, however, it was not important to him who built it but that God's will be done and God's name be glorified.

## **2 Samuel 9**

This chapter presents a moving illustration of the salvation we have in Christ. David's treatment of Mephibosheth is certainly that of a “man after God's own heart.”

## **I. Mephibosheth—The Lost Sinner**

### *A. He was born in a rejected family.*

As the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth was a member of a rejected family. He was a son of a prince, yet was living in dependence on others away from the city of Jerusalem. Every lost sinner today is born in sin, born into Adam's family, and is thus under condemnation (Rom. 5:12ff; Eph. 2:1–3).

### *B. He experienced a fall and could not walk.*

Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet (vv. 3, 13) and thus could not walk. All people today are sinners because of the fall of Adam (Rom. 5:12), and they cannot walk so as to please God. Instead of walking in obedience, sinners walk "according to the course of this world" (Eph. 2:2). They may try to walk to please God, but no amount of self-effort or good works will save them.

### *C. He was missing the best.*

Mephibosheth lived at Lo-debar which means "no pasture." That is a fitting description of this present world—no pasture, no place for the souls to be satisfied. Sinners are hungry and thirsty, but this world and its pleasures cannot satisfy.

### *D. He would have perished without David's help.*

We would never have heard of Mephibosheth were it not for the gracious steps David took to save him. His name was written down in God's Word because David reached him and helped him.

The lost sinner is in a tragic situation. He has fallen; he cannot walk to please God; he is separated from home; he is under condemnation; he cannot help himself.

## **II. David—The Gracious Savior**

### *A. David made the first move.*

Salvation is of the Lord! He must take the first steps, because the lost sinner will not by nature seek God (Rom. 3:10–12). David sent for poor Mephibosheth, just as God sent Christ to this earth to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

### *B. David acted for Jonathan's sake.*

This grew out of the loving covenant that David had made with Jonathan years before (1 Sam. 20:11–23). David had never seen Mephibosheth, yet he loved him for Jonathan's sake. We are not saved because of our own merit; we are saved for the sake of Christ. We are forgiven for His sake (Eph. 4:32). We are accepted "in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). It

was part of that “everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20–21) that the Father should save for Jesus’ sake all that trust the Savior.

*C. It was an act of kindness.*

In v. 3, David calls it “the kindness of God.” Christ shows His kindness to us in saving us (Eph. 2:7; Titus 3:4–7). David’s throne was a throne of grace, not a throne of justice. Mephibosheth had no claim upon David; he had absolutely no case to present. Had he appeared before that throne asking for justice, he would have received condemnation.

*D. David called him personally and he came.*

David sent a servant to bring him (v. 5), but the servant then stepped out of the way to make room for the king. Nobody is saved by a preacher or evangelist; all the servant can do is usher the sinner into the presence of Christ. Note how Mephibosheth fell humbly before David, for he knew his place as a condemned man. How tenderly David said, “Mephibosheth.”

*E. David took him into his own family.*

Like many sinners today, Mephibosheth wanted to work his way into forgiveness (vv. 6, 8), but David made him a son (v. 11). The Prodigal Son wanted to be a servant too, but no one can earn salvation (Luke 15:18–19). “Beloved, now are we the sons of God!” See 1 John 3:1–2 and John 1:11–13.

*F. David spoke peace to him.*

“Fear not!” were David’s words of grace to the trembling crippled man; and “Fear not!” is what Christ says to every believing sinner. “There is therefore now no condemnation ...” (Rom. 8:1). Through the Word of God before us and the Spirit of God within us, we experience peace.

*G. David provided for his every need.*

Mephibosheth would no longer live at “no pasture”; for now he would eat daily at the king’s table. Furthermore, the servant Ziba and his sons became servants to Mephibosheth. And David gave to Mephibosheth all of the inheritance that belonged to him. So Christ satisfies the spiritual and material needs of His family. He has given us an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:11, 18; 1 Peter 1:4ff; Col. 1:12). If he gave us our rightful inheritance, we would go to hell! But in His grace He has chosen us to share His inheritance with Him, for we are “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17).

*H. David protected him from judgment.*

In 2 Sam. 21:1–11, we see that God sent a famine to the land to chastise His people. When David sought God’s will, it became evident that the famine came because of the

wicked way Saul treated the Gibeonites. There is no record of Saul's exact treatment of them in the Bible, but since Israel had made a treaty with these people (Josh. 9), Saul's actions were a direct violation of the truth and were a sin against God. God had waited many years to reveal this sin and send this judgment; "Be sure your sins will find you out." See Ex. 21:23–25. It is not for us in this age of grace to judge these people for asking for the sacrifice of seven of Saul's descendants; it is sufficient that God permitted this to happen. Note that David deliberately spared Mephibosheth (v. 7). There was another Mephibosheth among Saul's descendants (v. 8), but David knew the difference! There are many today who profess to be God's children, and perhaps we cannot always tell the difference; but when the Day of Judgment comes, God will reveal those who are truly His.

Of course, as we study this illustration, we must keep in mind that the salvation we have in Christ supplies "much more." David rescued Mephibosheth from physical danger and supplied his physical needs, but Christ has saved us from eternal hell and daily meets our physical and spiritual needs. We are not sons of some earthly king; we are the very children of God.

Second Samuel 16:1–4 illustrates this difference. When David fled from Jerusalem during the rebellion of his son Absalom, Ziba the servant met him and made an accusation against Mephibosheth. David believed the accusation and rashly gave all of Mephibosheth's land to the servant. However, when David returned to Jerusalem later, he met Mephibosheth and learned the truth (2 Sam. 19:24–30). Ziba had lied. He had promised to supply an animal for Mephibosheth to use to escape with David, but had not kept his promise. Ziba had slandered an innocent man, and David had believed the slander. Of course, this could never happen between a believer and Jesus Christ. "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?... Who is he who condemns?" (Rom. 8:33–39) Satan may accuse us and slander us, but Christ will never change in His love for us or His promises to us.

We can see in Mephibosheth the attitude the believer ought to have concerning the "return of the King." This exiled lame man lived for the day his king would return! He had no thought for his own comfort; rather, he waited and prayed for the return of the one who had loved him and rescued him from death. So overjoyed was Mephibosheth at the return of David that he even forfeited his land.

## **2 Samuel 11–12**

The Bible honestly records the sins of God's people, but never in such a way that sin is made acceptable. Unlike many so-called "true-to-life" books today, the Bible states the facts and draws out the lessons, but allows nothing for the imagination to dwell on. There are some things "it is a shame to speak of" (Eph. 5:12), and the events in this chapter must be studied with a Spirit-directed mind and heart, "considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

## **I. David and Bathsheba (11:1–4)**

It was not a passionate youth who deliberately walked into this sin, but a man of God who had now reached middle age. It is easy to see how David got into this sin: (1) he was self-confident, after enjoying victories and prosperity; (2) he was disobedient, staying home when he should have been on the battlefield; (3) he was idle, lying in bed in the evening; (4) he was self-indulgent, giving freedom to his desires when he should have been disciplining himself; and (5) he was careless, allowing his eyes to wander and yielding to the “lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16). The Christian soldier must never lay aside the armor (Eph. 6:10ff).

James 1:13–15 perfectly describes David's case: (1) his desires were activated by the sight, and he failed to curb them; (2) desire conceived the sin in his imagination; (3) his will surrendered and this led to sin; (4) his actions led to death. He did not “watch and pray” as Matt. 26:41 commands; nor did he deal decisively with his “wandering eye” (Matt. 5:29 and 18:9).

David could have defeated this temptation (for it is not a sin to be tempted) by recalling God's Word (Ex. 20:14), or by considering that Bathsheba was a man's daughter and a man's wife (v. 3). In fact, she was married to one of the bravest soldiers in David's army (23:39), and she was also the granddaughter of Ahithophel, who later rebelled against David and sided with Absalom (23:34 and chaps. 16–17). David had many wives already, and God would have given him more (12:8). It is too bad that the record of this godly man was marred forever by “the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5). Of course, we must admit that the woman shared in the guilt, but David, being the king, surely is more to blame.

## **II. David and Uriah (11:5–27)**

“When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin!” warns James 1:15 (nkjv). How true these words are in David's experience. Instead of calling on the Lord and confessing his sin, the king sent for the husband and tried to trick him into going home. This, of course, might have covered the sin. But Uriah was a better man than his king, and he refused to go home! Compare David's self-indulgence in vv. 1–2 with Uriah's discipline in v. 11. Then, his first plan having failed, David tried a new scheme and made the man drunk. But even under the influence of wine, Uriah was a more disciplined man than sober David!

Sin was still growing: David decided to have the man murdered and then to take his wife. Joab was more than willing to cooperate, since this would give him opportunity later to take advantage of the king. Uriah carried his own death warrant to the battlefield that day. The plan worked and the brave soldier was killed in battle. David “put on a front” and waited until the week of mourning was over; then he married the widow. Some in the court may have thought highly of David for comforting Bathsheba in this way, but the Lord thought otherwise.

### III. David and the Lord (12)

#### A. *David's confession (vv. 1–14).*

At least a year passed, during which time David covered his sins. Read Ps. 32 and 51 for descriptions of David's feelings during that difficult period. He became weak and sick physically; he lost his joy; he lost his witness; he lost his power. God gave David plenty of time to make things right, but he persisted in hiding his sins. Had he come to the Lord on his own, in sincere repentance, things might have been different later on. Finally, God sent Nathan, not with a message of blessing as in chapter 7, but with a message of conviction. How easy it is to be convicted about other people's sins! But Nathan fearlessly told David, "You are the man!"

We must commend David for bowing to the authority of the Word of God and confessing his sin. He could have slain Nathan. (Note that David even named a son after Nathan, 1 Chron. 3:5; Luke 3:31). God was ready to forgive David's sins, but He could not prevent those sins from "bringing forth death" (James 1:15). God's grace forgives, but God's government must allow sinners to reap what they sow. See Ps. 99:8. "He shall restore fourfold!" David had declared punishment concerning the man in Nathan's story, so God accepted his sentence. The sword never did depart from David's household: the baby died; Absalom killed Amnon, who had ruined Tamar (chap. 13); then Joab killed Absalom (18:9–17); and Adonijah was slain by Benaiah (1 Kings 2:24–25). Fourfold! Add to these trials the awful ruin of Tamar, the shameful treatment of David's wives by Absalom (12:11; 16:20–23), plus the rebellion of Absalom, and you can see that David paid dearly for a few moments of lustful pleasure. He sowed lust and reaped the same; he sowed murder and reaped murders, for "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

#### B. *David's contrition (vv. 15–25).*

Immediately the chastening hand of God moved, and the baby became ill. Nathan had said it would die (v. 14), but David still fasted and prayed for the life of the child. He would not even listen to his servants, but at the end of a week, the child died. David's fasting and prayers could not alter the counsel of God. He had committed a sin unto death, and it was wrong to pray about it (1 John 5:14–16). However, we appreciate David's concern for the child and mother, and his faith in the goodness of God. We appreciate too his confidence in God's Word, for he knew the child had gone to heaven (v. 23). While we abhor David's sin and all the trouble it brought, we thank God for this wonderful verse of assurance to sorrowing parents who have lost children in death. (As Vance Havner said, "When you know where something is, you haven't lost it.") "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds!" Note too that it is wrong to pray for the dead. David stopped praying for the child.

#### C. *David's conquests (vv. 26–31).*

This tragic episode began with David pampering himself at home, but it ends with him taking his rightful place on the battlefield and leading the nation to an important victory.

It is encouraging to see that God was willing to use David again in spite of his sins. He had confessed his sins; God had forgiven him; now he could fight for the Lord again. It is bad for believers to sin; it is also bad for them to live in the past and think themselves useless even after they have confessed their sins. Satan loves to shackle God's people with memories of sins that God has already forgiven and forgotten. Satan is the accuser (Rev. 12:10; Zech. 3), but Jesus is the Advocate (1 John 2:1–2).

How the grace of God shines in vv. 24–25, for God chose Bathsheba to be the mother of the next king! “Solomon” means “Peaceable”; “Jedidiah” means “beloved of the Lord.” God turned the curse into a blessing, for Solomon was the fulfillment of the promise given to David in 1 Chron. 22:9.

This event in David's life ought to be a warning to all Christians to “take heed lest we fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). First Corinthians 10:13 promises a way of escape when we face temptation. However, as in David's case, we cannot overcome temptation if we allow our desires to take over. We need to beware of the beginnings of sin and take care to keep our imaginations clean. The Apostle Paul commands us to “put to death” (mortify) the members of the body that can lead us into sin (Col. 3; Rom. 6). It is necessary for all believers to watch and pray and not make provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14).

## 2 Samuel 15–19

David continues to reap the sad harvest of his sins; see 2 Sam. 12:10–12. While our God is gracious to forgive when we confess our sins, He will not violate His own holiness by interfering with the tragic results of our sins.

### I. The Rebellion of the Prince (15:1–12)

Read chapters 13 and 14 to get the complete story. Absalom's beautiful sister Tamar was ruined by his half-brother Amnon, who was David's oldest son (3:2). David had committed adultery with Bathsheba; now rape invaded his own household! Absalom had a dual purpose in mind when he found out what Amnon had done: he wanted to revenge Tamar by killing Amnon, but at the same time he would be removing the obvious heir to the throne. It seems that David had no disciplinary influence over his own family. In 13:21 we read of David's anger, but we read nothing of his actions to correct matters. Perhaps the memory of his own sins checked him. Absalom took matters into his own hands and killed Amnon; then he fled to Gentile territory to hide away with the relatives of his mother (13:37 and see 3:3). In chapter 14, Joab interceded for Absalom and tricked David into bringing his wayward son back home.

Absalom wasted little time in building a loyal group of followers. He openly criticized his father's administration and secretly stole the hearts of the people. (Note that the “forty years” of 15:7 is translated “four years” in other versions. If the number forty is the correct number, then we do not know from which event in the past the writer is dating.)

After a time, Absalom found his movement strong enough to risk open revolt. It is not surprising that Ahithophel, David's counselor, sided with the rebels, for it was his granddaughter Bathsheba that David had taken (11:3 with 23:34). It looked as though Absalom would be successful and steal the crown from his father.

## **II. The Reactions of the People (15:13–16:23)**

While David was reigning in power, his real enemies would not dare to oppose him, but Absalom's revolt gave them what appeared to be a wonderful opportunity to resist the king and get away with it. It was a time of sifting the true from the false.

### *A. David's friends (15:13–37).*

Leaving Jerusalem was a wise move for David, for it would not have taken much force to make him a prisoner in his own palace. Note that the Gentiles in his army, led by Ittai the Gittite, were loyal to their king. Undoubtedly these men had stood with David during his trying years of exile. The two priests, Zadok and Abiathar, also started to follow their king, but David sent them back to the city. This in itself was a step of faith, for David was trusting God to give him victory and return him to his throne. David did not make the mistake Eli's sons made when they rashly took the ark into battle (1 Sam. 4–5); he sent the priests and the ark back to Jerusalem. Of course, the priests could spy for him and send their sons with information. Hushai was also sent back to the city to pose as an ally of Absalom; his counsel could change that of Ahithophel. It is a sad picture as David and his small army flee the city and cross the Kidron River. It reminds us of our Lord Jesus as He was rejected in Jerusalem, left the city, and crossed the Kidron to pray in the garden (John 18:1). The "Judas" in David's situation was his former friend Ahithophel; perhaps Ps. 55:12–15 was written at this time. Psalms 3 and 4 were composed during this rebellion, and in them we see where David was putting his faith.

### *B. David's enemies (chap. 16).*

Times of rebellion are times of revelation; you see what people really believe and where they stand. Ziba lied to David about Mephibosheth (see 19:24–30) and David was too quick to pass judgment. Shimei was related to Saul's family and openly showed his hatred for David. David's patience under this trial was wonderful; he knew the Lord would avenge him at the right time. Abishai wanted to cut off the man's head (see Luke 9:54 and 1 Peter 2:23), but David stopped him. David was being disgraced not only in the wilderness, but also back in his own palace. For Ahithophel had counseled Absalom to take David's concubines for himself and thus openly break with his father. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy in 12:11–12.

Today, our Lord Jesus is despised and rejected of men, just as was David during the rebellion. It takes courage for men and women today to remain loyal to the King, but we can be sure that God will reward such loyalty when Jesus returns.

### III. The Reckoning of the Lord (17–19)

God permitted this rebellion as a part of the price David was to pay for the sins he committed in connection with Uriah and Bathsheba. God also overruled the events so as to purge David's kingdom and separate the loyal from the disloyal. A day of reckoning finally arrived. Sometimes God's judgments fall swiftly, while at other times He waits and acts slowly.

#### A. *Ahithophel dies (chap. 17).*

There is no question that Ahithophel's plan was the better of the two, but God saw to it that Absalom rejected it. Note Hushai's psychological approach to suggesting that Absalom himself lead the army in battle. This appealed to the man's vanity, but, alas, that vanity only led ultimately to his death. When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was rejected, he took his own life. This is another parallel with Christ's experience in the NT, for Judas went out and hanged himself.

#### B. *Absalom dies (18:1–19:15).*

The vain prince followed Hushai's advice and led his army into the wood of Ephraim. Certainly he was unprepared to wage war, but "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18, nkjv). Absalom caught his head and long hair (14:25–26) in a branch and could not get down. (See Job 20:1–7.) Joab disobeyed David's command (18:5) and killed the rebel; then he sent the news to the king who, when he heard it, wept bitterly. David was a man "after God's own heart" and found "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek. 33:11). David's abnormal grief, however, almost cost him the kingdom.

#### C. *Shimei is pardoned (19:16–23).*

Many a rebel will try to "change his tune" when the King comes back! David was trying to gather together the fragments of his kingdom, so he could not afford to alienate any of the tribes, but later on, Solomon gave Shimei what he deserved (1 Kings 2:36–46).

#### D. *Ziba and Mephibosheth are reconciled (19:24–30).*

It does not speak well of Mephibosheth that he arrived in the company of Shimei (vv. 16–17). Certainly Ziba had lied about his master, and David sought to give a fair judgment. Sad to say, his rash decision before made it difficult to settle matters completely; but we do appreciate David's attitude. We see in Mephibosheth a good example of concern for his absent king.

#### E. *Barzillai is rewarded (19:31–43).*

He had met David's company with help in their hour of need (17:27–29); and no doubt this act of kindness had cost him friends, but he was wonderfully rewarded when the king came back! Barzillai did not want to leave his home and die away from his loved

ones, so he suggested that Chimham (perhaps a son or grandson) be given the blessing. Jeremiah 41:17 informs us that David gave Chimham land near Bethlehem and that his family lived there for many years.

This entire episode of David's rejection and return certainly illustrates the attitudes people today have toward Christ. There are the loyal few who stand by their absent King, and there are the selfish majority who prefer to rebel. But what will happen when the King comes back? And what are we, His followers, doing to hasten His return? (2 Peter 3:12)

## 2 Samuel 24

You will want to read 1 Chronicles 21, the parallel account of this great sin in David's life. Here is another example of God permitting Satan to work so that the purposes of the Lord might be fulfilled. See Luke 22:31–34.

### I. Sin (24:1–9)

What lay behind David's desire for a national census? Probably it was pride: he had won a number of great victories (1 Chron. 18–20) and perhaps wanted to bask in the glory of success. There was certainly nothing wrong with a census, since the people had often been numbered during their national history; but we must keep in mind that a census that praised men would never glorify God.

Another factor to consider is Ex. 30:11–16. In connection with a census was the matter of the "redemption money" that each one was to give, for this money was a reminder that the people were the Lord's purchased possession. Exodus 30:12 warns that God would plague the nation if the people ignored giving the redemption money, and this is just what happened.

God gave David nearly ten months to change his mind and avoid discipline (v. 8). God even used the wise counsel of Joab to discourage him, but David would not listen. It is too bad that God's children sometimes become stubborn in heart and insist on their own way.

David's sin was not a hasty thing; he carried it out with cool, calculated precision. He was rebelling against God! There is an interesting series of contrasts between this sin and his sin with Bathsheba: (1) this was a sin of the spirit (pride) while the other was a sin of the flesh; (2) here he acted with deliberate persistence, while his sin with Bathsheba came as the result of the sudden overwhelming desires of the flesh; (3) this sin involved the nation, and 70,000 people died; his other sin was a family matter, with 4 people dying. (4) Yet in both sins, God gave David time to repent, but he waited too long.

We may not think that pride and rebellion against God's Word are serious sins, but in David's life they produced greater sorrow and tragedy than did his adultery. We must beware of sins "of the flesh and of the spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1).

## II. Suffering (24:10–17)

“The wages of sin is death.” Note that David was convicted in his heart before the judgment fell. He was certainly honest with himself and with the Lord, but his conviction and repentance came too late. In 12:13, David said, “I have sinned,” but here he says, “I have sinned *greatly*.” From a human point of view, numbering the people does not seem a greater sin than adultery and murder; yet from God’s point of view, taking the census was a sin greater in its disobedience and consequence. Jesus, when on earth, was forgiving toward the publicans and sinners but severe with the proud and rebellious. Certainly sins both of the flesh and of the spirit are evil, and a person should not be involved in either one, but we dare not underestimate the awful results of pride and stubborn disobedience.

God permitted David to choose his own discipline, and his choice showed the compassion of his heart. (“Seven years of famine” in v. 13 should be “three years” to parallel the three months and three days of the other two punishments.) David chose to fall into the hands of his merciful Lord rather than into the hands of men. At 6:00 A.M. God’s angel came and began to plague the people. By the time of the evening sacrifice (3:00 P.M.) the angel had slain 70,000 people with a plague. David and his elders saw the judging angel, and David immediately interceded for the people. “These sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand be against me!” However, we must remember that God had a definite cause against the entire nation (24:1) and was using David’s sin as the opportunity to judge the people. Perhaps God was punishing the nation for its rebellion against David when many of them followed Absalom.

There is a practical warning here for those in places of authority: the higher the office, the greater the influence for good or for evil. In Lev. 4 we see that, if the high priest sinned, he was to bring a bullock for an offering (v. 3), the same sacrifice that God required if the whole congregation sinned (vv. 13–14)! David’s sin involved the whole nation this time, just as his “family sin” had involved his entire household.

## III. Sacrifice (24:18–25)

Two factors were involved in the halting of the judgment: the mercy of the Lord (v. 16) and the confession and sacrifice of the sinner (vv. 17ff). God sent His servant a message to build an altar at the place where he had seen the angel, the threshing floor of Araunah (or Ornan). David and his elders went immediately to the site and settled the purchase: he paid 600 shekels of gold for “the place” (the entire area, 1 Chron. 21:25) and 50 shekels of silver for the oxen and the threshing floor (2 Sam. 24:24). Ornan would have freely given the whole thing to his king, but David would not accept it. He would not give the Lord another man’s sacrifice! A cheap sacrifice is worse than no sacrifice at all. This is a good principle for us to follow in our own Christian walk.

David immediately offered the oxen as burnt offerings of dedication to the Lord, and the shedding of the blood took care of the sins. Second Chronicles 3:1 informs us that this very same area became the site for Solomon’s temple. God was able to turn the curse into a blessing! It is interesting to note that Solomon was born to Bathsheba, who had been involved in David’s adultery; and yet Solomon became the next king and actually built the temple on the piece of ground associated with David’s greater sin of

numbering the people. Such is the amazing working of the grace of God! Certainly we ought not to "do evil that good may come from it" (Rom. 3:8), but we can rest in the confidence that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28).

Let us note some practical lessons from this chapter:

*A. We never outgrow temptation.*

David was not an inexperienced youth when he committed this sin! Had he been "watching and praying" he would not have entered into temptation and sin so easily.

*B. God graciously gives time to repent.*

He gave David more than nine months to deal with his sins and make matters right. "Seek the Lord while He may be found."

*C. Sins of the spirit do great damage.*

All sin is wicked and should be avoided, to be sure, but we must realize that the Bible repeatedly condemns stubborn pride. Once David got on his evil course, he was too proud to turn around. His predecessor, King Saul, made the same mistake. We may not be guilty of adultery and murder, but a hard heart and a proud look will lead to perhaps greater evils.

*D. Our sins involve others.*

Seventy thousand people died because David disobeyed the Lord.

*E. True confession is a costly thing.*

Do we realize the high cost of sinning? A true confession is more than a quick prayer and a quoting of 1 John 1:9! True confession involves facing sin honestly and obeying God's Word regardless of the price we must pay.

*F. God will forgive and bring blessing.*

Let us put ourselves into the hands of the Lord, for great are His mercies toward us!