

2 Samuel Explained & Applied 10

Ger de Koning



David: King and Father

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Contents

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible	11
Old Testament	11
New Testament	12
Explanation of general format	13
The second book of Samuel	14
Introduction	14
2 Samuel 1	15
2Sam 1:1-10 Message About Saul and Jonathan	15
2Sam 1:11-16 David's Response to the Message	17
2Sam 1:17-18 Lament of David as a Teaching Song	18
2Sam 1:19-27 The Lamentation	20
2 Samuel 2	24
2Sam 2:1-7 David King in Hebron	24
2Sam 2:8-11 Ish-bosheth King over Israel	26
2Sam 2:12-17 Abner Is Defeated by David	27
2Sam 2:18-23 Abner Kills Asahel	28
2Sam 2:24-26 Joab and Abishai Pursued Abner	29
2Sam 2:27-32 Joab Stops the Pursuit	30
2 Samuel 3	32
2Sam 3:1 The House of Saul and the House of David	32
2Sam 3:2-5 The Sons of David	32
2Sam 3:6-11 Ish-bosheth and Abner	34
2Sam 3:12-21 Abner Negotiates With David	35
2Sam 3:22-27 Joab Kills Abner	36
2Sam 3:28-30 David Condemns the Deed of Joab	38
2Sam 3:31-39 David Mourns the Death of Abner	39
2 Samuel 4	41
2Sam 4:1-3 Two Servants of Saul	41

2Sam 4:4 Mephibosheth	41
2Sam 4:5-8 Ish-bosheth Is Murdered	42
2Sam 4:9-12 David's Answer	43
2 Samuel 5	45
2Sam 5:1-5 David King over Israel	45
2Sam 5:6-9 David in Jerusalem	46
2Sam 5:10-12 David Becomes Greater and Greater	48
2Sam 5:13-16 David's Wives and Sons	48
2Sam 5:17-21 David Defeats the Philistines	49
2Sam 5:22-25 The Philistines Once Again Defeated	50
2 Samuel 6	52
2Sam 6:1-2 David Is Going to Bring up the Ark	52
2Sam 6:3-5 The Ark Transported on a New Cart	52
2Sam 6:6-8 The Death of Uzzah	53
2Sam 6:9-11 The Ark in the House of Obed-edom	55
2Sam 6:12-15 The Ark Brought into Jerusalem	56
2Sam 6:16 Michal Despises David	57
2Sam 6:17-19 Offerings and Food	58
2Sam 6:20-23 David and Michal	59
2 Samuel 7	62
Introduction	62
2Sam 7:1-3 David's Longing for the Ark	62
2Sam 7:4-7 The Answer of the LORD	63
2Sam 7:8-11 The Work of the LORD for David	64
2Sam 7:12-17 The Son of David	65
2Sam 7:18-29 David's Thanksgiving Prayer	66
2 Samuel 8	70
Introduction	70
2Sam 8:1 David Beats the Philistines	70
2Sam 8:2-6 Other Enemies Defeated	71
2Sam 8:7-12 David's Booty of War	73
2Sam 8:13-14 David Makes a Name	74
2Sam 8:15-18 Reign of David	74

2 Samuel 9	77
Introduction	77
2Sam 9:1-4 David Wants to Show Kindness	77
2Sam 9:5-13 Mephibosheth With David	78
2 Samuel 10	82
Introduction	82
2Sam 10:1-5 The Men of David Greatly Humiliated	82
2Sam 10:6-14 David Sends Joab to Battle	84
2Sam 10:15-19 David Goes to War	86
2 Samuel 11	87
Introduction	87
2Sam 11:1-5 Adultery of David With Bathsheba	87
2Sam 11:6-13 David and Uriah	89
2Sam 11:14-25 David Lets Uriah Be Killed	91
2Sam 11:26-27 David Takes Bathsheba to Be His Wife	92
2 Samuel 12	95
2Sam 12:1-6 A Rich, a Poor and a Traveler	95
2Sam 12:7-9 David Faced With His Sins	96
2Sam 12:10-13 God's Judgment on David's Sins	97
2Sam 12:14-23 The Death of the Child	98
2Sam 12:24-25 Birth of Solomon	101
2Sam 12:26-31 The City of Rabbah Captured	101
2 Samuel 13	103
Introduction	103
2Sam 13:1-2 Amnon Covets Tamar	104
2Sam 13:3-5 Amnon Gets Advice From a Friend	105
2Sam 13:6-9 Amnon Asks David for Tamar	106
2Sam 13:10-14 Amnon Violates Tamar	106
2Sam 13:15-19 Amnon Sends Tamar Away	107
2Sam 13:20-22 Reactions of Absalom and David	110
2Sam 13:23-29 Absalom Kills Amnon	111
2Sam 13:30-36 Jonadab Informs David	112
2Sam 13:37-38 Flee of Absalom	113
2Sam 13:39 David Longs for Absalom	113

2 Samuel 14	115
2Sam 14:1-3 Joab Calls a Wise Woman	115
2Sam 14:4-7 The Story of the Woman of Tekoa	115
2Sam 14:8-11 Reaction of David	116
2Sam 14:12-17 The Woman Explains the Story	117
2Sam 14:18-20 David Discovers the Hand of Joab	119
2Sam 14:21-24 Absalom Returns to Jerusalem	119
2Sam 14:25-27 Beauty of Absalom	120
2Sam 14:28-33 Absalom Forces Access to David	121
2 Samuel 15	124
Introduction	124
2Sam 15:1-6 Absalom Manipulates the People	124
2Sam 15:7-12 Conspiracy Against David	126
2Sam 15:13-18 David Flees From Absalom	127
2Sam 15:19-22 Ittai	128
2Sam 15:23-29 The Ark Goes Back to Jerusalem	130
2Sam 15:30-37 Ahithophel and Hushai	131
2 Samuel 16	133
2Sam 16:1-4 David Misled by Ziba	133
2Sam 16:5-8 Shimei Curses David	134
2Sam 16:9-14 David Bows Down Under the Curse	135
2Sam 16:15-19 Hushai Comes to Absalom	136
2Sam 16:20-23 The First Advice of Ahithophel	137
2 Samuel 17	139
2Sam 17:1-4 Further Advice of Ahithophel	139
2Sam 17:5-13 The Advice of Hushai	140
2Sam 17:14 The Counsel of Ahithophel Rejected	141
2Sam 17:15-22 Hushai Warns David	142
2Sam 17:23 Ahithophel Commits Suicide	144
2Sam 17:24-26 Camps of David and Absalom	144
2Sam 17:27-29 Friendship Service	145
2 Samuel 18	146
2Sam 18:1-5 Preparing for Battle	146
2Sam 18:6-8 The Battle	148

2Sam 18:9-18 The Death of Absalom	148
2Sam 18:19-33 David Hears About Absalom's Death	151
2 Samuel 19	155
2Sam 19:1-8 Joab Reprimands David	155
2Sam 19:9-15 David on His Way Back to Jerusalem	157
2Sam 19:16-23 David Shows Grace to Shimei	159
2Sam 19:24-30 David Meets Mephibosheth	160
2Sam 19:31-40 Farewell to Barzillai	161
2Sam 19:41-43 Israel and Judah Quarrel over David	163
2 Samuel 20	166
2Sam 20:1-2 Rebellion of Sheba	166
2Sam 20:3-10 Joab Kills Amasa	167
2Sam 20:11-22 Joab Lets Sheba Be Killed	168
2Sam 20:23-26 David's Officials	170
2 Samuel 21	172
2Sam 21:1-14 The Repayment of the Gibeonites to Saul	172
2Sam 21:15-22 Victory over the Philistines	176
2 Samuel 22	179
2Sam 22:1 The Song of David	179
2Sam 22:2-4 First Part	180
2Sam 22:5-7 Second Part	181
2Sam 22:8-20 Third Part	181
2Sam 22:21-27 Fourth Part	183
2Sam 22:28-37 Fifth Part	184
2Sam 22:38-49 Sixth Part	185
2Sam 22:50-51 Seventh Part	186
2 Samuel 23	187
Introduction	187
2Sam 23:1-7 The Last Words of David	187
2Sam 23:8-12 The First Three Heroes	190
2Sam 23:13-17 Water for David	192
2Sam 23:18-19 Abishai	192
2Sam 23:20-23 Benaiah	193

2Sam 23:24-39 Other Heroes	198
2 Samuel 24	199
Introduction	199
2Sam 24:1-9 The Registration of the People	199
2Sam 24:10-15 The Punishment for Sin	201
2Sam 24:16-17 It Is Enough	203
2Sam 24:18-25 The Altar	204
Other Publications	206

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The second book of Samuel

Introduction

The history of David, which started in 1 Samuel, continues in this book. Yet it is also a new beginning. The first book ended with the death of Saul, the king after the heart of man. This book is about David. From 1 Samuel 16 onward it also is about him. There he becomes the rejected king. Now it is about him as the crowned king.

The second book of Samuel describes the history of the kingdom of David according to the main moments of its development. We find here:

1. The beginning of the reign of David as king of Judah in Hebron, while the other tribes of Israel still adhere to the house of Saul (2 Samuel 1-4).
2. His exaltation to king over all Israel and the blessed establishment of his kingship (2 Samuel 5-9).
3. The time of the humiliation of his kingship as a result of his adultery (2 Samuel 10-20).
4. The end of his government (2 Samuel 21-24).

In 1 Chronicles 11-29 we find the same history described, also with additions to it, but more seen from the aspect of the development of the Old Testament kingdom of God. There we see a detailed description of David's efforts in the design and regulation of public service to God and the organization and affirmation of his kingdom and its administration.

2 Samuel 1

2Sam 1:1-10 | Message About Saul and Jonathan

1 Now it came about after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, that David remained two days in Ziklag. 2 On the third day, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes torn and dust on his head. And it came about when he came to David that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself. 3 Then David said to him, "From where do you come?" And he said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel." 4 David said to him, "How did things go? Please tell me." And he said, "The people have fled from the battle, and also many of the people have fallen and are dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also." 5 So David said to the young man who told him, "How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?" 6 The young man who told him said, "By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and behold, Saul was leaning on his spear. And behold, the chariots and the horsemen pursued him closely. 7 When he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I said, 'Here I am.' 8 He said to me, 'Who are you?' And I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.' 9 Then he said to me, 'Please stand beside me and kill me, for agony has seized me because my life still lingers in me.' 10 So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown which [was] on his head and the bracelet which [was] on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord."

David here is still in the area where the Philistines are in power. He is back in Ziklag two days, after he was sent away by the Philistine princes, except by Achis, as a danger for the battle against Israel. God has used it to free him from his false position. He must have been tense about the outcome of the fight in which he was not allowed to participate. Saul could not wait patiently, David could. He knows that everything is in the hand of the LORD. When God works, he can be still. He also does not send a spy to find out how the battle is going.

On the third day of his stay in Ziklag there is a report of the battle. An Amalekite brings him the tidings that Saul and Jonathan died. The man

really comes from the fight. He does not pretend. David submits the bearer of the tidings to an interrogation about the facts. He wants certainty. Here David doesn't know yet that the man who brings him this message is an Amalekite. He seems not to have been in the service of Israel or the Philistines, but an independently operating robber.

David asks several questions. In this way he discovers the true character of the man and he is kept from accepting the kingship prematurely and from the wrong hands.

The Lord Jesus is our Master in everything, even in asking questions. He did not need to ask people who came to Him questions to find out what their motives were, "for He Himself knew what was in man" (Jn 2:25). The questions He asked were meant to discover man to himself and to bring him to conversion in that way. He also silenced His questioners by His questions.

When David asks about Saul's death, the Amalekite says that he killed Saul at his request. In order to justify his deed, he speaks about Saul's death as something that would happen anyway. In 1 Samuel 31 we read how it really went (1Sam 31:4-5). This Amalekite thinks he pleases David by telling him that his great enemy is dead and that he personally took care of it. But he does not know the heart of David. He has acted completely differently than David has always done.

The man presents it as if he has done a service to Saul by killing him, and at the same time he has done a service to David. As proof that his story is true, he took some jewelry with him. Tragically, Saul has lost the kingdom by sparing the king of the Amalekites. Now he has his royal dignity taken away by an Amalekite. The Amalekite offers them to David. It is as if this man offers David the kingdom.

If David had accepted this, he would have accepted his kingship from the hand of an Amalekite. Amalek is a picture of the flesh, used by satan to fight against God. Accepting the crown means accepting the kingship. David, however, wants to accept the kingship only from the hand of the LORD his God.

2Sam 1:11-16 | David's Response to the Message

11 Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and [so] also [did] all the men who [were] with him. 12 They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. 13 David said to the young man who told him, "Where are you from?" And he answered, "I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite." 14 Then David said to him, "How is it you were not afraid to stretch out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" 15 And David called one of the young men and said, "Go, cut him down." So he struck him and he died. 16 David said to him, "Your blood is on your head, for your mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'"

The man who can wait is the man who is careful. The crown is within the reach of the hands, but its bringer is not sent by God. The eagerness with which he offers the crown is not in accordance with the spirit of David. Even before his son Solomon wrote it down in the book of Proverbs, David shows the truth of the proverb: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles" (Pro 24:17). God-fearing people are saddened when sinners suffer misfortune, no matter how much the judgment that strikes sinners may be deserved.

The spirit of grace in David is also the spirit of discernment. David sees in the approach of the Amalekite the approach of the devil, the enemy of souls. He will not be deceived by the dust on the man's head and his torn clothes and the tribute he receives.

David is here an example of the Lord Jesus. The devil came to the Lord with the offer to give Him all the kingdoms of the earth. All the Lord must do is kneel down before the devil and worship him. Then, without suffering, He shall acquire all the kingdoms. The Lord, however, lets Himself be guided in everything only by the will of His God.

He defends Himself against the devil with a word from the Scriptures: "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY'" (Mt 4:8-10). He wants to accept the kingship only from the hand of His God and in the way He has indicated: by way of the cross. He waits for the moment when God says to him: "Ask of Me, and I

will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the [very] ends of the earth as Your possession” (Psa 2:8).

David does not rejoice about the death of Saul. On the contrary, he is mourning about his death. Also “all the men” who are with David react just like him. They have taken over his character, they are formed by him. David and his men weep not only about Saul and Jonathan, but also about the people of the LORD and the house of Israel.

Saul always was and is to David, “the LORD’s anointed”, and he even still speaks so of him now. David himself has never dared or wanted to kill Saul, because he always saw Saul as the anointed of the LORD. There is respect for Saul with him. This respect is not present with this man. What this man has done is against the will of the LORD. Instead of taking the kingdom out of the hand of the Amalekite, David kills this enemy. He wants to take the kingdom only from the hand of the LORD.

For this deed, the man receives the only ‘reward’ that is appropriate: death. He did not know David’s heart by thinking that he would make him happy with such a message and deed. Maybe we are sometimes so busy that we think we are making the Lord happy, while we have assaulted someone appointed by Him, even if that person deviates so much. In that case, we need to see assaulted in a figurative sense. We can assault someone by always putting him in a bad light. This doesn’t justify the deviation, but there are cases where we must leave such a person to the Lord.

2Sam 1:17-18 | Lament of David as a Teaching Song

17 Then David chanted with this lament over Saul and Jonathan his son, 18 and he told [them] to teach the sons of Judah [the song of] the bow; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar.

David expresses his grief over the death of Saul and Jonathan in a lamentation. Saul has been his most bitter enemy and Jonathan his most dear friend, but in this song of sadness he links them together. By expressing his grief in a song, it will also arouse feelings of grief among those who hear it. The fall of the heroes is brought much closer by a song than when it is mentioned as a fact.

The emotion can be expressed better in a song than in a narrative and will therefore have a more powerful effect on the listener. The fact that the song is written down in a book also makes the effect more sustainable. The next generations, “the sons of Judah”, can share in the feelings of the past.

The sons of Judah are the children of his tribe. David has them in the first place in mind. We not only need to know things, but we also need to be able to sing about them. Not only happy songs, but also songs that have the character of lamentations. Both kinds of songs can be found in the psalms David wrote.

It is a song about the bow. The Judeans have to learn this song. Moses also taught the people a song (Deu 31:19,22,30). There is teaching in a song: “Teaching and admonishing one another with psalms [and] hymns [and] spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16). This song “is written in the book of Jashar” or “the book of the upright”. In that book is also written that Joshua made the sun and the moon stand still (Jos 10:13). This links the lamentation of David and the victory of Joshua.

However, there is a distinction. What Joshua did seems greater. Yet the demonstration of grace is greater than the demonstration of power. In the sorrow of David we see more of God’s Being than in the stopping of the sun and the moon. In the sorrow of David we see God’s heart; in the standing still of the sun and the moon we see God’s power.

The fact that the song is written in a book means in the first place that the song must be saved for the next generations who have to learn it over and over again. A book has lasting value. To call this book “the book of the upright” presupposes that it is in accordance with the righteousness of God. It is a book that belongs to ‘the Upright’, that is God. It can also mean that it is a book in which only true stories are included. Those stories will have had a great moral value. Isn’t the Bible pre-eminently “the Book of the Upright”? This is why this song is given a place in the Bible.

The song is called “[the song of] the bow”. Saul had become afraid of the archers (1Sam 31:3). David takes up this thought and teaches the use of the bow to the descendants of Judah – Judah means “praise” – so that they will not be afraid of it. Joseph, too, is besieged by archers, “but his bow

remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob” (Gen 49:23-24).

The song of the bow teaches us how to guard ourselves against the arrows of the archers and how to handle the bow ourselves. When it is about the bow in the hands of the enemy, we may know that the bow may be in the hands of the enemy, but that the arrow is controlled by our God.

In the time David is in Ziklag, there are men “who helped [him] in war. They were equipped with bows, ... [to shoot] arrows from the bow” (1Chr 12:1-2a). These men, who can handle the bow well, have fled to David and have chosen his side. Whoever becomes prey of the bow must lose. Whoever loses the bow must lose. Saul no longer had a bow, but Joseph’s bow remained firm, even when he was attacked by it. Who can handle the bow has the strength to fight.

2Sam 1:19-27 | The Lamentation

19 *“Your beauty, O Israel, is slain on your high places!*

How have the mighty fallen!

20 *“Tell [it] not in Gath,*

Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,

Or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,

The daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.

21 *“O mountains of Gilboa,*

Let not dew or rain be on you, 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 did not turn back,

And the sword of Saul did not return empty.

23 *“Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life,*

And in their death they were not parted;

They were swifter than eagles,

They were stronger than lions.

24 *“O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,*

Who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet,

Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

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

Jonathan is slain on your high places.

26 *"I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;*

You have been very pleasant to me.

Your love to me was more wonderful

Than the love of women.

27 *"How have the mighty fallen,*

And the weapons of war perished!"

The song can be divided into three parts or stanzas. Each part starts with the words "how have the mighty fallen" (verses 19,25,27). The three parts decrease in strength and size. The first part consists of verses 19-24, the second part of verses 25-26 and the third part of verse 27. The first part is about everything that can be said to the praise of the fallen mighty. We hear the deep grief about their death, the price for their braveness, their inseparable love and the qualities of Saul's government that are to be appreciated. The second part sings of David's friendship with Jonathan. The third part contains only one last sigh, with which the lamentation silences.

David sings of what Saul was, not of what he was not. Saul has been a beauty for Israel (verse 19). David does not adore him, but commemorates the good he has done (1Sam 14:48), ignoring the evil Saul has done.

David does not want the sad news of their death to be known to the enemies of Israel so that they will not rejoice (verse 20). Such joy would increase the grief over the loss that Israel has suffered. Two Philistine cities are mentioned: nearby Gath and far away at the sea Ashkelon. That it is about the joy of the Philistine women is because of the custom that the women celebrate the victory of their people by singing and dancing (cf. 1Sam 18:7). That should not happen with the enemy over the fall of Saul.

We can learn from this that we must be careful how we speak about our brothers who have fallen into the hands of 'the Philistines', which are for us the nominal Christians. If we speak ill of such brothers, it will increase the joy of the Philistines. An example of their joy can be seen in the history of Samson, who fell alive into the hands of the Philistines (Jdg 16:23).

David even calls upon nature to mourn along in this for Israel so sad occurrence (verse 21). He wants God to withhold His blessing from the

mountains on which the mighty fell, so that they may be a permanent reminder of what has happened here. What a deep respect this shows for the LORD's anointed. There is no room for bitterness and resentment.

When Saul and Jonathan went to war, it was always with result (verse 22). Both weapons are poetically divided so that Jonathan has the bow and Saul the sword. Jonathan gave his bow to David after David's victory over Goliath (1Sam 18:4). We don't know if Jonathan got the bow back from David or if he used another bow in battle, but David will undoubtedly have remembered that special event. Perhaps this is the reason why the descendants of Judah, the tribe of David, have to learn the bow. It means learning to love Him Who is more than David and dedicate everything to Him.

The bow shows the hitting of a goal from a distance, either in an offensive, or in a defensive battle. In any case, a bow presupposes battle and danger. In Jonathan giving his bow to David we see the effect of David's fight against and victory over Goliath. There is no fight and no distance, but connectedness in love.

Saul and Jonathan loved each other. Jonathan has always been beloved and pleasant; Saul has been so for as long as he went with Jonathan (verse 23). Jonathan stayed with Saul in his life and so it is in his death. David gives them both a great compliment by attributing to them characteristics that we also find with the throne of God. There we find with the first creature that it is "like a lion" and with the fourth creature that it is "like a flying eagle" (Rev 4:7). The power of the lion and the speed and movability of the eagle (Lam 4:19a) are the main characteristics of the mighty of antiquity.

As in life, so in death the two mighty are not parted. In braveness and courage they were equal to each other. Despite the difference in character and the different basic mindset toward David, Jonathan did not let his father down. The two qualifications "beloved and pleasant" apply above all to Jonathan. Yet they also apply to Saul when we think of his first years of government. In his sadness about Saul's death, David thinks only of the praiseworthy aspects of his character.

What David brings forward in this song speaks of the value Saul and Jonathan had for Israel (verse 24). They worked for Israel and gave it security and prosperity. He is not talking about all the suffering he personally

suffered from Saul, but about the loss that their death means to Israel. As one of Saul's merits David mentions his contribution to the prosperity of Israel's daughters. Saul divided the spoils and made his people rich and distinguished. He is therefore a real son of Benjamin (Gen 49:27).

David concludes his lamentation with a personal word about Jonathan (verses 25-26). The distress of which David speaks here, is the distress and anxiety of his heart through sorrow and grief. He feels so much connected with Jonathan that he experiences his great friend's loss as a distress. These are feelings that we can only understand if we know such a friendship and it comes to an end because our friend dies.

David expresses a great personal grief because of the loss of someone who was more dear to him than anyone else on earth. The comparison with women's love is to express the deepest connection in their love as friends. It bears witness to a corrupt spirit to think of homosexual love here. It is about a natural love that is different from the love for a woman. It is about the dedication of love and self-denial that were present with Jonathan. It's about sharing things a woman doesn't have. It is a unique connection.

The fact that Jonathan stayed with Saul is something David ignores. He thinks only of the good. This also indicates that God wants us to teach to be sad about the loss of men who have been of great significance to His people. The loss of Jonathan is sung in a special and touching way by David. Even with people who do not follow the way of the rejected David – as a picture of the rejected Christ – a special bond is possible. This is possible if there is deep love for the Lord Jesus.

The final words of the lament (verse 27) are an echo of what he expressed in the preceding verses. It is a final sigh, after which the silence of death remains. It is also a silence to let the song sink in and come to rest inwardly. For us, the silence of death is broken by Him Who conquered death by rising from the dead. He appears among His brethren to celebrate the victory over death.

2 Samuel 2

2Sam 2:1-7 | David King in Hebron

1 Then it came about afterwards that David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?" And the LORD said to him, "Go up." So David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron." 2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. 3 And David brought up his men who [were] with him, each with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron. 4 Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, "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 of the LORD because you have shown this kindness to Saul your lord, and have buried him. 6 Now may the LORD show lovingkindness and truth to you; and I also will show this goodness 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 also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

David is still in Ziklag. For him, the announcement that Saul died does not mean that the question of the accession to the throne has been decided. After the news about Saul David could have gone up triumphantly to become king immediately. He knows he is the anointed, but he will not take a step without the instruction of the LORD. David can wait. He knows that the purpose of the LORD will not fail. A lot needs to be done before he can rule.

Prophetically it's not like that either, that the kingdom of peace starts directly when the Lord Jesus comes back. Even then, there is still a lot to be done first. First things must be put right in an environment where for a long time everything has been against the Anointed One because of the influence of the spirit of the antichrist and the reign of the person of the antichrist.

First David asks the LORD what he should do. That makes it clear that he has been restored. After the lamentation about Saul and Jonathan David asks the LORD whether he will go to one of the cities of Judah. He gets a clear answer to that question. Then the next question is which city he will go up to. He also receives a clear answer to this question. It is important to always ask the Lord to do something and also when and how we should do it. We may ask Him for concrete directions.

When David goes in obedience to the place the LORD named him, he takes both his wives with him. His men also go along. They are a picture of the people who are involved in the conquest of the kingdom by the Lord Jesus. His men have endured persecution and suffering with him, now they will be allowed to rule with him (cf. 2Tim 2:12a).

In Hebron David is anointed king by the men of Judah. David is anointed king three times. The first time this happened in a hidden way in the midst of his brothers (1Sam 16:13a). Here it happens for the second time, now by the men of Judah, who anointed him king over the house of Judah. In 2 Samuel 5 he is anointed for the third time, then made king over all Israel (2Sam 5:3).

We can also apply this to what has happened and will happen to the Lord Jesus. When He receives the Holy Spirit at His baptism, He is anointed in the midst of the remnant that we can designate as His brethren (Mt 3:16; cf. Mt 12:50). The second and third anointing of the Lord Jesus can be seen after the rapture of the church. When He returns, He will first be acknowledged as King by the remnant of Judah, and then He will be openly acknowledged by all people as Messiah, meaning 'Anointed' (Psa 45:7).

The first act of David after his anointing is to wish the blessing of the LORD to the men of Jabez. He does this after he is told what these men have done. Here David shows the magnitude of his heart. He wants to thank the men of Jabez for the respect they have shown Saul. It is also a wise thing to do. He shows that he does not seize this opportunity to become king. By thanking them he wins them over.

David praises the men of Jabez for their love service to Saul, their lord. It is an act that is also pleasing to the LORD, for it is a tribute to him who was appointed by Him as authority figure. David does not leave it at the good

wishes of the blessing of the LORD, but also promises that he himself will reward them. He makes no claim to their recognition of his kingship. Now that Saul is dead, David does not impose himself upon the men of Jabez. He only mentions that he is king over Judah. He does not want to subdue them, but to win their hearts.

This is a good indication of the current time of confusion and uncertainty in professing Christianity. Many don't know what to do when they see how more and more things in the church that used to be self-evident are changing against Scripture. No one can be forced to make a decision. In such circumstances it is important to bless believers, that is to wish good things, as David does here. "If there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things" (Phil 4:8b).

2Sam 2:8-11 | Ish-bosheth King over Israel

8 But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim. 9 He made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, even over all Israel. 10 Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he was king for two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David. 11 The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

Abner knows that David is the anointed king. Yet he takes Ish-bosheth and makes him king. With this, he works a division in Israel. The place where he does that, Mahanaim, speaks of that too. Mahanaim means 'two armies' (Gen 32:1-2). Israel's enmity toward David has not disappeared. Ish-bosheth means 'man of shame'. He is the youngest son of Saul. He must have been a weak, spineless man. We read: "Abner ... had taken Ish-bosheth." This state of affairs is in fact rebellion against God. David is the anointed of the LORD, not Ish-bosheth.

Ish-bosheth is king for two years "over Israel". 'Israel' here is the name for Israel without Judah, because David is king over Judah. Judah is no longer part of it. Ish-bosheth has no right to the kingship. Yet we see great meekness in David toward him. It may be that David's meekness partly stems from a lack of initiative, because he leaves too much to Joab. Yet he can

only show such indulgence because he knows that his right to that place is indisputable.

If people arrogate to themselves something they are not, they generally rise up in anger if something happens to their disadvantage and they feel threatened quickly. But he who knows God's truth and trusts it, can afford to let things pass over him without getting angry or afraid of harm.

We see this with David. Because of this attitude Ish-bosheth is able to rule over Israel for a certain time, while David is king 'only' over the house of Judah. The test here may well be even greater than under Saul. Saul was the anointed of the LORD; but Ish-bosheth is someone without right. This is the way God goes with His anointed king, and David complies.

2Sam 2:12-17 | Abner Is Defeated by David

12 Now Abner the son of Ner, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon with the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul. 13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, one on the one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool. 14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Now let the young men arise and hold a contest before us." And Joab said, "Let them arise." 15 So they arose and went over by count, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. 16 Each one of them seized his opponent by the head and [thrust] his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon. 17 That day the battle was very severe, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

In this section we meet two army commanders, Abner, the general of Ish-bosheth, and Joab, the general of David. Abner is a noble man with a noble character, but he is on the wrong side. Good people are sometimes on the wrong side. This is why he is also an opponent of David. He knows that David is the anointed one of the LORD and yet he takes sides against him.

Next to David stands a man, Joab, who thinks only of himself, of profit. Bad people are sometimes on the right side. He never thinks of the case of the LORD. It is hard to understand why David gave this man so much power. Opposite Joab David is weak. David calls him hard. This is the

same as with Ish-bosheth and Abner where we also see a weak king and a strong commander.

Joab is mentioned here for the first time. He is associated with David, but does not share in David's faith. Joab is a man who is characterized by performing evil deeds and great deeds. Both types of action are about his own advantage. He does not tolerate rivalry. Whoever he sees as a rival, he gets rid of.

Abner takes the initiative to fight. He seems to be out to bring Judah back under the authority of Saul's house. This is a battle against God and he must therefore lose it. The scene of the battle is by the pool of Gibeon. Abner probably chooses that place because it is in the Benjamin area, where Saul has the most friends.

Abner makes a proposal where only a few fight instead of the whole. Instead of outrageously rejecting this proposal, Joab accepts it. The result is a useless slaughter with twenty-four dead, because they are all that good and fast that they kill each other. The only one who has won is death, which is insatiable.

What should have been prevented by the young men's fight is happening now. The brother contest expands and becomes a battle between the men of Israel and the men of David.

2Sam 2:18-23 | Abner Kills Asahel

18 Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab and Abishai and Asahel; and Asahel [was as] swift-footed as one of the gazelles which is in the field. 19 Asahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left from following Abner. 20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" And he answered, "It is I." 21 So Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and take hold of one of the young men for yourself, and take for yourself his spoil." But Asahel was not willing to turn aside from following him. 22 Abner repeated 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 However, he refused to turn aside; therefore Abner struck him in the belly with the butt end of the spear, so that the spear came out at his back. And he

fell there and died on the spot. And it came about that all who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

In his youthful hubris Asahel seems to be targeting Abner. He relies on his speed and agility in pursuit. His speed, possibly at the same time his pride, brings him rapid destruction. Recklessly he rushes after Abner, while he seems to forget that Abner is an experienced warrior.

Although Abner is on the wrong side, he is an honest warrior. Twice he tries to convince Asahel to leave from pursuing him. This shows his noble character.

First he points out to Asahel other men he could kill. That would also give him credit. Asahel does not accept the proposal. He seems to be inspired by only one thing and that is getting Abner into his hands, dead or alive. That will bring him much fame.

Abner makes a second attempt to change Asahel's mind. With this he gives him the chance to leave the battlefield alive. If he goes on, he will have to kill him. Abner is not out for his death. Behind Asahel Abner also sees Joab. He knows Joab and knows that he will surely avenge the death of Asahel, and that he does not consider any means too bad for that.

Unfortunately, Asahel does not listen and is killed, because Abner strikes him in the belly with the butt end of the spear. Asahel will not have expected this unusual act. He will have been surprised by this tactic. The effectiveness is there. This shows that also on the side of David are men who act unwisely.

The result is a delay in the battle. When Asahel is dead on the road, all the chasers stand still with him. This gives Abner the chance to escape.

2Sam 2:24-26 | Joab and Abishai Pursued Abner

24 But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner, and when the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which is in front of Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon. 25 The sons of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one band, and they stood on the top of a certain hill. 26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, "Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that

it will be bitter in the end? How long will you refrain from telling the people to turn back from following their brothers?"

Joab and Abishai continued the pursuit. Then comes the sunset and the battle must be stopped. At that moment Abner makes a good proposal. He does not want this fight. At the same time, he himself is guilty of it. He took up the sword himself and caused the civil war. He perseveres in defending the wrong king.

In verse 26, the poignant question from Abner to Joab sounds: "Shall the sword devour forever?" In other words: 'Will there never be an end to the killing?' The question is justified and exploratory. However, the following question also arises whether Abner is the right person to ask this question. If he had resigned himself to God's choice of His king, this battle would not have taken place.

This can also be applied to our time and situation. We may be saddened by a battle among brothers, but we must also ask ourselves to what extent we ourselves are to blame for it. How many people have already been lost to God's testimony by a battle between brothers? When will we stop our self-willed actions? When will we focus all our attention again on the Lord and His Word, to learn from Him meekness and humility of heart and to walk in that mind in the truth?

2Sam 2:27-32 | Joab Stops the Pursuit

27 Joab said, "As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then the people would have gone away in the morning, each from following his brother." 28 So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people halted and pursued Israel no longer, nor did they continue to fight anymore. 29 Abner and his men then went through the Arabah all that night; so they crossed the Jordan, walked all morning, and came to Mahanaim. 30 Then Joab returned from following Abner; when he had gathered all the people together, nineteen of David's servants besides Asahel were missing. 31 But the servants of David had struck down many of Benjamin and Abner's men, [so that] three hundred and sixty men died. 32 And they took up Asahel and buried him in his father's tomb which was in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men went all night until the day dawned at Hebron.

Joab is too much a military man not to accept Abner's proposal. Continuing the battle would cost many men their lives. He also rightly accuses Abner of having had to speak these words much earlier. Then there would have been no battle with the many unnecessary losses. As a sign that the pursuit can be stopped and the battle can stop, Joab blows the trumpet. Abner and his men can then return to Mahanaim where Abner made Ishbosheth king (verses 8-9).

The balance of losses is drawn up. Twenty men, including Asahel, were killed by David's men. Of the men of Abner eighteen times as many men have died. Asahel receives a special mention among the fallen. He gets a special burial. He is buried in his father's tomb in Bethlehem. The others will probably have been buried on the battlefield.

Just like Abner and his men, Joab and his men walk all night long. They reach Hebron as the light begins to come. That is a nice combination. Hebron means 'fellowship'. Fellowship with God is only possible in the light. That the light begins to come has something to do with the dawning of a new day or period for the people of God. The first rays of sunshine of the establishment of David's kingship can be seen. Unfortunately, Joab is not a man in whose life much can be seen of dealing with God. He is someone who is only interested in his own advantage. This will become clear later.

The history in this chapter can be applied practically as follows. It is about allowing the Lord Jesus to establish His dominion in our lives and in exercising that dominion getting full freedom from us. If there are other forces working in our lives that stop this, we may ask Him if He wants us to learn to deal with them in the right way.

Also, for the establishment and exercise of His authority among His people we have to work in a way that suits Him. If other forces are working in that area, we can ask Him to teach us how to deal with them. Men like Joab don't always set the good example.

Let us pray that we will be kept in direct dependence on the Lord Himself. Let us also pray that we will be kept from going with them in a battle that only produce losers. We must learn to fight the good fight (1Tim 6:12; 2Tim 4:7), with the right weapons and methods (2Tim 2:5).

2 Samuel 3

2Sam 3:1 | The House of Saul and the House of David

1 Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually.

This verse still belongs to the previous chapter. It is not just a communication on military force ratios. The verse also says that David must patiently learn how God will lead his cause. He has to wait for God's time, and he does. In the long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, the first house is getting weaker and weaker and the second stronger and stronger.

This is how it goes in the life of the believer. In the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, we can see the spiritual growth of someone who has come to know the Lord Jesus. As he begins to live more with Him, he will increase in spiritual strength and the flesh will have less chance to assert itself. If we give the Spirit authority in our lives, the flesh will not have a chance to manifest itself.

2Sam 3:2-5 | The Sons of David

2 Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; 3 and his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur; 4 and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; 5 and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These were born to David at Hebron.

These verses are between two verses about the war between the house of Saul and the house of David (verses 1,6). While David waits quietly, our attention is focused on his family. This develops in a way which is not after God's mind. The seed has been laid, from which later many troubles for David will come forth. This suggests that we can quietly wait for God's time, but which it is not intended that we should be dealing with wrong

things. Not that starting a family is wrong, but the way David does do this, is.

David is not only a picture of the Lord Jesus. He is in his weakness and sins also a picture of us. We find in these verses that he has taken even more wives next to Abigail and Ahinoam. In doing so, he has not only gone even further against the order of God's creation, but also against God's explicit law for kingship, in which it is forbidden to take more than one wife (Deu 17:17a). From his several wives, he has sons who have caused major problems.

In Hebron David has six sons. They are not boys who have given him much pleasure. In particular Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah will break David's heart as father. Hebron means 'fellowship', but to be in a place that speaks of fellowship is not yet a guarantee that everything that happens there is also a consequence of fellowship with God. What later becomes the fall of Solomon, his many wives, is unfortunately not strange to David either.

Having 'only' one wife is not a guarantee for a good marriage, nor is it a guarantee that children born in this marriage only cause joy. Having more than one wife, however, is completely against the will of God and is guaranteed to cause problems. How much troubles and worries David would have spared himself if he had limited himself to Abigail.

His first son is Amnon, the son of Ahinoam. David possibly has taken Ahinoam after he has taken Abigail as his wife (1Sam 25:43). Amnon rapes his half-sister (2Sam 13:11-14).

Through Abigail he receives his second son, Chileab, also called Daniel (1Chr 3:1). From him we hear nothing else. He may have died young.

The third son, Absalom, is born from his relationship with "Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur". How he got to her is not known. It may have been a political marriage. Maybe she was taken prisoner by him (1Sam 27:8). Geshur is located in Syria (2Sam 15:8), a neighboring people. David had a particular weakness for this son. This could not prevent and possibly even led Absalom to revolt against his father and to kick him off the throne to take place there himself (2 Samuel 14-18).

Adonijah, the fourth son, is also someone who wants to kick his father off the throne to become a king himself (1Kgs 1:5-10,41-53). This is after Absalom died.

Of the fifth and sixth son we only know their names.

2Sam 3:6-11 | Ish-bosheth and Abner

6 It came about while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David that Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul. 7 Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah; and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?" 8 Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, "Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hands of David; and yet today you charge me with a guilt concerning the woman. 9 May God do so to Abner, and more also, if as the LORD has sworn to David, I do not accomplish this for him, 10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and to establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba." 11 And he could no longer answer Abner a word, because he was afraid of him.

Here the history of the civil war continues. Abner is the actual ruler in the house of Saul and not Ish-bosheth. This is clear when Ish-bosheth asks Abner about his adulterous behavior with the concubine of his father Saul. Apparently Abner has taken this sideline. He did so not only because he liked her, but to strengthen his position in Saul's house even more. We also see it later with David when he wants Michal back. We also see it with Absalom and Adonijah. It is all for the same purpose: to obtain more power.

Abner feels Ish-bosheth's question as a reproach. That is also right, because his behavior is culpable. But Abner doesn't accept the reproach. He makes himself angry and accuses Ish-bosheth of being ungrateful. He wants to show 'kindness' and then Ish-bosheth dares to blame him for an iniquity with a woman! In his wounded pride and proudness Abner says that *he* will give David the kingdom. This will be a new temptation for David, after in 2 Samuel 1 an Amalekite has already offered it to him (2Sam 1:1-10).

Abner seems to know that the LORD has given the kingship to David. Therefore his resistance by making Ish-bosheth king is sin. He acts consciously against the will of God. Abner has joined Ish-bosheth to exercise power himself. Noting that David will eventually win and become king, he proposes to go over to David. He wants to do that in a way that will benefit him most.

Abner's threats affect Ish-bosheth. He tones down and doesn't let himself be heard anymore. It shows his weak character and who really is in power.

2Sam 3:12-21 | Abner Negotiates With David

12 Then Abner sent messengers to David in his place, saying, "Whose is the land? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you." 13 He said, "Good! I will make a covenant with you, but I demand one thing of you, namely, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see me." 14 So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." 15 Ish-bosheth sent and took her from [her] husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. 16 But her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, "Go, return." So he returned. 17 Now Abner had consultation with the elders of Israel, saying, "In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you. 18 Now then, do [it]! For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.'" 19 Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin; and in addition Abner went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and to the whole house of Benjamin. 20 Then Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. 21 Abner said to David, "Let me arise and go and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may be king over all that your soul desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

Abner turns the words into deeds and sends messengers to David. They propose on his behalf to David to make a covenant with him to have all Israel turn to David. In his weakness David consents. He will have been

glad that the matter would finally be decided. Here, however, he should have said that he was waiting for God's time.

Immediately following Abner's proposal and his agreement to it, David acts as if the matter is already settled. He sends messengers to Ish-bosheth with the request to send Michal, his wife, to him. Maybe he still loved her. Michal was and remained his wife because marriage is inextricable.

Abner does not only consult with David. He also consults with the elders of Israel. He knows their feelings for David. He cleverly responds to make his intention succeed and give David the kingdom. With the encouragement "now then, do [it]!" he directs, without any time for reflection, toward a decision for his plan. He tells them it is now or never. In this way he puts pressure on the matter. He has a special consultation with the tribe of Benjamin. It is important that this tribe, to which also Saul belonged, should join his plans.

After his diplomatic tour around the parties involved, which he had to win for his plan, Abner goes to David with the results. He has managed to get all the parties on his side. They are all ready to make a covenant with David, so that he can rule over what his soul desires, that is over what the LORD has promised him. David is completely won over to the plan and lets Abner go in peace.

However, there is one absent in this matter and that is the LORD. We don't hear David consulting Him. Abner will do it, not the LORD. This makes this matter not only a precarious undertaking, but an undertaking doomed to failure.

The lesson is that we should not let ourselves be taken in by all kinds of diplomatic attempts to win us for a certain point of view, but that we should ask the Lord for His will. We can apply this, among other things, to changes within the church, for which sometimes frantically can be lobbied to get them implemented. Let us test proposals for change against God's Word.

2Sam 3:22-27 | Joab Kills Abner

22 And behold, the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them; but Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had

sent him away, and he had gone in peace. 23 When Joab and all the army that was with him arrived, they told Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has sent him away, and he has gone in peace." 24 Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you; why then have you sent him away and he is already gone? 25 You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive you and to learn of your going out and coming in and to find out all that you are doing." 26 When Joab came out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David did not know [it]. 27 So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the middle of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the belly so that he died on account of the blood of Asahel his brother.

It is not inconceivable that Abner planned his visit to David at a moment that it could take place during the absence of Joab. When Joab hears of it, he is very displeased. He blames David for having let Abner leave unhindered. He does not hesitate to make false accusations. What he says to David is a reminder of Abner's attitude toward Ish-bosheth.

David has paid too much attention to this bad man. The language and tone of Joab are inappropriate for a cousin who speaks to his uncle and are certainly inappropriate for a commander who speaks to his king. But David accepts it, without any resistance.

We may wonder how it is possible that a powerful king is so weak against a man like Joab. Why is it that David could not free himself from this man? It is not clear from history. Perhaps family relationships have played a role. As the history continues, David does not seem to possess the spiritual power in his family that he possesses as king. His performance as a father is downright weak and in some respects even wrong and culpable.

The fact that God is going to use Joab to prevent David's foolish intention to make a covenant with Abner does not mean that Joab is acting well. It is more often the case that God uses the sinful actions of people to achieve His goal. This is the wisdom of God. God does not encourage Joab, but uses his jealousy to kill Abner and thus prevent the covenant. We can suppose Joab's jealousy, because in Abner he saw a formidable competitor for

his position as a general in David's army. If Abner would go over to David, it could mean that Abner would be placed above him.

After his collision with David Joab follows his own course. He does not care about David and the agreements made, but acts as judge himself. Completely apart from David he has Abner brought back with an excuse. He pretends to discuss something personal with Abner and lures him into a trap (cf. Psa 55:21). Abner falls into the trap. When Joab is alone with Abner, he kills him.

What Joab does is a mean, cunning action. In this way, he brings upon himself the curse of the law: "'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen'" (Deu 27:24). Abner had killed Joab's brother in battle and also after two warnings (2Sam 2:18-23). Joab kills Abner in peacetime. Later David gives this to his son Solomon as a reason to let Joab be killed (1Kgs 2:5-6).

2Sam 3:28-30 | David Condemns the Deed of Joab

28 Afterward when David heard it, he said, "I and my kingdom are innocent before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. 29 May it fall on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and may there not fail from the house of Joab one who has a discharge, or who is a leper, or who takes hold of a distaff, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread." 30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

When David hears of Joab's deed, he clearly distances himself from it. He judges Joab's performance. His reaction makes it clear that he really regrets this event. This is, after all, the reason why the other tribes accept him as their king.

David's grief over Abner is real. Israel needs to see that there is no intention on David's part. It is also an indication for us to take away the appearance of partiality wherever we can. We do not take away that appearance by defending ourselves, but by showing the right attitude.

David curses Joab and his whole family. In doing so, he shows his disgust for Joab's crime. His curse, however, is without much strength. He should have punished as well. Verse 30 shows that Joab also involved his brother

Abishai in the complot against and murder of Abner. It is a reprehensible revenge action, which they organized because Abner killed their brother Asahel. The Holy Spirit adds that Abner has put “Asahel to death in the battle”. This shows superfluously that the retaliatory action by Joab and Abishai is unjustified.

2Sam 3:31-39 | David Mourns the Death of Abner

31 Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes and gird on sackcloth and lament before Abner.” And King David walked behind the bier. 32 Thus they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. 33 The king chanted a [lament] for Abner and said, “Should Abner die as a fool dies? 34 “Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put in fetters; As one falls before the wicked, you have fallen.” And all the people wept again over him. 35 Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was still day; but David vowed, saying, “May God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun goes down.” 36 Now all the people took note [of it], and it pleased them, just as everything the king did pleased all the people. 37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been [the will] of the king to put Abner the son of Ner to death. 38 Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? 39 I am weak today, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too difficult for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil.”

David says to Joab and all the people to lament. If Joab has lamented, it will not have gone warmly. David himself goes after the bier. He is close to the dead, as if Abner was his best friend. Also at the grave of Abner the grief of David is great. He cries loudly and the people share in the grief with him. Of Joab we read nothing.

We see with David the same attitude he showed after the news of Saul’s death. Just as he did over Saul and Jonathan, David also chants a lament over Abner. Through his attitude and reaction to the murder of Abner, the people are won over to the king. David calls here Joab and Abishai “the

wicked" (verse 34). He praises Abner and calls him "a prince and a great man".

David acknowledges his weakness. He has just become king and faces an enormous task. On the other hand are "these men the sons of Zeruiah", who are Joab and Abishai, whom he calls "too difficult for me" or "harder than me". That David feels weak and is not as hard as "these men" shows a good mind. It is important that the people are governed with care and tenderness and not with a hard hand. We see the effect of a hard government when the son of Solomon, Rehoboam, comes to power. It results in the division of the empire (1Kgs 12:1-19).

God's king is someone who in the first place shepherds God's people and then also is prince over that people (1Chr 11:2). Caring for God's people comes first.

Anyone who has been given a place by the Lord as pastor among His people may pray that the Lord will teach him a lot from Himself as the good Shepherd. When he restored Peter after his denial of Him, He said to Peter in the first place: "Tend My lambs." Only then did he speak of the shepherding of the sheep (Jn 21:15-17).

2 Samuel 4

2Sam 4:1-3 | Two Servants of Saul

1 Now when Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel was disturbed. 2 Saul's son [had] two men who were commanders of bands: the name of the one was Baanah and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the sons of Benjamin (for Beeroth is also considered [part] of Benjamin, 3 and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been aliens there until this day).

Without Abner, Ish-bosheth is without power. After Abner is murdered, the leader is gone on whom Ish-bosheth and the people trusted. If a support point falls away, fear arises. Now that Ish-bosheth is powerless and the people are confused, two men see that as the ideal opportunity to kill Ish-bosheth. Through them David is tempted for the third time to take the kingdom not from the hand of the LORD, but from the hand of men.

2Sam 4:4 | Mephibosheth

4 Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the report of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened that in her hurry to flee, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

Before the cowardly murder by both men is described, the Holy Spirit interrupts history to focus on Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son. In this one verse much is told about him. We read about his disability, how old he was when his father died, that he was cared for by a nurse and the cause of his disability. His nurse had fled, possibly for fear of David. As a result, the boy entrusted to her care can no longer walk.

For pastoral care there are several applications to be derived from this. You may have been entrusted to someone for whom parenting is a profession. A love bond like the one with a mother doesn't exist with that person. What you are missing then is already a lot. You will then lose your father at the age of five. And if, immediately after that, because your educator

makes a stupid move, you also lose your health, the drama seems complete.

None of these things you can do anything about. They happen to you. There's nothing you can do about your education being outsourced. The loss of your father is also a matter that is beyond you. The same goes for the loss of your health. In addition, you belong to a family that has been put aside because of unfaithfulness toward God. You are stuck on all sides. Then you don't have a future anymore, do you? All that remains for you is grace. This is what Mephibosheth later gets from David and that is what anyone in such circumstances can get from the Lord Jesus.

Mephibosheth has never been a danger to David with regard to his reign. Neither he nor his nurse had anything to fear. The run is the result of not knowing the heart of David. Otherwise she would not have fled and would have counted on his grace and mercy. Today many see the Lord Jesus in this way. Many hold Him for a hard and severe Man. He will surely be so for those who remain His enemies, when they stand before the great white throne. However, whoever appeals to His grace will experience that He is merciful. Mephibosheth will experience that David takes care of him.

2Sam 4:5-8 | Ish-bosheth Is Murdered

5 So the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, departed and came to the house of Ish-bosheth in the heat of the day while he was taking his midday rest. 6 They came to the middle of the house as if to get wheat, and they struck him in the belly; and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. 7 Now when they came into the house, as he was lying on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and killed him and beheaded him. And they took his head and traveled by way of the Arabah all night. 8 Then they brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron and said to the king, "Behold, the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; thus the LORD has given my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and his descendants."

While Ish-bosheth rests, Rechab and Baanah his brother enter the palace under a pretense. They pretend to come to get wheat (verse 6) and appeal to the mercy of Ish-bosheth. This gives them access to him. They cut off his head and take it with them to David. They sacrifice their night's rest to

bring David the tidings that his competitor is dead. They make it seem as if they are the executors of the will of the LORD to help him in this way to become king (verse 8b).

By the use of the word “thus” they indicate that, by killing Ish-bosheth, they have carried out the will of the LORD. They boast that they exercised the LORD’s revenge on Saul and his descendants. After the Amalekite and Abner, these two murderers now come to offer David the kingdom.

2Sam 4:9-12 | David’s Answer

9 David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, “As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, 10 when one told me, saying, ‘Behold, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for [his] news. 11 How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood from your hand and destroy you from the earth?” 12 Then David commanded the young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hung them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron.

Fleeing from David, not submitting to his authority, has paralysis as a consequence. Going to David with false motives leads to death. The latter is experienced by the murderers of Ish-bosheth. They’re grossly mistaken about David because they don’t know him. David does not fall into this new trap. He learned the lesson of the previous chapter, where he was about to make a covenant with Abner (2Sam 3:12-13). He also refers to a previous event that someone thought he was bringing him good news (verse 10; 2Sam 1:11-16).

Now he says that the LORD has redeemed him from all distress (verse 9). He brings the matter into its true perspective. Only the LORD has helped him against Saul, and not these two murderers. He expresses his confidence that the LORD will arrange it for him further. He does not have to take anything in his own hand or accept from others.

We may learn from David’s attitude to the murderers of Ish-bosheth that we can leave everything to the Lord. We need not take anything into our

own hands or be dependent on others when it comes to what the Lord asks of us and wants us to do. He has helped so many times in the past. He will accomplish it for us (Psa 138:8; 57:2; cf. Rth 3:18).

David calls Ish-bosheth righteous in comparison with these two murderers. Ish-bosheth has never been a murderer. The Amalekite has been killed, Abner has been killed, and both these men are also killed. The hands with which they committed the murder and the feet with which they went a violent and corrupt way are cut off.

2 Samuel 5

2Sam 5:1-5 | David King over Israel

1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. 2 Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'" 3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel. 4 David was thirty years old when he became king, [and] he reigned forty years. 5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

After seven and a half years David becomes king of all the people. It has taken that long. All the time Saul ruled over them, all the tribes knew who really led Israel. Although they knew it, they never openly chose David's side. There can be knowledge, but when faith is lacking, one does nothing with it.

The chapter begins with the word "then", i.e. after the events described in the previous chapter. The ten tribes have seen that David is innocent of Ish-bosheth's death and that he has punished the murderers. Then the time has come for all the tribes of Israel to declare openly that they are his family. They can say this because they all descend from Jacob (cf. Jdg 9:2).

At the end of verse 2 we see a remarkable sequence. First there is talk about "will shepherd" and then about "will be a ruler". This means that the first task is to care for God's people and then the government comes. Be shepherd first, then become king. We also see this with the Lord Jesus. He is already the good Shepherd and will soon openly accept His kingship.

For our personal lives, it is clear from this that we will submit to His dominion over our lives, precisely because He takes care of us every day. There is also a lot to learn here for the attitude of the husband toward his wife and for the attitude of parents toward their children. It is also important for the authority in the church of God.

If God has given persons a place of authority, whether in the church or in the family, that authority can only be properly exercised by those who know what it is to serve, to be the least and to care for fellow believers. Such persons show the picture of the Lord Jesus. Subservience is much easier to put into practice toward someone who cares about you, who cares for you with love, than toward someone who only wants to control you and abuses his position of authority in this way. With God, authority is never separated from care and love, and this has become perfectly visible in and through the Lord Jesus.

Then David is anointed king for the third time, now over all Israel. The first time he was anointed by Samuel in the midst of his brothers (1Sam 16:13a). The second time he was anointed by the men of Judah over the house of Judah (2Sam 2:4a). Here the third anointing of David takes place. This third anointing speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus on earth, when He is accepted as Messiah by all the people, who are all twelve tribes returned to the land.

2Sam 5:6-9 | David in Jerusalem

6 Now the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, and they said to David, "You shall not come in here, but the blind and lame will turn you away"; thinking, "David cannot enter here." 7 Nevertheless, David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David. 8 David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him reach the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul, through the water tunnel." Therefore they say, "The blind or the lame shall not come into the house." 9 So David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward.

David goes to Jerusalem. This is an important step. Hebron is not a suitable capital city. Jerusalem is centrally located for all the tribes of the kingdom. Politically speaking, it is therefore wise to go there. It is also a good choice from a military point of view. Jerusalem is high and is an excellent fortress.

Besides a good military reason there is also a more important one, more a spiritual one. The place where he goes is the place where Abraham sacrificed his son, Mount Moria. Right next to it is Sion.

Jerusalem has been mentioned before in history as the city taken by Judah, but they have not been able to drive out all the Jebusites (Jdg 1:8; Jos 15:63). The sons of Benjamin also failed to drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem (Jdg 1:21). So there is still a camp of enemies in Jebus. David is going to drive them out.

Jerusalem is the religious name. Therein is the word Salem, the name of the city where Melchizedek was king (Gen 14:18). Salem means 'peace' (Heb 7:1-2). Yet the city is also called Jebus, which means 'trample'. It is still a trampled city. In the future, the city will once again be "trampled under foot by the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24). Then the Lord Jesus comes to earth to make Jerusalem the city of peace. He will judge the people for this and deliver the city from enemies. Then the Prince of peace will reign. Prophetically, we see David doing this here.

The enemy in Jebus doesn't just surrender. The Jebusites are convinced of their own strength. In his reaction David is not a picture of the Lord Jesus. He is obviously offended, he is the hurt leader. When the Lord Jesus is later in this city, it becomes clear how much He loves, for example, the blind. The lame and the blind are excluded by David, but the Lord Jesus says that they should be invited into the house (Lk 14:13).

For us, the lesson is how we feel about the poor in the church. When we think of the 'lame' we can think of people who have no strength for a good walk and when we think of the 'blind' we can think of those who have no insight in certain truths.

David's aversion to this group is not according to God's mind. Luckily, he acts differently with Mephibosheth later (2Sam 9:3,6-7,13).

It is also possible that here in David we can see a type of the Lord Jesus. Then it is not so that David has an abhorrence of lame and blind people in general, but of these lame and blind people because they resist him in his right to Jerusalem. The lame and blind are those who, as the Jebusites say, will turn David away. In their view, David's weakness is that great that even people with disabilities are strong enough to chase him away. If such people manifest themselves as enemies of the rightful owner of Jerusalem, the city of David, it is right that he should abhor them. The Lord Jesus also hates all those who commit iniquity.

Once David is king, we see in him less and less the man of faith he was when he was chased by Saul. Then he was in circumstances that made him walk in dependence on God. Yet we can say that David is generally guided by God.

2Sam 5:10-12 | David Becomes Greater and Greater

10 David became greater and greater, for the LORD God of hosts was with him. 11 Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David with cedar trees and carpenters and stonemasons; and they built a house for David. 12 And David realized that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.

Not only does the city become more powerful, but David also becomes more powerful. Because God is with him, he grows in power. Here He is a picture of the Lord Jesus. We also see this in the nations that come and acknowledge his kingship.

David is not proud of his greatness, but realizes that everything comes from the LORD. He also realizes that it is not primarily about him, but about God's people. It shows the love of the LORD for His people. God so loves His people that He gives them such a king. This also applies to us now. God loves us so much that He has given us the Lord Jesus as Lord. God also wants the dominion of the Lord Jesus to increase in our lives.

2Sam 5:13-16 | David's Wives and Sons

13 Meanwhile David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron; and more sons and daughters were born to David. 14 Now these are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, 15 Ithar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, 16 Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet.

These verses are again an interruption of the establishment of his kingship. In these verses a new sin of David is mentioned. Despite the prohibition God has given in His law for the king (Deu 17:17a), he takes even more wives to underline His greatness. It does not prevent him from later coveting his neighbor's wife and committing adultery with her (2Sam 11:2-4), but it rather must have prompted him to do so. Those who do not remain

with the institution of God, open themselves up to all forms of evil. If sin is not judged, it will take on greater proportions.

By the grace of God we find two names of his sons in the two genealogies of the Lord Jesus we have in the Gospels, namely Nathan and Solomon. We find Nathan in the genealogy that Luke gives of the line of Mary (Lk 3:31). Solomon can be found in the genealogy that Matthew gives, where the legal right of the Lord Jesus to the throne is established (Mt 1:6).

2Sam 5:17-21 | David Defeats the Philistines

17 When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek out David; and when David heard [of it], he went down to the stronghold. 18 Now the Philistines came and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. 19 Then David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You give them into my hand?" And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." 20 So David came to Baal-perazim and defeated them there; and he said, "The LORD has broken through my enemies before me like the breakthrough of waters." Therefore he named that place Baal-perazim. 21 They abandoned their idols there, so David and his men carried them away.

The wars of David with the Philistines come after the conquest of Jerusalem and after all the people anointed him king. They are the first enemies to come forward. More will come later. A defeated enemy is no warning to other enemies. The same resistance against the God-given king characterizes them all. The defeating of the Philistines is one of the commands David received as king over the house of Judah (2Sam 3:18).

When Jerusalem is taken, all enemies are not yet subject to David. This also applies to Christ. If He descends from heaven, He will first destroy the Assyrians. Then He will establish His throne in Jerusalem, after which He will destroy other enemies of Israel through His own people.

The Philistines first kept quiet, but now that David is so strong and they see a threat in him, they go up against him. The establishment of the throne of David sets the Philistines in motion to kill David and take away his influence. It is with it as with the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth.

The human being will then resist to the extreme and thus bring a quick destruction on himself.

The action of the Philistines has a spiritual meaning for us. Nominal Christians take action if we want to give the Lord Jesus full reign in our lives. They will try to gain influence in our lives to diminish His authority.

Here we see the dependent David again. Despite his strong army he asks the LORD whether he should go up. David gains the victory through dependence. He takes the idols with him to burn them (1Chr 14:12).

2Sam 5:22-25 | The Philistines Once Again Defeated

22 Now the Philistines came up once again and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. 23 When David inquired of the LORD, He said, "You shall not go [directly] up; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the balsam trees. 24 It shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you shall act promptly, for then the LORD will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines." 25 Then David did so, just as the LORD had commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.

The enemy has not been defeated definitively. The Philistines come up once again. David asks the LORD again what he should do. The previous permission (verse 19) does not mean a continuous permission. We are dependent on the Lord step by step. This applies to all of us. Each has his own relationship to the Lord. What the Lord allows one to do, He forbids another. God does not always explain why He sometimes says this and sometimes that. It is about obeying, even if we do not understand. The Lord's purpose never changes, but His ways sometimes change.

David is attacked twice and both times he asks God what to do. Twice he gets an answer, twice he obeys and twice he defeats the enemy. The second time he gets a different answer than the first time. God has no standard answers to our questions. Therefore we have to go to Him again and again. We should not be like Samson, who said: "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free" (Jdg 16:20). However, he did not know that the LORD had departed from him and with it his strength, so he suffered the defeat. Dependence on the Lord is always the secret of victory in our lives.

David gets clear directions for the battle. Only by following these up, victory will be certain. This time he has to wait until he hears the sound of footsteps in the tops of the balsam trees. This means that while waiting he must listen carefully to determine the way the LORD is going ahead of him. It is important to us that our ears are open to God's Word, that our eyes are open to His directions, and that our feet are on His ways.

Hearing the footsteps of the LORD is a special experience for David. The LORD walks on 'weeping trees', that is the literal meaning of the name "balsam trees". In Psalm 84 the 'valley of Baca (meaning: weeping)' is made into a 'valley of springs' (Psa 84:6). Where there are tears, God unlocks a source of refreshment. In battle that cause trouble, God gives strength.

David is also an example for us as a picture of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is our Lord. We are dealing with Philistines, people who are on the Christian territory, but are unbelievers. They are people who, in picture, never went through the Red Sea, the wilderness and the Jordan. They are false brothers, people who do not belong to the church. David has the power to fight them. He is also an example of leaders who protect God's people from wrong influences.

The next chapter shows that the Philistine not only comes to us from outside, but is also in us. There we see that David uses a Philistine method to transport the ark.

2 Samuel 6

2Sam 6:1-2 | David Is Going to Bring up the Ark

1 Now David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned [above] the cherubim.

After David has made Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom, his concern is for the service to God. Since the time of Eli's death, the separation between the ark and the tabernacle has led to the strong decay of the service to God. Now he first wants to bring the ark up to Jerusalem. The tabernacle remains in Gibeon.

The ark has been among the people of God for twenty years without any concern for it (1Sam 7:2). In this way we may have allowed the Lord Jesus to enter into our lives, but at the same time He can only be a concomitant, a 'marginal figure'. That's different with David. We read in Psalm 132 about his desire to find a dwelling for the LORD, that is to say for the ark (Psa 132:5). He finds the ark "in the field of Jaar" (Psa 132:6).

When the people were about to enter the promised land, the LORD already said that the people should go in search of the place He would choose (Deu 12:5). But when the people conquered the land, no one went looking for it. But here is a man who cannot find rest until he has found it (Psa 132:3-5).

The ark speaks of the Lord Jesus. In professing Christianity there is hardly any question about where He is and Who He is.

2Sam 6:3-5 | The Ark Transported on a New Cart

3 They placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart. 4 So they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking ahead of the ark. 5 Meanwhile, David and all the house of Israel were celebrating

before the LORD with all kinds of [instruments made of] fir wood, and with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets and cymbals.

It is possible to do good things in a wrong way. This is what is happening here. David's wish to bring the ark to Jerusalem is good, but the way he does this isn't. The ark must be borne. In a spiritual sense this means that the bearers must feel the weight of the glory of the LORD. It is about a service being performed to the Lord in the way He Himself indicates. We must feel the importance of it. For God to accept a service, it must be in accordance with His Word.

David works here in a Philistine way. He uses their method to transport the ark (1Sam 6:7-12). He imitates the Philistines and makes a new cart for it. It speaks of the work of man, of a way of serving God that appeals to man. Here we see that the danger of the Philistines does not only come from outside, but is also in one's own heart. The dangers of the flesh and sin are in our own heart.

To fight the Philistines, in the previous chapter he asked the LORD twice for His guidance. Now that it's about the ark, we don't read about it. David goes to work without asking the LORD. Maybe it is because it is obvious that he wants to bring the ark to Jerusalem. This can only be good, can't it? It indeed is good, but the method must also be good, and that is not the case here. If anywhere the guidance of God and the directions of His grace are needed, it is in His own service and the worship brought to Him.

We can compare this to giving or organizing Bible lectures. Those are good things, aren't they? But is it not important then to ask the Lord if and how He wants it? It is about knowing that we are in His way. If we do not do it in dependence on the Lord, it goes wrong.

2Sam 6:6-8 | The Death of Uzzah

6 But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset [it]. 7 And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God. 8 David became angry because of the LORD's outburst against Uzzah, and that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day.

What should have been a feast ends in a disaster. David has arranged everything with the best intentions, but this does not prevent an accident happening with the ark. Uzzah wants to prevent the ark from falling and does so by reaching out his hand toward the ark to stop it. However, this well-intentioned act is punished with death by God.

God does not want us to support His service with our hands. His Divine glory, of which the ark is the symbol, cannot be touched by our hands. That touch only results in a tarnish of the ark. God watches over His honor. The ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus. God wants us to treat Him with respect, to treat Him as He indicates. He is the center of true service to God.

God will never allow us, humans, to arrange service to Him according to our own thoughts. If we are going to fill in this service ourselves, it will certainly end up wrong. Only if we really give Him the guidance in our lives and meeting together things will go well.

For example, when it comes to worship, the Lord Jesus says that the Father seeks worshipers. At the same time, He indicates how God should be worshiped (Jn 4:23-24). He does not do this by means of rules, men with the best intentions have prescribed. God has given His Word and His Spirit. In His Word we can read how to worship Him in spirit and truth. Where obedience to His Word is found under the guidance of His Spirit, a service can take place that is to His glory.

The oxen that pull the cart on which the ark stands are no better than the shoulders of priests. They nearly upset. God has led the cows of the Philistines (1Sam 6:7,12). He did so because the Philistines do not know better. God's people, however, must know better. What God tolerates to some degree with the Philistines, He doesn't tolerate with His own. Uzzah tries to save the ark from a fall and forgets God's rule not to touch the ark. God punishes heavily!

Here in the picture it is about not keeping enough distance between the Lord Jesus and us. Appropriate respect is not undermined by confidentiality. Although Uzzah doesn't look into the ark, he does something that speaks of tarnishing the glory of the Lord Jesus. Then God must intervene.

David is not only sad, but also angry, and even rebellious. He thinks he's doing so well and now he's being punished so heavily! The disaster is

not over the Philistines (1Sam 5:6), but over David. However, David must learn that it is not God, but himself who is the cause of this disaster. It is often the case that we blame God for the events we have caused ourselves.

David's lack of obedience to what God has said costs someone else, Uzzah, his life. Thus, our disobedience can have harmful consequences for others. This does not justify Uzzah. He too was responsible for knowing the will of God. His well-intentioned attempt to save the ark was contrary to God's Word and God must punish it. God cannot give up anything of His holiness.

2Sam 6:9-11 | The Ark in the House of Obed-edom

9 So David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" 10 And David was unwilling to move the ark of the LORD into the city of David with him; but David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11 Thus the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

The next reaction is fear. Sin always brings fear, "but perfect love casts out fear" (1Jn 4:18). David does not walk in the light of God's love, but in the light of his good intentions. Therefore this act of God discourages him. He gets scared and gives up his plan. He takes the ark aside to the house of Obed-edom.

Obed-edom will undoubtedly have known what suffering the ark caused among the Philistines, who had kept the ark imprisoned (1Sam 5:1-12). He will also have known of the men of Beth-shemesh who looked into it and some of whom were killed (1Sam 6:19). He certainly heard and perhaps saw that Uzzah was killed because he touched the ark. He also noticed that David has become too afraid to continue to occupy himself with the ark. Nevertheless, he took the ark into his house with joy. Without fear he opens his door for it. He does so because he knows that the ark is "an aroma from death to death" (2Cor 2:16a) only for those who deal wrongly with it.

In the house of Obed-edom we see how God meant the ark to be: not to be a curse, but to be a blessing. The same hand that punished the hubris of

Uzzah, rewards the hospitality of Obed-edom. For him, the ark becomes “an aroma from life to life” (2Cor 2:16b). If the Lord Jesus is central to our family, the blessing comes. The stay of the ark with Obed-edom shows that it is possible, if the leaders and the whole people fail, still personally and as a family to experience the blessing of God’s presence. Whosoever deals with the ark in the right way, is blessed by God.

No one has ever had a reason, and no one will ever have a reason to say that it is in vain to serve God. The example of Obed-edom is an encouragement for heads of families to honor the service of God in their families. Serving God and the interests of His kingdom with their homes and their goods is the means to bring a blessing on everything they have. The family of Obed-edom shares in the blessing. It is good living in a family that houses the ark. All who belong to it will experience the blessing of it.

Later we see that Obed-edom gets a special service as gatekeeper at the temple (1Chr 26:4-8). He is a Levite, but born in a city of the Philistines. His name means ‘servant of Edom’, that is to say servant of the flesh, the sinful nature, someone who lives in the lusts of the flesh (Eph 2:3). But in him we also see what God can do in such a person and what His grace can make of him.

2Sam 6:12-15 | The Ark Brought into Jerusalem

12 Now it was told King David, saying, “The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, on account of the ark of God.” David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. 13 And so it was, that when the bearers of the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. 14 And David was dancing before the LORD with all [his] might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. 15 So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet.

After the ark has been in the house of Obed-edom for three months, David hears what the ark has meant for the family of Obed-edom. In these three months the ark has not been out of David’s thoughts. He is exercised in the school of God and taught in grace. The ark in the house of Obed-edom brings blessing over his house and a testimony of that goes out. If we real-

ly put the Lord Jesus at the center, it will mean blessing for ourselves and others will hear of Him.

When grace has done its work in David and he hears of the blessing that the ark has brought, it leads him to bring up the ark from there. This time he does it properly, in accordance with God's Word. David has learned and now lets Levites carry the ark (Num 7:9; 1Chr 15:2) . After six steps, not 'an Uzzah' dies, but a sacrifice. This means that the ark can only be placed on Zion because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. David also sacrifices and wears a priest's shirt. He is here the king-priest. This points forward to what the Lord Jesus will be in the kingdom of peace.

The enthusiasm of David will be understood by everyone who carries the things of the LORD upon their hearts. It is about the ark of the LORD that is brought to the place He Himself has chosen for it! It gives great joy to be able to cooperate. We do this by honoring Christ for God the Father as priests – and these are all New Testament believers – in the meetings of the church.

2Sam 6:16 | Michal Despises David

16 Then it happened [as] the ark of the LORD came into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

In between, the Holy Spirit points to Michal, who is also called here “the daughter of Saul”. David's wife has no part in her husband's joy. On the contrary, she despises him in her heart. The reason for this is that she has no interest in the ark, the dwelling place and the resting place of God. For her, the ark is nothing more than a box of gold.

She is in her own familiar environment. From her elevated enclosure she looks down out of the window. It indicates that from her own thinking she judges in haughtiness what is happening outside her own limited circle. She is not accessible to things connected to heaven. The window through which she looks down is probably a narrow window. Her view of what she sees is so narrow. And even though it was a wide window, her field of vision is determined by her pride, making her blind to the glory of the ark and the service that goes with it.

She is a picture of the natural man for whom the things of the Spirit are foolishness (1Cor 2:14). Just as Michal is blind to what overwhelms her husband's heart, so the world sees nothing attractive in our Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who had as limited a view as Michal saw in Christ no more than "the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon" (Mk 6:3) and "the carpenter's son" (Mt 13:55).

She despises David for not meeting her expectations. She only wants him when he is dressed in beautiful royal clothes. She knows nothing of the sources of true enthusiasm in the service of God.

2Sam 6:17-19 | Offerings and Food

17 So they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. 18 When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. 19 Further, he distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed each to his house.

The ark comes to Zion. Zion stands opposite Mount Sinai. Zion stands for grace, Mount Sinai for the law (Heb 12:18-22). On Zion the ark finds its final place. There the people of God dwell with Him of Whom the ark speaks. In the future, Zion will be the center of the earth.

In the New Testament we see the fulfillment of this Old Testament picture, when on the first day of the week the Lord Jesus comes into the midst of the disciples (Jn 20:19). There we see the glory of Him of Whom the ark speaks in the power of the resurrection, after He was in the hands of 'the Philistines', the religious leaders of the people.

David is also a distributor of blessing and food, as Melchizedek once was (Gen 14:18-19). When he has made the sacrifices, he blesses "the people in the name of the LORD of hosts". Here is a man who has his joy in the LORD, for whom God is the great goal, but who also has a heart for God's people. Not only does he rejoice that he is in the presence of God, but he also wants to lead others there. He thinks of the whole people and gives a rich blessing to all. What a contrast with three months earlier. Then he had

no blessing for the people. We are a blessing to others only when we are in the way of the Lord's will.

It is important that we recognize Christ as the center of our lives, and that we also recognize that this applies to all the true children of God. David distributes "to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women". Paul also refuses to be sectarian and to be part of a party. He writes to the Corinthians: "Has Christ been divided?" (1Cor 1:13). And he writes to the Philippians: "For God is my witness, how I long for you all" (Phil 1:8).

2Sam 6:20-23 | David and Michal

20 But when David returned to bless his household, Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants' maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself!" 21 So David said to Michal, "[It was] before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD. 22 I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished." 23 Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

After blessing the people, David also wants to bless his family. However, his wife Michal, also here meaningfully called "the daughter of Saul", appears to share nothing of David's joy about the ark. To her the ark is nothing special. On the contrary, celebrating before an ark is something to laugh about. It is ridiculous. So people who are so close to us can laugh at us when we talk enthusiastically about the Lord Jesus and want to live for Him.

Michal despises David for having discarded his royal dignity and put on a linen priestly cloth instead. That priestly cloth has no meaning or value to her. She doesn't see it at all. She even accused him that he "uncovered himself". For a spiritual-minded wife, this would have been a worthy addition to his dignity as king. For Michal, however, he has failed. David no longer stands out from others, and that is what she wants, to her own glory. She

cannot show him off when he is humble. A woman who behaves in this way does not have to count on spiritual fruit.

For David, the reception by his wife is like a cold shower. He himself is still, as it were, in awe of what happened to the ark. He has brought the ark where God wants it. His dealings with the ark brought him, so to speak, to the level of heaven. The reception by Michael may have given him the feeling Paul had after being in the third heaven. After that experience, an angel of satan came to torment him (2Cor 12:7). The Lord allowed this, so that he shouldn't exalt himself to the fact that he had been raised up to paradise.

In his conversation with Michal David is humble. Her despicable words must have hurt him, because he loves her. At the same time, he feels more connected to the lowest of the people than to those who are connected to him by natural ties. On the one hand, he is aware of his election by God, and on the other hand, he takes the lowest place in relation to men. He is humble in his own eyes and that is at the same time through which he knows how to acquire honor. Thus he resembles the Lord Jesus who said: "Who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant" (Lk 22:26). In this He Himself is the great example.

Michal's attitude brings no fruit. There is no relationship between David and her, no spiritual fellowship. She has no part in what inspires David in his relationship to God. It seems that her contempt for David for his love for the ark caused her never to have a child.

We can learn a spiritual lesson here. We cannot have fellowship with those who despise the Lord Jesus (of whom the ark is a picture). Just as Michal remains without fruit because of her attitude toward David, so there will be no fruit for God in our lives if we speak despicably of people who are committed to the interests of God.

There will always be people like Michal who disdain an extraordinary enthusiasm of the believers for God and Christ.

There will always be someone like Judas who calls Mary's anointing oil for the Lord wasteful (Jn 12:4-6).

There will always be mockers who say of believers filled with the Spirit that they are full of sweet wine (Acts 2:13).

There will always be people who say of bread coming from heaven: 'What is it?' and of the gift from heaven: 'Who is it?'

There will always be a Festus to say to Paul: "You are out of your mind! [Your] great learning is driving you mad" (Acts 26:24).

There will always be those who take offence of the cross.

But there also will always be those who can say that they boast in nothing, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 6:14).

2 Samuel 7

Introduction

After the ark is brought to Zion, it occurs to David's heart to build a house for the LORD as a resting place for the ark. Here we see the heart of God and the heart of David. David wants to build a house for God. He brought the ark to Zion and wants to build the temple for it. God does not allow him to do so, but instead He says He will build a house for David.

The tabernacle is currently in Gibeon. The ark was first in Shiloh and is now on Mount Zion. Gibeon is a city of priests. David does not think of the tabernacle. He did arrange a service there (1Chr 16:39-40), but his heart is in Zion, just like the heart of God. It is not in his heart to bring the tabernacle to Zion, but to build a permanent home for the LORD.

2Sam 7:1-3 | David's Longing for the Ark

1 Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, 2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains." 3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your mind, for the LORD is with you."

David is as king at rest in his house. The LORD has given him rest on all sides; all enemies have been conquered. Then the desire occurs to his heart to build a house for the ark of God, that is to say for God Himself (1Chr 28:2). He has found peace himself and now he is looking for peace for the ark. He wants to build a house of peace for the ark. The ark is the place of rest for the feet of the LORD. This speaks of the Lord Jesus in Whom God can rest.

What we see with David also happens today in the lives of people who repent. If God points to the Lord Jesus as the resting point for his sins, such a person will find that rest with Him. Then such a person will start thinking about the dwelling of God, that is now the church. The church is a place of rest where the Lord Jesus finds rest, where He finds people to whom He is

everything. We can also apply it more generally. If God has done so much for us in His goodness, it should make us think about what we can do for Him and His glory.

David shares his plan with Nathan, who is immediately enthusiastic. He confirms David's intention. David's wish is so beautiful! Surely it cannot be other than according to God's thoughts, can it?

2Sam 7:4-7 | The Answer of the LORD

4 But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, 5 "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in? 6 For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle. 7 Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"'"

David's intention, however, is not in accordance with God's will. Nathan appears to have given a favorable advice too quickly. This may happen to us as well. Something appeals to us, that is what we want to do for the Lord. We talk about it with a brother who is spiritually minded and who also stimulates us. Yet it may still become apparent that what we want to do for the Lord is not our task.

Nathan did not speak on the instruction of the LORD and therefore did not give David permission on His behalf for the execution of his plan. The LORD corrects His prophet in the same night. He does so in a very kind way. He doesn't reproach him, but tells him His thoughts. He points out to Nathan that He has always been with His people in a way that He adapted Himself to His people. This is expressed particularly beautifully because the LORD speaks here of "all the sons of Israel". This brings Him even closer to every member of His people. He does not speak of a people as a whole, but sees that people in every person who is a member of it.

In the time before David He never said anything about building a house to one of the leaders of his people, like Moses, Aaron, Joshua, the judges. He did not want a place of rest until the people had entered into the rest.

2Sam 7:8-11 | The Work of the LORD for David

8 "Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. 9 I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. 10 I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, 11 even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.

The LORD sends Nathan to David, whom He calls "My servant". He also gives Nathan the words in his mouth that he must speak. Nathan must go and say words to David on behalf of "the LORD of hosts". This impressive name of God shows Him as God over everything. In that majesty He addresses the word to David.

First the LORD speaks of David personally. He speaks of all the benefits He has given him, and how He has been with him, and what He will do with him and for him. He reminds David of what He did with him. He has raised him from the humble position of a shepherd of cattle to leader over His people. He has always been with David in his way to the throne. He has also eradicated all his enemies from before him. He also made him a great name, comparable to other great names.

The LORD speaks in verses 10-11a about a situation for His people that is yet to come. Yet it does not say that God will do it, but that He did it. It stands in the perfect tense, because it is already so for God, even if it is not yet so far in current affairs. There is rest during the reign of David and also in the first years of the reign of Solomon.

The LORD promises David that He will build a house for him. He officially announces this to him here. The house which the LORD will build for David is his descendency, his family. He is the head of his house here (cf. Zec 12:8). In David we have a picture of the Lord Jesus and in David's house a picture of the church of the living God.

Here we do not find the argument that David may not build because he has blood on his hands (1Chr 28:3), but that the LORD only wants rest when His people have it. David has to learn that that time is not yet there. David may not build a house for the LORD because the LORD will build a house for him. God reveals Himself here as the Giver.

2Sam 7:12-17 | The Son of David

12 When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15 but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took [it] away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.””” 17 In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

After His words to and about David personally the LORD speaks about his successor. When David is asleep with his fathers, the LORD will take care of a successor. This shall be one who comes forth out of his body, his son. The LORD will confirm the kingship of that son.

Except that the son shall take the place of David on the throne, the son also shall build the house desired by David for the LORD. To the building of His house by this son the LORD immediately connects a new confirmation of the kingship of the son of David. The LORD even says here that He will “establish” this kingdom “forever”.

The word ‘forever’ appears seven times in this chapter. It is not about temporary things. What is unfolded in this chapter is in connection with the eternal thoughts of God. The favor David receives is greater than what God has done for Moses, or for Joshua, or for any of the judges He called to pasture His people. David’s government is the first to be hereditary. It is a government that will be fully fulfilled when Christ exercises His kingship ‘forever’. In the first place, forever looks at the millennial kingdom of peace, but then also at the eternal state thereafter.

The LORD connects a third remarkable thing – after the building of His house and the establishment of an eternal kingdom – to the son of David. He adopts David’s son as His own son and says that He will be a Father to him. As soon as Solomon is born David gives him a name, but immediately the LORD speaks about who Solomon is for him (2Sam 12:24-25). Solomon is a picture of the true Son of David, Who is also the Son of God, in Whom God has found His pleasure.

At the same time it becomes clear that under Solomon the full counsel of God in relation to Christ is not fulfilled. Solomon is a picture of Christ, and his government points to the government of Christ, but Solomon himself is a weak and fallible human being. This is evident from his life. He has finally failed in his responsibility as king. In view of this responsibility, the LORD speaks here of “commits iniquity” and “correct him”, something that cannot possibly be said of the Lord Jesus.

But the LORD promises his constant mercy. He points to Saul and reminds David how He “removed” Saul “from before you”. The remembrance of Saul and how the LORD had to deal with him, is a serious warning. The LORD’s addition that the house and kingship of David “shall endure before Me forever”, must fill David with the greatest gratitude because of the enormous contrast with the LORD’s dealings with Saul.

Nathan has passed on the message of the LORD and what he has seen word for word to David. How must David, during the speaking of Nathan, have been increasingly impressed by the great grace that is being shown to him. The climax is the comparison with Saul. Surely he is not better in himself than Saul, is he? As far as he is concerned, it can only be God’s electing grace. Grateful and overwhelmed by that grace, David utters the impressive prayer of thanks that now follows.

2Sam 7:18-29 | David’s Thanksgiving Prayer

*18 Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, “Who am I, O Lord LORD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?
19 And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord LORD, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future. And this is the custom of man, O Lord LORD. 20 Again what more can David say*

to You? For You know Your servant, O Lord LORD! 21 For the sake of Your word, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness to let Your servant know. 22 For this reason You are great, O Lord LORD; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, [from] nations and their gods? 24 For You have established for Yourself Your people Israel as Your own people forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God. 25 Now therefore, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house, confirm [it] forever, and do as You have spoken, 26 that Your name may be magnified forever, by saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel'; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You. 27 For You, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made a revelation to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house'; therefore Your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to You. 28 Now, O Lord LORD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant. 29 Now therefore, may it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord LORD, have spoken; and with Your blessing may the house of Your servant be blessed forever."

After all that David has heard from Nathan, he goes to the LORD. He takes his place "before the LORD". He sits down with Him, in peace and quiet in His presence (verse 18). This shows a high degree of confidentiality. He feels at home with God. At the same time he is full of respect for that God. He is impressed by everything God has done and will do for him. He feels overwhelmed by God's mercies for him and his descendants.

David knows that the LORD did this according to His own heart and made him part of it. He will talk about this with the LORD, thank Him for it in the awareness of proven grace. He is deeply imbued with his own unworthiness. This we hear in what he says: "Who am I ... and what is my house" (cf. Gen 32:10). This mindset characterizes his whole prayer of thanks.

God communicates His plans to us. This is true for His counsels and also for the way we have to go on earth. Do we thank the Lord for including us in His plans and making us part of them? We will do so when we are over-

whelmed by His mercy. We will thank Him for making us feel comfortable with Him. We will thank Him for allowing us to rely on His Word, on what He has said, as the basis for every blessing also for us. We will thank Him for allowing us to address him as David does in verse 28: “Lord LORD, You are God, and Your words are truth.”

David not only expresses his amazement at what the LORD has done, but also at what He will do in the distant future (verse 19). He will do this according “to the custom of men”, that is to say, by letting follow generation by generation. The LORD will always take care of a descendant.

Notice how often David speaks here about God’s Word and what God has spoken. God keeps His Word, as evidenced by the deeds that make it come true. It is also striking that David addresses God six times as “Lord LORD” and speaks of himself ten times as “Your servant”. David knows the power of the word of the LORD, that what He says also happens. He trusts it. He sees it fulfilled in his life and knows that everything will be fulfilled. The word comes from God’s heart. He sees and knows the heart of God.

In verse 20, however, he begins with the LORD knowing *him*. Not only is it important to know God, but it is also important to be aware that God knows us. Paul even says that the awareness that God knows us is more than the awareness that we know God (Gal 4:9a). The reason is that our knowledge of God is partial, but God’s knowledge of us is perfect. This is what impressed David and what should impress us.

He praises the incomparable greatness and power of God. There is no one like Him. To this he directly connects the incomparability of His people with any other people. After David had said of himself in verse 18: “Who am I”, he says in verse 23: “what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel?” He also sees God’s goodness for His people that He has redeemed. God’s greatness, power and grace can be seen in His election and redemption of Israel. Just as no one among the gods is equal to God, so no people among the nations are equal to His people. The people belong to God and God belongs to the people. God makes the name of David and His people great; but that is so that David and His people may make His Name great.

In view of his own house David has a prayer (verse 25). He yearns for it and prays that God will make great His Name, which is great, and that He

will make it greater, and that He will do so in accordance with His promises concerning Israel and the house of David. He does not speak about what God has spoken about his name, the name of David, but what God has spoken about His own Name, the Name of God (verse 26).

David ends his prayer of thanksgiving by asking that God may bless his house (verse 29). The basis for this prayer is: "For You, O Lord LORD, have spoken." His house will be eternally blessed by the birth and reign of the great Son of David.

2 Samuel 8

Introduction

It is good to see David sitting on the throne in this chapter. Yet it does not reach the scene of the previous chapter, where we saw David sitting before the LORD. As believers, we are destined to sit on thrones. But it is better to get off these thrones, to prostrate ourselves at the feet of the Redeemer and throw down our crowns there. Just as sitting in the LORD's presence is the high point of David's life, so is our high point that we prostrate ourselves before Him. Worshiping is greater than reigning.

In this chapter we see David as the man of faith. He breaks the power of the enemy and takes his goods. He also makes preparations for the government of peace and prosperity of his son Solomon.

We also see him as the picture of the Lord Jesus, the King of Zion, Who gains the victory over the enemies of Israel and Who gives His people the possession of the promised land right up to the Euphrates (Gen 15:18). David rules over all Israel and exercises justice and righteousness over all the people. Those who have shared his wanderings now also share in the glory of his kingdom. In everything we see a picture of the reign of Christ.

David successively overcomes the Philistines, the Moabites, the king of Zobah, the Arameans and the Edomites. He also deals with the Ammonites and the Amalekites. All these enemies represent sin in its many manifestations. All these manifestations are as many enemies who want to have influence in our lives. The Lord wants to give us the strength to overcome those enemies. The armor of God described in Ephesians 6 is given to us (Eph 6:10-18). If we put it on, without forgetting a part, we can stand and be victors.

2Sam 8:1 | David Beats the Philistines

1 Now after this it came about that David defeated the Philistines and subdued them; and David took control of the chief city from the hand of the Philistines.

“Now after” means that there is a link with the foregoing. After the house of David in the previous chapter, in this chapter comes his kingdom. When the house is established, there is also strength to fight. David has been in the sanctuary and is now coming outside to gain victories. We can overcome enemies by the Spirit. The Lord Jesus has conquered the world and we can do so in the power of His Spirit.

The first enemies David defeats are the Philistines. Samson was long ago the man who had been told he would begin to defeat the Philistines (Jdg 13:5), but Samson himself was defeated by them. The same goes for Saul. David has already begun to defeat the Philistines (2Sam 5:17-25) and is now completing his work. This brings to an end a long period in which the people of God were delivered into the power of the Philistines. Taking control of “the chief city” – by which is probably meant Gath – seems to be an act that is symbolic for the breaking of the power of the Philistines. Now he exercises his influence on the Philistines and subdues them.

2Sam 8:2-6 | Other Enemies Defeated

2 He defeated Moab, and measured them with the line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death and one full line to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute. 3 Then David defeated Hadadezer, the son of Rehob king of Zobah, as he went to restore his rule at the River. 4 David captured from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers; and David hamstringed the chariot horses, but reserved [enough] of them for 100 chariots. 5 When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, king of Zobah, David killed 22,000 Arameans. 6 Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus, and the Arameans became servants to David, bringing tribute. And the LORD helped David wherever he went.

After the Philistines it is Moab’s turn. This enemy is also defeated. Here a pre-fulfillment of the prophecy of Balaam takes place: “A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab” (Num 24:17). In judging the Moabites, David uses lines to measure. In this way he determines who is killed and who is allowed to stay alive. It is reminiscent of the effect of the gospel, of which

we read that it is “to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life” (2Cor 2:16).

Moab is also defeated by David. The Moabites remained indebted to Israel until after the death of Ahab. Then they rebelled and were never subjected again (2Kgs 3:4-5). The final submission, according to the quoted prophecy of Balaam, will be done by “the star of Jacob” and the “scepter of Israel”, which in reality refers to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of Israel.

The spiritual meaning of this enemy is not difficult. We read of Moab that it is characterized by pride and laziness (Isa 16:6; Jer 48:11a). These sins are in us, in our flesh. In Christ we have power over sin. In practice, it means that we must keep ourselves dead to sin. This can be done by constantly thinking that our old man has been crucified with Christ. As soon as pride or laziness are to assert themselves in our lives, we must look at Christ and His work on the cross. Only in this way will the flesh not have a chance to assert itself.

The next enemies to be defeated are the Arameans. These enemies try to undermine the authority of David at the extreme borders of God’s people. David goes there to maintain his authority. What God has given as a boundary for His people, the Euphrates (Gen 15:18), there the enemy tries to regain authority. The spiritual lesson is that there are powers that try to take possession of the boundaries God has given in His Word. For example, we can think of the limitation of marriage as the only area God has given in which sexuality can be experienced in the way He purposed.

The Arameans consist of two groups. We read this in Psalm 60, a psalm David has made in response to the battle described here. David begins with “the Arameans of Zobah” (verses 3-4; Psa 60:1a). When he goes to the border of his realm at the Euphrates, he finds the king of Zobah on his way. This king claims the possession of the countries that belong to Israel. They are assigned to Abraham and his seed by the promise of God. David beats him, takes his chariots away from him and captures many horsemen and footmen. He also cuts through the hamstrings of many horses, making them lame and unusable for battle.

David also deals with the Arameans of Damascus who came to help the king of Zobah. They do this to their own destruction. All the conspiracy

against the LORD and His anointed only simplifies the judgment of them. The enemies of God are also joined together in the end times by an invisible power to be completely destroyed in one moment (Isa 8:9). Many of the Arameans are killed by David. As a result he simply conquered Damascus and turned it into a garrison town.

David overcomes because the LORD gives him victory (verses 6,14). It is good to realize that in ourselves there is no power to overcome any enemy.

2Sam 8:7-12 | David's Booty of War

7 David took the shields of gold which were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 From Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a very large amount of bronze. 9 Now when Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer, 10 Toi sent Joram his son to King David to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him; for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi. And [Joram] brought with him articles of silver, of gold and of bronze. 11 King David also dedicated these to the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued: 12 from Aram and Moab and the sons of Ammon and the Philistines and Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

Because David has defeated Hadadezer, there is joy with Toi, king of Hamath. Defeating enemies has a richer effect than just a personal joy. Just as failure has evil consequences for others (2Sam 6:7), so a victory in the power of God has good effects for others.

Toi does not come forced, but voluntarily. In the realm of peace, kings and empires will be subjected with an iron rod, while others will voluntarily submit to the rule of the Lord Jesus (Psa 18:43-45). They are grateful to Him for defeating their enemies. Toi brings articles of metals which David can use for building the temple.

David sanctifies all that he captures in the various wars for the LORD (verse 11). Everything is destined for building the temple (1Kgs 7:51). That the temple is built from the spoils and gifts of pagan peoples shows God's benevolence to the pagans. The house of God will therefore be called "a house of prayer for all the peoples" (Isa 56:7). We see the same with the

new Jerusalem. We read of “the kings of the earth” that they “bring their glory to her” (Rev 21:24).

If someone is overcome by the grace of the Son of David, all that has served first to his own glory must be used from that moment on to glorify Him. For this it must be sanctified, i.e. consciously given that destiny and no longer used for his own glorification (cf. Isa 23:18; Mic 4:13b). This is only possible if everything is seen in the light of the cross.

2Sam 8:13-14 | David Makes a Name

13 So David made a name [for himself] when he returned from killing 18,000 Arameans in the Valley of Salt. 14 He put garrisons in Edom. In all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. And the LORD helped David wherever he went.

Through his victories, especially those on the Arameans, David makes a name. He does so through his policy and courage that make him stand out from other military commanders. Probably there is something extraordinary in his way of warfare. However, he is very careful not to give credit to himself. This is clear from the conclusion of the psalm he wrote as a result of this war: “Through God we shall do valiantly, and it is He who will tread down our adversaries” (Psa 60:12). He realizes that his victories are exclusively due to God.

All Edomites become servants of David. In this way and at this moment the blessing of Isaac is fulfilled, in which he made Jacob lord over Esau (Gen 27:37-40). This is also a pre-fulfillment, because the final fulfillment only comes in the kingdom of peace. The Edomites remained indebted to the kings of Judah for a long time, as did the Moabites to the kings of Israel. In the time of king Jehoram they revolt (2Chr 21:8), according to the prophecy by Isaac that Esau will in time cast off Jacob’s yoke from his neck.

2Sam 8:15-18 | Reign of David

15 So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people. 16 Joab the son of Zeruiah [was] over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud [was] recorder. 17 Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar [were] priests, and Seraiah [was] secretary.

18 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers.

These verses give a picture of the kingdom of peace under the reign of the Lord Jesus. David reigns over all Israel. The whole people are safe under his protection and share in the fruits of his good reign. He is impartial and fair in lawsuit. He has never twisted the law out of favor or predilection. In his legal proceedings he proceeds without regard to the person. In this he is a type of Christ, Who is faithful and true and “in righteousness He judges and wages war” (Rev 19:11; Psa 72:1-2).

With a steady hand he exercises justice and righteousness among all the people, without doing wrong to someone or denial of right to anyone. It shows that the people have easy access to him and that he is prepared to listen to those who want to ask him something or appeal to him.

David also has good officials at his court. He is the first leader of God's people to have an established government. He also sees that he needs people who can manage well. He has two military officers, Joab and Benaiah. Joab is over the army in view of hostile forces outside of Israel. Benaiah is over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, the bodyguard of David, and ensures the maintenance of internal order.

He also has two priests for religious matters, Zadok and Ahimelech. The joint mention of Zadok and Ahimelech as priests indicates the transition that takes place in the priestly service. Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, is a descendant of Eli, the son of Ithamar, the son of Aaron. This line of the priesthood will end, as Samuel said to Eli (1Sam 3:10-14). Zadok is a descendant of Aaron via Eleazar, the other remaining son of Aaron (1Chr 6:3-8). Via Zadok the line of the priesthood is continued from the reign of Solomon (1Kgs 2:35).

Finally, there are two civil servants, Jehoshaphat and Seraiah. Jehoshaphat is recorder. He brings the important issues to David's attention to deal with them. Seraiah is a secretary of state. He sets public order and keeps records of decisions and court rulings.

We can learn spiritual lessons from David's concern for internal peace by maintaining the law. He provides a good army, because he realizes that, all his enemies having been defeated, a threat from them continues to em-

anate. The army is not only there to maintain peace toward the peoples around them, it is also used to maintain peace among the members of the people themselves. Also internally there must be no outbreak of revolt.

If we apply this to the life of the church, the lesson is that also when there are tensions between them, the true David is ready to restore peace and quiet. He has an 'army', His gifts to the church, who give clues that can make the tension disappear.

In Acts 6, we have an example of such tensions. A group of believers feels disadvantaged. These believers feel that, compared to others, they get too little. If this grumble does not disappear quickly, it will have a devastating effect on the church. The 'army' of the Lord Jesus, the apostles, comes up with the solution, by which the grumbling stops. This solution does not lie in the use of violence, but in meeting the complainants wherever possible (Acts 6:1-6). Such a solution requires a spiritual mind, the mind of the Lord Jesus.

We also have a responsibility to ensure that we uphold His rights in our own lives and in the church of God. This means, that what He says in His Word is obeyed. This cannot happen by force or violence, but by the Spirit Who works in leaders whom the Lord has given. These leaders are not officially appointed persons. There is no such thing in the Bible. They are servants trained and formed by the Lord in the school of life. We are exhorted to be obedient and submissive to them (Heb 13:17a).

2 Samuel 9

Introduction

In this chapter we have a special side of the kingdom. Here we do not see the power and majesty of the kingdom, but its kindness and love. The king of that realm is not only concerned with security and fighting and subjugating enemies, but he is also concerned with some poor, little souls. Mephibosheth is an example of such a poor, little soul. He is not only a picture of a sinner who receives grace and is therefore not killed. The grace that David shows him makes him a man who may continually be at the king's table.

When David is exalted king over all Israel, he wants to show kindness to the house of the fallen king Saul. He also wants to reward his friend Jonathan for the love he once had him swear before the LORD (1Sam 20:12-17,42).

The report of David's act of kindness marks the end of the first part of his government's history. Perhaps it is better to speak of an appendix to that history. In this appendix we see how David, at the height of his power and glory, thinks of a friend's love and wants to show his gratitude for it.

2Sam 9:1-4 | David Wants to Show Kindness

1 Then David said, "Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" 2 Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "[I am] your servant." 3 The king said, "Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet." 4 So the king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar."

David has defeated his enemies and maintains justice in the land. We have seen this in the last chapter. Then he thinks of Saul's house and wants to

show kindness to Jonathan. David has been closely associated with Jonathan and wants to show the kindness of God to Jonathan's descendants, although Jonathan's descendants belong to the house of Saul.

In this David is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the perfect proof of God's kindness toward a human race which deserves nothing but judgment. In Him "the kindness of God our Savior and [His] love for mankind appeared" (Tit 3:4). Through Him God saved us, while we only had rebelled against His authority.

David cares about the offspring of someone who has persecuted him with deadly hatred. David has a reason for showing his kindness. That reason is Jonathan who was near him in the time of his rejection.

The descendants of Saul had to be sought, because they had hidden themselves. Saul is the picture of the enemy, of what we are by nature (Tit 3:3). When we were still enemies, God gave His Son for us. Man is not only a sinner and powerless and wicked, but also an enemy in mind.

Ziba (verse 2) is not lame. He is a servant of Saul and he remains so, for he is content with it. On the other hand, we see poor Mephibosheth, a grandson of the king. Through Ziba David hears of Mephibosheth. In 2 Samuel 4 there is also a short mention of Mephibosheth, just in a verse in between (2Sam 4:4). There something is said about the cause of his paralysis. In his paralysis, Mephibosheth is a picture of man paralyzed by sin. He is powerless to serve God and to live to His glory. He cannot do anything which is pleasing to God.

Mephibosheth is in "Lo-debar", which means, among other things, "for him there is a meadow", which in his case means that for him there is a place of grace. He is in the house of "Machir", which means "sold", "the son of Ammiel", which means, among other things, "people of God".

2Sam 9:5-13 | Mephibosheth With David

5 Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. 6 Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, "Mephibosheth." And he said, "Here is your servant!" 7 David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father

Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly.” 8 Again he prostrated himself and said, “What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?” 9 Then the king called Saul’s servant Ziba and said to him, “All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master’s grandson. 10 You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in [the produce] so that your master’s grandson may have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master’s grandson shall eat at my table regularly.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. 11 Then Ziba said to the king, “According to all that my lord the king commands his servant so your servant will do.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table as one of the king’s sons. 12 Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth. 13 So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king’s table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet.

Mephibosheth comes to David, falls on his face and prostrates (verse 6). Does he know what David is planning? What can he count on? He can only think of one thing and that is that this is his last hour. The only person he didn’t want to meet is David. The only person who can do him good is David. And that happens. When David has found him, there is no tirade of accusations, he is not accused, no verdict is pronounced. He experiences only grace. When David sees him, he only mentions his name. “Mephibosheth” means “radiation of Baal”.

The reaction of Mephibosheth is: “Here is your servant.” It is reminiscent of the reaction of Mary when the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to her. He did so by calling a deeply distressed Mary only by her name: “Mary!” Mary’s reaction is like that of Mephibosheth: “She turned and *said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher)” (Jn 20:16).

There need be no fear with Mephibosheth. David did not call him to end his life, but to give him a much richer life than he has had so far (verse 7). He gets everything back that belongs to his family. This suddenly gives him an enormous property. But this is not the only thing. He gets much more, for he may be constantly in the presence of David. It is said three times that he may be at the king’s table.

Once again, and if possible even deeper, Mephibosheth prostrates himself (verses 6,8) upon receiving so much grace. He calls himself “a dead dog”. This is how David once called himself (1Sam 24:14; cf. 2Sam 16:9; Mt 15:26-28). Mephibosheth is aware of who he is in himself. This consciousness must also penetrate us as well. In ourselves we are nothing but a dead dog, nothing more. In Israel, a dog is already something despicable, let alone a dead dog. Mephibosheth is not only interested in being saved, but it is knowing that David’s attention is on him. He is overwhelmed by the kindness of David in what he gives him. In the picture it is about a dead dog becoming a son of God.

David gives Mephibosheth an abundance of food, much more than he can eat (verse 10). So it is with the riches of the Christian. And David does not leave it to the provision of food. He goes even further. Mephibosheth is allowed to eat regularly together with David and even live in Jerusalem, in the immediate vicinity of David.

This is how God has dealt with us. He has delivered us from a state in which we could only expect judgment. He has given us who are so reprehensible in ourselves a treasure in heaven. And already now we may have contact with Him, be in His presence, without fear of judgment. Convinced of His perfect love there is no place for fear (1Jn 4:18a).

In verse 11 we see the contrast between someone who is a servant and also satisfied to be so and someone who is a son and to whom this is his greatest good. Ziba is meaningfully referred to in verse 9 as “the servant of Saul”. His sons and servants must have their share of the income. It is a considerable portion, as is evident from the number mentioned. Ziba has fifteen sons and twenty servants. They will need a lot of what is available. We see here: “When good things increase, those who consume them increase” (Ecc 5:11a).

All who live in the house of Ziba are servants of Mephibosheth. They are all busy with his possessions and live therefrom. They feast on it, because they are out on their own advantage. The Jews have a saying: “He who multiplies servants multiplies thieves.” Ziba is now satisfied, for he loves the riches and has them at his disposal in abundance. He promises the king that he will act faithfully with it. It even seems that he says he wants

Mephibosheth at his table and will treat him like a real king's son. David does not go into that, for he wants him at his own table. How unfaithful Ziba has been, we will see later (2Sam 16:3).

In verse 12 we see that the blessings are not only for Mephibosheth, but also for his son, "whose name was Mica". Mica means 'who is like the LORD?' In the naming of his son, Mephibosheth has already expressed the faith which is in him. For that he now receives the reward through the treatment of David.

The last announcement about Mephibosheth (verse 13) is the remembrance of what he is by nature. This makes what he has become and where he has been brought all the greater. He is and remains a sinner in himself, for the flesh never changes. In ourselves we are and remain as powerless as ever, but it should not be the matter we always are busy with. We should not, so to speak, look *under* the table, but *on* the table, and especially *over* the table to Him to Whom the table belongs. We do not keep ourselves busy with ourselves, but with the Lord Jesus. It is about the constant fellowship with Him and not only about the fellowship at His Table once a week to celebrate His Supper.

Once Mephibosheth lives in Jerusalem, there is no longer reference made about his property, nor his origin, but still about his lame feet. We can apply it to ourselves as follows. It remains an everlasting miracle that I, who is naturally powerless, may now be so close to the Lord Jesus and eat at His table, that is, have fellowship with Him. In the grace of David which he shows to Mephibosheth, I see the grace of the Lord Jesus to me. He is so overwhelmingly good to me; He has given me so much. The greatest thing is that I may have fellowship with Him and be in His presence, even though I am a dead dog in myself and have no power to live to His glory.

2 Samuel 10

Introduction

This chapter marks the beginning of a new phase in David's life. The prosperity in all that he has undertaken and the increase in the power of his rule have in a way made him independent of the LORD. The feeling of undisturbed happiness has made him receptive to wicked desires. This led him to stain his soul with adultery and also with blood guilt. Thus the man who is so high exalted by the LORD his God falls deep into sin. This happens during the war against the Ammonites and Arameans, when after the subjugation of Arameans Joab with the army besieged the capital of the Ammonites and David remains in Jerusalem (2Sam 11:1).

Because of the twofold sin – the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah – the LORD announces the punishment to the high placed sinner. The punishment is that the sword shall not depart from his house and that his wives shall be slept with in public (2Sam 12:11).

Despite David's sincere repentance and confession of sin, the fruit of sin, the child born of Bathsheba, dies. But not only that. Also the announced judgments about his house are carried out. This happens because his first-born son Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar, for which brother Absalom kills him (2 Samuel 13). Absalom then flees to his father-in-law in Geshur. When Absalom is again accepted in grace by his father, King David (2 Samuel 14), he revolts against David. As a result David almost loses his throne and his life (2 Samuel 15-17:23).

After the demise of Absalom (2 Samuel 17:24-19:1) and the return of David to the throne (2 Samuel 19:2-40) there is still the rebellion of the Benjamite Sheba. This rebellion will only be overcome after this rebel has been killed in Abel Beth-maacah (2 Samuel 19:41-20:26).

2Sam 10:1-5 | The Men of David Greatly Humiliated

1 Now it happened afterwards that the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son became king in his place. 2 Then David said, "I will show kindness

to Hanun the son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.” So David sent some of his servants to console him concerning his father. But when David’s servants came to the land of the Ammonites, 3 the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think that David is honoring your father because he has sent consolers to you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to search the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?” 4 So Hanun took David’s servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away. 5 When they told [it] to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, “Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and [then] return.”

The word “afterwards” means that the history that follows takes place after the story of the previous chapter. There is a connection between the two chapters and that is kindness. After the kindness of the previous chapter to the remnant of Israel – in the picture of Mephibosheth – David also wants to show kindness to the nations – in the picture of Hanun. He is the son of Nahash who was fought by Saul (1Sam 11:1-11). This Nahash has shown kindness to David, possibly because David was pursued by Saul.

David wants to answer the kindness that Nahash has shown to him by showing kindness to his son Hanun. The reason for this is the death of Nahash. David does not forget the kindness which has been shown to him. In the same way, the Lord Jesus does not forget anything of what has been done for Him even by those who have no connection with Him. He gives them a message of grace. The question is what is done with the offer of grace. Many reject grace, as Hanun does with the kindness that David wants to show him. Those who reject grace will be judged, just as Hanun will be judged.

Hanun has advisers who tell him not to trust David. Hanun listens to his advisers. So it often happens that people reject the gospel because others make the gospel suspicious by presenting it as monetization or only to win souls. The kindness of David is not recognized. Their response to grace is a vile treatment of the messengers of grace. How totally different is this from the reaction of Mephibosheth we have seen in the previous chapter.

What David does is interpreted as hypocrisy. There is suspicion that his true intentions are not of a peaceful nature, but that he tries to submit the

Ammonites to himself through a played sympathy. Hanun shows that he does not know David. There are many people in the world who do not know the Lord Jesus. If you talk to them about the love of God and the Lord Jesus, they will not hear about it. They do not allow Him to come into their lives. They see Him as an intruder, Who does not seek the good for them, but the evil.

Whosoever bears witness of his Lord may receive the same treatment as the messengers of David. The messengers of David are treated insultingly and sent away. Hanun shaves off half of the beards of David's men, that is to say, he shaves off the beard on one side. This is one of the worst mockeries for a man in an eastern country (cf. Isa 15:2b; 20:4). For such a person, the beard is one of the greatest decorations. This insult is further enhanced by cutting off their clothes that cover their entire body, revealing the lower half of their body.

By these insults Hanun also casts libel upon the person of their lord, King David. He who rejects the servant rejects the Lord. He who offends the servant, offends the Lord. He feels the insult that is done to His own as His own insult and stands up for His own.

David hears of the humiliation and lets his messengers say that they have to take time for recovery.

2Sam 10:6-14 | David Sends Joab to Battle

6 Now when the sons of Ammon saw that they had become odious to David, the sons of Ammon sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob with 12,000 men. 7 When David heard [of it], he sent Joab and all the army, the mighty men. 8 The sons of Ammon came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the city, while the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah [were] by themselves in the field. 9 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him in front and in the rear, he selected from all the choice men of Israel, and arrayed [them] against the Arameans. 10 But the remainder of the people he placed in the hand of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed [them] against the sons of Ammon. 11 He said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the sons of

Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you. 12 Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight." 13 So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Arameans, and they fled before him. 14 When the sons of Ammon saw that the Arameans fled, they [also] fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from [fighting] against the sons of Ammon and came to Jerusalem.

The enemies know that David can't just let this pass by. They strengthen and pull together, a part near the city and a part in the field. Joab is sent to battle by David. He follows a tactic, together with Abishai, in which they divide the forces. They agree to come to each other's aid if the other one gets into trouble. This contains an important lesson. We see here an example of brotherly love that is willing to help the other, when necessary. The strong must support and help the weak. Those who, by grace, have gained a victory over temptations, can counsel and comfort those who are tempted, and pray for them. In this way the members of the body help each other (1Cor 12:21,25).

Joab encourages Abishai and himself (verse 12). He points out what it is all about, namely "our people" and "the cities of our God". Furthermore, with the words "may the LORD do what is good in His sight" he puts the matter into the hands of the LORD. They gain the victory.

Despite his beautiful words Joab is a wicked man. He is cunning, also in his piety. He separates what he and others do and what the LORD will do. It seems nice, but here is a man who knows well what he himself is capable of and who at the same time theoretically also knows that God is there. This is because he lives in the midst of a religious people. His motto is: 'Help yourself, and God may help you.' Each for himself and God for all of us. This is liberal theology. In reality God does not play a role in his plans at all.

In the judgment that David exercises over the heathen, after the proof of grace in Mephibosheth to the remnant, we see prophetically how things will go in the end time.

2Sam 10:15-19 | David Goes to War

15 When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. 16 And Hadadezer sent and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the River, and they came to Helam; and Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer led them. 17 Now when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Arameans arrayed themselves to meet David and fought against him. 18 But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed 700 charioteers of the Arameans and 40,000 horsemen and struck down Shobach the commander of their army, and he died there. 19 When all the kings, servants of Hadadezer, saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Arameans feared to help the sons of Ammon anymore.

The Arameans regroup (verse 15). Now David himself goes to war (verse 17). The enemy is defeated, makes peace and submits to Israel (verse 19). Also, for fear of the consequences, they no longer connect with Israel's other enemy, Ammon. The result is that the remnant of the nations make peace with David.

In these verses we see a prophetic picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus to defeat the gathered armies after two thousand years of grace has been offered to the nations. The great King David beats them. Here we can think of the battle in Harmagedon (Rev 16:16).

We can learn the following from this whole history. It may happen that a kindness of ours in the Name of the Lord Jesus, is misinterpreted and answered with insult. We may know that when this happens to us, He identifies Himself with us and makes our cause His. If we give everything into His hands, the result is that we have lasting peace in our hearts (1Pet 2:23b; Phil 4:6-7).

We also see that resistance and revolt only result in the authority of the Lord Jesus being established even more strongly. It is useless to fight against the power of the King chosen by God.

2 Samuel 11

Introduction

Here begins a part of David's history in which he is not a picture of the Lord Jesus, but of a believer who sins. It is also a believer with a great responsibility. He offends God, commits adultery and commits murder. The position and responsibility of a believer also determines the seriousness of his sin. It makes a difference to God whether an ordinary member of His people or a leader of His people sins (Lev 4:1-2,13,22,27). The consequences are inevitable, although there is forgiveness for the sins he has committed.

We also learn that we do not suddenly start living in sin. *Falling* into sin can happen suddenly, but David starts to *live* in sin. He chooses this way of life and makes sin part of his life.

2Sam 11:1-5 | Adultery of David With Bathsheba

1 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out [to battle], that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

This chapter follows historically on the previous one, it is the following year, "in the spring", literally "at the return of the year". According to the customs of that time, the spring, when the late rain has stopped, is the time for military action to be taken again. For David it means that the time has come to defeat Moab definitively. But instead of going out at the head of the army, he stays at home and sends Joab and the whole people. It seems

that he spent the whole day in bed, because we read that “when evening came David arose from his bed”.

David stays at home, when he should have gone to battle. He neglects his duty and takes rest while he should have worked. Here the saying is true: ‘Idle hands are the devil’s playground.’ If we are not busy with what we should or may do, we are on a road on which the temptation can overtake us as a traveler (2Sam 12:1-4). Someone who has nothing to do, is an easy prey for the devil. He can get on well with that. Doing nothing is creating room for sin.

David “saw”. He does not seek temptation, but sees it. The temptation appears suddenly. Then it comes down to what one does. However, David’s mental defense mechanism has been eliminated by his laziness. If the inner condition is prepared by laziness, desire can easily enter. The law which James mentions in his letter then comes into effect (Jam 1:14-15). Desire does not have to lead to sin, but the power to say ‘no’ to sin is lacking when one lives in laxness. Then the lusts find a partner in the flesh. If David had been strong, he would have made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1).

With us it will be exactly the same if we open ourselves up to pornographic material. Sometimes you suddenly see a picture, by accident. This can happen because you see a picture on a billboard along the road. It can also happen through a picture you see on the ‘digital highway’, without searching for it. What do you do then? Were you just driving, a bit aimlessly, or surfing, a bit aimlessly? Then you have opened the door wide for sin.

David’s sin with Bathsheba is preceded by taking more wives, after he has come from Hebron (2Sam 5:13). His many wives have demolished the threshold for his desire for another wife. Taking more wives is a violation of the king’s law (Deu 17:17a). When David commits the sin of adultery, he is over fifty years old. The danger of adultery remains, even at old age and is perhaps then the greatest.

David spent the whole day in idleness. Laziness, laxness and passivity are enormous dangers for every believer. When we give in to laziness, the enemy comes, the traveler who wants to stay overnight with us (2Sam 12:1-4). This traveler is sin, lust. David sins because he does not immediately, after he has seen Bathsheba washing herself, place himself before the LORD

to have his thoughts purified. Instead, he holds on to that picture and inquires who the woman is. He is informed in detail about her, and he is also told that she is married. However, lust has him in her grip so much that he cannot be stopped in his intention to take possession of that woman by laying with her (cf. Jer 5:8).

David abuses his position. He also abuses Bathsheba. Because she is another person's wife, he also cheats on her husband. He lets her come and lies with her. The history is described without sensation. It's simply the events. The mention that she has "purified herself from her uncleanness" seems to indicate that she has just had her period and that she has washed herself to that end (verse 4; Lev 12:2-5; 15:19-28). At the same time it makes clear why she is pregnant immediately, because a few days after menstruation the chance of pregnancy is naturally greatest. It is usually the most fertile period. When Bathsheba discovers that she is pregnant, she lets him know. She says nothing else, but leaves everything to him (verse 5).

The question is whether we are equipped to meet sin. It is not about the sins of others, but those of me. David's sin is the sin that is widely committed today and that takes away the life force of God's people. The accidents in traffic and in the air are insignificant compared to the accidents in families and lives caused by this sin. Satan specializes in making sin popular and entertaining. We are no longer afraid of sin. Of the history of David and Bathsheba a movie is made. Why do people want to see that movie? Do we throw away a DVD if it contains erotic scenes?

2Sam 11:6-13 | David and Uriah

6 Then David sent to Joab, [saying], "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and a present from the king was sent out after him. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 Now when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord

Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing.” 12 Then David said to Uriah, “Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you go.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Now David called him, and he ate and drank before him, and he made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with his lord’s servants, but he did not go down to his house.

If the evil deed is not judged, another evil emerges from the evil. David realizes that he has to take measures before it comes to light that he has committed adultery and he has to be killed. Now he becomes a murderer to avoid this fate. He comes up with a cunning plan.

Now that David has chosen the path of sin, he can do two things. He can acknowledge that he has been wrong and beg God for mercy. He also can continue on the way of sin and try to erase the consequences. He chooses the latter.

David has not yet set out to kill Uriah. First he tries to get Uriah with his wife surreptitiously. He lets him come to him. Hypocritically he asks after Joab, the men, and how the war is going. He pretends to have concern for his men and the battle they are engaged in. Uriah reports of it.

After the report David gives Uriah leave to go home and be with his wife. He manipulates him to achieve that goal. Uriah will undoubtedly then also lie with her. This will make it look as if the child being born is Uriah’s child. The king’s adultery would then have remained hidden. How he abuses his royal power here! However, he did not consider the loyalty of Uriah.

When David lets Uriah come to him and asks why he did not go home, Uriah speaks the language of faith, the language of a faithful and dedicated believer. He cannot take his ease, as David did, by which he came to his sin. The words of Uriah (verse 11) remind David of his own duty. God lets Uriah say those things to speak to David’s conscience. It is an impressive plea of dedication, which at the same time exposes razor sharp David’s unfaithfulness. We see in this discourse the love of God who speaks in a penetrating way to the conscience of David. But he is deaf to it, for he has silenced his conscience.

As David cannot be brought to leave the way of sin, so Uriah cannot be brought to leave the way of dedication. Even the present David has sent out after him does not detract Uriah from the way of faithfulness to his duty. David makes another attempt to get Uriah with his wife (verse 12). He tries it with a new trick. He invites Uriah to come and eat and drink with him. What is a proof of grace with Mephibosheth (2Sam 9:13) is a trick with Uriah. David only uses his invitation to make Uriah drunk, hoping that he would then go to his wife and lie with her (cf. Hab 2:15-16).

David, however, fails to get Uriah go to his wife Bathsheba to cover his terrible sin. Uriah is in no way to be moved to forsake his duty. Uriah's dedication to his duty causes David is getting more and more nervous and he is also getting meaner and meaner. He is unstoppable and runs on the way of sin to a next sin.

2Sam 11:14-25 | David Lets Uriah Be Killed

14 Now in the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent [it] by the hand of Uriah. 15 He had written in the letter, saying, "Place Uriah in the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck down and die." 16 So it was as Joab kept watch on the city, that he put Uriah at the place where he knew there [were] valiant men. 17 The men of the city went out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among David's servants fell; and Uriah the Hittite also died. 18 Then Joab sent and reported to David all the events of the war. 19 He charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling all the events of the war to the king, 20 and if it happens that the king's wrath rises and he says to you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? 21 Who struck down Abimelech the son of Jerubesheth? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?'—then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'" 22 So the messenger departed and came and reported to David all that Joab had sent him [to tell]. 23 The messenger said to David, "The men prevailed against us and came out against us in the field, but we pressed them as far as the entrance of the gate. 24 Moreover, the archers shot at your servants from the wall; so some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead." 25 Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall

say to Joab, 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another; make your battle against the city stronger and overthrow it'; and [so] encourage him."

David orders Joab to ensure that Uriah is killed. It is nothing less than an order to have him murdered. The brave man who is prepared to die for the honor of his king is killed by his king. David has lost his mind through his adultery (Pro 6:32). He killed Goliath in broad daylight and before the eyes of all the people. He secretly lets the murder of Uriah happen, it is a work of darkness.

David is that hardened that he orders the murder by giving the letter for Joab and the instructions to Uriah himself. The fact that he gives the letter to Uriah is an extra proof of the integrity of Uriah. David knows that this faithful soldier will never open the letter. By making Joab complicit in his iniquity, he at the same time makes himself a slave to him. By the way, Joab did not have to do this. Later he also knows to act when David is doing wrong in his eyes (2Sam 19:5-7; 24:3).

How deeply David sunk! When he was chased in the mountains like a partridge by Saul (1Sam 26:20), he was happier than now. Then he had a living faith and a good conscience.

Joab is well acquainted with David's way of thinking, because he knows how he will react (verses 18-21). In view of this, the messenger must then say that Uriah is dead. When David has heard the report, he knows he has achieved his goal. His response is a general comment, without any sympathy because of the death of his subjects. Uriah is dead. That was what it was all about. He soothes Joab's conscience, but his own conscience seems cauterized.

2Sam 11:26-27 | David Takes Bathsheba to Be His Wife

26 Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 When the [time of] mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Bathsheba also receives the message of her husband's death and mourns for him. This mourning must not have lasted too long and must not have

been too deep, for immediately after the time of mourning David sends for her and she becomes his wife. In this way sin must remain hidden.

However, his sin will find him out (Num 32:23). It also seems that the matter has become well known anyway. Can we not derive this from what Nathan says about the slander of the LORD's enemies by this sinful act of David (2Sam 12:14)? It was also possible to count in that time and it was noted that the son of Bathsheba was born much earlier than nine months after his marriage.

David may have tried to hide his sin from the eyes of men, but it is impossible to hide it from the eyes of the all-seeing God. We read: "But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD." We see what sin is to God when we read the profound confession of David in Psalm 51. This psalm David wrote "when the prophet Nathan came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba" (Psa 51:1a).

The lesson this history contains for us is that we must be careful not to hang around but to do what the Lord commands. A sin never comes alone. We must be careful of the lust of the eyes. If we have sinned, we should not try to camouflage that sin, because that leads to another sin. We must confess sin. I am now thinking of the sexual relationship that the former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, had with Monica Lewinski (November 1995-March 1997, Wikipedia). He did everything possible to deny the charges so as not to lose his face to the world.

Actually, we should not even think about Clinton's relationship with Lewinski. Don't we have enough to do with ourselves? How often do we try to find an excuse for sin, so we don't have to confess it, afraid as we are of losing face? This needs to be not only on the sexual level. It can happen in all kinds of situations. Also then there is One Who looks from the beginning and it must be said that it is "evil in the sight of the LORD".

We may all pray for ourselves: 'Lord, do not lead me into temptation, but keep me close to Yourself, in Your way. "Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You" (Psa 16:1). I know, Lord, that these words were in Your heart when You walked here on earth. You spoke them, not because You were afraid to stumble, but because as Man You found complete safety and protection with Your God. These words indicate how You were completely

dependent on Your God. Thank You for allowing me to pray these words too. With me it is for fear that I give in to sin. There is so much around me that connects to the sin dwelling in me, that I want to ask again: Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.'

2 Samuel 12

2Sam 12:1-6 | A Rich, a Poor and a Traveler

*1 Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said,
“There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor.*

2 “The rich man had a great many flocks and herds.

*3 “But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb
Which he bought and nourished;*

And it grew up together with him and his children.

*It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom,
And was like a daughter to him.*

4 “Now a traveler came to the rich man,

And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd,

To prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him;

*Rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had
come to him.”*

*5 Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan,
“As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. 6 He
must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had
no compassion.”*

When the child is born, Nathan is sent to David by the LORD. Why did the LORD wait so long? Is it because perhaps He waited in His great patience for David’s confession? However, this confession does not come. Therefore He must come now Himself.

When Nathan arrives at David’s house, he starts telling him a story without any introduction. He has already come to David once before. Then he came with a beautiful word from the LORD about building the house of David (2Sam 7:4-17). Now he comes with a message of judgment. He does so in the form of a story to discover David to himself.

In the story Nathan tells, David is the rich man and Uriah the poor man. David is the man who has “a great many flocks and herds”, which represent the many wives he has, which, by the way, is very much against the

thoughts of God. The poor man is the man with the one little ewe lamb, the simple soldier Uriah, who has one wife, which, by the way, is very much in accordance with God's thoughts. In the traveler we see the picture of lust that can present itself just like that. The question is what someone does with this traveler when he visits him. One can send him away or take him into his home. He who takes him into the house, which is in his heart, and gives him food, is in the power of the traveler.

When David hears the story, his "anger burned greatly". He makes a sharp and twofold judgment. As for him, the rich one "deserves to die". At the same time, he demands that the rich one compensate the poor with a large amount of compensation: "He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold." The latter is according to the law and also happened with David. He has lost four children: the child he conceived in adultery, Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah.

His judgment that the rich man "deserves to die" goes beyond the law. It is inconceivable that David had no exercises of conscience. However, a human being can suppress these exercises. Yet they are there and they appear here in a word about others. If he had not lived in sin himself, he would not have pronounced such a judgment. He pronounces this judgment on himself.

How well we can judge others, while we ourselves may be living in sin (cf. Rom 2:1)! If we realize this deeply, we will pray: 'Lord, grant that, from what I notice in others, I may learn who I am myself. Give me to take to heart what You say about the log and the speck (Mt 7:3-5). I want to be discovered in myself, but am I open to it? If You show me something that is not good, give me that the first thing I do is to place myself in Your light so that You can show me who I am. In that attitude, let me go to others to serve' (Gal 6:1).

2Sam 12:7-9 | David Faced With His Sins

7 Nathan then said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if [that

had been] too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! 9 Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.

The words “you are the man!” strike David into the deepest of his conscience. They are enough to break him completely and bring him to a complete confession. This is the proof that he is truly a believer. The right word at the right time can lead a wandering believer to confession.

Nathan says to David what he got when the LORD made him king instead of Saul. He has also received everything that had belonged to Saul. David is reminded of how many blessings God has given him. And if that were too little, God would have wanted to give more (verse 8b), if he had only asked Him to do so, and had not acted arbitrarily. By his actions David “despised the word of the LORD”. We may ask ourselves whether we are satisfied with what God has given us and whether we are grateful to Him for that. If we want more, we should ask Him.

Because David despised the word of the LORD, he committed a double sin. First of all, he took his neighbor’s wife. Secondly, he killed his neighbor.

2Sam 12:10-13 | God’s Judgment on David’s Sins

10 Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’ 11 Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give [them] to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. 12 Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’” 13 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.

David has despised the LORD Himself. Sin is a contempt of God’s Word (verse 9) and of God Himself. Sin can be forgiven. That certainty God Himself gives in His Word (1Jn 1:9). This does not mean, however, that the consequences will always be removed. If our children have sinned, they

get punishment. Confession is not to escape a deserved punishment, but to restore the relationship broken by sin. We must bear the consequences.

For David it means that the sword he has used will not depart from his house. He will experience his one beloved child killing his other beloved child. Isn't that terrible? It also means that the sin of fornication he has committed is punished with what will happen to his wives. His neighbor will commit adultery with his wives. This neighbor will turn out to be his son Absalom (2Sam 16:22). What David has done in secret shall be done with his wives in full daylight. The punishment is heavy because his sin is heavy.

The only word David speaks after Nathan has confronted him with his sin is: "I have sinned against the LORD" (verse 13). Nathan sees through the depth and sincerity of this statement. David doesn't need to argue. Where there is true humiliation and confession, this will be recognized, no matter how few words are used. Nathan, therefore, says without hesitation directly that his sin is forgiven.

2Sam 12:14-23 | The Death of the Child

14 However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die." 15 So Nathan went to his house. Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was [very] sick. 16 David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground. 17 The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them. 18 Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was [still] alive, we spoke to him and he did not listen to our voice. How then can we tell him that the child is dead, since he might do [himself] harm!" 19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." 20 So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed [himself], and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate. 21 Then his servants said to

him, "What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." 22 He said, "While the child was [still] alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.' 23 But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

There is also a direct punishment for sin, after confession, because of the blaspheming by the enemies of the LORD that was caused by David through his deed. That direct punishment is the death of the child born of adultery. The LORD could have killed the child immediately, but first he makes him sick to death for a week because of an incurable disease. Bathsheba is still called "Uriah's wife [lit. translation]" (verse 15). It emphasizes that the child is attached to the sin David did.

The death of the child is also grace of God. It forbears that David has to live with this son who would have constantly reminded him of the sin of adultery. This grace is not given to everyone in such a situation. That does not mean that there is no grace for such a person. If there is true repentance for sin, God has another form of grace for that situation. Where sin has entered, there is always grace with God that goes beyond sin when an appeal is made to Him.

David cannot and will not accept what has been said to him about his son. What he hears leads him to an intense seeking of God because of the child. He is completely focused on this need. David knows that God's heart can be moved. We learn from David what prayer is. David does not accept the message as a fate. He knows God as a God who can revoke a decision. This is not because the decision is not good, but because He wants to be prayed for it. Our prayers have a place in God's plan. Our relationship with God determines our begging.

As said before, the LORD does not take the life of the child straight away. It takes seven days before he dies. In those seven days David seeks God and fasts. He spends the night lying on the ground. This also means that after the confession of verse 13 there will be a period of awareness of what really happened. This is also necessary in our lives. After failure and confession, we cannot move on immediately. Restoration takes time.

David does not eat with the elders, i.e. he has no contact with them. God uses those seven days (a full period) to bring David to the awareness of what he has done. David will undoubtedly have seen his sin in all its awfulness in God's presence. The child is the result. At the same time, he hopes for the grace of God to let his son live. God does not do that. This is not because He could not do otherwise. God has often let Himself be entreated. God does not do it now, possibly because He does not want to leave a memory of sin.

If the child died on the seventh day, his servants do not dare to say it to David. Although they live close to him, they don't know him very well. They look at the matter from a human point of view. However, prayer life cannot be viewed in a natural way. When David hears that the child has died, he takes it from the hand of God. This is trust. The fervent prayer must go hand in hand with a full confidence in God. Thus the Lord Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. After He had risen from His prayer there, He could continue His way in peace.

When the child has died, David's attitude changes (verse 20). He stands up, washes and anoints himself, changes his clothes and goes to the place where the ark is. There he worships. The one who prays is also a worshiper. After that he eats again. The servants ask him how this can be done. Their question testifies that there is a good relationship between the servants and their king.

David tells them of his deep exercises in the presence of the LORD. The result is not that the child is healed, but his confidence in the LORD is strengthened. He does not speak of the death of the child as an inevitable event, but as a matter he accepts from the hand of the LORD. He rests in the will of the LORD, not because he cannot do otherwise, but because the LORD knows what is best.

In so doing, he does not close his eyes to the actual situation. The child is dead. Fasting further makes no sense. No one can bring a dead person to life. What God has taken, a man cannot bring back, not even David. Something else is possible. In faith David speaks about going to the child. Such statements are rare in the Old Testament. It is clear to him that the child is in God's glory. We may know this of all children who died young.

2Sam 12:24-25 | Birth of Solomon

24 Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the LORD loved him 25 and sent [word] through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah for the LORD'S sake.

When David is restored, he is able to comfort Bathsheba. Only now does God's Word speak about Bathsheba as David's wife. They have a son. David calls him "Solomon" which means "peaceful" or "man of peace". He becomes the first-born, the successor of David. In the first book of Chronicles this son is announced and it is told to him how his name will be (1Chr 22:9-10). This is in accordance to that book, because in it God writes history from the point of view of His advice and not from the point of view of man's responsibility as here. God will be a Father to this son, and Solomon will be His son. Thus Solomon is a picture of the Lord Jesus. Hence we read here: "The LORD loved him."

Again the LORD sends His prophet Nathan with a message to David. This time the message again contains an encouragement. Nathan must tell David which name Solomon gets from the LORD. His name must be "Jedidiah", which means "beloved of the LORD". This is a small star that shines in the scene of adultery and murder. It is the light in the darkness of sin. In him we find, as it were, the history of the house of David concentrated.

2Sam 12:26-31 | The City of Rabbah Captured

26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the sons of Ammon and captured the royal city. 27 Joab sent messengers to David and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, I have even captured the city of waters. 28 Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and camp against the city and capture it, or I will capture the city myself and it will be named after me." 29 So David gathered all the people and went to Rabbah, fought against it and captured it. 30 Then he took the crown of their king from his head; and its weight [was] a talent of gold, and [in it was] a precious stone; and it was [placed] on David's head. And he brought out the spoil of the city in great amounts. 31 He also brought out the people who were in it, and set [them] under saws, sharp iron instruments, and iron axes, and made them pass through the brickkiln. And thus he did to

all the cities of the sons of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned [to] Jerusalem.

After the birth of Solomon the final victory over the Ammonites is described. Yet we also see here that David's restoration does not fully restore his spiritual power and insight. Joab must encourage him to be active. We also see that his performance against Rabbah has something cruel, which we are not used to from David. Possibly this occurrence is also a consequence of his life in sin. His fellowship with God has been restored through his confession, but the long loss of fellowship with God can lead to a weakening of the knowledge of God's will.

2 Samuel 13

Introduction

The two sins committed by David, adultery and murder, are both found in this chapter in his house. He has sown for his own flesh and “from the flesh reaps corruption” (Gal 6:8a; cf. Jer 4:18). It is a chapter full of sorrow for David. A moment of thoughtless sinning can result in years of crying bitter tears. At the same time, we may know that God can turn those bitter tears into a rainbow.

In this chapter the announced sword (2Sam 12:9-10) in his house begins to do its judgmental work. A man, a son of his house, his eldest son, rapes his daughter. Another son, one of his favorites, kills the rapist. Later this son will rebel against him and be killed. Amnon is his eldest son, the crown prince. The third son is Absalom. He loses his first-born son and also the second oldest sons – if we exclude Chileab who probably died young (2Sam 3:2-3).

By committing his sins, something has come into David’s family that breaks the already fragile family bond even more. He has no discernment in the case of Amnon’s dark plans with Tamar. He is also unable to act against it because his spiritual power and his spiritual insight have been greatly diminished by his life in sin. Maybe he also feels he’s become implausible to say something about the sins of his children.

The sin we have committed ourselves makes it difficult to strongly condemn another person’s sin. We see this here too. David does not act against Amnon nor against Absalom. The consequences of sins are not automatic. They don’t just come over his house. Every sin in his home takes place under his responsibility. If he had been strong, he could have prevented those consequences. The judgment comes from God, yet David himself is responsible.

We see that David is no longer the same man as before his sins. He is blind to certain things. He does not understand anything of the intentions of Amnon nor of those of Absalom. If sin has wrought devastation in the life

of a believer, one consequence is that one is no longer the same person as before.

We learn here that children are the weakness of their parents. There is no area where we are so weak as when it comes to our children. Many parents have come on wrong paths because they have recognized and acknowledged their children's sins so little. Sometimes they've even seen those sins, but haven't acted against them or even defended them. Many people can judge sharply when it comes to others, but when it comes to their own children, they no longer see so sharply and sometimes even defend sin.

2Sam 13:1-2 | Amnon Covets Tamar

1 Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her. 2 Amnon was so frustrated because of his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, for she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her.

The introductory words “now it was after this” show that what follows, connects to the foregoing. In this case, what happens “after” is not only a sequel to the previous, but also a consequence thereof. In the events described, too, we see that one thing is the result of another.

First we are introduced to the ‘protagonists’ in verse 1. They are two sons of David, a daughter of David and David himself. It is about a family drama.

The drama begins with a young man falling in love with his beautiful half-sister. There is nothing to be seen of any fear of God in this son of David. If it had been there, he would directly have judged his evil lusts in himself. However, he does not follow his father in the good example that David also gave, but in the evil example that he unfortunately also gave. David has not been able to curb his lusts. His son goes even further in his sexual sinfulness. The young man's love is so great that it makes him sick. This love is a purely selfish matter, only directed to self-satisfaction.

It is strictly forbidden by law to have sexual intercourse with a sister or half-sister (Lev 18:9; 20:17). This rule of the law and also the continuation of the history make it clear that this is not a question of love, but only of self-generated sexual lusts. Sexual desires are given by God, but they may

only be experienced in the bond of marriage and love. Of course, Tamar is not to blame.

The fact that “it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her” does not mean that he has any sense of respect for her. The sequel shows that for him she is nothing more than a lust object. That it seems hard to do anything to her perhaps means that it is impossible for him to come to her, because she lives, because she is a virgin, in the women’s enclosure.

2Sam 13:3-5 | Amnon Gets Advice From a Friend

3 But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David’s brother; and Jonadab was a very shrewd man. 4 He said to him, “O son of the king, why are you so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?” Then Amnon said to him, “I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom.” 5 Jonadab then said to him, “Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill; when your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘Please let my sister Tamar come and give me [some] food to eat, and let her prepare the food in my sight, that I may see [it] and eat from her hand.’”

Amnon has a friend. A good friend is worth a lot, especially if that friend is also “a very shrewd man”. However, Amnon’s friend is a cunning friend, and his shrewdness or wisdom “is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but it is ... demonic” (Jam 3:15). He is also a member of David’s family and plays an important role in this family drama. This is evident from the way he addresses Amnon and the advice he gives him.

Jonadab speaks to Amnon about his sense of honor and the power he still has: ‘Amnon, why are you so miserable every morning, if you are the son of the king? You can have all the fun you want, can’t you? You only have to snap with your fingers and your wishes will be fulfilled’. It is the way in which Jezebel addresses her husband Ahab, when he also wants something in which he is thwarted (1Kgs 21:7).

At his friend’s invitation to tell him what’s wrong with it, Amnon tells him that he loves Tamar. He is totally blind to the completely misplaced use of the word ‘love’. For Jonadab, ‘loving’ is also a hollow concept. He knows that Amnon is only interested in the body of Tamar. He advises him to pretend he is ill and then ask his father to send Tamar to him to prepare some

food for him. He adds that she must prepare this food “in my sight” and that he will “eat from her hand”. With this cunning proposal, Amnon will be able to look at her closely and she will have to get close to him.

2Sam 13:6-9 | Amnon Asks David for Tamar

6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, “Please let my sister Tamar come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand.” 7 Then David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, “Go now to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him.” 8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, and he was lying down. And she took dough, kneaded [it], made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. 9 She took the pan and dished [them] out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, “Have everyone go out from me.” So everyone went out from him.

Amnon follows his friend’s advice. David has not understood anything of the real intentions of Amnon. Although he has experienced what is in a person’s heart, he is blind to what his son wants. An important lesson is that we ask the Lord to give us an eye for what is going on in our children and that He makes us feel what the real motives are when they ask something of us. We must learn to go to Him first before we agree. On the one hand, it is necessary that we be preserved from a suspicious attitude. On the other hand, it is also necessary that we be preserved from a foolhardy kind of confidence, as if our children were incapable to commit certain sins.

Joseph also once said what Amnon says in verse 9 (Gen 45:1). Joseph said it at the height of his history. Amnon says it at the lowest point of his history.

2Sam 13:10-14 | Amnon Violates Tamar

10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand.” So Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them into the bedroom to her brother Amnon. 11 When she brought [them] to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, “Come, lie with me, my sister.” 12 But she answered him, “No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing! 13 As for me, where

could I get rid of my reproach? And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you.” 14 However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.

When Tamar brings the food to him, the lust breaks loose. His lust prevails so much that he grabs her instead of the food. He first tries to get her to lie in bed with him of her own accord. Tamar wants to bring him to other thoughts. First she points out to him that such an act should be unheard of in Israel. Then she tells him what a shame he would bring upon her. Then she shows him what the consequences of his deed will be for himself. Finally, she offers another solution to be connected to each other and that is that he asks the king if he can have her. It is all in vain. “However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her” (verse 14).

2Sam 13:15-19 | Amnon Sends Tamar Away

15 Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Get up, go away!” 16 But she said to him, “No, because this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you have done to me!” Yet he would not listen to her. 17 Then he called his young man who attended him and said, “Now throw this woman out of my [presence], and lock the door behind her.” 18 Now she had on a long-sleeved garment; for in this manner the virgin daughters of the king dressed themselves in robes. Then his attendant took her out and locked the door behind her. 19 Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her long-sleeved garment which [was] on her; and she put her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

Amnon has what he wanted. Is he satisfied now? It is appalling to read: “Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her: “Get up, go away!” (verse 15). From this history we learn two things. Firstly, we see how enormous the power of sexual lust is. It is an untamable power if you have not learned to control yourself through the power of the Holy Spirit. Part of the fruit of the Spirit is “self-control” (Gal 5:22-23a). The power of sexuality is irresistible if we do

not submit to the rules God has given us in His Word. Secondly, we see that Amnon's 'love' turns into hatred after he has given way to his lust.

These two lessons are repeated daily in the lives of (young) people who do as Amnon. They use sex as a loose commodity. Often men who have seduced girls have later become averse to them. In that intercourse, however, there is often cooperation from those girls, which was not the case with Tamar.

If Amnon had been a guy with any decency, he would have taken Tamar as his wife. Although illicit sexual intercourse is certainly not equivalent to rape, there is another important lesson to be learned from the history of Amnon and Tamar. That lesson is that illicit sexual intercourse is not a sin that someone can just easily and fast confess, after which everything returns to normal.

In a very intimate way someone has made himself one with someone else. Not that there always has to be a marriage as a consequence. Being one *body* – that is the case with sex outside marriage – is not the same as being one *flesh*, for that is only said of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who have first married each other (1Cor 6:16). To conclude, however, that being one body never has obligations, goes too far. Every case is different and there must be confession and openness to the Lord and to one another to make a good decision.

One deed as a result of rampant lust causes a sea of misery. Tamar is dishonored, the family is disgraced, hatred prevails and some time later murder also results. It is a sad repetition of what the father of Amnon, King David, did himself. He was also guided by his lust when he saw Bathsheba washing herself (2Sam 11:2). He had let her come to him and had intercourse with her, although she was married. When he receives the message that she is pregnant, he tries to cover up his act by devious means. It all fails. There's one thing left for him and that's to let Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba die in battle. That comes down to murder: King David becomes a murderer.

How much misery has already arisen from illicit intercourse, whether it took place before marriage or outside marriage. It is to be hoped that we will be warned by such clear biblical examples (Pro 6:32-35; 7:1-27).

There is another verse in Scripture that leaves no doubt as to what God thinks about pre-marital intercourse and non-marital intercourse: "Marriage [is to be held] in honor among all, and the [marriage] bed [is to be] undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb 13:4). Marriage is something that must be held in high esteem and valued as an institution of God. There must be respect for it. We can only show this respect by taking it into account and maintaining marriage as such. There is no exception for anyone, it should be honored "among all".

When a marriage bed is defiled, it means adultery, illicit intercourse by someone who has intercourse with a partner other than his or her own. Adultery is fornication committed by married people, but fornication includes more than adultery. Fornication is often the collective name for all forms of lewdness that unmarried persons can commit by having sexual intercourse with someone regardless of the marriage relationship.

With Amnon, after his horrible deed, his so-called love for Tamar immediately changes into hatred (cf. Eze 23:17). Here we see the meaning of the word love when in fact it means only self-love. Love must grow in the happy atmosphere and protecting bond of marriage. After sexual intercourse before marriage, there is often a certain degree of disgust. The blame is also often shifted to the other party. Only with sincere confession and deep repentance can there be restoration.

Amnon knows no love. As soon as he has satisfied his lusts, he disgusts her. That must be because he passes the disgust of his deed on to Tamar. This humiliation goes even further than physical humiliation and disgrace. Here, the soul is hurt to the deepest degree.

Amnon is totally insensitive to what he has done to her. He sends her away like a dog. Tamar expresses the deep dishonor that is done to her by putting ashes on her head, as a sign of mourning. "Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her long-sleeved garment which [was] on her; and she put her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went." She also tears the beautiful garment of her virginity (long-sleeved garment is literally varicolored tunic). With her hand on her head, possibly as a symbol of the misery that has come upon her (cf. Jer 2:37), she goes away, crying aloud.

2Sam 13:20-22 | Reactions of Absalom and David

20 Then Absalom her brother said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now keep silent, my sister, he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart." So Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother Absalom's house. 21 Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry. 22 But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

David is the absent father. Tamar does not go to him, but to her brother Absalom. When she comes to him, he immediately suspects what happened. He must have noticed how Amnon thought about Tamar. He may also have seen how he looked at her. Amnon's deed did not come out of the blue. Was Amnon perhaps known as a sexual rake?

While in Absalom plans may already arise to avenge himself, he advises his sister not to publicize it any further. She should not take this matter to heart either. This is the advice of people who have their own ideas about solving problems and do not care about God's judgment of them. Tamar seems to follow the advice and moves into her brother's house. There she stays as a lonely and abandoned woman whose joy of life has turned into a hopeless wilderness.

When David hears of it, he is very angry (verse 21), but that's all (cf. 1Sam 3:13b). Nothing else comes out of his anger. He has no power to act against his son, the crown prince. Even parents of little children often have so little to say about their children. It is not about children receiving authoritarian education, but about them being brought up "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). Children are not won by exercising pure force, but by love. The Lord gives us children so that we may teach them through loving authority how to submit to His loving authority.

David is responsible for everything that happens in his home. The judgment comes not only because of his sin with Bathsheba, but also because of his sin of negligence not to act against the evil in his family.

Amnon is an unscrupulous man who knows no love. Absalom is no different. Both of them know only one kind of love and that is the love for themselves. Absalom is not only without love, but he is also cunning, mean, and can wait, if necessary two full years (verse 23). During this waiting period,

the feelings of hatred remain burning in all their intensity. Meanwhile he doesn't show any of these feelings in his dealings with Amnon. Absalom does not show anything at all, "either good or bad". He meets the desired courtesies, without showing anything of what occupies him. If he has spoken a kind word at all, it has only been a camouflage of what lives in his heart (Psa 55:21a; Pro 26:24).

In this way, family members and members of the family of God can interact with each other in a way that is correct, but not more than that. What essentially binds them does not matter. The relationships are dominated by events that are not talked about, but in which the senses are set on a counteraction.

2Sam 13:23-29 | Absalom Kills Amnon

23 Now it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24 Absalom came to the king and said, "Behold now, your servant has sheepshearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant." 25 But the king said to Absalom, "No, my son, we should not all go, for we will be burdensome to you." Although he urged him, he would not go, but blessed him. 26 Then Absalom said, "If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us." And the king said to him, "Why should he go with you?" 27 But when Absalom urged him, he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28 Absalom commanded his servants, saying, "See now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then put him to death. Do not fear; have not I myself commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant." 29 The servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose and each mounted his mule and fled.

When two full years have passed since the events described in the previous section, Absalom organizes a party. It is a feast because of the shearing of the sheep. There are two more such celebrations in Scripture. They are not positive statements. Both these times and here there is talk of iniquity (Gen 38:12-15; 1Sam 25:4-11).

For this feast Absalom invites David and all his sons. The purpose of this feast is to kill Amnon. David objects to him and his servants going, be-

cause that will give Absalom too much work. After some insistence with David he gets the blessing of his father. This is the sign for Absalom that he can continue asking to hold the party and that then especially his “brother Amnon” will be allowed to come to the party.

As a father David is a man without a backbone. He is easy to persuade. While he is present, something is staged again, the purpose of which is hidden from him. David is a stranger in his own home. Later Jonadab says that Absalom’s face showed what he was planning to do. David does not see the consequences of his permission for the feast of Absalom, just as he did not see Amnon’s request earlier when he asked for Tamar to come to him (verse 6). The result is that he loses two sons. Amnon is killed and Absalom flees.

Absalom instructs his servants to kill Amnon when he is drunk. He knows his brother as someone who enjoys drinking wine. The servants do so at the insistence of Absalom, who as the client takes responsibility for the death of his brother. All other sons of the king flee immediately after the murder of Amnon, away from the surroundings of the murderer. The fear of also being killed has struck.

2Sam 13:30-36 | Jonadab Informs David

30 Now it was while they were on the way that the report came to David, saying, “Absalom has struck down all the king’s sons, and not one of them is left.” 31 Then the king arose, tore his clothes and lay on the ground; and all his servants were standing by with clothes torn. 32 Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David’s brother, responded, “Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king’s sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar. 33 Now therefore, do not let my lord the king take the report to heart, namely, ‘all the king’s sons are dead,’ for only Amnon is dead.” 34 Now Absalom had fled. And the young man who was the watchman raised his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain. 35 Jonadab said to the king, “Behold, the king’s sons have come; according to your servant’s word, so it happened.” 36 As soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king’s sons came and lifted their voices and wept; and also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.

Rumor reaches David that all his sons have been killed by Absalom. That brings him to deep dejection and mourning. He thinks that everything is lost. He tears his clothes, because his kingship has no meaning for him anymore. Then he lies down on the ground. Life no longer has any meaning for him either.

Then comes Jonadab. His comments show that he knew the full two years of Absalom's plan. The fact that he did not inform David of this is yet another proof of his corrupt character. At the same time it also shows that David walked with blinkers on. Another translation says that it could be read on Absalom's face. Only David did not see it.

Jonadab is not very impressed by the death of his friend Amnon. He is a cool calculating man. We do not read of him that he is crying. He speaks to David (verse 33) in the same way as Absalom speaks to his sister after she is violated (verse 20). David should not be too concerned about it. This kind of comfort is only given by people who have no relationship with God.

2Sam 13:37-38 | Flee of Absalom

37 Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. And [David] mourned for his son every day. 38 So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years.

Absalom flees to his grandfather. His mother is the daughter of the king of Geshur. Her origins may have contributed to the character of her son. David should never have married her. Absalom finds here a refuge outside the realm of the law of Moses, as if this would allow him to evade its authority. It is an illustration that God's law has no authority for him.

2Sam 13:39 | David Longs for Absalom

39 [The heart of] King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.

After David has mourned Amnon for quite some time, his grief diminishes and he reconciles with his death. It seems that his desperation of Absalom's sin also decreases over time. Instead of abhorring Absalom as a murderer, he longs to go to him and meet him. At first he did not manage

to punish him justly for the murder of his brother, now he is almost willing to accept him again in favor. This marks the weakness of David.

Just as Saul in the first book of Samuel occupies a large place as an opponent of David, so Absalom in second book of Samuel occupies a large place, also as an opponent of David. Both persons are a picture of the antichrist. Saul wants to take the life of David before he sits on the throne. Absalom wants to take the life of David when he has taken his place on the throne, but not all enemies have yet been judged and the kingdom of peace has not yet arrived. Absalom is a picture of satan as the liar and the murderer.

Absalom is even more depraved in character than Saul. As a son he has a close relationship with David and yet he revolts against him. The closer someone is to the good, the more terrible his condition becomes when he closes himself off for the good. We also see this aptly in Judas, one of the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus. The fulness of grace and truth revealed in the Lord Jesus brings out the worst in man.

2 Samuel 14

2Sam 14:1-3 | Joab Calls a Wise Woman

1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart [was inclined] toward Absalom. 2 So Joab sent to Tekoa and brought a wise woman from there and said to her, "Please pretend to be a mourner, and put on mourning garments now, and do not anoint yourself with oil, but be like a woman who has been mourning for the dead many days; 3 then go to the king and speak to him in this manner." So Joab put the words in her mouth.

Here we see Joab appearing on stage again: the man who always, as here, pursues his own goals. He takes sides with Absalom, because to him he is the crown prince. Solomon plays no role for him. He sees how David's heart is inclined toward Absalom. The mother of Joab, Zeruiah, is a half-sister of David. Joab is therefore a cousin of Absalom. It is possible that the family ties also play a role for him. What does not matter to him, here again, is law.

David cannot come loose from Absalom. Joab notices this and hires a wise woman whom he sends to David to tell an invented event. She must put on mourning clothes and behave as if she were in mourning. Her story must be covered by her appearance. The wise woman is a good actress and is a good storyteller.

It turns out that Joab knows David well. He can tell the woman exactly what to say because he knows how David will react. Joab uses this knowledge to manipulate him. Manipulation means to take advantage of the knowledge you have of someone to let him do or say things you want, without the person noticing it and being able to resist it. It goes too far to go into that in greater depth, but it is a common evil in the world and also among believers. If you feel you are a victim of manipulation, talk to someone about it. It must be broken. This can be done with the help of others who know God's Word and apply it in their own lives.

2Sam 14:4-7 | The Story of the Woman of Tekoa

4 Now when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself and said, "Help, O king." 5 The king said to her,

"What is your trouble?" And she answered, "Truly I am a widow, for my husband is dead. 6 Your maidservant had two sons, but the two of them struggled together in the field, and there was no one to separate them, so one struck the other and killed him. 7 Now behold, the whole family has risen against your maidservant, and they say, 'Hand over the one who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed, and destroy the heir also.' Thus they will extinguish my coal which is left, so as to leave my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth."

There is a similarity between the story of the woman and the story Nathan tells David after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah (2Sam 12:1-4). There is also a difference which is greater than the similarity. The similarity is that the woman tells a history that has not happened. Its purpose is to persuade the king to make Absalom come home again. The difference is that Nathan wanted to reach the conscience of David to bring it into the light of God, while the woman wants to persuade David deactivate his conscience by letting Absalom come back again without justice being done. He just has to accept him as his son again.

The woman presents herself as someone in great need and therefore appeals to the king. She is a widow and had two sons. Those two sons were important for the continuation of the family name. However, one of them has been killed by the other. The story does not show that this manslaughter was deliberate. In the situation of Absalom, to which this story refers, there is talk of deliberation. He has deliberately killed his brother Amnon.

Now the remaining son is threatened with death, because the whole family has turned against him. They want to avenge the manslaughter. The one son who is surviving, is her only hope. If he is killed, there is no heir anymore. This also goes beyond reality. David has more sons. In addition, Absalom is not the heir.

2Sam 14:8-11 | Reaction of David

8 Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you." 9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king, "O my lord, the king, the iniquity is on me and my father's house, but the king and his throne are guiltless." 10 So the king said, "Whoever speaks to you, bring him to me, and

he will not touch you anymore.” 11 Then she said, “Please let the king remember the LORD your God, [so that] the avenger of blood will not continue to destroy, otherwise they will destroy my son.” And he said, “As the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground.”

David is impressed by the story and promises her protection. However, she is not satisfied with that. If she were to go home now with this message from the king, the chance is great they wouldn't believe her at home. That is why she continues to ask questions. She wants to have more. In so doing, she takes any iniquity of the matter on herself and acquits the king and his throne. Her words are nothing, but they are pleasant for David to hear.

Her approach ensures that David gives her his personal protection. People who want to do her harm, she may refer to him. Then he will make sure that these people will no longer have the opportunity to do her further harm. But she is not satisfied with that either. She wants him to swear by the LORD that no evil will happen to her son. He does.

The whole history is a lie, but she makes David swear. It is a great danger to bring believers to a promise or action that one wants by drama. This is manipulation.

2Sam 14:12-17 | The Woman Explains the Story

12 Then the woman said, “Please let your maidservant speak a word to my lord the king.” And he said, “Speak.” 13 The woman said, “Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, [in that] the king does not bring back his banished one. 14 For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him. 15 Now the reason I have come to speak this word to my lord the king is that the people have made me afraid; so your maidservant said, ‘Let me now speak to the king, perhaps the king will perform the request of his maidservant. 16 For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy both me and my son from the inheritance of God.’ 17 Then your maidservant said, ‘Please let the word of my lord the king be comforting, for as the angel of God,

so is my lord the king to discern good and evil. And may the LORD your God be with you.”

The woman now comes to the matter itself. She asks if she can tell what her intention is. She does so in the same devious way in the line of her story, without mentioning the name of Absalom. She accuses David of robbing the people of a valuable man by sending Absalom away. In doing so, he acted “against the people of God”. In other words, she says to David what Nathan also said to him: “You are the guilty one.” This guilt is evidenced by the fact that he does not bring back “his banished one”, Absalom.

Absalom seems popular among the people. She wants David to show mercy, but she has no other ground for it than his popularity. She does not say a word about his repentance for his sin. This shows that she leaves God outside this matter and especially that Joab leaves God outside. God does not prove to man the grace of forgiveness if he does not first confess his sin. God forgives only when sin is confessed. David is deceived by Joab through this woman to show grace without righteousness.

She adds that Absalom can no longer return to him when he dies. The death of a human being is like pouring water on the earth. That water cannot be gathered up again. It has disappeared into the earth. And isn't it true that God is also working on bringing back someone who has been rejected? She uses a pious argument and presents God as that loving God Who also wants Absalom to return. It is true that God brings back the banished one, but through the way of repentance and conversion. He shows mercy based on righteousness. But if there is no repentance, there is no grace. For us here is the lesson that we learn to prove in the way of God that He does not take away life, but seeks ways that a banished person does not remain banished from Him (verse 14b).

After the arguments that should persuade David to make Absalom return, she does not wait for an answer from the king. She continues to speak, and she comes back to her example. She reminds him of her fear for her family in regard to her son. She wants to force him with the necessary drama to a decision.

After the drama she suddenly switches to flattery. It's all part of the rhetoric she uses. None but he, King David, can bring about a change for the

better in the impending death of her son. He is “as the angel of God” and like no other able to listen to a problem and make the right distinction between good and evil. Finally she wishes him that the LORD his God will be with him.

2Sam 14:18-20 | David Discovers the Hand of Joab

18 Then the king answered and said to the woman, “Please do not hide anything from me that I am about to ask you.” And the woman said, “Let my lord the king please speak.” 19 So the king said, “Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?” And the woman replied, “As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me, and it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant; 20 in order to change the appearance of things your servant Joab has done this thing. But my lord is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know all that is in the earth.”

The king begins to realize that it is a play, behind which is Joab. When he asks, she acknowledges that this is the case. Then she flatters him for the second time by calling him “the angel of God”.

2Sam 14:21-24 | Absalom Returns to Jerusalem

21 Then the king said to Joab, “Behold now, I will surely do this thing; go therefore, bring back the young man Absalom.” 22 Joab fell on his face to the ground, prostrated himself and blessed the king; then Joab said, “Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, O my lord, the king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant.” 23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24 However the king said, “Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face.” So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king’s face.

Without mentioning that the woman left, suddenly Joab stands before the king. David will have called him immediately after the matter has become clear to him. He orders him to bring back Absalom, whom he calls a young man although he is married and has children. His fatherly weakness leads him to this decision. David sees nothing of the real intention of Absalom. He allows Absalom to return to Jerusalem, but without contact with his

son. However, this is only a matter of time. The first steps toward a full return have been taken because David's resistance to it has already been broken.

By accepting his request, Joab concludes that David is well-disposed toward him (verse 22). Joab must have had a great interest in Absalom coming back, that he shows himself so thankful. His approach is selfish and that of a flatterer. He speaks of David's affection, while he has used a trick to get that permission.

Affection expresses itself not only in getting something. God does not want us to think of Him like this. What would it be worth if we were only convinced of God's grace or love toward us if He gave us everything we ask? We don't always give our children everything they ask for, do we? Sometimes we refuse, to show our love by doing so. Surely we are not giving them things that they might want to have, but which are dangerous for them, do we?

From this whole history it seems clear that David's insight into the real intentions is virtually absent and that he has become a toy of his feelings. Joab, and also Absalom, respond to this. David is weak and lets himself be persuaded over and over again. He is no longer a king who seeks and maintains justice. He is no longer in control of himself and his family is in disorder. How then can you govern a land well?

2Sam 14:25-27 | Beauty of Absalom

25 Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him. 26 When he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut [it], for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight. 27 To Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a woman of beautiful appearance.

Before more is said about Absalom, his appearance is first discussed. This happens more often, as with Saul and David. His external beauty, without any discernible defect, his radiance, will have exerted great power of attraction on David as well. The people will also 'fall down' for this man. In

the same way, the antichrist will be a man of whom there seems to be no shortcoming, so that he can take all the apostates for himself.

Absalom's hair gets a special mention. What is a sign of dedication to the LORD, as with the Nazirite (Num 6:5), serves here to his own glory. Thus, this special feature of his beauty later becomes the cause of his death. He remains caught fast with his head, possibly with his hair, in the branches of a great oak (2Sam 18:9).

His beautiful appearance can also be seen in his daughter Tamar. She may have been named after her beautiful aunt Tamar (2Sam 13:1), her father's sister. With this Absalom honors his sister. It is part of his character to give as many compliments as possible with the aim of winning people over or holding them in his hand.

2Sam 14:28-33 | Absalom Forces Access to David

28 Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face. 29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. So he sent again a second time, but he would not come. 30 Therefore he said to his servants, "See, Joab's field is next to mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set the field on fire. 31 Then Joab arose, came to Absalom at his house and said to him, "Why have your servants set my field on fire?" 32 Absalom answered Joab, "Behold, I sent for you, saying, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king, to say, "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me still to be there."' Now therefore, let me see the king's face, and if there is iniquity in me, let him put me to death." 33 So when Joab came to the king and told him, he called for Absalom. Thus he came to the king and prostrated himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.

Absalom is a hard man. He must and shall force his father to accept him again. The background is the coup he has in mind. Possibly this also played a role in the murder of Amnon, whom he slew with tricks. To reach his goal he wants Joab to come to him. He has to work for him. If Joab doesn't want to listen to him at will, then he'll do it against will. He sets the barley on Joab's piece of land adjacent to his own on fire.

The life of a neighbor and the proceeds of the land of God mean nothing to Absalom. He is full of Himself. He is the self-confident man who knows that he is beautiful and can therefore impress. He also has power as a king's son. He also knows his father's weakness, whom he manipulates. He's the 'killer' who does away with everything he encounters as an obstacle on his way to the goal he has set himself. That goal is him himself.

His performance here shows his character, the character of the spoiled crown prince. He destroys part of the land to get his way. He does not take into account another's property. Amnon had the same character. He was not interested in what Tamar thought. He wanted her, so he took her. That's how it goes with children who grow up without discipline and are spoiled. What the children are and what they do is largely determined by the behavior of the parents. It is largely their responsibility. Their words do not play the greatest role in this, but their example. What Absalom was, was not only a character problem, but also an educational problem. David, the great king in public, is the weak father at home.

When Joab comes to Absalom with a claim, he is not impressed. He does not apologize, let alone speak of compensation, which he was obliged to give according to the law (Exo 22:6). Joab should have come directly, then the burning of his land would not have been necessary. It's that simple. Absalom also manipulates Joab. Joab is in the power of Absalom and therefore Absalom does not speak of compensation. When Joab later gets the chance to avenge himself, he does so.

Absalom denies his crimes although they are well known. He does not want to know of any iniquity that would be in him. On the contrary, he thinks he has been wronged by blocking his way back to Jerusalem. To Joab he defies the righteousness of the king by saying that he should kill him if there is guilt in him. He knows David won't do that because he, as his father, loves him too much for that. He knows his father's predilection for him and knows how to use it for his purpose.

When Absalom comes to his father David, David kisses him. However, it is not the kiss the prodigal son gets from his father who is waiting for him. The prodigal son says he has sinned (Lk 15:20-21). From Absalom we do

not hear a word in that direction. We do not hear a word from his mouth at all. Poor David is blind to the condition of his son.

We may pray that the Lord will give us an eye for our weaknesses, so that we do not become the plaything of others or of our feelings. This requires that we live in a living relationship with the Lord Jesus. Then we will see through what others would like to achieve with deceit.

2 Samuel 15

Introduction

In what is happening in this chapter, we see part of David's harvest of what he sowed in the flesh. His son Absalom revolts against him, expels him from the throne, and expels him from Jerusalem. This is the side of responsibility. At the same time, we also see that God in grace is doing His work in David. The LORD is busy forming him further for His honor. We see how David submits to the will of the LORD.

2Sam 15:1-6 | Absalom Manipulates the People

1 Now it came about after this that Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses and fifty men as runners before him. 2 Absalom used to rise early and stand beside the way to the gate; and when any man had a suit to come to the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him and say, "From what city are you?" And he would say, "Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel." 3 Then Absalom would say to him, "See, your claims are good and right, but no man listens to you on the part of the king." 4 Moreover, Absalom would say, "Oh that one would appoint me judge in the land, then every man who has any suit or cause could come to me and I would give him justice." 5 And when a man came near to prostrate himself before him, he would put out his hand and take hold of him and kiss him. 6 In this manner Absalom dealt with all Israel who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom stole away the hearts of the men of Israel.

The answer to the kiss Absalom received from his father is that he is preparing for a coup. He answers his father's kindness with betrayal. He provides the right means and people around him. He gets up early – he is not lazy in the execution of his program – and also goes 'down the street', among the people. He acts as if he has the greatest possible interest in what is happening among the people. It resembles the cunning politicians of today who also operate in this way to acquire the favor of the people.

They all also promise to make up for all the wrong things, when they are in power.

Absalom cleverly responds to the feelings of the people for David. People will no longer have been so pleased with him, for his spiritual judgment has become weak, and the people will have noticed this. Now Absalom presents himself as the better candidate and promises that he will listen to them. He undermines the authority of the king, to promote himself. He tells the people that he wants a post as a judge, because as things stand, nothing will come of the law. If he were a judge, it would be different. Everyone would get their right from him.

Without any enquiry, he tells the people who wanted to go to the king with a dispute, that their affairs are “good and right”. This says the man who should have been sentenced to death for murder himself. It is the audacity at its peak. Nothing in what we read of Absalom indicates that he possesses any wisdom or familiarity with the laws. Nor has he provided any evidence of his love for the people, rather the opposite. Nevertheless, he wishes to be a judge. It is often the people who are least suited to an office who are most ambitious in their pursuit of it. Those who are gifted are usually modest and have no high opinion of themselves.

Inwardly, Absalom is extremely cunning and hateful. He really is a picture of the antichrist. Saul was so too, but more as the one who pursued the remnant in David. In Absalom we see the picture of the antichrist who presents himself to the people, while the Lord Jesus is at work among His people, but has not yet subjected all His enemies to Himself.

If we apply this to today, we know that the Lord Jesus now has His kingdom in the hearts of all who follow Him. In this time, the spirit of the antichrist is working to deceive all who confess to belong to God’s people (1Jn 2:18; 4:1-4). In Saul we see more the picture of the antichrist who manifests himself in the apostasy of Judaism. In Absalom we see more the picture of the antichrist who manifests himself in the apostasy of Christendom. John mentions both aspects in his first letter (1Jn 2:22).

Absalom also acts as if he is humble and the other is important to him, but he is a great hypocrite and does everything out of self-love. Thus he wins over the people. Through flattery Absalom steals the hearts of the

Israelites who seek justice with David. The fact that Absalom gets them so easily behind him, says something about these people themselves, who are so easily influenced. They will not have known David either. Those who do not have a close relationship with the Lord Jesus can be influenced by other chatter. This is a real danger to all believers.

2Sam 15:7-12 | Conspiracy Against David

7 Now it came about at the end of forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron. 8 For your servant vowed a vow while I was living at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the LORD shall indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'" 9 The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'" 11 Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem, who were invited and went innocently, and they did not know anything. 12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom.

The number of "forty years" should in all probability be "four years". After four years, Absalom has reached the point of seizing power. The introduction to this is that Absalom acts as if he still has a promise to fulfil which he claims to have made at least four years earlier. The fulfillment of this so-called promise also comes quite late. He says that his promise is a service to the LORD, which comes down to the fact that he wants to offer sacrifices to the LORD (cf. verses 8,12). He uses the Name of the LORD in vain (Exo 20:7). He speaks only of Him to deceive David. There is in him no trace of respect for the LORD.

David has no knowledge of the hidden and corrupt intentions of his son. He lets Absalom go and even wishes him peace on his way. He has lost his spiritual discernment. In this history he is not a picture of the Lord Jesus. Here we see a father who has back a 'lost son', a son who now tells him that he has promised to serve the LORD! What would you rather hear as a father? It is the credulity of a parent who has not punished his child for

his sins and now perceives with 'gratitude' that his child is 'getting serious with God'.

Absalom goes, with the blessing of his father, to Hebron, a place of remembrance. It is the place where he is born, it is also the place where David is anointed king over Judah and ruled for seven years. Absalom expects to have the majority of supporters there. That place is tactically chosen by him to be declared king. The two hundred men who go with him know nothing of Absalom's plans. He knows how to keep his true intentions well hidden from others.

Absalom also manages to get Ahithophel, David's counsel, on his side. Bathsheba is the daughter of Eliam and Eliam is the son of Ahithophel. Ahithophel is the grandfather of Bathsheba and that is probably the reason why he came to David's court as David's counsellor. This man is also a picture of the antichrist, that is to say of one aspect of it, in the evil advice he gives Absalom to get rid of David. In Absalom and Ahithophel we have the combination of the royal character of the antichrist in his posturing to be the king of God's people and the spiritual or religious character of the antichrist as the false prophet.

2Sam 15:13-18 | David Flees From Absalom

13 Then a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." 14 David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise and let us flee, for [otherwise] none of us will escape from Absalom. Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword." 15 Then the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants [are ready to do] whatever my lord the king chooses." 16 So the king went out and all his household with him. But the king left ten concubines to keep the house. 17 The king went out and all the people with him, and they stopped at the last house. 18 Now all his servants passed on beside him, all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had come with him from Gath, passed on before the king.

When David gets the message that everyone in Israel is with Absalom, all that remains for him is to flee. The man who felled Goliath flees for his son. It does not seem brave, but it is still wisdom to flee now. David bows down

under the discipline of God. It is not written that way, but his attitude shows it. Here in David we see a picture of the spirit of Israel's remnant in the last days, when the antichrist is in charge.

When God-fearing people suffer, it is their desire that their suffering be shared as little as possible by others. We see that here with David. He flees out of love for the city. It explicitly states that he is leaving the city "on foot". It shows his humiliation and at the same time it shows his identification with his followers, whom he does not wish to hurry forward in his run. Absalom possesses horses and he makes use of them. It is the world upside down (Ecc 10:7).

His run seems to be a loss, but from this moment on there is an upward trend in David's life. With God, winning is always through loss. We see David taking the lead again. He behaves royally again.

The fact that he leaves ten concubines to take care of the house, seems to be a somewhat naive action. If he has thought that Absalom will leave them alone, he will be deceived. Absalom will, according to the word of Nathan (2Sam 12:11-12), engage in horrible, open fornication with these concubines (2Sam 16:21-22).

His servants stand behind him, and also his whole house and all the people. Further there are "all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites" and six hundred Gittites. The Cherethites and the Pelethites and the Gittites are all Philistines. Except a remnant, the whole people of Israel are unfaithful to David, but from the uncircumcised nations there are those who follow him. From this we can learn for ourselves that if we follow the Lord Jesus, we cannot have high thoughts about our origin.

On his flight from Absalom, David wrote Psalm 3 (Psa 3:1). He also wrote Psalm 41 then, where he most probably speaks about Ahithophel in verse 9. This verse is applied by the evangelist John to Judas (Jn 13:18), who is also a picture of the antichrist. With Ahithophel it is mainly his intelligence that we see as a characteristic of the antichrist. In his time his counsel was accepted as the word of God (2Sam 16:23).

2Sam 15:19-22 | Ittai

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why will you also go with us? Return and remain with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile;

[return] to your own place. 20 You came [only] yesterday, and shall I today make you wander with us, while I go where I will? Return and take back your brothers; mercy and truth be with you." 21 But Ittai answered the king and said, *"As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be."* 22 Therefore David said to Ittai, *"Go and pass over."* So Ittai the Gittite passed over with all his men and all the little ones who [were] with him.

From the strangers who follow David, Ittai, the Gittite, is specially highlighted. This is done by letting us hear a conversation between the king and Ittai. What Ittai says is an example for us. Ittai is a stranger, he is not an Israelite, yet he chooses to be with David. The question also comes to us: 'Who do you belong to? Do you belong to those who have the power today, or to Him Who is rejected?'

As often happens in crisis situations, the people who are on the right side come to the surface. David asks Ittai why he is going with him. The answer Ittai gives will be the representation of what is present in the hearts of the many. It resembles what the Lord Jesus asks of His twelve followers, when many others of His disciples no longer follow Him: "You do not want to go away also, do you?" The answer comes from Peter's mouth: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (Jn 6:67-68). Thus each of us is asked why we want to stay with the Lord. What is our answer?

In what David says in verse 20 to Ittai, it is as if we hear Naomi speak to her daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth. Naomi wants to prevent her daughters-in-law from following her on her way back to Bethlehem (Rth 1:7-15). In what Ittai answers the king in verse 21, it is as if we hear Ruth's answer to her mother-in-law (Rth 1:16-17). He chooses to follow David without hesitation. He is like a young convert with a burning heart for the Lord Jesus. He wants to be where David is. This is not only true for him, but also for all who belong to him. He takes them all with him, to follow David.

The Lord Jesus said: "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also" (Jn 12:26). Whoever says he serves the Lord Jesus will show it by following Him and being with Him. This means sharing on earth in His rejection and later sharing in His glorification. If

this really lives for us, we will wish it for all who belong to us, our children and family members.

2Sam 15:23-29 | The Ark Goes Back to Jerusalem

23 While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people passed over. The king also passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness. 24 Now behold, Zadok also [came], and all the Levites with him carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar came up until all the people had finished passing from the city. 25 The king said to Zadok, "Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the sight of the LORD, then He will bring me back again and show me both it and His habitation. 26 But if He should say thus, 'I have no delight in you,' behold, here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him." 27 The king said also to Zadok the priest, "Are you [not] a seer? Return to the city in peace and your two sons with you, your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28 See, I am going to wait at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." 29 Therefore Zadok and Abiathar returned the ark of God to Jerusalem and remained there.

The passing over the brook Kidron of David has a strong parallel with the passing over the ravine of the Kidron by the Lord Jesus (Jn 18:1). The Lord Jesus also passes over this ravine to leave the city. He goes the way of suffering, on the way to the cross. He does so, while He is innocent and to bear the guilt of others. The Lord Jesus goes with His disciples, that is that remnant of Israel with which He makes Himself one. David's fault is his own. David is here a picture of the remnant that also confesses guilt to the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Then come Zadok and the Levites with the ark. Zadok and Abiathar, who represent the priestly family, want to take the ark, but David does not. He doesn't want to make the ark a mascot like in the days of Eli (1Sam 4:3-11). He is not superstitious. He knows that God is with him and that he is not dependent on a visible sign. David orders the ark to be brought back to the city, because there it belongs. His heart goes out to God's house. There he longs for, there he wants to be.

In view of this – and not in view of his return as king – he puts his life in the hand of the LORD. The words in which he expresses this are those also spoken by Eli (1Sam 3:18). With Eli it is resignation to the judgment that has been given to him, without it changing anything with him. With David it is different. He bows down and continues in the power of the LORD.

Of the return of the ark to Jerusalem we can make the following application. The ark is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus. The return of the ark to Jerusalem shows the situation that in the local church the Lord Jesus is again placed in the center and He is given all authority. We live in a time when human ideas increasingly decide how things should go in the church of God. What right is there still to be able to say that believers come together in the Name of the Lord? As far as we are concerned, every right to it has been forfeited.

Yet it is still possible to come together to the Name of the Lord Jesus (Mt 18:20). This is when we stand on the basis of grace and put everything in the hands of the Lord Jesus. Then we will be able to find Him – of Whom the ark is a picture – and the place where He is in the midst of the two or three – of which the temple in Jerusalem is a picture.

2Sam 15:30-37 | Ahithophel and Hushai

30 And David went up the ascent of the [Mount of] Olives, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went. 31 Now someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness." 32 It happened as David was coming to the summit, where God was worshiped, that behold, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn and dust on his head. 33 David said to him, "If you pass over with me, then you will be a burden to me. 34 But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father's servant in time past, so I will now be your servant,' then you can thwart the counsel of Ahithophel for me. 35 Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So it shall be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall report to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36 Behold their two sons are with them there, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me ev-

everything that you hear.” 37 So Hushai, David’s friend, came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

The way of David, up to the Mount of Olives, is the way the Lord Jesus also went. The Lord has wept twice, and both times this was done in this neighborhood: once at the tomb of Lazarus, near Bethany, close to Jerusalem, and once when approaching Jerusalem (Jn 11:17-18,35; Lk 19:41). So it is here with David. He weeps, just like the Lord Jesus, because of the absence of peace for the city. We see the same feeling in all who follow him. They too weep.

When David hears that Ahithophel is with Absalom, he turns to the LORD about this. With a short prayer, actually a sigh, he passes on his need to the LORD about this. It is as if David’s prayer about Ahithophel is answered by the LORD through the coming of Hushai, the Archite. The Archites are heathen. Hushai also is a disciple of David, a stranger among his countrymen. He comes to David on the summit of the Mount of Olives, “where God was worshiped”. This is nice: the help David gets, and we get, is in a place that speaks of worshipping God.

When Hushai is with him, David also takes his responsibility. He acts after he has prayed. Prayer and our actions are connected to each other and not opposite to each other. He sees again clearly what needs to be done. Hushai is much more useful if he joins Absalom than if he joins David. With Absalom he can give David the best service. The sons of Zadok and Abiathar can act as couriers to keep David informed of the plans of Absalom. Hushai found out. Further on we see that God uses this tactic of David to destroy the advice of Ahithophel.

In the last verse (verse 37) Hushai is called “David’s friend” (2Sam 16:16-17; 1Chr 27:33). Hushai has a unique place. He is a counselor, but as a friend, someone with whom one shares one’s deepest feelings. Abraham was the friend of God. The Lord Jesus, when He is rejected, calls us His friends (Jn 15:14-15). He does not hide from us what He is going to do.

2 Samuel 16

2Sam 16:1-4 | David Misled by Ziba

1 Now when David had passed a little beyond the summit, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them [were] two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a jug of wine. 2 The king said to Ziba, "Why do you have these?" And Ziba said, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine, for whoever is faint in the wilderness to drink." 3 Then the king said, "And where is your master's son?" And Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.'" 4 So the king said to Ziba, "Behold, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours." And Ziba said, "I prostrate myself; let me find favor in your sight, O my lord, the king!"

David has a new meeting. Ziba comes to show his support. He has a lot with him to serve David with. This in itself is a good thing. In the same way, we too may make all we possess available to the Lord and to those who serve Him. But Ziba is not honest in his motives. In addition, everything he gives, in reality belongs to Mephibosheth, whose servant he is. The whole performance of Ziba is done out of personal interest.

To David Ziba remains the servant of Saul (verse 3; 2Sam 9:9). Yet it seems that David is again blind to the real motives that drive Ziba. When he asks about Mephibosheth, Ziba gives him a mendacious answer. If David had thought about it for a moment, he would have understood the lie immediately. How could it be that the lame Mephibosheth could do something against a man like Absalom? The most handsome man in Israel has been declared king and all of Israel is following him and now Ziba is pretending that the lame Mephibosheth is seizing power.

David is so stupid to believe Ziba's story about Mephibosheth. Later it will become clear how things really are with Mephibosheth (2Sam 19:24-30). Meanwhile David has been influenced by the generosity of Ziba. This leads

him to the wrong decision to give all the possessions of Mephibosheth to Ziba. Ziba enjoys it all and flatters David for his generosity. The whole performance of Ziba is surrounded with flattery and David falls for it.

It is important that we watch out for flattery. We must avoid it ourselves at all costs. And if we are flattered, we must at all costs prevent it from obscuring our view of reality. Let us keep flattery far from us, both the flattering of others and being flattered by others.

2Sam 16:5-8 | Shimei Curses David

5 When King David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out from there a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came out cursing continually as he came. 6 He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; and all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and at his left. 7 Thus Shimei said when he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow! 8 The LORD has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. And behold, you are [taken] in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!"

After the meeting with Ziba David has another meeting. In that meeting we see David again at a spiritual climax. Shimei comes to David. The man is full of hatred toward David. He is of the family of Saul and sees David as the cause of misery. From the mouth and from the hands of Shimei come the proofs of his contempt for David. He makes his disgust clearly heard through the curses he pronounces about David. He underlines his hateful words by throwing stones at him.

Shimei justifies his behavior by referring to the fact that David is under the LORD's judgment. According to Shimei, David is in this misery because the LORD avenges Himself about what David has done to Saul. Therefore also the kingdom is given by the LORD to Absalom. How unfounded these accusations are, we know from the histories in the first book of Samuel. We read several times that David has saved Saul (1Sam 24:4-8; 1Sam 26:4-12). We also know of his deep sorrow about the death of Saul and Jonathan (2Sam 1:1-12).

Shimei's accusations are somewhat similar to the accusations made by the three friends of Job against Job, to whom they say he is in misery through his own fault. There is this difference, however, that Shimei is driven by hatred and aversion, while the three friends speak from the wrong perspective of Jobs suffering. Whoever is somehow under the discipline of God, must take into account the fact that people make suffering even greater by noticing that they themselves are the cause of their misery.

Shimei is not bothered by the heroes surrounding David. Whoever is caught by a spirit of contempt for God's anointed king, will not be impressed by anything. He even is so audacious to accuse David of Saul's death and to name the Name of the LORD as the One Who gave the kingship to Absalom. This is a foolish and slanderous statement.

2Sam 16:9-14 | David Bows Down Under the Curse

9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and cut off his head." 10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, 'Curse David,' then who shall say, 'Why have you done so?'" 11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjamite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him. 12 Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day." 13 So David and his men went on the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside parallel with him and as he went he cursed and cast stones and threw dust at him. 14 The king and all the people who were with him arrived weary and he refreshed himself there.

Abishai resists the curses that are spoken to his king and the stones that are thrown at him. Surely it cannot be the case that "this dead dog" can treat his king so insultingly with impunity? Abishai's indignation is understandable. He will avenge David, for the curse is awful.

David reacts here in a spiritual mind. He submits himself completely to the will of the LORD, without avenging himself on what is done to him. He did not respond to Abishai's encouragement. He takes everything out of the hand of the LORD, as a result of his own failure. But he continues to

hope for the goodness of the Lord: “Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day” (verse 12). After this spiritual acquiescence David, with all those who are with him, arrives weary a place where he finds rest and refreshment (cf. Mk 6:30-31).

As David responds here, he has always responded to all of Saul’s assassination attempts and slanders. In this he is an example for us and a picture of the Lord Jesus. He does not want to be connected with such an expression of retribution, for it is not in his heart. He accepts this evil entirely from God’s hand.

The Lord also exhorts Peter to put the sword back into the sheath when he has drawn it to defend his Lord (Jn 18:10-11). In the way the Father wants Him to go, there is no place for the exercise of violence, even if it were so just. It’s simply not the time for it. The Lord Jesus, while being reviled, He did not revile in return (1Pet 2:23).

Another incident in the life of the Lord bears a clear resemblance to what is happening here. If He seeks refuge in Samaria and people do not want to receive Him there, James and John want fire to descend from heaven upon those people, because they treat their Lord with contempt. However, the Lord rebukes His two disciples, as David does with Abishai. He doesn’t want His disciples to eliminate people who treat Him unfairly and tells them they don’t know what spirit they are of. They do not reveal the spirit of grace and love and humility (Lk 9:52-56). Toward the Lord we see people responding with hatred, like Absalom toward David, but also with misplaced zeal, like Abishai toward David.

2Sam 16:15-19 | Hushai Comes to Absalom

15 Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. 16 Now it came about when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, “[Long] live the king! [Long] live the king!” 17 Absalom said to Hushai, “Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?” 18 Then Hushai said to Absalom, “No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and with him I will remain. 19 Besides, whom should

I serve? [Should I] not [serve] in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I will be in your presence."

As David asked him (2Sam 15:32-37), Hushai goes to Jerusalem to be the opponent of Ahithophel. When he gets there he goes to Absalom. He immediately breaks through any suspicion by saying to Absalom twice "[long] live the king!" He will undoubtedly mean this for David, but it misleads Absalom.

Absalom is very surprised that Hushai seems to have defected to him. Yet he is not suspicious. He knows that Hushai is a friend of his father David and asks him if this is his kindness to his friend. Doesn't it make his defection much worse that he now leaves his friend, who has been so good to him, by abandoning him and taking sides with his opponent?

The answer Hushai gives is not a lie as his saying 'long live the king' was not a lie. When he speaks of "him whom the LORD has chosen", this to him is David. Very skillfully Hushai connects his love for David with his defection to his son. After all, Absalom is the son of his friend, isn't he? What could be more obvious than to serve the son who has taken over the power from his father? Absalom has no further questions about the arrival of Hushai. He feels very strengthened by the fact that he now has two advisers.

2Sam 16:20-23 | The First Advice of Ahithophel

20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your advice. What shall we do?" 21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. The hands of all who are with you will also be strengthened." 22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. 23 The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, [was] as if one inquired of the word of God; so was all the advice of Ahithophel [regarded] by both David and Absalom.

When asked by Absalom what should happen now, Ahithophel advises that he should have intercourse with the concubines his father left in Jerusalem. This will be clear proof to the whole people of his seizure of power. At the time, a king showed his power by taking the wives of the expelled

king. This disgusting advice is followed without hesitation by Absalom. This is where Nathan's word is fulfilled, which he has spoken about David as a punishment (2Sam 12:11-12).

Ahithophel is a satanic man. Satan is the great imitator. He looks like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon (Rev 13:11). The word of the dragon is accepted as the word of God. This also happens today in professing Christianity, where the Word of God is replaced by satanic teachings. The spirit of Ahithophel is among us. In Ahithophel we see a picture of the inspiration, the spirit of the antichrist, of whom Absalom is a picture.

It is remarkable that also for David, asking for the advice of Ahithophel is as asking for a word of God. Ahithophel must have been a very impressive person, astute and convincing. It may be a warning for us to see to it that no one takes us captive with beautiful talk or a glowing speech (Col 2:8).

However sharp and full of good advice Ahithophel may have been, he is also darkened in his mind. This is evident from his choice for the rebel against the king given by God. Perhaps, as has been assumed, he was also guided in his choice by feelings of hatred toward David, because of David's dishonoring of Bathsheba. Bathsheba is his granddaughter (2Sam 11:3; 23:34).

2 Samuel 17

2Sam 17:1-4 | Further Advice of Ahithophel

1 Furthermore, Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Please let me choose 12,000 men that I may arise and pursue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him while he is weary and exhausted and terrify him, so that all the people who are with him will flee. Then I will strike down the king alone, 3 and I will bring back all the people to you. The return of everyone depends on the man you seek; [then] all the people will be at peace." 4 So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

Ahithophel gives further counsel. Of that counsel it is noted in verse 14 by the Spirit of God that it was "the good counsel of Ahithophel". He proposes to work with a number of men to ensure that David is killed. Then the whole people will be saved. He asks Absalom permission to put together an army. He wants to choose the men himself. There are not too few of them, as many as 12,000 men. However, there are not too many of them either. It is a mobile and decisive army. He determines the tactics himself and wants to pursue David with these men without losing time.

With his astute mind, he realizes that David is tired and discouraged. This is the right moment for the attack on the life of the fugitive king. Ahithophel foresees that the people who are with David will flee when he appears with his special forces. That's not bad, because it's about David. If he can kill him, the whole people will return to Absalom and be at peace, for "the return of everyone depends on the man you seek". This counsel of Ahithophel pleases "Absalom and all the elders of Israel".

By presenting the matter in this way Ahithophel suggests that Absalom is the rightful king from whom the people have deviated. He also makes it seem as if Absalom is the man who gives peace. The proclamation of this false peace, as well as the proclamation that Absalom is the rightful king, is also seen in the antichrist.

What Ahithophel says about disabling David is very similar to the words Caiaphas spoke about disabling the Lord Jesus: "But one of them, Caiaphas,

who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (Jn 11:49-52). What is not fulfilled with David, is fulfilled with the Lord Jesus, but only to carry out God's plan. The lie of Caiaphas becomes the truth of God. What the Lord Jesus did has consequences for all who belong to Him.

2Sam 17:5-13 | The Advice of Hushai

5 Then Absalom said, "Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say." 6 When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom said to him, "Ahithophel has spoken thus. Shall we carry out his plan? If not, you speak." 7 So Hushai said to Absalom, "This time the advice that Ahithophel has given is not good." 8 Moreover, Hushai said, "You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men and they are fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field. And your father is an expert in warfare, and will not spend the night with the people. 9 Behold, he has now hidden himself in one of the caves or in another place; and it will be when he falls on them at the first attack, that whoever hears [it] will say, 'There has been a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' 10 And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men. 11 But I counsel that all Israel be surely gathered to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea in abundance, and that you personally go into battle. 12 So we shall come to him in one of the places where he can be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground; and of him and of all the men who are with him, not even one will be left. 13 If he withdraws into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it into the valley until not even a small stone is found there."

Despite the fact that Ahithophel's counsel "pleases Absalom and all the elders of Israel"" (verse 4), Absalom does not want to bind himself to any particular advice and also wants to hear Hushai. This can only be from the

LORD. Hushai seizes the opportunity offered to him. Very tactically, he starts by saying that the advice Ahithophel gave “this time ... is not good”. To be able to say this, he will need a lot of persuasion. He has that. His persuasiveness lies in the knowledge he has of David, because David is his friend. Absalom knows that well. He believes he can now benefit from that knowledge for the plan to be made to eliminate his father.

It is therefore possible that Absalom wants to hear Hushai’s advice because, as a friend of David, he is even better informed about his plans and working method than Ahithophel. As the son of David, Absalom knows the weaknesses of David as a father, but he does not know him as a warrior. With great knowledge of David’s method and courage, Hushai shows that his proposal is better. Hushai speaks with conviction and great caution. He also flatters the insight of Absalom. He speaks of David’s leadership, his inspiring example, the hero he is to the people who are with him.

Hushai recommends that the whole people be gathered. The background of this advice is that it saves time and David can be warned. He emphasizes that only by a tremendous supremacy, David and his men can be defeated in a way that not one remains. In poetic language Hushai paints to Absalom how it will go when David withdraws into a city, believing that he is safe there. Because of the enormous superiority, the whole city will be demolished stone by stone, so there is nothing left of the protection of David.

2Sam 17:14 | The Counsel of Ahithophel Rejected

14 Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had ordained to thwart the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring calamity on Absalom.

Here we see why Hushai’s speech is successful. This is not because of his eloquence and persuasiveness, but because the LORD has ordained this. The words of Hushai are used by the LORD to reach His goal. It is not the case that Hushai would have managed to convince Absalom without his convincing speech. His magnificent plea was necessary, and God uses it. Absalom and all the people are convinced. The fact that the LORD governs

it, does not alter the fact that Hushai had to lay down a good plan. As so often, the responsibility of man and the purpose of God also work together here.

This is also the case with us, for example when it comes to the preaching of the gospel. On the one hand, through the preaching, all will believe who “had been appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). On the other hand, we must convince people of their sins, as if it depends on us that they repent. We then read that they “spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks” (Acts 14:1). We must speak and work according to our responsibility and then we will find that the Lord uses it to speak to people. We also pray that our words and all kinds of organizational matters will be blessed by Him. The same goes for the upbringing of our children.

2Sam 17:15-22 | Hushai Warns David

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, “This is what Ahithophel counseled Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is what I have counseled. 16 Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means cross over, or else the king and all the people who are with him will be destroyed.’” 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying at En-rogel, and a maidservant would go and tell them, and they would go and tell King David, for they could not be seen entering the city. 18 But a lad did see them and told Absalom; so the two of them departed quickly and came to the house of a man in Bahurim, who had a well in his courtyard, and they went down into it. 19 And the woman took a covering and spread it over the well’s mouth and scattered grain on it, so that nothing was known. 20 Then Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house and said, “Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?” And the woman said to them, “They have crossed the brook of water.” And when they searched and could not find [them], they returned to Jerusalem. 21 It came about after they had departed that they came up out of the well and went and told King David; and they said to David, “Arise and cross over the water quickly for thus Ahithophel has counseled against you.” 22 Then David and all the people who [were] with him arose and crossed the Jordan; and by dawn not even one remained who had not crossed the Jordan.

More means are being used to protect David from the rebels and to stay out of their hands. In addition to Hushai and his eloquent speech, Zadok and Abiathar are also used. Hushai tells them what both Ahithophel and himself counseled Absalom.

Others are called in to warn David. Two boys and a slave also form links in the chain of messengers, allowing David to cross the Jordan in time. Jonathan is the son of Abiathar and Ahimaaz is the son of Zadok (2Sam 15:36). These boys are now making their lives available to save the king's life. A nameless woman and a nameless family living in Bahurim also help. They are known to God. So everyone has a task in this history, in which David's life is hunted.

The Lord Jesus is always the stake of life, also in ours. It is for or against Him, in all situations of life. As friends of our rejected Lord, let us not consider any service unworthy or too small to help others who may have a service that is greater in our eyes, to do that service. If we fail in our 'minor' assignment, we may be the cause of that service not happening or happening very poorly.

We can have our questions about using lies to stay out of enemy hands. Just like with Rachab a lie is used so that the young ones are not found (Jos 2:4-7). Shall we be careful in our judgment of it? Do we know anything about such a danger? If we have never been in such a situation, it is almost impossible to say what we would have answered on the question of where the boys are. By the way, haven't we ever used a lie ourselves to free ourselves from a tricky situation? We did it to save ourselves and not even to help someone else. So let us not judge too harshly what is happening here. God does not do it.

That does not mean that He accepts a lie. We cannot say with an appeal to this history and other similar histories: "Let us do evil that good may come" (Rom 3:8). God is able to let good come forth from evil, but that does not mean that He approves evil. The fact that He does not pass judgment on it here, must make us cautious about passing judgment on it.

The boys do not tell what Hushai counseled to do, but what Ahithophel counseled (verse 21). Ahithophel is the great danger.

It is nice to read that David crosses the Jordan with all the people and that not one is missing (verse 22). No one leaves him, even though the difficulties are so great; no one is left sick or tired. We are reminded here of the words of the Lord Jesus – through which we can see David again here as a type of Him: “Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one” (Jn 18:9).

2Sam 17:23 | Ahithophel Commits Suicide

23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled [his] donkey and arose and went to his home, to his city, and set his house in order, and strangled himself; thus he died and was buried in the grave of his father.

Now that Ahithophel can no longer exert any influence, his role is over. He understands the consequences of ignoring his counsel. He possesses the wisdom for it, but it is a wisdom from the abyss, a demonic wisdom. He understands that David will win the war and that he should not expect any grace from David. In what he is going to do, he resembles Judas, the traitor of the Lord Jesus: just like Judas he commits suicide (Mt 27:5). To this someone comes when he hates the man who is loved by God. The end is destruction.

2Sam 17:24-26 | Camps of David and Absalom

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 25 Absalom set Amasa over the army in place of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26 And Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

David arrives in Mahanaim. Perhaps David thought about what Jacob experienced here in his wanderings. At this place angels of God came to Jacob to help and encourage him in his fear of meeting Esau (Gen 32:1-2). Now David is here, where he is also helped (verses 27-29).

In the meantime, Absalom has arrived with all the warriors in the land of Gilead where they camp.

2Sam 17:27-29 | Friendship Service

27 Now when David had come to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, 28 brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, parched [grain], beans, lentils, parched [seeds], 29 honey, curds, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David and for the people who [were] with him, to eat; for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

Here we see who David's friends are. Again, they are mainly heathen. David has made friends among the enemies. When he arrives in Mahanaim, others meet him with soothing and strengthening means, such as beds and food. There is enough for David and the people. Machir, the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar is also present. He lovingly cared for Mephibosheth (2Sam 9:3-5).

Thus in the time of the Lord Jesus there are also people who have something for Him and His disciples (Lk 4:39; 5:29-30; 10:38-40). They have an eye for the Man after God's heart and for those who go with Him and share in His reproach. They can empathize with the hardships they have suffered (cf. Heb 13:3).

How important it is to feel what the Lord's servants are experiencing, to give them things that invigorate and strengthen them. It is withheld once from Gideon, when he is in battle and pursuing the enemy (Jdg 8:5-6). Later he returned to punish this negative attitude (Jdg 8:15-17).

What we learn in this chapter is that we can ask the Lord for wisdom to counsel others in a way that promotes His work. This happens when we acknowledge and stimulate those who are involved in His work. It is important for all time to choose His side, which we can show by helping others in what they need so they can persevere in their way with Him.

2 Samuel 18

2Sam 18:1-5 | Preparing for Battle

1 Then David numbered the people who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. 2 David sent the people out, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I myself will surely go out with you also." 3 But the people said, "You should not go out; for if we indeed flee, they will not care about us; even if half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that you [be ready] to help us from the city." 4 Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and thousands. 5 The king charged Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "[Deal] gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom.

David divides the people who are with him into groups of thousand men, which he further divides into groups of hundred men. He has appointed commanders over all these groups. Then he divides the entire people into three large groups. Joab, Abishai and Ittai each get the supreme command over a group. David wants to go out at the head of the whole army.

When he proposes this, the love of the people for him comes to the surface. They know what Ahithophel also knew (2Sam 17:3), that it is that the enemy is only interested in David. They use the same argument as Ahithophel. They are aware that if he dies, it will be over for the people as a whole. David is the bond that binds all together. When it is eliminated, there is no bond anymore.

This also applies now. The Lord Jesus is the bond that unites believers. When other things drive Him away from the central place, when other things become important in personal life, the bond with the believers is no

longer experienced. We are going to live for ourselves and thus become an easy prey for the enemy.

The people have another proposal and that is that David stays in the city and comes to their aid from the city. David accepts the advice of the people (verse 4). In the same way, the Lord Jesus would like to hear from us how we think about the battle. If we know Him, we will come up with plans that He can approve, as David does here. It is, of course, encouraging that we are not alone in our fight. The awareness that the Lord comes to our aid from 'the city' gives strength to the battle.

In verse 5 David asks his generals to deal with Absalom, "the young man", gently for his sake. This is the weakness of David. Here David is the weak father. His predilection for his rebellious son, who has played tricks on him so many times, has remained unabated. He asks to spare a rebel for his own protection. In the addition "for my sake" we might notice a little manipulation.

He knows his son deserves death, but he calls on their loyalty to him to spare the young man. By talking about Absalom as a "young man" David seems to put the great danger, that his son is certain, somewhat into perspective. He tries to reduce Absalom's actions from rebellion against his father and God to the youthful overconfidence of a mischievous boy who you can't entirely blame for his actions. David is looking for apologies.

His question does, however, mean that he does not doubt the outcome of the fight. He is certain that his army will win and that Absalom will fall into their hands. Therefore he asks the young man to be treated with gentleness and not to take the right into their own hands, but to leave the exercise of the right to him as king.

Our children are our greatest weakness. Absalom is no longer a young man. He already has grown up children. Here we hear the language of a father. Absalom only wants to kill David; David only wants to save Absalom. Someone has said: Never was an unnatural hatred toward a father stronger than with Absalom and never was unnatural affection for a child stronger than with David.

2Sam 18:6-8 | The Battle

6 Then the people went out into the field against Israel, and the battle took place in the forest of Ephraim. 7 The people of Israel were defeated there before the servants of David, and the slaughter there that day was great, 20,000 men. 8 For the battle there was spread over the whole countryside, and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

The battle is a victory for David's men, with the forest making more victims among the opponents than the sword. The LORD is fighting for David. He uses the forest for that purpose, thinking of potholes and marshes. Perhaps even wild animals have killed many Israelites. A total of 20,000 men are killed. On the one hand the victory is a blessing of the LORD, on the other hand it is also His discipline, for the victims are subjects of David's kingdom. David does, as it were, "a slaughter" with himself. The loss of subjects means a weakening of its realm.

2Sam 18:9-18 | The Death of Absalom

9 Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. For Absalom was riding on [his] mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going. 10 When a certain man saw [it], he told Joab and said, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." 11 Then Joab said to the man who had told him, "Now behold, you saw [him]! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten [pieces] of silver and a belt." 12 The man said to Joab, "Even if I should receive a thousand [pieces of] silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Protect for me the young man Absalom!' 13 Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof." 14 Then Joab said, "I will not waste time here with you." So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. 15 And ten young men who carried Joab's armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him. 16 Then Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab restrained the people. 17 They took Absalom and cast him into a deep pit in the forest and erected over him a very great heap of

stones. And all Israel fled, each to his tent. 18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar which is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to preserve my name." So he named the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day.

In the section that now comes before us is described in detail how Absalom flees and ends up in a hopeless position, caught by a tree, how Joab kills him and how David is informed of this.

When Absalom encounters the men of David, he flees. He looks for a good getaway, but drives toward his destruction. Absalom befalls the word: "The one who flees from the terror will fall into the pit, and the one who climbs up out of the pit will be caught in the snare" (Jer 48:44a). David tends to spare him, but the Divine righteousness exercises judgment on him as a traitor. God makes sure that he is captured alive by a tree. There was no human hand involved.

The great oak through which Absalom is caught is a picture of greatness. Absalom, who wanted to be great, is captured and brought down by his greatness. He hangs "between heaven and earth", as if thereby it is said that he is unacceptable to both. The earth will not keep him, nor will heaven accept him. Therefore the realm of the dead opens its mouth to receive him.

Absalom comes to an extraordinary end because his crime is so monstrous. It would also have been possible, for example, that his donkey had thrown him off in his flight and left him half dead on the ground. The servants of David could then have killed him. Then the same goal would have been achieved. However, it would have been too common a death for such an extraordinary delinquent.

God wants to create something new here, as in the case of those other rebels, Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num 16:29-30). He wants to make clear to everyone how much this man has taunted Him. Absalom has thus come to an end to be a terrifying example for children to warn them what may happen to them if they disobey their parents (cf. Pro 30:17).

A man who sees Absalom hanging alive in a tree tells Joab. Joab blames the man for not killing him. Joab would have rewarded him richly for this, not only by an amount of money, but also by a proof of honor in the form

of a belt. Perhaps it can be compared to a medal of merit. Jonathan, for example, also gave his belt to David to pay tribute to David (1Sam 18:4). If someone's belt was removed from him, it was an insulting treatment.

The man's defense shows that he respects David's desire not to kill his son. What the man says also shows that he has no respect for Joab. He knows that he would not have to expect any support from him if he had killed Absalom and King David had called him to account for his deed. Joab is known as a man who is always out to his own advantage, a man who always acts on selfish motives. This is also evident from Joab's reaction to what the man says. He does not intend to exchange another word with this 'royal-minded' man. He thinks there has been enough chatter. It is time for deeds, that is to say for that one deed, the killing of Absalom.

Joab does not care about what David said. It is true that Absalom was not allowed to live and Joab acts correctly by killing the rebel. However, God does not only look at the correctness of the action, but also at the motive with which that action is done. Joab's working method shows that he is looking for personal revenge. He would have been very capable of killing Absalom with one javelin stroke. He doesn't, but he tortures him first and then lets ten of his servants, armor bearers, men who know how to handle a weapon, kill him.

After Absalom is killed, he is despicably thrown into "a big pit" and buried under "a very great heap of stones". This is the end of the man who during his life thought great of himself. He is a striking picture of the antichrist, both in his haughty existence and in his inglorious death. His end is at right angles to the pillar he had erected for himself to glorify himself.

To increase the defamation of his burial, the sacred historian points this out in verse 18. He speaks of "a pillar" that Absalom had set up "for himself" "in the King's Valley", which is in the valley of Kidron near Jerusalem. He did so considering that his name would then at least live on in this pillar, because he had no son. Absalom had three sons (2Sam 14:27), but they must have died already. His concern was to keep his name in remembrance. This happened, but to his eternal shame.

"The King's Valley" is mentioned earlier, namely when Abraham meets the true king in the picture of Melchizedek (Gen 14:17). A valley indicates

humiliation. That is the place where Absalom has erected a memorial for himself and his name.

2Sam 18:19-33 | David Hears About Absalom's Death

19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, "Please let me run and bring the king news that the LORD has freed him from the hand of his enemies." 20 But Joab said to him, "You are not the man to carry news this day, but you shall carry news another day; however, you shall carry no news today because the king's son is dead." 21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, "Go, tell the king what you have seen." So the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran. 22 Now Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said once more to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why would you run, my son, since you will have no reward for going?" 23 "But whatever happens," [he said], "I will run." So he said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and passed up the Cushite. 24 Now David was sitting between the two gates; and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked, and behold, a man running by himself. 25 The watchman called and told the king. And the king said, "If he is by himself there is good news in his mouth." And he came nearer and nearer. 26 Then the watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, "Behold, [another] man running by himself." And the king said, "This one also is bringing good news." 27 The watchman said, "I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." And the king said, "This is a good man and comes with good news." 28 Ahimaaz called and said to the king, "All is well." And he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, "Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king." 29 The king said, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what [it was]." 30 Then the king said, "Turn aside and stand here." So he turned aside and stood still. 31 Behold, the Cushite arrived, and the Cushite said, "Let my lord the king receive good news, for the LORD has freed you this day from the hand of all those who rose up against you." 32 Then the king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" And the Cushite answered, "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who

rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!" 33 The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

From verse 19 follows a detailed account of the way in which David must be informed and receives a report about the death of his son Absalom and how he reacts to it. We can divide this section into four sections:

1. In verses 19-23 the messengers are sent to David to tell him about the death of Absalom.
2. In verses 24-27 we see how David waits anxiously for news about Absalom.
3. In verses 28-32 David receives the messengers and their message.
4. In verse 33 we read how David reacts to the news of the death of his son.

Ahimaaz would like to go to David to tell him that the rebellious son is dead and that he has been delivered from that danger. Joab, however, does not allow it. It seems that Ahimaaz is a man connected to bringing good news. Joab knows how David will react to the news of his son's death. It will not be good news for David. Joab lets a Cushite go instead of Ahimaaz. Ahimaaz does not accept the refusal and insisted that Joab sends him also. Finally, Joab allows him.

In the meantime David waits anxiously for news about the course or outcome of the battle. His heart is only busy with one thing and that is Absalom. Although Ahimaaz left later, he is with the king earlier than the Cushite. He seems to have made a name for himself as a fast runner, with a style that makes him recognizable from a great distance. When David hears that Ahimaaz is coming, he concludes for himself that this man is bringing good news (verse 27). David knows him as a good man, so his message will also be good (cf. 1Kgs 1:42). He wants to believe that too. We could call it 'wishful thinking'. He doesn't want to think of other tidings.

Ahimaaz calls and says to David that it is "peace" and prostrates himself before the king with his face to the ground. Without waiting for a sign from David to speak, he immediately tells that the rebels are in the hand of David, an announcement he ushers in with blessing "the LORD your

God". Instead of being happy about the victory, David asks only one question, the question after Absalom. Ahimaaz gives an evasive answer to this (verse 29). David doesn't ask any further. Ahimaaz must make room for the second messenger, the Cushite.

The Cushite brings the message that the LORD has done justice to David and delivered him from the hand of all who revolted against him. It is as if David does not hear it. The only question he wants an answer to is, how things are with Absalom. Without detour the Cushite tells what has happened to Absalom.

On hearing the news of his son's death, David collapses completely (verse 33). As soon as he hears that Absalom is dead, he is no longer a king of his people, but only a father. He asks nothing more, but falls into a passionate weeping. He withdraws from the company and surrenders to his grief. Do we have to be hard at David about that? How would we react if we had such a son and received such a message?

Nevertheless, we should note a few things to learn from. His love for Absalom may be understandable, but is not acceptable. How can anyone have such a great love for such a wicked son? Absalom, however beautiful and clever he may have been, turned against God and God-given authority. No parent should be deceived in this. It is important that parents always take the side of God when it comes to the sin of children.

Spurgeon told in a sermon about a mother who said to her son when he was still living a profligate life: "If God judges you for your sins, I will say 'amen' to His judgment." God does not want us to treat our children softly when He deals with them hard because of their sins. Nobody more than He Himself wants them to return to Him. But if they do not want to, He lets them go and we must do so too: "If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them into the power of their transgression" (Job 8:4; cf. Lk 10:1-7).

We may pray that the Lord will show us the reality of things, that is to say that we will see things, including the deeds of our children, as He sees them. We may also pray that we deal with Him about whatever tidings we have to deal with, especially about our children. We do not have to show we are the strong man or woman, but we may give room to the genuine-

ness of our feelings. But let us pray that this will happen without losing sight of Him.

David has lost sight of the LORD here. It's not the first time he's weeping about someone's death. He has wept about the death of an opponent, Abner (2Sam 3:32). He has wept about the loss of an intimate friend and about the death of his son Amnon (2Sam 1:11-12; 13:33,35-36). At the death of Absalom, however, his grief knows no bounds.

The language he speaks is also unique. The poet-king, who in other cases express themselves in an eloquent lament, can only sob and stammer here: "My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! ... , Absalom, my son, my son!" Eight times the words "my son" come up from the depths of his soul (verse 33; 2Sam 19:4). He doesn't have other words to express the size of his grief. With this he says all. It is as if life no longer makes sense to him.

2 Samuel 19

2Sam 19:1-8 | Joab Reprimands David

1 Then it was told Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping and mourns for Absalom." 2 The victory that day was turned to mourning for all the people, for the people heard [it] said that day, "The king is grieved for his son." 3 So the people went by stealth into the city that day, as people who are humiliated steal away when they flee in battle. 4 The king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" 5 Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, "Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who today have saved your life and the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines, 6 by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. 7 Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, surely not a man will pass the night with you, and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now." 8 So the king arose and sat in the gate. When they told all the people, saying, "Behold, the king is sitting in the gate," then all the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled, each to his tent.

Joab seems to be the leader of the people here and not David. The people come to him with the news that David is overwhelmed with grief over the loss of his son Absalom. David is that down and broken, that the people dare not show any trace of joy. The attitude and behavior of David affect the whole people. Instead of celebrating victory, they behave like losers. This is how great the influence of a beloved leader who is overwhelmed by immense personal grief can be. David loses himself in his sorrow and therefore loses sight of the interest of the people.

David is a father with a special love for a son who was a rebel. This love goes so far, that his grief because of the loss of Absalom is at the expense of the feelings of others. While David continuously expresses his deep feelings of mourning, Joab comes to him. He powerfully deals with David, al-

though he himself is the cause of David's grief. He, who should be the last one to speak this truth, speaks what is right. He is the only one who could say this to the king. Sometimes situations can be so complicated.

Joab seems to be a man without feeling. Without any compassion, almost cool businesslike, he breaks into the feelings of David. It must now be over and out with his grief. David's attitude and grief over the death of his son has the message in it that everything his men have done for him means nothing. His men saved his life and that of all his relatives.

Instead of being thankful for that and thanking his men, he pretends that his men had done him harm. David turns things around, Joab says. He loves Absalom, who hated his father, and he hates his men, who worked for him out of love. Joab concludes that David would have liked it if his entire army had been killed, as long as Absalom was alive.

Joab summons (!) David to arise and speak to the men. He warns him that he doesn't have to count on someone staying with him if he doesn't. David then changes his attitude. He listens to Joab and does what he says. When David has taken his place in the gate, it is made known to the people. Then all the people come to him.

From David's attitude toward Absalom and the admonition by Joab we can learn a lot about our relationship with our children. It is understandable that a child who causes us a lot of grief demands a lot of our attention. These concerns can be the result of illness, but can also be caused by a sinful path that a child goes. Nevertheless, we must try to maintain or balance the attention given to our children. It does happen that a child who causes a lot of grief receives so much attention that the others miss the attention that they too need. The sigh has sometimes been breathed: 'I wanted me to dare to do something crazy, so there would be attention for me too.'

Also in the local church, some young people may not get the attention they need. This can create problem situations that could have been avoided if we, as elderly people, had made every young person feel the interest that we have for each of them individually. Then we behave as the Lord wills, Who also has an interest in each of the children of God personally.

After the dramatic events of Absalom's the coup d'état and the rebel's death, the people who had gone after Absalom fled to their homes.

2Sam 19:9-15 | David on His Way Back to Jerusalem

9 All the people were quarreling throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines, but now he has fled out of the land from Absalom. 10 However, Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. Now then, why are you silent about bringing the king back?" 11 Then King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, "Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the word of all Israel has come to the king, [even] to his house? 12 You are my brothers; you are my bone and my flesh. Why then should you be the last to bring back the king?' 13 Say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? May God do so to me, and more also, if you will not be commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.'" 14 Thus he turned the hearts of all the men of Judah as one man, so that they sent [word] to the king, [saying], "Return, you and all your servants." 15 The king then returned and came as far as the Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal in order to go to meet the king, to bring the king across the Jordan.

Then among the people the discussion starts about David, the strong and at the same time weak man. They talk about the situation that has arisen. Sobriety demands to face up to the situation. They think back to what David has meant and done for them in earlier years. Absalom has not been a good choice. He was their man for a while and they had anointed him king, but things went differently.

Their considerations do not show that they involve the LORD and repent of their wrong choice. It's just the most obvious solution. This leads them to blame each other for the retrieval of David and accuse each other of negligence.

Immediately after that we read that David orders the elders of Judah to take him back. He does so in response to the consultations of the ten tribes, of which he has heard. This stimulates David to offer himself to Judah to be their king again. He let the priests Zadok and Abiathar convey his message about this. This shows, in picture, that priestly service plays an important role in restoring the dominion of the Lord Jesus in our lives as

Lord. Priestly service focuses our hearts on Him. When we see Him, we will want to serve Him.

In practical terms, David is a weak believer here, giving the impression that he favors the tribe of Judah, while the ten tribes also talked about returning to them. Is there any partiality here with David? As king he should stand above all twelve tribes. Now he (unintentionally) becomes a party-head.

He talks to Judah's sense of honor. He tells them twice that they will certainly not be the last ones to get him back. He therefore expresses his clear preference. The ten tribes have betrayed him. It seems that he does not grant them the privilege of bringing him back before Judah, whom he calls "my bone and my flesh". It is not so that he no longer wants to be their king. He does want to show them that the bond with them is not as close as his bond with Judah.

We can make an application to ourselves here. In the same way we can say that we love all true believers, while possibly having our preferences. We feel much more being one with those who agree with us and let that be noticed. It may happen that we unnoticedly form a party from which others are excluded. It may also be the case that you let yourself be the party leader, whether you want it or not.

David gives a special word for Amasa. Amasa has been commander of Absalom and David offers him to become commander with him. This also seems to have a tactical reason. How can David give him this promise? It seems that he wants to favor a family member at the expense of a man he wants to get rid of. In doing so, he is again mistaken in Joab. Joab does not tolerate competition and kills Amasa (2Sam 20:9-10).

His diplomatic action is producing the desired results. The hearts of all the men of Judah are won. They all want David to be their king again. The whole tribe comes to the Jordan to help him over and to receive him back in their midst. It would have been better if the whole people had come.

Throughout everything we see David as the weak man. Everything that has happened in his house in recent years and in which he has failed as father and king, has reduced his mental judgment. This leads him to wrong decisions or decisions that do not have the characteristic of faith.

2Sam 19:16-23 | David Shows Grace to Shimei

16 Then Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite who was from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. 17 There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, with Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they rushed to the Jordan before the king. 18 Then they kept crossing the ford to bring over the king's household, and to do what was good in his sight. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan. 19 So he said to the king, "Let not my lord consider me guilty, nor remember what your servant did wrong on the day when my lord the king came out from Jerusalem, so that the king would take [it] to heart. 20 For your servant knows that I have sinned; therefore behold, I have come today, the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king." 21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah said, "Should not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" 22 David then said, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zerui-ah, that you should this day be an adversary to me? Should any man be put to death in Israel today? For do I not know that I am king over Israel today?" 23 The king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." Thus the king swore to him.

In connection with the message of crossing over the Jordan, several meetings take place, successively with Shimei, Mephibosheth and Barzillai. In all these cases we see a weak David, with still beautiful characteristics. It is difficult to interpret these meetings correctly. We can carefully learn a few things from them.

With the tribe of Judah Shimei comes as well. He realizes that he must be quick to save his skin. He also realizes that he can only save his life if he acknowledges that he has been wrong and appeals to grace. While David crosses over to the promised land, Shimei falls down before David. He acknowledges his sin and at the same time points out that he is the first of Joseph's house to acknowledge and honor David as king.

Abishai clearly expresses his dissatisfaction with the evil that this man has done to his king. He immediately passes judgment and argues that Shimei should be killed for it. This is the third time that Abishai tries to get David to kill someone. First Saul (1Sam 26:8), then Shimei (2Sam 16:9), and here again. The first and second time David reacted well. It is difficult to say

whether this is the case here. It may be that David grants Shimei grace from a false sense of generosity. He grants grace because he has become king again.

David declares Abishai “an adversary” (literally: satan), because he wants to bring him to an action that is contrary to his desire to show mercy. Yet Shimei is later killed for his cursing of David. This is done by Solomon, on the advice of David (1Kgs 2:8-9,44,46).

2Sam 19:24-30 | David Meets Mephibosheth

24 Then Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king; and he had neither cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came [home] in peace. 25 It was when he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, “Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?” 26 So he answered, “O my lord, the king, my servant deceived me; for your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ because your servant is lame. 27 Moreover, he has slandered your servant to my lord the king; but my lord the king is like the angel of God, therefore do what is good in your sight. 28 For all my father’s household was nothing but dead men before my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right do I have yet that I should complain anymore to the king?” 29 So the king said to him, “Why do you still speak of your affairs? I have decided, ‘You and Ziba shall divide the land.’” 30 Mephibosheth said to the king, “Let him even take it all, since my lord the king has come safely to his own house.”

The second one David meets is Mephibosheth. It can be seen from him, that during the absence of David, he did not take care of himself. All his thoughts have gone out to his benefactor. Mephibosheth is a picture of the believer who looks forward to the coming of his Lord and therefore is not busy with “provision for the flesh in regard to [its] lusts” (Rom 13:14b).

Mephibosheth may be a picture of a believer looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus, but David is certainly not a picture of the Lord Jesus here. He accuses Mephibosheth that he did not go with him. Mephibosheth tells David the true reason and also about the deceit of Ziba. He also points

out that he is lame, which made him unable to follow David himself. What Ziba told David about him is not true.

Mephibosheth's attitude is beautiful. He does not speak of David having believed Ziba. He has constantly looked forward to his return, while remaining aware of the grace granted to him. He talks about that. He remembers well how he, someone who was nothing but a dead man because he belonged to the house of Saul, was taken up by David among those who eat at his table (2Sam 9:13). He is still overwhelmed by this evidence of mercy. What right does he have in the light of this?

It is to be hoped that we, to whom mercy has also been shown, will live constantly in the awareness of it and that this awareness may always overwhelm us and bring us to great gratitude to Him Who has shown us that mercy. This will save us from standing on our right and claiming our right.

David's reaction to the words of Mephibosheth does not make us think of the Lord Jesus. David is aware that he made a mistake by giving Ziba the land. Yet he does not want to discuss this any further. In his words there is some annoyance about the mistake he made. He does not admit this mistake, but decides that the land should be shared. This is not a wise decision; on the contrary, it is a wrong decision.

David's assignment to share the land reveals Mephibosheth's mind. Mephibosheth does not protest. On the contrary, he does not want anything from the land, for he has David back. And to him it is about David. Mephibosheth's attitude is admirable and worthy of being followed by us in view of our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Mephibosheth's answer is proof that he is only interested in David and does not in any way seek getting his possessions back. It is the language of Paul who says: "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him" (Phil 3:7-9a).

2Sam 19:31-40 | Farewell to Barzillai

31 Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim; and he went on to the Jordan with the king to escort him over the Jordan. 32 Now Barzillai

was very old, being eighty years old; and he had sustained the king while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very great man. 33 The king said to Barzillai, "You cross over with me and I will sustain you in Jerusalem with me." 34 But Barzillai said to the king, "How long have I yet to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? 35 I am now eighty years old. Can I distinguish between good and bad? Or can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Or can I hear anymore the voice of singing men and women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king? 36 Your servant would merely cross over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king compensate me [with] this reward? 37 Please let your servant return, that I may die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother. However, here is your servant Chimham, let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what is good in your sight." 38 The king answered, "Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what is good in your sight; and whatever you require of me, I will do for you." 39 All the people crossed over the Jordan and the king crossed too. The king then kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his place. 40 Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him; and all the people of Judah and also half the people of Israel accompanied the king.

The third man we read about meeting David is Barzillai. The discussion David has with him is different from the discussion he had with Shimei and also different from the one he had with Mephibosheth. Here David takes the initiative. Barzillai is a wealthy man and has used his possessions to support the king.

David did not forget those statements of support. Barzillai helped him at a time when he was on the run from Absalom (2Sam 17:27-29). With this, Barzillai has taken a great risk. He didn't know how the battle would go. However, he has chosen in faith for the man of God's choice. For that, now comes appreciation from the mouth of David. Out of gratitude for everything Barzillai has done for him, David offers Barzillai to go with him. Then he may live with David in Jerusalem and David will make sure that in his last years of life he will lack nothing.

However, Barzillai does not want to be "an added burden" (verse 35) to David. He gives various reasons for this in verses 34-35. The reasons he gives – his age and the associated defects – could be interpreted negative-

ly. Then it would be a refusal, packed in plausible excuses. Yet this approach does not seem to do justice to what Barzillai did for David. David's reaction does not give rise to a negative approach either.

It is more obvious to see the reasons given as proof that he is not seeking his own interest, but David's. He has always done this, and he does it now. When he gives Chimham to David in his stead to cross over the Jordan with him, we see the same mindset in speaking to David. David's appreciation for Barzillai is great. He will treat Chimham as if it were Barzillai himself.

In Barzillai we can also see what the elderly believers can do for the Lord Jesus and His own. When we think of what he did for David, we can see in him a picture of a father in Christ (1Jn 2:13-14). Fathers in Christ have gathered much spiritual wealth. They are able to share with believers who have no knowledge of spiritual blessings the riches and help them on their way to 'Jerusalem', that is, the place where the Lord Jesus dwells in the midst of His own.

That Barzillai instead of going along himself let the young Chimham – maybe his son, maybe his servant – go, is also a lesson. We see a good example of how an old believer allows a young believer to take his place in the way with the Lord Jesus.

David goes back into the promised land through the Jordan. In this way, the remnant of Israel will return to the land in the end time. Then the whole people will be united. Here the separation is still a fact. Also Gilgal is mentioned on the way back. It is the way the people went at the time to conquer the land. In Gilgal, the circumcision took place, which speaks of the judgment on the flesh. That way should be followed again if there has been a deviation. The wrong must be confessed and removed. If that happens, it is a new beginning, the beginning of a new path with the Lord on which new spiritual experiences are being gained.

2Sam 19:41-43 | Israel and Judah Quarrel over David

41 And behold, all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, "Why had our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king and his household and all David's men with him over the Jordan?" 42 Then all the

men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is a close relative to us. Why then are you angry about this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's [expense], or has anything been taken for us?" 43 But the men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said, "We have ten parts in the king, therefore we also have more [claim] on David than you. Why then did you treat us with contempt? Was it not our advice first to bring back our king?" Yet the words of the men of Judah were harsher than the words of the men of Israel.

Then comes the moment when the men of Israel make themselves heard. They complain about the conduct of their brothers, the men of Judah. David himself has contributed to this by his preferential treatment of Judah. The result is jealousy. We see that the schism that will occur under the reign of the grandson of David, Rehoboam, is already hidden present here.

In church history, division is not always – or perhaps better: often not – the result of a difference in doctrines, but of the difference in characters of those who defend certain doctrines. What happens under the appearance of a difference in doctrine perception, is in reality a struggle between people who do not want to be the least.

The men of Israel react carnal. The answer from the men of Judah is just as carnal. Solomon's wise word "a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Pro 15:1), is not taken to heart by either party. The men of Israel think that they have more right to David because they are greater in number. There is a dispute among God's people between Judah on the one hand with a part of Israel and on the other hand the rest of Israel. The dispute revolves around the question of who is most entitled to David. Is it good to speak like this? David is king of all the people, isn't he?

We must be careful not to claim the Lord Jesus for our group. This happens if we believe that we are more faithful than others, or that we have more knowledge than others, or that we believe we have more gifts of the Spirit than others. Let us pray that the Lord will preserve us from talking about Him with our brothers and sisters wherever they may be, in the sense that we would have a greater right to Him than any other.

This is the evil Paul condemns among the Corinthians (1Cor 1:12-13). The group that claims Christ as party leader is the worst. They are even worse than the Corinthians who have chosen Peter or Paul as party leader. This

may sound strange, but it is still so. Paul lists four parties, each with its own party leader. One of those party leaders is Christ. But can He be put on a par with any other person? Yet that is exactly what the Corinthians do. Christ is made a party leader, next to Paul and Peter and Apollos! What this party is saying is: 'We are the only ones who take the right position. Whoever joins Paul or Apollos or Peter does not belong to us.' However, every believer belongs to Christ, although perhaps, unfortunately, he has joined some group that calls himself after a certain servant.

Christ cannot be compartmentalized – nor can His true servants, for they do not want to be at the head of a party or compartmentalized. Therefore, when Paul says that Christ is not divided, he indicates that Christ cannot be claimed as party leader by any group.

You will certainly recognize this in professing Christianity around you. What a disunion! One group calls itself after Luther, another after Calvin. There are also groups and churches where people come together, just because they agree on certain parts or subjects from the Bible, for example baptism, while others, who think otherwise, cannot join them. The fact that the Lord Jesus is the only One by Whom Christians belong together, has increasingly been pushed into the background. Let us therefore put Him and what He says in His Word back in the foreground!

2 Samuel 20

2Sam 20:1-2 | Rebellion of Sheba

*1 Now a worthless fellow happened to be there whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite; and he blew the trumpet and said,
"We have no portion in David,
Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse;
Every man to his tents, O Israel!"*
2 So all the men of Israel withdrew from following David [and] followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah remained steadfast to their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem.

When the tribes argue, the enemy sends a man who stimulates division. Sheba, "a worthless fellow", abuses the situation of disagreement between Judah and Israel to withdraw Israel from following David. He wants to take advantage of the disagreement. He turns against David. Similarly, a division with evil motives is always directed against the Lord Jesus.

All men of Israel listen to the call of Sheba. Those who have a moment ago spoken in favor of David withdraw from him again to follow a wicked man. Those who have said that "ten parts of the king" are of them (2Sam 19:43), now say that they "have no inheritance in the son of Jesse", that is, that they have no portion in him. This is how it went when the Lord Jesus was here. First they were calling 'hosanna' and shortly thereafter 'crucify Him'.

Only Judah remains faithful to David. They follow him from the Jordan to Jerusalem. If we apply this spiritually, we see an important way. The Jordan is a picture of the death and resurrection of Christ, and Jerusalem is the place the LORD has chosen to make his Name dwell there. When the people who had left Egypt had passed through the Jordan, they came into the promised land.

Thus we may be aware that we died and rose with Christ and are thereby brought into the heavenly places, of which the promised land is a picture. As a result, we shall want to be in the place that is now the dwelling place

of God, the church. In practical terms, this means visiting the local church where we see the church being expressed (Mt 18:15-20).

2Sam 20:3-10 | Joab Kills Amasa

3 Then David came to his house at Jerusalem, and the king took the ten women, the concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and placed them under guard and provided them with sustenance, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as widows. 4 Then the king said to Amasa, "Call out the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself." 5 So Amasa went to call out [the men of] Judah, but he delayed longer than the set time which he had appointed him. 6 And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom; take your lord's servants and pursue him, so that he does not find for himself fortified cities and escape from our sight." 7 So Joab's men went out after him, along with the Cherethites and the Pelethites and all the mighty men; and they went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. 8 When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was dressed in his military attire, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened at his waist; and as he went forward, it fell out. 9 Joab said to Amasa, "Is it well with you, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. 10 But Amasa was not on guard against the sword which was in Joab's hand so he struck him in the belly with it and poured out his inward parts on the ground, and did not [strike] him again, and he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

What David does with the concubines is right. He cares for them, but no longer has sexual intercourse with them, because they were taken over by Absalom (2Sam 16:21-22). He must also have been ashamed that he made these women the prey of his rebellious son. What he does with the concubines may be right, but for the women it is a bad consequence of his wrong actions. They are condemned to widowhood, without the freedom to belong again to a man. This was a hard fate for a woman at the time.

When he has put things in order internally, he wants to secure the support of the men of Judah. He orders Amasa to bring the men of Judah to him within three days. But it is all very difficult. Amasa needs more time. Were the men of Judah so difficult to mobilize? Did they no longer like fighting?

Unfortunately, there are also many Christians who boast of belonging to the Lord Jesus, but who, when it comes to battle, they don't want to go. They are too attached to their peace and ease to venture a new adventure with Him.

Amasa does not seem to be the right man for the task. In any case, he cannot manage to bring the men from Judah to David within three days. Maybe he was not David's good choice. David therefore sees the danger looming that Sheba will strengthen and a new uprising will break out. Therefore he sends Abishai out for it.

Joab has not received a command, but he is there too. He sees his chance to solve a problem that bothers him. How it exactly is with the sword that falls out is not clear. It can be a cunning act of Joab. By pretending that the sword is falling, he can take it in his hand, without it being a threatening and disturbing movement for Amasa. In any case, he has the sword in his hand when he meets Amasa. With feigned interest he asks Amasa how he is doing, while he takes his beard to greet him with a kiss. Just like his feigned words, this expression of love is also feigned. It is the 'Judas kiss' in the Old Testament, the kiss behind which is a treacherous and murderous heart.

The way in which Joab works is described in detail to indicate that he works in a cool, deliberative and calculating way. It's almost inevitable that Joab acts out of jealousy. He is passed by as a general by David, possibly because of his murder of Abner or the murder of Absalom or both. But he cannot accept his demotion.

Things can happen in a person's life that disables him from leading. It is often difficult to accept that. Some can never accept it and will do everything to restore themselves to their lost position, often at the expense of others.

2Sam 20:11-22 | Joab Lets Sheba Be Killed

11 Now there stood by him one of Joab's young men, and said, "Whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David, [let him] follow Joab." 12 But Amasa lay wallowing in [his] blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa from the highway into the field and threw a garment over him when he saw that everyone who came by

him stood still. 13 As soon as he was removed from the highway, all the men passed on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. 14 Now he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, even Beth-maacah, and all the Berites; and they were gathered together and also went after him. 15 They came and besieged him in Abel Beth-maacah, and they cast up a siege ramp against the city, and it stood by the rampart; and all the people who were with Joab were wreaking destruction in order to topple the wall. 16 Then a wise woman called from the city, "Hear, hear! Please tell Joab, 'Come here that I may speak with you.'" 17 So he approached her, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" And he answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening." 18 Then she spoke, saying, "Formerly they used to say, 'They will surely ask [advice] at Abel,' and thus they ended [the dispute]. 19 I am of those who are peaceable [and] faithful in Israel. You are seeking to destroy a city, even a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?" 20 Joab replied, "Far be it, far be it from me that I should swallow up or destroy! 21 Such is not the case. But a man from the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand against King David. Only hand him over, and I will depart from the city." And the woman said to Joab, "Behold, his head will be thrown to you over the wall." 22 Then the woman wisely came to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each to his tent. Joab also returned to the king at Jerusalem.

Immediately after the murder of Amasa, Joab takes over command. This crime brings delay in the pursuit. After the dead body of Amasa is removed from the road, the men of Joab continue the hunt for Sheba. Sheba appears to have entrenched himself in Abel. When Joab besieges the city and starts demolishing it, a wise woman speaks up. She asks for the reason of the siege and destruction of the city. Joab responds in a way that demonstrates his political and diplomatic gifts. However, God does not play any role in the negotiations between the woman and Joab.

The woman agrees with Joab's demand and convinces the people in the city. The result is that the head of Sheba is cut off and thrown to Joab. Thus, through the intervention of a wise woman, the judgment of the culprit is

carried out and the city is spared. Her wisdom is shown in this that by handing over a worthless fellow, she spares an entire city.

Another example of a wise woman is Esther, who also saved a people by her performance. The wise actions of a few have consequences for the whole. By this one act the peace for the city returns (cf. Ecc 9:13-15). Because there was no such wisdom in the church of Corinth, there was division there and they had lawsuits with each other (1Cor 6:2-5).

At Abel obviously many wise people dwelt. The city is known for it. We can apply this to a local church. There are big differences between local churches. In one death is in the pot, in the other is brotherly love and fellowship. From a local church a testimony goes out. This can be a testimony of wisdom or love or freshness from one person or a few persons, like here from this one woman. In the church too, the actions of a single person can have consequences for the whole.

2Sam 20:23-26 | David's Officials

23 Now Joab was over the whole army of Israel, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; 24 and Adoram was over the forced labor, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder; 25 and Sheva was scribe, and Zadok and Abiathar were priests; 26 and Ira the Jairite was also a priest to David.

At the end of the chapter the officials of David are mentioned. For good governance of his kingdom, David has people around him who help him to do so. Joab is again the commander over the whole army of Israel, because he has eliminated his competitor. David is condemned to him by his weakness. Also some priests are mentioned, because approaching God is of the utmost importance. Honoring and consulting God is the basis for peace in the realm.

Perhaps the general lesson of this chapter is that loyalty to David leads to a certain victory, although sometimes everything seems lost. There is also something to be learned from the behavior of the subjects of David. Jealousy, dissatisfaction with the position that we ourselves or others get among the people and also among the leaders, leads to wrong practices, as we notice in the actions of Sheba and Joab. The lesson here is that we must

be content with the way the Lord wants to use us and accept how He wants to use others. This will preserve us from jealous and competitive struggle, where we disadvantage others in favor of ourselves.

2 Samuel 21

2Sam 21:1-14 | The Repayment of the Gibeonites to Saul

1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." 2 So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the sons of Israel made a covenant with them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah). 3 Thus David said to the Gibeonites, "What should I do for you? And how can I make atonement that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?" 4 Then the Gibeonites said to him, "We have no [concern] of silver or gold with Saul or his house, nor is it for us to put any man to death in Israel." And he said, "I will do for you whatever you say." 5 So they said to the king, "The man who consumed us and who planned to exterminate us from remaining within any border of Israel, 6 let seven men from his sons be given to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD" And the king said, "I will give [them]." 7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the oath of the LORD which was between them, between David and Saul's son Jonathan. 8 So the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, Armoni and Mephibosheth whom she had borne to Saul, and the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she had borne to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite. 9 Then he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before the LORD, so that the seven of them fell together; and they were put to death in the first days of harvest at the beginning of barley harvest. 10 And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until it rained on them from the sky; and she allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night. 11 When it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, 12 then David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the open square of Beth-shan, where

the Philistines had hanged them on the day the Philistines struck down Saul in Gilboa. 13 He brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there, and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged. 14 They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father; thus they did all that the king commanded, and after that God was moved by prayer for the land.

With a description at the end of the previous chapter of the order that reigns in the realm of David, the general history of David has come to an end. What is described in this chapter concerns actions that God is yet to let David execute in His reign. It is a crime of Saul for which retaliation was yet to take place, and the defeating of a remnant of giants.

God's mills grind slowly, but surely. It can take a long time, but the day of the repayment comes. With God crime is not time-barred. Every crime will be righteously repaid. Often this just repayment will only take place in the resurrection, but sometimes also during life on earth. The latter is the case with what Saul has done with the Gibeonites. Although this crime was committed some time ago, the time has now come for God to call His people to account for it.

To draw the attention of His people, He sends a famine across the land for three consecutive years. The first year everyone will have seen the drought and the failure of the harvest as a more common phenomenon, although the God-fearing Israelite will realize that something is not good in the people. Famine in the land where God promised abundance, indicates that there is unfaithfulness among the people. David only understands at the third famine that this is the voice of God and asks Him about the occasion. When he prays, the answer comes immediately.

The reason is what Saul did with the Gibeonites. It is remarkable that God did not immediately punish Saul for this. Now comes this famine. David was not to blame for it, was he? It therefore appears to be not only Saul's fault, but also that of his house and possibly also that of the house of Israel, the people who followed him. It is a common responsibility. It must bring us to the awareness that, even though we may be faithful ourselves, we may also be guilty of a situation of injustice and division. We have to make ourselves one with that, as Daniel did (Dan 9:1-6).

From the famine that God sends, we can learn another spiritual lesson. If we are spiritually deficient, we must ask the Lord why. Perhaps there is something in our lives that is not good. It may also be that we fail to do something that has yet to be done, like here. There is an evil to be judged here that had previously been committed by a leader of the people.

The Gibeonites should not have been killed. There was a covenant with them that the Israelites would not harm them (Jos 9:15-21). Saul, however, was not bothered by that covenant, but he was bothered by the presence of these Canaanites in their midst. Saul's self-willed zeal for Israel has wronged a group of residents of Israel, who rightly lived there, and has been guilty of shedding the blood of allies. It is not known at which point this happened. We can only guess about Saul's motive to do this. In any case, for us it means the warning that we must strictly observe the Lord's command and only carry that out and no more.

The negative consequences of giving one's own interpretation to a work for the Lord do not fail. In what Saul did, his attention was not on the LORD, but on people. It is always dangerous for someone who wants to do a service to the Lord if not the Lord, but people are standing before his attention. This will cause disasters. The LORD comes back to what Saul did. There are two things David has in mind: he wants to work reconciliation and he wishes them to bless the inheritance of the LORD again.

If one of the people of God wrongs another who is not a member of the people of God, this will have a negative effect on their perception of the inheritance of the Lord. He will not be attracted to it. Therefore we should not justify the evil done in the Name of the Lord when unbelievers point it out. Our task is to find out how we can bring about reconciliation in the conscience of such a person.

When David knows the reason for the famine, he calls the Gibeonites. He asks them what they want as a compensation for Saul's crime. The question is whether he is doing the right thing. Is it right for a king as the supreme judicial body to ask aggrieved people how they want justice to be done for the injustice done to them? Judging must be done by an independent judge. Yet it seems that God approves of his actions, for when everything

is done as David has commanded, “that God was moved by prayer for the land” (verse 14).

What the Gibeonites want is not the result of anger toward Saul or his descendants. If they had wanted revenge, it is conceivable that they would have made this proposal much earlier. Their wish seems to come more from love for the people of Israel, whom they live in the midst of and which is now suffering from the drought because of what was done to them. They asked for the judgment on Saul’s house, which was to be carried out on seven men from his house. These seven men they will then “hang ... before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD”. “Hang before the LORD” means that they want to comply with His righteousness and do not act out of revenge.

The designation of the persons the Gibeonites leave to David. David chooses seven descendants, leaving Mephibosheth out of consideration. He does so because of Jonathan, whom he has sworn with an oath not to withhold his mercy from his house (1Sam 20:15-16). He gives them two sons and five grandsons of Saul. The two sons of Saul were begotten by him to Rizpah, his concubine (2Sam 3:7). The five grandsons of Saul are the children of Saul’s daughter Merab (cf. 1Sam 18:19).

The two sons and the five grandsons of Saul are hanged “in Gibeah of Saul” to show that they are killed for his sin. They are, as it were, hanged in front of their own door to reconcile the guilt of the house of Saul. Whether these men personally participated in Saul’s crime is not mentioned. An important lesson for us in this history is that things that are done wrong in the past by others have consequences for the people of God now. This means that we can do things of which the people of God later will reap the bitter fruits.

After Saul’s descendants are killed, we are told what mother Rizpah does. Rizpah is a mother who misses her children very much. Her children couldn’t help being sons of Saul. They may also have made themselves guilty on the blood of the Gibeonites. For the LORD also speaks in verse 1 of the blood guilt of the house of Saul. But that does not change the love she as a mother has for her sons. We have seen in the previous chapters

something of David's love for a wicked son. If we could have some understanding for that, then certainly for Rizpah as mother of these two sons.

She keeps watch for six months on the bodies she has not buried. She protects the bodies against birds and wild animals. She couldn't do more, she didn't want to do less. She gave birth and raised these boys. Now that they have died, she does not want to leave them. We don't know why she did that.

Nor do we know what she thought, all those six months that she took care of the corpses. Was she rebellious for the death of her sons because of what Saul did? Was she jealous that Mephibosheth was spared? He was also from Saul's house, wasn't he? All kinds of questions can have occupied her. Her sons were sacrificed to appease the wrath of heaven. Their lives had ended, but not her love for them. She could not take them in her lap, but she could prevent that what was precious to her was taken away by the birds and wild animals. With this she showed a love that is stronger than death.

If it starts raining, that is the sign that the curse has been ended. When water drips from the sky on the hanged, when God sends rain to moisten the earth, the bones are taken away to be buried. This happens as a result of her special act of love for those who have been killed. Of her deed is namely reported to David.

When David hears of it, he is reminded of the bones of Saul and Jonathan. He decides to pick them up from the place where the men of Jabez in Gilead had buried them (1Sam 31:11-13). It is a late tribute, but it is never too late to put things right. He buries the bones of the hanged together with the bones of Saul and Jonathan.

When justice is done on earth, the vengeance of heaven ends and blessing comes over the land instead of wrath. The rain is proof that God has let Himself be entreated, while the rain is the result of fulfilling the righteousness of God.

2Sam 21:15-22 | Victory over the Philistines

15 Now when the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David went down and his servants with him; and as they fought against the Philistines, David

became weary. 16 Then Ishbi-benob, who was among the descendants of the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred [shekels] of bronze in weight, was girded with a new [sword], and he intended to kill David. 17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah helped him, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You shall not go out again with us to battle, so that you do not extinguish the lamp of Israel." 18 Now it came about after this that there was war again with the Philistines at Gob; then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was among the descendants of the giant. 19 There was war with the Philistines again at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. 20 There was war at Gath again, where there was a man of [great] stature who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also had been born to the giant. 21 When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down. 22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

At the end of David's reign, when he is old, old enemies from the beginning, the Philistines, appear again. For us, it means that our old enemy, the flesh, remains active, no matter how old we are. In picture we can also see how attacks are made on the ancient gospel and on Him Who is the Center of it. We may put ourselves at the disposal of the Lord Jesus to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

David and his men defeat the four giants of the Philistines. David started his fame with the victory over a giant, and here he concludes that victory with the victory over four giants. Their impressive statures and armor do not frighten the men of David. They defeat them in the power of the LORD, as David defeated Goliath.

A giant symbolizes pride, self-esteem, arrogance and oppressive power. We are not dealing with literal giants of flesh and blood, but with the spiritual powers in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12). We see this represented in the name of the first giant. His name is "Ishbi-benob", which means "his residence is in the high". This is reminiscent of "destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God" (2Cor 10:5a). To break down these heights – in picture: kill that giant – we do not

fight with carnal weapons, but we must use the weapons that are “divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” (2Cor 10:3-4). The result is that “[we are] taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2Cor 10:5b).

David is old here and his strength has been diminished by everything he has experienced. His men come to his aid when he is in danger of being killed. This shows their love for David. We may have the same love for each other and come to each other’s aid when someone is in danger of being overrun by the enemy, while he himself has no strength to resist.

That David, for most of his later life, is not a picture of the Lord Jesus, we also see here. Here we read of an exhausted David. This is a great opportunity for the enemy to knock him down. Fortunately, God makes sure that Abishai is nearby. Abishai comes to his aid and kills the Philistine. This threat of death resulting from David’s diminished strength leads his men to implore him to stop going to fight together with them.

The reason they give is that he provides light in Israel. He is their hope. They don’t say he’s too old. We sometimes do, if someone is burdensome. Here it is to protect. Elderly people must learn to leave or surrender things to young people. Ageing brings with it limitations and of these they must be aware of or made aware of. It’s not always easy to be old. Being old can sometimes be a burden for others.

The giants are incorrigible optimists. The fact that Goliath was defeated by David does not matter to them. They think they can defeat David. We see in them the great folly to glory in our own strength. They do not know the secret of the power of David and his men. David’s men are not bigger or stronger than other people, but with the help of God, they defeat one giant after another. God prefers the weak things to shame the strong things (1Cor 1:27b).

2 Samuel 22

2Sam 22:1 | The Song of David

1 And David spoke the words of this song to the LORD in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

When the time to fight is over because one is too old, it is time to sing. When everything around us is gone, God can still be praised. The reason is the deliverance from the power of the enemy through the redemption of the LORD. If we want to serve the Lord in faithfulness, we should not be surprised if we have enemies (Jn 15:18-19). We will experience His help and salvation all the more in it, giving us all the more reason to praise Him. We should not wait until we are with the Lord. David did it “in the day that the LORD delivered him”, so immediately after his deliverance. Thus we should do it immediately after we have experienced His help.

This song consists of almost the same words as Psalm 18. In this song we hear from David Who the LORD is for him and what He has done for him. It is a testimony that each of us will be able to give in our own way from the experiences we have had with the Lord. The fact that this song is also included as a psalm in the book of Psalms means that David’s experiences are also recognized and shared by others. These words also express the feelings of those who have been in similar circumstances and have been saved from distress and who want to praise the LORD for it.

Something similar we have in a spiritual song of the believer. A believer can poet a song in which he expresses his feelings for the Lord. He can even set it to music or have it set to music, which sometimes makes the feelings even more penetrating. What emerges in that song is recognized by others. It gives words to the feelings that someone has at that moment and therefore often works enlightenment and joy. This makes something that was first only a personal expression of a faith experience, useful for others to express themselves toward God.

There are four ways we can look at this song:

1. In this psalm we see David's personal experiences. In this way we have here a historical description. It's about the history of David.

2. We see that David's history in this psalm is a model for that of Israel. We can think of the redemption from Egypt. What Israel has experienced, David experiences too.

3. We see that everything in this psalm has been fulfilled in the life of the Lord Jesus, the life of the true David. This psalm is therefore an expression of Christ's feelings. The Spirit of Christ is active in David when he writes this psalm.

4. This psalm expresses the feelings of the remnant of Israel in the future. With them the Lord Jesus connects Himself in the most intimate way.

David commemorates all that God has been to him, all that he has found in Him in his needs and dangers. He looks back on the power of God which has worked for him and what the blessed result of that power is. All this is expressed in this song, an expression of feelings that are fully present in Christ.

This song, which can be divided into seven parts, begins and ends with praise. It is the story of sadness and suffering that ends in joy and triumph. Because the song reflects past experiences, it can also begin with a praise to the LORD.

2Sam 22:2-4 | First Part

2 He said,

"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

3 *My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,*

My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge;

My savior, You save me from violence.

4 *"I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,*

And I am saved from my enemies.

All the deliverances from the grip of all kinds of enemies and from the hand of Saul in particular bring up in David a hymn of praise, a psalm. He begins by mentioning the LORD with a number of names in verses 2-3. All acts of God in the past and promises for the future are based on Who He

is. All these names fit in a special way in the context of this song in which it is about fleeing, struggle and victory.

At the same time David makes the LORD a very personal experience through the word “my”. Thus Paul could also speak of God as “my God” (Phil 4:19). The Lord Jesus also spoke of “My Father” and “My God” (Jn 20:17). David praises that Name because of salvation.

2Sam 22:5-7 | Second Part

*5 “For the waves of death encompassed me;
The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me;
6 The cords of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
7 “In my distress I called upon the LORD,
Yes, I cried to my God;
And from His temple He heard my voice,
And my cry for help [came] into His ears.*

This part describes the feelings of David – and also of the faithful remnant of Israel during the great tribulation – when the enemy was out to kill him. We also see it with the Lord Jesus on the cross. He brings this suffering into the memory of His people when He comes to them. Of the Lord Jesus we read that He “in the days of His flesh, ... offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death” (Heb 5:7).

David describes his need and his call for help to “my God”. His distress was so great that he despaired of life, for death was imminent. The enormous powers he saw in front of him went beyond human control. All he could do was call to God, for he had a God to Whom he could call. God heard his voice in His palace, the house of His reign. God was not too busy with other things, but had His ears open for the cry of distress of His chosen king.

2Sam 22:8-20 | Third Part

*8 “Then the earth shook and quaked,
The foundations of heaven were trembling*

And were shaken, because He was angry.

9 *"Smoke went up out of His nostrils,
Fire from His mouth devoured;
Coals were kindled by it.*

10 *"He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With thick darkness under His feet.*

11 *"And He rode on a cherub and flew;
And He appeared on the wings of the wind.*

12 *"And He made darkness canopies around Him,
A mass of waters, thick clouds of the sky.*

13 *"From the brightness before Him
Coals of fire were kindled.*

14 *"The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice.*

15 *"And He sent out arrows, and scattered them,
Lightning, and routed them.*

16 *"Then the channels of the sea appeared,
The foundations of the world were laid bare
By the rebuke of the LORD,
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.*

17 *"He sent from on high, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.*

18 *"He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me, for they were too strong for me.*

19 *"They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.*

20 *"He also brought me forth into a broad place;
He rescued me, because He delighted in me.*

God listens to the call for help in need made in verses 5-7. In verses 8-16 David tells how the LORD has answered in His mighty appearance to deliver him and his people. He describes what became visible of God when He began to act in his favor. It did not make David feel anxious, but filled him with awe. This mighty God stood up for him! Smoke and fire, wind and water, thunder and lightning, God used all these natural phenomena for his deliverance.

From verse 16 we see various salvations: of Israel from Egypt, of David from the hands of Saul and of the Lord Jesus from death in the resurrection. The deliverance by the LORD is expressed by several verbs: “sent from on high”, “took me”, “drew me”, “delivered me”, “rescued me” (verses 17-20). In these verses David experiences the salvation in an almost tangible way.

2Sam 22:21-27 | Fourth Part

21 *“The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.*
22 *“For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not acted wickedly against my God.*
23 *“For all His ordinances [were] before me,
And [as for] His statutes, I did not depart from them.*
24 *“I was also blameless toward Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.*
25 *“Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to my cleanness before His eyes.*
26 *“With the kind You show Yourself kind,
With the blameless You show Yourself blameless;
27 With the pure You show Yourself pure,
And with the perverted You show Yourself astute.*

This section is about the perfection of the Lord Jesus. David was not perfect. Here David does not speak, but here the prophet speaks of Him Who is truly and only perfect. What David is in perfection, he owes to the LORD; what the Lord Jesus is in perfection, He is personally. By virtue of that, He is King.

The end of verse 20 is the introduction to verses 21-25 where David says why God had a pleasure in him and stood up for him. As said, this description in its fullness is only true of the Lord Jesus. Yet this also applies to the believer who has been reconciled, and whose sins have been removed. David does not argue here on the basis of a life without failure. He knows his sins too well. However, he knows, to quote the New Testament, that he is made pleasant in the Beloved (Eph 1:6). If God also acts for his benefit, He does so in accordance with His perfect righteousness. This righteousness comes to the fore in verses 26-27.

2Sam 22:28-37 | Fifth Part

28 *"And You save an afflicted people;
But Your eyes are on the haughty [whom] You abase.*
29 *"For You are my lamp, O LORD;
And the LORD illumines my darkness.*
30 *"For by You I can run upon a troop;
By my God I can leap over a wall.*
31 *"As for God, His way is blameless;
The word of the LORD is tested;
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.*
32 *"For who is God, besides the LORD?
And who is a rock, besides our God?*
33 *"God is my strong fortress;
And He sets the blameless in His way.*
34 *"He makes my feet like hinds' [feet],
And sets me on my high places.*
35 *"He trains my hands for battle,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*
36 *"You have also given me the shield of Your salvation,
And Your help makes me great.*
37 *"You enlarge my steps under me,
And my feet have not slipped.*

The fifth to seventh parts tell about the glorious consequences of the work of the Lord Jesus. In the previous part He is delivered, in the coming part He is the Deliverer.

After David has told Who God is and how He has acted in the rescues, he sings in verses 28-37 about Who God is for him. He does so in the knowledge of what he says in verse 31. Declaring God's way perfect is the secret of rest in Him. By this we know that God is not getting out of control.

It should be remembered that God's way always runs parallel to His Word. His Word is pure. We can rely on it. The way God takes with one of His own or with His people as a whole is always in accordance with His Word. When we experience surprises in the way we are going, it is often because we don't know God's Word, in which He tells us how He

sees things. When we surrender ourselves to God in the way He is going with us as the best way and we trust His Word, we hide with Him and He proves Himself as a shield. In short: way, Word, shield and shelter, this is what God offers us.

We also hear in these verses a wonderful testimony of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant of Israel. This remnant receives strength to hold out to and overcome all enmity in the great tribulation.

2Sam 22:38-49 | Sixth Part

38 *"I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,
And I did not turn back until they were consumed.*
39 *"And I have devoured them and shattered them, so that they did not rise;
And they fell under my feet.*
40 *"For You have girded me with strength for battle;
You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.*
41 *"You have also made my enemies turn [their] backs to me,
And I destroyed those who hated me.*
42 *"They looked, but there was none to save;
[Even] to the LORD, but He did not answer them.*
43 *"Then I pulverized them as the dust of the earth;
I crushed [and] stamped them as the mire of the streets.*
44 *"You have also delivered me from the contentions of my people;
You have kept me as head of the nations;
A people whom I have not known serve me.*
45 *"Foreigners pretend obedience to me;
As soon as they hear, they obey me.*
46 *"Foreigners lose heart,
And come trembling out of their fortresses.*
47 *"The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock;
And exalted be God, the rock of my salvation,*
48 *The God who executes vengeance for me,
And brings down peoples under me,*
49 *Who also brings me out from my enemies;
You even lift me above those who rise up against me;
You rescue me from the violent man.*

In this sixth part David sings of the consequences of deliverance and the glorious reign of the kingdom of peace. In verses 38-46 we see that God did not defeat the enemies Himself, but He gave David the strength to do so. So it is ultimately God Who did it. Therefore David gives Him all honor in verses 47-49. In “the violent man” (verse 49) we can see both the antichrist and the king of the north (Dan 11:29-45).

2Sam 22:50-51 | Seventh Part

*50 “Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the nations,
And I will sing praises to Your name.*

*51 “[He] is a tower of deliverance to His king,
And shows lovingkindness to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forever.”*

Because of the deliverance he sang in the previous part, David praises the LORD in verse 50. Not only does he do this in an expression toward Him, but he makes His Name great among the nations. David is aware that everything is the result of God’s mercy and faithfulness to His Anointed. This mercy will never fail, because the Anointed, the Lord Jesus, is the Christ, the Man of God’s pleasure. In Him all the promises of God are yes and amen (2Cor 1:20).

Because of “His anointed” God will also show “lovingkindness ... to David and his descendants forever”. What a great prospect. The faithfulness of God to His Anointed is also for us the basis that God will act for our benefit. Nothing in ourselves, everything in Him.

2 Samuel 23

Introduction

In this chapter David speaks as a prophet *about* Christ. This is the difference with 2 Samuel 22, because there he speaks as king and in the picture we hear the Lord Jesus *Himself* speak.

We have two topics in this chapter. First we listen to the farewell words of king David (verses 1-7). Then follows a list of David's heroes and their deeds, deeds that gave them an honorable position in his kingdom (verses 8-39).

2Sam 23:1-7 | The Last Words of David

1 *Now these are the last words of David.
David the son of Jesse declares,
The man who was raised on high declares,
The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Israel,*
2 *"The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,
And His word was on my tongue.*
3 *"The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spoke to me,
'He who rules over men righteously,
Who rules in the fear of God,*
4 *Is as the light of the morning [when] the sun rises,
A morning without clouds,
[When] the tender grass [springs] out of the earth,
Through sunshine after rain.'*
5 *"Truly is not my house so with God?
For He has made an everlasting covenant with me,
Ordered in all things, and secured;
For all my salvation and all [my] desire,
Will He not indeed make [it] grow?*

6 *"But the worthless, every one of them will be thrust away like thorns,
Because they cannot be taken in hand;
7 But the man who touches them
Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear,
And they will be completely burned with fire in [their] place."*

Here we have the last words of David as a poet, as a singer. He talks about the future as someone who is particularly privileged. Even more so, he speaks of a Ruler Who differs so much from what he has been as ruler.

The last words of someone always have a special value for the descendants and friends. Last words are permanent words. They are often words that arise from a rich experience of the past, while that past is seen in the light of the future, one's final destination (verse 1a).

David first speaks about himself as a *person* in verse 1b. He begins by naming his name, "David," which means "beloved". He knows himself the object of God's love; he is the man after God's heart. At the same time he calls himself "the son of Jesse". By doing so, he indicates that he is aware of his origins. He knows its humility, and doesn't forget that.

He is also aware of the high *position* he has been given and as such he speaks (verse 1c). With this he refers to the fact that he was taken by the LORD from behind the sheep of his father to become the shepherd of His people. Grace has brought him to that high place.

He knows that he is "the anointed" (verse 1d). This indicates that he cannot act in his own power in the position he has received, but that this can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit, to which the anointing reminds (1Jn 2:20,27). At the same time, here again he points to his own weakness by attributing the anointing to "the God of Jacob", that is the God Who has always supported and helped the weak Jacob.

In the last line of verse 1 he places himself in connection with the whole people which he calls "Israel", that is the people as God sees them according to His purpose. God sees His people as a people of praise. David took care of the songs of praise, that is to say, that the LORD brought him into so many circumstances that these psalms originated in his heart.

David knows himself as the instrument of the Holy Spirit through Whom he speaks God's words (verse 2). This verse is one of the most beautiful verses in the Old Testament that teaches us something about inspiration. It is a speaking of the Spirit through someone. "His word was on my tongue" does not mean that David displays a general thought, but that the words are inspired by the Spirit. These are the words in which thoughts are expressed. It emphasizes the word-for-word inspiration of the Word of God.

In verse 3 we see that God Himself speaks. David can say: "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me" (verse 2) because, as it says in verse 3, the God of Israel first "spoke to" him. We can only speak words of God *through* the Spirit when those words have come *to* us first, when we have first absorbed them into our hearts. The words God speaks have His Messiah as their subject. With God it is always about His Son. In this verse the Messiah is clearly distinguished from God. The Messiah is the Man Who reigns in the fear of God. He rules for God, although He Himself is God.

God speaks as "the God of Israel", the God of His people. He also speaks as "the rock of Israel", the Unshakable. The unshakable God puts Someone in the foreground Who will be a righteous Ruler of men. This Ruler will not rule according to human standards, but "in the fear of God", that is, all His actions will be governed by respect for God. "The fear of God" will be His personal feature.

The Ruler of verse 3 is not his son Solomon. Under the reign of Solomon there is partial fulfillment, but the full fulfillment only occurs at the reign of the Lord Jesus. Then Christ rises as "the light of the morning" (verse 4). He is "the sun of righteousness" Who rises (Mal 4:2). That is the beginning of the realm of peace. With His government will come the "times of refreshing" and the "period of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19-21).

Then the "morning without clouds" begins. The dark clouds of the great tribulation, the period in which it was night for the faithful remnant, have disappeared forever. Everything will be light and characterized by young and fresh life under the mighty working of the Spirit.

Salvation and joy come *from* the house of David as the fulfillment of what God has promised. It is the ultimate salvation for the whole people. David realizes that he does not speak about himself and his own house (verse

5). In this second book of Samuel, the failure of David has all too clearly come to the fore. At the same time it is wonderful to see David clinging to the eternal covenant of God. As God has proposed, so it will happen. The time has not yet come, but salvation and joy will come. David expresses his unshakeable confidence that he will personally, “my”, participate in it. Under the reign of the Messiah the wicked will be judged (verses 6-7). For all those who have not bowed before God, there is no place in the counsels of God about which David has spoken in the preceding verses.

2Sam 23:8-12 | The First Three Heroes

8 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains, he was [called] Adino the Eznite, because of eight hundred slain [by him] at one time; 9 and after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there to battle and the men of Israel had withdrawn. 10 He arose and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword, and the LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to strip [the slain]. 11 Now after him was Shammah the son of Agee a Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered into a troop where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people fled from the Philistines. 12 But he took his stand in the midst of the plot, defended it and struck the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.

After the last words of David, which indicate how God has acted with him and how God will continue to act, our attention is now turned to the heroes of David. They have served him in the acquisition and confirmation of the kingship. They stood firm for the people and the land he ruled. David was God’s chosen king, the people were God’s chosen people, the land was God’s chosen land.

The heroes of David are mentioned in direct connection with the above. There are thirty-seven (verse 39). Three of them are heads (verses 8-17), two others are just below them (verses 18-23). Of the remaining thirty-two, only the names are mentioned (verses 24-39).

The heroes have done all kinds of deeds. Some of these deeds took place a long time ago. However, they have not been forgotten. Thus God forgets nothing of what His own have done for His Son. He will reward everything during the reign of the Messiah. Before the judgment seat all deeds shall be recompensed, both good and bad (2Cor 5:10). Here it is about the good ones.

Under David and also under Solomon these heroes get a high place. When David was still the rejected one, they stood by him. Thus we are now on the side of the rejected Christ (cf. Lk 22:28).

The three greatest heroes in verses 8-12 (Josheb-basshebeth, Eleazar and Shammah) we do not know from history. We only hear from them here. Yet they are called the greatest heroes. It will be the same before the judgment seat. The greatest heroes will be those whom we may not have known at all, who worked unobtrusively for the Lord Jesus, but with great results.

Next comes a group of thirty heroes. [The number 'thirty' should probably be seen as the designation of a group, because it concerns more than thirty heroes.] Of the thirty, two more heroes are distinguished whose deeds are mentioned.

The first hero, Josheb-basshebeth, killed eight hundred men on one occasion. What kind of enemies they were, is not mentioned. The next two are heroes who caused a slaughter among the Philistines and by whom God gave a great victory. The result is that the people can take from the Philistines what they had robbed and that a piece of land with its harvest is preserved for the people.

The Philistines are a picture of the nominal Christians. They are still today the archenemies of God's people who are in the land. Even today God can still give great victories over all human elements in the service to God – of which the Philistines are a picture – through people who are faithful to the Lord Jesus, the true David. Personal faithfulness in this has a blessed effect on the whole people.

It is a great danger that people take away the food of God's Word from us. Then it's great if someone defends the food. The inheritance and the food are preserved for God's people.

2Sam 23:13-17 | Water for David

13 Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim. 14 David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. 15 David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" 16 So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took [it] and brought [it] to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD; 17 and he said, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. [Shall I drink] the blood of the men who went in [jeopardy] of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

A special deed of heroism is mentioned in this history. The previous deeds were done with the people in mind. This heroic deed is all about fulfilling a wish of David. He was thirsty. His longing for water, and especially from the well of Bethlehem, he proclaimed as a kind of sigh, without addressing anyone in particular. His thirst has reminded him of the well of Bethlehem. Three heroes were so close to him that they heard his sigh. When we are close to the Lord Jesus, it will not be necessary for Him to cry out to us, but we will hear the gentle whisper of His voice.

When they come with the water to David, he pours it out. This is not an insult but a high appreciation. They made it at the risk of their lives. This water could not be drinking water to David. He gave it a higher purpose by making it a drink offering to the LORD and pouring it out to Him.

2Sam 23:18-19 | Abishai

18 Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the thirty. And he swung his spear against three hundred and killed [them], and had a name as well as the three. 19 He was most honored of the thirty, therefore he became their commander; however, he did not attain to the three.

After the three most important heroes, another group of three is called heroes. Of these three, two are mentioned by name. The first is Abishai, who is called "most honored of the thirty". He is mentioned several times

in the history of David. However, the heroic deed mentioned here has not been mentioned before. He turns out to have once killed with his spear three hundred enemies.

2Sam 23:20-23 | Benaiah

20 Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds, killed the two [sons of] Ariel of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day. 21 He killed an Egyptian, an impressive man. Now the Egyptian [had] a spear in his hand, but he went down to him with a club and snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. 22 These [things] Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and had a name as well as the three mighty men. 23 He was honored among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three. And David appointed him over his guard.

The three deeds Benaiah has performed are:

1. killing the two sons of Ariel of Moab,
2. killing a lion in a pit at a time when there was snow; and
3. killing an Egyptian with his own spear.

Benaiah was a very determined man. Nor is it the case that after one victory he thought it was all right. Benaiah is a man with great courage and perseverance.

From his achievements we can learn important spiritual lessons. We must remember, however, that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly [places]” (Eph 6:12). The three enemies that Benaiah defeats and kills are a picture of three spiritual enemy powers that we face in our lives. We will see that Moab is a picture of the flesh in the believer, that the lion here is a picture of satan and that the Egyptian is a picture of the world.

The first enemy consists of two sons of Ariel, in a different translation: two heroes, from Moab. Moab means ‘from the father’. Who is the father of Moab? That is Lot (Gen 19:36-37). From what the Bible says about Lot, we see what kind of man Lot was. He was a man who loved the world. He

looked at the outward appearance. He was guided by the lusts of the flesh (Gen 13:10-11), that is by the old nature that every believer still has in him. In Moab we see a picture of the flesh and its deeds (Gal 5:19-21).

In the history of Moab, two characteristics are visible that stem from the lust of the flesh. One characteristic is laziness, the other is pride (Jer 48:11; Isa 16:6). We can give each of these two sons of Moab a name. The name of one son is Laziness and the name of the other son is Pride. These two 'heroes' are also a danger to our lives as Christians. They also want to exert their influence in our lives. Perhaps one 'son' is a greater danger than another. Be that as it may, we have to deal with them if we want to live dedicated to the Lord.

After Benaiah has defeated the two men from Moab, he doesn't take it easy to enjoy his victory. He keeps an attentive eye on whether new danger is threatening somewhere. As soon as it presents itself, he acts with courage and determination.

What is the case? A lion has fallen into a pit. A special feature is mentioned that it is a snowy day. Benaiah could have thought: 'That lion is well there, it is no longer a threat to anyone; let him be, and he will die by himself.' But Benaiah is not like that. We can imagine that he thought: 'That lion may have slipped through the snow and ended up in the pit. What happened to the lion can also happen to a human being. For example, children love to play in the snow. Imagine that one of those children also slips and accidentally ends up in that pit. You can't stand the thought. Benaiah doesn't think about it, he goes down into the pit and kills the lion. He does not think about himself, but about the risk for others.

Benaiah acts according to the meaning of his name. His name means 'built by the LORD'. In his dealings with the LORD, the LORD has formed him into a man of character. He does not have the strength to fight the lion in himself. But he says, as it were: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). This is not the language of the boaster but the language of faith in the Almighty. To Him, the lion is a little one. Did not his king David also speak this language when he said, "For by You I can run upon a troop; and by my God I can leap over a wall" (Psa 18:29)?

The lion is here a picture of the devil who is out to devour (1Pet 5:8). In the most impossible places, where we think he can't do much, he tries to make victims. He also has a preference for children. We can learn from Benaiah, even though we may not have any children and we are not even married yet. It is a question of being aware of the dangers to which our children, those of ourselves and those of our brothers and sisters, are exposed. With what do children come into contact at school, on the street? It is cold in the world. There is a thick layer of snow. The snow makes the world attractive and makes the cold forget.

Unfortunately, it is no exception that the cold meets the children when they come home. No one is waiting for them to drink anything with them, no one is asking how they have been, no one to spontaneously tell their story to. Yes, there is a 'cuddle corner'. The PC is turned on or the smart-phone is taken to go 'on the net' and the chat can start. With whom? There are always 'nice' people, to whom they can tell their story, who do have attention. The snow looks so attractive, the cold is forgotten, they are getting closer and closer to the pit If you recognize this, act as Benaiah.

We don't read about spectators at his performance. Nor does it say that he took the dead lion out of the pit to show it triumphantly as a trophy to others. Maybe he never told others anything about it. But God has noticed it and has it recorded in His Word so that we can learn from it.

This fight with the lion in the pit, where no one was present or watched except the LORD, is reminiscent of fighting in the prayers, as we read of Epaphras: "Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col 4:12). Such a battle is fought hidden in the inner room (cf. Mt 6:6). Inconspicuous for people, but perceived by God we may fight for others in the prayers.

For those who may feel useless, there is an enormous opportunity here to serve fellow believers in a great way. He or she can fight in the prayers for the families of the believers, especially for their children. More than ever, it is necessary to pray for the families. This is what the devil's attacks concentrate on. This call to prayer does not only apply to older believers. It is

to be hoped that young people will also understand the need for it. Take more time to pray for the spiritual salvation of the children of the believers and for all the children we have in our circle of acquaintances. Thus we can become a hero of the true David.

In the victory Benaiah achieved in secret, he resembles David. David also defeated the lion in secret, and also the bear (1Sam 17:34-35).

Even after his second victory Benaiah isn't keen on taking it easy. The enemy is also not the enemy to give up the battle after a defeat. He appears each time in a different form. This time Benaiah has to deal with an Egyptian. Just like the previous enemies, this one is also one of stature. A gigantic stature of no less than two and a half meters looms up in front of him (1Chr 11:23). Such an appearance will have impressed many people in Israel, but not Benaiah.

Egypt is a picture of the world. We see that in the book of Exodus. It is the land that has kept the people of God in slavery for a long time. When God wanted to deliver His people from it, the king of Egypt offered fierce resistance. Even when the people of God had left, Pharaoh wanted to take them back and bring them back under his rule. This is an illustration of what happens when someone converts. Then he is saved by God from the present evil world (Gal 1:4).

But let's not think that this will rescue us from this enemy forever. Certainly, he has no authority over us anymore. Yet he will try again and again to gain possession of a certain area of our lives. The danger remains that certain patterns of our old life will reappear with us. Surely it had its attractive sides, isn't it? Not everything was wrong, was it? There are a lot of things we can enjoy, we don't have to be foreign to the world, do we?

These are not in themselves reprehensible reasonings. But beware: are we certain that such reasoning is not intended to undo our break with the world and are we sure that it will not diminish our commitment to the Lord Jesus? In our old life we used to be absorbed in music or sports or we could only think of beautiful clothes or beautiful cars. With that we have broken. Is it therefore wrong to listen to music, do sports, look good or use a car? No, but let's remember that what we used to live in and for,

can become the pattern of our lives again if we don't act like Benaiah with the Egyptian.

How does Benaiah gain the victory? First of all, he goes there with a club or, better, a staff (Darby Translation). Someone is using a staff when he is on his way. The staff says something about being a pilgrim, a stranger on earth, someone on his way to his destination. For those who know Christ as Redeemer and Lord, the destiny is not this world. After all, he has been delivered from that. Our destination is heaven, to which we are on our way. If we are well aware of that, we have a weapon against the enemy. If the world wants to entice us to take part in its entertainment and join its efforts, let's keep the staff up. By this we say: I do not belong to you, I belong to heaven.

With his staff in his hand Benaiah snatches the spear from the hand of the Egyptian. This speaks of a strong performance. He doesn't ask the Egyptian to be so kind as to hand over his spear, but he takes it from his hands by force. Then he gives the Egyptian with his own weapon the death blow. Here too he follows the example of his king, David. David killed the giant Goliath with by using his own weapon (1Sam 17:51). This points in a wonderful way to the Lord Jesus, who defeated the devil with his own weapon, death (Heb 2:14).

Colossians 3 tells us how to apply this killing of the Egyptian. We are called there to consider our members who are on earth as dead. One of the members mentioned there is "greed, which amounts to idolatry" (Col 3:5). Thus is written in the following verse: "And in them you also once walked, when you were living in them" (Col 3:7). That means it's about things we used to live in. The challenge now is to radically deal with this as soon as we notice that something from the past is going to take hold of us again, when we feel feelings that we used to cherish in us again. We must not give them the chance to take possession of us again.

This is only possible by remembering what the Lord Jesus did for us on the cross to deliver us from it. There He achieved the great victory. In that victory we may stand. We may say that we are more than victors through Him Who loved us (Rom 8:31-39). This is the death blow to the Egyptian.

2Sam 23:24-39 | Other Heroes

24 Asahel the brother of Joab was among the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, 25 Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite, 26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkeiah the Tekoite, 27 Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, 28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, 29 Heleb the son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeath of the sons of Benjamin, 30 Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, 31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, 32 Eliahba the Shaalbomite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, 33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Ararite, 34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, 35 Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, 36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, 37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armor bearers of Joab the son of Zeruiah, 38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 39 Uriah the Hittite; thirty-seven in all.

Of the rest of the heroes we only hear the name and the place where they came from. Some of these names we have also come across in the history of David, such as Asahel (verse 24) and Uriah (verse 39). Not one is forgotten. They are all known to God and their deeds are also recorded. In the same way, He forgets nothing that has been done out of love for the Lord Jesus.

The name of Uriah cannot be mentioned without recalling David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah he arranged. David got rid of him to hide his sin, because he felt compelled to do so by Uriah's faithfulness. Here God commemorates the faithfulness of this faithful warrior to David. Uriah gets his reward in the resurrection.

Remarkable is that in the row of David's heroes the name of Joab is missing. His name is rightly missing, because he fought his own battle and not David's, although his battle often turned out to be in David's favor.

Although Joab is not mentioned among the heroes, his name is mentioned a few times. There are two references to "the brother of Joab" (verses 18,24) and one to "the armor bearer of Joab" (verse 37). The fact that Joab fought his own battle did not affect his brothers nor his armor bearer. They fought for David. Conversely, the fact that his brothers and armor bearer fought for David unfortunately had no influence on Joab.

2 Samuel 24

Introduction

The book ends seriously, but also beautifully. It ends first with a serious sin, but then follows an altar and a sacrifice and a mountain. Through this history God makes clear where the temple will be, but that is more the side that is highlighted in the first and second book of Chronicles.

2Sam 24:1-9 | The Registration of the People

1 Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." 2 The king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, "Go about now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and register the people, that I may know the number of the people." 3 But Joab said to the king, "Now 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; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?" 4 Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to register the people of Israel. 5 They crossed the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the right side of the city that is in the middle of the valley of Gad and toward Jazer. 6 Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi, and they came to Dan-jaan and around to Sidon, 7 and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and of the Canaanites, and they went out to the south of Judah, [to] Beersheba. 8 So when they had gone about through the whole land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9 And Joab gave the number of the registration of the people to the king; and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

Israel has done something that raised the anger of the LORD (verse 1). What it is, is not mentioned. It is about the LORD's reaction to this. He holds David as the leader of His people responsible for this. Therefore

He incites David against the people. From the first book of Chronicles we know that He uses satan for this (1Chr 21:1). The first and second book of Chronicles describe the history of God's people as God loves to remember it. God wants to indicate the place where He wants to be served according to His counsel, and satan wants to prevent this. We see there that God does reach His goal not *despite*, but *through* the sin of David. This is also the case with the Fall, which is used by God for the execution of His counsels. We cannot understand this, but it is so.

Here it is about the side of man. Satan cannot do anything without the permission or will of God. The temple is not mentioned here. It is more about God's dealings with David. It is about his responsibility. David's heart is filled with the desire to know how great his army is. God is not the origin of sin, but lust in the heart of man (Jam 1:13-14). Sin is already in David's heart and that is what God sees. God brings that sin to light, that David may judge it.

With his desire to know the power of his army, he takes the place of God. What he actually says with his command to register them is that he regards the land of God as his own land and sees his army as his own means of keeping it in possession. He has lost his dependence on God. He commits in principle the sin of the people when they said they wanted a king, just like the people around them (1Sam 8:19-20). Now the king wants to know the strength of his army, just like the kings of the nations around him.

Why is it wrong to number the people? Surely God has done so several times (Num 1:2-3; 26:1-4)? We must think that with David it is about knowing the power of his army (verse 9). He wants to know how strong he is and that depends on the number of soldiers he has. That is his mistake. He forgets that he depends on God's power. It is serious if we start thinking in numbers to measure our strength. We can think for example of the number of those we meet with and the number of gifts. In the history of Gideon we see how God thinks about numbers (Jdg 7:2). God always wants to prevent the flesh from praising itself (cf. 1Cor 1:27-29).

With Nebuchadnezzar we see something similar when he pats himself on the back about "the Babylon the great", of which he says: "Which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory

of my majesty" (Dan 4:28-33). He is judged for this. With Herod we see the same thing. He accepts the honor to which only God is entitled and is killed for it (Acts 12:21-23). God's government is equal for everyone. He can never give His honor to another (Isa 42:8; 48:11). If the Lord wants to use us for the benefit of His people, let it be so that we are always aware that they are His people.

David commands Joab to register the people. Joab, however, objects to this. It seems that Joab here has a better assessment of this plan than David. He foresees that this command is not according to the will of the LORD. This is not because he wants to do the will of the LORD, but because he fears the anger of the LORD. He also speaks to David about "the LORD your God". The LORD is the God of David. He himself has no relationship with Him.

This time David does not allow himself to be told by Joab and perseveres his will. We can ask ourselves whether we will be warned if we intend to do something about which other people are expressing their objections. Do we want to reconsider our plan before the Lord, even if those who warn us may have their own interests in mind? Despite the objections of Joab and the other commanders of the army, the country is counted. After "nine months and twenty days" David gets the result. All this time God has been patient with the sin David commits. However, David's conscience does not awaken until after evil has been done.

When David gets the outcome, at least he knows on what he can trust. What is not described here, is that Joab did not get around completely (1Chr 21:6). He has not registered all the people. Remarkable is that in verse 9 the distinction between Israel and Judah comes to the fore. Here again we see the reference to the division of the empire that is already present subcutaneously.

2Sam 24:10-15 | The Punishment for Sin

10 Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So 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 acted very foolishly." 11 When David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 "Go and speak to David, 'Thus

the LORD says, "I am offering you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you."'" 13 So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider and see what answer I shall return to Him who sent me." 14 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man." 15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.

Immediately after David has the result of the registration, he gets remorse and confesses his sin. The troubling of his heart means that his conscience speaks. He says he "sinned greatly". It is a great sin for a leader of God's people to rely on something or someone other than God alone. When we start calculating whether we have all the means to function properly, both materially and spiritually, and therefore act independently of God, we are doing the same thing.

The confession of his sin does not mean that God no longer punishes his sin. His sin becomes a cause of great need for all the people. When David has confessed his sin before the LORD, the LORD sends His prophet to him. The prophet Gad does not need to go to him to reveal his sin to him. Nor does he have to tell him that his sin is forgiven. What Gad must do is tell David how God wants to act. He tells David three punishments from which he may choose.

The prophet says: "Consider and see what answer I shall return to Him who sent me." This is an important word. When making decisions, it is always important that we take time and give time to others to consider in God's presence what needs to be done, especially if a decision also has consequences for others.

The consideration shows that David's heart trusts God again. The choice he makes shows that he is the man of faith we know. He would rather fall into the hand of the LORD than into that of man. David knows what is in man. That is why he fears falling into his hands. This is not only true when fleeing from the enemy. It can also apply to famine, because it could also

come from enemy invasions. In return he knows the mercy of the LORD. That he chooses, without pronouncing himself in favor of any of the three punishments. With this he leaves the choice to the LORD.

The punishment must correspond to sin. David was proud of the great number of his people. Therefore, the judgment with which he is chastened for that sin must be of such a nature as to reduce their number. It is righteousness in God to take away from us what stimulates our pride. Many people die of the plague (verse 15).

After all, it was also the sin of the people by which the anger of the LORD burned and by which David came to his sin. The plague reduces both the number of inhabitants and the warpower he wanted to know. What is left of a people if God stretches out His hand against it? What remains of the great numbers of churches when God's hand is stretched out against them?

2Sam 24:16-17 | It Is Enough

16 When the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who destroyed the people, "It is enough! Now relax your hand!" And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking down the people, and said, "Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father's house."

When the angel is ready to strike Jerusalem, it is enough. The angel must let his hand relax. The LORD relents from of the calamity He had to let come. He has a reason to do so, and that is the intercession of David. He sees in David's heart what he also says: his love for "these sheep" of whom he says: "What have they done?" David asks if God will punish him and his father's house instead of the people (verse 17). He takes full responsibility for the guilt and is therefore a mediator for the people and resembles the Lord Jesus. Here he speaks not only as a sinner, but also as someone who excuses the people by saying that they are innocent sheep. He calls himself the only culprit.

The relenting of the LORD (cf. 1Sam 15:29,35; Gen 6:6) never has to do with regrets about a deed of Himself, but always with the deeds of man. Here with David we see that God in His holiness and righteousness must judge, while at the same time He also has salvation for a remnant. This salvation is based on the prayer and sacrifice of His Son.

2Sam 24:18-25 | The Altar

18 So Gad came to David that day and said to him, "Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." 19 David went up according to the word of Gad, just as the LORD had commanded. 20 Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants crossing over toward him; and Araunah went out and bowed his face to the ground before the king. 21 Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be held back from the people." 22 Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up what is good in his sight. Look, the oxen for the burnt offering, the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. 23 Everything, O king, Araunah gives to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you." 24 However, the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy [it] from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25 David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Thus the LORD was moved by prayer for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel.

On the threshing floor of Araunah judgment comes to a standstill. This threshing floor is located on Mount Moriah. It is the same place where Abraham offered Isaac (Gen 22:2). It is also the place where Solomon will build the temple (1Chr 22:1; 2Chr 3:1). The LORD commands David to go up and build an altar on that mountain. In this way up we see the way that is taken after humiliation under the powerful hand of God.

The angel stands by the threshing floor of a heathen. The altar that comes there stands in a place where there is nothing that belongs to the people. David understands that he must buy the threshing floor for the LORD. When Araunah wants to give him the threshing floor (cf. Gen 23:6,11), Da-

vid refuses. He wants to buy it for a price, “for”, as he says, “I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing”. This is an important rule: an offering must cost something, otherwise it is not an offering.

When the altar is built and the burnt offerings and the peace offerings are brought, the LORD “was moved by prayer for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel”. This is a wonderful reference to the only foundation on which God still allows Himself to be prayed and the plague that is raging among the people to stop. That foundation is the Lord Jesus in His work on the cross to God’s honor and glorification – what is reflected by the burnt offerings. This work on the cross is also the basis for our fellowship with God and with each other – which is reflected in the peace offerings.

At the end of this book David has an altar. The last thing that is mentioned of him here is that he offers the LORD offerings. Whoever comes to God on the basis of the offering of His Son will experience that God answers prayers because the work of His Son is so precious. It is beautiful to see that this book ends with the atoning sacrifice that by grace averts the anger of God over His people. This sacrifice will be the foundation of the place where God and Israel can meet and the people will worship.

In this chapter we have the sin of man, the judgment of God and also His relenting from it and therefore also salvation, but salvation through an offering. Here we have in short, the whole plan of salvation that Scripture shows us.

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