



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of 2nd Samuel

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2 SAMUEL 1:1---3:39

The Amalekite's report to David of Saul's death does not coincide with the report in 1 Samuel ch. 31. We take the account in 1 Sam. 31 to be the correct one. There, **(a)** it is reported that Saul asked his "armor-bearer" to thrust him through; **(b)** the "armor-bearer" would not do so and Saul fell upon his own sword and committed suicide; **(c)** the armor-bearer then committed suicide with Saul; **(d)** it appears from 1 Sam. 31, Saul might have lived had someone helped him withdraw from the field of Battle. Compare all this with the Amalekite's report! The Amalekite knew where David was! He knew David was to become king! He made sure he was not killed along with Saul's fighting men at Gilboa! He **assumed** David would be happy about Saul's death so that he could immediately take advantage of Israel's defeat by the Philistines and subdue Saul's army and take the kingdom. But David was not that kind of man! David quizzed the Amalekite extensively. The Amalekite insisted **he** had killed Saul. He lied! He viewed Israel as just another carnal kingdom of men. The Amalekite was sure David would let his greed, hatred, and retaliation drive him to "take over" and subsequently reward the Amalekite! But David is truly, "a man after God's own heart." He was tempted to rejoice over the evil that had befallen Saul and Jonathan by this Amalekite, but he did not do so! God's man prays for his enemies, loves them, does good to them, tries to convert them, and leaves their punishment & judgment to society and to God.

David's reaction to the news of Saul's death was quite unlike that of the carnal-minded man. He did not gloat---not even secretly. He did not seek his advantage. David recognized the spiritual ruin that had come to Saul and his family, and to the Messianic nation of Israel, and **mourned**. He refused to profit in a time of someone else's ruin and distress. He ordered that the spectacle of Saul's death and Jonathan's death "not be told in Gath." He would not give the Philistines (opposing God's redemptive program) an opportunity for propaganda against God and his truth! Notice: the text says David "mourned and **wept** and **fasted** until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son **and for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel**. In other words, David's sorrow was not just because friends had died, it was for the spiritual set-back of the defeat and death at the hand of God's enemies. Most men would think David a fool for mourning over Saul, and for not taking advantage of the situation to further his own ambitions. But David had no ambitions toward God's program that would run ahead of God's leading! David was jealous for God's glory in the earth first and foremost! It was not something to gloat over that "God's anointed" had been defeated. When God's kingdom **appears** to have been defeated, it is foolish for a believer to think he must take charge without being led by God's direction. The believer must **wait** with **endurance**, asking, seeking, knocking, and his path will be opened unto him! That is why David is "a man after God's own heart."

David had the Amalekite executed because the man had admitted he murdered Saul! The terribleness of his crime was that he murdered "God's anointed." God had put Saul in office---only God has the right to take him from office. No man should take that into his own hands. That is **anarchy** as well as murder! The Amalekite said Saul was wounded. Evidently Saul could have escaped with the Amalekite's help. But he killed Saul.

This is from the man's own mouth. David had already demonstrated he would not "touch the head of the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam. 26:8-11). David would have given up his own life before committing anarchy before the Lord. Once again, David was seeing the deep spiritual implications of Saul's position, rather than seeing him from a merely human point of view. To harm what God has appointed in the world as a governing authority is to assault God. One who would do that would kill God if he had opportunity to do so! That is why Jesus made his killers (the Pharisees, Matt. 23:1ff) guilty of all the murders of God's servants from Abel to Zechariah. The man clearly showed his motivation for allegedly "killing" Saul to be malice and greed. **He** hoped to gain from it! His concern was not for David's gain, but his own. His confession of killing Saul was a willing "boast" and not extorted from him. Think of all the hands that have been raised against God's servants unto death through the last 2000 years! If God approved David's punishment here, what must God have stored up for all the murderers for the past 2000 years?

The "Song of the Bow" is the title given to David's "psalm" of lamentation in 2 Sam. 1:19-27. The words, "The use of..." are not in the Hebrew text nor in the Septuagint. The translators of the KJV simply inserted these words as an interpretation, not a translation! David ordered that *his song of lamentation* (which does mention "sword of Saul" in vs. 22) for Saul and Jonathan be **taught** the people of Judah. He was not ordering that the people of Judah be taught "The use of..." the bow (although some were undoubtedly taught that). The "Song of the Bow" was David's **eulogy** for Saul and his sons. It was the outpouring of David's intense grief for their death and the infamy which is brought to God's glory. It was also David's praise for all the *good* that Saul, the "Lord's anointed," and his dearest fiend, Jonathan, had brought to God's people. David does not hold grudges. He says nothing of all the evil Saul had done and personal persecution toward David's family. It is right to lament the fallen servants of God and to remember their good, and **leave judgment** to God! David knew there was much in the lives of Saul, and especially Jonathan, that should be emulated by the people of Judah. David also desired the people be taught to lament the infamy that comes to God's redemptive work when one of his servants is defeated by the "enemy." In the end, "How the mighty are fallen"...God's providence rules!

Hebron is about 20 miles south of Jerusalem (Jerusalem was called "Jebus" in David's early days), and about 20 miles n.e. of Ziklag. David was anointed king over Judah at Hebron. Hebron was in the territory of Judah, David's home territory. David was born at Bethlehem, about 15 miles north of Hebron. And Hebron was where Abram (Abraham) built an altar to the Lord (Gen. 13:18). The only land Abram owned, was the field of Machpelah, which he purchased from the Hittites, as a burial place for Sarah (Heb. 11:8-10; Gen. 23:17-20). Later, Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, were all buried in the same cave. Hebron is one of the oldest cities of the world. It is about 3000 ft above sea level, though lying in a shallow valley, and about 4300 ft. above the Dead Sea level which is only 15 miles to the east of Hebron. David made Hebron his capital city as king over Judah, and dwelt there for 7 ½ years. There the elders of Israel finally anointed David king over all Israel. He later moved his capital to Jebus (Jerusalem). David was in Hebron at the leading of God. He sought God's guidance and followed it against what human ideas would most probably have dictated. At Hebron David was given opportunity to act out his praise for God's "anointed" (Saul) by rewarding the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul

and his son's bodies. This act was sincere, and turned out to be helpful in uniting the two warring factions (Israel and Judah).

Abner proclaimed Ishbosheth king of Israel upon Saul's death **in order to continue the resistance** of Saul's kingdom to David's ascendancy. Abner's act was an act of open rebellion against the message of God through Samuel. It was undoubtedly a power move by Abner to advance his own ambitions. Abner later acknowledged that he knew the Lord's will concerning David's kingship (2 Sam. 3:18). And Abner eventually made the move that brought the entire sovereignty to David. Note: Abner "had taken Ishbosheth...and brought him over...and made him king..." (2:8-9). Abner was the strong man—Ishbosheth was apparently the "puppet" kind of person. Abner undoubtedly manipulated the king hoping eventually (when David would be defeated) to have the kingdom for himself (see 3:6-11). When Abner later manipulated things into David's hands, he thought he would be the strong man and David his "puppet." He never found out! There are still many "strong men," manipulators, at work in the kingdom of God on earth (the church of Christ)! They have ambitions and desires to use God's people for their own purposes and fame! Abner seems to have come to his senses because of the terrible casualties from the civil war and decided to do what he could to unite the people under David. But his "macho" obsession finally did him in! Pride goes before a fall!

Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men arise and play before us...and each caught his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together..." *Some play, huh?* It is the Hebrew word *sachaq* and translated in the LXX *paizatosan*, and really is the word for "play, make sport, laugh, make merry." This "macho" Abner meant, however, not fun and games, but a contest of warriors—a sword fight! This shows how war tends to brutalize people. They think of "games" that maim and kill as "play" or "sport." It was brutal, bloody combat—dueling. They were determined to resolve the rivalry of the two kingdoms by "macho" "play" (combat). Many died. Joab's brother (Asahel, who was also David's nephew) was slain, along with 360 of Abner's men. This little "play-time" led to civil war that made both sides weep and mourn. It also resulted in a vengeance that led to Abner's murder. This kind of "play" leads to a thirst for more and more violence and blood-letting. Asahel pursued the defeated Abner with a desire to kill Abner that would not pass—even with Abner's repeated warnings (2 Sam. 2:18-23). Abner finally killed Asahel. Then Joab, Asahel's brother, and some others tried to kill Abner. Finally both military leaders saw the bloody calamity that was about to consume everyone and Abner cried out, "Shall the sword devour forever?" Joab and his men had decided to quit, also, and pursued Israel no more! NO! WAR IS NOT FOREVER. GOD HAS A PLACE OF TOTAL PEACE PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE AND MAKE PEACE!

Abner was a cousin to Saul (Ner and Kish were brothers). Abner was commanding general of Saul's army (1 Sam. 14:50). It was Abner who brought David to Saul following the slaying of Goliath (1 Sam. 17:55-58). Abner accompanied Saul in his pursuit of David (1 Sam. 26:5ff), and was rebuked by David for his failure to keep watch over Saul (1 Sam. 15). They knew each other well, apparently, from their days together in Saul's palace and in his army. Abner was tired of bloodshed. Ishbosheth was a weakling. His career and his kingdom were going nowhere. It was getting weaker and weaker. Ishbosheth chafed under the strong manipulation of Abner and this is what probably caused

him to accuse Abner of “going in to my father’s (Saul’s) concubine.” Abner replied in cutting sarcasm to the “king,” “Am I a dog’s head of Judah?” In other words, “Am I the worthless dog of a traitor from Judah?” Abner neither confessed or denied the charge! He replied with resentment and contempt that he had made Ishbosheth king—so now would the puppet reprimand its maker? Then he declared he would perpetrate treason—he would deliver Ishbosheth’s kingdom to David (to whom, even Abner confessed, it belonged by Divine fiat). Who knows why Abner turned to David? He seems to be grudgingly admitting he was wrong. There seems to be a growing conviction of duty toward a new “anointed of the Lord.” He was faithful to David’s request that his wife Michal (Saul’s daughter) be returned to him. David, unlike Joab, interpreted Abner’s action in the best light!

While Abner’s long-coming acceptance of David’s “anointing of the Lord” was a turn for the better in his life, it could not avert the bloodthirsty background of his earlier life. Abner was a faithful soldier, and he acted honorably in making his open contact with David. David showed himself to be a man of honor inasmuch as he sent word back to Ishbosheth so that the king in Gilead would be informed of what was transpiring. But Joab, under the pretense of avenging his brother’s death, took Abner aside and killed him in cold blood. Joab’s brother died in battle, foolishly pursuing a retreating man who was warning him and ultimately killed him in self-defense. Joab had no justification for personally avenging himself upon Abner. Abner was not a villain—not a coward—not a murderer, deserving to be assassinated in a cowardly manner. He was brave, capable, and noble-minded. Perhaps not even guilty of what Ishbosheth accused him with the concubine. When he was murdered, thus a capable man was murdered who might have made Israel even greater. David’s sorrow was sincere. His tears showed what a tender and compassionate man he was. His tenderness moved the whole nation to mourn Abner’s murder. David showed that he hated evil and loved righteousness. He mourned the fall of right as much as the fall of Abner. Again we see David exalting the good in a man’s life and refusing to hold a grudge against anyone who might have done him personal injustices.

(a) David was faithful to keep his feelings and actions attuned to the will of God. He would not “touch the head of the Lord’s anointed;” (b) David stood for decency and order. He executed anarchists; (c) David always praised the good that men did; (d) David was tender hearted and compassionate; (e) David did not hold grudges; (f) David saw the deep spiritual goals of God’s redemptive work in Israel where most men saw only a carnal kingdom; (g) David sought the Lord’s guidance; (h) David honored the law of God about marriage to Michal and insisted she be restored to him by her father Saul (she had been taken from David and given to another man, 1 Sam. 25:44).

THE ANCESTRY AND FAMILY OF DAVID

Ancestry—(Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chron. 1:1-15)

Patriarchs	Abraham—Isaac—Jacob—Judah
Egypt	Perez—Hezron—Ram—Amminadab—Nahshon
Conquest and Judges	Salmon—Boaz—Obed—Jesse—David

Family—(2 Samuel 3:2-5; 5:14-16; 2 Chronicles 3:5-8)

<u>Children of Jesse</u>	<u>Wives of David</u>	<u>Sons of David</u>
<u>Sons</u>	Ahinoam	Amnon (killed by Abs)
Eliab	Abigail	Chileab (died in youth)
Abinadab	Maacah	Absalom (killed by Joab)
Shammah	Haggith	Adonijah (deposed by Solomon)
Nethanel	Abital	Shephatiah
Raddi	Eglah	Ithream
Ozem	Bathsheba	Solomon, Shimea, Shobab, Nathan
David	Michal	None
<u>Daughters</u>		
Zeruiah		
(Mother of Joab, Abishai	Various concubines	Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet,
and Asahel)		Nogah, Nepheg,
		Japhia, Eliada, Elishama,
Abigail		Eliphelet
(Mother of Amasa)		

2 SAMUEL 4:1—6:23

Mephibosheth's real name was *Meri-baal* or "Baal's-man." The Hebrew word *Baal* means "Lord." Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. Crippled from birth, he was made permanently lame when his nurse let him fall as they were fleeing after Saul's defeat and Jonathan's death at Gilboa. He is evidently mentioned here to show the complete ruin to which Saul's house had come. All that was left of Saul's house was his last son, Ishbosheth (a weakling in political abilities), and a crippled, lame, grandson. The orphaned, crippled lame Mephibosheth was apparently next in line (after Ishbosheth) to the throne of Israel. No doubt many were asking, "What's to become of this son of Jonathan?" "What's to become of God's people if he is all that is left to lead us?" The mention of Mephibosheth here, I think, clearly indicates that God is acutely aware of what so many in the world today would try to **abort**—handicapped children! God has a reason for their being alive in our world! First, Mephibosheth will give David an opportunity to express himself and develop himself as "a man after God's own heart." Second, Mephibosheth (in later history) will show that God can use "handicapped" (or "weak"—remember 1 Corinthians 1:26-31) people as servants in his kingdom. We will meet Mephibosheth again in our studies and he will show that he inherited the warm heart and love for David that Jonathan his father had.

Ishbosheth was, clearly a man without the courage or strength of character to be a king like his father Saul or David, but that does not mean he was a wicked or unrighteous man. His perpetuation of Saul's kingdom may have been more Abner's doing than his. Even if it was his own doing, we must remember David's right to the kingdom was not "officially" or "publicly" announced yet, even though known by many. Transfer of sovereignty after so long a civil war as had been going on could not be expected instantaneously—men are not machines—Ishbosheth is not any more at fault in this than the others. He certainly did not deserve assassination. His murderers were like the Amalekite and wanted to profit from "slaying an enemy of David." They did not realize how much David was against harming the "Lord's anointed," and against anarchy. David made a public show of their executed, mutilated bodies to warn any others against committing the same crime against the political head of a nation. Some people simply do not understand or care that such terrorism is anarchy and a serious threat to civil order. Satan is behind such disorder. God wants civil order (1 Tim. 1:8-9; 2:1-4) in order that the gospel of grace may be preached and as many people saved in his love as possible. Christians must stand along with David for civil order—even if force must be

The men of Israel **finally** turn to David after Ishbosheth's death, twelve years of civil war, anarchy, assassination of two leaders of Israel (Abner and Ishbosheth), and the Philistines licking their chops over the devastation preparing to drive Israel out of the land. Someone has estimated there were about 350,000 warriors gathered at Hebron from the combined rival forces (Israel and Judah). There are 16,600 men in a U.S. Army division—that means there were 21 divisions of fighting men ready to follow David! The "elders" of the tribes of Israel officially elected David as king of all Israel. They had their reasons: **(a)** they were all brethren—the should stop killing one another—Abner had already advocated that; **(b)** David had proved himself to be the strong, competent, leader they needed—he had received plenty of training running from Saul and grew up in the house of Saul—they

had observed his competency; **(c)** the Lord had anointed David for this office—they knew that—they were waiting, evidently, for him to prove himself. They wanted David to “feed” the people. That is, to be their civil leader—ruler, protector—so they could carry on the business of a nation. David was **not** their **spiritual** leader (officially). The priesthood and the prophets were supposed to be the spiritual leaders. David did lead them in spirituality by his example.

Jebus (Jerusalem) was the best place in all the land of Canaan for a capital city. All former attempts to capture the city had failed. The Jebusites felt so secure they taunted David by saying, “The blind and the lame will be sufficient opposition to keep David out of this city.” But David was not kept out. He conquered it. The Jebusites were a Canaanite tribe, descended from Canaan according to the table of nations in Genesis 10, and dwelling in the land before Moses and Joshua conquered the land. They were Semitic descendants of Ham. Their king, Adonizedek, was one of the 5 who conspired against Gibeon and was slain by Joshua. After David conquered the city, he purchased the threshing floor of Ornan (or Araunah) the Jebusite as a place for the temple he planned to build for Jehovah, his God. This large flat rock where the altar of burnt offering stood is today supposed to be visible in the “Dome of the Rock (Mount Moriah) at Jerusalem. David orders that the “blind and the lame” of Jebus be slain—also any who should be left in the city were not to be helped even though they become beggars. This way of describing “tramps” as “the blind and the lame” originated from this Jebusite taunt. No fortress is secure against God! If God wants anything for his kingdom, he always wants the best and most useful. Everything in the world belongs to God and he may take it at any time in any way for any purpose he wishes—he may use any part of his creation for his church today (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

God did not start this war. God has **never** started a war! The devil started war when he seduced Eve and Adam into thinking they should rebel against their Creator. But God will finish every war, and all war (someday) when his terms, “Unconditional Surrender,” are fulfilled, either by choice or by force (Phil. 2:9-11). The devil continues to seduce and deceive men into thinking they can conquer or dethrone God. Every person who has ever sinned has thought to dethrone God—to defeat his sovereign claim and right. God has two alternatives when his sovereignty is challenged—destroy all who war against him—or persuade his opponents to accept his gracious offer of pardon and peace! It is evident he does not instantly destroy all who oppose him so how is God to ever persuade? He attempts to persuade by working his program of grace, in history, through human beings. This necessitates his sovereign participation in sustaining his work in the world through civil order (civil governments) and by preaching the gospel. God has three institutions through which he works to redeem mankind—marriage and the home—civil government—and the church. Each has its sphere of operation and each may influence (but not control) the other. If God intends to maintain civil order through the instrumentality of men (and not by direct, miraculous, constant intervention), it will involve **enforcement** of civil order. And that will, in turn, involve the use of force (even on family, local, national and international levels). That is the teaching of the Bible. If God’s participation in war with David is a problem, read Revelation! Human beings are haughty, arrogant, and deceived so that often they are **forced** to see God’s sovereignty through “the things that have been made” (**see Rom. 1:18-32**).

Uzzah's death is no more shocking than that of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-7; Num. 3:4; 26:61) who offered "unholy" fire upon the altar of incense. Fire devoured them and they were buried and no mourning was permitted at their death. What about the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) for just a little "white lie"? This is a classic demonstration of the truth that God's word is **absolute!** God cannot allow his word to be less than absolute! Israel needed to learn that—David needed to learn that—all mankind needs to learn that in every generation! It is also a classic demonstration that human opinion or "feeling" no matter how *sincere*, if it is **contrary** to what God says, deserves death! Think about that one for a moment. When God speaks clearly he harbors no opinion! None at all! Death to those who think he does! No matter how *sincere* they may be in holding their "feeling" above God's clear word. It is a question of sovereignty—of who is in charge—of who runs the world—of who knows all and is all wise. It is a classic demonstration that salvation comes only by the grace of God. Human beings cannot even keep from sinning against God when they try to be "helpful" (if their "help" opposes what God's word as said). Uzzah, David and all Israel thought Uzzah was doing God a service by keeping the ark from falling to the ground. But what Uzzah was really doing was disobeying God!

David was angry. The Hebrew word is *charah* and means "to burn with anger." God's word does not misrepresent the facts—it is honest and accurate. It exposes all the foibles of human beings—even of the greatest like David. David could see no justice in the death of a man who was simply trying to avert dishonor to God's "Mercy Seat" (the ark of the covenant). Besides, Uzzah's sudden death ruined the joyous day David had planned for himself and Israel and the Lord. He had prepared a great religious festival to honor God—now God had spoiled it all and everyone would be on David's case for it all. But it was David's fault as much as anyone's. God had said no one was to touch any holy thing lest they die. Directions were given in the law about transporting these holy things. These directions were not followed by David at all. He did not even try to find directions until after the tragedy. Had the ark been carried on poles by the Levites as it should have been there would have been no danger of its falling—6:7 says in the Hebrew text that God "smote" Uzzah "for his error." David's next reaction was fear—if this was the penalty for touching this "thing" it must be a **dangerous** "thing" to have around—so leave it outside "my" city—give it to the nearest Levite. God blessed the Levite for keeping it at his house (undoubtedly in the proper fashion—not touching it). Now, David wants it in his city—but **now** he will consult God's directions on moving it! It is always our **ignorance** that makes us vulnerable to displeasing God! Ignorance keeps us from God's desire to bless us. LET'S GET SMART ABOUT GOD'S REVEALED WILL!

There are a number of Hebrew words translated "dance" or "dancing" **(a)** *chul*, meaning, "to turn about, twirl around"; **(b)** *raqad*, "to skip, jump, leap"; **(c)** *tzachaq*, "to play, have fun"; **(d)** *sachaq*, "to laugh"; **(e)** *mekkarrekkar*, "to move quickly as if to stumble, stagger." *Mekkarrekkar* is used in vers 14, while another word, *phazzea* ("to leap, jump high") is used in verse 16. David was merely "cavorting"—there was no routine or form or choreography to his "dancing." Social dancing as we know it today was altogether unknown in ancient times. Dancing in the Bible is totally **spontaneous** (Ex. 15:20) and never planned or choreographed! Dancing by the Israelites was never dancing for fun, for its own sake, not even for "artistic value." There is no provision for "dancing" even in the

law of Moses as a religious expression. It is just something David did on the spur of the moment, and it was simply jumping up and down or whirling in a circle, by himself. David's dancing does not sanction modern dancing. The NT says nothing about "dancing" (except Salome's dance). The NT does say a lot about being careful not to become a temptation to someone else. My opinion, for what it is worth to anyone else who must stand or fall before his own Lord, is that modern dancing would be acceptable for a man with his wife, and perhaps even some non-suggestive, dancing (if there is such modern dancing) for unmarried men and women. But much of modern dancing is too suggestive and conducive to tempting. A church-house does not necessarily keep "dancing" from being an instrument of temptation. What about spontaneous "dancing before the Lord" by happy believers? Congregations will have to make that decision for themselves on the basis of decorum, decency and order (see 1 Cor. 14:40).

David's wife, Michal (daughter of Saul), was upset with David's "cavorting" because he stripped himself of his royal robes to mingle with the "common people" in this procession as they brought the ark into the city. This was very undignified and unbecoming a king—in Michal's opinion! He even danced like a common farmer among the lowliest of the low—his servant's maids. Michal was just "petrified," and shamed! Kings just weren't supposed to act like commoners in Michal's opinion. She was probably afraid David would lose the respect of the people and thus lose his power to be their sovereign. She believed they would not follow someone who would so humiliate himself. It was this very same kind of arrogance that brought about the downfall of her father, Saul. Michal was a "chip off the old block." We wonder how Jonathan could have become the exact opposite of Michal? Both reared in the same house. Well, Jonathan had the constant company of David the humble shepherd boy and that must have had a lot to do with Jonathan's character!

David's answer to Michal was about as sarcastic as her rebuke to him. He wants her to understand his "cavorting" was because of his joy toward the Lord God. And as far as his humbling himself, he will even humble himself ("be contemptible") and "abased **in her eyes**. But he knows this spontaneous act of sincere humility and devotion to the Lord will cause the common people to respect and honor him. Especially because he does not hold himself aloof from his brethren in Israel. He is one of them. He is no better in the Lord's sight than they. He may as well admit it and act like it. He would only be fooling himself if he thought otherwise. So we have discovered David—a "man after God's own heart" **(a)** standing against murder, anarchy, and civil disorder; **(b)** attested as a worthy leader by all his contemporaries; **(c)** recognizing and appropriating the best for God's use; **(d)** courageous to give his all in the struggle (war) against opposition to God; **(e)** learning from his errors, seeking God's will, and repenting; **(f)** exuberant and spontaneous in his joy toward the Lord; **(g)** honestly humble and desirous of fellowship and participation with all of God's people.

2 SAMUEL 7:1—9:13

David's motive for wanting to build the Lord a "house" was pure. He wanted to "glorify" God. We cannot impugn his concept of God. David knew that Jehovah did not "need" a building for a dwelling place (Psa. 11:4; 103:19; 115:1ff; 123:1). David knew it was not right for so much to be spent on building himself a palace and nothing being spent to glorify God. It was not right for David to dwell in a palace and worship God in a tent. He wanted to put God's visible "place" (his kingdom, where he rules and lives) **first** (Haggai 1:4-9). How do we measure up to David? Are we willing to spend as much on God's "glorification" (the work of building up his universal dwelling place—the church throughout the world) as our own "things"? David had a deep desire to "glorify" God (read these Psalms—9,33,34,42,47,48, 65,66,75,81,84,89,92,95,96,97,98,99,100,103,104,105,106,107,108,111,112,113,117,118,119,122,123,134,135,136,138,144,145,145,147,148,149,150). Someone has said, "In the new Testament, religion is grace, and ethics is gratitude." In other words, since we are saved by grace our gratitude ought to be so profound and deep our thankfulness alone will make us do what is right. This is another reason why David was "a man after God's own heart."

God responded to David's intention by sending Nathan the prophet with this message: "Who told you to build me a house? Have I ever told anyone to build me a house? It is not yet time for my house to be built. So **you** will not build **Me** a house. **I**, in fact, will build **you** a house!" There were many wars yet to be fought. There would be much killing done. The kingdom of Israel would be years yet in getting itself firmly established in Canaan. There would be much turmoil in David's life. He would have his hands full just bringing physical stability, peace, prosperity and security to Israel. Israel, as an organized nation, was not yet ready for a permanent worship place. Israel did not yet have the will or the means to build such a place. All Israel's able-bodied men would be occupied in warfare and have no time to be carpenters and stone masons, etc. They would have little opportunity to attend the worship services of a temple. The absence of an ornate building would not keep anyone from glorifying God and worshiping him if they really wanted to worship. God can be worshiped in every situation, and methods and means may be adapted. David himself had worshiped God out in the fields while tending the sheep, or during pauses in the fighting while he served in Saul's army. God had another job for David. Each man to his own "gift" in ministry. David's gift was bringing unity and sovereignty to Israel in the land. Solomon's gift would be to build a temple. Both were needed.

God refused to let David build a temple. There would come a time came it might be more effectually fulfilled. David's work was *preparation*. He would "sow" where Solomon would "reap." Both sower and reaper are necessary and one is not more important than the other (John 4:36-38; 1 Cor. 3:5-9). God must first "build" David's "house" (i.e., a messianic lineage). God had redemptive eternal plans for this man's descendants. And since God chooses to work within the framework of human history, it will take all of David's energies and life to take care of the issue of establishing the messianic "house" (i.e., family). Actually, the "house" God would build for David was going to be God's "house" (the church of Jesus Christ). God's dwelling is not in buildings but in people.

God chooses, by his infinite sovereignty and divine grace, to establish David's leadership over redemption in the world forever! David will sin (and so will a number of his descendants), but David and most of his descendants will produce enough godliness to be God's instrument by which to bring the **Perfect Man** into the world. The *influence* of this man *David* was to be perpetuated down through centuries until it resided in a pure-minded, willing, virgin girl of Nazareth, **Mary**, the mother of Jesus. Some of David's descendants would be wicked, but God chastened David's house until they brought forth **Mary**, the handmaiden of the Lord, with the "servant's" heart of her **17th** great-grandfather, David. It is a confirmation of God's faithful promise that David's influence could reach down through centuries—ours will, too—let it be right!

God chose David's genetic lineage to perpetuate forever because God's omniscient foreknowledge knew David's lineage would produce Mary, betrothed of Joseph, and ultimately, Jesus, the anointed Messiah. God knew that down through the centuries David's godly influence would be passed on to enough of his progeny to produce a "Mary" (and perhaps, a "Joseph"—restudy notes on Jesus' genealogies in Matthew notes). God chose David's genetic lineage not because David was perfect, but because David was humble and malleable and spiritually-minded. God did not change his mind about David's "forever" throne after David sinned because David **repented!** God is faithful. He promises to give every person an eternal inheritance ("house" and "throne") who is of a spiritual-mindedness, who will humbly accept God's grace, and who has a penitent heart! All who are such persons "after God's own heart"—are children of Abraham by faith, heirs of God's promises (all of them), joint heirs with the "Son of David," Jesus Christ! Think about it, friend, God's perpetuation of David's throne was for you and me as well as for David. If David's Son, who was also David's Lord, is your Lord, you are David's son by the adoption of grace through faith. His throne is your throne—his house is your house. God never changes his promises—people change! The promises of God are forever. Some people are humble enough to accept them by grace—others are proud and despise grace and thus lose the promises of God!

David's prayer (7:18-29) is one of the exemplary prayers in all the Bible. It would make a great pattern for the prayer life of any Christian: **(a)** It expresses the awe, wonder and amazement felt by having God's grace; "Amazing grace," have we become flippant about God's infinite grace? Do we take it too much for granted? Do we pray about it? Does it register on our brain at every moment we have to meditate?; **(b)** It expresses deep humility; David was a man aware that he did not deserve what God was doing with him and for him; it was in this awareness that David found his *own worth*; if God declares a person worth his divine grace, then that person must not contradict God's evaluation of his worth. If all the people in the world, frustrated and defeated because they think they have no worth, could humble themselves to receive God's grace in faith, they would find their worth—it can't come from any other source!; **(c)** It expresses David's adoration of God; David loved God because God loved David first; that is the way with us all; and **not to love God is a terrible crime** in view of the fact that God loves us when we haven't loved him first and don't merit his love and don't deserve it; **(d)** It expresses David's concern for others (7:23-24); David was not just thinking of himself when he prayed; he had all Israel on his mind in his prayers; the good of Israel was a constant concern for David (read his Psalms); **(e)** It expresses David's great desire to consecrate himself to serving the Lord as the Lord wants

to be served (7:25-27); it is one thing want to serve the Lord and another to serve the Lord **as he wants** us to serve. Too many people do not want to do service as the Lord wants it; too many are unwilling to do things they don't like; David would liked to have built the temple, but he surrendered to doing his job as the Lord wanted it done; **(f)** It expresses David's faith ("courage" 7:27); he was ready to believe the Lord's "revelation" to him through Nathan the prophet about his "house" for thousands of years after he would be dead—about an **eternal throne** (inheritance); it takes faith and courage to believe God about **our eternal inheritance**—it is something not seen or seeable with the physical eye—it has to be "seen" by faith.

David slew *thousands* of men in all the battles he fought and commanded. Combat in those days was never at long-range. When David fought men killed one another face to face, body to body, blood and agony and devastation was smeared all over them in a battle. It is nothing short of amazing that David could maintain his tenderness, compassion, spirituality, and closeness to God having been in the thick of these kinds of **brutalizing experiences**. Yet, some of our own military men were some of America's most spiritual men (all the way from George Washington to veterans in the 21st century). David could do this because he **believed God**. It is just that simple! God has ordained that human governments and rulers are his servants to keep civil order in the world (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:1-4, etc.). Therefore, he could serve God in this way with a clear conscience and self-respect knowing that it was the way God ordained it to be! **No Christian likes war! God does not like war! Go does not start wars!** But wars must be fought if there is to be any order maintained in this fallen world—any truth to be taught, any good to be done. David could make war and pray and worship God as devoutly as any pacifist (more so, actually). How can a person who is unwilling to use force to maintain civil order or punish injustices really say he would die for the truth or live for the truth, or that he honors the God who led David in battle?

David was intent on showing kindness to Saul's remaining descendants (Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son) because that is the kind of man David was! He was loyal to friends, compassionate to those unable to help themselves, spiritually concerned about his spiritual brethren (Israelites), and aware that such behavior was the will (law) of God. David was a grateful man. He knew that gratefulness without expressing it overtly was nothing more than hypocrisy. David was so indebted to Jonathan (Jonathan risked his life and family for David), David would have felt "unclean" had he not been able to do something to express his gratitude. David wrote in a Psalm that the God-fearing man should pay his vows "unto the Most High." David had made a covenant with Jonathan that they would befriend each other and the descendants of their families (1 Sam. 20:12-17; 14:21-22). To David, this was a sacred vow. As soon as he was in a position to do so, he sought out the heirs of Saul's family. God-fearing people should consider their words as their bonds. They must promise only what they intend to fulfill. This is a quality sorely needed in today's society. It is another of the characteristics that made David "a man after God's own heart." It was very uncommon for any member of a kingly family to treat the heir of a rival house with such consideration. This was a very unusual kindness. **It is almost without parallel in the history of mankind.** The usual action would be for one royal family (the one coming into power) to seek out the members of the defeated "house" and assassinate or murder every member of that deposed family so that no heirs to the throne

would survive (in American politics it is bloodless, but just as vicious). David must have been a subject of conversation around many a supper table in Israel and even in surrounding nations! He was a very uncommonly good, considerate, wise ruler. What an influence he must have had on lots of little Israelite boys and young men. His name was a household word—and not because of anything bizarre, uncouth, wicked, stupid, rebellious, or self-exalting—but because of an **uncommon goodness!**

What do you think of David now? Put down your own thoughts and evaluations:

Are you a person “after God’s own heart”? What does that mean? It means, **are you the person God wants you to be.** What kind of a person is that? Perfect? Without a fault? Self-sufficient? Always capable? Always good? None of the above! You are a person “God wants you to be” if you are wholly trusting in God’s grace, and penitently thankful for it! Those are the two basic characteristics of David that made him “God’s man!” Now, of course, you are not wholly trusting in God’s grace if you are ***not* accepting it on his terms!** You are not sincerely thankful for God’s grace if you ***are not trying every way you can to express that gratitude in imitating God’s grace in good deeds to other people.*** Of course, we will make mistakes. Of course, we will sin. That is probably the hardest thing in the world for a **Christian** to admit—that he is a sinner, saved by **grace alone!** But admit it we must, else we fall away from grace! David sinned, he made mistakes, but he admitted it and always returned to total dependence upon God’s grace. That is what made him God’s man; that is what makes you and me God’s people—**Amazing, isn’t it!**

2 SAMUEL 10:1—12:31

David sent ambassadors in a gesture of condolence, homage and gratitude to the Ammonites. However, some “politicians” created suspicion by putting evil motives on David’s actions. David’s ambassadors were humiliated by the Ammonites. David went to Jericho to encourage his ambassadors and protest their treatment. The Ammonites, hearing David was upset, hired Syrian troops to make war on David. Joab was dispatched by David to meet them and routed them. The Ammonites then arranged for help from Assyria (beyond the Euphrates) and came toward the land of Israel. David went across the Jordan River to meet them and do battle. In the 21st century we are appalled at the report of only hundreds are killed in wars in the Middle East. In just days David’s army under Joab slew 40,700 men. According to the World Book encyclopedia 54,246 American servicemen were killed in our 3-year Korean War. David’s gesture toward the Ammonites was in good faith. His ambassadors were shamefully treated—an act of war in itself. Yet, David made no military gesture until the Ammonites hired the Syrians and threatened the border of Israel. Then Joab did not pursue and kill the enemy after he routed them. Finally, when invasion was imminent with mercenaries from Assyria, David acted and defeated the invaders. This brought peace and God’s redemptive work went forward. David was clearly **justified** in his actions. Civil order must be maintained on an international level as well as a nation and local level. God’s redemptive people must have civil protection if they are to carry on the program of redemption—and God will see that they have all such protection he deems necessary (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:1-4, etc.). Sometimes, however, God’s ambassadors will have to suffer from the ungodly because unbelievers are suspicious of unqualified goodness (such as David wanted to show the Ammonites).

David had led in many, many battles before. His whole life up to this point was either fleeing from Saul, or doing battle with the heathen and the remnants of Saul’s heirs. David had previously gone to the battlefield because it appeared a coalition of Syrians, Ammonites and Assyrians were arrayed against Israel. Now, with only Ammon to punish, he stayed home and sent Joab with the army. It was dangerous for him to go to battle now that he was famous for all his enemies would be constantly looking to capture “King David” or kill him (see 2 Sam. 18:3; 21:17). Having been away so much just before this, he needed to stay at the capital city and do the administrative work of “king” he needed to get his kingdom organized to provide the people with civil prosperity. But an idle man is the devil’s tool. Having nothing better to do than walk around looking, he saw what he should not have seen had he been engaged in work for the Lord. David probably said many times later, “If only I had gone to the battle field with Joab and the army—if only I had stayed down in the palace “office” taking care of business—if only I had been out among the people tending to the affairs of state.” “**If only.....**” How many times that has been said—too late! Our hi-tech society has many advantages—but one huge disadvantage is, it has created too much leisure time for children and adults who need to keep their minds and “members” occupied with wholesome activities (reading, creating, working, helping others).

Bathsheba was probably taking a ceremonial bath (Heb. *mikva*) to purify herself of some ritual “uncleanness.” In ancient times it was regarded as improper for one’s neighbor to look over the battlement (the low wall around the roof-top of mid-East houses which kept people from falling to their death) of his house into the inner court of the next

dwelling. **But David looked!** He had no control over the fact that Bathsheba was bathing out where she could be seen (she was the one to control that). But he did have control over where he focused his eyes! Even after he looked, he could have chosen to resist involving or indulging his urges (feelings). We may not always be able to escape having our “urges” stimulated, but we can resist indulging them (see 1 Cor. 10:13)! David had power—he was now “king” over all Israel! He was a man of strong passions! He was accustomed to more than one woman (multiplicity of sexual encounters does not necessarily curb lust). When David was feeling persecution, foraging for food, and without leisure time, he was faithful to God and ethically immovable, but prosperity came! He who had previously shown himself to be so chivalrous and noble—who was outraged that Saul should take **his** wife Michal and give her to another man—stoops to robbing one of his own specially trusted officers of his wife and his honor! David’s behavior prepared the way for the incestuous rape of his daughter, the murder of his son Amnon, the rebellion and death of his son Absalom, and the death of his son Adonijah. His house from that day forward was the scene of horrible crimes, feuds, scandals and miseries of every kind. The long interval after his repentance, between the birth of Solomon and David’s death, is passed over in silence. No act of the penitent king is henceforth deemed worthy of record.

“It takes two to tango!” There is no intimation whatever that David brought Bathsheba into the palace through deceit, violence or seduction. He sent for her and she came. She may even have planned to be bathing where she could be seen. She may have thought to advance herself or her husband this way. She came at his request without any hesitation and offered no resistance to his desires! She, like other women, undoubtedly admired David, felt flattered by the attentions of the “king” and had not the moral strength to resist his attention or control her own vanity (we know what happened to U.S. President Clinton and the young woman who was so flattered by his attention after she had flirted with him). Bathsheba was more scrupulous about ceremonial law than the moral law! She mourned the death of her husband, Uriah, but not the sin that caused it. She was concerned about appearances. She was concerned only after she became pregnant and appears to want to put all the burden of the sin upon David to “take care of the pregnancy.” A simple “NO!” from Bathsheba would probably have averted the sin and the terrible consequences which followed. The power of a woman’s “NO!” against illicit sexual advances is unmatched by any other power. Of course, “king” David might have become angry! Of course, he might even have taken Bathsheba by violence! But **more** likely, he would have been ashamed, then penitent, and eventually grateful toward Bathsheba. Women are not nearly so lured by the physical urge for sexual gratification in such “liaisons” as they are lured by vanity and egotism and “power” they can exercise over a man through “sexual favors.” Such a prostitution of sexuality is nothing better than whoredom.

David was about 50 years of age (ripe for “male menopause” or “mid-life crisis”). He had done it all! He had reached as high as he could go! He is at the peak! He is facing the “down-hill slide” to mortality. There “are no more worlds to conquer” (except Bathsheba). As “king” he’s characterized by popularity, power, prosperity, comfort. He is surrounded by habitual sexual promiscuity in the form of polygamy. He has the blessing of knowing he is doing God’s will and God’s work. So far as he knows he faces no catastrophes, no crises, no frustrations. He has not been removed from his “ministry” to

the Lord. There is much work he may yet do. But he is not satisfied with that! Perhaps he faces for the first time, his mortality. He must prove to himself once more that he is “a man”! **No man, however holy, is exempt from the liability of falling into sin.** A long, long list of great “holy men” who have fallen confirms it! Sin is a voluntary choice which flies in the face of: (a) God’s revealed will of grace and love and law; (b) a man’s moral obligation and responsibility to his society; (c) known circumstances and consequences. It is choosing to love self above God and one’s fellow human-beings. David was not “mentally ill.” **He sinned!** Illness is something with which you are infected or which you inherit in your genes, over which you have no control and for which you are not usually morally responsible! **Sin is lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4).** It is a mental decision. It is an attitude! Adultery is not “illness”! Drunkenness is not “illness”! Lying is not “illness”! Murder is not caused by “illness”! These are sins—deliberate **choices** to disobey God.

David did not have Uriah slain. He had someone else do his “dirty work” for him, but he was all the more guilty for the prostitution of such great power he had to do justice and righteousness. He could have confessed his sin, but that would have caused “difficulties,” of course! David simply chose to deal with the consequences of his and Bathsheba’s sin by trying to **hide** it. **SIN IS NEVER HIDDEN!** There is an eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful Creator who sees all and knows all! David might have confessed his sin. But what is the penalty in Israel for adultery? **Death by stoning!** Would they have stoned their king to death had he confessed? He was not executed for murdering Uriah when it was exposed by Nathan the prophet! It is doubtful that David was afraid of death. He was probably more afraid of the **shame and a stricken conscience** that would be constantly “bugging” him if Uriah was allowed to live and be a perpetual reminder. So he got rid of “conscience” (he thought) by getting rid of Uriah. He may even have rationalized, “I can’t allow Bathsheba to face all the same and humiliation, and probably death by stoning, that will surely come if this is discovered by Uriah.” **So David tried to hide the sin—but it wouldn’t be hidden!** Psa. 32 and 51 substantiates that sin is not illness, but that **sin unconfessed** can certainly **result in** illness! And what about Joab? Was he completely innocent in this plot to take Uriah’s life? He is somewhat like the Nazi officers who “merely followed the orders of their superiors” and murdered many millions of Poles, Jews, handicapped Germans, suspected homosexuals, Checs, Gypsies, Russians, etc. etc. It is hard to believe that Joab knew nothing of the situation at all!

Notice first, God took the initiative in David’s salvation. David was digging himself deeper and deeper into the clutches of hell. But the “*Hound of Heaven*” (a poem by Francis Thompson about his own experience of the pursuit of God for his soul) was seeking him, chasing him, through the “labyrinthine” ways of sin. There is hardly a better way to bring a person to his sense than with a story about some hypothetical moral failure of someone else. Nathan outflanked David. He appealed to David’s good qualities and brought them to bear on the bad. Often a “point blank” face-down of a sinner merely makes him defensive and self-justifying. But every man has a deep-seated, sometimes extremely calloused, sense of justice (right and wrong). Every man usually will be quick to confirm his sense of justice when it has to do with someone else’s need for justice! Jesus used this method of appealing to the basic sense of justice in even the most wicked—especially when he told the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-46). **Note how deceitful the human heart can be (see Jer. 17:9-10)!** David could quickly condemn

in someone else what he was blind to in himself. It is even possible for people to correctly understand the message of God without understanding that it applies personally to them! Having once uncovered (or exposed) in the human heart a basic sense of right and wrong, we must quickly and certainly apply the truth to ourselves and others who are deceiving themselves by applying it always to someone else. “Application is the life of preaching—and self-application is the life of hearing”!

Sin is connected with suffering. Nothing is clearer in Scripture and nature, and nothing is more generally disregarded than the fact that men commit sin under the delusion that they can do so with impunity. We believe God’s word eagerly when it promises goodness, grace and glory. But we eagerly dismiss the warnings and threats about sin and its consequences! It is the first and fundamental life of the devil: “Thou shalt **not** surely die! You may sin with impunity,” says Satan. And we say we have not been seduced—but we don’t act that way! David’s suffering is necessitated by the justice of God! Whoever despises the commandment of God **ought** to be punished—**must be** punished—one way or another, wrong must be righted! Justice must be done! Who was wronged by David’s and Bathsheba’s adultery? **God** was wronged! He had done no evil to David—only good! God’s love and God’s reputation and God’s absolute power was wronged. All of society, before and after David was wronged by his sin. His suffering is a reaping of that which is sown in a moral creation. It cannot be escaped if morality is a fact. The violence, the sexual abuse, seeds of his own punishment were sown at the time of his sin. And God had to punish it: **(a)** to manifest divine justice and uphold divine law; **(b)** to exhibit the evil of sin and to deter others; **(c)** to humble, prove, chasten, instruct, purify and save the penitent David. But we do see in the aftermath of sin why David “was a man after God’s own heart.” His deep, tender, penitent susceptibility to the will of God results from the prophet’s ministry to him (see Psa. 32 and 51).

The people were surprised at David’s reaction to the death of his illegitimate son because they expected David to be devastated with grief and perhaps they expected him to take out his grief by recriminations against God as he did when Uzzah died. While life lingered in the baby, David (rightfully, I think) hoped that by repentance and contrition, the judgment might be postponed. He may even have prayed that God’s wrath be executed upon himself rather than upon the innocent baby. That would be like David! Like a loving father! But once the word of God is fulfilled it is useless to indulge in lamentation. The will of God must be submitted to without selfish desires exalting themselves above God’s ways! David is now fully submissive to the will of God. He has learned from his weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-10). He cannot sin with impunity. God wanted David to grieve over the consequence of his sin (i.e., the death of the child). But once the punishment is finished, God does not want David to go on grieving. David is forgiven. There are other things for David to do. Besides, to grieve as someone without hope in a gracious God is sin itself. We are not, as Christians, to grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). Jesus interrupted grief and forbade it in believers at least twice (Lk. 7:13; Jn. 11). Yes, we should grieve over the death of loved ones and all others of mankind—but grieve for the sin and wickedness that made it so! And if we are in Jesus by faith, we may rejoice that “we can go to him” which is “very far better” (Phil. 1:21-23).

This is one of the “cherishable” verses of the Old Testament. “I shall go to him,

but he will not return to me.” David believed in immortality (life after death) (see Psa. 16:9-11; 17:15). Many of his Psalms talk about the immortal God and angels and another existence to which men may look and hope. David’s answer promises us our beloved who die in the Lord’s grace: **(a)** remain who they are—“I shall go to **him**...” By David’s belief, the existence beyond death is one of personality, of separate existence—it is not some “nirvana” or some conglomerate of unidentifiable humanity; **(b)** will know and be known there... “I shall go to **him**, but he will not return to **me**...”—the child will know David and David will know the child when David goes to him! All the little illegitimate babies, abused and aborted babies, diseased and slaughtered babies, have gone to God. And those who loved them, and even those who have sinned against them, if they repent, may “go to them!” Thank God, we have David’s longing and hope confirmed, not by sentiment, or speculation, but by historical demonstration in a baby born in a cattle shed some 2000 years ago—Jesus Christ son of the virgin Mary. What a blessed knowledge that is! It is more precious than all this world’s fame and fortune. There is nothing in this world to compare with the blessed ness of that knowledge (2 Cor. 4:16-18). “I shall go to him” (father, son, mother, daughter, grandson and granddaughter). **By his grace Jesus has granted us to KNOW that!**

2 SAMUEL 13:1—15:37

Amnon was guilty of lust, lying, deceit, rape, fornication, incest hatred and irresponsibility (see Lev. 18:6-18 and Deut. 27:11 for the law of God against incest). Tamar was a beautiful 16 year old princess. Amnon was a handsome 20-25 year old prince, heir to the messianic throne! He was an Israelite—future leader of the people blessed above all others (recipients of Almighty God’s calling, God’s law, God’s grace, God’s providential sustenance, God’s promises). This beautiful girl was his half-sister. Perhaps this is how Amnon rationalized his sin: (a) his father, David, had taken Bathsheba, another man’s wife, and plotted to have her husband killed; (b) his father was a polygamist—had many wives and concubines; (c) he, Amnon, was a prince and might assume to have anything he wanted; (d) as a prince, what else was there to do—he didn’t have to work for a living so he could “play”; (e) he had evil-minded companions (Jonadab, a cousin) who goaded him on in his lust—peer-pressure; (f) Tamar shouldn’t have been so beautiful and so available—how can a man control his urges when the temptation is always around. Amnon **could** have **redirected** his attention, focused his mind on something else, had he wanted to do so. He could have busied his mind and body with helpful deeds for others, with learning God’s word, with all kinds of wholesome activities. All human beings have the power to direct their thinking—“set the minds” (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-4, etc.). Amnon’s sins are going on in our city day after day. It is not just the pornographers who are goading people into sexual abuses. It’s also the so-called “social scientists” are declaring fornication, adultery, and incest as “healthy.” Sexual intimacy and freedom **within marriage** is healthy! God made it that way. There is nothing sinful about sexual freedom in marriage. Indeed that is one of the main “cements” which holds marriage together (see 1 Cor. 7). But do not be deceived—illicit sexual intercourse (whoredom, fornication, adultery, incest, homosexual acts) are crimes against the whole of society. There are some of the devil’s messengers who would have us think illicit sexual intercourse is really a “victimless affair.” Actually, all sin victimizes all humanity one way or another. Lying, stealing, murder, waste, pollution, murder, rape, fornication, incest, adultery— all these and other sins are rebellion against the social order and social fiber. All one has to do is extrapolate each of these into a whole society doing them and you see they are sins against society even if only one person does them. And Amnon, because of his high calling, victimized more than Tamar, more than himself, and more than David’s family—he victimized the whole nation of Israel and of the world—then and now! What the Caesars did in the ancient Roman empire (because they were emperors) victimized the whole empire and all of history. What Hitler’s sexual perverts did (Goebbels, Goering, Himmler, *etal.*) victimized the whole of Europe and the whole world of the 20th century. One man’s sin—any man’s sin—sin of any kind and of all kinds, is always against God and against humanity!

Those who rape, love only themselves. Those who rob and steal commit acts of economic “rape.” Robbers are contemptuous of all others. They seek only self-gratification. They respect no one else’s rights or dignity. They have no respect for the idea that all men are created with certain **unalienable rights!** They will use deceit, violence, force, bribery or any other non-self-sacrificing means to exploit someone else for their own ends. Rape is a capital crime (Deut. 22:25). Rapists have no respect for social order—he/she is like the murderer. They will destroy if it serves their own pleasure. Amnon never really “loved” Tamar. He was not even infatuated. There was no “romance”

involved in it at all. He simply desired to gratify his bodily urge. He lusted for self-indulgence. His was mere physical desire. We hear all the time today from the liberal humanists that sexual intercourse is a synonym for “making love.” IT IS NOT! “Making love” is merely a euphemism for the satisfaction of sexual urges whether licit or illicit. Why don’t those who are having illicit liaisons call it—“We had sexual intercourse” instead of saying “We made love.” Adulterers and fornicators will not even describe their deeds scientifically, let alone morally—have you ever heard anyone say, “We made adultery,” or “We had fornication”? No, they say, “We made love” and it wasn’t love at all—it was sexual intercourse and illicit sexual intercourse at that! It is usually true that people hate those whom they have exploited and degraded because they victim is a constant goad to their guilty conscience. Rather than hate themselves, they hate their victim. Rapists **know** they have **victimized** a person!

Amnon didn’t just ask Tamar to leave his room and his presence—he had her thrown out and the door bolted. He wanted nothing more from her. He was through with her and discarded her: (a) he expressed his complete contempt for her as a person; (b) it made Tamar feel like “a thing” instead of someone of worth; (c) Amnon thus made it appear to the people that Tamar was the guilty one—that she had seduced him and should be thrown out; (d) his sin against her body was slight compared to his degradation of her soul and spirit by showing such contempt; (e) she felt violated, spoiled, unfit for anyone else because Amnon “threw her away”—she felt like a “throw-away”; (f) she is deprived of her rights or justice and of any consideration of fairness in life—this is the most difficult of all; (g) Tamar would become the subject of gossip throughout the palace and the kingdom; (h) she would have to live with this stigma the rest of her life; (i) she would have to live with the psychological trauma to her own mind unless she found sufficient solace in the grace of God. The greatest sin of the rapist is not the physical harm, but the “throw-away” attitude he has toward the victim’s person-hood! He wants to use another person’s body as simply a piece of meat—a “thing.” Men get raped, too, you know, in prison, or by a homosexual on the loose, or they get seduced and used—violated!

David did **nothing**! He was very angry, but he **did nothing**! Amnon’s crime should have been punished by death. David did not even make a pretense of punishing Amnon—he did not even rebuke him (so far as we know). **WHY?** (a) Amnon was heir to the throne; (b) David had his own guilt—he would feel like a hypocrite punishing Amnon; (c) the Septuagint (the OT translated into Greek about 300 B.C.) adds a phrase, “David did not rebuke Amnon because he was his first born and he loved him” (if David had loved him, perhaps he should have punished Amnon, or at least rebuked him); (e) he evidently neglected the father’s role of counseling, correcting, and nurturing his children in their younger years—and now finds grown children difficult to correct. David’s path lay clear before him. Being a king, he is doubly responsible for moral and civil order. He should have punished rape. It was in his own children—in the crown-prince! David knows the law. He knows the logical consequences of such a crime. He knows his duty and responsibility. He knows history (e.g., Saul) that kings and their sons are not above God’s law! David’s lack of action would surely confirm Amnon in future recklessness! It would surely give excuse for all Israel to laugh at God’s law and the king’s authority. It undoubtedly led to Absalom’s taking the law into his own hands and assassinating Amnon. It was undoubtedly a factor in Absalom’s rebellion as he kept insinuating that if he were king he would see that

justice would be done!

How would you have handled this? It is easy to speculate! We think we have all the answers! It is so simple—just see that the law is fulfilled. Can you put the clearly revealed will of God above your own heart? Have you ever been called upon to do God's will when every nerve in your system cries out, "I don't want to—it hurts me too much"? Would God demand that of David? Would he demand it of you? Remember what he demanded of Abraham—of Jesus! Is the Lord as serious or demanding or absolute about sin like Amon's in the New Testament kingdom (see 1 Cor. Chs. 5-6). What usually happens when parents let their feelings or their "love" override the clearly revealed will of God about correcting children? Remember Eli and his sons—Jacob and Shechem and Dinah—the brothers of Joseph. Perhaps David could have done nothing as a father—but what about as the civil authority? Could a Christian judge today sentence his own son to prison or death? Could a Christian prison warden incarcerate his own daughter? Do we believe enough to put God's word above feelings? How can sin like Amnon's be prevented? Only by conversion—by teaching (precept and example)—force will not prevent it (it happens in prisons).

Absalom had no moral or legal right to kill Amon. What he did was to make vengeance a personal vendetta. Romans 12:19—13:7 and Lev. 19:18 are God's will in the matter of personal vengeance. Punishment for capital crimes and social crimes are to be left to God's appointed "ministers" (i.e., civil magistrates). It has always been God's will that civil leaders tend to the protection of society by executing punishments commensurate with the crimes. Individual and personal vengeance is anarchy and anarchy is the worst form of tyranny. Some people idealize that the absence of all government would lead to freedom—NOT SO! Absalom waited two years to fulfill his "rage" against Amnon. Question—Was Absalom really concerned about Tamar's honor—or was he scheming to eliminate the heir to the throne and in killing the "guilty Amnon" making a public relations gesture to show the people his "sense of justice" compared to his father's lack? Absalom, you notice, had his servants do the "dirty work"! Does that sound like a man "consumed" with the passion of "justice"? We see Absalom, later, all wrapped up in his conceit that **he** is a man who could bring "justice" to Israel. He is proud that he is no political weakling like his father (see ch. 15). Absalom's conceit is unmistakable. He even built a monument to himself (18:18). He got himself a "retinue" to precede him wherever he went—he butted in to the king's business of administering justice to the subjects of the kingdom. He was a "climber," he expected to be a leader before he learned to follow. His ambition was not for the Lord's will—but for his own. He was willing to violate God's law and any man's life (even the king's) to attain his ambition.

Absalom fled to his grandfather's house (see 2 Sam. 3:3 for Absalom's mother's father). David did nothing! David wanted to—he longed to—but he didn't! Why? **(a)** was Absalom beyond David's power?; **(b)** was David paralyzed with guilt for his own duplicity in Uriah's death? Should a parent let his sinful past immobilize him from exercising the proper parental duties?; **(c)** was David letting his parental "love" override the will of God again? David had not seen Absalom for three years, and refused to see him for another two years (5 altogether). If David "longed" for Absalom so, why not see him immediately upon Absalom's return to the palace? Absalom was willing to face the king—and in fact,

precipitated Joab's intercession. Was it stricken conscience in David because he had not immediately punished Absalom when he murdered his brother? Was it fear of what the people might think? In both these sons, David did not make their choices for them. He is not guilty or responsible for their choices or actions. They could have chosen otherwise. Hezekiah was a good man even though he had a wicked father (Ahaz), and a wicked son (Manasseh). Solomon made the right choice! And he was reared in the same family! David **is** responsible for his own sin. Of course, his example was bad—his failures are clearly exposed—but that does not relieve his grown sons of their own moral obligations to choose right over wrong. Ezekiel the prophet deals with this issue—no man can say, “My father has eaten sour grapes and my teeth are set on edge”—each soul is responsible for his own sin (see Ezek. 18:1-32; 33:1-20).

Is David to blame for Absalom's rebellion? (a) did David's leniency prompt Absalom to seize an opportunity—what if David had punished Absalom for killing Amnon?; (b) did David's refusal to see Absalom for five years goad Absalom into rebellion?; (c) was David's apparent ineptitude and aging responsible for his son's insurrection? Can parental failures such as these (or worse) be handled and overcome or are children completely unable to escape inevitable psychological conditioning by social environment (i.e., home, school, economic situation, peer-pressure, etc. etc.) and repeat the moral failures of the preceding generation? All these faults in David (and worse ones) are realities, but no man can justify his own moral failures by appealing to another's faults! NO! David was not responsible for Absalom's revolt. Absalom did what he wanted to do! It was pride, lust for power, arrogance, conceit and self-deception in Absalom's heart, cherished, gratified, and acted out that produced the rebellion. Absalom is doing exactly what David **refused** to do against Saul (and David had much more provocation). Actually, David is showing Absalom one of the best examples of godliness Absalom could ever have (and David had shown this good example over and over earlier). Absalom could have taken David's **good** as his model for life instead of David's bad! Can a parent ever use any of his own personal **failures** for **good** in rearing up his children? How? Why do the children of parents who **do not** make the mistakes David made, rebel? Who is responsible for their rebellion? Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, is the classic example!

Absalom used deceit, flattery, (“public relations mush”), false piety, fawning agreeableness and appeal to the failures of others. He divided the kingdom of God for his own ambitions. He lifted up his hand against the Lord's anointed without provocation at all. He made the kingdom vulnerable to its enemies weakening it by civil strife and division. He shamed Israel and David in the eyes of the heathen. He caused unnecessary suffering for thousands of innocent people. He preyed upon human weakness. He exploited the tendencies of human beings to look for “greener grass.” Instead of trying to assist his father in teaching the people to have faith in God in times of adversity, he promised utopia through human means. Absalom would not be above using his “beauty” to gain his goals. It was said of him, “In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty,” and for the abundance of his hair (14:25-27). Absalom would have been right at home in American politics of today. He was a “prince”—he could start his own “Camelot” when and where he chose. Does that sound like any politician you've known? Absalom was even able to convince some of David's most trusted counselors to defect and serve him in rebelling against a man (David) who had elevated them to positions of power and

respect. Men who are ambitious for themselves (and not for God) can be devious, cunning, ingenious, and vicious. Absalom was all of this. We wonder why! David wondered why! (18:33).

David promptly and quietly submitted to the circumstances—not because he was a coward or because Absalom was in the right—but because he saw the guiding providence of God in it: (a) David could have put up a fight, but he saw in his son’s ingratitude and rebellion a rod of chastening for himself—to humble him and keep him from ever going back to the arrogant presumptuousness he had before manifested in taking Bathsheba; (b) David trusted the Lord’s faithfulness to execute righteousness in the Lord’s own good time, through instrumentalities and circumstances the Lord himself would ordain; (c) David made the best of his circumstances—providential chastening is not designed to paralyze action—adversities are blessings when, in faith and trust in God, we use our human powers to bear them and mitigate their repetition (Heb. 12:5-12)—adversity becomes truly educational when we are stirred up to adjust our life to its conditions (2 Cor. 12:7ff)—David was willing to learn the sufficiency of God’s grace; (d) David was concerned for the welfare of others (Ittai, *etal.*)—immediate response to Absalom’s revolt, militarily, would put many others in “harm’s way”; (e) David would not even take the ark of the covenant from its permanent place (Jerusalem)—he would do nothing to harm the religious moorings of the nation even if it meant he would be separated from God’s “mercy-seat” presence; (f) David committed his present and future to God (15:25-26)—no self-will, no boasting of his position, no claims of his rights, no resisting the shame of it all. David’s attitude was “God is over all and can do all—all the ways of man are in God’s care. I must do the best I can for God’s kingdom and God’s will, and for those depending on me for human sustenance.” David believes the Lord will lead him—he must have the faith and patience to wait for that leading. Be sure to read Psalm 3:1-8. A man named Gene Edwards has written an interesting little booklet entitled, *A Tale of Three kings—a Study in Brokenness*—about Saul, David and Absalom. I quote here from a couple of pages: “‘When Saul was king, I was David. In my old age I intend to be David still. Even if it costs me a throne, a kingdom, and perhaps my head.’ Abishai said nothing for a while. Then, slowly he spoke, making sure he grasped the significance of David’s decision, ‘You were not an Absalom; you will not be a Saul. Sir, if you are not willing to put Absalom down, then I suggest we prepare to evacuate the kingdom, for Absalom will surely rule.’ ‘Only as surely as king Saul killed the shepherd boy,’ replied the wise old king. ‘What?’ said Abishai, startled. ‘Think on it, Abishai. God once delivered a defenseless shepherd boy from the powerful, mad king. He can yet deliver an old ruler from an ambitious young rebel.’ ‘You underestimate your adversary,’ retorted Abishai. ‘You underestimate my God,’ replied David serenely. ‘But why, David? Why not fight?’ ‘I will give you the answer. If you will recall—for you were there—I once gave this same answer to Joab in a cave long ago!’ ‘It is better I be defeated, even killed, than to learn the ways of—of a Saul, or the ways of an Absalom. The kingdom is not *that* valuable. Let him have it, if that be the Lord’s will. I repeat: I shall not learn the ways of either Saul or Absalom. And now, being an old man, I will add a word I might not have known then. Abishai, no man knows his own heart. I certainly do not know mine. Only God does. Shall I defend my little realm in the name of God? Shall I throw spears, and ; plot and divide—and kill men’s spirits if not their bodies—to protect my empire? I did not lift a finger to be *made* king. Nor to preserve a kingdom. Even the kingdom of God! God put me here. It is not my responsibility to take, or *keep*

authority. Do you not realize, it may be *his* will for these things to take place? I suspect that, if he chose, God could protect and keep the kingdom even now. After all, it is *his* kingdom. As I said, no man knows his heart. I do not know mine. Who knows what is really in my heart? It may be that in God's eyes I am no longer worthy to rule. Perhaps he *is* through with me. Perhaps it is his will for Absalom to rule. I honestly don't know. But God knows!"

What's ***your*** answer?

2 SAMUEL 16:1—18:33

Ziba lied! That is clear from 2 Sam. 19:24-29. Mephibosheth had asked Ziba to saddle a donkey for him to ride forth to David but evidently Ziba took off with the donkeys and enough food for an army and left the crippled, invalid Mephibosheth behind in Jerusalem. Ziba's actions illustrate greed in its most hideous form: **(a)** he cruelly deserted Mephibosheth in a city taken over by Absalom, David's enemy; **(b)** his scheme had to be premeditated and worked out with cunning and ingenuity to collect such massive amounts of materials; **(c)** he knew David was a soft touch—con-men are careful students of human nature and skillful manipulators; **(d)** he took advantage of David's troubled spirit and troublous circumstances to impress David with his "loyalty" and portray Mephibosheth as a **traitor**—he profited by slandering someone else; **(e)** he feigned obeisance. There are many "con-men" with "scams" hoping to profit by feigning allegiance to the King of Kings. They are "friends" like Judas was a "friend"! They may even take advantage of Christ's church without ever being discovered. But a great judgment day is coming when all secrets will be exposed and judged. "Con-men" who have not repented will face the awful wrath of the Lord God Almighty. In the meantime, we can only trust the Lord that he will use the schemes of wicked men to strengthen his church as he used Ziba to sustain David. The Lord's church must endure being "conned."

Shimei called David a "bloody man" and a man of Belial (literally, "worthless wretch"), or "son of the devil." David cried out to God in Psa. 69 about those who cursed him. Shimei is probably representative of many on the side of Absalom who cursed David. A more graphic account of insult and personal wrong than this is not found in the Bible except the insults suffered by the Son of David—Jesus Christ our Lord. Shimei focuses on the one great failure of David's life (the blood of Uriah on his hands) and tries to infer from that, that David is responsible for Saul's and Jonathan's death and others of Saul's household, and for all the terrible things that happened to Saul and the kingdom under him. Shimei will not mention all the good David did for Saul's house. David is silent—no retort, no retaliation, not even self-vindication. It was forbidden for any Israelite to blaspheme God or the king—1 Kings 21:10-13. David will not be like Shimei. David considers that God may have sent Shimei to chastize him. David knows he deserves the curse of God, but trusts in the grace of God, so he will let the man curse him. God will do whatever he wants and whatever is right. If the man Shimei is to be held accountable for cursing the king, God will do that. Cursing is not anarchy—there is no threat to life or limb, so David leaves it to God. Besides, this is a minor matter compared to Absalom's rebellion. That is hurting David and civil order and the name of God much more than Shimei's taunts and lies. For David to have the man slain would give his enemies opportunity to speak even more evil of him.

Ahithophel (meaning, "brother of supplication") from Giloh (s.w. hills of Judea) was a **very** influential counselor of kings. His reputation for political sagacity was unrivaled. But he was destitute of principle (2 Sam. 15:12—17:23; 1 Chron. 27:33). He joined the rebellion of Absalom, probably through ambition or trying to anticipate which would be the winning side—to save his neck. David was probably referring to Ahithophel in Psa. 41:9 and 55:12-14. In the *Midrash* (Jewish commentary) and *Talmud* Ahithophel is classed with Baalam as a illustration of human wisdom being used contrary to God's will. Ahithophel's

reputation for almost “divine” wisdom (“as the oracle of God”) was Absalom’s only excuse for his wicked rebellion. Ahithophel’s word was accepted as if he had gone to the Urim and Thummim. But like so many “counselors” in modern society, it was on “**as if**” he spoke divinely. The Bible claims to be the **complete and final revelation of God** so far as salvation, sanctification, edification and preparation for eternal life (2 Pet. 1:3-11; Jude 3). The Bible is the only divinely sanctioned source of “supernatural counseling” today, just as the law was in Ahithophel’s and David’s day. Of course, God’s word in human language, has to be written down, translated into the many different languages of today, preached, taught, read, believed and obeyed. And human beings are the instruments through which God’s word flows in such instances. But all the “counseling” needed by man resides in his once-for-all written word, the Bible (Acts 20:27; Jn. 20:30-31; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 3:3-11; Jude 3, etc.). A significant work advocating the prior sentence is, *Against Biblical Counseling: For the Bible*, by Martin and Deidre Bobgan, pub. EastGate, Santa Barbara, CA., urging the practice of biblical theology instead of psychotherapy.

When David learned the smart and canny Ahithophel had defected to Absalom’s camp, he prayed to the Lord to turn the counselor’s “counsel” into “foolishness.” Is that wrong? To pray that someone will make stupid mistakes? The way David’s prayer was answered was for David to put Hushai as an “undercover agent” into the court of Absalom to spy and deceive. Ahithophel’s counsel was brilliant. David’s men were worn out and frustrated. Absalom would not get any stronger than he was already. This was the time to attack David. But Hushai had made such an impression on Absalom by flattery, Absalom decided to call him in and seek his advice. Hushai appealed to Absalom’s vanity by picturing a great, massive army being led by Absalom, thoroughly defeating David—very impressive “counsel.” His advice to Ahithophel was “wait”! Wait until David cools down and does not expect attack—wait until you, Absalom, have control of “all Israel.” Right now David could repel an attack—right now you need more men, Absalom. Wait until your power is overwhelming and even if David goes behind city walls, you can pull the walls down and get him! Hushai’s counsel was deceitfully wrong because: (a) David was **presently** unable to defend against Absalom—now was the time to attack when there was discouragement and confusion in David’s camp; (b) David would never become unsuspecting about his being attacked; (c) Absalom would never be able to rally “all Israel” around him—many would still support David’s sovereignty even if they did not join David’s army in the field. When we’re dealing with hardened criminals or international aggression, we cannot trust them with the truth! Spying is a necessary “evil” of this fallen world. Police do it, soldiers do it, sometimes, even parents must do it!

Hushai’s “counsel” to Absalom allowed David to flee to safe territory (across the Jordan once again as when Saul was chasing him). There, David could gather a large, well-equipped army and prepare a major campaign against Absalom. Hushai laid his neck on the line for David by going “undercover” in the very palace of Absalom. This undoubtedly helped David’s depression (evidenced by his Psalms of this time) to know there were still some “true” friends who would do anything David asked of them, even to risking their lives! That is what true friendship is. It is like the Divine “Friend”—Jesus (Jn. 15:12-17). “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Remember, Hushai wanted to “go on with David” (15:32-37), but David said, “Where I really need you is in the court of Absalom as an undercover agent, risking your neck and your

reputation in work no one but I will know about..." "So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city" (15:37). A friend helps no matter how dangerous, unspectacular, unknown and unrewarding the assistance may be. A friend thinks of his "friends' good first (Rom. 15:2; Phil. 2:3-4). A friend never **uses** his "friend" to promote his own interests. What a heart-warming thing that must have been for David whose own family was, for the most part, tearing his heart asunder! One of the major causes for suicide is the inability to deal with the feeling of "aloneness"! BE A FRIEND TODAY TO SOMEONE WHO IS "ALONE"!

Ahithophel took his own life because: **(a)** he knew that Absalom's giving David time to "regroup" would result in Absalom's eventual defeat and his own death as a traitor at the justice of David; **(b)** and he evidently hated David with such a passion that he could not stand the idea of David's succeeding where he was sure David should fail; **(c)** and certainly not least, his "face" had been lost, his pride gone, and he is all alone in his "mess-of-life" which he has made; **(d)** perhaps, even a conscience about having wrong someone! Usually, though, suicide is a very selfish, self-centered revenge and has little to do with thinking about someone else. There is no explicit commandment, in either the OT or the NT about suicide. However, there are certainly strong implications that it is contrary to the will of God. It is, in effect, self-murder. God has never granted to the individual (only to society) the authority to take a human life. Suicide is against that! (See Rom. 14:7-9; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 5:29). One commentator has written: "In every society where the Christian idea of life, as a talent and a trust, is unknown or forgotten, and where its value is measured by enjoyment, suicide will be likely to become common." That characterizes the Roman society of the first century, and the world of the 21st century. Suicide usually results from a syndrome of ingratitude, contempt of the Lord's gift of life, defiance, impatience, pride rebellion and unbelief. God will not let any person be tempted (tried, tested) beyond their strength, but will with the temptation (even to take one's own life) provide also the way of escape, that any person may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13).

Mahanaim (literally means, "camps") is an historic place. It derives its name from the time "the angels of God met" Jacob (Gen. 32:1) on his way back to the Promised Land after exile from Esau. So, here, in David's case, we learn of veritable "angels" of God (in human bodies) coming to the same place to give aid and encouragement to another of God's redemptive servants in similar circumstances. Today's Christian warfare needs the same kind of "angels" who will aid (materially) and support (spiritually) God's redemption-warriors (all Christians). The world waits for hundreds of "angels" to thus support hundreds more warriors on the far-flung battlefields of the lost world. **(1)** It is not optional for the Christian whether he is to be such a "angel" of support or not. His obligation is from the inexpressible grace of God given to him in Jesus Christ. **(2)** By God's grace such "angels" are given unspeakable opportunity and privilege to be partners in the redemption of the world (see Lk. 8:2-3; Acts 16:15; Phil. 1:5-7; 4:14-16; 3 Jn. 8). Being an "angel" requires the same Christian virtues as personal service, faith, love, conscientiousness, gratitude, and self-denial as was ministered to David. **(3)** "Angel" service is equally acceptable to God as "warrior" service. Paul calls the support of the Philippian brethren, "...a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God..." Phil. 4:18 (see also Heb. 13:16). It is interesting to note that "Shobi" an Ammonite (remember how the Ammonites treated David's ambassadors 10:1-8) remained a faithful friend to David when the rest of his countrymen fought David!

Who was right here? Absalom was a criminal! He unjustifiably led a revolt against the Lord's anointed. He had shed blood in this revolt. He legally and morally deserved to die. But this "certain man" believes he must obey the order of king David and "deal gently with Absalom for David's sake." Joab believes the moment to be opportune that an enemy of the crown may be executed. Does David have a legal and moral right to ask "gentleness" for Absalom since Absalom has caused so much grief to people other than David? Does Joab have the right to explicitly obey the order of his king when Joab must have known this order, 18:12? It is my opinion that Joab should not have slain Absalom. Absalom was rendered helpless—a prisoner of war. He could have been taken in and given to David for punishment. Joab is assuming the authority of the king. Even if David had not executed him, at least Joab would not be responsible if there seemed to be an injustice. More good for the unity of the kingdom might have been accomplished had Absalom been taken to David for judgment. At first, some would reason Joab was doing the kingdom a favor by executing this rebel. But Joab, by his disobedience to the king's command, is really sowing the seed of rebellion—for what he did was a show of arbitrary contempt for the king's authority. This would plant the thought in many men of Israel that they too, could take the law into their own, individual hands, and disobey the king. Jesus says, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Who likes to be the bearers of bad news? Ahimaaz did not volunteer to take the news of the battle to David because he enjoyed it—but because he was so sympathetic and loving of his king (see 15:27,36). Ahimaaz laid his life on the line for David by staying "undercover" for a while with Hushai. Ahimaaz thought he might be able to temper the news of Absalom's death with some **good news** about victory and peace and some sympathetic discretion. Any other messenger (like the Cushite turned out to be) would blurt out the account of Absalom's death immediately, matter-of-factly, and without the sympathy Ahimaaz could convey to David. I will always remember the moment when I had to walk into my mother's hospital room at Freeman hospital (where she was suffering from a heart attack) and tell her my father and her husband had died, just a few rooms away...and that she could not go to the funeral! I will also remember the night the Freeman hospital orderly, a big, strong, young man, spoke to me with tears running down his cheeks that they could not save my mother from the stroke that killed her. As a minister, I remember all those times I have had to break bad news to others. You always wish there was something you could say or do that would turn the bad news into good! Ahimaaz apparently just could not bring himself to tell David that his son, Absalom, was dead. Joab had told him not to tell David because Joab was probably afraid of what David might do to him. Joab sent the bad news by someone who had not been such a personal friend to David.

Time and time again David had demonstrated his love for Absalom. Now he was probably feeling some responsibility for Absalom's tragic end: (a) David had not been able to bring himself to correct or punish Amnon for the sin against Absalom's sister, for David himself had committed adultery; (b) David would not punish Absalom for avenging his sister's honor; (c) David's sending Hushai to Absalom had turned out to Absalom's defeat. Much regret, remorse and self-incrimination was sweeping over David's heart—five times he cries, "My son..." Three times he cries, "Absalom..." David cries, "Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" No matter what your children have done, they are flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone—and you love them. You don't love their

wrong ways because you **really LOVE them** and their wrong ways hurt them. How broken hearted, this man David! First his infant son by Bathsheba dies, then Tamar is raped, then Amnon is slain, then Absalom dies a violent, tragic death. Yet to follow (though David will not see it) will be the death of Adonijah his son. David saw many bosom friends die (including the dearest of all, Jonathan). Through it all he never blamed God, or gave up his need for God, or took his own life, or raged against others. We can believe that God has wiped away every tear from David's eyes. God has taken away all David's grief and sorrow and pain. God has made David happy and complete and satisfied forever! That "man after God's own heart"!

2 SAMUEL 19:1—21:22

Joab **was** rude, unsympathetic, and perhaps unjust, but **not** impertinent! What he said to David was very pertinent. It was the duty of the king to master his feelings and make some reward to his depressed troops for saving his life and the lives of his family and saving God's kingdom. Had Absalom been successful it would probably have meant the massacre of David and all his sons, daughters, wives, officers and advisors. David needed to be loyal to those who had been so loyal to him. David's loyalty to others should take precedence over his own feelings. These faithful soldiers had made great sacrifices over and above their own personal desires on his behalf. Should David disregard their needs now they might leave him and follow the first "rebel" who would give them some attention (someone from Saul's family). David was mourning over a sad incident which had consummated a great victory for justice, stability to the kingdom of God, and rewarding satisfaction to the men who had been fighting for just such a victory. This action by David depressed and confused his friends and loyal supporters. Joab said David appeared to love his enemies and hate his friends—to be angry with his men who had put down the revolt. There are times and circumstances when what is right and necessary takes precedence over even the profoundest feelings of the human psyche. We must learn to be in control of feelings and resist the temptation to indulge in feelings of self-pity, or self-loss. We must look beyond self to the needs of God's people and God's kingdom and God's word! When David lay on his death bed he charged Solomon to fulfill certain obligations he had failed to fulfill, either through neglect or inability. One of those charges was the execution of Joab. Joab had literally gotten away with murder—two great crimes against the crown and against stable government—the murders of Abner and Amasa, generals of the army. David's instruction regarding Joab (1 Kings 2:5-6) does not appear to have been motivated by personal revenge. He excluded all mention of personal grievances against Joab. He might have mentioned how Joab disobeyed his direct order and killed his son Absalom. He might have mentioned the fact that Joab had backed Adonijah's bid for the throne. But all this was ignored. The heinous deeds of Joab cried out for judicial punishment. As king of the nation, David should have ordered Joab executed when he killed Abner. But David lost his "backbone" and let pragmatism (at that time he did not have the recognition and support of the northern tribes) decide the issue. All David did then (33 years before this charge to Solomon) was invoke divine retribution on the head of Joab (2 Sam. 3:29). When Amasa was slain, David had just come through the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba, and the authority of the crown was at a very low ebb. Undoubtedly David had intended to punish Joab, but he procrastinated. He should have had the wisdom of his son, Solomon, about the necessity for speedy justice (Eccl. 8:11). This was surely a moral failure on David's part. James Smith in his commentary on 1 Kings says, "It can only be regarded as somewhat cowardly of David to instruct Solomon to do what he had been unwilling to do for 33 years!" But Joab must not be allowed to die a natural death! He must pay for his crimes with his life. Solomon had to find a way!

The tribe of Judah was late because they were afraid! The rebellion of Absalom had begun in Hebron (important city of Judah, David's ancestral territory) and many of the leading chiefs of Judah were probably deeply implicated in this revolt. They now regretted it, but held back waiting to see "which way the political winds were blowing"—waiting for others to "test the waters first." If David does not wreak vengeance on others who

participated in the revolt, then the chiefs of Judah will join in restoring David to power. Israel was ready to return allegiance to David. Judah was waiting for some encouragement to yield to him. Once they received encouragement from David himself, they rushed **to be first** at the camp (19:15,41). But all this does not help their image. The special, royal tribe of Judah, which had received so much favor from God and David, was won over to the winning side” **because** it was the winning side. A classic example of the fickleness of human nature. So many then, and now, move “with the tide”—“follow the crowd” and are governed **not** by **principle**, but by the “flock complex.” This is not the highest calling for the human race (the “flock complex”). Judah pulled a “scoop” on all the other tribes of Israel and was quick to take advantage of an opportunity to make “points”—much to the chagrin of the rest of the nation. This created a bitterness between them that accumulated. It later was a major cause for the division of the kingdom. Competition, “me-first,” vacillation with the crowd, is unbecoming motivation for anyone wanting to become active in the Lord’s service.

David made a grievous error in making Amasa commander-in-chief of the army. He may have done it in all sincerity to woo the dissidents who had gone with Absalom back into strong allegiance to himself. He may have done it as a “substitute” punishment for what he should have done to Joab for his crimes. He may even have done it out of personal resentment for the way Joab had “dressed him down in public” about his mourning for his dead son. Whatever David’s reasoning, two wrongs never make a right. Amasa was the former Commander in Chief of rebel forces under Absalom. David appointed Joab’s **enemy** to replace him. What humiliation that must have been to Joab in the eyes of his troops. Joab’s loyalty to David was unimpeachable! Joab had been willing to commit crime for David! But of course, that kind of loyalty always make one suspicious. There was nothing wrong with Joab’s military expertise—nothing wrong with his politics. Imagine the fierce and sullen resentment of Joab’s veterans when they heard the news. It is a wonder there was not a new outbreak of mutiny against David. Amasa later proved inept. Another illustration that David was no “super-saint”—but a man who made glaring mistakes in judgment and action—a man who let his feelings sometimes over-rule his good sense. In this matter with Amasa and Joab, it almost seems as if David has lost complete command of his senses. He not only made mistakes himself, but often caused others to be offended and sin. Yet he is a “man after God’s own heart”—a chosen progenitor of the Messiah and immortalized in “Faith’s Hall of Fame” (Heb. ch. 11). There is hope for all erring sinners who cling desperately to the grace of God in Christ, the Messiah.

Shimei is the man who vehemently cursed David when David was “down and out.” This was a man who, as a member of Absalom’s rebellion, was determined to see David dead. But when he plead for mercy, David extended mercy. Later (1 Kings 2:8-9), David charges Solomon to execute Shimei and “hold him not guiltless.” Evidently Shimei was “with” Solomon and about to become one of the “inner circle” of Solomon’s administration, David was warning Solomon that he must be removed—and that must be done because **justice must be done**. When Shimei begged mercy, David had just won his battle over the insurrection of Absalom and probably did not want to mar the joy of his reinstatement by a bloody execution, so he took an oath that he would not slay him. However, in taking this oath, David pardoned what he had no right or power to pardon—that is, a sin to which the law of Moses attached the death penalty (Ex. 22:28). Shimei

should have been executed by David, but had, in fact twice been pardoned by order of the king. As David lay in his “death-chamber,” the guilt of negligence weighed heavily upon his mind. He would keep his oath, but Solomon was bound by no such oath. The morality of David’s sentencing Shimei and Joab to death has been called into question. There is no hint of malice or vindictiveness evident in 1 Kings 2. David was not bequeathing to Solomon “a dark legacy of hatred” as one writer puts it. David’s primary concern is not his own humiliation—not even the safety and security of Solomon’s throne. 1 Kings 2:2-4 set the tone for David’s sentencing of the two. What was uppermost in David’s mind was to carry out observance of the law of God. This included the stipulated punishments for murder and blasphemy. David is tacitly admitting to failure on his own part when he asks his son to execute the murderer and the blasphemer. He (David) is now too old and sickly to execute the sentence. It would give him comfort in his final hours of life to know that his son would perform those unpleasant legal tasks which he had neglected—and, evidently, had not the moral courage to do so. But David was a forgiving man—he carried no grudges against his enemies. He gave his personal forgiveness to both Joab and Shimei. The spiritual maturity that could forgive Shimei **personally**, demonstrated that David was “a man after God’s own heart.” Forgiveness (mercy, grace) is the character trait most like the nature of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. The only way to really cultivate it in the human heart is to constantly immerse the consciousness in an awareness of God’s mercy toward oneself—a sinner and enemy of God reconciled only through that grace. That is what David did! Do Christians ever face such a spiritual crisis? Having to extend personal forgiveness, while insisting that society’s just be executed upon an offender? Christian police, judges, jurors and law-makers do it all the time!

Competition, vain ambition, secrecy, jealousy—all this had begun between the tribes almost as soon as they had settled in the Promised Land (see the book of Judges). The nation of Israel (excluding the tribes of Judah and perhaps Benjamin) had thought first of restoring David as king and escorting him back to Jerusalem, but Judah (prompted by Amasa) went secretly ahead of Israel and pulled off a “coup.” Israel said, “King David belongs to all Israel, and we are 10 tribes, and therefore have “10-parts” more claim on him than you, Judah!” This selfish, competitive spirit, and the bitterness which had been accumulating over the centuries between the tribes, plus Rehoboam’s heavy taxation (after Solomon died) precipitated the ungodly division of the kingdom and all the fighting and idolatry and wickedness between “brethren” for 300-400 years after Solomon’s death. Selfishness, competitiveness, ambition to rule instead of serve, has caused the terrible divisiveness among Bible-believing millions in the world today. That divisiveness has caused an unbelieving world to mock the church and spurn the grace of God. Serious doctrinal aberrations can have no “part” of God’s kingdom. Denials of the tenets of the faith—unbelieving attempts to divest the Christian faith of its supernaturalness cannot be tolerated. However, believers in Christ, sinners who have accepted his grace on his terms, can, and must cease competing, cease selfish “partying,” cease ambitious grasping to “rule” and begin to serve. The world will never be saved until this takes place! Such was the wicked seed that produced the wicked plant in “old” Israel. God “rooted up that plant” and destroyed it. The same fate awaits any part of “new” Israel (the church, Gal. 6:15-16) which is of the same mind as “old” Israel.

The rebellion of Sheba, the promotion but ineptitude of Amasa, the earlier

demotion and public humiliation Joab suffered, all rankled in Joab's mind! When Joab met Amasa, he was clothed with a garment that had a girdle around the middle. This large belt had a sheath attached to it, and in the sheath was Joab's sword. He allowed this sword to fall out, leading Amasa to believe that he was unarmed. Joab threw Amasa off guard by greeting him in a friendly way making inquiry about his health and calling him "brother." Being naturally right handed, he took Amasa by the beard to draw him to himself to embrace him. Joab had a sword in his other hand, probably behind his back; when Amasa was close enough to him to permit it, Joab plunged the blade into the abdomen of Amasa and ripped out his intestines which fell upon the ground. The one blow was sufficient to wound him mortally. Once again, Joab had struck without sufficient reason, except for a matter of personal "honor" and vengeance. Joab murdered Amasa—it is inexcusable. That is why David did not want to die without insuring that Joab would pay for his crimes—even though David took the "cowardly" way out. Is Joab the only person who has ever murdered in the name of religion? Think of the "Crusades"—the "Inquisitions"—the "holocausts"—Islamic "plane-bombers" and "suicide-bombers." The Jews themselves have killed people Gentiles in the name of their religion. Then think of the souls of people that have been "killed," i.e., led into unbelief in the name of "religion"! Any religion that leads people away from salvation by grace through faith and covenant in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ is a "killer of souls" for there is no salvation apart from the grace of Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). May God keep us humble and dependent through chastening so that we shall never seek salvation apart from his grace.

A deadly conflict was imminent! Joab had "cornered" Sheba in Abel one of the major cities of Israel (way up north by Dan). When "Abel" is used to denote a place, it means "mourning." Joab was not asking questions, not negotiating—he was preparing his troops for an overwhelming assault upon this city—planning to wipe it out! At this point a woman appeared on the wall and began to cry out for a "peace palaver" with Joab. Imagine that, a woman, of all things! But she was well known in Able to be a "woman of peace and wisdom." (Be sure to read Eccl. 9:14-18). One bad man (Sheba) had exposed the city to destruction—one good woman effect its deliverance. Why were there no men who would lead out in suing for peace? Were there none wise enough—none peaceable enough? Or was it there were none courageous enough? Thank God, when there were no men who would, there was one woman who did! And this woman did what she had to do! She persuaded the people of the city to take Sheba, cut off his head, and fling it over the wall to Joab. Whoever said all women are squeamish? According to the text, "...and the woman went to all the people **in her wisdom**...and they cut off the head of Sheba...and threw it out to Joab..." She had to do some "tall" persuading, evidently, but had the "smarts" to be able to do it. Let us not throw away the "ministry capacities" of our Christian women—it would be a crime. They have much **wisdom** to contribute to the kingdom! They also have the **courage** to do many things men sometimes are afraid to do!

Forced labor was what might be called "serfdom" in Medieval times. Ancient kings demanded taxes. Ancient people often had no money with which to pay such taxes, so the king took the people and forced them to labor for him in building projects, etc. This is **not** where one Hebrew "indentured" himself to a neighbor for services rendered. That was sanctioned in the law God gave Moses. There were many protections in "indentured service." What David began, Solomon extended (1 Kings 5:14,18; 9:20-22) and Rehoboam

made even more burdensome (1 Kings 12:4). Exorbitant taxation was the cause of the revolt of the 10 northern tribes under Jereboam. Jehoiakim (a thoroughly oppressive and godless king who ruled over Judah from 607-597 B.C.) was rebuked by Jeremiah for “forced labor” (Jer. 22:13). While God made provision in his law for men to “indenture” themselves as “servants” to pay off debts or support themselves when financial disaster struck—God never intended men to be “owned” by other men and “forced” to labor under inhumane oppression. God never intended men to become “property” or be treated like animals. God did not even intend that men guilty of crimes be incarcerated in prisons—there were three forms of punishment for crimes in the law of God—restitution, retaliation (eye for eye), or capital punishment (death). When men chose not to have God rule over them through his written law, but cried for “a king like the nations,” God warned them such a king would “take” from them their produce and their sons and daughters to be his “slaves” (1 Sam. 8:10-18). This is what has happened in non-democratic nations today—most of which have renounced any rule of God in their governments. Human rule without submission to God’s law inevitably enslaves human beings.

“Hanging” in those days meant the victim was gibbeted or impaled on large, sharpened posts, in a public place (an ancient form of crucifixion). Sometimes they were executed prior to the impaling. Other times they were impaled alive and left to die slowly. Rizpah was Saul’s concubine. Merab was Saul’s eldest daughter (who should have been given to David in marriage after he killed Goliath, but Saul gave her to Adriel to embarrass David). David spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, because of the oath he had sworn with Jonathan to protect and care for one another’s surviving children. Saul had massacred a large number of Gibeonites, violating a covenant or treaty made with them by Joshua and all Israel (Josh 9:3-27), and Saul had plundered their cities and (as the Gibeonites said, “Consumed them.”). Gibeonites were demanding compensation, blood for blood. They wanted the criminal-family extradited to receive justice. Did you notice the Lord sent the famine upon Israel for this very sin of Saul (21:1ff)? David asks what can be done to expiate (“cover”) Saul’s sin and the Gibeonites reject any idea of monetary reparation and demand capital punishment. Notice the God-revealed connection between moral evil and physical evil! Israel is to realize the connection between the famine and national sin. There is a strong reluctance by the unbelieving human race to make this connection. They will call physical evil the consequence of “fate, nature, chance, environment, genetic determination,” almost anything to dispose of the revelation of the Bible that the “creation is subjected to futility and decay” because of moral evil (see Rom. 8:17ff). David was **not** wrong—he was following God’s law for the maintenance of society—*lex talionis*—the law of retribution (i.e., an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth). Rational, moral civilization demands this, and God has provided for it in his law.

NO! It is not fair! Wickedness which brings war (in all societal structures) is not fair, just or right. The expediencies of retribution, punishment, force are necessary lest we have uncontrolled evil—but there is nothing fair, right or living in any of it. God wishes it were not so. That is what his kingdom (the church) is all about. Within the kingdom of God there is no force necessary—persuasion, love and servant-hood rules! Who’s to blame—the devil and those who choose to side with him in his rebellion against God, against persuasion, love, servant-hood and truth. These are the people who instigate war! They start wars! Whether in the home, in the nation, internationally or in the church. As long as

this world lasts, mothers, like Rizpah, are going to have their hearts broken—are going to weep and mourn over husbands, fathers and sons (and daughters) slain because some vain and ambitious and hating people make war upon one another. For World War I alone it is estimated that the total number of orphans was of the order of 9,000,000. Estimates of the Viet Nam war look like this: Communist casualties 715,000; South Vietnamese soldiers killed 500,000; civilian casualties 1,000,000; Americans who died, about 58,000–150,000 seriously wounded (maimed).

<u>U.S. Military</u>	<u>Dead</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Revolutionary War	4,435	Not available
War of 1812	2,260	\$133,700,000
Mexican-American War	1,733	166,000,000
Civil War	623,511	5,000,000,000
Spanish America War	2,446	568,000,000
World War I	116,516	729,000,000
World War II	405,399	339,000,000,000
Korean War	54,246	18,000,000,000
Viet Nam War	58,000	98,000,000,000
Totals	1,258,546	\$ 486,596,700,000

Now add to these mind-boggling figures **all the wars of mankind** (the “30 years war,” “the 1000 years war,” the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers slain in one night by the angel of God, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*) and you have some idea of what could have been spared from mankind had all men loved God, been thankful for his grace, believed in his word and his Son and trusted whole-heartedly in him! General William Tecumseh Sherman said, “War is hell”—he was right! That is where it originates (James 4:1-4). That is where it’s going! That is what hell be for all eternity—rebellion, war, ruin, waste, hurt, death, separation, torture. Christians must live as “peacemakers.” We must spread the only cure for war as widely and as solidly as our resources will allow. And what is the only cure? The blessed word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which gives grace, forgiveness, reconciliation (to God and to fellow man), love and hope. “Peace Corps” to raise standards of living, to promote human ideological forms of government, will **never stop war**;. They may do some good to hold the forces of evil in check so the gospel of Christ can have freer course to run

—but we must never depend on them to produce lasting peace. All we can do is mourn war—but preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 SAMUEL 22:1—24:25

The Lord saved David from Goliath, Saul, Absalom, the Philistines, Sheba and from the elements (storms, starvation, lions, etc.). **Most of all, however, the Lord saved David from himself.** We, as sinful, selfish human beings are our own worst enemies. Like “Pogo”—“we have met the enemy, and he is us!” David doesn’t actually say this precisely, but from his statements about waves of death and the torrents of perdition, I assume he is talking about his guilty conscience as a sinner (see also Psa. 6,13,32,51, etc.). And how did God save David from **himself**? **(a) through a knowledge of God’s revealed word (see Psa. 119); (b) through severe chastening when David strayed—and bountiful goodness and grace when David humbled himself and sought God’s forgiveness.** David acknowledged this methodology of God in 2 Samuel and in his Psalms. David even believed God was chastening him for his own good by allowing human beings to trouble him (sounds like Joseph, Gen. 50:20). Let us acknowledge that God is working everything in our lives for good (ours or someone else’s) if we love him and answer his call (Rom. 8;28ff). Let us understand that we enter the kingdom through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). Let us understand that the discipline of the Lord is not pleasant for the moment, but ultimately it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness if we trust him (Heb. 12:7-11). Let us not be surprised, since we are children of God that testing, discipline, trial, chastening and grace comes to us (1 Pet. 4:12-19; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 12:7-10, etc.). Let us not be deceived by the devil about it so as to mistrust God and turn away from serving him.

NO! David did not see God’s “nostrils.” We must understand that the Bible is written in **human language**. Human beings can understand concepts only if these concepts are state in terms of human experience. That which is completely unseen and spiritual is capable of being understood only within the limits that our words can symbolize them. Anthropomorphic (“in the form of man”) terms are the only terms men can use to symbolize unseen, superhuman, divine concepts and realities. God is described in “man-forms.” David is trying to communicate the omnipotence of God—the majesty of God—as he is both transcendent and immanent. God is Creator over-and-above (transcendent) and apart from creation. At the same time, God is working immanently in and through everything that is created to redeem his creation (including mankind) and bring blessedness to men who trust him and desire him. All that is in this world and even all that is in the next world is obedient to God to answer the prayers of those who call upon him (cf. 1 Cor. 3:21-22). We need to beware that familiarity does not breed contempt! We need to guard, jealously, our awe of God, the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent “**I AM.**” God became man, that is true, and in so doing he revealed his glory (his goodness, his grace), but he is also revealed his **truth-factor**. God is gracious but he is also absolutely faithful to the truth (his word). His grace does not make him any less majestic, awesome, powerful, just, true, righteous, or holy! Nature is full of the awesomeness of God! Stop and smell the majesty and awesomeness of Almighty God!

David is confessing in 22:17-20 that he had to have help from “on high.” David was a great man, a hero of the faith, but anything he accomplished was because God “reached down from on high” to sustain him and deliver him from those people and circumstances “too mighty” for him. That is the case with all of us, and we might as well confess it as David did. It would be good for our souls. Make a list sometime of some of

the “messes” from which God delivered you (into which you involved yourself) and it will surprise you what the Lord has done! We are powerless before this “futile, decaying” sinful world. Those nearest and dearest to us can sympathize, encourage, care, love and minister to our physical needs. But neither we nor they can deliver ourselves from sin and death—enemies too mighty for us. The Lord himself, omnipotent, must “reach down” (become incarnated in Jesus Christ) and become our vicarious “substitute” in atonement, and “draw” us out of the sea of sin in which we are drowning. That is what made David great—his dependence on the help of God. This is the one crucial point at which the unbelieving world rebels. It simply will not admit that they, individually, are **fully** dependent upon God. Unbelievers continue to hope in the wisdom, the goodness, and the strength of man to extricate the human race from the throes of moral decadence and death! Give man sufficient money, millions more years in which to gain more knowledge, and he will solve all his problems, say the humanists. According to humanism man does not need a “crutch” like “God” upon which to depend.

David has to be talking about *relative* righteousness—no matter what time of his life he is talking about, for all people (even David) sin as soon as they know right from wrong. We do not have to think of David “B.B.” (i.e., before Bathsheba) to know he was imperfect. He was blameable before God when he was but a youth! David always **wanted** to do the law of God! He loved the law of God and meditated upon it day and night (see Psa. 119). But he was like the great apostle Paul—he did not always do what he wanted to do (see Rom. 7:7-25). God **does** reward those who are **loyal** to him and that has always been in a *relative* sense. God has proved that he rewards (and will reward) loyalty by rewarding the loyal with both material and spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) in this life. But God has also made it clear that “rewards” in **this life ARE NOT HIS ULTIMATE GOAL FOR “REWARDING”!** God keeps his gracious promises for those who are humble and dependent. God knows us—he knows if we **want** goodness or if we want wickedness. He knows if we love truth or hate it. He knows how strong and powerful the flesh and the devil are. And it is not by luck or good fortune that blessings and goodness and satisfaction, hope, and love come to the “righteous” (relatively speaking). Nor is it by chance that things go wrong and fail to satisfy the crooked and perverse. This is the unfailing rule of God’s dealings with man. Jesus came to earth to demonstrate that peace, joy, satisfaction hope and love belong to the righteous, the humble, and the loyal. And that to the also belongs, ultimate, eternal life!

David claims his Psalms (his “music”) are **the words of God**—divinely revealed and inerrant. The New Testament (the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles) unequivocally affirm that David spoke by divine revelation from the Holy Spirit of God. The Psalms are not just poetry (they are that, of course), but the Psalms are an integral part of the complete and final revelation in this world of God for man’s salvation. They are more than devotional and emotional—they are answers to some of humankind’s most nagging and perplexing questions. Especially do they and Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are God’s answers to the “ancients” concerning human suffering! They are classified by Bible students in what is called “Wisdom Literature.” In them are eternal principles for spiritual guidance. We certainly would be much more profited by “speaking to one another in the Psalms of David” than in much of the music we sing or hear today—even religious music! With the Psalms we would have no question as to whether these were God’s words or not! We would be

singing the inspired, revealed word of God. Think how much more of the revealed word of God we would be exposed to each service if we sang the psalms. People say “but we need variety.” The Hebrews didn’t—the early church didn’t. How many different human-written hymns or choruses do we use from our “vast repertoire?” I question whether any hymn or chorus written by uninspired men—no matter how saintly or “gifted” can be as good or profitable as that from the Holy Spirit inspired “sweet Psalmist of Israel!”

The list of names in 23:8ff is like the “roll of credits” at the end of a movie or a TV special. These are all the good people who worked “behind the scenes” so the “star” could shine! This list is like those Paul makes in his epistles. David did not accomplish anything without help! Neither do we! We all reap where others have sown and, hopefully, we are sowing so others may reap. There is nothing wrong with “giving recognition to such men” (see 1 Cor. 16:18). It is interesting that God allows so many “sinners” (saved by his grace) to be immortalized in his book! Think of the other names throughout the Bible. They are all men and women like we—(those toward whom God’s book speaks kindly)—wanting, desiring to do God’s will, but finding themselves failing (not just occasionally) but every day. Still, because they are loyal in their hearts, and because they have humbled themselves to trust in God’s grace extended through the Messiah, God is not ashamed to list them and honor them and recognize them. None of them deserve it—none of them have earned such recognition from the omnipotent, awesome God. God owes none of them anything. But because their desire is to be like him, he gives honor to them. In giving honor, he aims at transforming them into the image of his dear Son, Jesus Christ—of giving, loyalty, mercifulness, and goodness.

The subject of the verb “incited” (Heb. *suth*, “to induce, to incite, to move”) is the **Lord** whose anger was kindled against Israel. The nation had sinned against God and incurred his anger, and he “moved” David to perform an act which brought down a severe punishment on the nation. God did not **compel or force** David to sin; but God **did allow** David to be tested, tried, and tempted. Jesus allowed Satan to “sift” Peter! God is always “proving” and “testing” his children. He is always developing our character through trials and tests (Rom. 5:3-4). So he allows temptations to come. Jesus said, “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is **necessary** that temptations come, but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes!” (Matt. 18:7). In 1 Chronicles 22:1 we are told “Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number his people.” God allowed Satan to tempt David (and Job, see Job. 1:12; 2:10). The devil can only tempt and try human beings to the extent God allows. The mere taking of a census is not wrong, for God had commanded the numbering of his people on two separate occasions (Num. 1:26; 1 Sam. 11:8; 13:2). David’s sin consisted in taking a census to stroke his pride. God even allowed the Messiah, his holy Son, Jesus, to be tempted! When Jesus resisted the temptation, God said, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” There is absolutely no developing of goodness if that goodness is not tested! The gift of choice and using that choice to be loyal to God is what makes us like Jesus!

David numbered Israel not just to see how many people he ruled. He did it in connection with his military prowess (2 Chron. 27:23-24). Evidently he wanted to see how much power he had and was making plans to use it (he was like Hezekiah who fell into the temptation of boasting about **his** wealth and power, Isa. 39:1-8). He also fell into the

temptation to lean upon what he thought was power at his disposal—to do with as he wished—and thus forgot that it all belonged to God and he must depend totally upon God. This was a peculiar sin of Israel in the days following David's reign. David had 1,300,000 men of fighting age (20 years old or older)—that's like 130 divisions in the modern American army! If there were that many males **under** 20, that would mean there were 2,600,000 males in Israel. If there were an equal number of women, that would make Israel's total population 5,200,000 or about 6,000,000 people (not many less than live in modern Israel of the 21st century)! It is right to want "numbers" in **the** church, or even in "our" congregation, if our desire is to save people from hell (as many as possible). But it is wrong to focus on numbers or "largeness" so as to think to find security in such "bigness" or "successfulness." "Successfulness" on God's standard is equated with spirituality. "Numbers" do not **necessarily** equal "spiritualness." Everyone wants to be "the biggest," "number one," "most famous," "richest," or whatever—just so it is "better" than the other guy. Once again that is that old competitive spirit that feeds pride, arrogance and independence from Almighty God. Movement in the kingdom of God is **downward**. One does not even get in until one moves to the "bottom"! IT IS SERVANT-HOOD, SLAVERY TO CHRIST, NOT "BIGNESS, OR SUCCESSFULNESS, OR MOST FAMOUS!

David chose pestilence because he felt through that he would be more dependent upon God. It lasted for only one day, but its toll was heavy—70,000 were slain. Had Israel suffered 7 years of famine she would have been brought to her knees in hunger and starvation. She would have been extremely vulnerable to her enemies—the same as if she had to go into exile for 3 months. The great number in which David had taken pride, and in which he trusted, was drastically reduced in one day. David learned a lesson that could be learned no other way—man is at his **best** when he admits he is **helpless** without God. Remember—this is the lesson Paul, the apostle, learned (2 Cor. 12:7-10). "When I am weak, I am strong through Christ." It is nothing short of amazing that mankind, for the most part, never learns this lesson. God continually works in the "natural order" to suddenly, completely wipe out "things" in which man trusts—but many go right on trusting in themselves and in "things" rather than in God the One who "gives and takes away." There is no excuse for this human arrogance! Even the "natural order" itself is a revelation that there is a "Person"—an Eternal, Divine Person to whom man is mentally and morally responsible to pay homage, give thanks, and worship in obedience (Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 17:22-31; Acts 14:15-18; Psa. 19:1ff).

The threshing floor of Araunah was outside Jebus (Jerusalem) on Mount Moriah, a hill n.e. of Mt. Zion. It was here that the temple was later built by Solomon. David stands beside the great intercessors of the Bible (Abraham, Moses, the apostle Paul, Rom. 9:3) when he offers to suffer in place of his people. God instructed David to go up to Moriah and the threshing floor of Araunah, and build an altar. Araunah wants to give the threshing floor to David free of charge and include everything David would need for making an offering to Jehovah. But David refused to accept it for free. David states he will not offer something to God which had cost him nothing. Had David accepted the free gift, the sacrifice would not have been David's but Araunah's! On this hallowed spot, God answered David's atonement with fire upon the altar (1 Chron. 21:26). On this sanctified spot the angel of the Lord was ordered by God to sheath his sword and the pestilence stopped. On this holy ground David continued to offer sacrifices and thus designated the

spot for his son, Solomon, as the place to build the house of worship (temple) for Jehovah (2 Chron. 22:1). What has your giving to the Lord's church **cost you**? Has it cost you luxuries? Necessities? Security? Humiliation. WHAT **SHOULD** IT COST YOU?

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

