

# King David's Weaknesses & Failures

## 2 Samuel 10:1-24:25

### Introduction:

David's ongoing story dominates 2 Samuel. God chose Him to be King over Israel in place of Saul because he was "a man after His own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). And from 1 Samuel 16 until 2 Samuel 10, we see God's blessing upon David and on Israel as He obeys and honors God and encourages his people to do the same.

***2 Samuel 8:14b–15 ...And the Lord helped David wherever he went. So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people.***

David exemplifies the phrase "As goes the leader, so goes the nation." In those earlier chapters, David's righteous actions foreshadowed the future blessed reign of Christ. And in the chapters which we will examine today, David's sin brings death and destruction to his family and his people—showing by contrast the need for a truly sinless King—Jesus, David's greater son.

David, like all of us, has feet of clay. And, sadly, from 2 Samuel 11 onward, we will come face to face with the reality of indwelling sin, the need for repentance, and the grace of God to forgive even the worst of repentant sinners. We will also recognize that forgiveness usually doesn't remove the temporal consequences of our sin.

### Setting:

2 Samuel 8:13–13 records that David, with God's help, had subdued the surrounding nations, including Ammon and Syria (Aram). Afterwards, David and Nahash (the King of Ammon) established a peaceful relationship—until Nahash dies, and his son takes the throne. In the interest of maintaining the same good relationship with Nahash's son Hanun, David sends a delegation to Ammon to convey his condolences. Hanun is convinced by his counselors that David's gracious outreach is nothing less than a prelude to war.

### 1. Victory over Ammon and Syria (Aram) (10:1–11:1)

***2 Sam 10:1 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.***

This grave insult by Ammon, a vassal state, followed by their recruitment of Syrian mercenaries, threatened to undermine the security of Israel's eastern border. So, David sent Joab to lead the armies of Israel against the capital city of Rabbah—where the Ammonite and Syrian troops had set up a trap.

***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.***

When the Syrian mercenaries fled, the Ammonite armies did too, and Israel captured the city. Ammon was once again in submission to David, but the Syrians were not. Hadadezer, the Syrian king, called in reinforcements from the east to meet Israel in battle 40 miles east of the Sea of Galilee.

***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...17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan and came to Helam... 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.***

David himself lead Israel's armies into battle and God gave them the victory. But the next verse sets the stage for David's greatest failure.

***2 Sam 11:1 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.***

The reversed Hebrew word order in that last sentence calls attention to the fact the something isn't quite right. As biblical scholar Robert Chisholm says in his commentary, David "appears to be in the wrong place at the wrong time." There is a sense that David is not fulfilling his responsibilities as God's King. He should be out leading his armies in battle, but he remains at home—content to let others take his place. His idle irresponsibility results in disastrous temptation.

## 2. David's Great Sins (2 Sam 11:1–12:25)

### A. Adultery (2 Sam 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."***

David, who in Psalm 101:3 expressed his desire to keep his eyes and heart pure so that he might "know nothing of evil" fell victim to the lust of his eyes. He coveted his neighbor's wife and broke the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, and then he "took" her — which is the same language used to describe Eli's evil sons who unlawfully "took" meat from the sacrifices of God's people for themselves (1 Sam. 2:14). Then, David committed adultery with her, breaking the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment. And afterwards, she sends him word that she is pregnant. And because she has just finished cleansing from her menstrual cycle, and because her husband is away fighting with the army that David isn't leading—it will be clear to all that the baby is David's. He is sure to be caught. Unless sin is confessed and repented of, it leads to more sin. David should repent, but instead, he suppresses his conscience and concocts a deceptive plan to pass off the pregnancy as the result of sexual relations between Uriah and his wife.

### B. Cover-up (2 Sam 11:6–13)

***6 So David sent word to Joab, [the commander of David's army] "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.*

David did everything he could think of to cover up his adultery—including inducing Uriah to drunkenness. But Uriah, a Hittite who had joined himself to God’s people, was more righteous than David, and would not violate his conscience by allowing himself comforts which his fellow soldiers did not enjoy. Once again, David should confess his sin, but instead, to protect his own reputation, he commits more sin.

### C. Murder (2 Sam 11:14–27)

*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. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all the news about the fighting. ... 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.' [A pitiless statement if there ever was one] 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.*

David’s dereliction of duty lead to temptation. Temptation gave birth to adultery. Adultery led to deceitful attempts at covering it up, and then David broke the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment by arranging for the murder of Uriah (depriving Bathsheba of her husband), which also resulted in the death of others and made Joab an accessory to murder. Unrepentant sin ripples out to affect others. And, sadly, David suppresses his conscience and hardens his heart in unrepentance for at least 9 more months—until after his son is born to Bathsheba. Sin never occurs in private—God sees it all—for all sin, including sin against other people, is first and foremost against God (Ps 51:4).

Yahweh is displeased with David, because David “*despised*” God in his sin—he treated God with contempt (2 Sam 12:10 below). So God sends a prophet to provoke David’s conscience to life and call him to repentance.

#### D. Confrontation (2 Sam 12:1–12)

***2 Sam 12:1 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.”***

Nathan, under God’s direction, provokes David’s conscience by describing the pitiless theft of a precious lamb from a pauper by one who had many such lambs of his own. And David, though blind to his own sin, sees clearly the sinfulness of the fictional man in the story—and declares the very sentence he himself deserves for his own crimes: Fourfold restoration and death. And Nathan hammers that point home:

***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. 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.”***

Now, confronted by God through the prophet, David comes to his senses.

#### E. Confession and Consequence (2 Sam 12:13–23)

***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.”***

David is truly repentant and his confession doesn’t contain any excuses. He simply confesses himself as a sinner—and recognizes that His sin is against God. And God’s response is forgiveness—He puts away David’s sin. David pronounced his own death sentence a moment before—adultery and murder brought the death penalty under the law of Moses—but God

sparing David's life. Nevertheless, other consequences of his sin will damage his family, his position, and the entire nation. In partial fulfillment of David's sentence, his newborn son falls ill, and despite six long nights of fasting and prayer, the child dies. David's sin resulted in the death of his son. But, God, who is merciful and loving brings life and redemption to sinners. And God makes that message clear in the birth of another son.

### C. Solomon Born (2 Sam 12:24-25)

***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.***

Jedidiah means "loved by Yahweh." Here we see God's providence at work in unexpected ways. David has other sons who are in line for the throne *before* Solomon. But, here we have a hint that God has chosen this infant son to be David's heir.

After the birth of Solomon, the Ammonites rise up again against Israel. And Joab leads the army to capture the walled city of Rabbah. Joab is nearing success, having captured the "city of waters" which probably means the protected water supply for the city itself. With Israel surrounding its walls and the water supply cut off, it's only a matter of time before they are forced to surrender. And Joab calls David to lead the army in the final stage of the battle.

### D. David Returns to Battle (2 Sam 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.***

At this moment, it seems that hostilities are over, and that life in Jerusalem can return to normal. But, sadly, the effects of David's sin have trickled down to his sons. Robert Chisholm says it this way:

David, by sinning in the way he did, planted the seeds for what subsequently happens within his family. The unbridled lust and abuse of power that he exhibited in the Bathsheba affair surfaces in his son Amnon, and the deceit and capacity to murder that he exhibited in

the Uriah matter surfaces in his son Absalom. In both cases, the acorn does not fall far from the tree.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Amnon & Tamar (2 Sam 13:1–39)

#### A. Amnon's Great Sin (2 Sam 13:1–22)

***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.***

Amnon was David's oldest son, born to David's wife Ahinoam and heir to the throne of Israel. Absalom was his thirdborn son, born to Maacah, as also was Tamar, David's daughter. So, Amnon is half-brother to Absalom and Tamar, while Absalom and Tamar are full siblings to each other. Now God's law condemned and pronounced a curse on any sexual relationship between brother and sister, or between a half-brother and half-sister (See Lev. 18:9–11; Deut 27:22). But Amnon's lustful heart conceived a desire for his half-sister, which he allowed to so consume his thoughts that he became physically ill. Yet he was constrained by God's law from acting out on his evil desires.

Sadly, Amnon kept company with a cousin named Jonadab, a nephew of David, whose heart was wicked, and who crafted a deceitful plan that would enable Amnon to take sexual advantage of Tamar.

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**Note:**

The Bible is so up-front and so clear about human sinfulness that this is a hard passage to read.

But we should note just how many of David's sins are mirrored in the heart of his oldest son.

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***2 Sam 13:3 ... 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." (Lust—unbridled sinful desire) 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. (Deception) 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." (making David an accomplice to his crime) 7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." 8 So Tamar***

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<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Mark L. Strauss, John H. Walton, and Rosalie de Rosset, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 249.

*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." 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!"*

Amnon's lust drove him to deceive and manipulate David so that he then could deceive and rape Tamar. And proved himself to be a fool—a Nabal (1 Sam 25:3)—one whom the Bible identifies has no relationship to God (Ps 14:1). And his lust, which he claimed to be true love, evaporated into hatred after he—like his father before him—took what God's law said he could not have. Under God's law, rape was a capital offence—and like David, Amnon deserved death for his crime. Tamar, in great distress, tore her special robes which signified her virginity, and fled to her brother Absalom's house. And Absalom began to hate Amnon for what he had done to his sister (vs. 16–22). When David was told of Amnon's heinous sin, and became very angry, but, knowing himself to be guilty of a similar crime, refused to execute justice on Amnon, and thereby sentenced Tamar to a life of silent shame (vs. 16–22). Once more David's past sin gave birth to more sin. And Absalom's hatred grew for two full years in which he plotted revenge against his half-brother. Next, Absalom used deception to make David an accomplice to his great sin of murder.

### **B. Absalom Kills Amnon (2 Sam 13:23–39)**

*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.*



Absalom used the ruse of a sheep shearing party to invite his brothers, especially Amnon, to a feast. While there, Absalom commanded his servants to murder Amnon, just like David ordered Joab to arrange for Uriah's death. All the other living sons of David fled in fear of their lives. And when word of Amnon's death reaches David, and before the rest of his sons return, he tore his garments in mourning (like Tamar). But his wicked nephew Jonadab, apparently also in on Absalom's plot, assures David that Amnon alone was killed—because David had failed to bring him to justice. David's sins have come home to roost yet again (vs. 30–33). The rest of David's sons return weeping in grief, and Absalom flees to the protection of his maternal grandfather Talmai, in Geshur (east of the Sea of Galilee) where he remains for 3 years. During that time David wrestled with his moral duty to bring Absalom to justice for murder, and his love for his son who did to Amnon as he himself did to Uriah (vs. 34–39).

## 4. Absalom's Rebellion

### A. Absalom's Return (2 Sam 14:1–33)

Joab sees David's grief over Absalom's exile. And much like Nathan did in telling a story with a point to bring David to repentance, Joab concocts a story to convince David to allow Absalom (now the crown prince) to return. Joab enlists the help of a woman from Tekoa to dress and act like a mother in mourning for a son who was killed by his brother. Joab tells her to ask for David's protection for her guilty son, so that he might not be avenged by another family member for his crime (Num 35:6–28). Her argument is that if her only living son is killed, her family line will end.

**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. [echoes of Cain and Able in Gen 4:8] 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." ... 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..."**

David figures out that Joab is behind this woman's appeal. But, bound by his oath to Yahweh, he orders Joab to bring Absalom to Jerusalem, but with one restriction:

**24 ... 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.**

David has neither applied justice to nor forgiven Absalom. And Joab, who manipulated David to bring Absalom back is caught in the middle. Absalom isn't allowed to see the King, so he tried repeatedly to get Joab to bring a message to David, but Joab doesn't respond, so, to get Joab's attention, he has his servants set Joab's neighboring fields on fire. Joab finally comes, and ultimately agrees to deliver Absalom's message to David:

***32 ... "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.***

Put me to death or forgive me... don't leave me in this limbo forever. And David forgives Absalom, but, as we'll soon see, Absalom didn't forgive David for how he handled Amnon's violation of his sister. Absalom is now free in Jerusalem, and he, like a politician shaking hands and kissing babies, begins to steal the affections of the people of Israel away from David and for himself.

## **B. Absalom's Revolt (2 Sam 15:1–12)**

***2 Sam 15:1 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.***

This went on for four long years—during which time Absalom gained the allegiance of many leaders in Israel with whose help he intended to usurp his father David's throne. Even David's old and trusted counselor Ahithophel turned to follow Absalom in his rebellion. Once all the necessary arrangements were in place, Absalom, predictably, sets his coup d'état in motion with deception.

***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. 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***

***quests, 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.***

The consequences for David's sins continued just as God had promised. A son from within his own house was plotting to take away his throne by force (2 Sam 12:10–12). Next, messengers came to report the strength of the brewing rebellion:

### **C. David's Retreat (2 Sam 15:13–16:19)**

***2 Sam 15:13 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.***

David flees Jerusalem with his royal servants, as well as the fiercely loyal foreign bodyguards and soldiers who had followed him from the days when he hid from King Saul in Philistine territory. They are so loyal to David, that even when he tries to convince them to abandon his cause, they will not.

***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.***

The priests also try to bring the Ark of the Covenant along with David, but David does not presume on God's favor, but instead responds in genuine humility and submission:

***25 ... "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."***

David also commands Zadok the priest to return to the city with his sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, so that they might become his eyes and ears in the city once Absalom takes over.

**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."**

In these verses, we have evidence that David's heart has been humbled through the consequences of His sin, and he is once again depending upon God and not himself. He knows this is all the result of his great sin, but he is also trusting God to come to his aid in this great time of need. And when David hears more heartbreaking news—his trusted counselor and friend Ahithophel ((see Ps 41:9) who also happened to be Bathsheba's grandfather) has betrayed him—he turns to God in prayer. And God's answer immediately appears in the form of Hushai.

**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.**

God was providentially building the network of people in Jerusalem who would become the means of David's return to power in Jerusalem, even as he was fleeing Jerusalem. And then David was confronted by Ziba, the servant of Jonathan's crippled son Mephibosheth, who brought a couple of donkey-loads of supplies. And when David asked him about his master, Ziba accuses Mephibosheth of plotting to take the throne himself. David somehow believes this false story and thoughtlessly gives all of Mephibosheth's possessions to Ziba without hearing the other side of the story (2 Sam 16:1–4).

Then, crossing northeast into the territory of Benjamin (Saul's tribe):

**2 Sam 16:5 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 Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head."**

David recognizes that there is a certain amount of truth in what Shimei says, and responds with appropriate humility:

***10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? 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.***

Not long after David and his men leave Jerusalem, Absalom and his forces enter the city. Hushai, in obedience to David, convinces Absalom that he will serve him just as he served David. And Absalom accepts him into his inner circle of advisors (vs. 15–19).

#### **D. Absalom's Counselors (2 Sam 16:20–17:23)**

***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.***

Ahithophel's advice was considered by all to be like wisdom from God. And, once again, we see the consequences of David's sin coming to light. At Ahithophel encouragement, Absalom publicly took David's harem for his own. As God promised, what David did by taking another man's wife in secret, his son would do in broad daylight (2 Sam 12:11–12). Then, Ahithophel offered a second piece of advice:

***2 Sam 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.***

Ahithophel clearly had a personal score to settle with David. He wanted to kill David himself. Why? Evidence points to the probability that he was Bathsheba's grandfather. Despite Ahithophel's vendetta against David, God's providential answer to David's prayer to confound Ahithophel's counsel is standing nearby:

**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." 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.**

God countermanded Ahithophel's plan through Hushai. But, just in case Absalom decided to go with Ahithophel's plan, Hushai sent word through David's operatives in Jerusalem to warn him to avoid a possible attack by crossing to the other side of the Jordan river. Before the messengers could reach David with the warning, they were spotted by one of Absalom's men, but were providentially protected from capture by a woman who hid them in a well. They escaped the city and warned David, who then moved his forces across the Jordan to safety (15–22). Scripture then records

**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.**

In Ahithophel's betrayal of David, who considered him a "friend" (Ps 41:9), and his suicide by hanging, we can see a dim foreshadowing of Judas—whom Jesus (David's greater son) called "friend" (Matt 26:50) even as he betrayed Him and afterward hanged himself.

### **E. Absalom's Death (2 Sam 18:1–18)**

After crossing the Jordan, David moved his forces ~20 miles north to the walled city of Mahanaim. There David's men receive much needed supplies donated by Barzillai the Gileadite (vs. 24–29). Refreshed by the food and rest, David then organizes his men into three separate divisions, commanded by Joab, Abishai (Joab's brother), and Ittai the Gittite. David, now fully accepting his duty as king, intends to lead his troops into battle, saying...

**2 ... "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. 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.**

As the three divisions of David's much smaller army went to battle, they ended up in wooded terrain that proved more treacherous to Absalom's army than could be imagined. And Absalom himself would fall victim to that same forest:

**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.**

2 Samuel 14:26 tells us that Absalom's hair grew thick and heavy, and that he cut it once a year. Perhaps he thought of it as a sign of strength—like Samson of old. But, in this case, his hair probably contributed to the fact that his head got caught up in the branches of a tree, and when his donkey kept going, he was left swinging in mid-air. Trapped by his own pride.

**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?"**

But that "certain man" refused to kill defenseless Absalom because he knew that David commanded that no one should harm him. But Joab didn't agree, so...

**14 ...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.**

When he was a younger man, prideful Absalom had raised a monument to himself in the valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives (v 18). But in death, he was buried in a pit in the forest under a pile of rocks..

David's sin had cost him dearly—before the battle, 2 sons were already dead, and one daughter whose life was ruined. Now that the battle was over. David forces had won. But David

had lost yet another son—and someone had to tell him the good news and the bad news. So, David's trusted courier Ahimaaz volunteered for the job.

#### F. David's Grief (2 Sam 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.**

But Ahimaaz was not to be denied, so he ran after the Cushite and, apparently being a faster runner, overtook and passed him on the way. As David waited for news of the battle at the gates of Mahanaim, the watchmen pointed out the approach of the runners—recognizing the first as David's courier. David assuming that a good man running alone would bring good news, hears that the battle has been won. But Ahimaaz deflects when asked about the fate of Absalom (vs. 22–31). The second runner arrives, and apparently unaware of David's command that Absalom's life was to be spared happily shares...

**31 ... "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!"**

Undoubtedly David's guilt over his own sin that led to his son's death was on display. He knew that he himself was ultimately responsible. In 2 Samuel 12:6, David essentially sentenced himself to restore fourfold for what he had stolen. And now Absalom is dead — the third of David's sons to die to because of David's sin (a fourth would follow soon after his death). David's grief over Absalom is deep as he cries out the word "son" five times in his lament. Even though he tried in every way to spare his son's life, his own sin ultimately brought about his death. And David's great grief stole the joy of victory from his soldiers when they all heard about David's sorrow.

#### G. Joab's Rebuke (2 Sam 19:1–8a)

**2 Sam 19:1 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.**

Instead of coming in triumph to Mahanaim, they walked on eggshells in shame. And David did not restrain his grief but continued to loudly wail about the loss of his son. So, Joab confronted him:



**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."**

David knew this was no idle threat. Joab had proven himself to be both a fierce general and a loose cannon. So, David took it to heart and ***arose and took his seat in the gate (19:8)***. And the people were encouraged.

But the survivors of the Northern tribes who fought against David had returned to their homes, and they began to consider the benefits of accepting David as King once again (19:8–10). But David, believing his return to the throne was imminent, first sends the priests Zadok and Abiathar to the elders of Judah (his own tribe) with this message:

## **5. David's Return (2 Sa, 19:8b–43)**

**11 ... '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, [the commander of Absalom's forces] '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.**

As they near Jerusalem, Shimei the Benjaminite, who had cursed David as he previously fled the city, now rushes to confess his sins and beg David for his life. And even though Abishai volunteers to kill Shimei on the spot, David, tired of bloodshed, grants him his life (vs. 16–24).

Next, Mephibosheth, whom Ziba (who is also present) had accused earlier of seeking the throne for himself, comes to welcome the king. David asks him...

**25... "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?"**

David doesn't know who is telling the truth, and his grief still seems to be clouding his judgment, so, rather than consulting God, he rashly declares:

**29 ... "Why speak any more of your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba shall divide the land."**

But Mephibosheth's innocence is confirmed by his response:

**30 ... "Oh, let him take it all, since my lord the king has come safely home."**

Next, Barzillai the Gileadite, who had given food and comfort to David's men at Mahanaim, comes to escort David across the Jordan. David invites him to take up residence in Jerusalem so that he might care for him in his old age, but Barzillai is wealthy enough to take care of himself and suggests that David care for his servant Chimham in his place which David gladly agrees to do (vs. 31–38).

Sadly, as David approaches Jerusalem with men from both Judah and Israel, in the midst of what should be an act of reconciliation, those from the northern tribes take offense at Judah's claim of David as their own, and ask David bluntly...

**41 ... "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.**

Here we see that the seeds of future separation between the northern tribes and Judah are beginning to take root. The effects of David's sin will continue long after his death. But the immediate result is yet another rebellion.

## 6. Sheba's Rebellion (2 Sam 20:1–26)

**2 Sam 20:1 Now there happened to be there a worthless man ["man of Belial"], 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.**

David, after providing separate quarters for the concubines that Absalom had defiled, then orders his new commander Amasa to

**4... "Call the men of Judah together to me within three days, and be here yourself."**

But Amasa drags his feet, so David turns to Abishai (Joab's older brother) and commands him to pursue Sheba before he can escape to a walled city. So Abishai leads David's armies out in pursuit, and as they approach Gibeon, Amasa [David's choice to replace Joab] comes to meet them (vs. 5–8). Joab, angry that Amasa has taken his place as commander, pretends to greet his cousin with a family kiss, and at the same time thrusts a sword into his stomach and leaves him

there in the dirt to die so that all who pass by might see. Then Joab and Abishai together continue the pursuit of Sheba, with Joab once again assuming command of the army by common consent. Sheba manages to escape into the walled city of Abel of Beth-maacah and Joab begins to lay siege to the city (vs. 5–16). A wise woman in the city realizes that all within will die unless something is done to stop it, so she wisely calls out to Joab from the city wall...

**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.**

The chapter ends with a list of the new leadership structure David instituted after his return to the throne.

## **7. Appendices (2 Sam 21:1–24:25)**

The remainder of 2 Samuel is divided into 4 sections which each cover, out of chronological order, a separate event from the latter years of David's reign.

### **A. Justice for the Gibeonites (2 Sam 21:1–14)**

Israel experienced a three-year-long famine...

**2 Sam 21:1 ... 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.**

The Gibeonites were residents of Canaan who deceived Joshua into making a covenant with them to spare their lives in Joshua chapter 9. They became laborers in service to Israel.

**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.**

God takes covenants seriously—the breaking of which was punishable by death. So, God used the famine to force David to fulfill Israel's covenant obligation.

**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."**

Amazingly, these Gibeonites seem to still be honoring the covenant which Saul violated. So, David, prompted by God, asks:

**4... "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 [different from the Mephibosheth in vs. 7]; and the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; 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.**

Just as David's sins resulted in the death of his sons (one even after his death), so also the sins of Saul cost his family dearly years after his passing.

**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.**

God's law required that the body of anyone hung to death must be buried that same day or the land would be defiled (see Deut 21:22–23). But the Gibeonites didn't allow a quick burial, so David, upon hearing the plight of Rizpah, seeks to right another wrong...

**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.**

## **B. Wars with Philistia (2 Sam 21:1–22)**

Four additional battles against Israel's ancient enemies are recorded.

First battle:

**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 Zeruiah 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."**

David is no longer able to handle the rigors of battle because of his advancing age.

Second battle:

**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.**

Third battle:

**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 [different from the Goliath that a much younger David defeated in 1 Samuel 17], the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.**

Fourth battle:

**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.**

### C. David's Song of Praise (2 Sam 22:1–51)

Chapter 22 is a Psalm of David (also found in Psalm 18) which celebrates God's providential rescue of David from all his enemies in the time when Saul was seeking to take his life.

**1 Sam22:1 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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."*

#### D. David's Last Words (2 Sam 23:1–7)

Here, the Holy Spirit inspires David to write another Psalm reflecting on God's faithfulness to the covenant He established with David in 2 Samuel chapter 7. A covenant that will ultimately lead to the coming of Christ, David's son, the Messiah of Israel. Who will finally bring true justice to the earth (Isa 42:1).

***2 Sam 23:1 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."***

#### E. David's Mighty Men (2 Sam 23:8–39)

This is a list of 37 of David's most valiant warriors and includes descriptions of how God enabled them to triumph in remarkable way in battle. It begins with the three most prominent, then two who are more prominent than the rest but not part of the first three. And finally, it ends with a large group known as "the thirty."

The three:

***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. 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.*

The two:

*18 Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, 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.*

The thirty: This designation remained the same even when the group grew smaller when a one of David's mighty men died, or when another was added. In this case, 32 members are listed at the time this was recorded.

*24 Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, 25 Shammah of Harod, Erika 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 of Gilo, 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.*

3+2+32=37 in all. How ironic is it to see Uriah listed at the end of David's most valiant and loyal warriors! This puts an ironic exclamation point on the wickedness of David's sin, and how sin twisted his relationships, and damaged his family and nation. It also serves to warn us that our own sin has damaging effects on others too.

### **E. David's Sinful Census (2 Sam 24:2–15)**

2 Samuel ends with God judging his people for an unnamed sin. To do this, God allowed Satan to tempt David to feed his pride by taking a census of his military might (see 1 Chron 21).



**2 Sam 24:1** 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?" **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.

As soon as the census was complete, David realized how his pride had led him to sin.

**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."

God gave David three choices, and David chose to trust that God would be merciful to not completely destroy his sinful people.

**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." **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.**

## Conclusion:

2 Samuel follows the transition from Saul, an ungodly king, to David, who knew that God is the one true sovereign over all. David was a man after God's own heart, and, as such, often represented God rightly to Israel, and Israel was blessed by God for David's obedience. As goes the king so goes the people.

David was a true worshiper of God, and desired to build God a temple so that His presence might dwell among his people. God responded by making a covenant with David to give him a future heir who will reign from his throne in Jerusalem forever. The Davidic covenant forwards God's promise of a seed from the woman who will crush Satan's head (see Gen 3:15) and also God's promises to Abraham to bless the earth through his seed (Gen 12:2-3)—all of which find their fulfillment in Jesus, David's greater son, the divine Son of God, Messiah of Israel, and Savior of the world.

In many ways, king David's obedience and faithful service to God serves as a type pointing to the greater reality to come in Christ. But, when David's sins and failures begin to manifest, we are forced to realize that even the most noble of human kings would be absolutely insufficient to fulfill God's promises. So, we are caused to look beyond David to Jesus, God's Son, the true and only sinless King of kings, who came to earth to save sinners, presently rules from heaven, and will soon return to rule the earth from David's throne in Jerusalem.