

## 2 Samuel 5:17-25

### Lord of Break-Throughs

*When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?" And the Lord said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood." Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.*

*And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." And David did as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer. – 2 Samuel 5:17-25 ESV*

Upon hearing word that David had been crowned king of Israel, the Philistines determined to attack him before he could establish his reign and gather strength. It seems that while he had been king over the single tribe of Judah, they had been content to leave him alone, seeing him as little to no threat. But now that he had unified all 12 tribes, he had gotten their attention. So they came in search of him. Having just taken the city of Jerusalem, and not having had time to fortify it, David and his men made their way to their stronghold. We're not told where this stronghold was. It could have been the cave of Adullam near Hebron. Or it could be a reference to the fortress of Zion (verse 7). Most likely, David returned to his original stronghold in the wilderness. It would have made sense for David to return to familiar ground and draw the Philistines away from Jerusalem and the other tribes of Israel. The Valley of Rephaim was located southwest of Jerusalem, closer to Hebron and the border between Israel and the Philistines.

Before attempting to battle the Philistines, David sought counsel from God. He wanted to know two things: whether he should fight the Philistines and, if he did, whether he would be successful. David could have easily assumed that war with the Philistines was inevitable and marched into battle without seeking God's word. He could have rationalized that, as the king of Israel, doing battle with the enemies of Israel was his duty; it came with the job description. But instead of acting rashly or presumptuously, David turned to God. He wanted God's blessing and approval. But more than anything, He wanted God's help. And God assured David that He would be with him and give him victory over the Philistines. And after defeating the Philistines, David named the place of the battle Baal-perazim, which means, "the Lord of breaking through." David explains the meaning of the name when he says, "The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood" (2 Samuel 5:20 ESV).

The victory was so quick and decisive that the Philistines abandoned their idols on the battlefield. Their gods had been worthless because they were lifeless. So, David and his men gathered them up and burned them (1 Chronicles 14:12).

But while the Philistines had lost the battle, they were not giving up the war. They gathered once again in the Valley of Rephaim. Again, David sought the counsel of God. This time, God gave David different instructions, commanding him to take his troops and prepare for a rear action against the Philistines. And God told David to wait until he heard “the sound of marching” in the tops of the trees under which they were taking cover. This was to be God’s sign to go into battle. David did just as God commanded and, once again, he handily defeated the Philistines that day.

These two victories had been God’s doing. Yes, David and his men had to fight, but it was God who gave them success. David’s naming of the first battleground, “the Lord of breaking through,” provides us with insight into David’s perception of the events of that day. It had been God who had broken through his enemies like a flood. David would experience other victories like this one. And with each win over his enemies, David grew in his faith and confidence in God. This dependence upon God for aid in his battles is reflected in his psalms.

*God’s way is perfect.*

*All the Lord’s promises prove true.*

*He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.*

*For who is God except the Lord?*

*Who but our God is a solid rock?*

*God arms me with strength,  
and he makes my way perfect.*

*He makes me as surefooted as a deer,  
enabling me to stand on mountain heights.*

*He trains my hands for battle;  
he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow.*

*You have given me your shield of victory.*

*Your right hand supports me;*

*your help has made me great. – Psalm 18:30-35 NLT*

*Praise the Lord, who is my rock.*

*He trains my hands for war  
and gives my fingers skill for battle.*

*He is my loving ally and my fortress,  
my tower of safety, my rescuer.*

*He is my shield, and I take refuge in him.*

*He makes the nations submit to me. – Psalm 144:1-2 NLT*

David’s breakthroughs were God’s doing. His victories were the direct result of his reliance upon God. God didn’t win the battles *without* David; He won the battles using David as His

preferred agent. David was God's divinely chosen instrument to accomplish His will. God has also chosen us, as believers in Jesus Christ, to act as His agents of change and spiritual army, bringing about His victories on earth. But as Paul reminds us, we are not fighting against flesh and blood.

*Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

*Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. – Ephesians 6:10-13 NLT*

God has provided us with spiritual armor. He has equipped us with spiritual power in the form of the Holy Spirit. He has assured us of victory over our enemy. But we must fight according to His terms while utilizing His strategies. We must seek God's will regarding the battles we face. As Paul reminds us, we must "Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere" (Ephesians 6:18 NLT).

David was victorious because He sought the will of God. He won because God gave him a breakthrough against his enemy. The same thing will be true for us, as long as we turn to God, rely upon Him, and do what He commands us to do. Attempting to do battle *for* God, but *without* His permission and help, is doomed to failure, no matter how well-intentioned we might be.



## 2 Samuel 6:1-11

### Being Zealous Can Be Dangerous.

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

*And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God. And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David. But David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household. – 2 Samuel 6:1-11 ESV*

David had a heart for God. He was eager to serve God faithfully and govern according to God's will. As we saw in the last chapter, David sought God's counsel before engaging in battle with the Philistines, and the result was a stunning and decisive victory. As David began to plan and prepare for his future kingdom, including the creation of his new capital in Jerusalem, he was motivated by a strong desire to acknowledge God in all that he did. And one of the first decisions he made was to relocate the Ark of the Covenant from its place in Kiriath-jearim to the city of Jerusalem. The ark was a significant part of Jewish history. It was their link back to the days of Moses and the period of the Exodus. The book of Hebrews provides us with some details regarding this holy and revered object: "the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant" (Hebrews 9:4 ESV). The cover of the ark was called the Mercy Seat, and it was there that God's presence dwelt. Exodus records God's commands concerning the Mercy Seat.

*"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will*

*meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony...” – Exodus 25:17-22 ESV*

The Mercy Seat was especially significant to the Jewish people because it was there, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, that the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of a bull and a goat as an offering to God for the sins of the people. So, you can see why David was anxious to have the Ark of the Covenant relocated to his newly chosen capital. But in his zeal to do the right thing, David ended up doing the wrong thing. He got in a hurry and failed to do his homework, and his actions resulted in the unnecessary death of Uzzah.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul discusses the problem of zeal without knowledge.

*Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. – Romans 10:1-3 ESV*

Paul was talking about his fellow Jews who had refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah. In their zeal for God, they had failed to recognize the very one sent to them by God. Instead, they continued to seek a right standing with God through the keeping of the Law. They were zealous for God, but were refusing to do things God’s way.

And that was David’s problem. God had given clear instructions regarding the Ark and how it was to be transported.

*And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, lest they die. These are the things of the tent of meeting that the sons of Kohath are to carry. – Numbers 4:15 ESV*

The Ark was designed by God in a particular manner, and it had two long poles with which it was to be carried, only by the sons of Kohath. Because of the holiness of the Ark, it was forbidden for anyone to touch it. If they did, they would die. No one was to look inside the Ark (1 Samuel 6:19). Again, if they did, they would die. So, when David got ready to move the Ark, he made a significant mistake. Rather than doing things God’s way, he followed the lead of the Philistines. In other words, he did it the world’s way. Earlier in Israel’s history, there was an occasion when the Philistines captured the Ark after a battle with the Israelites. How did this happen? The Philistines had defeated the Israelites in battle, and as a result, the elders of Israel resorted to sending for the Ark and attempted to use it as a good luck token.

*And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.” – 1 Samuel 4:3 ESV*

But rather than bringing the Israelites victory, the Ark was captured by the Philistines. But when they discovered that having the Ark of God around proved to be deadly, they decided to return it to the Israelites. And, not knowing the law of God, they did so according to their own methodology.

*Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never come a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them. And take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart and put in a box at its side the figures of gold, which you are returning to him as a guilt offering. Then send it off and let it go its way... – 1 Samuel 6:7-8 ESV*

So, when David got ready to transport the Ark into Jerusalem, rather than doing so according to God's prescribed methods, he followed the lead of the Philistines. The passage clearly states:

*And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark. – 2 Samuel 6:3-4 ESV*

When the oxen pulling the cart stumbled, the Ark began to fall and Uzzah reached out and tried to steady it with his hand. He touched the Ark, and he died. In fact, the passage says, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6:7 ESV). This might appear to us as a gross overreaction on God's part. How could He be so angry against Uzzah for simply attempting to keep the Ark from falling? But God's anger is always righteous and just. It is never capricious or without warrant. Uzzah had broken the law of God, and, as a result, the righteous, just anger of God was unleashed. Had God not punished Uzzah for his sin, God would have failed to be God. He would have been unjust. Had God not responded in anger toward the violation of His just law, He would have been an unjust God. This is why God gave clear conditions and commands regarding his people and their interactions with Him. Had David followed God's plan, this would not have happened. Uzzah would not have died. While his sin was not motivated by a heart of rebellion, it was rebellion nonetheless. And the outcome was death.

And David's reaction to this event was much like ours would be. He became angry. He was frustrated. Then his anger turned to fear, and that fear ultimately paralyzed him into inaction. Rather than taking the time to determine what it was that he had done wrong, he simply left the Ark where it was. His intentions had been proper, but when he suffered for doing God's will in the wrong way, David just gave up. So, the Ark sat in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite for three months. David returned to Jerusalem angry at God and without the presence of the Ark in his new capital. But while David pouted, God was busy blessing Obed-edom. News of this would reach David, motivating him into action.

The problem was not David's zeal, it was his methodology. It was also his lack of knowledge regarding the will of God. He attempted to do the right thing in the wrong way. He acted with

sincerity, but in ignorance. He had celebrated, danced, and sung as he led the procession with the Ark toward Jerusalem. He had been enthusiastic and excited about having the Ark in his new capital. But he had left out one vital part: Obedience. As Samuel had told King Saul years earlier, God prefers obedience to enthusiastic sacrifice any day of the week.

*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,  
as in obeying the voice of the Lord?  
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
and to listen than the fat of rams.  
For rebellion is as the sin of divination,  
and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. – 1 Samuel 15:22-23 ESV*

## 2 Samuel 6:12-23

### Dancing and Disdain

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

*As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart. And they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house.*

*And David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" And David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord—and I will celebrate before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor." And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death. – 2 Samuel 6:12-23 ESV*

When David's first attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem ended with the untimely death of Uzzah, he angrily ordered the Ark to be left in the care of Obed-edom. But three months later, when he received word that the house of Obed-edom was being blessed because of the presence of the Ark, he had second thoughts. He decided to try again to move the ark into his new capital. This time he did it the right way – God's way. The passage reads, "And when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six steps..." (2 Samuel 6:12 ESV).

In other words, this time, there was no cart, no oxen, and no alternative method of transport used. He moved the Ark using God's prescribed method. The Book of 1st Chronicles provides the details.

*David built houses for himself in the city of David. And he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said that no one but the Levites may carry the*

*ark of God, for the Lord had chosen them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister to him forever. – 1 Chronicles 15:1-2 ESV*

David told the Levites:

*“You are the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites. Consecrate yourselves, you and your brothers, so that you may bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. Because you did not carry it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not seek him according to the rule.” So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord. – 1 Chronicles 15:12-15 ESV*

But the Book of 1st Chronicles also provides an interesting insight into what David had been doing in the three months prior to his second attempt to move the Ark. According to Chapter 15, David had been busy building houses for himself in the city of David. But the previous chapter provides even more details concerning David’s “house” building efforts.

*And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also masons and carpenters to build a house for him. And David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, and that his kingdom was highly exalted for the sake of his people Israel.*

*And David took more wives in Jerusalem, and David fathered more sons and daughters. These are the names of the children born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Beeliada and Eliphelet. – 1 Chronicles 14:1-7 ESV*

David had been busy building his house in more ways than one. His efforts included construction and conception. He was building a palace and a legacy. But the second part of his building efforts was in direct violation of God’s commands concerning the king (Deuteronomy 17:17). As we have seen before, David had an inordinate attraction to women, and their presence proved to be a distraction and a constant source of trouble in his life.

But the other interesting insight we glean from the Chronicles passage is that, while David was building a brick-and-mortar house for himself, he had “pitched a tent” for the Ark of the Covenant. He would later regret this oversight and voice his desire to build a great house for God (2 Samuel 7). However, at this point in his reign, it appears that David was busy establishing and solidifying his rule with all the trappings of kingly success, at least, according to the worldly standards of the day.

But back to the story. David led the procession of Levites, priests, and musicians into the city of Jerusalem. He was wearing a simple linen gown, not his kingly robes, and he was dancing and celebrating all along the way. This was a joyous occasion, but not for Michal, David’s first wife

and the daughter of Saul. We are told that she “looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart” (2 Samuel 6:16 ESV).

We are not given the reason for her disdain for David. Was it the way he was dressed? Was it his dancing before the Lord? Maybe she was angry that he was bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. We know from 1 Samuel 19:11-16, that Michal kept an idol of a false god in their home. She had used it in her efforts to help David escape from her father. So, it might be that Michal resented David bringing in what she believed to be an idol to his God. But we do know that she expressed her dissatisfaction to David, focusing on his behavior and clothing.

*“How distinguished the king of Israel looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!” – 2 Samuel 6:20 NLT*

While David danced before the Lord, she became disgusted with his embarrassing lack of decorum. But there is far more behind her resentment toward David than just his choice of attire and dancing skills. There was a pent-up anger with David. Keep in mind, he had replaced her father as king. Not only that, she had remarried and had been taken from her husband by force and returned to David, only to find out that he had acquired many other wives. We know from the text that those women had borne David many children. Evidently, Michal was childless, not an attractive proposition for any woman in those days, but especially for the wife of a king. And the text tells us that Michal remained childless. It’s unlikely that this was the result of a divine decree that left her barren because of her actions that day. I simply believe David lost all affection for Michal at that moment and never had intimate relations with her again. Their marriage was essentially over at that point. She would remain one of his queens, but would not enjoy his favor or bear him a son.

It is impossible to read this story without seeing the stark contrast between celebration and disintegration. David was building his kingdom while at the same time watching his relationship with Michal fall apart. He was building a palace in which to rule and reign, and yet he was also building his harem, in direct violation of God’s commands. His many wives and their offspring would end up bringing disorder and future destruction to his kingdom.

David exhibits a strange mix of humility and pride. He is all about establishing his image as a king, but also willing to humble himself before the God who had anointed him to be king. David’s response to Michal provides a subtle sense of his pride mixed with humility.

*“I was dancing before the Lord, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the Lord, so I celebrate before the Lord. Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! But those servant girls you mentioned will indeed think I am distinguished!” – 2 Samuel 6:21-22 NLT*

David knew God had made him king. However, he also took pleasure in being the king. His statement reveals a subtle mix of superiority and pride. He had been *chosen* by God. He was *the* king of Israel. And while he was willing to humble himself before God, he was also counting on the fact that God was going to distinguish him as a king. Dancing and disdain. Pride and humility. Celebration and disintegration. Palaces and tents. Worship and wives. Blessings and barrenness. Burnt offerings and burned relationships. This is a passage of contrasts, and David's reign would be one of contradictions and conflicts. There would be times of great blessing and significance, but there would also be times of pain, sorrow, and disobedience. David was going to continue to learn the truth found in the words of Samuel, spoken to the former king of Israel:

*"What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams."* – 1 Samuel 15:22 NLT

## 2 Samuel 7:1-17

### I Will...

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

*But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'" In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. – 2 Samuel 7:1-17 ESV*

There is some debate about the chronological order of Chapter Seven. The natural assumption is that Chapter 7 follows Chapter 6 in chronological order. But there are some problems with that conclusion. First, the chapter starts with the words, "Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies" (2 Samuel 7:1 ESV). God had given David rest from all his surrounding enemies. In other words, there was a period of national peace. But then, chapter eight opens up with the words, "After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them" (2 Samuel 8:1 ESV). Some believe that the term "rest" simply means David was experiencing a lull in the fighting. But others believe that chapter eight covers a time in David's reign when he had completed the task given initially to Joshua, and had subdued all the enemies of Israel in the land of Canaan. This would mean that chapter seven is not in chronological order but is placed where it is because of its mention of David's desire to build a house for God.

Chapter 6 records David placing the Ark of the Covenant in a tent he had pitched for it. So, throughout his entire reign, the ark had remained in that same spot until David came up with the idea to build a Temple in which to house it.

Chapter 7 appears where it does, not because it fits in chronologically, but because it lays an essential framework for the rest of 2 Samuel. It helps explain the future reign of Solomon. It provides a foundation for understanding why God remained committed to the kingdom of Israel, even though the majority of their kings failed to remain faithful to Him. The covenant outlined in this chapter, known as the Davidic Covenant, was actually a type of treaty, commonly referred to as a grant treaty. In this type of treaty, the sovereign makes an unconditional commitment to his servant. God, the King, was making a promise or covenant with His servant, David, and it was not based on David's actions or his holding up his end of the agreement. It was a unilateral covenant, not a bilateral one. God was promising to do something for David that had no basis on David's obedience or faithfulness. If you look at the words God speaks to David, ten different times He says, "I will..."

*"I **will** make for you a great name..." – vs 9*

*"I **will** appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them..." – vs 10*

*"I **will** give you rest from all your enemies..." – vs 11*

*"the Lord **will** make you a house..." – vs 11*

*"I **will** raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I **will** establish his kingdom" – vs 12*

*"I **will** establish the throne of his kingdom forever..." – vs 13*

*"I **will** be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son..." – vs 14*

*"When he commits iniquity, I **will** discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men..." – vs 14*

*"my steadfast love **will** not depart from him, as I took it from Saul..." – vs 15*

This covenant is based on God's faithfulness, not David's. It is a picture of the faithfulness and love of God, not the worthiness and obedience of David. God was not making this covenant with David because he had somehow deserved or earned it. Even David's desire to build a house for God was rejected by God. He hadn't asked David to build him a Temple because He didn't need one. In fact, God promised to make David a house.

*"Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house." – 2 Samuel 7:11 ESV*

God was not talking about a brick-and-mortar house; He was promising to give David an everlasting legacy that would last long after his death. David's son, Solomon, would follow him as king, and his reign would be marked by unprecedented peace and prosperity. Solomon would be the one to build a magnificent Temple for God. But Solomon's remarkable reign would not end well. He would prove to be disobedient to God, having married hundreds of foreign wives and worshiping their false gods. As a result, God would split his kingdom in half. And while descendants of David would continue to rule over Judah from his throne in Jerusalem, another line of kings would reign over the northern kingdom of Israel. Then the time would come when both kingdoms ended up in captivity, the result of their stubborn disobedience and unfaithfulness to God. From that point forward, no kings would rule over Israel or Judah. To this day, Israel has no king.

But that is what makes this covenant so significant. What did God mean when He told David, "And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever?" There is no throne in Jerusalem, and even if there were, there is no king to sit on that throne.

But there is. There is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who will one day return and reclaim the throne of David. Centuries later, an angel would deliver a shocking message to a young Jewish girl names Mary.

*"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"*  
— Luke 1:31-33 NLT

The prophet Isaiah foretold of the coming of this King when he wrote, "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity" (Isaiah 9:6-7 NLT). Daniel also told of a kingdom to come:

*The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever.* — Daniel 2:44 NLT

The apostle John, in a vision given to him while exiled on the island of Patmos, saw this coming King in all His glory.

*"I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads...the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever*

*and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, 'You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.'"* – Revelation 4:2-4, 10-11 ESV

Chapter 7 marks a watershed point in the story of David's life. God is letting David know that his kingdom will be far greater and more impactful than anything he could ever have imagined. God's plans for David went far beyond his reign or that of his son. And while the descendants of David will prove unfaithful and unreliable, God will remain committed to His covenant and faithful to fulfill what He promised. The apostle John concludes his great Book of Revelation with the stirring image of Christ's reign on the throne of David:

*"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"* – Revelation 21:2-4 ESV

## 2 Samuel 7:18-29

### No God Besides You

*Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God. You have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God! And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God! Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. Therefore you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God. And now, O Lord God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever, saying, ‘The Lord of hosts is God over Israel,’ and the house of your servant David will be established before you. For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, ‘I will build you a house.’ Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.” – 2 Samuel 7:18-29 ESV*

One of the keys to understanding David’s lasting legacy as Israel’s greatest king is found in this marvelous prayer he offers to God. As the Scriptures make painfully clear, David was far from perfect. He was a man after God’s own heart, but he also had a heart that was strongly attracted to women. He also had an impulsive streak that would continually land him in trouble, as well as a predisposition toward inaction and procrastination that would cause him significant difficulty. But when all is said and done, and the evaluation of David’s life is complete, it is difficult not to conclude that he was a man who loved God and understood the unique nature of his relationship with Him. In this prayer, David repeatedly refers to himself as the servant of God. Another eight times, he calls God his master. This speaks volumes regarding David’s comprehension of his role and God’s rule. David may have been the king of Israel, but God was the King over the universe. David was subordinate to him. In fact, he owed his entire life and his reign to God. David’s humility shines through as he expresses his amazement that God had chosen to use him.

*“Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?” – 2 Samuel 7:18 ESV*

David understood that his crowning as king had been God’s doing.

*“Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness...” – 2 Samuel 7:21 ESV*

David didn't see his recent elevation to the throne as something he deserved or had earned. It had been the result of God's promise and the natural overflow of God's heart. He is a faithful, covenant-keeping God.

While David was the king and enjoyed all the perks and benefits that came with the job, he was far more impressed with the greatness of God.

*“Therefore you are great, O Lord God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.” – 2 Samuel 7:22 ESV*

Even the existence of the nation of Israel had been the result of God's sovereign will. The fact that David had a nation over which to rule and reign was God's doing. There would have been no nation of Israel had God not chosen Abraham and promised to give him as many descendants as there are stars in the sky. There would have been no Exodus unless God had chosen to step in to rescue and redeem His people from their slavery in Egypt. And there would have been no land over which David could reign if God had not given them the promised land.

*“What other nation on earth is like your people Israel? What other nation, O God, have you redeemed from slavery to be your own people? You made a great name for yourself when you redeemed your people from Egypt.” – 2 Samuel 7:23 NLT*

David was genuinely surprised that God had promised to “build a house” for him. This wasn't a promise for a grand palace made with great stones, massive wooden beams, precious metals, and rare gems. No, God promised to make David into a great nation, complete with heirs to sit on his throne after him. Unlike Saul, whose dynasty died with him, David would see his kingdom thrive and flourish under the leadership of his own son, Solomon. But even greater than that was God's promise that “the house of your servant David will be established before you” (2 Samuel 7:26 ESV). And not only that, God told David, “Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever” (2 Samuel 7:16 NLT).

What a marvelous promise, and the staggering significance of its words did not escape David. He knew just how fleeting a king's reign could be. He had personally watched Saul's kingdom come to an abrupt and ignominious end. Kingdoms could fall just as easily as they began. And David knew that the key to his kingdom's longevity was tied directly to God's sovereignty. So, David asked God to graciously extend his kingdom forever.

*“Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you...” – 2 Samuel 7:29 ESV*

David knew that the length of his legacy was directly tied to the depth of his dependency upon God. As long as he recognized God as the ultimate King of Israel, his kingdom would flourish

and his legacy would last. David knew that the blessings of God were directly linked to the obedience of the king. David understood that he stood as the representative of the people of God. He was their proxy or their stand-in. His faithfulness would reflect the hearts of the people. As the king went, so would the people go.

In fact, there is an old proverb that says, “As the king, so are the subjects.” We see the truth of this statement lived out in the lives of Israel’s kings. The books of First and Second Kings contain story after story of the kings of Israel and Judah wrestling with their obedience and faithfulness to God. And their actions lead their subjects to pursue false gods and forsake the one true God. They gave up their dependence upon God in exchange for dependence on false gods and foreign nations. They turned their backs on God, and, eventually, God was forced to turn His back on them, sending the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity in Assyria. Then, hundreds of years later, the southern kingdom of Judah would be defeated and deported by the Babylonians.

Yet, God would remain faithful and keep His covenant promise. While the throne of David remains empty to this day, and the nation of Israel has no king, God has not abandoned them. A King is coming. One day, Jesus Christ, the Messiah and descendant of David, will return to claim His rightful place as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will establish His throne in Jerusalem, sitting on the throne of David. His reign will be everlasting. Not only that, His rule will be marked by righteousness, justice, and holiness. There will be no other king besides Him. There will be no other kingdoms to stand against His. Because there is no God besides Him. And the greatest news is that David’s kingdom did not end with his death or with that of his son Solomon. It didn’t end with the fall of Jerusalem or the destruction of the Temple. There is a day coming when God will fulfill His covenant with David, and it is that day we longingly look and hope for.

*And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.” – Revelation 21:5-7 NLT*



## 2 Samuel 8:1-14

### Radical Surgery

*After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.*

*And he defeated Moab and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground. Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.*

*David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates. And David took from him 1,700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstringed all the chariot horses but left enough for 100 chariots. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians. Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took very much bronze.*

*When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to ask about his health and to bless him because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him, for Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze. These also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.*

*And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. – 2 Samuel 8:1-14 ESV*

Chapter 5 ended with the words: “And David did as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer” (2 Samuel 5:25 ESV). Chapter 8 begins with the words: “After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines” (2 Samuel 8:1 ESV).

Many commentators believe that Chapters 6 and 7 are parenthetical and not chronological in nature. They deal with more religious-oriented aspects of David's reign, while Chapters 5 and 8 deal with his military conquests. Chapter 6 describes David's efforts to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the city of Jerusalem. Chapter 7 covers God's giving of His covenant to David. And Chapter 7 opens with the words: “Now when the king lived in his house and **the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies...**” (2 Samuel 7:1 ESV). It is the second half of

the sentence that leads most Old Testament scholars to believe the covenant was given to David later in his reign, after he had ceased fighting the enemies of Israel. Therefore, like Chapter 6, Chapter 7 is out of chronological order. These two chapters were placed where they are in the story because they provide a spiritual context to David's reign. They reveal his zeal and dedication for the Lord, a key motivating force in his military efforts. They also shed light on the real source behind David's military success: God. This point is made clear in Chapter 8.

*And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. – 2 Samuel 8:15 ESV*

Chapter 8 picks up where Chapter 5 left off. David, as God's hand-picked king, was finishing what Joshua and the people of Israel began when they entered the Promised Land years earlier. They had been commanded to destroy the inhabitants and take over the land that God had provided for them. God had told Joshua:

*"Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you— from the Negev wilderness in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, including all the land of the Hittites.' No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you." – Joshua 1:2-5 ESV*

God had clearly told Moses what the people were to do when they entered the land He had promised to Abraham and his descendants. And Moses had passed the words of God on to the people.

*"In those towns that the Lord your God is giving you as a special possession, destroy every living thing. You must completely destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the Lord your God has commanded you. This will prevent the people of the land from teaching you to imitate their detestable customs in the worship of their gods, which would cause you to sin deeply against the Lord your God." – Deuteronomy 20:16-18 ESV*

But the people of God disobeyed and failed to purge the land of its inhabitants. They had been half-hearted in their efforts and had allowed the majority of the nations occupying the land of Canaan to remain. And, just as God predicted, the people of the land ended up infecting the people of God with their idolatry, immorality, and "detestable customs." This is what led to the period of the judges. In fact, the opening chapters of the Book of Judges reveal exactly what happened.

*The Lord was with the people of Judah, and they took possession of the hill country. But they **failed** to drive out the people living in the plains, who had iron chariots. – Judges 1:19 ESV*

*The tribe of Benjamin, however, **failed** to drive out the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem. So to this day the Jebusites live in Jerusalem among the people of Benjamin. – Judges 1:21 ESV*

*The tribe of Manasseh **failed** to drive out the people living in Beth-shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, and all their surrounding settlements... – Judges 1:27 ESV*

*The tribe of Ephraim **failed** to drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer, so the Canaanites continued to live there among them. – Judges 1:29 ESV*

*The tribe of Zebulun **failed** to drive out the residents of Kitron and Nahalol, so the Canaanites continued to live among them. – Judges 1:30 ESV*

And the list goes on and on. It got so bad that God ended up sending an angel to give the people of Israel bad news:

*“I brought you out of Egypt into this land that I swore to give your ancestors, and I said I would never break my covenant with you. For your part, you were not to make any covenants with the people living in this land; instead, you were to destroy their altars. But you disobeyed my command. Why did you do this? So now I declare that I will no longer drive out the people living in your land. They will be thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a constant temptation to you.” – Judges 2:1-3 ESV*

So, by the time David became king, the nations surrounding Israel had become far more than just thorns in their side; they were a real threat to Israel’s future existence as a nation. So, David, as the king and commander-in-chief of Israel’s armies, determined to finish what Joshua had started, but the people of God had failed to finish.

David defeated the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites, Amalekites, Ammonites, and the armies of Zobah. The author makes it clear that David’s military successes were the result of God’s blessing upon him. God was giving David victories over his enemies. The very fact that David was forced to fight so many battles reflects just how unsuccessful the Israelites had been in their efforts to rid the land of its inhabitants. Their disobedience allowed these nations not only to survive but also to thrive. They had grown in numbers and strength. They were no longer just an irritant to the people of Israel, but a real threat to their existence. But David was doing everything in his power to subdue and destroy them.

It’s almost impossible to read this chapter and God’s words found in Deuteronomy 20 where He commanded the complete annihilation of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, and not be shocked at what appears to be God’s callous and seemingly capricious outlook on human life. How can the loving, Creator-God call for the destruction of entire people groups, including men, women, and innocent children? This question has caused many to doubt the veracity of the Old Testament. It has led others to reject the very idea of God Himself. Richard Dawkins, a proudly professing atheist and staunch opponent of Christianity has described the God of the Bible as,

“a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully” (Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*). He goes on to say, “The tragi-farce of God’s maniacal jealousy against alternative gods recurs continually through the Old Testament.”

For someone like Dawkins, the issue has less to do with the destruction of the people of Canaan than it does with his desire to prove that the God of the Bible is a farce. He simply uses the Old Testament record of God’s call for the destruction of the inhabitants of Canaan as proof that this so-called “God” of the Israelites, even if He did exist, would not be worth following. However, he misses the entire point of the story and the true nature of humanity’s tragic situation. The Bible makes it painfully clear that all men (women and children included) are sinners and stand before God as guilty and worthy of death. Because of sin, they are in rebellion against a holy God. And His holiness, which consists of justice, must deal with the sins of men. He cannot simply overlook them. God recognizes that sin, like an infectious disease, is contagious and capable of spreading from one person to another. Sin contaminates and destroys, like cancer cells in the human body. Sin is non-discriminatory and without mercy. God’s call for the destruction of the inhabitants of the land was based on His understanding of the true danger of indwelling sin. Left unchecked, the sinful dispositions of the inhabitants of the land would gradually infect and influence the people of God. And that is exactly what happened.

Slowly, but surely, the Israelites became just like the nations around them. The cancer of sin spread among them, destroying their relationship with God. And the same thing happens to believers today, as we allow the sins of the world to contaminate our lives. Rather than doing radical surgery and removing the sin that so easily entangles us (Hebrews 12:1), we embrace it, welcoming it with open arms. We end up loving the world and the things of the world (1 John 12:15). We become friends of the world, failing to recognize that the world hates us (John 15:18-19).

Removing sinful influences from our lives can be difficult. Sometimes it is painful. It may cause us to lose friends who have a negative influence on our lives. It may require that we distance ourselves from those individuals whose influence in our lives is unhealthy and potentially destructive. David knew just how dangerous sin could be, both externally and internally. And he was willing to do whatever it took to remove both. In Psalm 139, he offers a compelling and heartfelt prayer to God.

*O God, if only you would destroy the wicked!  
Get out of my life, you murderers!  
They blaspheme you;  
your enemies misuse your name.  
O Lord, shouldn't I hate those who hate you?  
Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you?  
Yes, I hate them with total hatred,  
for your enemies are my enemies.*

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
Point out anything in me that offends you,  
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.* – Psalm 139:19-24 NLT

David was willing to have God do radical surgery on his life to remove any and all vestiges of sin. He knew it wouldn't happen in this life, but he longed for the day when his battle with sin would be over.



## 2 Samuel 8:15-9:13

### A Man of His Word

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

*And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David. And the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "I am your servant." And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar." Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant." And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"*

*Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's servants. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet. — 2 Samuel 8:15-9:13 ESV*

I have chosen to link these two passages together because they provide a telling illustration of David's approach to his power. At the close of Chapter 8, we are told, "David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people" (2 Samuel 8:15 ESV). He was a good king and a fair one. He took his job seriously and ruled responsibly. And we see him surrounding himself with trustworthy men who acted as his official cabinet. He appointed Joab as his military leader. Jehoshaphat was his chief of staff. Zadok and Ahimelech were his spiritual advisors. Seraiah was the secretary. Benaiah was a representative. And then we read that two of David's sons served as priests. This should catch our attention, because as sons of David, they were not qualified to be priests. They were not of the tribe of Levi. And yet, the very same Hebrew word is used to describe their role as that used to describe Zadok and Ahimelech. Now,

if David appointed his sons as priests, he was making a serious mistake; one which the Lord would have seen as an egregious affront to His law. But since there is no indication elsewhere in Scripture that David's sons ever functioned as priests, many believe that an alternative meaning of the Hebrew word, *kohen*, must apply. That word could also refer to a chief ruler. In fact, the *New American Standard Bible* translates the word as "chief ministers." *The New Living Translation* uses the term "priestly leaders." More than likely, these two sons were not official priests but acted as intermediaries between the priesthood and David's administration.

David did not try to rule alone. He surrounded himself with wise and gifted men who could assist him in his responsibilities as king. And it would seem that most of these men had proven themselves loyal to David over the years. He was comfortable with their advice because he could trust their character. He knew them well.

But one of the amazing things revealed about David from these two passages is that he was also a loyal leader. He did not abuse his power or allow the significance of his role to go to his head. He was still the young shepherd boy at heart. He may have become the king of all Israel, but his character remained virtually unchanged. And Chapter 9 provides an insight into David's heart. After he had solidified his rule over all Israel, he remembered a covenant he had made with Jonathan, the son of Saul, and his best friend. When David had decided it was time to leave Saul's employment for good, he and Jonathan met for the last time to say their goodbyes. At that emotional farewell, David and Jonathan made a covenant with one another. Jonathan pledged to David, saying,

*"May the Lord be with you as he used to be with my father. And may you treat me with the faithful love of the Lord as long as I live. But if I die, treat my family with this faithful love, even when the Lord destroys all your enemies from the face of the earth."* – 1 Samuel 20:13-15 ESV

Just as they parted ways, Jonathan said one last thing to David:

*"Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.'" And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.* – 1 Samuel 20:18 ESV

Now, years later, Jonathan was dead and David was the king. David remembered his covenant with Jonathan and asked if there was anyone left from the house of Saul. If David had been like any other king of that era, he would have been asking that question so that he could eliminate any possible claimants to the throne. Killing potential kingly candidates was a fairly normal practice. But David wasn't looking to murder any descendants of Saul; he wanted to keep his commitment to Jonathan. To David's apparent surprise, he was informed that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth. He had been crippled in a household accident at the age of five, and by this time was probably a young man. He had been under the care of a man named Ziba ever since Jonathan died in battle. When David was informed of Mephibosheth's existence, he

commanded that he be brought to him. Can you imagine how Jonathan's young son received news of the king's request for his appearance? He was probably petrified. In fact, the text tells us he fell on his face before David. And David, sensing his fear, attempted to calm him.

*"Don't be afraid!" David said. "I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king's table!" – 2 Samuel 9:7 NLT*

This was not what Mephibosheth had expected to hear. He most likely thought that David would view him as an enemy and a threat. He probably knew the stories of how his grandfather treated David. He would not have been expecting a warm welcome from the king, and, yet, David showed Mephibosheth grace and mercy. He welcomed him with open arms and invited him to live in his home and eat at his table. He took complete responsibility for Mephibosheth's care, all out of respect and honor for his friend, Jonathan. And Mephibosheth was so taken aback by all of this that all he could do was bow before David and exclaim, "Who is your servant, that you should show such kindness to a dead dog like me?" (2 Samuel 9:8 NLT).

Mephibosheth became like a son to David. He ate at his table. He was treated with dignity, honor, and respect. David even returned to Mephibosheth all the land and property that had belonged to his grandfather, Saul. This incredible kindness shown by David was not something he was required to do. He did it out of love for his friend, Jonathan. He had made a covenant, and he was going to keep it. He didn't let his newfound power and fame go to his head. He didn't allow himself to justify or rationalize his failure to keep his word to Jonathan. He was a man of his word, even if it cost him. Those who sat in his cabinet might disagree with his decision, but he did the right thing, even if it was viewed as illogical and unnecessary. Mephibosheth was the undeserving beneficiary of David's mercy, grace, and kindness.

Those of us who have placed our faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ have also been shown mercy and grace from the King of kings and Lord of lords. In our weak and undeserving state, crippled by sin and condemned to death, we were invited to feast at the King's table and made His sons and daughters. Paul tells us in Romans that we are God's children and heirs (Romans 8:15-17). In his letter to Titus, Paul gives us a reminder of just how much like Mephibosheth we are.

*When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life. – Titus 3:4-5 NLT*

David was a man of his word, and God is faithful to keep His promises to us. We are His sons and daughters, and one day we will inherit His Kingdom. We will feast at His table and live in His presence. Not because we deserve it, but because of His grace, mercy, and love.

