

2 Samuel 23-24 • A Summary of the Reign of David

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We're actually going to finish 2 Samuel tonight. It begins in 2 Samuel 23 by saying, “...*these are the last words of David:...*” (ESV)

Now that shouldn't be necessarily understood to mean that this is the last utterance out of his mouth before he breathed his last, necessarily. It more or less refers to a final summary in Psalm form of David's life. And that's what we're going to find here in this particular chapter.

David is doing what he does best, frankly, and that is speaking these beautiful Psalms about the glorious things of the Lord. But he does it now as a summary, if you will, of his life and what a life. In terms of length of time, David didn't live a super long period of time. He died at the age of 70. He was just 70 years old when he passed away.

But, when we get into 1 Kings, you're going to see that when it speaks of David's life, it says he died old and full of years. We'll get to that and we'll talk more about it at the time. Today we would almost think of somebody dying at age 70 it's like, oh, wow, they went early. And even back in those days, people lived a lot longer than 70 years, but they didn't necessarily live more than did David in 70 years.

There are those people who we look up to and I bet you do too. Those people who just seem to pack more life into a time span than do other people. They may live only to 70 years or even less, but we look at their lives and we say, man, they lived a full life. They lived like 2 or 3 life experiences in the course of their 1 lifetime. They just lived it fully and powerfully, and David was one of those kinds of men.

But as he summarizes his life, he begins by saying, “*The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel:*”

Isn't that interesting? What would you say about yourself if you were writing a

summary of your life? I mean, what things would you say that sort of characterize or depict your life?

I think it's interesting that the very first thing that David says here. He says, "*the oracle of David, the son of Jesse.*" David never forgot that he was the son of Jesse. You might say, well, what is that really all about? Well, it's not much. Jesse was really just a humble commoner. There was no royalty in that family line. Jesse was just a man, and to be the son of Jesse was essentially for David to say, the son of just really a very, very common man.

But this is this is something I would expect David to say as he begins to speak about his own pedigree and his own life in his past. I would expect him to say, David, the son of Jesse, because he was a very humble man. And he understood that he came from very humble roots. David knew and understood that as the king of Israel, he was a man who wasn't in line to be the king of Israel. He was a man who wasn't expected to be the king of Israel.

In fact, you'll remember when Samuel came to anoint him as king of over Israel, he didn't know it was going to be specifically David. He just came to Jesse and said, one of your sons, let me see them, cause one of them is destined for something great. So Jesse brought out all his sons except David and had them all parade past Samuel. And yeah, oh boy, he's big and tall and handsome and strong and stuff, but he's not the one. And the next one, the next one.

Finally, is that it? Well, I didn't call them all. There's David, that little scrawny kid that's out with the sheep. And Samuel says, go get him, send for him. We're not going to eat until he comes.

David comes before Samuel and the Lord says, rise and anoint him for this is the king of Israel. David understood. David never forgot that he came from the sheep pen, that he came from the pasture. He's a farmer. He was a humble farmer and farmers were considered very humble in that culture and in most other cultures of that time.

In fact, for the Egyptians, to be a shepherd was a degrading sort of a thing to admit. But not for the Jews, but it was a humble thing. And David never lost sight of that.

And here at the end of his life, Jesse is long since gone, and yet David begins the summary of his life by saying David, the son of Jesse. And I think this is just such a good thing for you and I to remember.

The apostle Paul never lost sight of who he had been B.C. too. B.C. of course, before Christ. And he talked in some of his letters about, his life before Jesus. He never, he had to get past it emotionally. And I know that he believed he was forgiven for all the things that he did, but he never lost sight of it. He never forgot God raised me up to be an apostle, though I am the least of all the apostles, he said. In fact, he referred to himself as one abnormally born, in the sense that I shouldn't be here.

It was all God's grace that I am here at all before you as an apostle because see I persecuted the Christians. I wanted them dead. I wanted to grab them by the scruff of the neck and drag him into court and I wanted to see them sentenced for their belief in this Jesus who I thought was a nobody. And yet now I am an apostle of the very church that I persecuted so I don't deserve to be here. But he never let lost sight of that.

And, have you, it's one thing interesting about age, I wouldn't have known this until I started getting older. But there's one interesting thing about age that comes with age and with the experience of age. Sometimes we can lose sight of where we've been. Sometimes we can forget our humble beginnings.

As a pastor teacher, I could forget, that it was just flat out God's mercy and grace that picked me up out of the slime pit, and saved me just like you. None of us deserved to be saved. And when we think about who we were before we got saved, the kind of people that we were, we're not impressed. But see, with age, you can begin to forget some of that. And you can, it can begin to cool or even fade a little bit in your memory. Don't ever forget. Not so that you'll feel bad about yourself, so you'll understand how good God's grace is.

He says, “...*David, the son of Jesse.*” The next thing he says about himself, he says, this is “*the oracle of the man who was raised on high.*” That's the next thing he says is that God bent down, took hold of this lowly little shepherd boy that wasn't worth a plug nickel and raised him up on high. The Bible says that you and I as believers are seated with Christ in heaven. (Ephesians 2:6)

Did you know that? Did you know that you are even now seated with Christ in heaven? That is by faith, right? So you've been lifted up. You could say the same thing. About your own, relationship with God. I have been lifted up and seated on high with Christ.

Next he says that this is the oracle of “*the anointed of the God of Jacob.*” And what is the word, anointing? Well, you know that it was symbolized with oil

back in those days. In fact, it was symbolized with oil even in the New Testament.

When oil was poured over someone and it was poured over David's head when he was anointed king of Israel, it was a picture of the blessing and the calling of the Lord. It all, it's all about calling. David never let go of the fact that he had been called by God. That's a very important thing for somebody to maintain a real sense of perspective about. Here's why.

If somebody has advanced themselves to whatever position they're in. Whether it's ministry or whatever it may be. And you know that, you know, that you know, that this was your idea. This wasn't God's. All kinds of doubts and issues begin to creep in about your life and whether or not you have a rightful place to where you are right now and so forth.

David understood that he was anointed by God. He was called by God to be what he was in Israel. A king, a singer, songwriter, worshiper, and that sort of thing. He knew and understood that was his calling before the Lord. And when you know your calling, there is a sense of stability and a sense of... I'm struggling for a good word, but a sense of strength that you know this can't be taken from you because it was given by God. Well, if it can, it's only going to be taken away by God and David knew that.

And when there were threats to his kingship, he knew that ultimately it had to be God who was going to unseat him. If anybody was going to unseat him, it had to be God, because he was the one who put him there, you see. But he understood that it wasn't an issue of man.

Do you remember when Paul would write his letters? He would say, Paul, he'd start them off, Paul, an apostle by the will of God, right? Do you know what he was doing the exact same thing David was doing here. He was saying, Paul, an apostle anointed by God or called by God. He was saying that because he wanted it understood among people, I did not advance myself to this position. Okay. I have great security in my understanding that this is a work of God.

Now boy, if anybody ever comes to me and says, I feel like the Lord may be leading me to the mission field. I have one thing to say to them. You better be sure of your calling. Because let me tell you one thing, you go into the mission field and it will be tried. It will be tested as to whether or not you're really called. So if somebody were to say to me, I don't know, maybe I think the Lord might be calling me to the mission field. Well, I'd say, well, you better be sure.

That's not one of those things you want to go try out. You need to know for certain this is the calling of the Lord.

Frankly, it's important in any ministry, but there are some ministries that will test it and try it more than others. I got to tell you in 30 some years of pastoring, my calling has been tested and tried, and I've had to go back before the Lord. Okay, God, let's talk here again. Because if you're not sure, then the difficulties and the challenges that come, you're going to think to yourself, wait a minute, did I bring this on myself? Did I bring all these headaches into my own life? Did I bring all this grief and drama into... Was this my doing? If that's the case, I think I'll do something else.

But, when it's the calling of the Lord, it's like, God, this is what's happening because You called me. Do you understand the difference? Do you understand the place it puts you in, by faith? You can now say to God, You called me here, You take care of me here. You brought me into this place, I trust that You're going to give me the ability to walk through this time to see me through these kinds of difficulties, these dramas.

Let me say something I can say to you from experience, God is faithful to take care of those to whom He has called. When He calls you, listen, you know what we'd like to say around here, where God guides, God provides. It is true. And there's been drama and there's been difficulty and there's been all kinds of issues that we've dealt with in the past, but God is faithful.

But that's one of the reasons, why you'll hear about somebody who goes into the ministry, and it might be whether, it might be somebody who's in a ministry in a church, or somebody who goes into like a full time ministry, where they're paid on staff or something like that. And they leave after a period of time all discouraged and despondent about it, because life got hard. But see, it's not just that life got hard. That's not what caused them to leave. What caused them to leave was they didn't really truly believe that was where God called them.

Because when you believe that it's where God called you, it's like, well, hey, this is God's problem, right? This is God's problem. And He called me here. And so I'm going to just persevere and I'm going to be faithful to do what God's called me to do. I'm going to let Him take care of the problems and He does. He's so good at it. Anyway, the anointed of God, just a very important thing.

Notice the last thing he uses to describe himself, *"the sweet psalmist of Israel:"* Isn't that a crazy a definition? This is a king who cut people's heads off. He cut off Goliath's head, you know that, don't you? And yet he's *"the sweet psalmist."*

It almost sounds like a contradiction, doesn't it? I mean, here is a guy who loved the Lord, and he loved being in the presence of God. But he was also a warrior. He was a man, and he wasn't afraid to strap on his sword and go to battle, but he also loved God. I love that about him, and I love that he was such an amazing king.

If there's one thing that we've seen from our study of 1 and 2 Samuel, particularly here now, 2 Samuel, is that David did not have a perfect reign. Far from it. I mean, David's reign was filled with issues, drama, challenges. And when you stop and think about it, when you look at his reign alongside his son, Solomon, who will come after him, Solomon appears to have a much greater reign in many respects.

For example, Solomon reigned over more territory than did his father, David. Had a larger, I mean, Israel took more land during the time of Solomon's reign than it did during David's reign. Solomon lived at peace, relatively speaking, compared to his father David. Solomon built the temple. Under Solomon's reign, the temple went up and it was glorious. The kingdom was far richer under Solomon than it was under David.

So when we look at the reigns of these two men; David and Solomon, we look and it would probably be easy for us to look from the outside and say, well, Solomon's reign was greater than was in fact David's by comparison.

But I want to ask you a question. When you think about God's long-term redemptive program, which of course involves Messiah, Who do you hear about? Do you hear about David or do you hear about Solomon? You hear about David, don't you? It's David who you hear about. In fact, let me show you a passage from Matthew. The very beginning of Matthew's Gospel. Look at it, look at the very first words of this account.

Matthew 1:1 (ESV)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David...

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David...

It's not the son of Solomon, it's the son of David. In fact, when the people would address Him in public, they would call it out to Him saying, “*son of David, have mercy on me.*” (Luke 18:38) Son of David, help me. Now we know what that means. They knew what that meant. It meant Messiah. Son of David was synonymous with Messiah. Isn't that interesting? And yet Solomon, his son, had

comparatively a greater reign from the standpoint of all the exterior sorts of things.

What does that tell you about some of those peripheral sorts of, things that go along with a great reign like money, wealth and land and power? It tells you, doesn't it? That's really not everything that God considers to be the most important, right?

What was important to God? If it's not, if it's not money and the amount of land that they reign over and stuff like that, then what is it exactly? What is the thing that really just gets to the heart of God? Well, it really comes down to what these two men desired.

And we talk about Solomon. Solomon had an incredible thing happen to him in his lifetime. He got a wish that God said that He would grant for him. He said, anything you want just ask and I'll give it to you. That's something that you probably dream about. I mean, movies have been made right on, on just that premise of somebody getting the quintessential, genie in a bottle option of, hey, you name it, you've got it. So that happened to Solomon.

And we get to that in the Scripture and we look at what happened. And Solomon was a man who was, he was fairly young. He felt very ill equipped to lead the people of Israel. So when God came to him and said, just ask, I'll give you whatever you want. We know that Solomon asked for wisdom and that was a very good thing to ask for. There was nothing specifically wrong with that. That was Solomon's desire that he would be wise. And we look at that and we go, it's cool. That's cool. But you know what was better? David's desire was better. Solomon's was good. David's was better.

You know what David's desire was? That I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That I may behold His beauty. That was David's desire. That was his heart and that was better.

And because David's heart was to be in the presence of God, to behold the beauty of the Lord, he had a heart for the Lord that issued forth in all these beautiful Psalms. And his relationship with God was so different than the relationship of so many.

I remember as a teenager when I started having my flirtations with God. And that's essentially what they were. I started flirting with the Lord from the standpoint of reading the Bible and praying and wanting to know more. I wasn't really interested in walking with God as a teenager. And I didn't do it until I was

in my 20s. But when I was a teenager, I started asking God for things. And I remember at about age 15, 16, I started, I was very impressed with Solomon. And I was impressed that God was willing to give Solomon wisdom. And so I started praying very fervently over a protracted period of time, God, give me wisdom.

And then I read further into the story. And I realized that at the end of Solomon's life his wisdom even became compromised by his heart and his devotions. It says, he held fast to his wives, his foreign wives in love and his relationship with God was corrupted. And I remember reading that after praying for a long period of time, God give me wisdom. And I thought, wait a minute, this isn't good.

Here's a man who had more wisdom than any other human on the face of the earth. Save that, of course, of Jesus himself. And yet he was corrupted in his relationship with God. And I thought, well, this won't do. I want something that's going to keep me close to God.

Even as a teenager, I recognized that something had to change in me if I was going to stick with God, because even then I had a sense that boy, there's a lot to pull me away. There's a lot of stuff in this world that could drag my heart away from God. So what can I pray for that's going to keep me there. Well, apparently wisdom wasn't it.

And it took me a lot longer to find out that what David had was the real deal. And that was a heart for God. That longed for Him, that longed for Him. Are you convicted by that at all? Because I want to tell you right now, I am. I am convicted when I read about how David longed for a relationship with God.

I'm convicted about so many things in my life that seem to sometimes just take precedence over my desire to just be with Him and so forth. David is to us such a, such an amazing example.

Also when you consider the prophets who speak of the future of Israel, ever, from the life of David. David's life on earth came to an end. Certainly. I mean, he went to, he's with the Lord now. But even after he passed from the earthly scene, do you know how you... Read through the prophets, read through Isaiah and Jeremiah. And then go on into the minor prophets, you will hear over and over again and over again, Israel referred to this way; house of David. Not house of Solomon, house of David. The house of David. And usually not always, usually, house of David is used in a positive sense where God is talking about the blessings and so forth. Again, not always, but David is so great.

There's also a prophetic, I would say more than a hint that during the Millennial Kingdom. You guys know that Jesus is going to rule and reign during the Millennial Kingdom, right? The Lord Jesus is going to return after that seven year tribulation. We are going to return with Him, and He is going to rule and reign from Jerusalem. And He's going to rule over the nations of the world. You guys know that, right?

But do you know that there's other people that are going to reign too? In fact, do you know that the Bible says we will reign with Him? It doesn't say exactly how. You might get a city block. You might get a house to reign over. I don't know. You might get a town. But, there is reason to believe that David who will return also in a glorified body, will reign over Israel. Let me show it to you. It's in Hosea chapter 3, verse 5, where it says,

Hosea 3:5 (ESV)

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

And this is a prophetic reference to the time frame of the Millennial Kingdom. Isn't it interesting saying that the children of God are going to return, and they're going to worship the Lord their God, they're going to seek the Lord their God, and they're going to seek David, their king.

Now this was written way past David when, his earthly life. So this is talking about something in the future. Well, speaking of that time in the Millennial Kingdom. Interesting, isn't it? Of all the kings of Israel, and again, David's reign was not perfect by any means. And yet, boy, we see how David is just so blessed of the Lord.

Well, we've gotten through verse 1. We better keep moving. Verse 2 goes on and says, "*The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.*" This is not a prideful statement. David is simply making a statement very similar to what many other prophets in the Old Testament do. That the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and He is speaking through me.

And David was very aware of his prophetic ministry. Here was a king who was also a prophet. David was prophetic. In the New Testament, it actually comes

out and says, David is a prophet. David was a prophet. We know that there are whole chapters of the Bible that David wrote that prophetically speak of Messiah.

In fact, for those of you who have studied the cross, and how Jesus was crucified on the cross, and what He suffered on the cross, David goes into more detail in the Psalms about the suffering of Jesus on the cross, than any other biblical writer. Isn't that interesting? David gives us more insights about how Christ suffered. And so it's just amazing. David recognized, he was very aware of the prophetic ministry that God had given him.

And it says in verse 3, *"The God of Israel has spoken; (and here's what He says) the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,⁴ he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth."*

Notice He's talking about all kinds of blessings, right? Don't you love waking up on a beautiful morning when the sun is just pouring in through your bedroom window? And you look out and you see things growing, and green grass, and hopefully green grass, and all kinds of other things that just look healthy and beautiful. It's the blessing of the Lord.

And David says when somebody rules justly, in other words, rules well, it's like the Lord's blessing. It's the hand of the Lord blessing that those people, and in a sense, he's speaking of his own past as a king. And in another sense, he's speaking of Messiah who rules and reigns over men and the blessing of the Lord that comes through His reign.

And then he says in verse 5, he says, *"For does not my house stand so with God?"* In other words, is not my house likened under this blessing. Now, what is David saying here? Is he saying my reign has been so great that God has blessed through me?

No, he is now beginning to speak of the coming of Messiah, and we know that because if you go on and read, it says, *"For he has made with me (underline this in your mind) an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?"*

David is saying, my house has been enhanced by the promise of God that Messiah would come through me. David knew that he, God had promised him, you will never cease to have someone ruling and reigning on the throne, right? And he knew that, that ultimately referred to Messiah.

Verse 6, David loves to give contrasts and he says, *“But worthless men (or your Bible may say, the sons of rebellion) are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; (or picked up with the hand) ⁷ but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.”* And of course, fire is always a picture of judgment. And David often wrote about how God's justice would one day be established on the earth. Remember, he would say that. He would say that concerning his enemies.

He knew that they would answer to God one day. He knew it and he wrote about it, a lot. And he comforted himself. Not by taking vengeance, but by saying, the Lord's going to take care of this. All right.

Now, the rest of the chapter, verse 8 through the end, deals with the mighty men of David. And before we get into these names and the men who go along with it, it's important to note something here about these mighty men. And we're going to read a little bit about some of their exploits and what made them mighty and so forth.

But one of the things that you're not going to read here, that I feel the necessity to bring out, is that largely what made these men mighty. And they're going to talk about the things they did but beyond the things they did, what made these men mighty really, was the fact that they were with David. They hung out with a giant killer. David was a giant killer from his teenage years and he was known and they sang songs about him. We know that.

And when these men came to him and aligned themselves with him, there was a greatness that God bestowed upon David that trickled down to these men who came and aligned themselves with him. And it's really cool to see. These guys, a lot of these guys that we're going to read about here were losers before they really connected with David.

In fact, we're told that when David was on the run against Saul, that some men started to gather around him. Do you know what the description is about those men? It says that they were in distress, in debt, and bitter in soul. Sounds like a great group of guys, right? In debt, in distress, and in bitterness. They were mad, they were in debt, and they were in distress. And those were David's men.

And through the blessing of the Lord, David, eventually... He doesn't take vengeance against Saul. And over time he takes the kingdom and these men become mighty men. They become mighty men. We've seen this happen. We've seen this happen in interesting other sorts of pictures. I won't get into detail, but

for those of you who are into the NFL, I've seen quarterbacks who are so good, that they make their teammates look good. And then when those players go off to play for another team, they never, ever reach the level of greatness that they did under that one quarterback. Because he was so good, he made them look good. And I could get into specifics about the Minnesota Vikings, but I won't. But anyway, but there's a story there too. You can ask me afterwards. I'd love to tell you. I mean, I'd really love to tell you, so ask me, okay? Okay.

Anyway. There's one other thing quickly about this that I want to say before we get into these men. There's something very cool about the fact that David allowed men to be great around him. Because, he came from a man who—Saul—who didn't, couldn't, wouldn't, would not allow men to be great around him. Anybody was great and David was great, but Saul wouldn't allow it. It drove him insane.

There's something very cool about a man who is willing to invest in others and say, do this and be great. Be great in your own gifting. Be great in what you do in the things of the Lord. I want to multiply the kingdom in this way and bless the kingdom in this way. Do what you've been given to do. Take the gifts that you've been given and do them. And we're not going to be insulted. We're not going to be insecure. We're not going to be threatened by each other. We're just going to serve the Lord. You know what I mean? That's a very good thing. David wasn't afraid.

Alright, verse 8. *These are the names of the mighty men whom David had:* (you've got to wonder if they called this guy by some short name. I think I probably would have called him Josh) *Josheb-basshebeth (yeah) a Tahchemonite;...*”

All right, I got to confess something to you. Okay. Can I just stop for a moment to do that? I have a really nifty little program on my computer that, in fact, I've got two actually. But there's one of them that when I look at, see a name that comes up on the screen that I is really, really difficult, I can just right click on it and one of the options is hear it pronounced. But can I tell you, I need to tell you when I clicked on this name, there was nothing. It was like, sorry dude, you're on your own, because we don't have a clue how to say this. So, I just want you to know, as I'm struggling through this, I didn't get any help, okay? Just wanted you to know, it's probably all pride on my part, but there you go.

Anyway, it says that this guy that we'll call Josh, “...*was chief of the three.*” Now, “*the three*” is a reference to three men who had distinguished themselves among all the others. All right. There were three men who stood head and

shoulders above all the rest as mighty men. And this guy that we're calling Josh was one of the three. Then it says here, in fact, it says "*he was chief of the three.*" He distinguished himself as the leader of the three. Okay. So he was number one of the three.

And it says here that "*He wielded his spear* (now check this out you guys, you ready?) *against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.*" Or in other words, in one battle. "*He wielded his spear against eight hundred men*" and prevailed. Is there any doubt in your mind why this man should not be chief of the three, of the top three, the top tier guys, David's mighty man, this guy is the chief. It's interesting we don't hear about this guy. Really, I mean, his name, good thing his name didn't come up again or we would have had to pronounce it a lot, but still, he was an incredible man.

And it says in verse 9 that "*And next to him among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo,* (don't go teasing him about his dad's name because he's one of the three mighty men, and he was also) *son of Ahohi.* (by the way, when it says son of, that means first is his dad and then his grandfather. Or it might be the other way around; grandfather and then dad. But it says) *He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle,* (I don't know and look at this. Look at what it says at the end of verse 9) *and the men of Israel withdrew.*"

In other words, the rest of the army ran. They thought that this isn't going well. This battle isn't going to go for us. It's going to go against us. Run for your lives. So what does this guy named Eliezer do? It says he "*defied the Philistines,*" right?

Well, look what it goes on to say in verse 10. "*He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword.*" Have you ever had that happen? When you've been holding onto something so tight you can't even get your fingers to loosen their grip anymore? Your muscles are so tightened and so forth. And it says, "*And the LORD brought about a great victory that day, and the men returned after him only to strip the slain.*"

In other words, here's this guy, who's so mighty, That the rest of the army runs in fear, and he goes, no! And he says, I'm going to defy these enemies of the Lord. And he goes against them and he fights against them and struck them down to the point where he couldn't even begin, couldn't get his fingers off his sword. And it says, when the rest of the army heard what was going on and they said, hey, maybe we should go out there. By the time they got there, the only thing left to do was to strip the dead. In other words, take their implements of

war from them, right? Because this guy had beat the Philistine army and we don't know how many it was. But he did it alone. He did it single handedly.

And it says, “*And the LORD brought about a great victory that day, ...*” Did you catch that? Did you catch that the Lord brought about a great victory that day? Those words aren't there by mistake. What you're reading there is that God did through this man, what He did through David when he defeated Goliath. The Lord brought about a great victory.

Do you see what's going on here? These men are walking in David's footsteps as it relates to faith in God. Listen, you don't go up against, single handedly against a Philistine army and win. You just don't do that. One man doesn't just kill 800 warriors. It doesn't happen you guys, apart from the Lord. These are God things here.

And that's what the writer is trying to get you and I to see. This is the Lord's doing. But more than that, these men are walking in the footsteps of David, just like a teenager doesn't go up against an 8 foot, some, seasoned warrior and defeat him. Just doesn't happen. With God, right? It can happen. Sure. And that's what these men are doing. Do you see these are exploits of faith.

Guys, do you understand? This is important for us to see. I think this is really vital. These guys are very cool guys, but the coolest part about them is they had faith in God. They trusted the Lord and He empowered them to do what they could not do. And that is what the Lord does.

In the New Testament, we call it the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That baptism enables you and I to do what we can't do, what we're not able to do. Persevere, be victorious, walk in the gifts of the Spirit to accomplish the things of the Lord in the kingdom of God, which is a spiritual kingdom. You're going to try to do that in the flesh? That's not a good idea because you can't.

But you know what? God will empower you. to do it. What did Jesus say to the disciples? “*...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit... (comes) upon you,*” and you'll be enabled to be my witnesses in ways that you couldn't be all on your own. (Acts 1:8)

You see the mighty men, you guys, the mighty men, these guys are men of faith. These are men who took the power of God and believed that he would empower them to do great things. Let me tell you something. There, there really aren't any great people. There's just a great God and the people who believe that God can do great things through them.

Verse 11 says, *“And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. (and this is the third of the three, and we’re told about him that) The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. (So you have another situation where the rest of the army runs off) ¹² But he (Shammah) took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD (again, look at there: and the LORD) worked a great victory.”*

Those are probably some statements that you should underline in your Bible. The Lord worked a great victory. The Lord. Do you believe God still works great victories? That's the really important question that you and I need to ask ourselves tonight. Does the Lord still work great victories? All right.

Now in addition to the three, there were also men referred to as, *“the thirty.”* And it goes on in verse 13 to say, *“And three of the thirty chief men went down and came about harvest time to David at the cave of Adullam, when a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem.”*

This is personal now because this is David's hometown. Okay, if you were born in Vail, or Nyssa, or New Plymouth, or here in Ontario and the enemy came and took your town, and now you have an army, and you're going to take it back. This is personal. David was born and raised in Bethlehem and now the Philistines have captured it, and they have essentially occupied it and David's in this stronghold nearby.

And it says in verse 15 that *“...David said longingly, “Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!””* Now David was not giving a command here. David was not, don't think of it like he was sitting around pining, like a weakling. Oh, if I only had a drink of water. David was a warrior, he could do what he needed to do and get done what...

He was remembering his days back in Bethlehem. He's probably talking to the guys. Guys, there is a well by the gate of Bethlehem, and I tell you some, I grew up and we used to drink from that well as a kid. And you know what, that is the sweetest water I have ever tasted in my life. I just have such good memories of growing up and hanging around that well and drinking from that well. Oh, how I would love to have a drink of water from that well, right now, wouldn't that be? And three other guys heard him say it, and they got together and said, let's go get him one. And so remember, this town is occupied by the Philistines, right? This is great, so it goes on here.

It says that they, *“¹⁶ Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and carried and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it. He poured it out to the LORD ¹⁷ and said, “Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?” Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.”* In other words, the three of the thirty.

But it's funny. You and I, we're Americans, we read this story and we're like, wow! That sounds like you're ungrateful David. I mean, these guys, they went, they, at the risk of their lives, they went and got this water for you to drink. And then you poured it out. What is it? We look at that and we go, David, what's the problem here.

But you know what? The guys who did it, when they saw David do it, they didn't think David was an ingrate. They thought David was a pretty incredible guy because they understood that what he was doing. In essence, he was saying, I'm not worthy of this. That's what he was saying. He was saying this is so valuable. In other words, he was ascribing value to their efforts. And so he didn't just pour it out on the ground. He didn't just go, oh, thanks guys.

It says he poured it out before the Lord. In other words, he offered it to God. So he said, I'm not worthy of this, God is. And he says, I so value the effort of what you did to risk your lives to get this that I'm not worthy of taking it myself. And besides these guys got in there to get a drink of water, three of them. I figured the army probably just said, okay, the rest of us, let's go down and drink all we want because these guys paved the way.

But anyway, verse 18 goes on. We learned about another one and we've heard about this man before. *“Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the thirty.* (so he was the chief of the thirty) *And he wielded his spear against three hundred men and killed them and won a name beside the three.”* Alright? So it says in verse 19, *“He was the most renowned of the thirty and became their commander, but he did not attain to the three.”* All right.

Verse 20, *“And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a valiant man of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds. He struck down two ariels of Moab.”* Your Bible instead of ariels may say, *“lion like heroes.”* And if you have a New American Standard Bible (NASB), it may say, *“two sons of aerial.”* Here's the bottom line. We don't really know what aerial means. We're not positive what it means. Suffice it to say, it was a big deal.

And it says that, *“He also went down and struck down a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. (verse 21) And he struck down an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but Benaiah went down to him with a staff and snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²² These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and won a name beside the three mighty men. ²³ He was renowned among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. And David set him over his bodyguard.”* Or your Bible may just say, *“over his guard.”*

Verse 24 says, *“Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty;...”* You remember Asahel? Remember, he was the guy who could have won any race, probably should have been in the Olympics. But he was killed by Abner during the war between the northern tribes and the southern tribes, just after David had become king of Judah.

And then the rest of the verses are filled with names, which are really just an exercise in pronunciation. And so, it doesn't give any details about why they were a part of the thirty, so I'll let you read them yourself. And you can just pick some wonderful names there for your children someday.

But you'll notice in verse 39 it says, *“Uriah the Hittite: (so it adds him, and then it says) thirty-seven in all.”* You might say, well, wait a minute, why did they call him the thirty if there were thirty seven? Well, some of them obviously died. We know of two. We know Uriah the Hittite and we know that Asahel died, so they were obviously replacing these men as they died. And so there are 37 that are named, but they called them the thirty in addition to the three.

Chapter 24. *“Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, “Go, number Israel and Judah.”* In other words, go take a census.

Now this is interesting because it says here that the Lord incited David against Israel. That's an interesting statement, particularly in light of the fact that in 1 Chronicles chapter 21, we find out a bit more detail. It says,

<u>1 Chronicles 21:1 (ESV)</u>

<i>Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.</i>
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Then Satan (it's telling the same story, *Then Satan*) *stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.*

What's going on here? Who incited David to count the fighting men? Listen, you need to understand something. 1 Chronicles gives us specifics. Satan did the inciting. God gave him permission. Understand something about Satan. He doesn't make a peep without God's permission. God is sovereign and the word sovereign, means overall. And that includes Satan, he is a created being. And he must have permission.

We see this over and over again in the Word. Read the Book of Job. Satan did some pretty nasty things against Job. You remember? God gave him permission in every case. Satan was given permission under God's sovereignty to go and do things so that God's will might be done. And it may tweak your theology a little bit to hear me say that, that God might use Satan to accomplish His will, but He does.

At the Last Supper, Jesus just is telling the disciples that this very night they're all going to fall away from Him. Peter rises up in great pride and says, maybe them, not me. Jesus says something very interesting to Peter. Peter, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I've prayed for you. (Luke 22:31) You know what that means? I said, yes, but I've prayed for you. When you return, strengthen your brothers. Satan had to ask. Okay? We have way too much activity ascribed to Satan as an agent of woe that we feel he is just free to come and do only as he wants.

Listen, even Satan is used by the hand of God. And for those who are in Christ, particularly, there are Scriptures that make it very clear that though you are to respect Satan and what he can do, you are not to fear him. You are not to be afraid. You are to fear the Lord, not the enemy.

But it says here... And by the way, it doesn't say why David wanted... God's obviously dealing with something in David, okay? For God to give Satan permission to incite him to count the fighting men, God is dealing with something in Satan. We're not told specifically what it is. There are hints. And the strong hint in this passage is that it's pride. Okay. We'll just say that. But it doesn't come out blatantly and say it. We have to, it infers. Okay.

It goes on. It says, *"² So the king said to Joab, the commander of the army, who was with him, 'Go through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the number of the people.'"* ³ *But Joab said to the king, 'May the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see it, but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?'"* Joab tries to talk him out of it.

Let me just say something very quickly. When a guy like Joab objects to any course of action that you are doing you better listen because this man is not known. I mean, he may be known for being loyal, but he is also known for being cruel. He is known for being very self-willed. And when men like that begin to see the error of your way, it probably means it's pretty bad.

And yet David doesn't respond. It says in verse 4, *"But the king's word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. (So there were others who spoke against it) So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel."*

And then it tells us in verse 5, 6, 7, and 8, where they went. *"They crossed the Jordan..."* Da, da, da. Goes through all the places that they went to. And it tells us in verse 8, that *"when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days."* That took a long time. Almost 10 full months.

Verse 9. *"And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: in Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000."* In other words, 1.3 million.

Verse 10. *"But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people."* And this is where it sure seems that this was an issue of pride, because he wanted to know how big his fighting force was. And it appears now that once he gets the number, he's conscience stricken about it. And he realizes that he has engaged in a prideful act.

Well, what's so prideful about counting the people? Well, here's the deal. God actually gave them rules for counting the people in the Book of Exodus. When you count the people, do it this way. So counting the people wasn't the big, bad, ugly of the story. There's got to be something to David's heart. And that's always difficult for you and I to see unless the Scripture just comes out and tells us he was prideful in his heart. But we can presume, I guess to some degree because he hears this number of men. And he is conscience stricken because apparently he's trying to establish some sense of strength.

You know, how strong am I? Well, you guys know, don't you? That numbers don't matter when it comes to strength. And that's probably why Joab tried to talk him out of it. It's like, David, have numbers ever been an issue? I mean, every battle we've ever really gone into, we were outnumbered. I mean, there were always bigger armies, with bigger chariots, and bigger bazookas, and they didn't really have that, but you know what I mean. They had implements of

warfare that were better than ours and we beat them every time. So why are you wanting to count the fighting men? What's the point of this?

And we're in the middle of verse 10, *"And David said to the LORD, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly.'"*¹¹ And when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, (who always gives David some bad news) *David's seer, (or prophet) saying,*¹² *"Go and say to David, 'Thus says the LORD, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.'"*¹³ So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, *"Shall three years of famine come to you in your land?"*

Here's one of his options. How would you like that? Three years of famine. You're the leader of a nation of people. Do you know how many people would probably die in three years of famine? So that's what's being offered.

"Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me."

And it's interesting, isn't it? I don't remember another, in the Scripture, maybe I'm mistaken, but I don't recall another time when somebody was given a choice of consequences. Reminds you of, let's make a deal in a weird twisted sort of a way, except behind those doors. Usually there was like one bad thing and two really good things. In this situation, there's three really bad things. Three years of famine or three months of running from your enemies, or three days of pestilence, disease and so forth.

And it appears that God is giving David a choice because He is responding to the fact that what David did was a deliberate choice on his part. And *"¹⁴ Then David said to Gad, 'I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of man.'*"

And what David is doing here is he's saying, whatever we do, he's basically saying I'll take door one or three, whatever it is, let it be the hand of the Lord. I don't want to fall into the hands of men. Why? David says it here. His mercy is great. David knew something about the heart of God. He knew that His mercy was great.

"¹⁵ So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men." That's a lot of people. Can you imagine if you woke up tomorrow and found out that

70,000 people died last night? Every single news source in the land would be there, on the spot, reporting it, right? 70,000.

“¹⁶ And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. (your Bible may say Ornan, another name for him) ¹⁷ Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, “Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house.”

¹⁸ And Gad came that day to David and said to him, “Go up, raise an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” ¹⁹ So David went up at Gad's word, as the LORD commanded. ²⁰ And when Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming on toward him. And Araunah went out and paid homage to the king with his face to the ground. ²¹ And Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” David said, “To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be averted from the people.” (and) ²² Then Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. ²³ All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king.” And Araunah said to the king, “May the LORD your God accept you.” (listen to this) ²⁴ But the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. ²⁵ And David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.”

The idea, and we're going to close with this, but the idea of cost related to the things that we give to the Lord is an interesting concept. But David understood that this is all about worship. This is what it means to worship God.

He knew that men will sacrifice to whatever they consider to be their God. Just remember this. If you remember nothing else from tonight, you will sacrifice for your God. You will. All of us will. We will gladly sacrifice whatever it takes. Time, money, effort, energy, whatever it, takes to worship our God.

If your God is drugs, you will do whatever it takes to have that God in your life. And you can say, I worship the Lord God, but whatever you will do anything for is in fact, truly your God. If your God is entertainment. Again, you will give

it your time. You will give it your attention. You will give it your money. If your God is money, you will do whatever it takes to have that God in your life. Even if it means saying goodbye to your family. If your God is toys, you will sacrifice anything in your path to have that God in your life.

I was so blessed a few years ago. Remember, we showed that movie Fireproof. You guys remember that movie, Kirk Cameron? It was a great, it was a great Christian movie about a man who did not know the Lord but was really living for toys and he was saving up money to buy this boat. I think he had like 25,000 and he was saving this money and this was just his dream. He was married to a woman whose parents were in bad health and she wanted to do something to help them. And she was drawn to another man who was beginning to express some level of concern and help toward her parents. Her husband was being nothing but a big selfish bore.

And eventually he realized through being challenged by his own father, that he didn't truly love his wife. He loved other things and he was serving other gods. And at the end of the movie, you come to understand that he has taken this money that was his god, and he's given up his own desires. And instead he's given the money, even outside of his wife's knowledge, he gave it to help her parents in their health related issues. And she doesn't realize that until the end of the show. And what it shows is this interesting sort of a picture where a man is willing to say, it doesn't matter.

Now, what it takes to worship God and to be obedient to God. Which is part of worship, being obedient. And it's a beautiful story. And it's really interesting because right about the time that movie came out, and right about the time we showed it here in this room, there was a particular guy, who at the time was attending our fellowship. And was having all kinds of marital issues, and he and I were talking about it, and as we discussed more about what was going on in his life, it became very apparent that there were other gods. And it was a very similar sort of a situation as in the movie.

And I was able to, because we had just showed the movie, I was able to say, well, do you remember watching the movie? Yeah. Well, the guy realized that this was just, this was what his god was. And he had to come to terms with that and realize he was worshiping the wrong God. And if he wanted his marriage to work. If he was going to be obedient, he was going to do it at whatever cost.

And the guy looked at me and it was one of the saddest, frankly, times of my pastorate. He looked at me and he just said, no. And I mean, he was sitting in my office because he wanted me to do something to help his marriage.

I'm not a miracle worker. There's only so much that I can do, but the situation, and it's very little, by the way. The situation was something greater, was a matter of where is your heart?

How much are we willing to sacrifice to our God? Are you willing to sacrifice your marriage? Are you willing to sacrifice your family? Are you willing to sacrifice your health, which is a gift from God. Your ministry?

Here's the point. You will sacrifice to your god. You will give your time, your energy, to the things that really matter to you. We all do. So we can say all day long, I love God, I love God, I love God. I worship God. I worship God. I worship God.

David understood when Araunah said, Here, take the threshing floor. It's yours, dude. Just take it.

David said no. I will not give to my Lord anything that costs me nothing. He understood what real worship meant. Very important.

We'll close there.

And there it is. The Book of 2 Samuel.