

2 Samuel 1-2 • When Your Enemy Falls

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Can you relate to coming out of a period of spiritual deep freeze? We've probably all experienced something of that when we've just haven't been walking with the Lord like we should. And then something happens in our lives to jar us out of that place and move us into either into a walk with the Lord or back into a walk with the Lord.

It was in my original thing of coming to the Lord. I had to see my marriage completely fail in order to be brought to the Lord in the first place. And then since that time the Lord has used difficult challenging circumstances on many occasions to just get me back awake again.

And it's never fun at all. I never hope or pray for that in anybody's life, but certainly the Lord will use certain things to bring us to a place of just awake-ness, so that we can see what's going on spiritually speaking.

David has been in a bit of a deep freeze for about a year and 4 months. And that's basically how we end the last Book of 1 Samuel with David coming, just now coming out of the deep freeze. He decided at one particular point after having faith against Saul trying to kill him for so many years. He finally decided it's just a matter of time before he catches me, he's going to kill me, so he went to go hide among the Philistines, figuring that Saul wouldn't come to look for him there. And he was right. Saul didn't come to look for him there, but the problem is he had to begin to walk out a period of compromise.

And I don't know if you've ever been through that, where you've begun to walk out a period of compromise. And you know that you're not living the way you should, you're not making the right decisions. You're not tracking with the Lord like you should, but it's just what is presenting itself. And you can go like that for a long time.

Now, in David's case, there's a year and 4 months that goes on in that particular sort of a situation, but it could happen for 10, 20 years, longer that somebody could be just in that spiritual funk where you're just in the fog and you're just...

It's that wilderness Christian, we talked about back when we were going through our study of Joshua. You know how there are believers.

Remember we talked about the fact that going across the Jordan into the promised land is a picture for you and I of taking up faith and walking out the promises of God. And of course what's involved with walking out the promises of God? Battles, battles aplenty.

But still there's that point in a Christian's life where they decide, I'm tired of living in the wilderness. I don't want to sit and walk in the wilderness anymore and I'm ready now to walk out the promises of God. I'm going to begin to live by faith and stop trying to take care of myself and all my issues and so forth.

And it's a really important step that a Christian makes, but you'd be surprised how many don't make it. How many don't take that step? How many believers are just living in the wilderness, living their lives, and this is as good as it gets. And it's never easy to watch somebody walking through that a scenario.

And David's been doing it. He's been having to lie about what he does on a day to day basis. He's doing things he just shouldn't do. Finally, it culminates at the end of the last section we read last week where the Philistines eventually decide to go to war against the Israelites and David gets caught up in that whole thing to the point where he's getting ready to ride out against Israel.

And just by a certain just happenstance, the generals or the commanders of the Philistine army looked at David and his men and said, what in the world is he doing here? Send him back home. He's not going out with us. That's stupid. Got out of that one. But you remember what happened?

David got to Ziklag, back to the town where they were staying. And as he came over the horizon, he saw that there was no town left. It was a smoldering ruins. His family and all of his belongings were gone, along with the families and belongings of all of the rest of the men. And just, that's enough to rattle you right there. I mean, shake you to the core.

And we see David doing something that he hasn't done for a year and 4 months. He inquires of the Lord and it's like he's back. David comes into the Lord. Lord, should I go up against these raiders who have taken my family and all my possessions? Yes, the Lord says, go up against them. I've given them into your hands and it's a wonderful victory.

And God is moving and challenging in David's life like He hasn't in a while. And David is beginning to, to see things. He's coming into that understanding of the kingdom again. And, okay, let's get back.

Have you been there? Have you been there where it's like time to get back with the Lord. Time to get back into relationship with Him. Time to get back into the Word. Time to get back into praying. You may have prayed during that time, but it was just like you shoot up little prayers. You know how you do those prayers just as you're falling asleep.

And you call that praying. It's like your head hits the pillow and like, Lord, thank you for a good day, just forgive all my sins and thank you. And pretty soon you're asleep. But I'm praying. Oh yeah, I'm praying. If somebody asks you, are you praying? Oh yeah. Oh yeah, I pray. Pray every night. Yeah. It's about 15 seconds before I slip into incoherency. You think I haven't been there? Sure. But then we start to come out of that. We start to come out of that deep freeze.

Chapter 1, verse 1. *“After the death of Saul, when David had returned from striking down the Amalekites, David remained two days in Ziklag.” (ESV)* The Amalekites were the ones who took his family and all of his belongings. So he comes back to the city, which isn't much of a city anymore. And he stays there for a couple of days.

“²And on the third day, behold, a man came from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. (and that was a sign of mourning) And when he came to David, he fell to the ground and paid homage. ³David said to him, “Where do you come from?” And he said to him, “I have escaped from the camp of Israel.” ⁴And David said to him, “How did it go? Tell me.””

Keep in mind, David knew that the Philistine army was riding out to meet the Israelites in battle, but he has no idea how this has been going. He's been spending the last few days taking care of his own family who's been missing and getting back all of his possessions. He has absolutely no idea what the army of Israel has been up against and how the battle has been going up to this point. When he sees this individual coming along, he's anxious to find out how things have been going.

“And he answered, “The people fled from the battle, (and he's talking about the Israelites) and also many of the people have fallen and are dead, and Saul and his son Jonathan are also dead.” Wow, that, that must have been like a sledgehammer, because you know how David and Jonathan we're so close. And

David still loved Saul, even though he knew that one day this would probably happen. And he said it, he said, maybe someday the Lord will take him in battle. And now when he finds out that is in fact what has happened, it's still, it's just a blow. It's a blow to him, finds out that they're dead.

“Then David said to the young man (verse 5) who told him, ‘How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?’⁶ And the young man who told him said, ‘By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and there was Saul leaning on his spear, and behold, the chariots and the horsemen were close upon him.’⁷ And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’⁸ And he said to me, ‘Who are you?’ I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’⁹ And he said to me, ‘Stand beside me and kill me, for anguish has seized me, and yet my life still lingers.’¹⁰ So I stood beside him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the armlet that was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord.”

¹¹ Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. ¹² And they 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, because they had fallen by the sword.”

Now this is interesting and if it's true, it would be poetic justice. You'll remember that many years before God had given Saul through Samuel, the command to go and wipe out the Amalekites, to completely destroy them. And Saul had not been obedient to that command. He had not wiped out all of the people, even though he said he did.

And now we have this Amalekite who enters upon the scene, tells David how the battle went, and even tells David that he finished off Saul. And if in fact that is the case, that truly is a poetic sort of justice for Saul who should have wiped out the Amalekites.

I will say to you here that there, and I don't know what the possibility is, but I'll just lay it out for you. There's a possibility that this Amalekite is not telling the truth and he didn't actually kill Saul. It's possible because we read in the last chapter how Saul had fallen in the battle, turned to his armor bearer and said, I'm wounded, finish me off. And his armor bearer wouldn't do it. And so Saul fell on his own sword. And it says at the end of the last book that then his armor bearer, seeing that Saul was dead, fell on his own sword and committed suicide. And that's how the book essentially ends as it relates to the death of Saul.

Now we have this new information as we get into 2 Samuel, which may in fact be true and it may not be true. Either way it's not going to end well for this Amalekite because whether he did it or didn't do it, it is pretty obvious that he is coming to David because he's looking for some a reward.

And here's the mistake that this Amalekite makes. He makes the mistake of thinking that David is thinking like him because he's thinking like the world. And when the world understands the idea of somebody who's been hunting you for 10 years, the only thing that they can imagine is you want to get revenge on that person.

And so he comes to David, assuming that revenge is uppermost in David's mind. And so he says to him, this is the situation. Here's how the battle went. Oh, and by the way, I came upon Saul and when I did, he was still alive. But he begged me to kill him because he didn't want the Philistines to find him alive because he knew that they would torture him. And so he asked me to put him out of his misery. So I did. Oh, and by the way, here's some of the things from his body so you can see that I'm telling the truth.

Chances are, David's response to this man was somewhat surprising because, immediately, it says that, *"David took hold of his clothes and tore them."* And that of course was an extreme expression of mourning and grief and sorrow to rip one's clothes. Just to take hold of them and just rip them like that.

And the Amalekite, is probably wondering here a little bit about what's going on because it's pretty obvious here that he's assuming that David is going to be fairly happy about this, but David's not happy about it. Why is David not happy about it? Because David has connected with the heart of God as it relates to these sorts of things. And he doesn't think like a typical person apart from the Lord is going to think.

And I remember reading through these passages when I was a much younger man, and I remember reading and hearing how David responded to this. And I was like, really, David? I mean, you ought to be doing a little happy dance. I mean, start singing ding dong, the witch is dead sort of a thing. And rejoice in, hey, let's have a party. It's like, guys, we can go home. It's been 10 years of torture and it's over. I'm surprised the guys didn't send up a hoot and a holler.

But it says that David takes hold of his clothes, and he lets a cry of grief come out, and he begins to mourn. He begins to cry. David was part of that cultural sort of upbringing that didn't have any concept of the idea that real men don't

cry. He was not bound by any kind of weird cultural strange-ism related to that. He let out a cry and it says he mourned until evening for Saul and for Jonathan.

This is so interesting but it's so different for you and I to see somebody acting like this when he gets word that his enemy has bit the dust. Obviously Jonathan is not included in that but Saul certainly is. His enemy is dead.

How do you respond when your enemy has problems? Maybe when your enemy suffers a setback, how do you respond? What does your heart say? Let me show you an interesting passage out of the Proverbs. This is the 24th chapter of Proverbs, and it says this,

Proverbs 24:17-18 (ESV)

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him.

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, (why?) lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him.

Notice what the last part of that passage says. “...*lest the Lord be displeased and turn his anger him*. And what goes without saying a little bit here is, and maybe put it on you because the Lord would be displeased. What is the Lord displeased with? When we rejoice over our enemies when they fall. When we rejoice over some kind of a setback.

It's pretty crazy, isn't it? We like to talk behind people's back that we like. David loved his enemy, truly loved his enemy. And I don't know about you, but I find conviction over this whole thing. I really do. I'm convicted. I'm convicted of my own heart. I'm convicted of my own attitude. Let me show you one more quick one from the second part of verse 5 from Proverbs chapter 17. It says,

Proverbs 17:5b (ESV)

...he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

...he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished. If there's a rejoicing during calamity.

David didn't have that kind of a heart. David's heart was to mourn over calamity and to even mourn over when his enemy falls.

Verse 13, keep reading with me now. *“And David said to the young man who told him, “Where do you come from?” And he answered, “I am the son of a sojourner, (a traveler) an Amalekite.”* ¹⁴ *David said to him, “How is it you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?”* ¹⁵ *Then David called one of the young men and said, “Go, execute him.” And he struck him down so that he died.* ¹⁶ *And David said to him, “Your blood be on your head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed the Lord's anointed.’”*”

Again, we're not positive whether this guy was lying or whether he had actually physically killed Saul there on the field of battle but either way, it didn't go well for him. Because he came thinking he was going to get a reward for this and David was going to pay him handsomely. Because after all, I'm bringing him good news. His enemy has fallen. But he found just the opposite to be true and he ended up losing his life in the process.

Verse 17. *“And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and Jonathan his son, ¹⁸ and he said it should be taught to the people of Judah; behold, it is written in the Book of Jasher.”*

By the way, don't go looking through your Bible for the Book of Jasher. You won't find. It was just a collection of songs and sayings related to military campaigns and that sort of thing. It makes reference to it elsewhere in the Bible, but it was not an inspired book and so it's not included in the canon of Scripture. But this section that would also appear in the Book of Jasher is also given for us here in 2 Samuel.

And this is the song that David, this lamentation, that David wanted the people of Israel to learn. And it goes like this, ¹⁹ *“Your glory, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!”* You might have it's funny that phrase, you hear that a lot, movies, television programs, books, *“How the mighty have fallen.”*

It's interesting how it's almost always given as a dig in movies when, in fact, it's given in the exact opposite spirit of what David is giving it here. In fact, usually it's someone rejoicing over their enemy who has fallen. And they will look at that person and they will say, well, well, well, how the mighty have fallen. And it's exactly the opposite of the way David meant it. He is declaring that the mighty men of Israel have indeed fallen in Saul and his son Jonathan. And he's going to repeat it actually during this song.

²⁰ *Tell it not in Gath, (which is the area of the Philistines)
publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, (one of the major cities of the
Philistines)
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.*

²¹ *“You mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew or rain upon you, (remember, that's where the battle took
place)
nor fields of offerings!
For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,
the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.*

²² *“From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan turned not back,
and the sword of Saul returned not empty.*

²³ *“Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely!
In life and in death they were not divided;
they were swifter than eagles;
they were stronger than lions.*

²⁴ *“You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet,
who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.””*

And then listen to these last few verses of how David speaks of Jonathan in this song.

²⁵ *“How the mighty have fallen
in the midst of the battle!*

“Jonathan lies slain on your high places.

²⁶ *I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
very pleasant have you been to me;
your love to me was extraordinary,
surpassing the love of women.”*

²⁷ *“How the mighty have fallen,
and the weapons of war perished!””*

And we talked about this when we discussed Jonathan and David's relationship as it relates to the love that they had one for another, and the commitment that they have for one another. And we made the very, very clear statement back in 1 Samuel. That this should in no way be misconstrued as a homosexual relationship, it was nothing of the sort, but yet David speaks of Jonathan's love and says that to him it meant more to him, it surpassed the love of women.

He's speaking of a love that typical human relationships can't achieve. There was a closeness, there was a bond between these two men that was just undeniable and almost unexplainable. And David was destroyed with the idea that his friend Jonathan had perished in battle. And so 3 times, he says of Jonathan and Saul, *"How the mighty have fallen,..."*

Chapter 2. *"After this David inquired of the LORD,..."* Remember what I said? David's back, we're talking to God again. The conversation. Have you ever felt like your conversation with God was like a telephone line off the hook? Some of you younger, you kids don't even know what the hook means when we talk about the phone being off the hook.

Back when we were kids, phones actually sat on a hook. And they usually were on a wall and the phone, the receiver actually was, it was hung up. We don't hang up... Isn't that funny? We talk about hanging up on people. We, what do you hang up with your with your cellular phone? We don't hang anything up. Right. But we still use that terminology because what we would do back in those days is we would hang the phone up on the hook. I'm going to hang up now.

And we would literally hang it up. How stupid was that? Huh? But anyway, why in the world did I start talking about that? I can't even, I can't even imagine where I was going with that whole thing, except maybe I've got some hang-ups. Maybe that's it, huh? It's going to go through one of the...

Oh yeah, inquiring of the Lord. I'm back. I've had those periods of time where, you it just felt like the connection was disconnected. Again, speaking of those really, really dopey old phones we used to have. If you took your phone and took it off the hook, and just set it on the table or somewhere, eventually it would start making all kinds of really obnoxious noises, and you would get this recording of this woman. And she was the same wherever you lived across the United States.

And she would say, if you'd like to make a call, and she would go on with this whole thing, and then it would just go dead. And if anyone tried to call you, of

course, they would get a busy signal because your phone was off the hook. Alright. It was the same as really being on a call, but we would do that when we didn't want to be bothered.

But there were a lot of times in my life where I felt like my relationship with the Lord was off the hook for various reasons. Sometimes it was my own laziness. Like we've been talking about that. You go into that time of spiritual slumber, sometimes it's a time of attack. Sometimes the enemy can attack, and get you so distracted, and so focused on your problem, that you actually lose connection with the answer to the problem. And that's really, very cunning on his part, but it's very effective as well.

And there, of course, can be other kinds of distractions in our lives that leave us with that attitude or that sense, like somehow our communication is cut off from the Lord. I'm not able to think about, or not think about, but I'm not, I'm just, have you ever felt that way? It's like, you pick up the phone and it's hello, hello? There's nobody there. The line is dead.

But now because of the circumstances of David's life, he's back talking to God again. What a delightful thing that is. Do you guys know, do you remember what that's like to just get back into communication? It's like, I'm praying again and it's like, what kept me. And that you start praying and you think to yourself. Why did I stop? Why did I stop praying? It's such an easy thing to do. Just talk, wherever I am. Driving, walking. At work, at home, in bed. Hopefully before the incoherent part sets in, but we're just, I'm talking to God again. Lord, and I'm just having conversations with Him every, I'm on the way.

We did, I joked with you guys that one of the places the Lord tends to speak to me the, one of the most is in the bathroom. I was sharing it with the group that I do in Weezer on Thursday nights. They were having a good yuck about it. Because I excuse myself at one point, at the end of the study and I said, hey, can I just use the restroom for a minute? And they said, oh, so you can go hear from God? And it was a big joke in the house, about how that's the only place that...

But it's kind of funny because whenever you, I think there's something about the bathroom. Let's not put this on the tape, but there's just something about how you get alone. You know how you get alone and you can just talk with God? You're just, there's not all the distractions of people and stuff and whatever. You just like, it's weird when the water closet is your prayer closet but if it works, it works. But it's just so wonderful, isn't it? When you feel like I'm back talking to God the way I should be. Inquired of the Lord.

And see, Saul is dead now. He's gone through that period of mourning and he asked "...of the LORD, *"Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?"* And the LORD said to him, *"Go up."* David said, *"To which shall I go up?"* And he said, *"To Hebron."* (Hebron was obviously one of the major cities in Israel) ² So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. ³ And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron."

Remember, David had 600 men at this time. Now, if you count their wives, and their children, you don't know how many are married. You don't know how many kids they have, but you can well imagine that this is probably easily triple that number. This is a lot of people, and so this is going to swell the population of Hebron pretty rapidly. But David is now able to go back to Hebron among his own people. And that's part of returning to the Lord, isn't it? Right?

It's one thing just to talk to God, to start talking to God again when you're coming out of that deep freeze. But the other thing that is so delightful is you start getting back with God's people. You've been living with the world. You've been living with the Philistines. In fact, you've been acting more like a Philistine than anything, but now you're starting to come out of that. You start talking to God and now it's like I'm going to get back into fellowship. I'm going to be back with God's people. Talking with the people of the Lord. Rubbing elbows with the people of the Lord. This is a great thing.

"⁴ And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah." Did you catch that? They did not anoint him king over all of Israel. You might say, wait a minute. I didn't think at this point there were two kingdoms. Well, there really weren't, there really weren't.

There really wasn't a division at this point. It's just that the southern area of Israel was called Judah, although it even encompassed more than just the tribe of Judah. But it was the largest land mass in the south and it was where David was from. It was basically his tribe, his people. He was of the tribe of Judah. And he comes back among his people, and he's one of them, and they know that he's been anointed king over Israel. And so they make him king. They crown him king. Saul is dead. We need a king. David, you're the man, and they crown him king.

But remember, we've got the whole upper area of Israel that is still loyal to the house of Saul, because he's of the tribe of Benjamin from the upper part of Israel, okay. And you've got Judah and Simeon that are basically down in the south part.

And so David, this is interesting. David is the anointed king of Israel, but he doesn't come to the throne right away. He comes among his people and they crown him king, but he's only king of the southern area. Okay. Let's read what it says. It's going to go on and tell us some interesting things here.

And it says, we're in the middle of verse 4, by the way, *“When they told David, ‘It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul,’⁵ David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead and said to them, ‘May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord and buried him.’⁶ Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you. And I will do good to you because you have done this thing.⁷ Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant, for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”*”

Which means that the people of Jabesh-gilead are not in the southern area of Judah. They are considered, essentially, to be part of the northern area, although they are on the other side of the Jordan.

Alright, what is David doing here? You remember the story? You remember what happened? After the Philistines found Saul and his sons lying dead on the field of battle, it says they stripped off their armor, and they basically took them home as a trophy; their bodies. Decapitated Saul, hung his body in the temple of their god, along with his sons. Literally tacked him up on the wall, and rejoiced. Did their little happy dance over him because they figured, our god is stronger than their God. We won.

Well, Jabesh-gilead heard about this humiliation, and they stole during the night to the land of the Philistines, broke into the area. I didn't know how much fighting they had to do. It doesn't actually say, but chances are they had to do a good amount. But they went in there, very valiant. I mean, they just walked right into the enemy territory. I mean, this is like one of those things that you hear about, where they, these guys go in and they're highly trained. And they waltz right into the enemy's backyard and rescue someone.

Well, in this case, it's a recovery, not a rescue, but they go in there, they take Saul's body, the bodies of his sons, and they bring them back, and they cremate them, and then bury their ashes, and give them a proper burial.

Well, David hears about this. Now, these men are very loyal to Saul, these men from Jabesh-gilead. Very loyal to Saul. How are these men going to feel? Their king is dead, and they just hear that David gets crowned king at Hebron over the southern region of Judah. And what are they going to probably think? Oh, well,

there it goes. There goes the neighborhood. Because, again, they're very loyal to Saul and his family.

But David does one of the wisest things here at this point. He sends a message to the men of Jabesh-gilead and he says, you guys are the bomb. I heard what you did. I heard that you guys waltzed into Philistine territory and you recovered the body of Saul and his sons and you gave them a decent burial. I just want you to know you guys are blessed of the Lord and I'm going to bless you too. Now be strong because Saul is dead and I have been crowned king here over the house of Judah.

It's interesting. This is so smart. David does so many incredibly smart things in these early stages of becoming king. He doesn't demand that everybody crown... It's like, hey, okay, I'm king over Judah. Where's the rest? God anointed me king over Israel. Where's the rest?

He is going to bide his time. And you know why he's going to bide his time? Because he's learned for 10 years how to bide his time. He's learned for 10 years, get your hands off the works of God, get your hands off it. You just wait on the Lord. God's timing is best. It's never good enough for you and I though, is it? I mean, I usually hate God's timing. I really do. I mean, I end up liking it later on and I'll even end up bowing the knee to Him and saying, you know what, God, Your timing is perfect.

But when I'm going through a situation for which I'm waiting on the Lord, I never liked the timing of the Lord, honestly. Because He doesn't move as quickly as I think he should. He doesn't do the things that I think He should do when I think He should do them. And you know what? He never even comes to ask my opinion. Isn't that surprising?

But God did such a work in David's heart to give him wisdom about how to proceed in this that later on, years later, when the Psalmists wrote about David's kingship, they made some incredible remarks. I want to put this one up on the screen for you from the Psalms. This is from the 78th chapter. Look at this.

Psalm 78:70-72 (ESV)

He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.

He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. (but look at this last sentence) With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand. His skillful hand.

We're going to see just how skillful things are, even though they seem here for a bit to spin out of control a little bit. But David's response to this thing is very good.

Look at verse 8. *“But Abner (remember Abner? He was the commander of Saul’s army in Israel?) the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim,⁹ and he made him king over Gilead and the Ashurites and Jezreel and Ephraim and Benjamin and (essentially of) all Israel.”*

So if you will, and again, this is a military sort of a decision. But Abner being the commander of the army takes the son of Saul, Ish-bosheth who, by the way, is really a puppet king for the military at this point. But he crowns him king over the Northern 10 tribes. The Southern 2 tribes of Judah and Simeon would be under David. And so he makes him king.

But it's funny. We never really even recognize Ish-bosheth as a king of Israel even though he reigned for a very short period of time just two years. But in fact, we're told here in verse 10 that he *“was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.”*

Isn't it interesting. Now this schism that we're already seeing between the Northern kingdom of Israel and the Southern kingdom of Judah, right now they're not really kingdoms. I'm using that term in an anachronistic way because they really aren't two separate kingdoms. There's just one kingdom. There's just regions.

You have the Southern region, you have the Northern region, but it's all Israel. But it's talking to you about Israel and Judah because later on under David's grandson, they are going to split. They're going to have a civil war. In fact, there are going to have a civil war right now, but it's even more so.

They're going to have a civil split in a political geopolitical split in the nation. And there will, after that point, after David's grandson, there will always be a Northern king and a Southern king. And that's why then you have two kingdoms.

This initial sort of schism where you've got Ish-bosheth in the north, David in the south. This isn't the last very long. And when they make David king over all of Israel, of course, the whole nation will be one and it will continue to be one under the full reign of his son Solomon as well. It's going to be under Solomon's son, Rehoboam, who was an idiot, that the thing will actually split in two. And he really was. He was a youthful, dumb person, for lack of a better term. Anyway here we go.

Verse 11. *"And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months."* Seven and a half years. He only reigned partially.

How long total did David wait for the full prophecy to come to pass? Roughly 17 and a half years plus. There could be a couple more there. We're not exactly sure. But let's just say a minimum 17 and a half years he waited until the full prophecy: David, I have anointed you king over all of Israel.

Have you ever, but that, of course that 17 and a half years wasn't lost mind you. God used it for preparation. One thing is interesting today I find, particularly with young men and frankly, it can happen with young women. But people who get excited about the Lord and want to go into areas of ministry, they want to do it now. They just want to do it now and they don't really want to deal with the preparation period.

And they forget that Paul, the apostle, went in the wilderness for many years and just waited. John the Baptist hung out in the wilderness. Even Jesus. Wait until he was 30 years old to begin his public ministry. But they're 18, 19. They want to just get right into it and there's really no preparation time. It's just like I want to just do this.

Well, there's always preparation and if we're not going to submit to that preparation of the Lord, well, He's going to bring it one way or the other. He just is. He's really good at that, by the way. And there will be things that will go on in their lives. And if they survive them, it will be wonderfully, preparatory for the area, for the work of the ministry.

But I think we've just, we've gotten so impatient and rushed with things. and people, and we got to just raise them up. And Paul wrote, and said, don't raise up anyone too quickly. That was one of the wisdom philosophies of ministry that Paul outlined in the New Testament. Don't raise up a man too quickly because, lest he become conceited or vain or puffed up and take part in the same sins as the enemy. (1 Timothy 3:6) That's the sin of pride.

I've told you guys many times in the past that I was the quintessential raised up to early person. And it was frankly a mistake that the pastoral staff made when I was attending a church and had only been in the Lord, good grief. I'd only been in the Lord for probably a couple of weeks when I started teaching. It was ridiculous. I didn't even hardly know anything of the Word. All I knew was what I learned from listening to the rock opera, Jesus Christ Superstar, back in the 70s. And believe me, that's weird. I wouldn't hand anybody that today and go, here, you learn lots of great stuff about the Word of God. But that's where I learned stuff.

And I even remember reading the Bible during those days when I was teaching God's Word and thinking, oh, they were wrong. That thing about Jesus Christ, He didn't, I mean, it didn't actually happen that way. It was like a revelation to me. And I had to be careful sometimes because I would make statements that had no basis in biblical fact. But I was raised up too quickly.

And I remember the pastor that I told some of you this before, but the pastor I served under, he loved altar calls. He just loved them. He thought they were great. And there's a place for them, but what he would love to do. I was one of like four, three other guys on staff. And he would love to get the pastoral staff up on the platform during an altar call. So the people would come flocking down and they were like, there'd be rows of them, and they're all down raising their hands. And he'd say, I want my pastoral staff to come up here now. And they'd all, we'd all come up on the platform. And so here I am standing up here and I'm just, I mean, I'm in my early 20s and I'm standing up here.

And all these people are down here kneeling. He'd say to us, guys, now lay your hands on these people and start praying for him. Well, that's a heady thing for a person to do. It's like, I'm up here on the platform and all you people are down here on your knees. And I'm going to pray for you if you're lucky, I'll pray for you.

And I can just, I remember at the time thinking to myself, this isn't good, but I like it. Do you know what I mean? But I remember thinking, this isn't good. And I didn't even really know why. But, by God's grace, I survived that time, but By God's grace you can become a basket case, but God is holding the basket. Been there sort of thing. Had to go through that period in my life.

The preparatory period is going to come one way or another but I think we can save somebody a whole lot of grief and we can save the body of Christ a whole lot of grief if we will honor the principles of wisdom shown us in the New

Testament. Don't raise up a man too quickly. Don't be so impatient. God was so patient with David. Another 7 and a half years of only, ruling Judah.

Verse 12 goes on and tells us that during this period of time, *“Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.”*

And the term, *“went out”* implies an aggressive posture of attack. They didn't just go out for takeout. Okay, they went out armed for battle. Okay. This is telling you that they're going to come up against the army of Judah.

“¹³ And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. And they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.”

Sounds like a strange thing to do for armies that are like armed to the teeth to go up against one another doesn't it. You're sitting across a pool. You're sitting across a pool just looking at these guys. This is not the kind of thing people used to do when they would go to war but do you know what makes this different? These are brothers. These are relatives. These are all Jews.

The Jews from the southern kingdom of Judah, and again, it's not a separate kingdom really, truly yet. The area from the upper region that we will later call Israel, they're all brothers! And so this is weird. This just feels weird. So they sit down at this pool and they're looking at each other.

“And (finally, in verse 14, it says that) Abner said to Joab, “Let the young men arise and compete before us.” And Joab said, “Let them arise.”” If this sounds stupid to you, it is. This is sometimes what commanders will do with their young men. Have them fight for the entertainment of the watching men. And usually the people who pay the dearest price are the young men who are sucked into this thing.

It says, *“¹⁵ Then they arose and passed over by number, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. ¹⁶ And each caught his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side, so they fell down together.”*

These guys, instead of battling and one winning, they each grabbed each other, stabbed each other at the same time. They all died at the same time. And what's that going to start? Well, it's going to start a war. And this basically starts one of the first civil wars in Israel. *“Therefore that place was called Helkath-*

hazzurim, which is at Gibeon.” And that means the field of sword edges, because that's what started the battle.

“¹⁷ And (it says) the battle was very fierce that day. And Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

¹⁸ And the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle.” This guy was amazing. I mean, he was just super-fast.

“¹⁹ And Asahel pursued Abner, and as he went, he turned neither to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. ²⁰ Then Abner looked behind him and said, “Is it you, Asahel?” And he answered, “It is I.” ²¹ Abner said to him, “Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and seize one of the young men and take his spoil.””

Now, what does that mean exactly? What that means is that Asahel was essentially unarmed but he's running after Abner. Now, this is a really stupid thing to do, but then again, young men sometimes do stupid things.

He's a young man, he's full of zeal, so who's he going to go after? He's going to go after the commander of the opposing army. And so he's like, yeah, I'm going to bring the commander down. He doesn't even have any weapons, but he's got one thing on his side that he thinks, I'm fast. So he's running after, and I don't know if Abner's on horse, if he's in a chariot, I don't know but Asahel's keeping up with him and Abner finally looks back and says, Asahel is that you? Yeah, it's me.

He says, turn aside. And he's, what's the word here? Exactly. It says he answered, *“Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and seize one of the young men and take his spoil.”* What that means is, get his armor and his weapons and then come back and fight me. So if I strike you down, at least I can have a clean conscience about it. You're running after me with nothing. How am I going to look your brother in the eye if I have to kill you and you're completely unarmed. So turn aside and get one. And some of your Bibles may actually say, take some of their armor, get the armor from a young man instead of spoil, which it does here in the ESV.

“But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. ²² And Abner said again to Asahel, “Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I lift up my face to your brother Joab?” ²³ But he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. (I don't know why we had to

know all of that detail, all we need to know is he killed him) *And he fell there and died where he was. And all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.*

So everybody who came upon his body would stop and just pay homage for just a moment to this young man who died bravely, I suppose, but pretty stupidly as well.

“²⁴ But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. And as the sun was going down they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. ²⁵ And the people of Benjamin gathered themselves together behind Abner and became one group and took their stand on the top of a hill.”

And by the way, that's a good place to have. If you know anything about strategy of warfare. To be on a high place is always a strategic advantage rather than somebody being in the lower spot.

And yet even though they're in the place of advantage It says, *“Then Abner called to Joab, “Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you tell your people to turn (look at this) from the pursuit of their (enemies? No) brothers?””* Because that's what's going on here. They're literally fighting against their brothers.

He says, how long are you going to let this go on? *“²⁷ And Joab said, “As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely the men would not have given up the pursuit of their brothers until the morning.” ²⁸ So Joab blew the trumpet, and all the men stopped and pursued Israel no more, nor did they fight anymore.”*

Let see how this thing turns out. *“²⁹ And Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah. They crossed the Jordan, and marching the whole morning, they came to Mahanaim. ³⁰ Joab returned from the pursuit of Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing from David's servants nineteen men besides Asahel.”* They lost 20 soldiers.

“³¹ But the servants of David had struck down of Benjamin 360 of Abner's men. ³² And they took up Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was at Bethlehem. And Joab and his men marched all night, and the day broke upon them at Hebron.”

We're going to stop there for tonight, but when we move on, we're going to find that now that this has happened and blood has been shed, this is going to become very distasteful to the Jews. And they are going to move rather quickly to bring these 2 groups, these warring factions together again as one nation, but it will again happen with the spilling of blood.