
The Read, Pray and Grow
(RPG) is a daily Bible
reading material
published by
Tabernacle Books, Singapore.

This tablet version is freely downloadable from
www.truthbpc.com/rpg.html

If you have been blessed by this material,
do let us know at admin@truthbpc.com.

July to September 2026

“The Book of Second Samuel”

by Rev Dr Michael Koech

About the Author



Rev Dr Michael Koech serves in Kenya, East Africa, as the pastor of Kapkwen Africa Gospel Unity Church, principal of Bomet Bible Institute, and Bishop of the Africa Gospel Unity Church. He was saved in 1974 out of a Roman Catholic background. A graduate of the Bible College of East Africa (Nairobi) in 1978, he went on to obtain his Bachelor of Theology (1987), Master of Divinity (2004), Master of Theology (2005) and Doctor of Religious Education (2019) degrees from the Far Eastern Bible College (Singapore). Married to Susan Koech, they have two children (Martha and Moses).

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

2 SAMUEL 1

MATTHEW 5:43-48

*“...do good to them that hate you,
and pray for them which despitefully
use you, and persecute you.”*

THE DEATH OF KING SAUL

The news of the death of Saul came to David after three days while he fought the Amalekites at Ziklag. Saul lost in the war against his enemies and was compelled to commit suicide. A talebearer assumed that David would reward him for reporting to him of the death of Saul. He lied in his report because he was expecting a reward. David, however, punished him by death. He composed a song of tribute to Saul and Jonathan who had perished in the war, expressing his love for them.

David had won the war against the Amalekites and was set for his next move. Earlier, he was prevented from fighting against Saul when the princes of the Philistines had objected to his presence among them. He departed to his place and was expecting some news about the war. A talebearer came to report to him three days after Saul's death in the war. He told of the demise of Jonathan and all the sons of Saul. David asked him for details of that battle. The man told David what had happened but he added a lie. It was true that Saul had died. Saul had killed himself because he could not escape and he resented dying under the hands of the uncircumcised. Also, his armour bearer refused to kill him when he asked him to do so. These were very important news to the whole nation of Israel because they had to have a direction on the fate of the nation. There was now a vacant high office in the land.

Since the Lord brought Israel to Canaan from Egypt, the Lord Himself ruled among them, mostly through the hands of judges. However, after more than three centuries, the people were not satisfied and they wanted to have a king, just like the other nations. Though it was offensive to the Lord, He granted them their request and gave them Saul. David recognised this as important. On two occasions he had the opportunity to kill Saul. However, he exercised great restraint because he was a man of principles; and he stood upon the truth of God's law.

THOUGHT: Love extends kindness even to one's enemies.

PRAYER: Father, give me a heart of love to love all around me.

THURSDAY, JULY 2

2 SAMUEL 1

PROVERBS 4:1-9

*“Get wisdom, get understanding;
forget it not...”*

DAVID’S REACTION TO THE DEATH OF SAUL

David honoured the Lord who appointed Saul to be king. He was persuaded that the Lord alone would remove Saul from the throne when His time came. His only desire was to obey the Lord, trusting that all things would fall into place. The man who brought the news to David was completely ignorant of David’s character. He simply assumed that David would reward him for bringing the news to him.

In David’s prayers, he had committed all vengeance to the hands of the Lord. It was not only Saul who died in the war. His three sons, including Jonathan, were killed too (cf. 1 Sam 31:2). This prince of Israel (Jonathan) was a dear friend of David.

The man who brought the news to David had carried with him Saul’s crown and a bracelet as evidence that the king had died. David and his men rent their clothes to mourn the fall of those great ones in Israel. David counted himself as part of Saul’s household. Thus, David wept and fasted at the news of those deaths.

Prior to this, David did not have a place he could call home because he was always on the run as Saul sought to kill him. However, he remained contented because he knew that the Lord was guiding his steps. The man who brought the news to David was expecting to be rewarded. However, David surprised him. He called one of the young men, and said, *“Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died”* (2 Sam 1:15). This was a wise reaction from one who understood the mind of the Lord in matters of right and wrong.

THOUGHT: Godly wisdom leads one to do God’s will.

PRAYER: Father, give me this godly wisdom in my decision-making.

FRIDAY, JULY 3

2 SAMUEL 1

LUKE 10:29-37

*“...and when he saw him,
he had compassion on him...”*

DAVID SHOWED HIS LOVE FOR SAUL AND FAMILY

The talebearer was an Amalekite who had no moral right to take anyone's life even in those circumstances. Saul's armour bearer was right in refusing to slay Saul even though the king wanted him to slay him. David found the man guilty for killing the Lord's anointed. He sentenced him to death. The man's own testimony was a witness enough that he was guilty.

David did not want to take advantage of the fate of Saul to promote himself to the throne. The Lord appoints kings and other leaders not because their predecessors are wicked, but according to His will. This was what David expected. He sought to build his reputation based on moral right, and not on the basis of the character of other people. David had this wisdom from the Lord. He was the prospective king. His handling of that case was a good beginning.

David lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, and wrote a tribute for the fallen two, the king and the prince. David had strived to maintain good relations with the royal family. The covenant of friendship he had with Jonathan was binding in life and death. In his lamentation, David paid special tribute to Jonathan, saying that their love was wonderful, passing the love of women. He appealed to the daughters of Israel to mourn. He praised the love that they had and had a deep regret for the fallen. He poured out all his heart in his tribute.

The Lord Jesus Christ expounded that Christian love is summed up in the Ten Commandments. He specified the love of one's enemy as part of the commandments. David was successful because he kept the Law of God. Love always brings about a positive outcome. The Lord also used the story of the Good Samaritan to explain the meaning of true love. David understood God's Law. Love your enemies.

THOUGHT: God's commandment is truth.

PRAYER: Father, give me a heart that shows true love.

SATURDAY, JULY 4

2 SAMUEL 2

PSALM 65:1-4

*"Blessed is the man whom
thou choosest, and causest
to approach unto thee..."*

STEPS TO MAKE DAVID KING OF ALL ISRAEL

David was from the house of Judah while Saul was from the house of Benjamin. After the death of Saul, there was a power struggle. Benjamin assumed that the dynasty of Saul would continue. However, David knew that the Lord had made him king of all Israel. The house of Benjamin received support from Ephraim and others in Israel. The conflict turned violent, and there was a loss of life on both sides. Judah anointed David to be their king (2 Sam 2:4) while Benjamin made Ishbosheth (Saul's son) their king (2 Sam 2:8).

The Lord eventually gave direction and David settled in Hebron as king of the whole nation. He was confident that he was going in the right direction as he was assured of the throne of the nation. He prepared himself as king of all Israel. He was well-versed in God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. He did his uttermost to fulfil his part. In Hebron was the cave of Machpelah which Abraham bought as a burial ground when Sarah died (Gen 23).

Hebron became the chief city of Israel since it was identified as the first possession. As King Saul had died, it was no longer treason for David to be king. Even the men of Saul and all Israel knew David was the designated king after the death of Saul. If Jonathan, as Saul's son, had not died, he could have become king. While he was alive, he became a sworn friend of David, and he had accepted that David would be king after his father, though the people expected the continuation of the reign of Saul's house.

David wished to demonstrate his loyalty and friendship to the house of Saul. After the death of Saul, the men of Jabesh-gilead reclaimed the bodies of Saul and his sons, and gave them a decent burial. The kindness of those men was reported to David and this became another opportunity for him to demonstrate his friendly attitude towards the house of Saul. David still respected the house of Saul even after those deaths.

THOUGHT: God's choice is the best in a political stalemate.

PRAYER: Father, guide me in casting my lots for those whom Thou hast chosen.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 5

2 SAMUEL 2:5-11

PROVERBS 9:1-10

*"...and the knowledge of the holy
is understanding."*

DAVID WAS ENDOWED WITH GODLY WISDOM

David had godly love and knew that diplomacy was important for success as a king. This informs even the principles of modern diplomacy among nations. David knew what he was supposed to do in a given situation. His move to consolidate power was taking shape.

David informed the men of Jabesh-gilead that the house of Judah had anointed him as their king. He was indirectly asking them for their support, but he addressed them according to their mindset. Abner was the captain of the host of Saul. He was thus the key person in military matters and his word to Israel came with some authority. He thus took the lead in making Ishbosheth (one of the sons of Saul) king. He brought Ishbosheth to Mahanaim and made him king. It is noteworthy that they made Ishbosheth king without mentioning that he had been anointed. The making of a king might involve the setting of the proposed person to a throne. There would be a place of residence, such as a palace, for him as it is a public office. The proposed king would also have to take an oath of commitment to the office of power. In Israel, it was also necessary to seek divine authority and the proposed king would be anointed with oil by a priest or any person that God revealed. David went through that procedure and was rightly appointed as king.

In the case of Ishbosheth, Abner seemed to be the key person and since he did not have any consent from the Lord, it is said that he simply made Ishbosheth king. Ishbosheth was not formally anointed. Only the house of Benjamin supported him. He ascended the throne, but his reign was short-lived, lasting two years. It is not known if Ishbosheth died or abdicated the throne. That is how far his influence could go. David also did not gain support from the other tribes immediately, but he ruled over Judah with confidence. He became stronger and stronger while Ishbosheth became weaker and weaker.

THOUGHT: What the Lord has ordained will always succeed.

PRAYER: Father, give me godly wisdom that I may conform to Thy will.

MONDAY, JULY 6
2 SAMUEL 2:12-32
EPHESIANS 1:3-6

*"According as he hath chosen us
in him before the foundation
of the world..."*

DAVID WINS OVER ISHBOSHETH

Abner, the captain of the host of Saul, led in the struggle to retain the kingdom in the hands of the son of Saul. Each side flexed their muscles, but the gift of God is not by power or by might. God is the Lord of hosts and gives to whom He pleases. Since there were two kings in a nation that ought to be united, the struggle for power could not be avoided.

That situation, where there were two centres of power, caused a struggle and thus war was in the making. This was the natural outcome of having two kings in one nation. Joab, a nephew of David, was the head of his hosts and they met with Abner's army in Gibeon. Joab had two brothers (Abishai and Asahel) who were also military leaders. Joab was trying to avoid armed conflict at this point, but when the two opposing armies met, the individuals of each side had differing opinions on how to arrive at a resolution. This was what happened between these two armies. David's army was victorious in Gibeon. The appeal for a ceasefire did not take effect until Asahel was killed by Abner. Joab blew the trumpet to stop the war. All these happened according to God's will, eventually to enthrone David as king of all Israel.

The men of Benjamin gave in and there was a ceasefire. Joab prepared David's army for any eventualities. That conflict cost lives on both sides. Abner's side lost three hundred and sixty lives but there were only twenty lost on the side of Joab. Asahel was one of the highest ranking officers among those who died. David's side continued to get stronger.

Despite the confusion, God was in control of the events and David was headed to become king of all Israel. The sovereignty of God cannot be overtaken by human action.

THOUGHT: Godly solution to conflict is peace initiative.

PRAYER: Father, make me a peacemaker.

TUESDAY, JULY 7

2 SAMUEL 3

PSALM 40:1-8

*"Blessed is that man that maketh the
LORD his trust, and respecteth not the
proud, nor such as turn aside to lies."*

DAVID READY TO BE KING OF ISRAEL

David was always ready to bring peace between his family and the house of Saul. Abner, captain of the host of Saul, was cooperative in building that good relationship. He reprimanded Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, and declared his intention to support David. He paid David a visit in Hebron and made known his position. Joab, captain of the host of David, was not pleased at the turn of events and he conspired to kill Abner. This was a setback to the diplomatic relations that had been established. David reproved Joab for that murder, and he sincerely mourned the death of Abner. David was set to become king of all Israel.

David, a good military organiser, waxed stronger. He had moved forward in ascending the throne. Judah was for David and they anointed him. In Saul's camp, Abner was the military leader. Ishbosheth was weak. He did not have military experience. David was far ahead of him. The office of a king in the land was a political one. There were pride and self-exaltation by those who aspired to occupy it, and they easily turned to carnality.

David made an effort to handle matters in a godly fashion, but he was not entirely free from the intricacies of politics. Here, the sovereignty of God is evident. When Saul died, David knew that it was time for him to occupy the throne. The Lord directed him to Hebron. This was not only giving him a convenient place to establish his capital city. It was also significant. The tribe of Judah was destined for a royal office by prophecy. David was anointed and the Lord further directed his steps.

Since the death of Saul, the picture had now changed and there was almost no challenger to David's assumption of power. He was not bothered by what went on in Saul's camp because he had the assurance he was where he was by heavenly consent. The reactions on both sides favoured David as this was the Lord's way of bringing to pass what He had promised him. He was the only king that reigned well in all Israel. He became the standard for all good kings.

THOUGHT: God's favour is received with humility and thanksgiving.

PRAYER: Father, may the work of Thy grace be seen in the humble.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

2 SAMUEL 3

MATTHEW 5:1-11

*“Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called
the children of God.”*

ABNER, A MESSENGER OF PEACE

Abner was a key person in uniting the kingdom under David. He disagreed with Ishbosheth over petty issues. He was offended and decided to give his support to David. He also could easily persuade the people to shift their support. He told them what he had done to the house of Saul. As the captain of the host, he had power to influence many people. He had protected Saul and had not delivered him to David during the struggle for the throne. It was at this point that he asserted that the Lord had sworn to David that he was going to be king. He told Ishbosheth that as much as the Lord had appointed David to be king of all Israel, he was now shifting his support to David. David would then be king of the nation from Dan to Beersheba. Abner was confident that he had the power to lead all tribes to support David as their king. This became a starting point that eventually united the whole nation under David.

Abner sent messengers to David to ask for a league and declared his allegiance to him. He was not a stranger to David as they were once servants of King Saul together. David was the chief captain and Abner was one of the officers. There was a positive response from David and he agreed to have a meeting on one condition.

David had been married to Michal the daughter of King Saul, but when their relationship broke, Saul gave her away to another person. David told Abner that he would not see his face without Michal. So, Abner went, took Michal and persuaded the elders of Israel to support David. He came with a delegation of twenty men with the message that all Israel was for David. David made a feast for the Abner's delegation and they discussed the matter of the kingdom, reached an agreement and sealed their league. Since he had the power to rally the support needed to make David king, his presence represented the support of Israel.

THOUGHT: Peaceful approach in national issues has a heavenly seal.

PRAYER: Father, raise messengers of peace in times of conflict.

THURSDAY, JULY 9
2 SAMUEL 3:21-39
COLOSSIANS 1:10-14

*“That ye might walk worthy
of the Lord unto all pleasing,
being fruitful in every good work...”*

THE MURDER OF ABNER WAS A SETBACK TO PEACE

Joab's murder of Abner was a setback to diplomacy. David and Abner had everything in place for the union of Israel. Joab, captain of the host of David, was not present when Abner and his delegation came to see the king. When Joab returned, David's servants informed him about the visit and that the king had welcomed them.

Joab had a grudge against Abner. Earlier in their war, Abner had killed Asahel, Joab's brother. Joab told the king that Abner was not sincere, and that he had simply come to deceive the king. Joab sent messengers after Abner to bring him back to Hebron, after which Joab took him aside and killed him with a sword. This turn of events was a setback to the diplomacy that had been established between David and Abner. It was a sin that would haunt Joab later. However, this did not stop the efforts to unite the nation. David's response sustained it. Ultimately, God is in sovereign control.

David mourned the death of Abner and expressed his disapproval of the murder. He cursed Joab for that crime of shedding blood in a time of peace. David commanded a period of mourning for Abner. He had his people organise a funeral and gave Abner a decent burial in Hebron. David wept for him and expressed his feelings for him in a written lamentation. He fasted and called him a prince of Israel. Though Joab was not punished immediately, David did not forget, and the day of vengeance for him would come in the future.

The events of the story led to the fulfilment of what God had said about David. David was a leader, and challengers to his throne would lose. God's promises were behind that success. There are some spiritual shortcomings observed in the narrative, but these were all because of human depravity. With God ever on the throne, all these came to pass according to His sovereign will.

THOUGHT: Shedding blood is not for a child of God; the command *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exod 20:13) stands.

PRAYER: Father, keep my hands clean from shedding innocent blood.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

2 SAMUEL 4

EPHESIANS 3:14-19

*“Of whom the whole family
in heaven and earth is named...”*

DAVID REACTED TO THE DEATH OF ISHBOSHETH

David strove to exercise truthfulness and justice. His love for the house of Saul was sincere. From the way he made decisions, we see that he was a man of principles.

Saul and his three sons had been killed at war. The Lord was pointing to David as the preferred one to take over the throne. Abner, captain of the host of Saul, had realised this as the way forward for the nation (2 Sam 3). He had consulted with David and was set to unite the nation before he met his death.

The death of Abner was a setback to the remaining family of Saul. The remaining members of the family were now feeble. Ishbosheth (Saul's son) was not talented, and he had relied on the head of the army to maintain his power. This would have been an indication for him to seek direction from the Lord about the kingdom. They all relied on the fact that on the demise of King Saul, one of his sons would take over the throne. This was a misplaced assumption. The whole nation was troubled by the news of Abner's death.

When a nation lacks strong leadership, the situation becomes like the days of the judges when everyone did what was right in his own eyes. This was what happened upon the death of Abner.

Even though Ishbosheth was made king, he did not have full control over the tribes. This led to his murder by his confidants. Baanah and Rechab, the sons of Rimmon, beheaded Ishbosheth as he slept in his own bedchamber. And they brought his head to David in Hebron. Assuming that David and Ishbosheth were enemies, they sought a reward from David. David was greatly offended that the sons of Rimmon should murder Ishbosheth, and ordered the murderers to be put to death.

THOUGHT: God intervenes in times of confusion.

PRAYER: Father, may I always have a clear direction of Thy will for my life.

SATURDAY, JULY 11

2 SAMUEL 4

MATTHEW 5:20-26

*“...whosoever shall kill
shall be in danger of the judgment.”*

DAVID'S RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER

Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth (Saul's grandson). When news of the death of Saul and Jonathan came, the nurse of five-year-old Mephibosheth took him up and fled. In the confusion, he fell and became lame (2 Sam 4:4). He stood out here as the only surviving son of Jonathan: he was saved, but was injured in the process.

David was now set to be king of all Israel and he had a covenant of friendship with Jonathan. He had a character of godliness and, behind the scenes of these narratives, he was a man who walked closely with God. His deep thoughts are contained in the many psalms that he composed. He was a godly man and his close friends knew his character. He did not go against the principles that he had asserted in his writings. It was because of this that he was able to have a patient spirit when he was under persecution by Saul. He looked to heaven, not to man, as he was assured of God's promises. People who did not know him were in for surprises when they engaged him.

There were two men who were captains of the bands, Rechab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon of the tribe of Benjamin. They had seen the direction where the leadership of Israel was heading and they wanted to seek favour from David. They had assumed that Ishbosheth was an enemy of David. In their ambition, they sought means to get into David's good books and to receive a financial reward at the same time.

They went to the house of Ishbosheth and beheaded him in his bedchamber. They took his head and carried it all night to David in Hebron. Their main aim was to get a reward from David. They assumed that their victim was guilty and that they were doing the right thing to get rid of him. They could not, however, trump up any charges against him except that he was a son of Saul and was the designated king as per the order of monarchy. On the other hand, they broke the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.” They coveted a reward from David. That was not to be because David dealt with the matter righteously.

THOUGHT: The first principle of righteousness is to keep God's Law.

PRAYER: Father, let me always hide Thy word in my heart.

DAVID AVENGED THE MURDER OF ISHBOSHETH

David was a political leader and had a high standard of spirituality. This shaped his character and mode of operation. His decisions were not informed by circumstances but by righteous precepts.

Rechab and Baanah (the sons of Rimmon) were in for a shock upon seeing David's reaction to the murder of Ishbosheth. David swore in the name of the Lord who had redeemed him from all his adversities to deal righteously concerning Ishbosheth's death.

David recounted the time a man brought news to him about Saul's death. He said that the man thought he had brought good news to him. The man had even lied that he was the one who had killed Saul upon Saul's request as he did not want to die in the hands of uncircumcised Philistines. David said that he took that man and slew him in Ziklag. That man had expected David to give him a reward for the news that he brought.

David's perception was entirely different from regular public opinion because he was guided by God's Law. He understood the law the same way Moses did. That Law was described as perfect and righteous and no other nation had such laws but Israel (Deut 4:6-9). David had a reputation as a man after God's own heart. This description of his character was a result of his close walk with the Lord and he was careful in all his actions to follow the Lord.

David avenged the murder of Ishbosheth when he passed judgment on the sons of Rimmon, as he recounted that previous incident. He said, *"How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron"* (2 Sam 4:11-12a). It was the end for them but David obeyed the Law.

THOUGHT: Conformity with the moral Law manifests the truth.

PRAYER: Father, may I seek the guidance of Thy Law in my decisions.

MONDAY, JULY 13

2 SAMUEL 4

MATTHEW 6:5-15

"Our Father which art in heaven..."

DAVID WAS GUIDED BY GODLY PRINCIPLES

God formally gave the written Law in Exodus and He listed the moral law in the twentieth chapter. The law of retaliation for murder is given earlier. It says that whoso sheds man's blood, his blood also shall be shed by man (Gen 9:6). This has been called the first revelation of human government. David was king already and he had the authority to pass such a judgment in ordering the execution of the sons of Rimmon for the murder of Ishbosheth. This is possibly his first judgment.

Paul later wrote that the rulers do not bear a sword in vain; it is to be used against the doers of evil (Rom 13:1ff.). David was resolved to rule in righteousness. It was a custom to hang the bodies of criminals in an open place to express the warranted punishment for their crime.

When this took place, the grave of Abner in Hebron was still fresh and David commanded that they bury the head of Ishbosheth in the same place. David's judgment, even upon Ishbosheth's death, showed his high regard for the family of Saul. He wanted to show them his love even in death; he also exonerated himself from the actions of Joab and reserved his punishment until the right time. He had reasons for that suspension. David was a man guided by godly principles. He was sincere in his love for his friends and, more so, the house of Saul. He showed what is meant by the grace of God. May the Word of the Lord guide us in crucial moments. David knew God and he spoke with Him as friend to friend.

Psalms 142:1-5 is a sample prayer of David:

"I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living."

THOUGHT: Prayer is talking to God as a friend.

PRAYER: Father, may my daily prayers become a reality.

TUESDAY, JULY 14

2 SAMUEL 5

LUKE 11:15-20

*“Every kingdom
divided against itself
is brought to desolation...”*

DAVID WAS ANOINTED KING OVER ALL ISRAEL

David completed his long journey to be king of all Israel. All the elders made peace with him and they anointed him king of the whole nation. They made a league to support him in that office. Later, he sought to have a new capital for the nation, and he captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites. He called it the City of David which is also called Zion. Hiram, the king of Tyre, was friendly with him as a good neighbour. He gave David the building materials for his house and sent carpenters and masons to help him put up a royal palace. The Philistines again waged war with David. He sought God's direction and was victorious. God's hand was evident in his movements, and David was a successful king.

Following the death of Ishbosheth, the elders of Israel were of one accord and showed their support for David. They spoke well of him, and all agreed to recognise him as king of the whole nation. It was only the house of Judah that had anointed him king earlier in Hebron. Now the elders of all the tribes of Israel were of one accord to recognise David as their king because the Lord had said it. The circumstances were also moving in the same direction.

All the elders, including those from the house of Saul, agreed that David was to be their king. 2 Samuel 5:1-3 tells of the turn of events as follows: *“Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.”* They were sincere and the Lord guided them. The nation was united under David. All the promises that the Lord had made with the nation can be trusted.

THOUGHT: God is always faithful to His words.

PRAYER: Father, may this example give me assurance of Thy faithfulness.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

2 SAMUEL 5

1 CHRONICLES 11:4-9

*“So David waxed greater and greater:
for the LORD of hosts was with him.”*

AS KING OF ISRAEL DAVID WAS A TYPE OF CHRIST

The Lord would fulfil His promise to Israel through their king. David was on the throne of the nation as a type of Christ. It was through his lineage that the Messiah would subsequently come. Most of the promises would be fulfilled through him. Outside the public limelight, David walked with God. What is not told in the narratives about him is revealed in his psalms. His character is summed up in the words that he was a man after God's own heart. This is the quality that propelled him to the highest office in the nation.

Those elders who came to anoint David king testified that they knew what the Lord had said through Samuel about David. Initially, the house of Saul fought to retain the leadership in the house of Benjamin. However, God had revealed that David was the rightful heir to that throne and he came from Judah. David was king of Israel in his prime and he reigned for a total of forty years: seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. Becoming the king of the whole nation was the destination of his long journey.

Hebron was part of the heritage of the house of Judah, but Jerusalem was partly in Judah and partly in Benjamin. It was thus seen as a metropolitan city and could become a home of all tribes of Israel. It was the place that the Lord had spoken of in the time of Moses as a place that He would choose. The name of the city was Jebus and the inhabitants were called Jebusites. David challenged his army to capture the city and offered an incentive to whoever could capture it. Joab led his army and captured the city, thus he was made the chief and captain of David's army. David built a fort in the city of David, which is Zion.

It was King Solomon who later built the temple in this city, thus making it an important Jewish centre of worship. The Lord's consent for the building of that house of worship confirmed that He had chosen this place as He told through Moses.

THOUGHT: God determines even where we live.

PRAYER: Father, let me always yield to Thy will in my decision-making.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

2 SAMUEL 5

PSALM 47

*“He shall choose
our inheritance for us...”*

JERUSALEM THE CITY OF DAVID

The city of Jerusalem was part of the heritage that Joshua assigned to the house of Judah. David belonged to this tribe and when he became king, the city was named after him, even until now.

David made Jerusalem the capital city of Israel. It was so for a period of the reign of nearly twenty kings who came after David. The city was subsequently destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, when he took Judah captive in 586 BC. It was, however, restored upon the return of the exiled nation seventy years later. The returnees first built the temple. Subsequently, Nehemiah came and rebuilt the city walls. When Christ came, it was in Jerusalem that He did much of His work. He fulfilled many prophecies while in this city. It was destroyed a second time by the Romans in AD 70. It remained under many Gentile nations until the founding of modern Israel in 1948. In His second coming, Christ will enter Jerusalem through the East Gate. In making Jerusalem the capital city of Israel, David had made Jerusalem a symbol of the heavenly home.

David's alliance with the king of Tyre and his family was a way of consolidating his power. Hiram, king of Tyre and a friend of David, knew that David was then the king of all Israel. David's reputation was known beyond the borders of Israel even before he became king. Thus, Hiram sent his messengers to David with gifts, and carpenters and masons to build a palace for David.

The external support was useful for David in strengthening his position as king. He would also have a proper royal residence. This was in contrast to the time he was running away from King Saul. He did not have a home then, and had to live in caves. Then the Lord established David to be king over all Israel, and everything worthy of a king was put in place. And David knew that it was the hand of the Lord at work. He had rest, and a suitable city to run the nation from. David developed the city and had good relations. He was committed to his duties as king.

THOUGHT: God knows all my needs, whether big or small.

PRAYER: Father, provide all that I need that I may serve Thee.

FRIDAY, JULY 17

2 SAMUEL 5

PSALM 45:1-7

*“Thy throne, O God, is
for ever and ever: the sceptre
of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.”*

DAVID BECAME KING BY GOD’S APPOINTMENT

David knew that he was in office as king of Israel with God’s permission. Matthew Henry has this comment: “David’s government was rooted and built up. David was established king; so is the Son of David, and all who, through him, are made to our God kings and priests. Never had the nation of Israel appeared so great as it began now to be. Many have the favour and love of God, yet do not perceive it, and so want the comfort of it; but to be exalted to that, and to perceive it, is happiness. David owned it was for his people’s sake God had done great things for him; that he might be a blessing to them, and that they might be happy under him.”

David consolidated his power as king. He was an efficient administrator and a brave soldier. Thus, he exercised his office as the king of God’s chosen nation. His perception was in agreement with God’s plan for the nation.

David as a king had the duty to protect his nation. His first war as king of Israel was with the Philistines as they waged war against him. He was not frightened by this old enemy for he was familiar with them. He was ready to face the Philistines and did not shy away from confronting them. This first war as king of the whole nation was also meant to show that he was a worthy king. As was his custom, he did not face any enemy without seeking the Lord. This was what he did in this instance. The Lord gave him an immediate answer and direction, and he was victorious in that war.

Israel was a nation chosen by God from the time of Abraham; her direction was guided by the Lord. David was part of the unfolding drama of redemption. Where is your place in God’s eternal plan? Jesus is the greater Son of David and He came to save you. Accept Him now.

THOUGHT: God had appointed all things before the world began.

PRAYER: Father, guide me to fulfil my duties efficiently.

SATURDAY, JULY 18

2 SAMUEL 6

PSALM 45:8-17

*“Thou art fairer than
the children of men...”*

DAVID BROUGHT THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (I)

David was then settled in his new capital, the City of David, as king. He confirmed Jerusalem as the place that God had chosen. The struggle for the throne caused him to put aside spiritual matters. He knew that that was a shortcoming. He then saw that it was the right time to bring back the Ark of the Covenant to this new location. In his first attempt to bring the Ark back, he encountered an obstacle due to his human error. His mode of transporting the Ark was reproved. However, at last he brought it to its final destination with great fanfare. When it arrived, David made a feast and offered sacrifices. Michal was indignant, but David dismissed her and defended his rejoicing before the LORD.

The Ark of the Covenant was the most important object in worship. The Ark was placed in the most holy place in the Tabernacle, and there the priest led in the prescribed worship of God. That worship had been the practice from the time of Moses to the time of the Priest Eli when the Philistines took the Ark. Though it was returned to the land of Israel, it did not arrive in the rightful place because of discontent in the nation.

Now that David was settled in peace as king, he saw it as the right time to undertake a spiritual revival. He appointed a day to bring the Ark back to its place of worship. Jerusalem was then a place that the whole nation of Israel looked to for direction. All the affairs of the nation were ordered from this place that God had chosen for Israel. The Ark had to be there to complete the spiritual side of their national life. It is called the Ark of God, the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. The Ark was in Gibeah in the house of Abinadab where it had remained since the Philistines returned it. Though David was busy with national issues, the priests needed to be assisted to bring the Ark to its rightful place.

THOUGHT: Courage is needed to fulfil the service of the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, let me not neglect the most important service.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 19

2 SAMUEL 6

PSALM 62

*"God hath spoken once;
twice have I heard this..."*

DAVID BROUGHT THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (II)

In bringing the Ark back, they neglected to read the Law as to how it was to be transported. David gathered thirty thousand men to take part in the return of the Ark. Thus, when they came, Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, set the Ark upon an ox-cart and the two drove it.

David and his men followed the Ark with much singing and playing of instruments of music. This is the description of the scene: *"And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals"* (2 Sam 6:5). It was to be a great day for the nation. All this fanfare was due to the importance of the Ark in the religious life of Israel. Its construction was recorded in Exodus 25 as the Lord revealed its structure and dimensions to Moses. Bezaleel made the Ark. It contained the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod and pot of manna. Numbers 3:30-31 shows that it was conveyed by the Levites. It was a symbol of God's Law and holiness. It was kept in its place for a memorial that God was the king of Israel. It also typified atonement of the nation and individuals. Its place in the holy of holies was the central venue in worship and also had prophetic value. All these representations of the Ark made it so important that it could not be omitted in the nation's spiritual values.

The mode of transport was reprovved when Uzzah and Ahio drove the Ark on a cart. The oxen shook the cart. Uzzah put forth his hand to prevent the Ark from falling over. Here, the neglect of David, the Levites and all the congregation was brought to focus. The Lord was angry and He smote Uzzah so that he died right there. At this point, everything stopped, and the fanfare turned to mourning. It caused David to fear the LORD and to ask how the Ark of the LORD should be brought to him in Jerusalem. There were two errors that were made. The Law of Moses says that the Ark could only be conveyed by the Levites on their shoulders using the rods that were provided. And nobody was allowed to touch the Ark. The keeping of the Law was hereby stressed.

THOUGHT: God speaks once, we need to hear twice.

PRAYER: Father, may I pay attention to the specifications of Thy Word.

MONDAY, JULY 20

2 SAMUEL 6

PSALM 70:1-5

*“But I am poor and needy;
make haste unto me, O God...”*

DAVID BROUGHT THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (III)

The priest who was allowed to enter the holy of holies had to wear bells and a rope on his wrist (cf. Exod 28:34-35). It has been suggested that the purpose of the rope and bells was that if the Lord should smite him for any error in the holy place, the bells would stop ringing and his body could then be pulled out with the rope. The death of Uzzah brought everything to a standstill.

David had to make a decision. He was afraid and displeased with what had happened, and he called that place Perez-uzzah. The Ark was diverted to the nearest house. That was the house of Obededom where it remained for three months. It is recorded that the Lord blessed the house of Obededom for his accommodation of the Ark of God. It is not said that Uzzah was ignorant of the specifications for the conveying of the Ark of God. Even if he was, David himself had not given attention to God's command in the Law. The death of Uzzah awakened them to the fact that they had ignored the Law. All were guilty, and the Lord used Uzzah as an object lesson to them all. There was greater negligence on the part of the Levites as it was their duty and they did not pay attention to God's Law. Have we in one way or other ignored our duty to God?

Eventually, David brought the Ark to its final destination. It was after those three months that the king went and brought the Ark to the City of David. This time, he transported the Ark in accordance with God's Law. They could afford to be happy again after that sad episode. David was extra careful this time and ensured that all he did was in conformity with what God had commanded. He and the company of Israel marched with gladness before the Ark; it is told that David offered sacrifices of oxen and fatling after every six paces. Sacrifice to the Lord is indicative of submission and obedience to Him. David wanted to ensure that nothing went wrong this time with bringing the Ark to its destination. It is also reported that he danced with all his might and was girded with a linen ephod. It was a restoration of fellowship with the Lord.

THOUGHT: God is just. He is also compassionate.

PRAYER: Father, forgive me when I err.

TUESDAY, JULY 21

2 SAMUEL 6

PSALM 46:1-7

*“The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.”*

DAVID BROUGHT THE ARK TO JERUSALEM (IV)

The narrative describes the scene and disposition of all those who took part in the return of the Ark. The king was at the forefront in the celebration. All the jubilation and fanfare in bringing the Ark back was both a national celebration and a religious one for Israel. This singing was orderly and the playing of instruments was in harmony. After the death of Uzzah, the celebration must have taken on greater meaning and significance.

For Christians, there also has to be order in our singing of songs of praise to the Lord. Jude 20-23 exhorts us to build ourselves up in the most holy faith and, among other things, to hate even the garment spotted by the flesh. There has to be a difference between our praise of God and the carnal entertainment of the world. Biblical Christianity will lead to orderly praise.

The Ark finally arrived in the City of David. The king had prepared and pitched the tabernacle. Thus, they brought the Ark to its place as commanded in the Law. The whole process of bringing the Ark, the sacrifices and rejoicing was the nation's act of gratitude to God. As the national and spiritual leader of the nation, David made a feast for the people to celebrate the arrival of the Ark.

When Michal (David's wife) saw her husband's jubilation amongst the crowd, she despised him in her heart. David dismissed her chiding and explained the reason for his joy. David had many weaknesses. However, he worked hard in his life to please the Lord, and most of his thoughts and relationship with God were expressed in his psalms. He loved his nation and promoted spiritual service in Israel. He walked with the Lord, though not perfectly.

THOUGHT: *“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD...”* (Ps 33:12)

PRAYER: Father, forgive me for my trespasses.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

2 SAMUEL 7

1 CHRONICLES 17:1-2

*“Do all that is in thine heart;
for God is with thee.”*

DAVID’S PROPOSAL TO BUILD GOD’S HOUSE (I)

David was always ready to do what pleases God. When he had settled as king, he also wanted to put in order the worship of God in the nation as it was under Moses. He brought the Ark of the Covenant into the designated place in the City of David. Since their settlement was permanent in the Promised Land, they were now living in houses and not in tents. It came to David’s mind also that, instead of a tabernacle, he should build a house of the Lord for worship. He shared this idea with a prophet of God and the answer from the Lord was that David was not to build Him a house, but his seed after him would build it. The Lord also promised him an eternal house. David was grateful and he made his supplications to the Lord in grateful worship. Here is the story.

David sat in his house and noted that God had given him rest from all his enemies. He was now a powerful king and had a house fit for his status. He could recall the times when he had to run away from his home and hide in the desert caves. He was then living day by day but he trusted the Lord to protect him. He had used every means he could think of to overcome dangers. He relied mainly on the promises of the Lord that He was with him. His primary concern then was for his life. He had that bad experience but he soldiered on with hope.

The king was now living in a house of cedar, without any immediate danger, but he wanted to do something good for the Lord in appreciation of His protection. He knew that Israel started their formal worship of God under Moses when they came out of Egypt. During that period of forty years, the place of worship was the tabernacle, a tent structure that could be taken apart and moved as the people of God went on their journey. David then desired a permanent structure of worship.

He shared his idea of building a house for the Lord with Nathan the prophet. Nathan was agreeable and told him to do what was in his heart.

THOUGHT: A good deed comes out of a good heart.

PRAYER: Father, may I have thoughts of how to improve my service for Thee.

THURSDAY, JULY 23
2 SAMUEL 7
1 CHRONICLES 22:6-13

*“...the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou,
and build the house of the LORD thy God,
as he hath said of thee.”*

DAVID’S PROPOSAL TO BUILD A HOUSE (II)

After leaving Egypt, Moses was given the blueprint of the tabernacle by God. Israel could set it up and move it wherever they stopped in their journey. That structure was a means to assist in rendering due worship to the Lord. Everything was done as per the Lord’s instructions.

Then, as king in his palace in the Promised Land, the proposal by David to build the house of the Lord was not out of place because, by then, the people were no longer living in tents. It was logical for them to build for themselves houses, as they had no intention of moving away from the Promised Land. There was, however, no revelation from the Lord about the house of worship. David reasoned that it was needful to build a house of worship. Nathan was in agreement. However, the Lord made His will known to them. Here is an observation on this incident.

David, being at rest in his palace, considered how he might best employ his leisure and prosperity in the service of God. He designed a temple for the ark. Nathan here did not speak as a prophet, but as a godly man, encouraging David with his private judgment. We ought to do all we can to encourage and promote the good purposes and designs of others, and, as we have opportunity, to forward a good work (Matthew Henry).

God answered David through Nathan, forbidding the king to build a house for the Lord. It was revealed later in 1 Chronicles 22:8 (when he charged Solomon) that the Lord had told David that he had shed much blood in wars, thus he was not allowed to build a house for the Lord. This detail is not recorded in the current text. The Lord had many other things for David to fulfil. The Lord disclosed the important factors first. He told David that He did not need to dwell in a house. The idea in itself, however, shows the desire of David’s heart to do something good for the Lord.

THOUGHT: A loving heart plans good things for the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, let me always engage in things that glorify Thee.

DAVID’S PROPOSAL TO BUILD A HOUSE (III)

The house that David was proposing was a physical structure. My teacher (the late Rev Dr Timothy Tow) observed that an institution like a church is not a monument, but a movement. Many people give the most attention to a church building to ensure that it is well constructed and made attractive. This is fine when it reflects our commitment to the Lord. However, if it is for show, then it is reduced to a monument and has no spiritual significance.

It was the same in the days of David; the Lord wanted him and his people to know that the house of God is not merely stone, mortar and cedar, but a movement with hearts yielded to God. This was the point that the Lord wanted to instil in the heart of David when He said “No” to David’s proposal to build God’s house. The Lord said that all along the structure that was called the house of God was the tabernacle. That had been sufficient. A building was not the priority.

The Lord recapped what He had done for David: taking him from the sheepcote to making him a ruler of His people. He promised a place for the people of Israel, one that was their own. The Lord even told David that He would make him an house. This was done so that David did not need to focus on building an earthly house for Him.

Even though God’s house was eventually constructed, that did not make holy all the wicked kings of Israel. The house was there in Jerusalem, but when the hearts of the people departed from the Lord, they worshipped idols. In the end, the Lord allowed it to be destroyed by the enemies of Israel. It was a lesson for the nation to learn that they could worship the Lord without a house of stone and mortar.

What is the primary quality of the church today? It must be the spiritual quality of the invisible church. Those in it are the saints. Jesus ministered in the second temple and foretold its destruction, but His kingdom lasts forever.

THOUGHT: God’s Kingdom is true faith in a redeemed heart.

PRAYER: Father, may I not miss the blessing of Thy kingdom.

SATURDAY, JULY 25

2 SAMUEL 7

MATTHEW 1:1-17

*“The book of the generation of
Jesus Christ, the son of David...”*

DAVID KNEW JESUS AS THE MESSIAH

God Promised David an Eternal House:

He said that He would establish the kingdom of his seed forever. This makes the dynasty of David unique. In short, the incarnation of the Son of God needed to be fulfilled through human agency. God chose the house of David to bring this to pass.

The fulfilment of the term *“for ever”* (2 Sam 7:13) is not humanly possible. There has to be a supernatural involvement to make it possible. This is what only God can do. He told David that He would be his Father and David would be His son. As we are familiar with the Christmas story, this is how God fulfilled this promise. We see David being named among the genealogies of Jesus Christ in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Jesus is also called the Son of David. The purpose of the Son of God putting on human flesh was to save man from sin. The message of Nathan was the Lord’s answer to David. David also believed in Jesus, and he called Him *“my Lord”* (Ps 16:2; 35:23; 110:1).

David Praised God and Made His Supplications:

David addressed the Lord in humility and he praised Him for the position of Israel among the nations. It is a great nation because of the Messiah. This is part of David’s prayer: *“For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee”* (2 Sam 7:27). The Lord has established it forever. The choosing of the nation was a cause for David’s prayer. All the promises made to David were Messianic in nature. This Messiah is none other than Jesus Christ who was born of the virgin Mary. He has ascended to heaven and will come again. Believe in the Son of God and live.

THOUGHT: David’s position in Israel was part of God’s eternal plan of redemption.

PRAYER: Father, may the promises of the return of Jesus Christ come to pass soon.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 26

2 SAMUEL 8

PSALM 35:1-8

*"Plead my cause, O LORD,
with them that strive with me:
fight against them that fight against me."*

DAVID SUBDUED THE PHILISTINES

David extended his power in subduing the neighbouring nations which he saw as potential enemies. He showed his military might and made sure that there was no threat to his nation. He made Israel great by demonstrating her power. He knew that God was with him in his endeavours.

David received spoils and overcame those hostile nations easily. He made Israel the super power in those days. He settled down and organised his government. He appointed chief officers and ruled his nation righteously as he established a system of equity and ensured that all his subjects received just judgments. He acknowledged the hand of God in all that he was enabled to do.

The Philistines were perpetual enemies of Israel and were immediate neighbours. They colonised Israel during the time of the judges, and also engaged Israel in war during the reign of King Saul. They defeated King Saul as he died in battle with his sons. They took credit as they ended the reign of Saul in Israel. David rose to fame when he killed Goliath, the gigantic Philistine. Wars continued between them, and the Philistines even took the Ark of the Covenant of Israel.

David was familiar with the strength and weakness of the Philistines. He knew them as a nation that would not easily give up, and that they had to be contained. David devised an approach that would overcome this enemy. In the first round, he took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines. In those days, any nation that was conquered was made to pay tribute to the conquering nation. This was a show of superiority by the conquering nation and subjugation of the conquered one. David trusted the Lord.

THOUGHT: God gives wisdom in strategic decisions.

PRAYER: Father, grant me Thy protection from possible dangers.

MONDAY, JULY 27

2 SAMUEL 8

RUTH 1:1-5

*“And they came into
the country of Moab,
and continued there.”*

DAVID FACED THE MOABITES

The existence of any nation depended mainly on their military strength. David knew this and he was skilled in building up an army. The next potential enemy to the east of Israel across the Jordan was Moab. This nation also had a long history in her relationship with Israel. She was another nation that fought with Israel from the time of Moses and Joshua. They were descendants of Lot. It became a great nation and was governed by kings.

There were times of peace, and there were also times of conflict. David knew the potential dangers the enemy posed. They were aggressive, and the king of Israel was familiar with them. He had to remove any danger from the east as the Moabites did not give up easily. This is a brief report about David's conquest: *“And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts”* (2 Sam 8:2). The demarcation of the boundary defined the extent of David's power. This was a story that happened three thousand years ago. God did, and still does, marvellous things.

More about Moab is told: It was a nation governed by strong kings, and was a nation to reckon with even in the time of Exodus. They refused to let Israel pass through their land (Judg 11:17-18). They also joined Midian to curse Israel (Num 22:4). They had other interactions with Israel at that time. The story of Ruth shows that there were good relations with Israel then, and Naomi and family took refuge there. David's parents were welcomed there when David was fighting with Saul. All these gave David knowledge of Moab. When he had to face them, he knew their strengths and weaknesses. God's hand was behind all these.

THOUGHT: God can use diplomacy and wars to fulfil His purposes.

PRAYER: Father, may Thou bring about Thy peace even when there is war.

DAVID DEMONSTRATED HIS MILITARY MIGHT

The king of Israel took advantage of every approach to ensure that every potential danger was subdued. He did this to ensure that his nation lived in peace. Hadadezer, king of Zobah (which is part of Syria), was another potential enemy. David smote him and went the whole length to his boundary along the river Euphrates to recover his boundary. Hadadezer was a strong king with an army and cavalry. This was a show of his might. But David was strategic in his approach and did not shun from making his attempt.

He smote the king of Zobah and recovered the boundary. *“And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots”* (2 Sam 8:4). David was such a military genius because God was with him. All the narratives about his kingship show that he did not lose any war. The Syrians wanted to help the King of Zobah against David, but he slew a large army of the Syrians. The anointed of the Lord defeats all enemies and reigns. This was the promise given to David as noted earlier.

David captured Damascus and the Syrians. He put garrisons in their city and the people became David's servants, and they brought gifts to him. The secret of David's victories is again disclosed in 2 Samuel 8:6: *“the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.”* Silver and gold have financial value as per their weight. These were part of David's spoils, and gifts the Syrians brought to him. He took shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, king of Zobah, and brought them to Jerusalem. He took from other cities exceeding much brass. His ability to subdue those nations was indeed divine power that propelled him.

THOUGHT: Spiritual victory is as important as physical victory.

PRAYER: Father, may my faith in Thee yield spiritual victory.

DAVID’S VICTORIES CONTINUED

David was well-versed in both war strategies and diplomacy. When he saw that the latter approach was more profitable, he did not hesitate to exercise it. Toi, king of Hamath, was an enemy of Hadadezer, the king of Zobah. He was relieved when David conquered his adversary. This made him approach David on friendly terms. He sent his son (named Joram) to David to salute and bless him because David had fought against his enemy, the king of Zobah. They had wars, and Toi was happy that a mighty person as David could subdue him. Joram brought with him gifts to David, vessels of silver, gold and brass. All these were used to boost David’s treasury. David dedicated all these to the Lord.

Here is an application, “All the precious things David was master of, were dedicated things; they were designed for building the temple. The idols of gold David destroyed (2 Sam 5:21), but the vessels of gold he dedicated. Thus, in the conquest of a soul by the grace of the Son of David, what stands in opposition to God must be destroyed, every lust must be mortified and crucified, but what may glorify him must be dedicated; thus the property of it is altered. God employs his servants in various ways; some, as David, in spiritual battles; others, as Solomon, in spiritual buildings; and one prepares work for the other, that God may have the glory of all” (Matthew Henry).

David had a reputation for his military might. He now had the freedom to secure all the boundaries of his nation. He rested in peace because he had subdued all the potential threats. He put garrisons in all of the land of Edom. When there was peace without, he could attend to the domestic needs. The Lord preserved him wherever he went. Glory goes to God. David was able to execute judgment and justice to all people. He was also an efficient administrator and he appointed officers to head his different departments in the governing of Israel.

THOUGHT: All good things come from the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, help me to value my relationship with Thee more than silver and gold.

THURSDAY, JULY 30

2 SAMUEL 9

1 CORINTHIANS 13

*“Charity suffereth long,
and is kind; charity envieth not;
charity vaunteth not itself...”*

DAVID’S KINDNESS TO THE SON OF JONATHAN

David knew why the Lord gave him such a high position in the nation of Israel. He could trust the Lord, and he kept his word. There was a covenant of friendship between David and Jonathan. However, Jonathan was killed at war, together with his father King Saul and his brothers. David was committed to keeping this covenant, and he looked for Jonathan’s next of kin to show them kindness.

Ziba, a servant of Saul, identified a son of Jonathan. Thus, David invited him to be part of the king’s household and to dine with him at his table continually. The king also gave him Saul’s estate. The love that David demonstrated was of God. Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan. After the tragedy that befell the house of Saul, David was busy settling in as king. Still, he showed his love for Saul’s family. He disregarded the hostility that Saul had shown towards him and he accepted Saul as the Lord’s anointed. Another even stronger relationship David had, and was committed to, was with Jonathan, a dear friend of his, and also a son of Saul. When the confrontation between Saul and David was at its peak, Jonathan was there to relieve David’s distress. Both of them were sincere and they showed godly love for each other. David did not forget the covenant they had made, and he knew the obligation that came with such a commitment.

David had demonstrated the love that the Apostle Paul was inspired to write about in 1 Corinthians 13. David’s kindness towards Mephibosheth was illustrative of that full definition of love. The Lord Jesus Christ affirmed the superiority of love when He was asked as to which is the greatest commandment in the Law. He named the need to love God and one’s neighbour as the answer. David had these commandments in his heart and his circumstances gave him the opportunity to show what they meant in a practical way. He had hidden God’s Word in his heart that he might not sin against Him.

THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit brings same minds together.

PRAYER: Father, may the mind of Christ unite me with my brethren.

FRIDAY, JULY 31

2 SAMUEL 9

MATTHEW 19:16-19

*"Thou shalt love
thy neighbour as thyself."*

DAVID EXALTED THE HIGHEST VIRTUE

Charity is another word for love. It is the central character of the Gospel, eg. "...*God so loved the world...*" (John 3:16), "...*while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom 5:8). These are familiar expressions in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of love in the highest regard. David was not slow in understanding the Gospel. In his many psalms, he showed this understanding. Though believers were not known as Christians then, David knew what salvation in Christ meant. He was a Christian through and through. He knew what the Ten Commandments were. Jesus summed them up as love for God and for one's neighbour. David's love for the son of Jonathan (his dear friend) was unconditional. Mephibosheth was lame, but David did not make it an issue because love endures all things. He showed his love to Mephibosheth.

David sent for Mephibosheth to come from Lodebar where he was staying. There is no mention of other family members of Saul. He was the nearest of kin that Ziba identified. When he arrived, he fell on his face and bowed in respect to King David. They got to know each other and David spoke to him kindly. David's love had led him to focus on the good things in his relationship with Saul's family, ignoring all the wicked things Saul had done to him. He knew that love covers a multitude of sins. He recognised Mephibosheth and held him in high esteem, because he remembered his covenant with Jonathan. David had many responsibilities, but he found time to entertain his friend's son, and that kindness continued as Mephibosheth sat and dined at his table every day from that time.

David was a practical teacher of good things. His good deeds spoke for themselves. There is also great wisdom in his conduct. The Holy Spirit was his teacher. He was the youngest son of his father, but even as a boy, he spoke confidently to his older brothers. He is still that teacher today, and we continue to learn from him.

THOUGHT: Bible-based love is true love.

PRAYER: Father, may love define my Christian character.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

2 SAMUEL 9

ROMANS 8:35-39

*"Nay, in all these things
we are more than conquerors
through him that loved us."*

DAVID KEPT HIS COVENANT WITH JONATHAN

When Samuel anointed David as future king of Israel, David never disappointed when he had to fulfil the duties that fell on him. He made wise decisions and acted accordingly. He did not forget the covenant that he had made with Jonathan. Love never fails and David applied the virtue of love practically in this instance.

David perceived that Mephibosheth was afraid when Mephibosheth was brought before him. However, David assured him of his love. He told Mephibosheth that he wanted to show him kindness for his father's sake. Mephibosheth was treated as a prince. Ordinarily, Jonathan would have become king and Mephibosheth would automatically be a prince. David gave him that privilege. David also promised to restore to him all the land that belonged to his grandfather (Saul). He instructed Ziba to ensure that all that land was restored, to be a manager of the land and serve with his sons. He also sustained Mephibosheth's position in the royal household. Mephibosheth humbly accepted the invitation. David restoring Mephibosheth to his princely position was a demonstration of true love.

David reigned righteously and instituted justice. The events in the palace were published in the whole nation. The people of Israel learned to keep the Law of God after the example of their king. They were all aware of the hardships that David went through in the hands of Saul, but God was pleased to put him on the throne. David never adopted the spirit of vengeance. Instead, he showed godly love. He showed that love does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in truth. David had all this godly understanding and he yielded good fruits. As much as he had made a covenant with Jonathan, he was faithful in keeping it. It was the best he could do. In a covenant, God is the first party and the other parties involved have their obligations. David knew that he was responsible to God in the commitment that he had made to his great friend. Jonathan was also loyal to that covenant and if he had lived, he would have done as David did. Keeping a covenant is a duty to God.

THOUGHT: Keeping a covenant is trusting God.

PRAYER: Father, teach me to be faithful to my spiritual obligations.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 2

2 SAMUEL 9

PSALM 103:1-8

*"Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits."*

DAVID GAVE ORDERS ON SAUL'S ESTATE

King Saul had sizable property. Jonathan and his brothers would have inherited it, but they died with their father at war. His grandson was thus the rightful heir. The matter came before David when he invited Mephibosheth to his household. The king appointed Ziba the servant of Saul as the manager, and his sons and other servants tilled the land for the son of Jonathan.

David instructed Ziba in the presence of Mephibosheth in this regard. He was a trusted servant and he fulfilled his duty. David had all power as a king, but he was a humble servant of the Lord. He gave his instructions in demonstration of his love for all people. He treated all people with loving kindness. Mephibosheth occupied his place in the king's household. He dined at the king's table continually as David had promoted him, having a dignified position. Scripture says that he had a son named Micha (2 Sam 9:12) but nothing more was said about his family. The invitation was an honour and he had a taste of God's grace as David was gracious to him. Before that invitation, he lived as an ordinary citizen. Perhaps he did not think of his connection with the royal family and was surprised at the invitation of the king.

David showed his unfailing desire to sustain his commitment to his best friend, and Mephibosheth became the object of that concern. David's lamentations on the death of Saul and his sons showed more of the love he had for them. Love, as described by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13, was seen in David. He was loving and truthful. Concern for others' possessions is another display of good relationship.

THOUGHT: Nothing compares with sincere love and it is imperative to keep this greatest commandment.

PRAYER: Father, let love be the rule of our everyday life.

MONDAY, AUGUST 3

2 SAMUEL 10

PROVERBS 26:17-28

*“As coals are to burning coals,
and wood to fire; so is a
contentious man to kindle strife.”*

DAVID DEFEATED AMMON IN A NEW CONFLICT

David reigned and defended his nation. He used the friendly approach when appropriate and resorted to armed conflict when the need arose. This was part of his duty as a king. In the text, David offered friendship to the new king of Ammon, but his response was an insult to David. This led to a war of combined forces between Syria and Ammon against Israel. David's army prevailed, and once again, he showed his strength in warfare. He used these victories to build peace in Israel. They demonstrated God's hand which was upon him.

Nahash the king of Ammon died. He was a friend of David and also a neighbour. They had co-existed together in peace and exchanged diplomatic gestures. Hanun, his son, became king in place of his father. It was natural for David to send a delegation to comfort the family and the nation. He also wished to continue the friendly relationship they had with the late king. David demonstrated what the Apostle Paul later expressed that we ought to live peaceably with all men, as much as it is in our power (Rom 12:18). He wanted a continued peace with his neighbour. He said that he would show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash.

A delegation of David's servants went to the land of Ammon. The new king had no experience in matters of sustaining peace with a neighbour. His new advisors had a different opinion of David's gesture. They insinuated to their new king Hanun that David did not truly seek to honour his father when he sent a delegation to comfort him. They accused the servants of David as being spies who were seeking to overthrow their land. This led to the failure of sustaining their diplomacy and resulted in negative fruits.

THOUGHT: A wise person does not lack alternatives in conflicts.

PRAYER: Father, always show me the right move in conflicts.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

2 SAMUEL 10

PSALM 37:7-14

*“Rest in the LORD,
and wait patiently for him.”*

PEACE BETWEEN AMMON AND ISRAEL BROKEN

The counsel of the princes of Ammon was a negative reaction that broke the peace between the two nations. They became instant enemies. Their accusations against the servants of David had no basis but was due to their own imagination. Their attitude was in contrast to that of the late king. The imagination of a spy mission was a far-fetched idea, but it persuaded the new king that his servants' opinion was right.

Matthew Henry made this observation and application: “Nahash had been an enemy to Israel, yet had showed kindness to David. David therefore resolves gratefully to return it. If a Pharisee gives alms in pride, though God will not reward it, yet he that receives the alms ought to return thanks for it. Those who bear ill-will to their neighbours, are resolved not to believe that their neighbours bear any good-will to them. There is nothing so well meant, but it may be ill interpreted, and is wont to be so, by men who love nobody but themselves. The best men must not think it strange if they are thus misrepresented. Charity thinketh no evil. According to the usages of those days and countries, Hanun treated David's ambassadors in the most contemptuous manner. David showed much concern for his servants. Let us learn not to lay unjust reproaches to heart; they will wear off, and turn only to the shame of those who utter or do them; while the reputation wrongfully hurt in a little time grows again, as these beards did. God will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, therefore wait patiently for him, Ps 37:6, Ps 37:7.”

That reaction, as expected, triggered another strain in the relationship between the two nations. Ammon was a heathen nation, but David had developed a good relationship with them as a worthy neighbour. He needed God's wisdom to handle the new situation.

THOUGHT: Violence is destructive, but peace is constructive.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy peace rule in my life.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

2 SAMUEL 10

PSALM 59:1-5

*“Deliver me from
the workers of iniquity,
and save me from bloody men.”*

HANUN GAVE HEED TO HIS PRINCES

The new king insulted David's servants (2 Sam 10:4). They stopped short of killing them in the ill-treatment they meted out on them. The news of this response from Hanun eventually came to David. The men were greatly ashamed as the king of Ammon had ordered that they cut off half of their beards and their clothes. This violent act was an insult to David. He would have least expected that kind of treatment but, through this, he learned the attitude of the new king to their relationship. The king of Israel did what was best in those circumstances and did not escalate the situation.

David told the servants to tarry at Jericho until their beards were grown. This they did, but that insult had consequences. The diplomatic relation between the two nations was broken and the declaration of war was imminent. The reaction of Hanun might be attributed to inexperience, but armed conflict was likely to follow. David was ready for any challenge. He was the king of Israel and did not shy away from his duty to defend his nation. The king of Ammon knew that his treatment of the servants of David was a declaration of war, and thus he prepared for it. David was also not slow in understanding the action of Ammon. What followed was inevitable.

When peace is forsaken, a war follows. David prepared and went to war with Ammon and defeated them. Hanun knew that he had set a stage for a real war; so he hired mercenaries to fight David. It was not a small army that he had prepared. The capacity of that army that Hanun gathered was great. They were all from three camps of twenty thousand footmen plus another one thousand and the third was twelve thousand. David's simple act of sending comforters over the death of his father led Hanun to declare war and became an instant enemy of Israel. It led to a full war. Such conflict is not simply a matter of words, it concerns loss of life.

THOUGHT: The folly of a king may result in a very great loss.

PRAYER: Father, give me a heart that seeks to save lives and not kill.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

2 SAMUEL 10

PSALM 47

“God reigneth over the heathen...”

ARMED CONFLICT FOLLOWED UNWISE DECISION

Joab was the captain of David's army and a commander in Israel. The king sent him and all the mighty men of Israel to the war front. David did not go to any war without first asking the Lord for the right course of action. David was a soldier from his youth, and by the time he became king, he had amassed a wealth of good experience in warfare. He knew what course of action to take in the thick of any conflict.

He trained Joab and other mighty men. He had sufficient intelligence to prepare and to face that combined army. Joab ordered the Israelite army to fight and win. He told the army to be of good courage and be strong men for their nation. He described the cities of Israel as the cities of their God. He added that the Lord would answer as He seemed good. Joab had learned this lesson from David. In the battle, there were many casualties in the mercenary army. Israel defeated them and they fled. The Lord gave Israel their victory.

Syria and Ammon made a second attempt but they did not know the secret of Israel's victory. After the first defeat, they took counsel and gathered a bigger army. David came to the war front against the Syrians and commanded the Israelite army. He slew them, including their captain. After that, the allies of Syria made peace with David. The Syrians did not help the Ammonites any more.

The hand of God was on king David. He had divine wisdom and was victorious. Look to the Lord for direction. Trust Him in your activities and you will also overcome by His grace and enabling.

THOUGHT: God's ear always listens to our plea.

PRAYER: Father, hear and answer me when I pray.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

2 SAMUEL 11

1 JOHN 2:15-17

*“...but he that
doeth the will of God
abideth for ever.”*

DAVID EXPOSED TO TEMPTATION (I)

The depravity of the human heart is a reality and results in yielding to temptation and actually committing sin. David's time of temptation came and he yielded. It was a sin that became a dark blot in his life. He was known as a skilled military leader but, at this time, his captain of hosts was in the battle front. His soldiers were committed to defending their country. David, as king, was expected to be the leader. He abdicated his duty and was idling his time away in his palace. Out of this then came the temptation.

When David woke up from his afternoon siesta, his eyes wandered and he saw a woman. In the end, he committed very grievous sins as he was caught in the devil's net. He tried to cover up his sins, but the truth will always come out. David was guilty and it would take the grace of God for him to be restored. Yielding to temptation is sin.

David exposed himself to temptation when he did not fulfil what God wanted him to do. As a result, his mind became the devil's workshop. This would be to his peril. His primary duty was to protect his nation from external aggressors, but he chose to remain in his palace. He seemed to have neglected even other duties of judgment.

David was not always a person of this character. He was ever active and busily attending to his duties. This was, however, the hour of temptation. His faculties wandered because he was actually idle. Scripture records that in that hour of carelessness, he went to the roof of his house and saw a woman bathing, and he was attracted to her. Evil thoughts overtook him immediately. He was not on his guard at such an hour.

THOUGHT: Temptation is an ever-present weapon of Satan.

PRAYER: Father, help me always to avoid anything that can lead to temptation.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

2 SAMUEL 11

MATTHEW 5:27-30

*“And if thy right hand offend thee,
cut it off, and cast it from thee...”*

DAVID EXPOSED TO TEMPTATION (II)

David's first step led to a lustful reaction and, in turn, this led to David losing the battle, figuratively speaking. He was known not to lose any battle in war, but here he was before a weapon of the evil one.

Scripture records that the woman was very beautiful to look upon. This is where men's weakness lies. David was aware of this, but he yielded to that temptation. Instead of turning away and attending to his duties, he concentrated his thoughts on the woman. He was already committing the sin of adultery. Jesus warned about this kind of behaviour citing what the law of God said. He told His audience of the commandment that *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exod 20:14), and He added that whosoever looked at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt 5:27-28). David is not alone in this failure. Even today, the majority of men are guilty as the Lord judged. Agreeing with this observation, Matthew Henry said,

“Observe the occasions of David's sin; what led to it. 1. Neglect of his business. He tarried at Jerusalem. When we are out of the way of our duty, we are in temptation. 2. Love of ease: idleness gives great advantage to the tempter. 3. A wandering eye. He had not, like Job, made a covenant with his eyes, or, at this time, he had forgotten it. And observe the steps of the sin. See how the way of sin is down-hill; when men begin to do evil, they cannot soon stop. Observe the aggravations of the sin. How could David rebuke or punish that in others, of which he was conscious that he himself was guilty?”

David yielded to the temptation as he lost self-control. He lusted after the woman and enquired after her. It was an unbecoming move coming from a king who was known to follow the Lord in many of his decisions. Sin knows no rank.

THOUGHT: Overcoming temptation comes by constant obedience.

PRAYER: Father, *“lead us not into temptation”* (Matt 6:13).

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 9

2 SAMUEL 11

JEREMIAH 17:7-10

*"The heart is
deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked..."*

THE VULNERABILITY OF THE HUMAN HEART

The events here reveal that *"the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"* (Jer 17:9). It spells out the depravity of the human heart. David knew all these but he was blinded in that hour, so that he could not see the grave consequences of his actions.

David learned that the woman in question was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Uriah was one of the faithful soldiers of David and, at that time, he was away with Joab fighting for the nation in Ammon. David was aware of Uriah's absence. He sent messengers and they took her to him. After David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he took it easy as if nothing happened. However, it was a disgrace for him as this was not hidden from his servants. Besides losing their respect for him, David would go to commit more sins. He tried to remedy sin by sinning more.

Consequently, out of that union, the woman conceived. It must have been after one or two months that she sent a message to David that she was with child. It is a paradox that, years later, Solomon (a son of Bathsheba) became king of Israel. His greatest weakness turned out to be a love for many women. (The folly of being entangled with strange women is taught in the Book of Proverbs.)

Coming back to David, David was in a dilemma. The more he tried to cover up, the more he added to his sin. Times of loneliness are times of temptation. David thought that everything was concealed, but this act that led to another was indeed an instrument of the wicked one. He should have known better, but he did not flee from the temptation to sin.

THOUGHT: The only remedy for sin is repentance towards God.

PRAYER: Save me, O Father, from the deathly poison of sin.

MONDAY, AUGUST 10

2 SAMUEL 11

GALATIANS 5:16-21

*“...Walk in the Spirit,
and ye shall not
fulfil the lust of the flesh.”*

DAVID ATTEMPTED TO COVER UP HIS DISGRACE

The matter at hand was supposed to be a private affair, but by virtue of David's office, it was an open secret.

David told Joab to send Uriah (the husband of Bathsheba) home. When he came, the king asked him to go to his house and gave him favourable treatment. However, Uriah was a loyal soldier. He knew that it was against military ethics to go to his house and be with his wife when his comrades were in the war front. He refused to follow the king's instructions and did not go to his house. The next day the king tried to persuade Uriah to go home, but he again declined. The king knew that he was trapped and his attempted cover-up was not working. The Lord wanted his sin to be exposed. David should have known better, but he did not anticipate that matters would get worse. All transgressors follow such to their destruction.

David added more to his sin in devising another evil plan. He decided to kill Uriah. He wrote a letter to Joab commanding him to put Uriah on the battlefield on the hottest side and withdraw from him that he might be smitten and die. The evil plan worked, and Uriah was smitten and he died. Joab then sent a message to the king that his plan had been carried out. Though David was in his palace in Jerusalem, he was directly responsible for the death of Uriah. Scripture is silent on whether Joab was aware of David's reason for wanting Uriah eliminated. Nevertheless, all those crimes committed are attributed to David.

Bathsheba was not fully informed of what had transpired that led to the death of her husband. She was also partly guilty of the sin of adultery. The death was reported to her and, naturally, she mourned for him. David was undeterred in his relationship with her. After her mourning period, he sent for her and she became his wife. What David had done displeased the Lord. The grave nature of David's sins was evident, and it would take the hand of God to restore him.

THOUGHT: Yield not to temptation or you will be trapped.

PRAYER: Father, let me follow Thee faithfully and flee from sin.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

2 SAMUEL 12

PSALM 51:1-10

*"Have mercy upon me, O God,
according to thy lovingkindness..."*

GOD SENT NATHAN TO REPROVE DAVID

God was gracious to David and He allowed him time to repent. He sent Nathan the prophet to reprove him of his sin. The man of God approached the king carefully, using a parable. When Nathan finally confronted David, David understood the grave nature of his sin and repented. He had to face the consequences of his sin. He also expressed his repentance in a psalm that he wrote (Ps 51). Nathan told David that the Lord would take away his sin. The child that was born out of the adulterous union died. This caused much sorrow to David. Nathan's parable made David condemn himself. It was a sad occurrence in the nation of Israel that brought the king down spiritually.

At first, David acted as if nothing had happened, but the Lord knew and was not at all pleased. The Lord sent Nathan to David. The details of God's conversation with the prophet are not given. However, the Lord gave His messenger wisdom on how to approach the most powerful man of the nation. Nathan came to David as if he was seeking judgment from the king for a case. He thus told of an imaginary rich man who would not take a kid out of his flock to kill for a traveller. Instead, he took the only kid that a poor man had and dressed it for that traveller. David saw the immediate injustice in the story and sentenced the offender to death and also to pay back fourfold. Nathan's story was a parable. The offender was David and the prophet told him so. The poor man in this case would be Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba.

Nathan identified David as the guilty one. David's sentence was according to the Mosaic Law, and thus right. When anyone stole a sheep or a goat, the penalty would be fourfold repayment. The wisdom of Nathan caused the king to sentence himself. He came to understand the grave nature of his actions when the prophet told him, *"Thou art the man..."* (2 Sam 12:7). This was the turning point of that sad episode, and David responded in a positive attitude to make right that wrong.

THOUGHT: God's justice is not selective.

PRAYER: Father, let me always have a repentant heart.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

2 SAMUEL 12

HEBREWS 12:1-4

*“...let us lay aside every weight, and
the sin which doth so easily beset us,
and let us run with patience...”*

DAVID MADE TO SEE GOD’S FAVOUR

The prophet conveyed to David the Lord’s message and reminded him of all the goodness that the Lord had done for him. It took courage on the part of Nathan to talk to the king at that unpleasant moment, but he did what was needful.

This is part of the message to the king, *“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon...”* (2 Sam 12:9). There was every reason to show the goodness of the Lord to David. He needed to appreciate with thanksgiving, all that the Lord had done for him, exalting him to the highest office in the nation. He had been chosen as a youth to become king, and the Lord sent Samuel to anoint him. With Saul as king, David had a hard time ascending the throne. He was often in danger of losing his life, but the Lord protected him all the way.

When the Lord’s time came, David became king. He was reminded of this because sin had blinded him so much that he did not remember that favour from God. The prophet told him that he had despised the commandment of the Lord in committing that sin. Without repentance, one’s sin can multiply. This was the case with David. The first step was that David looked, coveted and lusted. Then the next step was the sin of adultery, and subsequently murder. This is how far sin can carry anyone when there is no repentance and restrain.

More evil will come out of an unrepentant heart. This was how events turned out to be in David’s case. Everything that concerned the king was an open secret. The immediate servants of the king would have known all that went on. The implications of David’s sin were great.

THOUGHT: Forgiveness comes when sin is forsaken.

PRAYER: Father, let the path of repentance be my choice.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13

2 SAMUEL 12

PSALM 51:1-10

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me.”*

DAVID REPENTED AND BORE THE CONSEQUENCES

In his response to Nathan's parable, the king sentenced himself. Nathan added that the sword would not depart from David's house, i.e. more would die in the house of David by the sword. Scripture further records that he transgressed in secret, but his punishment would be public.

David had to live with those consequences the rest of his life. This had to come to him because every sin is punishable. Secondly, justice must be done to the offended party. David responded with a repentant attitude. He listened to Nathan and knew that his message was from the Lord. He acknowledged that he had sinned against God. Nathan assured him that he was forgiven and was not going to die. This was the mind of the Lord revealed to David, and was no doubt what he wished to hear.

David realised the extent of his sin and was repentant. He prayed to God and wrote his psalm of repentance. The title of the psalm gives its background. This is Psalm 51 with the following introduction: *“To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.”* He begged God for mercy as he expressed his repentance.

David expressed his thoughts and feelings truthfully, and used the best language he could muster up to prove the truthfulness of his expressions. However, since sin has consequences, he had to bear them. It came because his actions had caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme God. These consequences began with a sickness and the death of the child that was born of Bathsheba. It was a painful time and David expressed his emotions in vivid language. When the child was sick, he prayed and fasted and was greatly grieved. He regarded not his servants' intreating, and earnestly desired that the child would live. However, the Lord had determined the fate of the child.

THOUGHT: When in great trouble, God's grace is the best for me.

PRAYER: Father, let me never lose confidence in Thee.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14

2 SAMUEL 12

PSALM 55:16-23

*“Cast thy burden upon the LORD,
and he shall sustain thee.”*

DAVID RESTORED TO FELLOWSHIP

It was on the seventh day that the child died. His servants feared to inform him of the sad news for they reasoned among themselves that while the child was alive, he would not listen to them. Now that the child had died, his reaction should be worse. David saw his servants whispering to one another. He knew that the child had died. He asked them, and they confirmed that it was so. David's mood changed immediately. He rose and washed himself and ate. The servants were surprised at that, but David said that while the child was alive, he had pleaded with the Lord that he might live. Now that the child was dead, there was nothing that he could do. The message hit him hard. He had committed a grievous sin and the consequences were also painful. That experience spoke to him clearly.

Thereafter, David returned to his duties as king. The occasion of his sin was the neglect of his duties in the highest office. The temptation came when he was not active as he should. Joab, the head of his hosts was in the battle front in Rabbah of Ammon. He sent for David to capture the city as king. This was an ethical requirement that only the king could capture a new territory. It was now counted as part of David's dominion under Israel. David came and took it, and they put the crown of the king of Ammon on David's head to show his victory. They took the spoils and subdued the city. This was what David ought to have been doing, but he was idling himself in his house and he was tempted.

Your sin will always find you out. David's sin and its aftermath found him out and he knew its pain. This was not expected of David. He had been faithful and abhorred sin, but Satan knows no boundaries. We must avoid all appearances of sin. Confession and repentance are God's ways when we sin. This is how we overcome Satan.

THOUGHT: Thank the Lord for He is always gracious to forgive.

PRAYER: Praise be to Thee, O God, for Jesus who died for my sins.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

2 SAMUEL 13

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

*“Know ye not that
the unrighteous shall not
inherit the kingdom of God?”*

DISORDER IN DAVID’S HOUSEHOLD

David had repented of his sins and he was forgiven and spared from death. However, Nathan the prophet had said by the word of the Lord to him that the sword would not depart from his house. David paid for his sins. He was reaping the wages of his transgressions. There were incest and murder in his family, as well as damage to his reputation. Disorder and hatred were manifested in his household.

In pain, David had to mourn and endure God’s rod of chastisement. The carnal nature of his unregenerate offspring yielded the fruits of their sinful nature. David, as the head of the family, had to trod the sad path he had chosen. The disorder that hit David’s household may be traced to the constitution of his family. David was polygamous and, since this was not God’s order from the beginning, those who practise polygamy often face negative consequences.

Amnon was one of the sons of David and, unlike his father, he did not fear the Lord. He took advantage of his position to indulge in unrestrained works of the flesh. He lusted after his step-sister, Tamar. He expressed his desire to a very close friend. In those days, intermarriage within families was not frowned upon. Amnon’s desire, however, was purely lust. He had no intention to marry his half-sister. He went as far as to pretend to be sick, which showed his evil desire. His friend noticed his distress.

Jonadab, his cousin, enquired of his problem. Amnon revealed to him his lustful desire for Tamar. As Jonadab was equally unregenerate and subtle, he devised the evil plot and ill-advised Amnon and both of them were in agreement. All along, Amnon harboured that lustful desire.

THOUGHT: The fear of the Lord brings salvation.

PRAYER: Father, may I avoid bad company to please Thee.

DISORDER CONTINUED IN DAVID'S HOUSEHOLD

All along, Amnon harboured that lustful desire to have his sister, Tamar. Jonadab ill advised him to feign sickness. When his father came to see him, he would make known his desire for Tamar to visit him. In this evil plot, as devised by Jonadab, Amnon sought to have a private time with Tamar. Amnon did not heed the warning that *"evil communications corrupt good manners"* (1 Cor 15:33).

David did come to see Amnon and the planned deception worked. Thus, having made his misleading request to his father, the king felt obliged to grant permission as per his request. The pronouncements of the prophet of God to the king concerning the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba were beginning to be fulfilled. However hurting they were, the Lord had already determined that retribution.

Amnon executed his evil plan and manifested his true colours. Tamar came to his house as he had requested of the king. He manipulated her movements until only two of them were left in the house. He asked her to make cakes and to bring them to him. Tamar innocently followed his instructions. When the cakes were ready, Amnon told everybody, except Tamar, to leave the house. He then told her to bring the cakes to his inner chamber. She did as she was told. But, while in the room, he forced himself on her. She tried to resist, but it was all in vain.

Thereafter, Amnon hated her more than he loved her earlier. He ordered that she be removed from his presence. Tamar had to face the shame of this humiliation. She cried in all bitterness and removed her royal dress and put ashes on her head, displaying her innocence.

THOUGHT: God's vengeance has no borders as God is no respecter of persons.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy grace be sufficient for me.

MONDAY, AUGUST 17

2 SAMUEL 13

PSALM 62:1-8

*“Trust in him at all times;
ye people, pour out your heart
before him: God is a refuge for us.”*

ABSALOM ADDED TO THE DISORDER

The events in David's house were not hidden from the public eye. His daughter became a victim of circumstances as she belonged to the king's family. That act of shame was laid to rest, but the whole matter was not over. It had yet to haunt the royal household. One event became a stepping stone to the other. Although, they were unpleasant, they were also instructive as they represented God's warning.

Absalom, another son of David, plotted to take revenge for his sister. (Absalom was Tamar's brother of the same mother.) He knew all that Amnon had done in humiliating his sister. He never forgave him. He might have had other interests as son of the king, but here it seemed that he resolved to take revenge for his sister. He comforted Tamar and took her to his house. He then made a decision on how to take revenge, and he possibly shared with close friends.

King David was very angry when he heard of what happened. But as time went by, Amnon was kind of forgotten. The family was comforted and David assumed that all was well. Nothing was said of the infighting and the adverse relationship within the family. David concentrated on his duties as king of the nation. The sons also continued in their usual business. However, Absalom did not forget his intended revenge.

Absalom resolved to kill Amnon from the day that he had humiliated his sister. After two years, he invited all the sons of David to a feast in his house. He sought permission from the king and invited him also. David declined the invitation but allowed his sons to go. It was at the end of the feast that Absalom ordered his servants to smite Amnon to death. After that was done, the feast ended suddenly and everyone fled for his life. This was now the second death in the family after the matter of Bathsheba. The predictions of the Lord through Nathan were coming to fulfilment.

THOUGHT: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy peace reign in our families.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

2 SAMUEL 13

PSALM 37:1-9

*“Delight thyself also in the LORD;
and he shall give thee
the desires of thine heart.”*

DAVID VEXED BY THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD

The life of David from his youth was one of courage and trusting the Lord. The incident that put him in the limelight was his slaying of the Philistine giant. In his own words, it was God who gave him that ability. He fought his way to become the king of Israel. But he was still human. All the heritage of Adam's sin was with David as much as it is with all the sons of Adam today. The current narrative illustrates this truth.

As the events continued, a false report was brought to David that Absalom had killed all the sons of the king. He began to mourn and rent his clothes and lay on the earth. His servants also did likewise. Jonadab, the friend of Amnon (a cousin), came and corrected the report that the king had received and said that only Amnon was killed. Absalom had planned this for a long time.

It was after this that Absalom also fled. David and all his remaining sons had to face the aftermath of that second death in the royal household. They all wept together for the loss of Amnon. Perhaps they were also scared that their lives were in danger. Absalom fled to Geshur where his mother belonged. He was there for three years. David's heart longed again for Absalom as he was comforted concerning Amnon.

The reality was beginning to set in for David. Death of a loved one is a pain that does not go away quickly. He had committed adultery and murder and now he was sharing the pain of his victims.

David did not anticipate all these, but God is righteous and just. David had to seek the Lord for comfort and solution to his predicament.

David's humility saw him through. It is instructive to adopt a humble attitude before God, and live.

THOUGHT: Sin has negative consequences.

PRAYER: Father, let me never be a slave of sin.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

2 SAMUEL 14

ECCLESIASTES 3:10-14

*"I know that,
whatsoever God doeth,
it shall be for ever..."*

JOAB INTERCEDED FOR ABSALOM

Absalom had gone into self-exile after killing Amnon. He was guilty of shedding blood, thus he took refuge at Geshur. Joab was David's captain of the hosts. It was after three years and the matter of Amnon was nearly forgotten. It was then that Joab perceived that the heart of David was towards Absalom. Thus, he planned to bring him back to Jerusalem. He used a wise woman to talk to the king in a parable to the effect that he might allow his son to return from exile. The king was persuaded, and he told Joab to fetch Absalom from Geshur. Absalom came but could not see the king. This was part of the disorder in David's house. It was only after two years that Absalom was able to see the king.

Joab brought up the matter of Absalom in a parable through a wise woman. Joab was always busy with his duties as the head of the hosts. He talked with the king regularly about the affairs of the nation. The predicament of Absalom could not escape their attention as he was the king's son; and in addition, he was the prospective king of the nation after his father. He had been in exile with his mother's kin at Geshur.

Joab perceived that the king was concerned for his son. He sought a way for the king to allow his son to come back. He was not sure how the king would react to the suggestion, so he devised a parable. He then put it in the mouth of a wise woman. She came to the king as if she had a case that required his attention. She said that she was a widow and that she had two sons who strove in the field and in the end, one killed the other. The people and the law demanded that the murderer should also die. Then the woman would lose both sons. She was pressed to deliver him to be killed. That would mean there would be no heir in the woman's family. But the woman had more to say.

THOUGHT: There is always hope because God is there.

PRAYER: Father, give me answers in all circumstances.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

2 SAMUEL 14

ECCLESIASTES 3:15-22

“...God doeth it,
that men should fear before him.”

THE KING SAW THE TRUTH IN THE PARABLE

David gave an easy judgment and assured the woman that her son would not die. The woman then revealed her intention to the king thus in verse 13: *“And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.”* Those remarks brought him to his senses.

The woman then expressed her desire that the king would grant her request. She was persuaded that she had made herself clear and the king would respond positively. Even though the parable was not devised by her, she was referred to as a wise woman of Tekoah. She was able to speak to the king with dignity. She later revealed the source of her plea. She represented herself in the parable as a widow but, in reality, she was selected for that task because of her wisdom.

Joab was also a leader in Israel and he belonged to the inner circle of the king and he chose that woman knowingly. There is a spiritual application as Matthew Henry observed, “We may notice here, how this widow pleads God’s mercy, and his clemency toward poor guilty sinners... The state of sinners is a state of banishment from God. God pardons none to the dishonor of his law and justice, nor any who are impenitent; nor to the encouragement of crimes, or the hurt of others.”

David knew the intention of the parable. He was also a judge and knew that he was required to make reasonable judgments. The matter before him was personal because Joab was pleading on behalf of a member of the king’s family. When the woman had told all to the king, he knew straightaway the source of that matter. Joab wanted to see an end to that predicament.

THOUGHT: “...in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” (Prov 11:14)

PRAYER: Father, may Thy mercy be my hope at all times.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21

2 SAMUEL 14

HEBREWS 12:7-14

*“Follow peace with all men,
and holiness, without which
no man shall see the Lord.”*

ABSALOM RETURNED HOME

Absalom could have asked Joab to mediate for him. When the king heard the end of the story, he had a clear picture of what was going on. Then the woman revealed the whole truth to him. He received the message and he knew that he had to take action.

The communication with the king showed Joab's pragmatic approach to the matter. He did not wish to offend the king, yet at the same time, he wanted to see an end to Absalom's exile. Thus far, he was waiting for a favourable answer from the king. Apart from being the head of the king's army, Joab served as an adviser to the king in matters of national interests, as well as his domestic matters.

David answered Joab and told him to fetch Absalom from Geshur. The parable of that woman to the king conveyed Joab's desire. Even though the king did not have immediate plans for Absalom, the exile had remained as an unresolved matter that was in the heart of the king. Thus, as soon as this message came to him, David granted permission for his son to return. Joab went to fetch him back. It had been three years since Absalom was exiled, but David was not ready to meet him. He instructed Absalom to go to his own house.

The only comfort here is that the king did not order any punishment for his son. This was Joab's response to the king when he granted him permission to bring Absalom back: *“And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again. And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant”* (2 Sam 14:21-22). It was human activity, with God directing the events behind the scenes.

THOUGHT: Chastisement is for the hard-hearted.

PRAYER: Father, *“lead us not into temptation.”*

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

2 SAMUEL 14

1 PETER 4:7-11

“But the end of all things is at hand:

*be ye therefore sober,
and watch unto prayer.”*

ABSALOM STRUGGLED TO END HIS CASE

When Absalom returned, David gave orders for him to remain in his own house and not meet him. The flow of facts here indicates that Joab and Absalom were communicating, and he had Joab to present his case to the king. The king did not give a time-line even though Absalom was desirous to know how his matter would end. The king was grieving for Amnon who had died and, at the same time, wished to give a fair treatment to Absalom. Any decision had a bearing on him as king.

In minor details about Absalom, it is noted that he was extremely good looking. Even his hair was given a special mention. He was generally ambitious. He had three sons and one daughter named Tamar. She was also praised for her beauty.

He dwelt in Jerusalem two full years but he did not see the king. He sent for Joab two times, requesting to see him, but there was no response. This is possibly because the king had not opened up to meet him and Joab did not want any confrontation. In order to get Joab's attention, Absalom told his servants to set Joab's field of barley on fire. They did as they were told. This hurried Joab to go and see Absalom. Absalom then had the opportunity to tell Joab his desire to see the king. He said that if there be any iniquity in him then let the king kill him. Joab did as per his request and he met the king after five years. It was a friendly meeting as they were reconciled.

The narrative at face value is dominated by deceit and carnal ambition. Nevertheless, it was still a lesson to all concerned that without God their approach was worthless. Be on the Lord's side and you will be safe. The Scripture tells us not to love the world. There is safety in Christ. Seek Him to save you and lead you.

THOUGHT: Negative factors are a cause to appreciate the positive.

PRAYER: Father, may my life be used to edify others.

THE RESTLESS CHARACTER OF ABSALOM

Absalom, as ever, was an ambitious and restless young man. He opened a new chapter in David's house. He was the thirdborn son of David. Absalom had gotten rid of Amnon (the firstborn) and it transpired later that, in his activities, he coveted the throne. David did not perceive his intentions early and he had designated Solomon to succeed him. When Absalom was reconciled to David over the murder of Amnon, he started another phase of struggle with David because his intentions were burning in him.

In his conspiracy, Absalom won the hearts of the people of Israel. He gathered around him, men to further his interests. He prepared to instigate an open rebellion against his father. Matters got worse and David had to flee from Jerusalem. The treason was ruthless and David had no alternative but to leave the palace. However, he was quick to put in place a strategy to come back.

Absalom won the hearts of Israel and he set about a convoy of chariots and horses to follow him. This was to boost his public image. It was five years after killing Amnon that he was able to see the king. He was reconciled to his father as seen earlier. Then he felt that he was free to do as he wanted. He started to pitch camp near the king's gate and used his privilege as a member of the royal family to interfere with the affairs of the nation.

He approached the people who came to the king for judgment as he sought to win their hearts. Scripture records that *"...Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!"* (2 Sam 15:2-4). In this, he recruited a good number of loyal followers.

THOUGHT: An evil character is never short of subtle devices.

PRAYER: Father, let my character yield the fruit of the Spirit.

MONDAY, AUGUST 24

2 SAMUEL 15

PROVERBS 3:11-18

*“For whom the LORD loveth
he correcteth; even as a father the son
in whom he delighteth.”*

ABSALOM'S SHREWD APPROACH WORKED

Absalom was shrewd in his approach because he was conspiring to become king. He treated the people kindly to give them hope. All he wanted was their support. He knew of the popularity of his father and he had to use that clever approach to win those people to his side. The people who encountered him were not suspicious of his intentions. They assumed that David knew what Absalom was doing.

Absalom treated those people with love and kindness and they felt that the aspiring king was responsible. Scripture records that he stole the hearts of the people of Israel. Absalom was a person of such character. It is worthwhile to note that when he killed Amnon, he fronted the treatment of his sister by Amnon with vengeance. He appeared to be doing justice for Tamar. When he returned from Geshur, he lived in his house and did his normal work. After two years of not being allowed to see the king, he compelled Joab to come to him and expressed his desire. He wanted to know the king's verdict over the murder of Amnon. Thus, he set Joab's field of barley on fire. He made a score and his wish was granted. Absalom was subtle and guileful in his decisions and deeds. In this third attempt to devise ways and means to become king, he disassembled David's spy network and he nearly succeeded.

Absalom prepared to incite a rebellion. He had done his groundwork well and was ready to execute his plan. Hebron was a strategic city for him to execute his plan. David had reigned in that city before moving his capital to Jerusalem. It was a home of the house of Jesse. It was not strange for him to go there because it was his family home. He told the king that he had made a vow while he was in Geshur and he wanted to fulfil it in Hebron. He thus sought permission from the king. He spoke simply and David did not see anything unusual in the request. David had no objection and he readily gave permission.

THOUGHT: The misuse of a gift is as good as none.

PRAYER: Father, help me to be truthful in all my utterances.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

2 SAMUEL 15

PSALM 21:1-7

*“For the king trusteth in the LORD,
and through the mercy of the most High
he shall not be moved.”*

ABSALOM’S CONSPIRACY STUMBLED

Absalom sent spies all over Israel to declare him king when they heard the sound of the trumpet. They were to say that Absalom reigned in Hebron. It was a coup against his father. He had gone with two hundred men from Jerusalem. These men were chosen, but they did not know that Absalom wanted to form a rebellious army. The scheme was all set and the situation was moving in favour of Absalom.

In his conspiracy, Absalom had conscripted some of David’s close advisers; he had taken in Ahithophel and possibly some less weighty insiders. The plan was all set to overthrow David. Even though the matter had gone that far, David was not an easy person to overcome. In addition, he had not taken the throne of Israel by force. God had ordered his anointing and when the time came, God removed Saul and all Israel favoured him as king. Absalom did not have any divine anointing and he was not known to be a follower of the Lord as his father. He was a worldly-wise man (if we may borrow Bunyan’s character in *Pilgrim’s Progress*). His plans were moving in the direction that he had crafted. All these and the number of defectors came to the ears of David. The king was quick in making decisions and he planned a tactical retreat.

David decided to flee from Jerusalem as he was told that the hearts of the men of Israel were in favour of Absalom. His immediate plan was to flee Jerusalem. The whole palace moved out except those whom the king had chosen to use for his strategic comeback. Absalom did not know who was loyal to him, and who was for the king. The servants of David were obedient and they followed him. It was a large household, but the king needed them in his flight. David’s immediate concern was his own life; he had to be in a safe place or at least where there was room to fight back. David had not lost hope. He had many experiences from the day he was anointed. Struggling with Saul, he had always acted wisely and made sure decisions.

THOUGHT: A wise leader always sees a window of hope and not despair.

PRAYER: Father, let my eyes see Thy invisible hand in times of danger.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

2 SAMUEL 15

JAMES 4:5-10

*“Humble yourselves
in the sight of the Lord,
and he shall lift you up.”*

DAVID'S PLAN TO DEFEAT THE REBELLION

David had all the professionals of that time, and furthermore, he was a war professional himself. He had experienced enough of such flights under Saul. More importantly, in addition to his qualities, David was a man of prayer. He did not make any move without seeking the Lord.

In his plan, he enlisted the help of Zadok the priest. Thus, in addition to appealing to the Lord, he told the priest to take back the Ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. He also included all the priests in his plans along with informants. In the eyes of the general public, the king was humiliated, but David kept his eyes on God. He wept publicly as he fled, but God was with him.

Ahithophel, who was David's chief counsellor, was seen as a main danger for he was for Absalom and had shown this openly. David prayed to the Lord specifically that He would defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. David assigned another counsellor to go back to Jerusalem and defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. David's spy network was composed of the priests and one of his chief counsellors, Hushai. He was in the plan to counter attack. When Hushai came before David, his coat was rent and though the king did not want him to leave Jerusalem, it was a good time for him to share information and craft some strategies. David was set to be victorious and more so because he trusted the Lord.

Absalom forced David to flee from Jerusalem. However, even in that danger, David looked to the Lord and planned for his return. Thus far, God had seen him through.

THOUGHT: A man of God does not run short of options.

PRAYER: Father, let me ever wait on Thee to answer my prayer.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

2 SAMUEL 16

PSALM 46:1-7

*“The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.”*

DAVID ENDURED HUMILIATION

The departure of David from his palace to nowhere was a great humiliation to him. He was king of Israel and now his son had forced him to run away. He had a good number of sympathisers who would have encouraged him. A servant of the house of Saul was a friend of the king; he brought him food and showed his support. Another stranger who was also of the house of Benjamin took advantage of the tragedy and ridiculed David. The king had to restrain his servants from doing him any harm.

Meanwhile Absalom took the palace and began with a disgraceful note as he was counselled by David's rebel adviser. Nevertheless, David did not give up easily. He carefully planned his return to the palace. At the same time, a sympathetic friend came to meet David and expressed his support. The king had left his palace and had no home; this was not his first such experience. When King Saul was after his life, he had lived in such conditions to hide from him.

Ziba was a servant of Saul, and David had appointed him to manage Saul's estate when he invited Mephibosheth (the son of Jonathan) to live with him in the palace. Ziba felt honoured in that position and he became a friend of the king. The time had come for him to express his gratitude. He brought food to David, enough to feed him and all the people that were with him. In this, he showed his loyalty to David. He had known the king long enough and it was likely he knew that there was a possibility of him coming back to Jerusalem. His act was also an encouragement to David that despite the conspiracy of Absalom, he had a good number of people who supported him.

THOUGHT: Our love for others can be a means of rescue in time of need.

PRAYER: Father, let me love my neighbour as myself.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

2 SAMUEL 16

MATTHEW 5:10-12

*“Blessed are they
which are persecuted
for righteousness’ sake...”*

TRUE FRIENDS CAME TO DAVID’S RESCUE

Ziba and those friends like him knew David well and they followed him. Ziba was in the forefront and so were all the priests that had remained in Jerusalem at the request of David. The king had strategically positioned them so that they could render help when they were needed. Those who went with the king also served a useful purpose in protecting him.

Nevertheless, the main source of strength and hope for David was his trust in the Lord. Details of his activities are not given at this point, but unlike Absalom and the rest of the people who opposed him, David was a man of prayer. This was where the difference with his enemies lay. The many psalms that he composed reveal more of his prayer life. He was a man who trusted God for everything. He never took a major step without seeking God for direction. This was his source of wisdom and protection.

Absalom who was aspiring to become king was destitute of any spiritual understanding. He was cunning and knew how to plot against his opponent, who in this case was his own father. He did not know that it is God who raises kings. Praying saints get God’s favour.

In his flight, David came to Bahurim and there was this man who was of the family of Saul, Shimei, who became an enemy of David. He added to the king’s shame by cursing him in public. He cast stones at David and at all his servants. David, however, had the protection of his mighty men, but this added more to David’s humiliation. Shemei told David that the Lord had returned to him the blood of the house of Saul. He expressed his support for Absalom, saying that David had taken the kingdom unjustly.

THOUGHT: God never forsakes His own.

PRAYER: Lord, teach me how to respond to my enemies.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

2 SAMUEL 16

ROMANS 8:30-34

*"If God be for us,
who can be against us?"*

GOD'S PURPOSE IN DAVID'S HUMILIATION

The enemies of David were ignorant of the details that led to David becoming king. There were advantages and disadvantages in David's humiliation. It became a time of identifying who his friends were and those who were against him. It also brought him closer to the Lord and his true friends. On the other hand, David was not entirely without fault. The sins associated with the matter of Bathsheba continued as a dark blot in the life of David. His humiliation was part of his chastisement for those sins. David had to endure that humiliation and hope in the grace of God. He was repentant and that gave him a heart to pray and endure.

The friends of David wished to fight back. Abishai (David's nephew) was one of the mighty men of David. He was enraged by the cursing of Shimei. He wanted to avenge David. Abishai called Shimei a *"dead dog"* (2 Sam 16:9) and sought permission from David to take his head. David rebuked him and forbade him to do so. He said that Shimei should be left to curse him because the Lord had told him to curse David. He said to Abishai that his own son that came from his bowels was seeking his life. He then asked, *"How much more now may this Benjamite do it?"* (2 Sam 16:11). David pleaded his wish with the Lord that He would look on his affliction and answer him favourably.

That was David who only trusted the Lord. His friends learned many spiritual lessons from him. They all ignored Shimei and he could not do anything more. Shimei represented the party that supported Absalom. This group was of the opinion that David had taken the throne unlawfully. However, David was specially called and anointed by God. At the time of rebellion, he was still capable of leading the nation. The Lord allowed this time of humiliation to befall him as part of his chastisement. Such is the work of the providence of God.

THOUGHT: Godly wisdom is handy when trouble besets us.

PRAYER: Father, give me a spirit of harmony in crucial situations.

ABSALOM REIGNED IN JERUSALEM

Absalom marched to Jerusalem and took over the king's palace. He was accompanied by Ahithophel as his chief counsellor. He served in the same capacity under David but he defected to the side of the rebel son. He had estimated that Absalom was more powerful and on the way to become king. The other counsellor of David was Hushai. He was loyal to David. Thus, David included him in his comeback strategy.

David sent Hushai as a double agent in order to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. He came and showed his support for the rebel son of David. Absalom asked him as to why he had left his friend. Hushai said that as he had served with David, he was also going to serve him. In this, he showed his support for the incoming king. Ahithophel was already a confidant of Absalom and Absalom asked him what he ought to do. His advice was disgraceful. When David left the palace, he had left his concubines to keep the house. Ahithophel counselled Absalom to go into his father's concubines and Absalom was not discerning, but trusted Ahithophel's counsel. This took place in broad daylight and added more to the humiliation of David.

The counsel of Ahithophel was misleading, but on the other hand, the providence of God was in all these events. David had taken Uriah's wife secretly and the Lord had said that vengeance would be before all Israel.

David's disgrace was partly the price of sin and partly a show of God's grace for he was repentant. He endured the humiliation and continued to trust the Lord. When the scripture says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), it includes David. Repentance and faith bring hope and reconciliation with the Lord. Repent of your sins today and God will forgive you.

THOUGHT: "I am a sinner saved by grace."

PRAYER: Father, Thy grace is ever sufficient for my sins.

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

2 SAMUEL 17

HEBREWS 12:7-11

*"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth
with you as with sons; for what son is
he whom the father chasteneth not?"*

ABSALOM REIGNED AS DAVID PLOTTED A COME-BACK

Absalom was proclaimed king when he took Jerusalem. He had a sizable army that followed him. He formed a council of elders that advised him. Ahithophel was the chief counsellor. He counselled the new king on how he could capture David. Hushai was also a favoured counsellor. His counsel differed from Ahithophel's and Absalom accepted Hushai's counsel. Hushai used fear to convince Absalom. All the information was brought to David by appointed messengers. This marked the beginning of his success against the rebellious son.

The new "king" formed a council of elders to advise him: Ahithophel was already prominent among those close to Absalom. He was a leader in the council of elders that advised the new king after he switched allegiance to support Absalom. He was previously with David, but he joined the rebels. When Absalom was settled in the seat of governance, Ahithophel became his chief adviser. He wanted Absalom to succeed so that he would be in an influential position.

Ahithophel was the first one to advise the king on how to defeat David. In his first speech, he outlined his proposal before Absalom. He promised to lead men and smite David. He assumed that, in the absence of David, all the people would follow the new king. He thought that his plan would be successful. Scripture records that Ahithophel's speech pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. However, the new king was not entirely convinced by the saying of Ahithophel. He wanted a second opinion. Hushai was one of the chief counsellors of David and he had been sent on a spy mission to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. He was silent while Ahithophel spoke.

THOUGHT: Human decisions serve divine purposes.

PRAYER: Father, may my decisions always serve Thy good purposes.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

2 SAMUEL 17

JOSHUA 1:6-9

*“Only be thou strong
and very courageous...”*

HUSHAI CREATED FEAR IN ABSALOM’S CAMP

Absalom asked for the opinion of Hushai. He told him of the counsel that Ahithophel had given, and asked if it was acceptable or if he should seek a second opinion. Hushai began by saying, *“The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time”* (2 Sam 17:7). In his speech, Hushai seemed to have aroused fear in the hearts of Absalom and the men that followed him. 2 Samuel 17:14 reveals that *“...the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.”*

Hushai spoke of David as a king of Israel who did not give up easily. They were also familiar with David’s character. This was what Hushai said, *“...thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men”* (2 Sam 17:8-10). He painted the character of David and his men convincingly. The supporters of Absalom knew the abilities of David because they were defectors. They were also familiar with the previous victories of David and how he became the king of Israel. Hushai’s counsel was a strategy to buy time.

Hushai counselled Absalom that the only way to defeat David was to gather all Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and go to war. They would then be able to defeat David. He gave a logical proposal and convincingly showed how it would be impossible to defeat David otherwise.

THOUGHT: Godly counsellors are a gift from the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, may I conform to the counsel of the wise.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

2 SAMUEL 17

PSALM 61

“...he whom
the father chasteneth not?”

THE LORD HAD APPOINTED THE DEFEAT OF AHITHOPHEL

Absalom knew that what Hushai said about David was true. God enabled Hushai to frame his speech in such a way so as to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. Absalom and the men that were with him agreed that the counsel of Hushai was better. This was so because God's hand was in it. 2 Samuel 17:14 reinforces that God is in control of all events.

Hushai reported the conversation he had with Absalom to Abiathar and Zadok the priests. They were to appoint messengers to convey the information to David as a means of ensuring David's safety. Jonathan and Ahimaaz were appointed to make their way from Jerusalem to David's hideout without being noticed.

A lad noticed them and told Absalom. That made the mission dangerous, but the two messengers knew that they had to hide and conceal their movement. They *“came to a man's house in Bahurim”* (2 Sam 17:18), and hid in a well. *“And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known”* (2 Sam 17:19).

When the men of Absalom came looking for the men, the woman told them that they had gone over the brook of water. When Absalom's men could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. The two messengers then came out of the well and resumed their mission. They conveyed their message to David (2 Sam 17:21). David had to move quickly with the people that were with him across River Jordan lest Absalom should come upon him. David, being a man of prayer, took refuge in the promises of God, and thus acted wisely.

THOUGHT: “With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm.”

PRAYER: Father, may Thou be there for me in all my decision-making.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

2 SAMUEL 17

PSALM 40:1-4

*“Blessed is that man
that maketh the LORD his trust...”*

DAVID BEGAN TO GAIN VICTORY

David took refuge beyond River Jordan. Since Absalom did not accept his counsel, Ahithophel knew he would suffer the consequences as a traitor. Ahithophel thus went to his house, set things in order and hanged himself (2 Sam 17:23).

The counsel of Hushai was working against the rebellion of Absalom. Absalom did not have a definite plan on how to overcome David, and there was confusion in the camp of Absalom. He appointed Amasa as the captain of his host, as Joab remained with David. However, his army was ill-prepared to counter the advance of the men of David. The words of Hushai were beginning to yield good fruits.

In Mahanaim, David was a refugee without a home or food supplies. Here, Shobi, Machir and Barzillai were moved by the Lord to supply food and bedding for David and those with him (2 Sam 17:27-29). This took care of their needs. All these would be an encouragement to David that God was helping him and things ahead of him would be better. The condition he was facing was better than the dangers he had faced earlier with Saul.

David's victory was near and assured. It was by the Lord's appointment that Absalom be defeated. The commandment says that one must honour one's father and mother. Yet, Absalom rebelled against his own father. The turn of events for Absalom was a punitive measure by God. The whole episode was not only politically motivated, but also one of familial treachery. Absalom's ambition blinded him so much that he did not see the grave nature of his rebellion. Even if he had some regrets, the matter was irreversible.

Obey God's commandments, and live with the assurance of having the peace of God with us.

THOUGHT: Human ambition makes sin worse.

PRAYER: Father, *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Ps 119:11).

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

2 SAMUEL 18

PSALM 35:1-4

*“Plead my cause, O LORD,
with them that strive with me...”*

DAVID WENT TO WAR WITH ABSALOM

All this time, the activities of Absalom were that of rebellion. He was fighting to become king without any mandate from the Lord, not even from the people of Israel. David had to organise his army to counter Absalom. He gave orders to his captains to be lenient with Absalom and to spare Absalom. His men went with great force to the fighting field which was in the woodland. There were many casualties, the ringleader being one of them. The conflict eventually ended, but with much sorrow for David.

The king organised his army and numbered the people. The nation was then divided as some stood with Absalom and others with David. The king appointed three captains to lead his army; they were Joab, Abishai his brother and Ittai. Each had an equal number of fighters.

David proposed to go to the warfront with his army, but the people persuaded him not to. They told him that if they fled, the enemy would not care for the ordinary people such as them. They would not care even if half of them died. In this, David agreed with them, and did that which seemed best for them. He stood at the gate as the army marched to war by the thousands.

In this case, David delegated the responsibility to his three captains. Joab had a plan as to the fate of Absalom. The Lord also had ordained Absalom's destiny.

THOUGHT: God guides, even when hard decisions are to be made.

PRAYER: Father, give me direction in matters of life and death.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

2 SAMUEL 18

PROVERBS 3:1-5

*“My son, forget not my law;
but let thine heart
keep my commandments.”*

JOAB DIFFERED WITH DAVID IN GIVING ORDERS

David was a man of prayer and had committed the matter before the Lord. However, Joab took it upon himself to make the last decision that was contrary to the will of the king. David had commanded the three captains (Joab, Abishai and Ittai) at the hearing of all the people that they should be lenient with Absalom. David's parental bowels propelled him to spare Absalom's life. Matthew Henry has this to say on that dilemma: “How does David render good for evil! Absalom would have only David smitten; David would have only Absalom spared. This seems to be a resemblance of man's wickedness towards God, and God's mercy to man, of which it is hard to say which is most amazing. Now the Israelites see what it is to take counsel against the Lord and his anointed.”

The captains understood the dilemma of the king. War began as the army marched. The battle was in the forest of Ephraim. In the initial encounter, the people that supported Absalom were slain before the servants of David, with twenty thousand killed.

The battlefield was also against the men of Absalom. Scripture records that the wood killed more people than those that died by the sword. The men of David had experienced different terrains when David was running away from Saul. Fighting in a wooded field was not easy, thus the men of Absalom perished. Joab had a better organised army with experienced captains. The Lord used these factors to give victory to Joab.

THOUGHT: Whether we achieve victory or failure, it is according to God's will, not our wish or effort.

PRAYER: Father, I am Thine. Enable me to stand for Thee.

ABSALOM WAS KILLED IN BATTLE

At the initial stage, a large number of soldiers was killed on the side of Absalom. The counsellors of Absalom defied divine will in supporting the son of David whom the Lord had not appointed. Needless to say, they were destitute of communion with God.

Absalom did not protect himself from the men of war. Kings in ancient days led their armies in the war front, but they took care to ensure their own safety. Lack of experience allowed Absalom to be exposed and endanger his own life. He rode upon a mule without personal security. He did not know how to escape in the woods. He was the son of a king and perhaps he had not bothered to learn the basics about military operations. He was caught in a branch of an oak tree as he rode the mule in the forest of Ephraim. The mule ran away and he was left hanging on that branch. He was too ambitious and did not pay attention to the precautions needed in war.

When Absalom was caught in the tree branch, he could not free himself. One of the men of David saw Absalom hanging and informed Joab. The chief captain of David's army was determined to see Absalom dead for he saw that this would lead to the end of the conflict. Joab told the man who reported about Absalom that he should have killed him. The man protested that they all heard the king charging the captains not to touch Absalom. Joab and his men then slew Absalom, and blew the trumpet to announce the end of the war. He defied the king's order!

THOUGHT: The higher law of God overrides the lower law of man.

PRAYER: Father, show me what to do in matters of life and death.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

2 SAMUEL 18

PROVERBS 9:1-10

*“...the knowledge of the holy
is understanding.”*

DAVID LAMENTED THE DEATH OF HIS SON

The description of Absalom in 2 Samuel 18:18 marks the end of his life and closes a chapter in the history of Israel. The monument mentioned still stands today. The first transgression of Absalom was rebellion against his own father. The commandment in Exodus 20:12 says, “*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long...*”. He went against this commandment, and it led to his death.

Rebellion does not pay, except by death. Though David was desirous that his son should live, it was a conflict between parental love and the leadership of the nation. The instruction here is: keep away from any rebellion, and obey the Lord instead. The exhortation in Romans 13 that there is no power except of God, and powers that be are ordained of God include both the civil government and one's parents.

Initially, Ahimaaz wanted to deliver the news of Absalom's death to David, but Joab restrained him. Eventually, both Ahimaaz and Cushi went and conveyed the news to the king. When David knew that Absalom had died, he wept bitterly for him and wished he had died himself. There was this conflict in David's heart: he had strong feelings for his son as a parent, yet on the other hand he needed to protect his throne. Joab saw the situation differently and acted as he thought fit.

The root cause of the problems that David faced was his multiple marriages. He had many wives and many children. It was difficult for him to have full control. Though the Lord tolerated this in the old era, the original “one man one wife” position stands. The family is the basic institution of human government.

THOUGHT: Flee self-made problems.

PRAYER: Father, give me an obedient heart.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

2 SAMUEL 19

PROVERBS 4:1-5

“...Let thine heart retain my words:
keep my commandments, and live.”

JOAB PREVAILED AS DAVID WAS RESTORED

David continued to mourn for Absalom. Joab came before the king with a rebuke. He told him why Absalom had to die. He persuaded David to speak to the people and made plans for his return to Jerusalem. Finally, the king was headed for Jerusalem to reclaim his palace and throne.

Joab, as the captain of the hosts of Israel, learned that David was still mourning for Absalom. The victory that day was turned to mourning. Since there was a national crisis, Joab saw that there was no time to waste. The matter needed immediate action. It had to be approached with wisdom. In his position, Joab was second to the king in order of seniority. Thus, he was in a position to take action when the king was incapacitated.

The nation was in a confused state on both sides. Those who supported Absalom were waiting to see what would happen next. David was incapacitated emotionally and could not direct the nation. Joab had to take upon himself to confront the king. Joab said, *“Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well”* (2 Sam 19:5-6).

These words overcame David as he was humbled. He was a leader and he knew that the words of Joab were true. He knew that there would be serious consequences if he did not put his personal sorrow aside. He yielded and obeyed.

THOUGHT: A leader considers to diverse opinions in making choices.

PRAYER: Father, show me when to seek help from others.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

2 SAMUEL 19

PROVERBS 22:1-5

*“By humility and
the fear of the LORD are
riches, and honour, and life.”*

DAVID HUMBLING IN YIELDING TO JOAB

Joab followed up his confrontation by asking the king to go out and speak to his servants. He strongly asserted that if the king would not go, there would be none among them who would support him. David was a king and a soldier, and he had many experiences. It was only at the death of his son Absalom that he was incapacitated. When he ordered the war to confront Absalom's rebellion, he would have known that there would be casualties. Notwithstanding, he was hoping that Absalom, the ring leader of the rebellion, would be spared.

Joab had hastened to slay Absalom because he knew his death would end the war. Absalom would have died a natural death on the branch of the tree that he was caught in, but Joab wanted to ensure his death. David surely understood the situation, but he was overcome by strong parental love. Joab had to step in to correct the predicament.

Joab as the captain of his host had told David that if he would not go and speak with the people, he would have no loyal servants left with him. The situation would be worse for him than any of the evil that had befallen him. His words were powerful, and the king yielded. So, David arose and sat at the gate in readiness to speak to his servants.

The people came to hear their king. They were wondering what had happened to David, one who had fought many wars and had delivered the nation from their enemies, mainly the Philistines. However, the king had to flee from his son Absalom. They spoke well of him though he was humbled. The main task now was to bring the king back to Jerusalem. The restoration of the king to his throne was needful and all officers had to be in their rightful place. Those who had opposed David turned loyal, and desired the king to return to Jerusalem. The government could function effectively only when the king was on the throne and all officers in their places.

THOUGHT: True friends are known in times of crisis.

PRAYER: Father, let Thy sovereignty rule in my life always.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

2 SAMUEL 19

ROMANS 12:12-17

"Recompense to no man evil for evil."

DAVID WAS SET TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM

David urged Zadok and Abiathar (the priests) to speak to the elders of Judah to bring the king back to Jerusalem (2 Sam 19:11). Their service had to do with the spiritual needs of the nation. Samuel, as a priest, had anointed David to be king (the kings could not take office without that priestly anointing). The rebellion had resulted in a disorder so that the priests initially moved out of the city with David (2 Sam 15:24). David then asked them to return to Jerusalem as they were not in danger (2 Sam 15:27-29).

The king then sent them to tell the house of Judah to return the king to his city. These were the king's kinsmen. The king promised Amasa he would be captain of hosts in place of Joab. The house of Judah then set in motion the return of the king. They conducted him across Jordan. Shimei who cursed the king came to seek reconciliation. Ziba the servant of the house of Saul came with his fifteen sons to support David. Plans were moving well for the return to Jerusalem.

David showed a gracious approach to his adversaries. His servants had a different opinion that Shimei had to be punished. They said that his support for the king was not sincere. The king assured Shimei that he would not die. He even swore to him on that. The other person to whom he showed his graciousness is Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. In the Absalom rebellion, he had remained in Jerusalem.

Mephibosheth came to meet David to seek peace. He had a miserable appearance as he had not groomed himself since the day the king left Jerusalem. He was apologetic and said that he was deceived. The king told him that he would share his property with Ziba. David overruled his servants who insisted that those who had supported the rebels should be punished.

THOUGHT: God's grace reconciles even great enemies.

PRAYER: Father, grant me this grace to be at peace with all men.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

2 SAMUEL 19

EPHESIANS 5:13-17

*“See then that ye walk circumspectly,
not as fools, but as wise.”*

DAVID BEGAN TO SETTLE IN JERUSALEM

When David was assured of the restoration of his throne, he gave an answer to those who desired revenge. He said that he knew that he was still king over Israel and he desired no adversaries. David knew the law of love, that it covered a multitude of sins. He applied it in this situation and it worked to help him settle in the kingdom, without worrying about the threat of enemies. He made his enemies his friends.

The rebellion of Absalom was another blot in David's life of which he was partly responsible. He was thus careful to ensure a peaceful restoration to his throne. He made every effort to see that all went well. Thus, he reconciled with his friends and enemies.

Barzillai was David's good friend from Gilead who aided him greatly during his brief exile. He was one of those who conducted the king to Jerusalem. David loved Barzillai and invited him to go and live with him in Jerusalem. He was an old man of eighty years and did not accept the king's invitation, but they remained great friends. He recommended Chimham his servant to go with David.

The king welcomed Chimham and bid farewell to Barzillai. All the men of David were with him when he crossed Jordan to go to Jerusalem. The men of both Judah and Israel wanted to have a part in the king and those of Judah prevailed.

The challenges that David encountered taught him to fear the Lord more. They also gave him a gracious heart. There is always a purpose for the Lord allowing setbacks to befall His people: so that they may learn to obey Him. Submit your heart to the will of the Lord today.

THOUGHT: The Lord uses lessons of experience to teach great things.

PRAYER: Father, may I always love all, even those who hate me.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

2 SAMUEL 20

ROMANS 13:1-5

*“Let every soul be subject
unto the higher powers...”*

DAVID RETURNED AND CONFRONTED A NEW REBELLION

The confrontations and setbacks of David were no different from modern struggles for power. He was on his way to Jerusalem when a new rebellion from Sheba, a Benjamite set in. He came to the city.

When Absalom died, there were interest groups that wanted the favour of the king. Those who did not get the king's listening ear wanted to establish another centre of power. Sheba, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, saw an opportunity to oppose David.

Sheba saw that he was excluded from David's inner circle, and was thirsty for power. Like Absalom, he did not know that the appointment to that high office came from above. He took a carnal approach and counted on the majority. However, he was set to fail. He knew that David had not yet settled in his palace and there were those who had supported Absalom who desired a new place of power. He blew a trumpet and said that they had no part with David. He demeaned David and called upon Israel to go back to their tents.

It was a good number in Israel who gave heed to Sheba's plea. They deserted David and followed Sheba, but David was not entirely forsaken. He had a good number in Judah who were loyal to him. Sheba underestimated David and thought that he had a majority. He did not take into account other factors that would be required to qualify him.

THOUGHT: Only God has a say on who should rule.

PRAYER: Father, let me follow Thy directive when choosing leaders.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 13

2 SAMUEL 20

PSALM 23

*"The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want."*

SHEBA CAUSED SOME SETBACK IN DAVID'S CAMP

The Sheba rebellion served to help David in identifying those who were genuinely his friends. Sheba underestimated the abilities of David. On the other hand, David, in his wisdom, was a man of strategy and he was all ears when the rebellion started. His assurance, however, did not depend on his might but on prayer.

David had divine anointing and had just overcome the first opposition led by his own son. David was also a brave man who would not surrender easily. When he penned in a Psalm these words, *"I shall not want"*, he was depending on God's power to help him in all his earthly struggles. Lack of spiritual understanding was a shortcoming on the part of the rebel leader, Sheba. He overestimated his ability when he blew the trumpet, and his failure was imminent.

David's men were divided because of the rebellion. Thus, Judah brought the king to Jerusalem. In his house, there were the women he had left behind to keep house whom Absalom had defiled. David then separated them and they lived as widows for the remaining of their lives.

Amasa was one of his captains and worked with Joab. David gave him an order to assemble the men of Judah in three days. He went and did as the king had told him, but he took a longer time than that appointed by the king. David told Abishai that Sheba would do them more harm than Absalom did. He then gave a new order to Abishai to pursue Sheba that he should not escape and Amasa joined them. Joab was still in command and it seemed that he was not pleased when the king gave direct orders to Amasa. He conspired and murdered him.

THOUGHT: The providence of God works even in the midst of confusion.

PRAYER: Father, give me wisdom to overcome any confusion.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

2 SAMUEL 20

JOB 42:1-5

*"I know that thou
canst do every thing..."*

MEN OF DAVID CONFRONTED SHEBA

The primary concern then was for David to overcome the rebellion of Sheba. Though it was an opposition to the king that came immediately after that of Absalom, there was a positive side to it. It helped David to know who his real friends were. It also warned him of other possible rebellions so that he could prepare to counter them.

All attention was now on the rebellion. At the beginning, Sheba depended on majority support from Israel. All the mighty men of Judah went after him.

However, anyone who would like to fight David had to count the cost because David and his men had great experience in war. It was the case here. Sheba had the numbers, while the men of David had experience and were capable of winning a war. Joab and Abishai followed Sheba with Joab in command. They pursued him to the city of Bethmaachah and the war turned very intense. If the conflict had continued, the city would have been destroyed and there would have been casualties.

Sheba was not a resident of that city and his rebellion was going to harm Bethmaachah. A woman planned to behead Sheba and make peace with Joab. She came and talked to Joab about her plan, and did as she had said. She beheaded Sheba and threw his head to Joab from the wall. That brought the Sheba rebellion to an end.

THOUGHT: God renders help from unexpected sources when need arises and He is faithful.

PRAYER: Father, may I keep myself in Thy will so that I am assured that my victory is from Thee.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

2 SAMUEL 20

ROMANS 12:3-9

*“...to think soberly,
according as God hath dealt
to every man the measure of faith.”*

GOD GAVE HELP FROM UNEXPECTED SOURCE

Joab blew the trumpet of victory. Then he and his men returned to the king in Jerusalem. This was a pleasant surprise to David and his men. It was a relief to him to overcome those two rebellions as he retained his throne. He had a better understanding of the kind of people in his kingdom. On the whole, it was the Lord that sustained him to lead Israel in the midst of that hostility.

It was another win for David. Matthew Henry comments:

“Justly is that place attacked, which dares to harbour a traitor; nor will the heart fare better which indulges rebellious lusts, that will not have Christ to reign over them. A discreet woman, by her prudent management, satisfied Joab, and yet saved the city. Wisdom is not confined to rank or sex; it consists not in deep knowledge; but in understanding how to act as matters arise, that troubles may be turned away and benefits secured. A great deal of mischief would be prevented, if contending parties would understand one another. Let both sides be undeceived. The single condition of peace is, the surrender of the traitor. It is so in God’s dealing with the soul, when besieged by conviction and distress; sin is the traitor; the beloved lust is the rebel: part with that, cast away the transgression, and all shall be well. There is no peace on any other terms.”

Joab continued to be the captain of host of David, and other officers served in their different offices. David was thus reestablished in Jerusalem after that time of trial. His victories were from above for he was anointed to that office. Those who acted contrary would fail. Always obey what God has revealed.

THOUGHT: Leadership is not just physical power but a divine gift.

PRAYER: Father, let peace prevail in my church and we shall achieve great things.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

2 SAMUEL 21

DEUTERONOMY 28:49-53

*"The LORD shall bring a nation
against thee from far..."*

FAMINE CONFRONTED DAVID

David was settled in Jerusalem after overcoming two rebellions. As king, he had to respond to emergencies that might befall the nation. Now he had to confront famine, the Gibeonites, the house of Saul and the Philistine giants. From the outset of these problems, David saw that it was needful to inquire of the Lord. In so doing, he found the right direction and was able to get solutions. He did not forget to seek and trust in the Lord, and he came out victorious.

The famine required David's attention as it was a national calamity. The people had no food and had to seek help from the king. It lasted for three years.

Famine comes because there is no rain. The crops would not grow for there is no water, and the animals that give milk and meat would also die. The people also die because they rely on this heavenly resource. In the face of such calamity, the people looked to the king for some relief. It is not indicated if there were any deaths in this instance, but it was a major calamity that lasted three years. It caused great concern for the king. It came to a point where he perceived that it was the hand of the Lord against them for some sin. Thus, he inquired of the Lord.

THOUGHT: God acts against sin.

PRAYER: Father, remind me to seek Thy face in any calamity.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

2 SAMUEL 21

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

*“For this is good and acceptable
in the sight of God our Saviour...”*

DAVID SOUGHT GOD’S SOLUTION

David did not forget to seek God’s direction in difficult situations because he was a spiritually-minded leader. There is no mention of any of his officers known to share the same devotion as him. The only possible persons who were close to the king would be the priests. These were spiritual leaders and the king was to seek counsel from them in such situations. David, however, sought God’s direction on his own in any problem that befell him. Some of the psalms that he had composed told of the disposition of his heart when he was going through difficult situations. In his prayer closet, he poured all his thoughts before his God who has solutions to all his problems. He made sure that he did not miss time with his God whom he trusted to have answers for him.

David had a wealth of experience with God. God picked him from his father’s house and made him king of Israel. After his anointing by Samuel, he still had a long journey to the throne. Eventually the Lord delivered the kingdom into his hand. The current experience of David was one of the many trials that confronted him, but he knew the Source of his strength and comfort.

The types of experiences of David and those of the ancient kings are no different from what modern-day leaders of countries face. Famine and other shortages come today because of poor economic planning, natural disasters, etc. However, there is hardly a leader today who will seek divine solution. Regardless of their neglect, God still sits on the throne. It will bring about a great change if they follow David’s example. It is the responsibility of believers today to pray for their national leaders that God may give them solutions to their national problems.

The Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles are our teachers today. Their examples and exhortations are our guide. Are you taking heed?

THOUGHT: The Lord has answers for you and me today.

PRAYER: Father, bless our land and nation.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

2 SAMUEL 21

JOSHUA 9:3,15-17

*“And Joshua made peace with them,
and made a league with them...”*

THE CAUSE OF FAMINE WAS REVEALED

The Lord told David that the calamity came about because of Saul who had slain the Gibeonites. They were the remnants of the Amorites that the elders of Israel had sworn in the days of Joshua not to kill them. That oath stood for the whole nation all those years. These people were made servants and they hewed firewood and fetched water for Israel.

When Joshua was campaigning to capture Canaan, these people were afraid and they tricked Joshua and the elders of Israel into making a league. King Saul knew of the league, but violated it by slaying the Gibeonites. The league was binding to the whole nation for generations. The Gibeonites also knew of it and Israel needed to pay for breaking such a vow. Such violation breaks the law of God which says, *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain...”* (Exod 20:7). Saul had ignored this and the Lord had to avenge the whole nation because it was a national league.

When David knew the cause of the calamity on the nation of Israel, he took steps to seek for a remedy. He asked the Gibeonites what they wanted done. They asked for seven sons of the house of Saul to be delivered unto them to be hanged. It was a painful condition, but the transgression had to be paid. It had been many years or even generations since Israel and the Gibeonites made that league and it had not been revoked. Even Joshua himself had to honour that league even though he was tricked into it. God's name had to be honoured.

The prohibition not to take the name of the Lord in vain is part of the Ten Commandments. This third commandment requires holy and reverent use of God's name, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works. It forbids all abuse of God's name. Saul ignored that league made under Joshua, and the time of the visitation of judgment had come.

THOUGHT: Punishment for every sin comes at God's appointed time.

PRAYER: Father, help me to depart from all sin.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

2 SAMUEL 21

MALACHI 1:11-14

*“...from the rising of the sun...
unto the going down of the same...”*

THE SONS OF SAUL PUNISHED

The decision to hand over the sons of Saul depended on the king and he had to respond. David consulted well before making a decision. Then he consented to their demand and delivered the seven sons of Saul to the Gibeonites.

The men of Gibeon refused any form of appeasement except the seven sons of Saul. Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, would have been one of them, but there was an oath between his father and David. He was thus spared the vengeance of the Gibeonites. There were two sons of Rizpah, a woman who had cohabited with King Saul; these two were handed over to the Gibeonites together with another five sons that Michal, the daughter of Saul, had brought up (2 Sam 21:8). The number that was demanded was met.

All the seven were delivered to the Gibeonites and they hanged them in the hill before the Lord. It was at the time of harvest and the land was thus healed. Rizpah was said to have mourned bitterly for her sons as any mother would. There was a price to be paid and the reaction of Rizpah showed that the punishment was felt. The league that Joshua had made with the Gibeonites was nearly four hundred years old, but time does not revoke such a solemn league.

It was after this that David accorded the bones of Saul and Jonathan a decent burial in the graves of their fathers. Since they were killed in war, the men of Jabeshgilead had buried them where they had died. Thus, David had their bones exhumed and reburied. David as king had many issues to balance. He had to make important decisions all the time. This required much wisdom which the Lord gave him.

David's time as king of Israel was coming to an end. He had exercised his power responsibly. This is a lesson for generations.

THOUGHT: Everyone, especially one who is in a place of authority, is answerable to God.

PRAYER: Father, help me to order my life journey responsibly.

THE BATTLE WITH GIANTS

David is best known for slaying Goliath, the Philistine giant, in his youth. There were many giants in that land, including Goliath's kinsmen. In those early days, they used primitive weapons, physical abilities and skills in any confrontation with the giants. The narrative of those wars gives a picture of both skill and trust in God in battles. David's men were not giants but, like him in his youth, they were skilled in combat.

2 Samuel 21:15 tells us that there was still constant war between Israel and the Philistines: *"Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint."* Although David also went to the war front, he could not fight as he did in his younger days. When he was weakened, Abishai, one of his mighty men, slew the giant named Ishbibenob.

Then, David's men of war prevented David from going to the battle front (2 Sam 21:17b). Though the king wanted to lead the army as in times past, his soldiers knew better. They did not want to expose their king to danger. His security detail consisted of men wise enough to understand the need to take every precaution to protect their king.

In the battle at Gob, Sibbechai slew Saph, one of the giants (2 Sam 21:18). In another battle at Gob, Elhanan slew the brother of giant Goliath (2 Sam 21:19). There was another giant of giants who had a total of twenty-four fingers and toes. When he defied Israel, Jonathan (a nephew of David) slew him. Altogether, four giants fell by the hand of David's men. These were the last recorded battles which David took part in.

A review of David and his wars shows that he had never lost any battle that he fought because he had always sought and trusted the Lord. He is also called the sweet psalmist of Israel. He contributed much to spiritual music in Israel.

THOUGHT: God has solutions to all fears, and can make His own to prosper.

PRAYER: Father, guide my spiritual journey until I reach my eternal home.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

2 SAMUEL 22

HEBREWS 6:1-8

“And this will we do, if God permit.”

A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING (I)

2 Samuel 22 is a digression from the historical narrative. It is a psalm that expresses the heart of David. The Psalms are David's best means of expressing his feelings to God. Below is a commentary by Keil and Delitzsch on 2 Samuel 22. It is titled, “David's Psalm of Thanksgiving for Victory over All His Enemies.”

“In the following psalm of thanksgiving, David praises the Lord as his deliverer out of all dangers during his agitated life and conflicts with his foes (2 Sam 22:2-4). In the first half he pictures his marvellous deliverance out of all the troubles which he passed through, especially in the time of Saul's persecutions, under the image of an extraordinary theophany (vv 5-20), and unfolds the ground of this deliverance (2 Sam 22:21-28). In the second half he proclaims the mighty help of the Lord, and his consequent victories over the foreign enemies of his government (vv 29-46), and closes with renewed praise of God for all His glorious deeds (2 Sam 22:47-51). The psalm is thus arranged in two leading divisions, with an introductory and concluding strophe. But we cannot discover any definite system of strophes in the further arrangement of the principal divisions, as the several groups of thoughts are not rounded off symmetrically.

The contents and form of this song of praise answer to the fact attested by the heading, that it was composed by David in the later years of his reign, when God had rescued him from all his foes, and helped his kingdom to victory over all the neighbouring heathen nations. The genuineness of the psalm is acknowledged to be indisputable by all the modern critics...”

THOUGHT: Good thoughts come from the Heavenly Father.

PRAYER: Father, fill me with Thy Holy Spirit to declare Thy Word.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

2 SAMUEL 22

HEBREWS 10:19-24

*“Let us hold fast the profession
of our faith without wavering...”*

A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING (II)

Keil and Delitzsch continued in the analysis of the psalm in 2 Samuel 22 with more observations and showed its Davidic origin.

“There is no ground whatever for calling in question the Davidic authorship of the psalm, and therefore the statement made in the heading; and, in fact, there is all the more reason for adhering to it, because it is attested twice. The recurrence of the psalm as one of Davidic origin in 2 Samuel 22 is of some weight, since not the slightest suspicion attaches to any of the other songs of sayings attributed to David in the second book of Samuel (e.g., 2 Sam 3:33-34; 2 Sam 5:8; 2 Sam 7:18-29; 2 Sam 23:1-7). Moreover, the psalm is evidently ancient, and suited to the classical period of the language and its poetry. 2 Sam 22:31 is quoted as early as Pro 30:5, and 2 Sam 22:34 in Hab 3:19. The psalm was also regarded as Davidic at a very early period, as the ‘diaskeuast’ of the second book of Samuel met with the heading, which attributes the psalm to David. No doubt this opinion might be founded upon 2 Sam 22:51; and with perfect justice if it were: for if the psalm was not composed by David, it must have been composed in his name and spirit; and who could have been this contemporaneous and equal poet?” Again, after quoting several thoroughly Davidic signs, he says: “It is very obvious with how little justice the words of 2 Sam 22:51, relating to 2 Sam 7:12-16, 2 Sam 7:26, 2 Sam 7:29, have been pronounced spurious. Besides, the psalm can no more have concluded with...(of David) (2 Sam 22:51) than with 2 Sam 22:50; and if David refers to himself by name at the commencement in 2 Sam 23:1, and in the middle in 2 Sam 7:20, why should he not do the same at the close?”

We cherish 2 Samuel 22 as we read it as part of the inspired text all along.

THOUGHT: All Scripture is given by the breath of God.

PRAYER: Father, let the Holy Spirit affirm Thy Word in my heart every day.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

2 SAMUEL 23

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-5

*"Thou therefore endure hardness,
as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*

A REVIEW OF DAVID'S YOUTH

David was coming to his last days as king in Israel. He was also set to complete his pilgrimage on earth. His last words depicted him as a mighty king and one who feared the Lord. He expressed his heart and his relationship with God in speech and in the many psalms that he had written.

He began as an obedient shepherd boy in his father's house. He was the last-born son of Jesse and the main occupation for boys in those days was to look after sheep. The Jews kept sheep for meat, sacrifices and possibly for milk. There were no grazing fields with sufficient grass for the animals. They had to go a long distance to get the feed. There was also need to protect the sheep from wild animals. David testified that at some instance, he was able to kill a lion and a bear that wanted to kill his father's sheep. He added that it was the Lord who enabled him to do so. Thus, the shepherd's job was more than merely leading the sheep to graze. David performed this duty effectively. He used his success as a shepherd to encourage himself that all things were possible when he trusted God. His spiritual maturity was a gift of God's grace. Jesse, his father, trusted David even as a child, as he was an efficient errand boy.

When the Philistines went to war with Israel, David's three older brothers fought for Israel (1 Sam 17:13). David was sent by his father to take some food to his brothers. It was during this trip that he encountered a challenge to the nation of Israel from a foreign army. David offered to help fight Goliath. In his offer, he spoke with strong confidence.

God chose David, the youngest son of his father, long before David himself knew, and He favoured him among the people with his extraordinary achievements. David was very young when he killed the Philistine giant. His achievement then brought him into the national limelight, and he became the captain of the host of the nation under King Saul. David attributed his successes to the Lord.

THOUGHT: All success and failure in life are permitted by our Creator, according to His will.

PRAYER: Father, remove all fear from my heart as I follow Thee.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

2 SAMUEL 23

PSALM 29

*“The LORD will give strength
unto his people; the LORD will
bless his people with peace.”*

DAVID AS A MILITARY LEADER

It was after that Goliath episode that David turned out to be a mighty military leader. He won every war that he fought. He had men around him who were committed and faithful to him. There are a few highlights that defined his life and his reign as king of his nation. First, he was a great military leader.

David is best known as the king of his nation and first in the dynasty of the house of Judah that reigned for many generations. God confirmed his leadership when He sent Samuel to anoint him as king. Though his appointment to the throne of Israel was against the normal procedure of succession within the royal family, every activity pointed to him as successor of Saul. Jonathan (son of King Saul), the legitimate Crown Prince, agreed that David was designated to be king. David had shortcomings in his life, but he was quick to bring about correction.

David became the standard of good kings as Jeroboam of the divided kingdom era was the measure of wicked kings. David was brave and did not make any battle move without asking the Lord. He trusted the Lord as he faced the Philistine giant and was assured of victory after his past experiences with a lion and a bear, and that was why he spoke with confidence. It was from that beginning that he demonstrated that war was won by trusting the Lord, and not by might. After Goliath's defeat, King Saul made David the military leader. However, Saul resented it when the womenfolk, while singing praises of both David and Saul, attributed more success to David. Saul knew that David was destined to become king.

David showed his military might when he fought mainly with the Philistines and other nations. However, at one instance, he misused his expertise when he intentionally had Uriah killed in battle. It was a sin that David had to repent of before the Lord. In all, David was a great soldier. In those early days, there was no formal training as today. However, David's skill came as a gift from God.

THOUGHT: God's gifts are discovered in action.

PRAYER: Father, let me use my gifts for Thy glory.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

2 SAMUEL 23

PSALM 23

*"The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want."*

DAVID AS A MASTER OF MUSIC

Besides his successes as a soldier, David had another talent which he used to the glory of God. He was a gifted musician and player of instruments. He began to show this talent when he ministered to King Saul. He earned the name *"the sweet psalmist of Israel"* (2 Sam 23:1). He was also a gifted poet. The quality of those psalms was not only on rhyme and pleasant melody, but more its spiritual content. He was also gifted in this regard.

All his psalms that are recorded in Scripture are recognised as the Word of God. They are all inspired, and they express God's truth. They are written for the spiritual benefit of all who read and sing them. God chose David and endowed him with that gift for the blessing of His people. Much has been said and written about his psalms.

In the well-known Psalm 23, he wrote about himself, but the psalm applies to all believers. It has been a blessing to generations. The expressions of his heart are worth repeating for exhortation. God was central in David's expressions. In other psalms, he acknowledged God as the Rock of Israel. In this context, he spoke of protection. He used this to paint a picture of his relationship with God. He spoke of God's covenant as assurance of His protection. He was victorious over the sons of Belial and told of the destruction of these enemies.

The life of David and his experiences showed that he was multi-talented. He was a spiritual leader, and he did his best to fulfil all those expectations. It can be said that he was successful in fulfilling all the demands of his God-given responsibilities. The psalms and sweet music gave him great joy.

THOUGHT: God's gifts are to be used to edify others.

PRAYER: Father, use Thy servants to bless the church today.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

2 SAMUEL 23

PSALM 121

*“The Lord shall preserve thee
from all evil...”*

EPILOGUE OF DAVID’S LIFE

The greatest challenges in David’s life were the rebellions that he faced as a king. That which came from Absalom nearly removed him from the highest office in the kingdom. This was followed by another rebellion by Sheba. In all his life, he did not lose any war. This was not out of his own might, but he always trusted the Lord and prayed before taking any action. David was raised of God, and given multiple talents for the edification of the people he was leading and for the generations that followed. In his days, the words of God were known by the nation of Israel and God gave them leaders to guide them. When the Greater Son of David (the Lord Jesus) came, He opened the door for the words of God to reach all nations.

The wars that David fought to protect his country were many. David had his advisors who assisted him in making important decisions. In the crisis that arose over Absalom’s rebellion, the names of Hushai and Ahithophel featured as his counsellors. The names of other officers who served in his government were also featured. Many others who served under him were his military leaders. When soldiers are successful, the country is at peace.

It is common today for soldiers who fight in wars to protect their nation to be rewarded with honours and other awards. There is a list of David’s men who fought in many wars when David was king. These were honoured for what they had achieved. The list spans from those who served under David when he fought the Philistines in the days of Saul, and ends with those who served in his last days. Those whose names appear in the list are thirty-seven. It was a time to reward them and express gratitude for what they had done for the nation. While David had the support of these men, God gave him wisdom to make right decisions. David is prominent in the Old Testament because he was a leader who knew God. And he was a man after God’s own heart.

THOUGHT: God uses people for the purposes He has foreordained.

PRAYER: Father, let me know Thy purpose for my life.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 27

2 SAMUEL 23-24

PSALM 38:1-9

"O LORD,

rebuke me not in thy wrath..."

THE FINAL YEARS OF DAVID'S LIFE

Joab was the only person among David's men who defied the king publicly and got away with it. He was the son of David's sister and was appointed as the captain of the host. In the case of Absalom, David had given orders to spare the life of Absalom (King David's son), but Joab slew him in defiance. There were other murders under Joab's hand that the king disapproved of.

Abishai was a brother of Joab, and he was loyal to King David. When the king desired the water of the well of Bethlehem (which had its way blocked by the Philistines), Abishai and two others broke through the enemy lines and fetched the water for the king. David saw this act as a sacrifice of their lives, and thus he refused to drink that water but poured it out to the Lord. Both nephews of David served under him to his last days.

David depended on the Lord, and did not neglect to acknowledge Him. The Lord gives assistance the same way today as He did in David's life. It is a desired legacy. When Jesus comes to reward His servants, will He find you watching?

It is also true that a high office can be deceptive, and leads one to disobey the Lord. This was what happened to David near the end of his reign. The command he gave to his officers to carry out a census in all Israel seemed legitimate at face value. Such an exercise is needful when it is done for a good purpose. In this particular case, there was no good reason. The Lord saw pride in the heart of David. David soon realised his sin, and repented. However, the consequences of that sin could not be avoided. The remedy was an offering made to the Lord. He was instructed through the prophet, Gad, and he did as he was commanded.

THOUGHT: The Lord is always ready to forgive.

PRAYER: Father, let me recognise my sins and repent of them.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

2 SAMUEL 24

PSALM 86:1-7

*“Bow down thine ear, O LORD,
hear me: for I am poor and needy.”*

DAVID’S ORDER OF A CENSUS TURNED SINFUL

David lived in peace after overcoming the rebellion of his son Absalom. He was able to overcome his challengers, and he had peace. However, he failed to recognise that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He was thus moved to number Israel, with an ill motive in his heart. He could not justify his action. God knew his heart.

The king was motivated by pride. He ordered Joab, the captain of his host, to go throughout the whole land of Israel from Dan to Beersheba to number the people. Joab had read the mind of the king, and objected politely. The king prevailed against him and told him with finality that he had to do as commanded. David forgot that the Lord did not depend on numbers, but operated according to His eternal purpose.

The conversation with Joab ought to have reminded the king of all that the Lord had done for him all along. However, he did not even listen to his conscience. Joab was obliged to go and carry out the census as commanded. The task was no mean exercise. They went throughout the whole country, and numbered the people. The names of the places and how they carried it out are recorded in the text. The question may be asked as to why the king did not perceive that there was a sinful motive in his action. David had been known to fear the Lord, and he would not make any important move without asking the Lord.

The answer lies in the fact that man is born a sinner by nature. Since the fall, man is inclined to follow the path of sin. This is the second sin mentioned in the narrative on David, after the matter of Bathsheba. The heart is deceitful and Scriptures give several warnings in this regard. Times of peace are also times of temptation, and we must resist the wiles of the devil (cf. Eph 6:11).

THOUGHT: Sin is everywhere present. I must be watchful.

PRAYER: Father, remove all sinful motives in my heart.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

2 SAMUEL 24

PSALM 27:1-5

*“For in time of trouble he shall
hide me in his pavilion...”*

DAVID DISCOVERED HIS SIN AND REPENTED

It took Joab and his team nine months and twenty days to complete that census exercise, and he gave the number to the king. It was then that David's heart smote him. He knew that he had ordered that census out of a sinful motive. He acknowledged his sin and asked the Lord to take it away. When the number was given to David, he was able to discover that it was personal pride that had moved him to number the people.

David reflected on this, and knew that he was at fault. He then took the right course and repented of his sin. In his repentance, he confessed to the Lord that he had sinned greatly in what he had done. He asked the Lord to take away his iniquity because he had done foolishly. These were humble and repentant confessions. God is ready to forgive. If the fruit of the Spirit is measured by human perception, David would still be in the forefront. He followed the Lord from his youth, and he generally did not take any action without asking the Lord.

The Lord made him king of Israel and gave him victory in all his wars. He also expressed his relationship with the Lord many times, mainly in the Psalms. However, salvation is not by the works that we have done, but by the grace of God only. God gave David a heart of repentance and grace to engage in any good that he did. Thus, David acknowledged his sin and was assured of forgiveness. However, the consequences of sin remain.

The Lord would not let David get away with his sin without punishment. It was painful. The word of the Lord came to David through Gad the prophet. David was given three choices as the rod of his punishment. David said that he did not want to fall into the hands of man, but to the Lord. Three days of pestilence was his preferred punishment. Thus, he was reconciled to God.

THOUGHT: Yielding to God brings about gracious reconciliation.

PRAYER: Father, let me humble myself before Thee every day.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

2 SAMUEL 24

PSALM 26

“Judge me, O LORD;

for I have walked in mine integrity...”

GOD FORGAVE AND INSTRUCTED DAVID

David had sinned, but the pain came upon his people. This was to show David that he must not boast of numbers, for the Lord was able to destroy a multitude. The number of those who died was more than what David would need in a war. The Lord wanted to humble him in this manner and to teach him through this object lesson. David was a man who never lost a war, but here was his humiliation, so that he might know that the Lord is indeed the Lord of hosts. The Lord had to bring him this low because he forsook dependence on the Lord. He wanted to boast of a large number of his men of war. The Lord taught him the hard way.

He was instructed to go and build an altar on the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam 24:18). An altar was a place to offer sacrifice to the Lord as a form of worship. It was the most reverential way to worship God before the Son of God came to the world and offered Himself as a final sacrifice for all the sins of men. David came and conversed with Araunah who allowed him to use the floor and also the oxen and the threshing instruments for wood. The king's intention was to buy, but Araunah offered the items for free. Nevertheless, David objected the free offer and said that he would not offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. He bought the floor and oxen for fifty shekels of silver. He might have offered him more than the market price then. He insisted on paying and Araunah accepted his offer. Perhaps, David thought that Araunah might have offered his floor because he feared the king. He could also have wanted to show that he was obedient to God's Law and that he would not use his position to act unlawfully.

Thus, David built an altar and offered to the Lord the sacrifice as had been instructed. He was then reconciled to the Lord and the sin of pride in the census was then put behind him. Pride is a serious sin. Those in authority must take great care. All sins are equally serious. What sin can you detect in your life? Come back to the Lord today.

THOUGHT: Kings must also submit to God.

PRAYER: Father, let me always honour Thee and those in authority.
