

## 2 Samuel 1: 1-11

The events described here are the aftermath of the disastrous battle between King Saul and the Philistines (1 Sam 31) where Israel are defeated and Saul himself is killed. The news is brought to the camp of David by a young Amalekite. The passage contrasts the reaction of these 2 men.

It's not hard to imagine the thought processes that have gone through the mind of this young man. The conflict between Saul and David would be well known. The issue centred on the throne. Surely this was an opportunity to ingratiate himself to the new King of Israel. He presents himself as delivering the *coup de grace* to the dying Saul. He comes with the royal insignia and the good news that David's fugitive years are over. It is a fatal miscalculation.

Although the death of Saul is personally advantageous, David's first thought is not his own promotion. *Then David and all his men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and fasted and wept until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the army of the Lord and for the nation of Israel (11,12)*

There was more at stake here than David's well being. This was a disaster for the Lord's people and for the Lord's reputation and David felt it deeply. For all that Saul had lost his way spiritually he was still the 'Lord's anointed' and the Amalekites inability to see this would prove fatal.

- Satan is the father of lies. Truth is non-negotiable. Forsake the 'belt of truth' and we invite defeat. Have we resolved to be people of truth?
- Proverbs urges us: *Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble do not let your heart rejoice, or the Lord will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them. (Prov 24:17,18)*
- There are more important things than my personal well being. Can I be concerned for the health of the Church and progress of the gospel whatever else may be going on around me?

## 2 Samuel 1: 17- 27

Death is an occasion for lament and mourning. And even on this side of the cross with a clearer view of the new creation David has things to teach us about handling sadness. There are powerful feelings and generous assessments expressed here. And strangely perhaps there is no mention of God. The feelings set out are purely human.

David is distressed at the thought of the victory celebrations in the Philistine cities. (20)

Gilboa, the scene of the battle will always be connected in his mind with this disastrous defeat. He puts a curse on it before he can bring himself to speak of the lost heroes. (21)

The military successes of Saul and Jonathan are recorded. No longer will Israel's daughters benefit from the plunder secured by the King's victories.

The poem ends with special mention of Jonathan. For all the tensions with his father, he died alongside him (23a) and if Jonathan was faithful to his flawed father how much more to his 'brother' David. (25,26)

- In the face of death we don't need to be triumphant and celebratory. It's not a failure of faith to mourn. There is an appropriate place for lament and profound sadness.
- David challenges us to be generous towards those who oppose us.

- *Jonathan my brother you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.* Jonathan the loyal, brave, self effacing, God honouring friend challenges the kind of friend we would be to others.

## 2 Samuel 2:1-32

Loyalty and ruthlessness are to the fore in the difficult transition to the reign of David.

V1 David seeks divine guidance before he makes his next move. He heads to Hebron and there he is confirmed as king over the tribe of Judah. Ishbosheth Saul's son, by contrast is placed on the throne over Israel by Abner. Abner not Ishbosheth is the leading figure in Israel.

Debts repaid.

David is deliberate in acknowledging the actions of the men of Jabesh Gilead. They are described (1 Sam 31) as risking their lives to recover the body of Saul from the Philistines. In doing so they are repaying a debt. Saul's reign began when he came to the aid of Jabesh Gilead who were at the mercy of Nahash the Ammonite. His actions saved them from having their eyes gouged out.

By contrast Israel refuses to acknowledge its debt to David whose bravery in the past rescued them from the Philistines. Consequently civil war ensues. The rest of the chapter serves to highlight the danger of bitterness that is left to smoulder.

Unresolved resentment

Although civil war breaks out the spotlight falls on Abner and Joab or perhaps more accurately, the sons of Zeruah. (18) Abner will reluctantly kill Joab's younger brother Asahel. And while the battle will be called off the crime will not be forgotten. By 3:27 Joab will have killed Abner.

- David reveals a generous spirit. He speaks graciously of Saul and acknowledges the courage of the men of Jabesh Gilead even although they are not among his supporters. Can we be generous towards those who disagree with us?
- Wisdom knows when to stop. Asahel was fleet footed but foolish. Are there things I ought to back off from?
- Violence and death breeds a bitter harvest. Pray for an end to conflict situations.

## 2 Samuel 3:1-21

This is a chapter full of intrigue and scheming. There is no shortage of evil intention and selfish behaviour. Yet these are the very things God will use to bring about his age old plan to place David on the throne. The human instruments may prove disappointing but Gods wise ways are very impressive.

Abner reacts angrily when he is challenged by the king over his behaviour with Rizpah (7) He protests his loyalty (8) but it all looks very lame. The writer tells us he has been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul (6) (Sleeping with Saul's concubine may be part of that process) When he goes to the elders of Israel he says: *For some time you have wanted to make David your king* (17) Abner appreciates that the direction of the wind is changing. He reveals that he knows what God's will is (9) but only responds now out of resentment and wounded pride.

David is glad to hear from him and looks to strike a deal but makes the demand that Michal his first wife be restored to him. (13) The chapter opens with a description of David's family circumstances. He has added more wives and now presides over a growing

family. All this makes the demand for Michal's return look at best unnecessary. The one other reference to Michal in 2 Samuel (6:20) suggests this was not a happy reunion. His family will turn out to be a battlefield. He will prove to be a much better soldier than father. As the Bible emphasises elsewhere if we don't get things right at home it shapes everything else.

- There may be much that disturbs us about what other people are doing and how events are unfolding. This chapter invites us to believe that *in all things God works for the good of those who love him ... (Rom 8:28)*
- The all wise God has a lot to say about home life. If we are to live well we will pay careful attention to it.

## 2 Samuel 3:22-39

The second half of the chapter describes the murder of Abner. The writer is at pains to emphasise David's innocence. The implication of this extended treatment must be that suspicion is rife among the tribes loyal to the house of Saul that David has organised this.

The phrase 'in peace' is used 3 times in 3 verses (21,22,23) to describe the way David and Abner parted.

Joab is painted in dark colours. He implies Abner's motives are insincere and he is plotting against David. In fact he looking for an opportunity to avenge the death of his brother. But whereas Asahel fell in battle Joab will murder Abner in cold blood.

We are given an extended description of the lengths to which David will go to honour Abner. He is given a state funeral. David composes a lament. The King fasts for the dead warrior. The conclusion comes in v36,37 *So on that day all the people there and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner.*

- David curses Joab but he does not punish him. (see his response to the murderers of Ishbosheth 4:12) This will become a pattern with David. He will fail to deal with Ammon's rape of his step sister and similarly fail with Absalom's murder of Ammon. There are warnings here about our tendency to compromise and negotiate with sin.
- The behaviour of the son of Zeruiah are a product of the lawless days described in 1 Sam 27:8,9. One commentator has written "Until Joab and Abishai were reined in it would be difficult for David to cast off the old lifestyle which had suited the outlaw but which ill fitted a king." (RP Gordon) The past has a habit of catching up with us. It is an encouragement to live by the fear of the Lord rather than by our own wits.

## 2 Samuel 4: 1-12

Attention moves from what is going on in the house of David to the house of Saul. The first four verses emphasise its weakness. Ishbosheth, Saul's successor is dismayed by the death of Abner, the commander of his forces. We are introduced to two of his military leaders who will turn out to be treacherous opportunists. The picture is completed with a reference to Jonathan's disabled son, Mephibosheth who is anything but regal. There is no one of the house of Saul who can revive its fortunes.

- The Bible is positive about the importance of wise and stable rule. Proverbs has a lot to say on the subject: *Kings detest wrongdoing for a throne is established through righteousness (16:12) Remove the dross from the silver and a silversmith can produce a vessel; remove wicked officials from the kings presence and his throne will be established through righteousness (25:4,5)* Give thanks for stable government and pray for righteous officials.

Rekab and Baanah rightly read the writing on the wall for the house of Saul. However they badly misjudge David's character. They murder their king and deliver his head to David but like the Amalekite of chapter 1 who thought his "news" would win him a reward these men pay with their lives for their actions. David who chose living as a fugitive over killing the Lords anointed, who mourned the death of Saul and was at pains to dissociate himself from Abner's murder is not about to welcome these assassins.

David informs us where his confidence lies. Rekab and Baanah pose as his rescuers: *Here is the head of Ishbosheth son of Saul your enemy who tried to kill you.* (8) David's confidence is elsewhere. *As surely as the Lord lives who has delivered me out of every trouble....* (9)

- The challenge for David and for us is to consistently trust the Lord. David deals justly with the two Benjamites but Joab, the murderer of Abner remains within his close circle. Some things are harder to trust God with but progress is learning the sufficiency of his grace for all occasions.

## 2 Samuel 5:1-25

This chapter describes the nation united under God's appointed King. The first five verses describe the approach of the tribes of Israel and their readiness to acknowledge David as their King. None of the reasons advanced (1,2) are new. It highlights the futility of the civil war.

- Are there inevitable outcomes that we persist in resisting?

The rest of the chapter (6-25) reveals David building up his kingdom.

He does so geographically and civilly. Hebron is in Judah. He moves his capital to Jerusalem situated in the territory of Benjamin. It signals that he intends to rule for the nation as a whole not his tribe in particular.

He enjoys spreading political influence with the contribution of Hiram to his palace. (11)

His family is presented in growing terms. (13,14)

His military success is recorded. (17-25) The last time we heard of the Philistines they were annihilating Saul's army and ravaging the surrounding Israelite towns and villages. The Philistines do not send King David any messages of congratulation. They draw up their considerable troops for battle. On two occasions though they are routed.

We are not left in any doubt what this is attributable to: *Then David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel and exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.* (12) Israel has already reminded the King what he is there for: *You shall shepherd my people Israel..* (2)

Shepherds exist to care for sheep. All will be well so long as the King remembers this.

- Church leaders need to remember this. *Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.* (Heb 13:17)
- Give thanks for the truly Good Shepherd that David points us towards.

## 2 Samuel 6:1-11

The last time we heard of the ark was 1 Sam 7:1,2. It has been located in Abinadad's house, following its return from exile among the Philistines, for the last 20 years. Now though, David is on the throne, the nation is united, the Philistine threat has been

subdued and Jerusalem has been established as the capital. It is time to install the ark at the heart of the nation's life.

David is to be commended for his desire and the enthusiasm with which he goes about this task. This is no dull religious duty. But the joy of the occasion evaporates as the body of Uzziah lies dead, struck down by God for 'reaching out his hand to steady the ark' (6) David's enthusiasm turns to anger. (8)

The ark of the covenant is not a 'useful resource' that can be employed for our benefit. It represents Gods throne, the place where we encounter him 'enthroned between the cherubim' (2) David may now be the king but there is a more important king. And this invisible king is as Isaiah saw, high and exalted and above all holy. (Isaiah 6:1-3)

David discovered that when it comes to relating to God he is not at liberty to 'go with his heart'. He had a new cart constructed, sadly he failed to take into consideration Gods previous instructions on this matter. Numbers 3,4 sets out in great detail who is to transport the ark and how they are to do it. When David attempts to do this a second time we read: *It was because you the Levites did not bring it (the ark) up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not enquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way. (1 Chron 15:13).*

- Retaining a sense of wonder and privilege is vital to our spiritual health. That we are able to approach Gods throne with 'confidence' ought to be a continual source of amazement to us.
- However, 'handle with care' could be the strap line to our Christian faith. *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. (Exod 20:8)* We are not left to ourselves in these matters. God has provided constraints and direction on how we use his day. Similarly Paul challenged the Corinthians: *Don't you know that you yourselves are Gods temple and Gods Spirit lives in you? (1 Cor 3:16)* That had implications for how the shared in the Lord's Supper and especially how they treated one another. (1 Cor 11:29 - 31)

## 2 Samuel 6:12-23

The second half of the chapter describes David's second attempt to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. This time David combines correct procedure (see 1 Chron 15 describing the involvement of the Levites) and heartfelt enthusiasm.

David the King: *wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets. (14)* David though Israel's earthly king, conveyed by his appearance that he knew who the true king was. And by his physical enthusiasm he showed that was pleased to be welcoming him into his city.

David the Priest: (17-19) David offers sacrifices, blesses the people and distributes gifts. Psalm 68 could have been composed for this very situation. Ephesians 4 takes up this picture and applies it to the ascension of Jesus Christ. It quotes Psalm 68:18 *When he ascended on high he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men. (Eph 4:8)*

David the Husband. (16 & 20-23) Michal views these events from the window of the palace and is unimpressed. The problem is not David's dancing but her failure to see the arrival of the true King. Like her father before her she does not share her husband's joy in the Lord. However the encounter between husband and wife is sad if not tragic. It calls into question David's demand for the return of Michal (3:13). Alongside all his other wives such a move seems unnecessary and mean.

The final verdict of v23 leave us in no doubt where Gods approval lay. The section begins with God blessing the household of Obed Edom. 1 Chron 26:4 credits him with 8 sons. Michal by way of contrast had no children to the day of her death.

- Are we able to view with our faith the invisible king present among his people?
- Does enthusiasm for God offend us?
- Are we conscious of the blessing of our ascended King who distributes his gifts among us?

## 2 Samuel 7: 1-17

It is to David's credit that secure in his new capital city his priority is godly. The ark, the sign of God's presence, is to move from tent to temple. It is though possible to have good intentions that are not part of Gods plan for our lives. The prophet Nathan having giving David the go-ahead is sent back to cancel these plans. But it turns out that David's temple building intention is dwarfed by Gods generous decree for him and his descendants. David is not to build a house for God rather God will build a house (dynasty) for David.

The Son of David will build the temple. The spotlight shifts from David to his successor Solomon. It is he who will build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. Alongside this project God promises to '*establish the throne of his kingdom for ever*' (13) He will enjoy an intimate relationship with the Lord which will include being subject to his loving discipline. (14)

The finished temple and the splendour of Solomon's reign witness to the reliability of these promises. This will turn out to be the high point of Old Testament fulfilment. It will though also prove to be the edge of the precipice as the story of the next 400 years is one of almost relentless decline. As Zedekiah, successor to the throne of David is lead away blinded and in chains to Babylon, the question hangs in the air: what now of the promise to establish an enduring kingdom?

Matthew's gospel begins: *This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David.* The blind men sitting by the Jericho road side will greet Jesus as '*Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us*' (Matt 20:31). He is the true temple builder. *And I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.* (Matt 16:18) It is his kingdom that will endure for ever: *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...."* (Matt 28:18)

- How do we respond when our good intentions are not necessarily welcomed?
- Am I willing to consider that God may have better plans for my life than I may have for myself?
- Reflect on the way Jesus Christ wonderfully fulfils the promises to David in this chapter. Consider what a privilege it is to be built into his house. *As you come to him the living Stone....you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house.* (1 Peter 2:4)

## 2 Samuel 7: 18-29

The OT contains some wonderful prayers. And here we are allowed to listen in to David pray in response to Gods covenant promise to him. It is a masterclass in how to relate to God and his goodness.

David has a small view of himself.

*Who am I, Sovereign Lord and what is my family that you have brought me this far? ..... - and this decree Sovereign Lord is for a mere human! (19)* Twenty first century Christianity is short on wonder. We are more likely to be amazed by the latest app for our phone than grace. David teaches us to view our past and future as ordered and directed by the hand of a gracious God. It ought to be a matter of amazement to us that the God of the universe should concern himself with the minutiae of our little lives. (Luke 12:6,7)

David has a big view of God

*How great you are Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you.. (22)* The prayer is full of words describing the uniqueness, power and love of God's character and ways. Its easy to become dull and predictable in our praying. David encourages us to recognise Gods sovereignty: *there is no god but you*. He references his rescue: *to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people whom you redeemed from Egypt. (23)* He acknowledges his power: *The Lord Almighty is God over Israel (26)*

David is clear about God's purposes

Israel are the people God went out to redeem *for himself* and to make a name *for himself* (23). And to that end David prays: *Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever. Then people will say: "The Lord Almighty is God over Israel!" (26)*

- Put yourself into David's prayer and allow him to lead you in your praying.
- David prayed that God would do what he had promised in the covenant set out in the first part of the chapter. Jeremiah sets out the new covenant (31:31-34) There are things there we could pray for ourselves.

## **2 Samuel 8:1-18**

"In the course of time....." literally, "After this" (v1) These words link this chapter with the previous one. The Lord promises to provide David with an enduring 'house'. Part of this promise involves: *I will also give you rest from all your enemies. (7:11)* This chapter shows that promise being kept.

The devastating defeat of Saul and his army with all the consequences for the region (1 Sam 31 esp v7) is reversed. (1)

The victory over Moab is accompanied by a brutal reality. (2) Such measures witness to the nature of life in those days. Enemies are not left to regroup.

V3-8 describe David's encounter with the Aramean states. Military power is located in cavalry. David takes steps to disable the threat. (4) In the language of modern warfare it would be comparable to destroying the air force.

The summary sentence comes at the end of v6 (see also 14) This is not down to military strategy or courageous soldiers, *The Lord gave David victory wherever he went. (6)* It becomes clear that the King understands this. His victory brought him large quantities of gold and bronze. (11) *King David dedicated these articles to the Lord.*

These things brought with them great fame. (13) *And David became famous after he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites.* God is again keeping his promise: *I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth (2 Sam 7:9)* But David's prayer in response to Gods promise reveals that he understood the issue: *Do as you promised so that your name will be great for ever. (2 Sam 7:26)*

- Be grateful that we live in more stable peaceful times. Value democracy and pray for those who rule over us to have wisdom to do *what is right and just. (15)*

- Ask God to help you fight the right battles. Paul urged Timothy to '*fight the good fight of faith*'
- Keep in view the really important thing: not what happens to our name but that the Son of David becomes famous.

## 2 Samuel 9:1-13

The strap line to David's reign is provided by 8:15. *David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people.* As an illustration of this, chap 9 opens with David's concern to show kindness to the house of Saul. The background to this is found in the relationship David formed with Jonathan. Jonathan appealed to David: *But show me unfailing kindness like the Lord's kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, and do not cut off your kindness from my family - not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth.* (1 Sam 20:14,15)

David as king doesn't have to do any of this. Jonathan is dead. Saul's family are no longer a force to be reckoned with. The promise appears to have been a private one, with no one else present at the time. This is not conventional behaviour rather its an illustration of Gods kindness. (3)

The object of this kindness is someone of insignificance. David doesn't know of Mephibosheth's existence. He discovers he is living in an obscure town in Trans-Jordan (4). The distinctive thing about him is his disablement. *There is still a son of Jonathan, he is disabled in both his feet.* (3)

And whilst David is acting out of loyalty to his promise to Jonathan this is lavish generosity. David grants Mephibosheth all of Saul's private property. He is given a permanent seat at the Kings table. Saul's steward Ziba and his considerable family are appointed to farm the estate for the benefit of their new master.

- Jonathan had appealed to David to show him 'unfailing kindness like the Lord's kindness'. David acts in line with his experience of Gods 'loyal love'. What is going to shape our behaviour? What we can get away with; what will keep other people happy or how we have been treated by the Lord?
- David acts in line with the spirit not the word of the promise. There is nothing grudging about David's hospitality. Mephibosheth sits at the kings table every day. We, who are invited to sit at the Lord's table have obligations that will be felt by those who sit around our tables.

## 2 Samuel 10: 1-19

The theme of 'kindness' continues into this next chapter. David sends a delegation to express his sympathy to Hanun the new king of the Ammonites on the death of his father. It was a gesture which could have promoted peaceful co-operation between two nations with a troubled history.

Instead the gesture is interpreted as a spying mission. The diplomats are humiliated. The situation quickly escalates into war. Poor leadership and bad counsel result in tragic consequences. The Bible has a lot to say about leaders. Significantly in the context of the church, it places the emphasis on character. One of the skills we need is the ability to recognise godly character.

The rest of the chapter describes David's success on the battlefield. The Ammonites with their mercenary reinforcements are seen off. The spotlight falls on Joab and Abishai in their encounter with this vast army. (9-12). Its easy to read the Biblical accounts of battles as foregone conclusions. Its clear from Joab's words that is not the case. *If the Arameans*

*are too strong for me .... If the Ammorites are too strong for you. (11).* The Christian life requires us to take risks because we don't always know what the outcome is going to be. Joab's strategy is for each of them to be ready to come to the aid of the other. God has not made us to be 'islands' independent of one another. It is because we will on occasion need to call on the help of others that we ought to take good care of our relationships.

- Kindness will not always be appreciated. It ought not to weaken our resolve to show it.
- Leadership is crucial. Pray for God to raise up godly leaders for his church
- Risk is right. Where is God challenging us to take some risks for him?

## **2 Samuel 11:1-27**

The background to this chapter is the war with the Ammonites. We read in the previous chapter that *On hearing this David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men. (10:7)* This campaign will continue through to the end of chapter 12. *Meanwhile Joab fought against Rabah of the Ammonites (12:26)* In the middle of all this conflict and danger we observe the King's behaviour in Jerusalem.

The first verse informs us that this is the time of year when kings go off to war. But not this king. Joab is at war. David is at leisure. The lights are at red in v3 but David ignores the warning and presses on. Kings have significant privileges but adultery is not one of them. The outcome of the liaison is a very unwanted pregnancy.

The cover up serves to emphasise further the shame of the King's behaviour. Encouraged to indulge himself with his wife, Uriah is constrained by the conditions of his comrades. He considers himself to be still on duty (soldiers at war were required to abstain from sexual intercourse. See 1 Sam 21:5) in stark contrast to David.

Earlier David was commended for refusing to take Saul's life. Sadly here he treacherously takes the life of Uriah one of his loyal special forces (23:24 - 39 esp 39). His insincere message to Joab, *Do not let this matter displease you V25 ESV* is matched by the final verse: *But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.*

- In a slightly different context Paul wrote of the Old Testament: *Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. (1 Cor 10:6)* Jesus makes a similar point when he puts his finger on what is going on in our hearts and minds. *I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble gouge it out ... (Matt 5:27-30)*
- Duty is not the whole story but staying on the rails of duty will keep us from sin.
- The chapter emphasises the power of sin. Even someone as spiritually gifted and able as David proved no match for it in his own strength. We ought to regard 2 Sam 11 as a sobering reminder of our need to watch and pray so that we will not fall into temptation.

