

Sunday, April 8, 2018—2 Samuel 16-18

For unknown reasons, David did not address the misbehavior of his sons. The abuse by Amnon led to murder by Absalom, and David did nothing to foster accountability or repentance. When Absalom had himself proclaimed as king and began to march toward the capital, David finally had to react, and he did so by leaving, again avoiding confrontation.

Absalom was not content with having himself occupy the palace and violating his father's concubines. He wanted his father dead, so he began to consider his options. God placed an adviser in his midst who would be able to inform David of the plans. David was no longer able to avoid Absalom, yet David's troops urged him to avoid the battle so he would not be a target. As with the battle that took Saul's and Jonathan's lives, God's grace allowed David to avoid this mortal battle, too.

The pride of Absalom, his beautiful hair, was ironically his undoing. Trapped in the branches of a tree by his plenteous coif, Absalom died at the hands of David's men, and the insurrection was over. David had plenty of faults, but he remained God's anointed leader over the people. Absalom wanted to be remembered, but his legacy is not what he desired.

Pray for integrity in your walk with the Lord. Pray for the courage to call others into accountability and to repentance when their words and actions are not pleasing to Him. Pray for the Spirit to bring conviction and restlessness when obedience is lacking.

Saturday, April 7, 2018—2 Samuel 13-15

Politicians often employ a process where they avoid a deeper problem or genuine solution by taking some type of simple or surface action. They "kick the can down the road" in hopes someone will deal with the situation in the future. Rarely is anything improved by this, and rarely do future politicians actually deal with "the can" until it's too late.

When David sinned with Bathsheba, he tried to cover up the truth, but Nathan called him to repentance. David was broken by the situation, but he likely would have said he was grateful for Nathan's courageous involvement. In contrast, when David's son Amnon was sinful, David did not call him to repent. In the modern #MeToo era, the physical and emotional distress Tamar endured is readily understood as disturbing. To know this came from her half-brother is even more heinous. To see David avoiding the situation is not easy for any reader to understand.

What Amnon understood as "love" or "desire" was truly lust. He got what he wanted and then hated her more than he had loved her. Had Amnon done the hard work of righteousness and self-control rather than "kicking the can," he would have saved much heartache and suffering. Absalom was deeply angered by what happened and eventually killed Amnon and usurped his father's throne. If David had done the hard work of holding Absalom accountable and treating him as his son, the whole nation might have avoided great heartache and suffering.

Pray for obedience in confessing and repenting of sin.

Friday, April 6, 2018—2 Samuel 9-12

God's grace is indescribable. By definition, his grace is undeserved. He lavishes favor that no one deserves, and Mephibosheth is a wonderful example of that. He was injured and unable to care for himself. His family had died, and David had replaced his grandfather as king. There was nothing about Mephibosheth that made him attractive or worthy.

David, however, in grace invited him into his home and provided servants for him who would work his land and provide for his needs. He did in a small way what God does for all who believe. He takes them in their unworthiness and inability, clothes them in the righteousness of Christ, and brings them into His family and to His banquet table.

When the king of Ammon died, David sent words of sympathy to his son, but his son's advisors cautioned him, questioning David's motives, leading to war and defeat. Likewise, many will reject the grace of God and find themselves skeptical, questioning, and ultimately condemned. Though offered freely, not everyone receives His grace.

Though he was successful, David was distracted, and when he should have been off at war, he stayed home. He saw a bathing Bathsheba and fell into a tragic, sinful relationship. As a result, Uriah lost his life, and

God “considered what David had done to be evil” (11:27). Being the anointed does not make one continually right. Holiness is a choice.

Thank God for His grace. Pray for a tender spirit to receive what He gives and to obey. Pray for wise friends who can counsel and rebuke.

Thursday, April 5, 2018—2 Samuel 5-8

“It’s not about you.” So began Rick Warren’s best-seller *The Purpose-Driven Life*. Those words are not what most would choose for the opening of a popular work, yet the truth that followed those words spoke to millions. Living a life of purpose designed by God requires humility.

Long before Rick Warren, King David knew this humility. When he became king over the entire nation, he acknowledged God had done this for the sake of Israel (5:12), not for the fame of David. When he sensed the need to go into battle, he inquired of Yahweh rather than rashly beginning a battle. As a result, God worked powerfully and supernaturally to give victory to David and bring honor to Himself.

Though humble, David needed to mature. His choice of moving the Ark on a cart rather than on poles cost Uzzah his life. In time, David moved the Ark to Jerusalem and celebrated visibly about the grace of God. His wife, Michal, was embarrassed by his display, but David said he would humble himself even more for the sake of God (6:22).

Though blessed, David did not receive everything for which he asked. He wanted to build God a home, yet God did not want a warrior to do so. God promised to make David’s son Solomon the builder and to bless him like no one before (7:15). David, further humbled, called himself the servant of God and administered justice and righteousness (8:15).

Pray for humility and righteousness so your life will bear fruit and bring Him honor.

Wednesday, April 4, 2018—2 Samuel 1-4

Grief is not solely a human emotion. Members of the animal kingdom demonstrate profound responses to the deaths of friend and family. Saying goodbye to someone special and experiencing permanent separation are difficult, but human grief is unique. Only humans deal with the death of one created in the image of God Himself.

When Saul died, David’s grief for Saul was deep. Although Saul had threatened David repeatedly, Saul was the LORD’s anointed, the one Yahweh chose to lead the people. David did not take that lightly. He was genuinely sorrowful that his and Jonathan’s lives had come to an end. Imagine, then, the conflict he would have been part of the battle that ended Saul’s and Jonathan’s lives. God was more gracious to David than he knew.

Grief is a part of the human experience, but grief is better shared in community. God gives us others so we might process the grief outwardly—recognizing the value of the person who has died, acknowledging their impact on the lives of others, and admitting the inability of mere mortals to overcome the power of death.

Because life is precious, David treated harshly those who treated Saul’s and Ish-bosheth’s lives poorly. David understood the sanctity of life and the power of Yahweh’s anointing. People were trying to place their own leaders or force their own ideas on the situation rather than recognize and rest in what God had already provided.

Thank God for the sanctity of life and the power we have in Christ to grieve with hope.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018—1 Samuel 29-31

Science says nature abhors a vacuum. Nature will work instantaneously to fill empty space. Jesus said something similar happens in the spiritual realm. In Matthew 12, he spoke of a demon’s leaving and then returning with seven more. There is spiritual battle all around, and Satan is always at work trying to keep pace with the work God is doing.

David was in self-imposed exile with the Philistines. Of all people at the time, the Philistines were the greatest enemy of the Israelites, so his choice was strange but effective. When the Philistines assembled to battle against Israel, David lined up with them. His allegiance was with those who gave him safe harbor. This seems inexplicable to modern minds but was completely logical to David and his men. While some saw David as fully honorable, the highest ranking officials deemed him a risk.

David was troubled by their questioning his character, but God was at work in a broader way. After their dismissal, David and his troops went home and found their families kidnapped, their possessions stolen, and their homes burned. In the absence of the Philistines, the Amalekites filled the void and wreaked havoc. While David and his men went in pursuit in one direction, Saul and Jonathan both died in battle. God worked to give David a great victory and avoid a terrible tragedy.

Thank God for always being at work. Pray for spiritual awareness to see the schemes of the enemy and to understand how God is working to equip you and use you in building the Kingdom.

Monday, April 2, 2018—1 Samuel 25-28

Sometimes God's favor is evident in the things His people are able to accomplish. Other times, His favor gradually becomes evident in the things He prevented. From winning battles to avoiding poor decisions, God is at work in all of it to demonstrate His righteousness.

David and his troops had protected Nabal's shepherds when they happened to be in the same area, so David decided to ask for Nabal's hospitality (a Hebrew custom) in return for their favor toward his men. Nabal scoffed, and David took this as the highest insult. He had his men strap on their swords and marched toward Nabal's home. God was at work and moved one of Nabal's servants to tell his wife Abigail of the insult. She immediately gathered a vast amount of food and drink and took it to David and his men. David praised God for His preventing unnecessary harm, and he blessed Abigail for her hospitality. Ten days later, Nabal was dead by the sovereignty of God rather than the sword of David.

"Nabal" means "foolish," but it refers not to intellectual inability but to spiritual emptiness. Nabal lived up to his name, being so spiritually unaware that he could not use his vast wealth to show hospitality to the one God had anointed over His people. In contrast, David knew Saul remained God's anointed and refused to strike him down, leaving that to God alone.

Thank God today for His wisdom which sees and knows all things and His ability to guide and bless those who surrender to Him.