

2 Samuel: New European Christadelphian Commentary

Duncan Heaster

Carelinks

PO Bo 152, Menai NSW 2234

AUSTRALIA

www.carelinks.net

Copyright

Copyright © 2018 by Duncan Heaster.

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review or scholarly journal.

First Printing: 2018

ISBN 978-0-244-11212-7

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. Charities such as Carelinks Ministries and the Christadelphian Advancement Trust endeavour to provide totally free copies worldwide according to resources and donations available to them. But there is a desire by many to go beyond those brief comments on each chapter, and delve deeper into the text. The New European Christadelphian commentary seeks to meet that need. As with all Divine things, beauty becomes the more apparent the closer we analyze. We can zoom in the scale of investigation to literally every letter of the words used by His Spirit. But that would require endless volumes. And academic analysis is no more nor less than that; we are to live by His word. This commentary seeks to achieve a balance between practical teaching on one hand, and a reasonable level of thorough consideration of the original text. On that side of things, you will observe in the commentary a common abbreviation: “s.w.”. This stands for “same word”; the same original Greek or Hebrew word translated [A] is used when translated [B]. This helps to slightly remove the mask of translation through which most Bible readers have to relate to the original text.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But finally- don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks Ministries or The Christadelphian Advancement Trust. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

dh@heaster.org

2 Samuel

2 Samuel Chapter 1

2 Samuel 1:1

It happened after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites-

Saul was empowered to smite or slaughter the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3,7 s.w.), but he didn't completely do this. As often happens, God then passed on the job to another, in this case David. We can see His hand working in similar ways today. This seems to be the idea of Esther 4:14. If she had not saved her people, then God would have pursued another plan to the same end.

And David had stayed two days in Ziklag-

Ziklag was about 90 miles from Gilboa where Saul had been slain (cp. 1 Sam. 27:6). A fast messenger would have taken two or three days to cover that distance with the news. The record has every 'ring of truth' to it in the details. It is this internal, circumstantial evidence which is to me the greatest proof that the Bible is indeed God's inspired word.

2 Samuel 1:2

it happened on the third day, that behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul-

LXX "From the people of Saul". We wonder whether the man was in fact as he claimed, an Amalekite who had been with Saul. For David had just been fighting the Amalekites (:1), and was near their territory. I wonder if in fact he was a local man who had heard or even guessed the news and had come with his own agendas. The record of Saul's death in 1 Sam. 31 contradicts the story of the Amalekite. But the Biblical record at times describes things as they appear to be. The NT language of demons is another example. However the fact the man had Saul's crown and bracelets (:10) would suggest that he was one of the wandering types who hung around battlefields eager for the spoil.

The three days journey from Gilboa to Ziklag has been noted on :1, but we note that David had travelled with the Philistines almost to Gilboa (1 Sam. 29:1), and had then been sent back to Ziklag, and it had taken them three days to get there (1 Sam. 30:1). The record has every circumstantial evidence of being true.

With his clothes torn and dust upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and showed respect-

Literally, he made obeisance, the word being used specifically for worshipping God. He was showing that he accepted David as the new king. We note that all arguments that "Jesus received worship, therefore Jesus is God" are flawed in that the words for Divine worship are also sometimes used about the worship of men; and this is a parade example.

The language here is that of 1 Sam. 4:12, where a Benjamite has the same tokens of mourning when bringing the news of the disastrous defeat of Aphek. I noted above that the man came "from the people of Saul" (LXX). Perhaps he was an Amalekite associated with Saul. See on :4.

2 Samuel 1:3

David said to him, Where do you come from? He said to him, I have escaped out of the camp of Israel-

This suggests the Amalekite was on Israel's side, and I have suggested on :2,4 that he was effectively a Benjamite from Saul's tribe and close to Saul.

2 Samuel 1:4

David said to him, How did it go? Please tell me. He answered, The people have fled from the battle, and many of the people also have fallen and are dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also-

"Many of the people" (2 Sam. 1:4) is no contradiction with 1 Sam. 31:6, where "all his men" refers to Saul's immediate body-guard. The report of the bad news here is exactly that of 1 Sam. 4:16, where a Benjamite reports a defeat in the same order: "The rout, the slaughter among the people, the death of the leaders, are mentioned in an ascending climax". This corroborates the suggestion on :2 that this Amalekite was in league with Saul quite closely.

2 Samuel 1:5

David said to the young man who told him, How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?-

David is sceptical of the man from the start, but accepts what he says at face value and judges him accordingly.

2 Samuel 1:6

The young man who told him said, As I happened by chance on Mount Gilboa, behold, Saul was leaning on his spear; and behold, the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him-

'Happening by chance' contradicts his story that he had escaped out of the camp or army of Israel (:3). But David doesn't challenge this obvious contradiction, but rather judges the man according to his own words and claimed positions. Leaning upon his spear meant suicide; the contradiction was that Saul was utterly alone, and hadn't managed to kill himself by leaning upon his spear.

2 Samuel 1:7

When he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Here I am'-

This contradicts the account of Saul's death in 1 Sam. 31, and is a typical example of how a liar will fabricate details to try to make their story look first hand and credible.

2 Samuel 1:8

He said to me, 'Who are you?'. I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite'-

Here we have another internal contradiction within the man's story. If Saul wished to die not at the hands of the uncircumcised, why then would he agree to being slain by an uncircumcised Amalekite.

2 Samuel 1:9

He said to me, 'Please stand beside me, and kill me; for anguish has taken hold of me, because my life is yet whole in me'-

The man was perhaps aware of how David had spared Saul's life because he believed it was wrong to slay Yahweh's anointed. And so the man creates the story that Saul had all but killed himself by leaning on his own spear (:6), and the Amalekite had just helped him by putting him out of the agony of a bungled suicide. The story lacks credibility.

2 Samuel 1:10

So I stood beside him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he had fallen. I took the crown that was on his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord-

As noted on :9, the man is trying to say that Saul was going to die anyway after having

fallen upon his own spear in suicide (:6). In this case, there was no need to kill him, because Saul was going to die anyway in due course. The man's story is self contradictory. But David doesn't raise any of the obvious contradictions; like the Lord Jesus dealing with untruths told Him, he takes the words at face value and reasons with the man according to his own words. And this is a pattern for us, not to be so obsessed with "truth" that we demonstrate the contradictions in the words of others, but rather taking them at face value and drawing the conclusions from those words. In this case, despite all the contradictions, the man was saying that he had slain Yahweh's anointed, and that was the grounds of condemnation in David's eyes.

2 Samuel 1:11

Then David took hold on his clothes, and tore them; and likewise all the men who were with him-

David accepted that the man's story was true insofar as Saul was dead, with the crown and bracelets being evidence of that.

2 Samuel 1:12

They mourned, wept and fasted until evening, for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of Yahweh, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword-
We enquire why David weeps so sincerely for Saul. I don't believe it was mere theatricism, nor purely politically motivated by a desire to get the house of Saul onside with him in his new kingdom. There was something evidently genuine about his grief.

Ps. 35:14 is David's comment about his grief for Saul both during Saul's life and also at his death: "I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother. I bowed down mourning, as one who mourns his mother". This is one verse which to me is a cameo of the extent of the victory which David won against the mind of the flesh, against our massive tendency to repay sin with sin, bitterness with bitterness, anger with anger. If we take nothing else away from this, please focus your mind on this, and keep the memory: Here David protests his love for the one who was persecuting him (Ps. 35:12) and is reflecting upon his attitude to Saul's death. "As one who mourns for his mother". This is surely one of the most powerful figures that could be employed. Picture a young man of say 24, in a dark blue suit, kneeling down at the graveside of his mother, surrounded by friends and relatives, bowing down heavily in his grief. Or picture a man of 34, 44, 54, hair greying and receding now, bowing himself down heavily. Or even 64, 74, alone in his grief, bowing down heavily to the green turf, muttering words about mum. Perhaps some of us haven't yet experienced this; many have. If you haven't, just imagine it. Surely it brings a lump to your throat. Now it was with this intensity of grief that David mourned the death or sickness of his persecutor. This is a wondrous reflection of his devotion, his true love, his triumph over bitterness and anger, over all the human actions that had been directed against him. The heavy bowing down of the Lord Jesus as he wept over Jerusalem, the city that hated and rejected him, whose leaders slew him, whose people screamed for his blood. David wept for Saul as if he was his friend or brother. Who was David's friend and brother? Surely Jonathan his brother-in-law. But he wept for Saul, David says, as he wept for Jonathan. This is testified to historically by David's lament of 2 Sam. 1. And still David sought out the house of Saul, "that I may shew the kindness of God" unto them (2 Sam. 9:3). It was the experience of Divine kindness that motivated David. As he hoped for fellowship at the King's table in the future, so David delighted in inviting his former enemies to partake of his table, now *he* was king (2 Sam. 9:7,11,13). And if we hope to share the Lord's table in the Kingdom, we must share it with our weaker brethren now. I see in all this such a triumph for David, that a man should reflect the love of God to such an extent, to love in the face of such hatred, to not just love those who loved him.

The choice of a man mourning his mother, rather than a man his son, his father or his sister, was intentional. A man mourns for his mother because of the deep bond he feels now severed, and from feelings of guilt over ingratitude to her, lack of appreciation for her. And this was how David genuinely felt for Saul, despite all Saul's evil against him.

The deep sorrow of the Lord Jesus for Judas and all those who turn away is surely typified here. Right at the bitter end, the Lord still referred to him as His friend (Mt. 26:50), even though a few hours before He had been speaking of how the faithful few were His friends, and how He would give His life for His friends (Jn. 15:13-15). Throughout His ministry, the Lord had spoken of the faithful as His friends (Lk. 14:20; 11:8; 12:4). This was the spirit of the Lord Jesus in His time of dying, this is what enabled Him to go through the mock trial, the intense degradation, the bitter pain of rejection, without bitterness and the sin of unholy anger. To be like David to Saul, like Paul to Corinth, like Christ to the Jews, like God to us, really is possible. If that's how we can live, we will truly be in the new life.

We must however compare this great love of David for Saul with the many bitter words of imprecation he says about him in his Psalms. See on :23. Perhaps one reason for David's sadness was that he realized that his overhasty prayers had in a way been answered. We really must be careful what we pray for, in case we receive it. Many human relationships include an element of love and hate [hence women remain in physically abusive relationships with men who protest "love" for them], and here David's love finally triumphs over the hate.

2 Samuel 1:13

David said to the young man who told him, Where are you from? He answered, I am the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite-

LXX "The son of an Amalekite sojourner". The man has already stated he is an Amalekite (:8), so the intention of David's question was not in order to elicit this information. Rather is David implying that it was even more wrong for an uncircumcised Gentile to slay Yahweh's anointed king of Israel.

2 Samuel 1:14

David said to him, How were you not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy Yahweh's anointed?-

We tend to be particularly judgmental in cases where we ourselves overcame a temptation. David could have used his hand to slay Saul and his own men urged him to do so, and would've done so; but David resisted (the same term for putting forth a hand upon the anointed is used in 1 Sam. 24:6,10; 26:9,11,23). And now he condemns to death a man who had done what he very nearly did, and what his own men wanted to do. And so the strongest condemnation for smokers comes from ex-smokers, and so forth. We need to be aware of this feature of human nature.

2 Samuel 1:15

David called one of the young men and said, Go near, and fall on him. He struck him, so that he died-

David had just slain the Amalekites with extreme brutality, slaying even their children so that none would be left alive to tell others that David's men had slaughtered them. David perhaps felt justified in this by Ex. 17:16, but I consider this was not David at his best. David still had that blood lust in him at this time. His slaying of this Amalekite could have been to demonstrate that he really was in lamentation for Saul's death and was truly sad, and believed that any who slew Yahweh's anointed must die the death. But his motives were surely mixed. He wanted to make a political statement to the house of Saul; and he also had blood lust in him from the recent fight with the Amalekites (:1). Not for nothing

was he precluded from building the temple because God considered he had shed too much blood.

It seems to me that this was an over the top reaction, and yet again betrays a lack of value and meaning attached to the human person. There was no attempt to convert the frightened young man to grace, to the God of Israel. The summary slaying of Rechab and Baanah has some similarities (2 Sam. 4:12). We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

2 Samuel 1:16

David said to him, Your blood be on your head; for your mouth has testified against you saying, 'I have slain Yahweh's anointed'-

As noted above, the man's story had various points of obvious internal contradiction within it. But David doesn't dwell upon these, although he may imply he considers the man is lying about the details, but rather judges the man according to his words and intentions. This looks forward to how the Lord Jesus will judge according to our words (Lk. 19:22 alludes here), by which men shall be condemned (Mt. 12:37). The need to respect Yahweh's anointed however continues to our day, for we too are anointed, in that we are "in Christ", the anointed one, and anointed (2 Cor. 1:21). This deep respect for all others "in Christ" should impart to relationships "in Christ" an altogether unique quality, a love so unusual that it is enough to convert the world (Jn. 17).

2 Samuel 1:17

David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son-

David is careful to united Saul and Jonathan together; as noted on :12, he mourned "as though it [Saul] had been my friend or my brother" [Jonathan].

2 Samuel 1:18

(and he commanded them to teach the children of Judah the song of the bow-

Saul was slain by a bow, and this was to be memorialized in the title. Similarly Ex. 3:1-22 is called "The Bush" in Mk. 12:26. Or the reference may be to Jonathan's fondness for archery (1 Sam. 20:20), and his gift of his own bow to David (1 Sam. 18:4). David and Saul had a highly complex relationship, pointing forward to the complexity of relationship between Christ and Israel. Consider the way that Jewry initially accepted John's Gospel of Messiah, how soon after the resurrection thousands of the priests who had rejected Christ then accepted him, and how even a few hours before the crucifixion the people shouted out for Jesus of Nazareth to be their Messiah-king. These are some of many hints that there was a complex acceptance-rejection relationship between Israel and Christ. Saul and David likewise had a mutual love and respect for each other. After all Saul had done to David, David's grief at his death in 2 Sam. 1 is deep indeed. David taught all Israel to regularly sing that song of grief for Saul, and his zeal to demonstrate his forgiveness to the house of Saul is outstanding. Saul's sons and family were also involved in the anti-David campaign.

Behold, it is written in the book of Jashar)-

Literally "the upright", showing how David imputed righteousness to Saul as an upright one. But this book has significantly not been preserved and was not Divinely inspired; because Saul is not ultimately in the book of God's upright ones.

2 Samuel 1:19

Your glory, Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!-

LXX "Set up a pillar, O Israel, for the slain that died upon thy high places". Or the Hebrew for "glory" is that for "gazelle" and may refer to the swiftness of Jonathan. If the LXX is

followed, we see David unafraid to break the spirit of the Mosaic law in Lev. 26:1; just as David at times acted as a Levitical priest when he wasn't one. The reference to "high places" suggests idolatry, and there is the implication in the Psalms written against Saul that he was finally an idolater. The place of his death was therefore appropriate.

2 Samuel 1:20

Don't tell it in Gath. Don't publish it in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph-

But all these things did of course happen (1 Sam. 31:9). We must read this as David's bitter regret that it happened.

2 Samuel 1:21

You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain on you, neither fields of offerings-
LXX "Fields of firstfruits".

For there the shield of the mighty was shamefully cast away, The shield of Saul was not anointed with oil-

Shields were anointed with oil before going into battle (Is. 21:5). The idea may be that Saul's shield didn't save him, he perished as if he had not anointed it with oil; but the implication is that his anointing as king of Israel hadn't saved him. He had been rejected, in favour of David.

2 Samuel 1:22

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, Jonathan's bow didn't turn back. Saul's sword didn't return empty-

Jonathan and Saul's "bow... and sword" were used by them in the fateful battle on Gilboa. Does this mean that Jonathan was trusting in his human strength again? Psalm 44, which sounds very much like David's meditation on Israel's defeat on Gilboa, includes the comment: "I (David) will not trust in my *bow*, neither shall my *sword* save me" (Ps. 44:6). Or does it mean that although Jonathan gave David / Jesus his human strength, his bow (1 Sam. 18:4), but David gave it back to him, for him to use on his own initiative?

It is possible to Biblically reconstruct the battle of Gilboa, and thus to enter into the pathos of the whole scene yet more fully. Saul and Jonathan did not retreat / turn back, when the rest of Israel did (1 Sam. 31:1). Saul and his sons held their ground, slaying many Philistines. But then Jonathan was wounded by an arrow (the Hebrew word translated "slain" in 2 Sam. 1:19,22,25 means to pierce to death; crucifixion language), as was Saul. Yet they kept on fighting, until they were surrounded on all sides; they died "in the *midst* of the battle" (2 Sam. 1:25); they "perished" (2 Sam. 1:27), a Hebrew word also translated 'to have no way to flee'. They tried to flee, eventually throwing down their shields so that they could run faster (2 Sam. 1:21). Eventually Jonathan and his brothers, the cream of Israel, lay slain on Gilboa, and Saul then fell on his sword.

2 Samuel 1:23

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives-

LXX "Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and the beautiful". Or, "loving and kindly". Saul had been anything but this, but it is part of love to impute righteousness to a person, to see them positively after their death; and this is why God's love leads to His imputation of righteousness to us, as Rom. 1-8 explains. The sense of this verse in the Hebrew is that "Neither in their lives nor in their death were they divided". But they were deeply divided in their lives. We see here David wishing by all means to impute righteousness to both Saul and Jonathan, even though he had suffered so terribly from Saul. We see here the measure

of David. Despite his Psalms of imprecation against Saul, when Saul dies, he shows that in his heart he truly loved Saul and forgave him to the point of imputing righteousness to him. We must remember that when a man rails against another. The words are indeed sinful, for we shall be judged according to our words. But human nature is so contradictory that within there may also be a core love for the person being abused in hot blood. Thankfully God judges righteously, factoring in all the invisible things of the heart which man cannot; we cannot ultimately judge, and this inability is the reason why we must not judge.

In their death they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions-

David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is extremely positive, after the spirit of the way in which Christ looks upon his dead saints (cp. God's positive comments on many of the kings after their death). Yet we know that Saul's death was in recompense for his dire apostasy. In that punishment, David observed, he and Jonathan "were not divided". This may suggest that in some sense Jonathan was too closely linked with his father, and was therefore implicated in his punishment. It can be shown that not all Saul's sons died on Gilboa; therefore there was special point to the fact that Jonathan died with his father in that way. David's command that there should be no dew or rain upon the mountains (2 Sam. 1:21) was to be picked up years later by Elijah, when he made the same imprecation against an apostate Israel (1 Kings 17:1).

Consider the following:

- The description of Jonathan as the son of Saul occurs a massive 23 times; the connection between them is certainly highlighted.
- Jonathan had Gideon as his personal hero. Yet there is ample evidence that Saul too saw Gideon in this light. Does this suggest that in his more spiritual days, Saul successfully imparted his spiritual enthusiasm for Gideon to his son in Sunday school lessons?
- Mephibosheth is called Saul's son (2 Sam. 9:7,10; 19:24), although he was actually Jonathan's son. This suggests that the son was brought up in Saul's house. This certainly does not give the impression that Jonathan separated himself from his father's house.
- Jonathan was commander of the army (1 Sam. 13:2). When he gave "the robe that was upon him" to David (1 Sam. 18:4), he was effectively making David the commander (cp. 2 Chron. 18:9,29). Thus when "Saul set (David) over the men of war" (1 Sam. 18:5), he was tacitly going along with Jonathan's wish, even though by this time he had already heard the women praising David more than himself, and his bitter jealousy against David had already begun (1 Sam. 18:6). This little point simply shows the external unity of action between Saul and Jonathan.

This closeness in Jonathan's relationship with Saul shows the emotional tangle which Jonathan was in on account of his relationship with David. If we truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, and if we are honest enough to come to terms with the pull of our own natures, we will be going through exactly the same. Our Lord seems to have seen in Jonathan a type of ourselves. In the context of warning us that loyalty to Him would mean confessing him before men and conflict between fathers and sons, he encourages us that not a hair of our head will perish (Mt. 10:30 cp. Lk. 21:18). This is picking up the application of this phrase to Jonathan in 1 Sam. 14:45.

2 Samuel 1:24

You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet delicately, who put ornaments of gold on your clothing-

It was those daughters of Israel who had praised David more than they had Saul, and this had been the trigger for Saul's jealousy complex against David. Samuel had warned that Saul would make the daughters of Israel suffer, making them his slavegirls. But here again, David imputes righteousness to Saul, a sign of love. And that is the same outcome of the

love of God for us in Christ.

2 Samuel 1:25

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places-
See on :22 for a reconstruction of the battle. I suggested on :23 that Jonathan died not at his spiritually best. The reference to *his* high places could imply that he died at the high places where he performed idolatry. We note the elements of idolatry in the names of his children.

2 Samuel 1:26

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women-
"The love of Christ, that passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19) is clearly prefigured in David's feelings for Jonathan and the love of David for Jonathan. Despite many passionate relationships with women, experiencing the depth of human closeness more than many, David could sob: Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women". The Hebrew for "wonderful" has a root meaning 'separate'. This love of Jonathan was separate from all other love David had known. In this we see perhaps the first Old Testament foretaste of *agape* love, love beyond the *phileo* and *eros*. Emotionally and spiritually, Jonathan and David went way ahead of their time. David speaks of Jonathan's love in terms of male: female love. He describes him as "the beauty of Israel", "very pleasant hast thou been unto me"; and grammatically, "your love to me..." (2 Sam. 1:26) implies that the lover was female. These two brethren had a spiritual love for each other which totally transcended the gender division. In like manner, our Lord said that male believers could be His sister and mother. We are dealing with high things here. Yet the heights of the David: Jonathan relationship are set down here to challenge us to at least try to touch the sky, however briefly. And when David later wrote of how good and "pleasant" it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133), he surely had the pleasantness of his relationship with Jonathan in mind, and wished it to be shared by all his brethren.

2 Samuel 1:27

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!-
"The mighty"- see on 1 Sam. 14:45. David had refused those same "weapons of war" in his victory over Goliath, and he may imply that now Israel were to learn the lesson- and trust in Yahweh rather than weapons. Indeed "the mighty" is the term used for Goliath in 1 Sam. 17:51. It's as if David sees this defeat as a reversal of his victory over Goliath.

2 Samuel Chapter 2

2 Samuel 2:1 It happened after this, that David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? Yahweh said to him, Go up. David said, Where shall I go up? He said, To Hebron-

David had been waiting to become king for very many years, if indeed Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21). To the credit of his humility, he didn't immediately gleefully seize power. He asks God whether he should, and where in Israel he should make his base, presumably by using the urim and thummim in the breastplate which was then in his possession. He was then living in Ziklag, which was in Philistine territory and not then considered a city of Judah.

2 Samuel 2:2 So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite-

This notice seems to pave the way for the note in 2 Sam. 3:2-5, that David took at least six other wives in the seven years he reigned in Hebron. We could get the impression that David's spiritual life was in some areas in steady decline from the time he slew Goliath in his youth. And yet he died in faith.

2 Samuel 2:3 David brought up his men who were with him, every man with his household. They lived in the cities of Hebron-

Six hundred men with their families would have been a major group of people, too large to just settle in the existing city of Hebron itself. It has been estimated that the population of all Israel at the time was only 300,000 at the most, which meant that the 3,000 or so with David would have been the equivalent of a significant town.

2 Samuel 2:4 The men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah-

It was known that Samuel had anointed David king, nearly 40 years before (Acts 13:21). This was therefore an act of showing that they were in step with God's clear intentions for David, and we at times likewise have to make such demonstrations of being in step with the path God is clearly revealing.

They told David saying, The men of Jabesh Gilead were those who buried Saul-

It could well be that they told him this in disgust or warning, expecting David to take some sanctions against them. But David does the very opposite, and blesses his enemies. For a major theme of these chapters is his enthusiasm to show every grace possible to the supporters and house of Saul, although they were his enemies.

2 Samuel 2:5 David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead and said to them, Blessed are you by Yahweh, that you have shown this kindness to your lord, even to Saul, and have buried him-

The people of Jabesh knew there was a civil war going on between the supporters of Saul and those of David. They had consciously buried Saul as a statement of respect, which surely implied loyalty to the house of Saul. For who you officially buried was a major statement in those times. And they receive a message of blessing from David. This was an expression of grace by David which was unheard of in the hard world of those days.

2 Samuel 2:6 Now may Yahweh show grace and truth to you. I also will reward you for this kindness, because you have done this thing-

David sees himself as showing this grace in tandem with Yahweh. "Grace and truth" often refers to the covenant promises, and David wishes them to receive every blessing of the covenant, and on the basis of that covenant accept him as king. He is giving a spiritual

dimension to the kingdom he wished to create, based around a common share in the covenant. And that indeed is the only true basis for unity. David however suggests in :7 that the "reward" he offers them is to come under his kingship. 'Reward' or 'doing' kindness / good is exactly the term David's wife Abigail had used of what God would do to David on Saul's death (1 Sam. 25:30 s.w.). David was influenced by his wife's perceptive words. And as he realizes he had been shown such grace by being made king, he wished to reflect that grace to others, even his political enemies; a principle for us to live by.

2 Samuel 2:7 Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant-

"Valiant" definitely refers to soldiers; it could be that David was inviting the men of Jabesh to join his army. This would have seemed a politically dangerous move, to invite his enemies to infiltrate his own military. But he acted according to his persuasion of grace and his desire to honour what he had promised to both Saul and Jonathan; and finally he was blessed for it.

For Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them- Jabesh was in Gilead not in Judah, but on the basis of grace, David invites these people to as it were become Jews, and come under his rulership. The Lord Jesus, whom David looked forward to, operates likewise.

2 Samuel 2:8 Now Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's army, had taken Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim-

This was about twenty miles east of Jordan, and hardly the most central place from which to try to rule Israel. We get the impression that Abner was using Ishbosheth for his own ends.

2 Samuel 2:9 and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin and over all Israel-

From Mahanaim, east of Jordan, Ishbosheth could not reign in practice "over all Israel", so we conclude that this was what Abner proclaimed him as, even if it had little meaning in practice.

2 Samuel 2:10 Ishbosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David-

If Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21), Ishbosheth was born at the start of his reign. His name is elsewhere Ish Baal, but here that has been played upon, making a word meaning literally 'man of shame'. This would suggest that Saul was a Baal worshipper at the start of his reign. He had never met Samuel nor attended his sacrifices to Yahweh. It had been God's intention to turn around the heart of this secular Israelite to Himself, through the gift of His Spirit making him "another man" and giving him "another heart". He was clearly not chosen because of any spirituality, but in the hope he would become a parade example of God's transforming grace.

2 Samuel 2:11 The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months-

Sometimes the Biblical record is vague, other times exact. This reflects how God is not seeking to cover His back against critics. He is of an altogether higher nature than that. There are times when the Spirit uses very approximate numbers rather than exact ("about the space of four hundred and fifty years", Acts 13:20 cp. 1 Kings 6:1). The reference to "seventy" in Judges 9:56 also doesn't seem exact. Seven and a half years (2 Sam. 2:11) becomes "seven years" (1 Kings 2:11); three months and ten days (2 Chron. 36:9) becomes "three months" (2 Kings 24:8). And 1 Kings 7:23 gives the circumference of the laver as "thirty cubits", although it was ten cubits broad. Taking 'pi' to be 3.14, it is

apparent that the circumference would have been 31.4 cubits; but the Spirit says, summing up, "thirty".

2 Samuel 2:12 Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon-

Gibeon was exactly half way between Hebron, David's capital, and Mahanaim, the capital of Abner and his puppet Ishbosheth. It's about 26 miles from Gibeon to both the capitals. That Abner "went out" towards the territory of Judah (Gibeon is only six miles from Jerusalem) shows that he felt strong enough to try to engage David's side in conflict.

2 Samuel 2:13 Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met them by the pool of Gibeon; and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool-

The 'going out' as in :12 was to battle. The pool of Gibeon has been located, and it is in a valley. The two armies would have seen each other from the opposite sides of the valley, hence the suggestion to fight at the pool in the valley.

2 Samuel 2:14 Abner said to Joab, Please let the young men arise and play before us! Joab said, Let them arise!-

We get the impression from this that Abner really didn't want to see bloodshed within Israel as a result of the civil war he was now initiating; he therefore suggested that as with the battle against Goliath, the issue was resolved by a symbolic number of young men fighting each other in full view of both armies. See on :21.

2 Samuel 2:15 Then they arose and went over by number: twelve for Benjamin, and for Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David-

The choice of twelve could suggest that both sides saw themselves as the true Israel, and that all Israel, all 12 tribes, should be subservient to them. Abner's 12 men were chosen for their loyalty to their tribe; whereas David's 12 men were simply his servants, their loyalty was to him and not to any tribe. They are therefore described as his servants, rather than men of Judah. See on :17.

2 Samuel 2:16 They each caught his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together-

This is proof for all time that conflict between brethren is only ever a lose-lose situation. 'Falling down together' is the language of Divine judgment (Is. 31:3; Jer. 6:21; 46:12). The conflict between brethren was not blessed by God and was His way of judging them all.

*Therefore that place was called Helkath Hazzurim, which is in Gibeon-
"The field of the sharp knives".*

2 Samuel 2:17 The battle was very severe that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David-

As noted on :15, Abner's men are described in terms of their loyalty to their tribal grouping; whereas David's soldiers were simply his servants, their loyalty was to him and not to any tribe. They are therefore described as his servants, rather than men of Judah. And this is the effect which personal loyalty to the Lord Jesus should have upon us. All human labels fade beneath that reality. See on :31.

2 Samuel 2:18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai and Asahel: and Asahel

was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle-

This family were from Bethlehem (:32), and would have known David well, as it was but a small village. We can imagine Asahel playing with David as a child. They would soon have been aware that David had been anointed in Bethlehem, and were supportive of him for almost a lifetime.

2 Samuel 2:19 Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he didn't turn to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner-

We get the impression that Asahel was enraged and obsessed in slaying Abner.

2 Samuel 2:20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, Is it you, Asahel? He answered, It is I-

The question was because he didn't want to slay Asahel. As noted on :21, Abner is presented as wanting to minimize bloodshed in that he didn't want to kill Asahel.

2 Samuel 2:21 Abner said to him, Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and grab one of the young men, and take his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following him-

This was an invitation to a duel, with armour; presumably they were running past young men with armour and not running unobserved by others. But Asahel didn't want a fair fight, he wanted to use his advantage of speed to somehow kill Abner by a blow to his back. Abner comes over as far more ethical in the conflict. He didn't want the bloodshed of civil war and instead suggested a duel to resolve it (:14), and he now does the same to Asahel.

2 Samuel 2:22 Abner said again to Asahel, Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab your brother?-

Again, Abner really doesn't want to kill Asahel. He is warning him, effectively, that he can just stop dead in his tracks and let Asahel run into his spear he is holding, with its point facing towards Asahel. The manner of death was really Asahel running into his own death rather than Abner consciously slaying him. Abner knows that Joab will then want to revenge Asahel's blood, and the city of refuge system was clearly not operative. And it seems Abner and Joab knew each other, and Abner wanted to forge a new relationship, face to face, with Joab; for this is how 'seeing the face' is used in 2 Sam. 3:13. Abner accepted defeat, and wanted to now move on in relationship. But Asahel was obsessed with settling some old scores.

2 Samuel 2:23 However he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner with the back end of the spear struck him in the body, so that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place. It happened, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still-

Abner has just warned Asahel in :22 that he can just stop dead in his tracks and let Asahel run into his spear he is holding, with its point facing towards Asahel. This was how close Asahel was to Abner, and was about to strike him to death with a blow to the back. The manner of death was really Asahel running into his own death rather than Abner consciously slaying him. He "refused to turn aside", implying his death was largely his own fault.

2 Samuel 2:24 But Joab and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they had come to the hill of Ammah, that lies before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon-

The detail given is very detailed. There must have been some significance in it which is not apparent to us today; a reminder that the Biblical record was primarily written for its first

audience and not for us. This means that there will be parts of it which appear hard to understand, or of less relevance to us than to the primary audience.

2 Samuel 2:25 The children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner and became one band, and stood on the top of a hill-

This could have been an invitation to come and fight them. They were prepared to make one last stand on the hill top. I suggest Abner did this because he sensed Joab would not take up the challenge, and it corroborates the impression we have that he wanted the least bloodshed as possible. By offering to make a last stand, and fight to the death with no way of escape [as they were on a hilltop], he was really forcing Joab to either accept peace or more bloodshed.

2 Samuel 2:26 Then Abner called to Joab and said, Shall the sword devour forever? Don't you know that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, before you ask the people to return from following their brothers?-

Again, Abner comes over as urging as little bloodshed as possible, and reminds Joab that they are brothers. "Return" is the word usually used for repentance. Although Abner had initiated the conflict, he seems genuinely regretful of the bloodshed it had caused.

2 Samuel 2:27 Joab said, As God lives, if you had not spoken, surely then in the morning the people would have gone away, rather than each following after his brother-

Joab agrees that brother fighting brother is wrong. He agrees, but seems to want to save face by saying that he would have called an end to the bloodshed the next morning. Again, to save face, he may also be implying that if they had continued fighting, he would have slain all Abner's men by the next morning.

2 Samuel 2:28 So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more-

That is, at that time (cp. 2 Sam. 3:1). In reading the Bible we must be aware that Semitic writing presents things as they are true at the immediate time, rather than in terms of what is true globally or in the future.

2 Samuel 2:29 Abner and his men went all that night through the Arabah; and they passed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and came to Mahanaim-

Abner and his men walked all night along the Jordan valley, northwards towards Mahanaim; because they obviously distrusted the peace deal with Joab, and feared he would again attack them. All the way through, Abner is presented as having more integrity than Joab, leading up to the tragedy of Joab murdering Abner by dishonest means.

2 Samuel 2:30 Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel-

We note the continued reference to David's soldiers as his personal servants, rather than "men of Judah"; see on :17,31.

2 Samuel 2:31 But the servants of David had struck of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and sixty men died-

Again we note the contrast between "Benjamin", who were loyal to their tribe, and "the servants of David", who did not consider tribal labels as important as being servants of their king. See on :15,17. The 360 men may be a general figure, as it was the number of days in a Hebrew year.

2 Samuel 2:32 They took up Asahel, and buried him in the tomb of his father, which was in Bethlehem-

Zeruiah was a woman; the father is not named. She is mentioned so often that we assume she had a large part to play in forming the rather unpleasant characters of her sons.

Joab and his men went all night, and the day broke on them at Hebron-

The two sides are presented as both marching all night back to their respective capitals. They were brethren, living in parallel lives, but fighting each other. And this is true of all the divisions amongst God's people.

2 Samuel Chapter 3

2 Samuel 3:1 Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: and David grew stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker-

The inspired commentator presents the civil war as it was, a feud between two families, who came from opposite sides of Jerusalem, only about 20 km. from each other.

2 Samuel 3:2 To David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess-

We must recognize that there will be anomalies in the lives of our brethren- just as there are in the lives of us all (if only we would examine ourselves ruthlessly enough to see them). And in some ways at some times, God goes along with them. Thus He gave Saul's wives to David (2 Sam. 12:8), which would've involved David being married to both a mother and daughter- for he had married Saul's daughters. And this giving of Saul's wives to David may not have occurred simply after Saul's death. For David's eldest son, Amnon, was borne by Ahinoam (2 Sam. 3:2), who was initially Saul's wife (1 Sam. 14:50). Now this is not to justify sin. Adultery, taking another's wife or husband, is all wrong. Let there be no mistake. But God at times sees the bigger, or longer, perspective, and tolerates things which we may quite rightly find intolerable. And if He loves us despite of our sin and failure- are we surprised that we are invited to show love to others in the face of their sin and failure toward us? A black and white insistence upon God's standards being upheld in the lives of others, demanding their repentance for having hurt us, is what has caused so much division between believers. Whilst God alone will apportion the guilt for this, in the final, unalterable, ultimately just algorithm of Divine judgment, it's worth observing that the fault for division isn't always with the sinners, the wider thinkers, the freewheelers; but with the inflexible intolerance of those in power.

"Amnon" means 'faithful' and we might have expected him to be David's logical successor. But one great theme of David's personal life was his disappointment in his children and wives.

2 Samuel 3:3 his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite-

We would rather have expected Chileab as the son of David's most spiritual wife to be his successor. But 'restrained by his father' might mean that David initially thought so too, and was so restrictive of Chileab that he didn't work out that way at all.

The third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur-

Solomon wished to imitate his father David in every sense; his own real personality only really came out in the Ecclesiastes years, when he took to drink, materialism, women and idolatry. It took the influence of his parents many years to wear off. David had weaknesses for horses (2 Sam. 8:4) and many wives; and Solomon followed in these steps too. Note that David had six sons in seven years by six different women, including Gentiles (1 Chron. 3:3). For Geshur was one of the tribes the Israelites ought to have driven out of the land (Josh. 13:13), and Talmai was sufficiently against David to provide refuge for Absalom (2 Sam. 13:37). "Geshur" means "joining" and such a joining in marriage to these people is another example of David's unwisdom with women.

And in addition to these, David had children by "the concubines" (1 Chron. 3:9). Doubtless Solomon reasoned, albeit deep within his psyche, that such behaviour was legitimate because David his father had done it. David seems to have over interpreted the promises made to him about Solomon and the temple, and assumed that his interpretation was certainly correct. And Solomon did exactly the same. The weaknesses of the parents all too easily are repeated by the children to an even greater extent.

2 Samuel 3:4 the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of

Abital-

The contrast of this section seems to be intentional with the note in 2 Sam. 2:2, that David arrived in Hebron from Ziklag with only two wives. We could get the impression that David's spiritual life was in some areas in steady decline from the time he slew Goliath in his youth. And yet he died in faith.

2 Samuel 3:5 the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron-

The birth of six sons, although these were not all his sons, is perhaps presented as a point of continuity with faithful Hannah who also had six sons, the firstborn of which had been David's mentor Samuel.

2 Samuel 3:6 It happened that while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner made himself strong on behalf of the house of Saul-

The idea may be that Abner exalted himself to be the effective leader of the house of Saul, with a view to becoming their leader in place of Ishbosheth. He was after all Saul's cousin. But the narrative continues to show that having recognized he was losing militarily (:1), he wanted to seek peace with David. And he uses the argument about Rizpah as an excuse.

2 Samuel 3:7 Now Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?-

This could have been seen as a an intentional challenge to Ishbosheth, for sleeping with a king's concubine was an effective statement of having taken the throne. This is what Absalom did to David during his rebellion.

2 Samuel 3:8 Then was Abner very angry for the words of Ishbosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and to his friends, and have not delivered you into the hand of David; and yet you charge me this day with a fault concerning this woman!-

See on :11. David had made it very clear that he would not slay any of the house of Saul. He had promised this to Saul and Jonathan, and was very careful to show absolute grace to them. So Ishbosheth was not at any real risk of losing his life if Abner handed him over to David. It all seems to me as if Abner was orchestrating this falling out in order to provide himself with a face saving excuse to achieve unity with David, and as it were surrender power on good terms. It is not even clear if he did indeed sleep with Rizpah.

2 Samuel 3:9 God do so to Abner, and more also, if, as Yahweh has sworn to David, I don't do even so to him-

Abner was aware of the promises to David. I have elsewhere suggested that the essence of the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7 had been made to him at a far earlier stage. See on 1 Sam. 25:28, where Abigail uses the terms of 2 Sam. 7 ["a sure / established house"] well before they are recorded as being given. Abner realizes that God's promises require a man to be in step with them, and in a sense, to be the human channel of their fulfilment. And he is saying that he is willing to be that channel for their fulfilment. Abner consistently comes over, as noted often on 2 Sam. 2, as indeed seeking the throne for himself, but not wanting excessive bloodshed, and realizing that it would be better for all concerned if he resigned any pretensions to power. And here he demonstrates, despite his aggressive exterior, that he appreciates the promises to David and is not going to be like Saul and fight in vain to stop God's word coming true.

2 Samuel 3:10 to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of

David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beersheba-

It was because David's heart was 'turned away' from sin, that God 'turned away' the kingdom from Saul to David (s.w. Ps. 119:37). As noted on :9, Abner realizes this and seeks to now work for and not against God's purpose for Saul. For God had promised to set up / establish the throne of David, and Abner is now effectively repenting of fighting to stop that happening.

2 Samuel 3:11 He could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him-

I suggest Abner was loud mouthed and crudely spoken (:8), but beneath that rough exterior there was a genuine repentance, and always a desire to avoid excessive bloodshed between brethren, as noted throughout 2 Sam. 2. We too need to see through the surface level appearance of some brethren to their spiritual essence.

2 Samuel 3:12 Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf saying, Whose is the land? Make your alliance with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you, to bring all Israel around to you-

The idea seems to be 'The land is yours'. But he feared the consequences of his surrender, and wants there to be an agreement or alliance granting him personal safety. Saul had slain the priests of Nob because their hand was with David (s.w. 1 Sam. 22:17); perhaps Abner wishes to say that now, he too was with David and disassociated himself from Saul's actions. He saw that Yahweh's hand was with David in order to make him king over all Israel, and Abner now wanted to be working with that hand, with his hand in God's; and to cease resisting it.

2 Samuel 3:13 He said, Good; I will make a treaty with you; but one thing I require of you. That is, you shall not see my face, unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face-

We are left, intentionally, wondering what exactly were David's motives here. He may have considered that Saul's daughter's marriage was going to mean that her husband Paltiel was a potential contender for the throne, and he wanted to remove that potential threat by breaking up their marriage. But that would have reflected a lack of faith in the promises that he would surely become king of Israel. Rather I suspect this was done from motives of personal bitterness. He had killed men in order to get Michal as wife, even though he ought to have been given her freely in return for slaying Goliath. That she had married another man was an intolerable insult for any Hebrew man, and it seems in weakness David acted like a secular person rather than a spiritual one.

2 Samuel 3:14 David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, whom I pledged to be married to me for one hundred foreskins of the Philistines-

As discussed on :13, it seems David felt bitterly the betrayal. He had actually paid 200 foreskins for her, and anyway Saul should have given her to him for slaying Goliath. Despite having many wives and children, he could not bear the thought that she was married to another man. And so he broke up an apparently loving marriage (:16) for the sake of his own pride and need for control. And he was to do the same with the marriage of Uriah and Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 3:15 Ishbosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Paltiel the son of Laish-

The request was made from Ishbosheth, who was technically the king of Israel, in order to prove David's authority over him. And it could be that Michal and Paltiel had fled from David

to Mahanaim. But David's resumed marriage with Michal wasn't blessed; it all seems a very personal and political thing.

Prov. 18:22 LXX may allude to Michal: "He that puts away a good wife, puts away a good thing, and he that keeps an adulteress is foolish and ungodly". This reading would then be a justification of how Solomon's father David had put away his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, who had then married Phaltiel, a relationship Solomon liked to see as adultery. Constantly Solomon uses his knowledge of Divine truths to justify himself and his father, just as God's truth can likewise be abused today.

2 Samuel 3:16 Her husband went with her, weeping as he went, and followed her to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, Go! Return! And he returned-
Bahurim was about 20 miles from Mahanaim, near Jerusalem. We have the tragic image of the loving husband walking behind her weeping as she is led away from him. This was not only a breach of Mosaic law, but displayed a sad elevation of politics above others' relationships and marriages. It may be significant that her renewed marriage with David wasn't blessed with any children (2 Sam. 6:23). The record elicits our sympathy for Paltiel, and leaves us with the impression that David was heartless and callous when it came to others' relationships.

2 Samuel 3:17 Abner had communication with the elders of Israel saying, In times past, you wished for David to be king over you-
The northern tribes had been supportive of David, as all Israel had been after the victory over Goliath. But Abner seems to admit that it was he who had persuaded them otherwise. He is now showing the fruits of repentance by undoing the division he had created.

2 Samuel 3:18 Now then do it; for Yahweh has spoken of David saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies'-
This was the Divine intention for Saul (1 Sam. 9:16), but Abner recognizes that now it had all been transferred to David. The interests of the nation as a whole, who had recently been defeated by the Philistines at Gilboa, were better served by David than Abner. For David had God's prophetic word on his side, and could bring deliverance. Abner had a number of options open to him; he could have fled to a neighbouring country, or sought some other way of resolving things with David. But he comes over as genuinely repentant, and honestly doing what he can, no matter at what loss of face, to bring Israel completely under David's control. See on :22.

2 Samuel 3:19 Abner also spoke in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and to the whole house of Benjamin-
As noted on :18, Abner's repentance was genuine. Having persuaded the northern tribes to accept his 'unity with David' plan, he then worked on Benjamin, Saul's own tribe, his own tribesmen. He spoke in their ears, and it "seemed good" to Benjamin as well as the other tribes to accept David as king. There would have been hawks within Benjamin, who were not persuaded; and some of them emerge in later history in rebellion against David. But Abner must be credited with bringing about a remarkably quick agreement that in practice paved the way for David to rule all Israel. And it was only he, as the effective leader and army general, who could have achieved this. "All that seemed good" may be alluded to in the description of another unity process between brethren in Acts 15:25,28.

2 Samuel 3:20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. David made

Abner and the men who were with him a feast-

The feast was surely a sign of acceptance and reconciliation, an idea which is continued in the feast of the Lord's supper which we experience in our days. The twenty men would have been the escort for both Abner and Michal.

2 Samuel 3:21 Abner said to David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your soul desires. David sent Abner away; and he went in peace-

Abner had already secured the general agreement of the other tribes (:19), and now he wanted them to send representatives to make a covenant with David. This would have been a guarantee of their safety, and finally was achieved in 2 Sam. 5:1. The name "Abner" is stressed many times in :17-21, because this whole unity process depended solely upon him. His assassination was therefore all the more shameful.

2 Samuel 3:22 Behold, the servants of David and Joab came from an engagement, and brought in a great spoil with them-

Abner had rightly argued that God's promise to deliver Israel from the Philistines was to now be fulfilled through David (:18). We presume this victory of Joab had been against the Philistines. We recently read of how David divided the spoil from the fight with the Amalekites amongst Judah in order to demonstrate in hard terms his ability to save them from their neighbours, and we wonder if he did likewise.

But Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace-

Here we have the hand of providence; for if Joab had been in Hebron when Abner was there, he would have surely murdered him and the whole peace process would have been majorly derailed, likely leading to more bitter civil war. We can note from this that unity between brethren is God's will and He will work, within the confines provided by human freewill, to enable it.

2 Samuel 3:23 When Joab and all the army who was with him had come, they told Joab saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has sent him away, and he is gone in peace-

The "they" were presumably those who like Joab considered that David was again being naive towards the house of Saul, and should have murdered Abner instead of making peace with him. Constantly we see David's belief in grace and unity leading him to do things which harder minded individuals found more than annoying; they reacted against it in the harshest of terms.

2 Samuel 3:24 Then Joab came to the king and said, What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, and he is quite gone?-

The implication is that David should have murdered him, and not let him go away in peace, with a guarantee of safe passage. We see the internal harmony of the record in that Joab's reaction here to Abner's being sent away in peace is in spirit so similar to his frustration with David over the death of Absalom (2 Sam. 19:6). We note the internal consistency in the record of Joab's character; another reason to believe these records are absolutely credible and inspired by God. See on 2 Sam. 20:10.

2 Samuel 3:25 You know Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive you, and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you do-

Throughout the preceding verses, I have sought to demonstrate Abner's sincere repentance and genuine desire for unity under David. But Joab speaks as if he knows for sure that

Abner is fake, and that David knows this too. Hatred of brethren leads to conspiracy theories about them being entertained, in the face of all evidence to the contrary. And then those theories become perceived as not only absolute fact in the mind of those who have nursed them, but they reflect their positions on to others, claiming that others in their hearts know them to be true. These ancient histories speak directly to the situations we encounter in relationships today.

2 Samuel 3:26 When Joab had come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David didn't know it-

Joab's desire to personally murder Abner was premeditated, and he bears complete responsibility for it. He would have been given life in prison for this kind of behaviour today. But he was not demoted or disciplined much by David, because David himself, whilst strongly disagreeing with Joab's actions, failed to perceive the value of human life as he ought to have done. This is cited as a reason why he couldn't build the temple. And because of this, Joab went on to commit another such murder in 2 Sam. 20:10.

2 Samuel 3:27 When Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him quietly, and struck him there in the body, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother-

The language of striking in the body recalls how Abner had struck Joab's brother Asahel in the body (2 Sam. 2:23), although as noted there, Abner did not wish to do this. The manner of death was really Asahel running into his own death at the spear point, despite Abner warning him about it, rather than Abner consciously slaying him. Joab is therefore presented as far less ethical than Abner. As Asahel had intended to kill Abner by a blow to his back as he fled from him, so his brother Joab slew Abner from behind. And Joab didn't learn from this; he does the same to Amasa (2 Sam. 20:10. See on 2 Sam. 4:6.

2 Samuel 3:28 Afterwards, when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before Yahweh forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner-

I have sought to demonstrate so far that Abner consistently comes over as indeed having sought the throne for himself, but not wanting excessive bloodshed, and finally repenting. He realized that it would be better for all concerned if he resigned any pretensions to power. He demonstrates, despite his aggressive exterior, that he appreciates the promises to David and is not going to be like Saul and fight in vain to stop God's word coming true. I therefore consider David's grief for his murder as not at all theatrical, but genuine. And all Israel also realized this.

2 Samuel 3:29 Let it fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house. Let there not fail from the house of Joab one who has an issue, or who is a leper, or who leans on a staff, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread-

This was a stinging curse for one who had been so loyal to David, effectively wishing his exclusion from God's people (Lev. 13:46). And it was an age when curses were believed to have real power. But we note that David doesn't dissociate from Joab; he remains in power throughout David's life. And this lack of real discipline means that he does the same to Amasa (2 Sam. 20:10). Disciplining others wasn't David's strong point, and he paid for it. Like all of us, he was a mixture of softness and hardness.

2 Samuel 3:30 So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle-

This was indeed the motivation, but additionally I suggest that Joab wanted to be seen as the king maker, and disliked the way that Abner was going to go down as the architect of

Israel's unity because of his own repentance, humility and resignation of his own aspirations to power. "In the battle" is perhaps added to show that any attempt by Joab to appeal to the laws of avenging blood was totally inappropriate and out of context.

2 Samuel 3:31 David said to Joab, and to all the people who were with him, Tear your clothes, and clothe yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. King David followed the bier-

The fact David had to tell Joab to do this shows that Joab was not the least bit repentant.

2 Samuel 3:32 They buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept-

This continues the frequent theme of David and his people being at one, sharing the same feelings. It looks ahead to the unity of the Lord Jesus with His people (see on 2 Sam. 5:1).

2 Samuel 3:33 The king lamented for Abner and said, Should Abner have died as a fool dies?-

We have here a lament song, composed and sung by David the musician, as he did over Saul and Jonathan. He sees Abner as a "fool" in that he had failed to perceive just how bad was Joab. Although Joab might have appealed to the laws about revenging slain blood, David clearly considered that they did not apply. For effectively, Abner had slain Asahel against his will and in self defence against a man literally aiming to stab him in the back.

2 Samuel 3:34 Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put into fetters. As a man falls before the children of iniquity, so you fell. All the people wept again over him-

The sons of Zeruiah, Joab and Abishai [who was also party to the murder, :30] are called not sons of Zeruiah but sons of iniquity. It is the phrase used for the Gentiles outside of covenant with God (2 Sam. 7:10); another hint that David had been given many of those promises before the time when Nathan is recorded as presenting them to him. See on 1 Sam. 25:28. David laments that Abner was deceived into his death, assuming others had the same desire for peace which he had. He had been free to fight or run, but did not because he was deceived. Or David may mean that Abner had done nothing to deserve even prison; because David had forgiven him, and Abner had genuinely repented.

2 Samuel 3:35 All the people came to cause David to eat bread while it was yet day. David swore saying, God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or anything else, until the sun goes down-

David strangely binds himself under the same curse as Saul had enforced upon the people in 1 Sam. 14:24. We wonder why this was. Perhaps it was simply that he truly loved Saul, and had him in mind at this time of hatred against the house of Saul; and so subconsciously he alludes to the words of Saul, although out of context. This again adds veracity to the record; this is typical of language usage at times like this.

2 Samuel 3:36 All the people took notice of it, and it pleased them; as whatever the king did pleased all the people-

This means that the people also were persuaded that Abner was genuine in his repentance, and had been honestly trying to do his best to undo the division his power seeking had caused. Otherwise they would not have agreed with David.

2 Samuel 3:37 So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to kill Abner the son of Ner-

In days of limited communication and the inevitable miscommunications this resulted in, it was quite an achievement to persuade all Israel that Abner's murder had not been orchestrated by David. The depth of David's convictions about Abner's sincerity was so great that somehow it spread throughout the land.

2 Samuel 3:38 The king said to his servants, Don't you know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?-

"Prince" suggests that David may well have considered elevating Abner to some position of senior rulership in the united kingdom. As captain of Saul's army, it may have been David's intention to replace Joab [who was captain of David's army] with Abner. This would have been another reason why Joab wanted to murder him. But the man's greatness was in his humility and desire for unity, built around the fruits of his very genuine repentance and hatred of bloodshed between brethren.

2 Samuel 3:39 I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruah are too hard for me. May Yahweh reward the evildoer according to his wickedness-

This was the language and exact situation David had experienced when on the run from Saul. He was anointed king, but weak, and he had to leave Yahweh to reward Saul for his wickedness. But he now transfers all those feelings about Saul onto Joab. This was how strongly David viewed the hatred of Joab for Abner.

2 Samuel Chapter 4

2 Samuel 4:1 When Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands became feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled-

I suggest on :7 that this fear was because they assumed David had killed Abner, and now would be coming to kill Ishbosheth and all his household. They totally failed to perceive David's huge grace towards the house of Saul, even though they surely knew about it. Their fears of possible human judgment were stronger than their faith in grace, and that is the theme of this chapter; and it is such a typically human failure.

2 Samuel 4:2 Saul's son had two men who were captains of bands: the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin (for Beeroth also is reckoned to Benjamin-

The point is being made that although these men may not have been ethnic Benjamites, they were counted as Benjamites, and thus there arose the shame of Ishbosheth being slain by men of his own tribe.

2 Samuel 4:3 and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and have lived as foreigners there until this day)-

Beeroth was one of the Gibeonite cities which made peace with Joshua (Josh. 9:17) and was then included within Benjamin (Josh. 18:25). But they had been persecuted by Saul (2 Sam. 21:1,2). The murderers of Ishbosheth were therefore counted as Benjamites, but they would have had an abiding bitterness toward Saul. Their murder of Ishbosheth was therefore from mixed motives, one of which may have simply been revenge. And this would fit the context of 2 Sam. 3, where Abner was murdered by Joab from the same wrong motive. The impression is given of the destruction caused when men refuse to reign in their desire for revenge.

Gittaim is the plural of Gath, and reflects Philistine influence in that area (1 Sam. 31:7). Again we see internal corroboration within the records, so detailed and constant that the entire history simply cannot be a forgery of men, but the inspired word of God.

2 Samuel 4:4 Now Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son who was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the news came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel; and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame-

We wonder why this is mentioned at this point, as the narrative is about the murder of Ishbosheth. Perhaps the idea is that now that Ishbosheth is to be killed, the only other potential king in Saul's line was a 12 year old boy who was a cripple, who had suffered that fate as an indirect result of the defeat of Saul due to his apostasy. In the hand of providence, all credible alternatives to David as king had now been removed, although not by his hand.

His name was Mephibosheth-

Merib-baal (1 Chron. 8:34; 9:40). It could mean 'the shame of Baal', but there is evidence that Saul's daughter Michal had an idol and it is likely that even Jonathan was not free of idolatry. Idolatry has always been a besetting weakness amongst even the best of God's people.

2 Samuel 4:5 The sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, as he took his rest at noon-

This might imply that he was physically weak, perhaps handicapped as was Mephibosheth (:4). As noted on :4, the impression is given that there were now no credible alternatives to David as king, although this was not by his hand.

2 Samuel 4:6 They came there into the middle of the house, as if they would have fetched wheat; and they struck him in the body: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped-
This striking in the body connects with what Abner did to Asahel, and what Joab did to Abner (2 Sam. 2:23; 3:27). We see the connection too with how Joab killed Abner in the middle of the gates of Hebron, between the outer and inner gates (2 Sam. 3:27). Although all these actions were the freewill choices of men, there was clearly a higher hand working through them all, in the same style. The apparent repetition of :5 is avoided by the LXX, which blames their entrance on a sleeping servant woman, as if Ishbosheth's power was so weak that his only guard was a sleeping woman: "And behold the portress of the house was cleaning wheat, and she slumbered and slept; and the brothers Rechab and Baanah came unobserved into the house. Now Ish-bosheth was sleeping on the bed in his chamber: and they smote him".

2 Samuel 4:7 Now when they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him, and killed him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and went by the way of the Arabah all night-
They did this presumably because they didn't believe or understand the huge grace which David was eager to show towards the house of Saul. They assumed Abner had been slain by David, and that he was now going to slay Ishbosheth. And so they thought they could protect their own heads by doing this for David, thinking they would ingratiate themselves to him. And this is the reason for so many murders and acts of unkindness; a mistaken belief in the likely actions of others.

2 Samuel 4:8 They brought the head of Ishbosheth to David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold, the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy-
The Philistines in 1 Sam. 29:4 recalled how David had carried the head of Goliath to Saul (1 Sam. 17:57). To carry the heads of a king's enemies was a way to get the king's favour, as in Jud. 7:25; 2 Sam. 4:8; 16:9; 20:21; 2 Kings 10:6-8. Again we see the inspired, historical record has consistency. It would have required a clever editor to insert this theme of beheading to curry a leader's favour throughout the entire Biblical record. But the histories were clearly written at different times; a later hand would not have thought of all these realistic touches to sprinkle so consistently throughout it. The internal harmony of the Bible is to me the greatest indication that it is what it claims to be, the Divinely inspired word of God, evidencing His editing throughout.

Who sought your life!-

Saul "sought" David, implying a great level of mental effort (1 Sam. 19:10; 23:14,15,25; 24:2; 25:26,29; 26:2,20; 27:1,4; 2 Sam. 4:8). In the type of Christ, the Jews sought to kill the Lord (Mt. 21:46; Mk. 11:18; 12:12; 14:1,11,55; Lk. 19:47; 20:19; 22:2,6; Jn.5:16,18; 7:1,11,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:8,56; 18:4,7,8). In the Psalms, David frequently imprecates judgment upon those who sought his life (s.w. Ps. 35:4; 38:12; 40:14; 54:3; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13; 86:14). He loved Saul, the life of Saul was precious in David's sight, indeed the historical records seem to emphasize David's patient love of Saul; and yet in the Psalms he gives vent before God to his anger with Saul and desire to see Saul punished and judged by God. This is absolutely true to human experience; we may act with great patience and apparent love toward those who abuse us, and yet within we fume about it. The lesson of David is that we are to pour out those feelings to God in prayer, leaving Him to judge.

Yahweh has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed-

They wrongly assumed that they could do Yahweh's work of vengeance, whereas the whole theme of David's thinking was that it is not for man to avenge.

2 Samuel 4:9 David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the

Beerothite, and said to them, As Yahweh lives, who has redeemed my soul out of all adversity-

Compare Gen. 48:16 with 2 Sam. 4:9. What Jacob only learnt at the *end* of his life, David learnt and applied during his life. And we should likewise not be experiential learners, but learn instead from Jacob. David stresses that Yahweh had redeemed him, and he had not needed to take vengeance himself. He repeats this in 1 Kings 1:29; he was deeply aware of Yahweh's redemption of him by grace right to his last days.

2 Samuel 4:10 when someone told me, 'Behold, Saul is dead', thinking to have brought good news, I took hold of him, and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news-

Surely the murderers knew of David's great grace toward Saul. The point is that their fears of possible judgment for them were greater than their belief in the abundant evidence of David's grace. And this remains a tragic feature of many people to this day.

2 Samuel 4:11 How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house on his bed-

Saul and his family were hardly righteous, except Jonathan. But David imputes righteousness to them, by grace; and this was later to be his experience from God after his seen concerning Bathsheba.

Shall I not now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?-

David alludes to himself as the avenger of blood, as if he was the close relative of Ishbosheth, so closely did he feel towards Saul's family (Num. 35:33; Dt. 19:13,19). Again we marvel at his love and grace.

2 Samuel 4:12 David commanded his young men, and they killed them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron-

It seems to me that David's killing of the Amalekite in 2 Sam. 1:15 was an over the top reaction, and yet again betrays a lack of value and meaning attached to the human person. There was no attempt to convert the frightened young man to grace, to the God of Israel. The summary slaying of Rechab and Baanah has some similarities. We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

The way he buries Ishbosheth where he was then living is proof enough of his further desire to publically identify with the house of Saul. It was not mere theatricism, nor politically savvy behaviour; but a reflection of his genuine grace and love for them.

2 Samuel Chapter 5

2 Samuel 5:1 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David to Hebron-

This was to enter the covenant which Abner had persuaded them to make (see on 2 Sam. 3:21).

And spoke saying, Behold, we are your bone and your flesh-

Eph. 5:30 makes the amazing statement that even now, "We are of members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones". In a very detailed study of this language, Henricus Renckens concluded: "In Israel, in order to say that someone was a blood relation, one said: "He is my flesh and my bones" (Gen. 29:14; Jud. 9:2; cp. Gen. 37:27; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13 ff.; Is. 58:7)". This is how close we are to the Lord Jesus- blood relatives. This language could in no way be justified if Jesus were God Himself in person.

2 Samuel 5:2 In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. Yahweh said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of My people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel'-

The mutuality between God and David is often brought out. Yahweh was his shepherd (Ps. 23:1), and he was to shepherd Israel). All Israel recognized that David had always been Israel's saviour, and Saul generally had failed to experience the Divine potential for him to be this.

2 Samuel 5:3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Yahweh; and they anointed David king over Israel-

This is the covenant which Abner had engineered in 2 Sam. 3:21, aimed at providing total amnesty and assurance to all those who had once supported Saul. David had already been anointed by Samuel, but this was stating that all Israel approved of that and wanted to work with God's plan rather than against it.

2 Samuel 5:4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years-

If Saul reigned 40 years (Acts 13:21), this creates various chronological problems. Solomon, David and Saul are all stated to have reigned 40 years, and it may be a non literal number. Paul's argument in Acts 13:21 seems to be seeking to draw a parallel between Israel's 40 years in the desert and Saul's reign. Numbers are simply not used in Semitic literature in the literalistic way that they are in the writings of other cultures. To this day an Arab may describe a hot day as being 100 degrees C, when it is not that literally. But the Arab is not lying nor deceiving; it's a case of using numbers within a different context of language usage. Beginning his reign at 30 may be intended to recall how the Levites began serving at 30 (Num. 4:3), because David was set up to be the priest-king who would replace the high priesthood according to Hannah's song. And at times he clearly did act like this, although his failures meant that the potential was reapplied and reframed to fulfilment in the Lord Jesus.

2 Samuel 5:5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah-

Hebron was a priestly city and Jerusalem the kingly city, so maybe this is intended to present David as a king-priest, beginning his kingship at the same age as the priests began their service (:4).

2 Samuel 5:6 The king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David saying, Unless you take away the blind and the lame, you shall not come in here; thinking, David can't come in here-

A person who feels they are somehow a nice guy and worthy of invitation will be the one who tends to consider others as unworthy of invitation to the Kingdom. He or she who perceives their own desperation will eagerly invite even those they consider to be in the very pits of human society. The lame, blind etc. were not allowed to serve God under the law (Lev. 21:18), nor be offered as sacrifices (Dt. 15:21), nor come within the holy city (2 Sam. 5:6-8). The Lord purposefully healed multitudes of lame and blind (Mt. 15:30), and allowed them to come to Him in the temple (Mt. 21:14). His acted out message was clearly that those who were despised as unfit for God's service were now being welcomed by Him into that service. The lame and blind were despised because they couldn't work. They had to rely on the grace of others. Here again is a crucial teaching: those called are those who can't do the works, but depend upon grace.

Defining the Jebusites as "the inhabitants of the land" may be another mark left by the inspired editing of these records for the exiles. Such explanatory notes would have been unnecessary for the primary readership. The encouragement to them was that restoration of Israel's fortunes was indeed possible, under a new David.

2 Samuel 5:7 Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David- As often in the Hebrew Bible, we have a summary statement and then an explanation of how it came about. The contrast is with how Saul's tribe of Benjamin had failed to drive out the Jebusites (Jud. 1:21). Jerusalem was originally in Benjamin, but David's capture of the city made it "the city of David" and therefore in Judah. We see here how different potential futures could have worked out. If Benjamin had taken and inherited their possession and Saul had 'worked out' as he could have done, then Jerusalem would have been in Benjamin. We see here how God's plans are flexible, reflective of His great respect of human freewill and initiative.

2 Samuel 5:8 David said on that day, Whoever strikes the Jebusites, let him get up to the watercourse, and strike the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul. Therefore they say, The blind and the lame can't come into the house- See on :6. The Hebrew is difficult but seems to allude to how the Jebusites mocked the Hebrews, thinking that their high elevation was such that the blind and lame could repel any attackers. If David was indeed Jonathan's armourbearer in 1 Sam. 14, he would have seen how God had punished the pride of the Philistines when they thought likewise. For Jonathan had shinned by an almost vertical cliff, with the Philistines mocking him- and slew them. This inspired David with the possibility that someone of similar faith and bravery could climb up the sewer line into Zion and do the same. Jonathan's example, from some decades earlier, inspired faith in this later situation. And so will all Godly examples. The fact it was Joab who rose up to this example (see 1 Chron.) means that he must surely have had some faith as well as bravery, despite his rather unspiritual ways.

But the Hebrew of David's words here read like a kind of song, which could be translated:

Whosoever smites the Jebusite,
let him hurl down the precipice
both the lame and the blind,
hated of David's soul.

We sense here a bitterness and lack of respect of the human person, which maybe resulted in his not being allowed to build the temple later. To murder the handicapped was unethical, but David's bitterness and desire for power led him to command it. Hence LXX "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusite, let him slay with the sword both the lame and the blind who hate David's soul".

There are echoes of Saul's offer at the time of the fight with Goliath. Chronicles records:

"Whosoever smites the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain". And thus Joab was restored to being chief of the army.

2 Samuel 5:9 David lived in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. David built around from Millo and inward-

Jerusalem was particularly loved by David. He thereby moved the city into Judah's possession from Benjamin's; see on :7. Chronicles adds: "And Joab repaired the rest of the city".

2 Samuel 5:10 David grew greater and greater; for Yahweh, the God of Armies, was with him-

This is the same phrase as used in David's protestation of humility in Ps. 131:1: "Nor do I concern myself with great matters, or things too wonderful for me". 'To go' ["concern myself"] with 'great things' is the phrase used of David here in 2 Sam. 5:10; he "went on [s.w. "concern myself"] and grew great" [s.w. "with great matters"]. So the idea of Ps. 131:1 may be that David didn't pay attention to these things so as not to become proud. And yet this humility was mixed with the bitterness noted on :8. We are all strange mixtures of spiritual strength and weakness.

2 Samuel 5:11 Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, carpenters and masons; and they built David a house-

The way Solomon also used him, or probably another Hiram, for the same trees reflects again how Solomon sought to live out his father. But he had no real spirituality, and over time he revealed that he had no personal faith, turning away to idols in his old age and coming to the nihilism of Ecclesiastes.

Psalms 30 was written at the dedication of a house by David, and we assume it was this house. But that Psalm reveals David had been very ill. He seems not to have had robust health although he was physically strong and lived a long life. There is ample evidence for a breakdown of his health after the sin with Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 5:12 David perceived that Yahweh had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake-

He realized that the promises of Samuel so long ago had finally come true, despite all the times when it had seemed they could not come true (see on 1 Sam. 27:1). But this sense of fulfilment led him to take yet more wives (:13), which is surely to be read negatively in spiritual terms. Yet he realized that his establishment was located in a wider context than just for himself; it was for the sake of His people Israel.

2 Samuel 5:13 David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron; and there were more sons and daughters born to David-

See on :12. This is hard to read in a positive light spiritually; for Israel's king was not to multiply wives (Dt. 17:17). He seemed to feel the need to prove himself established by having more wives and children, but this was itself a failure to appreciate that Yahweh had established him (:12). He did perceive this, but only on one level.

2 Samuel 5:14 These are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon-

These were the sons of Bathsheba. We note that they had a son called Nathan, perhaps in respect of the prophet of that name who had rebuked David for his sin with Bathsheba. And it was through him that the Lord Jesus was descended back to David (Lk. 3:31).

2 Samuel 5:15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia-

We know nothing of these sons, nor indeed of most of David's children. This would indicate perhaps that David was not a very good spiritual father to his children.

2 Samuel 5:16 Elishama, Eliada and Eliphelet-

The lists in 1 Chron. 3:5-8; 14:4-7 also mention two more sons, Eliphalet or Elpalet and Nogah. Perhaps they are omitted here because they died in infancy, and that the second Eliphalet was named after his dead brother.

2 Samuel 5:17 When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the stronghold-

They must have felt bitterly betrayed by David. He had lived with them in Ziklag and Gath for some time and claimed he was on their side against Judah. His lack of integrity would have deeply riled them, and was a poor advertisement for the God of Israel.

The stronghold in view may have been the cave of Adullam (2 Sam. 23:13,14), where God had previously delivered David from Saul. Perhaps he went there to pray. It was at this time that he wished to drink of the water from the well in Bethlehem, and his men broke risked their lives to get it for him. We see the extent of their dominance, in that they had overrun Bethlehem, David's home village, and placed a garrison in it (2 Sam. 23:14).

2 Samuel 5:18 Now the Philistines had come and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim-

The record of David's battle with the Philistines in 2 Sam.5:17-24 has certain similarities with the exploits of 1 Sam. 14:8-11; as if, years later, David replicated Jonathan's early adventure of faith. This would be understandable if he had been Jonathan's armourbearer in that incident. Situations repeat in our lives; what we learn in youth becomes tested later on in life.

They perhaps chose the valley of the giants as the battleground because they still recalled his victory over Goliath, and wanted to reverse it.

2 Samuel 5:19 David inquired of Yahweh saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand? Yahweh said to David, Go up; for I will certainly deliver the Philistines into your hand-

This recalls how he asked Yahweh when Saul died whether he should go into Judah, and to which city there. A man of lesser humility and closeness to God would have just gone ahead with assumptions he was right. His questions also recall the questions he asked [and answers received] about the situation in Keilah (1 Sam. 23:11,12). He retained this desire for guidance, and showed he had learned from his previous experiences.

2 Samuel 5:20 David came to Baal Perazim, and David struck them there; and he said, Yahweh has broken my enemies before me, like the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal Perazim-

This means the place of breaches. What happened has been explained as follows: "It was the rocky height on the north of the valley of Rephaim. David must, therefore, have stolen round the army of the Philistines, creeping, probably by night, up to this ridge of Ben-Hinnom, and thence at the dawn of day have rushed down upon the camp. And his onset was sudden and irresistible, like the rush of the waters of some mountain lake when, swollen with rains, it bursts through the opposing dam, and carries hasty destruction to everything that lies in its way". This means that just like the second attack, David circled

around and came at the Philistines from behind (:23). But this is exactly how a dog attacks. David in his low moments had felt himself as a desert dog (1 Sam. 17:44 LXX; 24:14). When we are weak, then we are strong. Perhaps God played along with David's low feelings by saying that if he indeed felt as a dog, then He would use him to achieve victory as a dog does. This is not to justify David's view of himself, but to show rather how God interacts with man in a mutual way.

2 Samuel 5:21 They left their images there; and David and his men took them away-
They should have destroyed them, according to the law of Moses which David professed such love for in Ps. 119. Perhaps they justified it by saying they were doing to the Philistines as they had done to the ark; for the Philistines took the ark as a sign they had triumphed over Israel's God. But Yahweh clearly punished them for that, and David's men might have boasted that the Philistine gods didn't do that to them. Such is the quasi spiritual reasoning of our flesh. 1 Chron. 14:12 however explains that finally, they were burnt.

2 Samuel 5:22 The Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim-
This was soon afterwards, implying David's men hadn't slain that many of the Philistines.

2 Samuel 5:23 When David inquired of Yahweh, He said, You shall not go up. Circle around behind them, and attack them opposite the mulberry trees-
The Father and Son are constantly seeking to lead us in "newness of life". David didn't get victory by the mulberry trees the same way each time (2 Sam. 5:23,24). God changed the method. But as noted on :20, David was still to circle around and attack from behind, like a dog. "Mulberry" is Hebrew *baca*, and could refer to the valley of Baca, or weeping, of Ps. 84:6. Hence RV "valley of weeping". Perhaps David was in depression at this time, and was being comforted that his weeping was to be his strength. For God loves to use the weak to achieve His victories.

2 Samuel 5:24 It shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall stir yourself up-
This sound was the marching of the Angels. They are called Yahweh's hosts or armies, and the idea was that David's army was a reflection on earth of the heavenly armies above him. This was necessary to teach that Israel were not winning these victories in their own strength, but by following the Angelic hosts above them.

"Stir up" is Heb. 'follow after'. The idea of 'following after' a man is a Hebrew figure for men following their leader / general into battle. There are many examples: Josh. 3:3; Jud. 3:28; 4:14; 6:34,35; 9:4,49; 1 Sam. 17:13,14; 30:21; 2 Sam. 5:24 etc. In those early days, a general wasn't a smart guy with a degree who directed the battlefield from his laptop; he was the one who went over the top first with his men behind him, knowing full well he was the one whom his enemies would go for above all others. It was his bravery which inspired the followers to go after him, and which, over the battles and wars, solidified their trust in him and willingness to give their lives behind him. And this figure of speech was well understood by the Lord when He bid us follow Him. Around Him were false prophets and rabbinic teachers, asking young men to follow them, adopt their interpretations of Torah, study the traditions, and get hyped up enough to take weapons in their hands and go forth to fight the infidel. The Lord was fully aware of this, and He frames His calling of men in the same terms. Indeed, when He speaks of leaving all and following after Him (Lk. 14:33), He surely had in mind the well known story of Mattathias, who began the Maccabean revolt by saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the Law and supports the covenant *follow after me... and they left their possessions behind in the town*" (1 Macc. 2:27).

For then Yahweh has gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines-

The people wanted a king to "go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:20), but they were disappointed in Saul ultimately. For it was effectively David who went out before the people to fight their battles (s.w. 1 Sam. 18:13,16). And David was only successful because he recognized that it was Yahweh who 'went out before' to fight his battles (s.w. 2 Sam. 5:24), rather than any human king or leader.

2 Samuel 5:25 David did so, as Yahweh commanded him, and struck the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gezer-

"Geba" is Gibeon (1 Chron. 14:16), which is directly on the road from the valley of Rephaim to Gaza. The continual consistency of the geographical references in the record is yet another reflection of the utter credibility of it as Divinely inspired. Any group of human writers would have made mistakes in this area, given the lack of detailed maps and geographical knowledge.

2 Samuel Chapter 6

2 Samuel 6:1 David again gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand- "Thousand" may refer to families or squadrons. They were "chosen" or 'shown as tested / approved'. It was a reunion gathering of all those who had been faithful to David over the years. This was a huge number of people to gather together, given the problem of providing food and lodging for them. This was why battles were fought swiftly in those days, for the men were needed on their farms, and the supply of food was difficult to arrange over longer periods. So this huge effort reflects the importance David attached to bringing up the ark.

2 Samuel 6:2 David arose, and went with all the people who were with him, from Baale Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name, even the name of Yahweh of Armies who sits above the cherubim-

Baalah, or Kirjath-Baal, "the city of Baal" was the old Canaanite name of Kirjath-jearim (Josh. 15:9,60). David's bringing up / going up / ascending of the ark (2 Sam. 6:2) recalls how the ark did not go up into Canaan in Num. 14:44 (s.w.); for the land was not to be given to Israel. But when the time came, the ark was brought up into Canaan (Josh. 4:16,18 s.w.). And so now, the land was being given to them again. David felt as if he was as Joshua reconquering Canaan in fulfilment of the promises. This may explain why Paul in Acts 13:21 parallels the 40 years wandering of Israel with the 40 year reign of Saul; and he may speak of Saul reigning 40 years because of this, even if it was not literally true. It creates big chronological problems if we read that 40 year reign of Saul literally. Solomon imitated David's bringing up of the ark to Zion in 1 Kings 8:1,4. He lived out his father's faith and devotion, but only on an external level. He in due course was to turn away from Yahweh to idols, and descend into the nihilism of Ecclesiastes.

2 Samuel 6:3 They set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart-

There were very specific laws about the transportation of the ark. It was to be carried on poles on the shoulders of not just Levites but specifically the sons of Kohath (Num. 4:15); and Abinadab's family were not the right people to carry it. David claims in Ps. 119 to have studied God's law all the day whilst on the run from Saul, reciting it to himself. Perhaps he forgot these details. But I suggest because he came to see that God wanted the spirit and not letter of the law to be followed, he came to totally place himself above Divine law. We face the same temptation. And it was this which led David into his sin with Bathsheba. Shaving off bits and pieces of God's laws and principles, on the basis that we are above His law, leads to the final catastrophe of David's sin with Bathsheba. Instead of following God's laws about the transportation of the ark, it seems David instead followed the pattern of the Philistines, who also transported the captured ark on a cart (s.w. 1 Sam. 6:10,11). And considered that having built a new cart, never used before, he was in his own way showing respect to it.

2 Samuel 6:4 They brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was in the hill, with the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark-

Uzzah walked at the side, whilst Ahio went before the oxen to guide them. The Divine cameraman is zoomed in close upon the scene.

2 Samuel 6:5 David and all the house of Israel played before Yahweh with all kinds of instruments made of fir wood, and with harps, stringed instruments, tambourines, castanets and cymbals-

The actual fact of making music and praise to God doesn't necessarily mean our acceptability before Him; the very experience of music and its effect can lead us to think

that our participation means our acceptability before God. But all this praise was made whilst God was extremely angry with them for how they were treating the ark.

2 Samuel 6:6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon-

1 Chron. 13:9 has "the threshing floor of Chidon" and 2 Sam. 6:6 has "of Nacon". I suggest Nacon was the name of the owner, and Chidon was the location. A threshing floor has associations with Divine judgment, and this is what happened.

Uzzah reached for the ark of God and took hold of it-

We wonder if Paul has this in mind when he praises the Lord Jesus for not trying to grasp hold of equality with God (Phil. 2:6). In this case, Uzzah is being accused of playing God by what he did. And yet this appears to be a very harsh reading of motives into a quite simple and natural, well meaning reaction. But this is the point; we cannot judge or know human motivations or thoughts. Who knows what was really in Uzzah's mind. For all we know he was cussing the ark as it wobbled on the cart. Only God knows, and we should respect His judgment and our own inability to judge. The other possible issue which arises from this is that we are to accept that there are huge implications to our apparently harmless, surface level sins. Only God can judge them. But He does extrapolate the implications of human thoughts and actions. The whole incident is a test of our humility before God, a test David initially failed.

For the cattle stumbled-

"Stumbled" is s.w. "threw down" (2 Kings 9:33; Ps. 141:6). It seems the ark itself was thrown down onto the ground, despite Uzzah trying to stop it.

2 Samuel 6:7 The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God-

See on :6. Yahweh had likewise struck down (s.w.) those who had earlier failed to respect the ark (1 Sam. 5:6,9; 6:19). And they had imitated the transport of the ark upon a cart. The failure of man to learn from Biblical history is one of the greatest tragedies. We may consider this incident as parallel with the sin of Adam and Eve in Eden, whereby an apparently small failure lead to huge consequences. But these incidents are placed in Biblical history to help us humble ourselves before God, and not to fall into the assumption that God is not serious about His principles. Yahweh's anger being kindled is a phrase used multiple times about His anger with Israel for breaking the covenant. The sin of Uzzah personified all that was wrong with Israel. They had assumed that they could serve Yahweh on their terms and not His, and that this was just a mere surface level failure which He should overlook. All this is so challenging for us, who are tempted to think in just the same way.

2 Samuel 6:8 David was displeased, because Yahweh had broken forth on Uzzah; and he called that place Perez Uzzah, to this day-

David was "displeased" with God because He had slain a man who was trying to assist David's pet project of bringing the ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6:8,9). Do we not again see the anger and irrational emotion of David flaring up? For the Hebrew for "displeased" really means "anger", and is the same word used of Yahweh's anger in :7. God was fiercely angry, and David was likewise fiercely angry with God for being angry. Whilst on one level this is a terrible example of human pride, David's response could be argued to reflect a closeness with God which enabled him to feel like this. The exiles were warned that all who are "incensed" against God must be humbled and ashamed before the ark could, as it were, come to Zion and Israel be restored (s.w. Is. 41:11; 45:24). The exiles, who were also angry with God for His anger with them, were to go through the humbling process David went through over the next three months.

2 Samuel 6:9 David was afraid of Yahweh that day; and he said, How can the ark of Yahweh come to me?-

There is a similarity, surely intentional, with the situation in 1 Sam. 6:20: "The men of Beth Shemesh said, Who is able to stand before Yahweh, this holy God?". These were now David's feelings when Uzzah was slain for also not being respectful to the ark.

Circumstances repeated, and David failed to learn the lesson. We wonder if indeed David consciously repeated the words of the men of Beth Shemesh. I suspect he didn't, but rather his words are recorded in a similar way, to show to us readers the similarity. We are intended to learn from history, even though so few do. This is why so much of the Bible is history.

2 Samuel 6:10 So David would not move the ark of Yahweh to be with him in the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite-

This was a huge showdown, for David had assembled a huge number of people to this ceremony; see on :1. And now he was revealed as a man who had not paid due attention to the requirements of the God whom he had invited all Israel to come to worship. It was very humbling for him. We note he "carried it aside", having it carried on poles as the law required and not on a cart.

2 Samuel 6:11 The ark of Yahweh remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months: and Yahweh blessed Obed-Edom, and all his house-

It took David three months to humble himself before God, and to perceive that His blessing is related to obedience and respect of Him, and not assuming we can serve Him on our terms and ride roughshod over His principles. David and his house had also been promised blessings, but he was being taught that these blessings were related to obedience and respect of God. And the fact a Philistine from Gath, perhaps an Edomite, indeed an Edomite servant [for so his name means] received these blessings... was to teach him that his pedigree counted for nothing compared to humble respect of Israel's God.

2 Samuel 6:12 It was told king David saying, Yahweh has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that pertains to him, because of the ark of God. David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with joy-

True joy can only come from repentance and humbling ourselves before God. A prouder man would have just given up with this apparently over sensitive, hard to please God of Israel. But Yahweh is not really like that; but He rightly requires our humility to Him and His principles. It was the Edomite servant, Obed Edom, who taught David this.

2 Samuel 6:13 It was so, that when those who bore the ark of Yahweh had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf-

David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex. 22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. David had just been severely humiliated and punished for assuming he could put aside the letter of God's law regarding the transport of the ark. That David should now act as a Levite when he was not one, again following the spirit and not the letter of the law, would therefore not have been done by him quickly. It would have required sustained reflection on the situation. His actions should therefore never be taken as a quick justification for disregarding Divine laws and principles. For in the context of what

had happened three months previously, he would have considered this matter very seriously.

If sacrifices were offered every six paces from the house of Obed Edom to Zion, the road to Zion would have been a stream of sacrificial blood, looking ahead to the way to Golgotha. I suggest on :17 that these were sin offerings. It demonstrated the deep sense of sin and need for atonement which David felt. It was this true repentance which was the basis for his ecstatic joy. LXX "And seven choruses accompanied him, bearing the ark, and a calf and lambs as a sacrifice".

2 Samuel 6:14 David danced before Yahweh with all his might-

I suggested on :13 that the massive number of sacrifices personally offered by David reflected his sense of repentance and need for atonement for his sin three months previously. It was this which was the basis for his ecstatic joy at his forgiveness.

And David was clothed in a linen ephod-

As we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps. 43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. Like Job, David had no precedents in past spiritual history from which he could take comfort (Job 5:1). David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. He knew that the ideal standard for married life was one man: one woman, and yet he was somehow able to flout this and still be a man after God's own heart. He broke explicit Mosaic commandment by marrying Saul's wives and also his daughter, he airily waived the Mosaic law concerning bloodguiltiness (consider the implications of 2 Sam. 14:4-11), and the need to stone rapists (2 Sam. 13:21). When others tried to do these kind of things, they were severely punished by a God who insisted upon serious obedience to His Law. Consider how Saul was condemned for offering sacrifice instead of a priest (1 Sam. 13:10-13); and Uzziah likewise (2 Chron. 26:16-19). When the woman of Tekoah basically suggested that the Mosaic laws about the rights of the revenger of blood be repealed, David seems to have agreed. When Amnon seeks to rape his sister Tamar, she suggests that he ask David to allow them to marry- and surely, she says, he will agree. Yet this too would have been counter to the spirit of the Law about marriages to close relatives. Yet David went beyond the Law so often; and it is this which perhaps led him to commit the sin of presumption in his behaviour with Bathsheba. Right afterwards he comments about the man who stole his neighbour's sheep, that it must be restored fourfold; whereas the Law only stipulated double, David felt he so knew the spirit of the Law that he could break the letter of it- in any context. And this was his [temporary] downfall.

2 Samuel 6:15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Yahweh with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet-

David is portrayed as in religious ecstasy before the God whom three months before he had been furiously angry with (see on :8). This indeed reflects the almost bi-polar nature of David. But it also shows the power of true repentance and seeking to put things right with God (see on :13), and the joy of good conscience resulting from that.

2 Samuel 6:16 It was so, as the ark of Yahweh came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window and saw king David leaping and dancing before

Yahweh; and she despised him in her heart-

As Goliath despised David (1 Sam. 17:42), so did Michal. The same word is used (2 Sam. 6:16). God reads the heart and what He finds there is so significant to Him. That woman's silent thoughts have been recorded for millennia in the record, and they are still in God's memory. We have a parade example here of the huge significance God attaches to our thoughts. Despising others for their spirituality is especially abhorrent to Him. We recall that Michal had an idol in her home soon after her marriage to David, and we wonder if it was Yahweh whom she also despised. And all this made her no better than Goliath.

2 Samuel 6:17 They brought in the ark of Yahweh, and set it in its place, in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh-

The usual pattern for the offerings was sin offering, burnt offering [dedication to God on the basis of being reconciled from sin] and then peace offerings, celebrating the resultant peace with God. I suggested on :13 that the mass of animals sacrificed on the road to Zion were sin offerings.

2 Samuel 6:18 When David had made an end of offering the burnt offering and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of Armies-

As noted and discussed on :14, this was again David acting as high priest, blessing the people in Yahweh's Name.

2 Samuel 6:19 He distributed to all the people, even throughout the whole multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to each one a portion of bread, dates and raisins. So all the people departed each one to his house-

We see here an ancient anticipation of the bread and wine [raisins] of the breaking of bread meeting. That meeting is essentially a peace offering, a celebration of the peace with God achieved through the Lord's sin offering, our promise of dedication to Him in the burnt offering, and then the celebration of the resultant peace with God. See on :17.

Israel's mixture of Yahweh worship with Baal worship is demonstrated by the reference to their being "lovers of raisin cakes" (Hos. 3:1). According to 2 Sam. 6:19, these cakes appear to have been part of the legitimate worship of Yahweh- and yet in Song 2:5 they are referred to as an aphrodisiac. There was a heady mix of Yahweh worship with participation in the sexual rituals of the Baal cult. It was this mixture which was so abhorrent to God- and time and again, in essence, we likewise mix flesh and spirit.

2 Samuel 6:20 Then David returned to bless his household-

David is to be commended for not simply blessing Israel, but turning his attention privately to his own private household, and wanting to hold a private ceremony with them. But it was this which elicited the angry retort of Michal, whom I suggested on :16 may still have been an idolater and despised not only David but also Yahweh.

Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious the king of Israel was today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!-

See on 1 Sam. 31:6. Perhaps she really loved her second husband Phaltiel as he loved her, and was bitter that David had broken up their marriage for political reasons. She disliked the way that David had put aside his royal robes to dance naked. She felt he ought to have always retained his royal dignity rather than apparently resign it before Yahweh as king. This would be why David responds that he is indeed the chosen king (:21). "Uncovered" does mean literally to make naked. We note the careful legislation about not revealing

nakedness before Yahweh (s.w. Ex. 20:26). But David disobeyed the letter of this law to keep the spirit of it; and he did it at a time when three months before, he and Israel had been strongly punished for breaking the letter of the Divine law. His "uncovered" presence before Yahweh (2 Sam. 6:21) was not therefore done in the heat of the moment, but he would have carefully thought this through before doing it.

2 Samuel 6:21 David said to Michal, It was in the eyes of Yahweh, who chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me prince over the people of Yahweh, over Israel-

See on :20. Here is a good example of "before" meaning 'before' in importance rather than time. David tells his wife: "The Lord chose me *before* your father [Saul]". Actually, in terms of *time*, God chose Saul well before He chose David. But God chose David *above* Saul in terms of importance and honour. This helps us understand the Lord Jesus being "before" Abraham, in importance not in time (Jn. 8:58).

Michal was worried about what David looked like in the eyes of the young women; but David was totally focused upon his being in the eyes of Yahweh. Worry about what others think of us and all concerns about image evaporate before this sense- that we are in the eyes of Yahweh.

Therefore will I celebrate in the eyes of Yahweh-

When David danced "before / in the eyes of the Lord", his wife mocked him, because he had embarrassed himself "before / in the eyes of Israel". David's response is that he had done this "in my *own* eyes" (2 Sam. 6:20-22). This play on the phrase "before / in the eyes of" is significant. David is highly perceptive here. He's saying that if this is how he feels in his *own* eyes, then this is how he is before the eyes of God, and therefore this is how he will be before the eyes of Israel and the general public. David is saying: 'Who I am, my real self, is the one God sees, and I'm not going to hide it from the world; let them see me how I see myself and how God sees me'. In this incident, there was no gap between the 'real self' of David and the image he projected to the world. There was complete congruence between how he felt about himself, how God saw him, and how the watching world saw him. And this incident ought to be programmatic for our entire lives.

2 Samuel 6:22 I will be yet more vile than this, and will be base in my own eyes. But of the handmaids of whom you have spoken, they shall honour me-

See on :21. This was true on one level, but it was a cruel thing for a husband to say to his middle aged wife; for it was to the effect that 'the attractive young women will think I'm wonderful and will give me the honour and respect a man craves from his woman, which you my wife don't give me'. Again we sense a harsher and quite unpleasant side in David, despite his softness and amazing grace. Such contradictions are sadly within us all.

2 Samuel 6:23 Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death-

This may not have been judgment solely upon Michal. Once King, David decides to get back his ex-wife Michal, who was by now married to Phaltiel, who evidently loved her. Yet David takes her from Phaltiel, and we have the tragic image of the loving husband walking behind her weeping as she is led away from him (2 Sam. 3:15,16). This was not only a breach of Mosaic law, but displayed a sad elevation of politics above others' relationships and marriages. It may be significant that her renewed marriage with David wasn't blessed with any children (2 Sam. 6:23).

2 Samuel Chapter 7

2 Samuel 7:1 It happened, when the king lived in his house, and Yahweh had given him rest from all his enemies all around-

All his adult life, David had hardly slept more than a few nights in the same place. And he had always been surrounded by enemies who gave him no rest. Now finally he was living a stable life in his own house, with rest from his enemies. Instead of slumping into the mire of mediocrity in his spirituality, as many would have done, he reflects that he apparently has more than God, as it were. He has a nice house, whilst God's house was a tent. This desire to use a stable existence in God's service is a stellar example to God's children of all ages.

The account here may not be chronological, because we read of more wars in 2 Sam. 8. I suggest this is included after the account of bringing the ark to Zion in order to continue the theme of David's work for the ark.

2 Samuel 7:2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains-

Any disparity between our own life situation and that of the things of God... ought to concern us. David didn't stop living in a house and instead live in a tent. Instead he did what he could to ensure that his abundance was not kept to himself. His motives were admirable throughout, and God saw that, but God was to use David's desires to teach that He doesn't need works, but just wants to share the abundance of His grace with others.

The reference to "curtains" doesn't mean that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent, whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle (Ex. 26:1). David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Many of the commands within the "law of Moses" were clearly only intended for the wilderness generation, indeed they could only have been obeyed by them then; and David wondered whether the entire commands about the tabernacle were in that category. Those today who claim that Mosaic legislation is eternally binding need to give this due weight. It's not just that the Mosaic law was abrogated by the Lord's death; but the whole nature of that law was that it was never intended to all be literally applied to every subsequent generation. And that meant that it was the spirit of it which was to be discerned and followed.

2 Samuel 7:3 Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for Yahweh is with you-

Nathan wrongly assumed that Yahweh would naturally agree to David's proposition to move on from the Mosaic idea of a tabernacle. David didn't actually state what he intended to do (:2), but Nathan assumes he knows David's intentions, and assumes he knows God will agree. Such assumptions are typical of human beings, and further adds psychological verisimilitude to the record. Nathan of course should have had the humility to first ask of God rather than assuming he knows God's will. The assumption we know God's will is a common problem amongst God's people; effectively we are elevating our gut feeling to the level of God's word.

2 Samuel 7:4 It happened the same night, that the word of Yahweh came to Nathan saying- David's plan to build a great house was met with the word of the Lord coming unto him "the same night", telling him not to do this. There seems to be some allusion to this by the Lord

Jesus when He spoke of the rich fool who wanted to build a greater barn being told the Lord's word "that same night". It could be that the Lord Jesus saw something material and very human in David's desire to build a house for the Lord. See on :7.

2 Samuel 7:5 Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says Yahweh, Shall you build Me a house for Me to dwell in?'

Perhaps there was a pause after this statement. The emphasis was upon the words "you" and "Me". David had not given due thought to the magnitude and inappropriacy of what was in his mind; that he as a mere man could build a house for Yahweh to live in. He had failed to perceive the greatness of his God. Any idea of confining God within four walls was bizarre.

2 Samuel 7:6 For I have not lived in a house since the day that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have moved around in a tent and in a tabernacle-

Although this may primarily refer to the Angel, the point is that the God of the cosmos had intensely manifested Himself in the ark and the tabernacle / tent which enclosed it. This of itself revealed His humility. The idea is "I have walked continually"; like David up until this point (see on :1), He had been a wanderer. David had now ceased his years of wandering (:1), and was assuming that God was like himself, preferring a stable and sedentary life. But this assumption that God is like us at this moment and point of our lives is incorrect, and David later criticizes it (Ps. 50:21). He is who He is, and not a god made in our image, as we are at this moment; rather are we made in His image, and not the other way around. It is for us to hear His voice in His word and accept Him as He is, rather than assuming He will think how we do at this point in our development. David earlier had appreciated the idea of God being a wanderer when he was a wanderer, as his wilderness Psalms indicate. But now he was settled, he assumed that this was how God would like to be.

2 Samuel 7:7 In all places in which I have walked with all the children of Israel, did I say a word to any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to be shepherd of My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'

David desired to build God a physical house. 2 Sam. 7:7-11 records God's response in clear enough language: God did not want a physical house because

1. It was not really possible for man to build God a house ("Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?" is surely rhetorical)
2. God had never asked Israel to build Him such a house before; indeed, it had been His expressed will that He should dwell among Israel in the temporary form of the tabernacle. God wanted a temporary abode to point forward to the fact that the reality was in Christ; thus the Law of Moses had features built into it which were intrinsically temporal, to point men forward to the stability and finality of Messiah. By building a permanent temple, Solomon reflects his lack of focus on the Messiah to come.
3. He would only have a permanent physical house when His people were permanently settled, never to be moved again (2 Sam. 7:10), i.e. in the Kingdom. Yet Solomon perceived that his kingdom was in fact the final Kingdom of God. David made this mistake, in assuming in Ps. 72 that Solomon's Kingdom would undoubtedly be the Messianic one... and Solomon repeated the error, yet to a more tragic extent.
4. God plays on the confusion between 'house' in the sense of household, and 'house' in the sense of a physical building. He says: '*You* want to build *me* a physical house. But *I* am going to build *you* a *household* which will be my Kingdom'. The implication is that David's desire for a physical house was altogether too human, and that there is an opposition between what man thinks he can physically do for God, and the fact that God wishes to do

things for men. Yet Solomon went ahead with his works rather than grappling with the reality of sheer grace. He so wanted to *do* something. He betrays this when he writes in Ecc. 9:7: "God now accepteth thy works". The Hebrew translated "accepteth" means literally to satisfy a debt, and is elsewhere translated 'to reconcile self'. He saw works as reconciling man's debt to God, rather than perceiving that grace is paramount. He keeps on about David his father; and yet there was a crucial difference. David perceived the need for grace as the basis of man's reconciliation with God; whereas Solomon thought it was works. David wrote that God wants a broken heart and not thousands of sacrifices; yet Solomon offered the thousands of sacrifices, but didn't have the contrite heart of his father.

5. To desire a physical house for God is to overlook the promised Messiah- that was surely the implication of the promise of the Lord Jesus following right on from the statement that a physical house was not required. Is. 57:15 and Is. 66:2 explain why this is- because God does not live in what man builds, but will fully dwell in one man to whom He will look, one who would have a humble spirit towards Him. And this man was of course the Lord Jesus. Solomon's obsession with the temple therefore reflected his deeper problem- of not being focused upon the Christ to come.

So it ought to be clear from all this that God's response to the request to build a temple was negative; He did not want a physical temple. None of the four reasons for this listed above were just temporary considerations; they were reasons which were valid for all time. There can be no doubt that God's response here is at the basis of Is. 66:1,2: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" . God is saying that it simply isn't possible to build Him a house; instead, He seeks to dwell in the hearts of men. Yet Solomon wasn't interested in the personal spiritual mindedness which enables this to happen. This is the same spirit as God's response to David: 'You can't build me a physical house, I will build my own household of believers'.

These words of Is. 66 are twice quoted in the New Testament. "God that made the world and all things therein, *seeing that* He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands... as though He needed any thing" (Acts 17:24,25). The reason for God not dwelling in temples is that He is Lord of heaven and earth. This reason does not change with time; He was Lord of heaven and earth at David's time just as much as He is now.

2 Samuel 7:8 Now therefore you shall tell My servant David this, 'Thus says Yahweh of Armies, I took you from the sheep pen, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people, over Israel-

David was asked to reflect that his wandering around as a shepherd as a child and teenager had been to prepare him for leading Israel. But leading a people likewise involves an element of mobility, and God as the ultimate leader of Israel was likewise moving on and never static. Hebrew shepherds usually lead their sheep, but here David is described as being moved from following sheep, to going ahead as a leader. Here we have an example of where language and imagery is used in a way we might consider opportunistic; but this is the nature of Semitic writing and reasoning. A failure to appreciate the Hebrew nature of the Bible has led to so many misinterpretations of it.

2 Samuel 7:9 I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you-

David's continual wandering up until the point of :1 had always been with God's presence "with you wherever". This connects with God's own statement that He Himself had "walked continually" (:6). Those years had been in order to get David to appreciate God's own constant journeying. This is to be a feature of every believer's life. Even if we live and die in

the house we were born in and never move 20 km. from our home village, life with God is a constant journey. And all within us will seek to turn it into the stability of mere religion, as David was seeking to do.

God encourages David to see himself as representative of Israel by saying this; they are words replete with reference to Israel in the wilderness and their establishment in the land. As David so loved his people and was their representative, for all they did to him, so with the Lord Jesus and His people. When God asked David "choose thee one of" three possible judgments, each of them involved the whole nation- e.g. "Shall seven years of famine come unto *thee*" (singular). David was their representative even in their time of failure.

I will make you a great name, like the name of the great ones who are in the earth-

This is now developed by God into saying that He will make David a house / family. That family was to bear David's great name, but the "great name", the greatest in the earth [reading "great ones" as an intensive plural for a singular great name] was that of Yahweh. And this Name was to be carried by David's house and particularly by the Messianic seed who was now to be promised. AV "I have made thee a great name" would refer to how God was to do this through David's military victories (2 Sam. 8:13), indicating that 2 Sam. 7 is actually referring to events after 2 Sam. 8 and is not in chronological sequence.

2 Samuel 7:10 I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as at the first-

This connects with how David had planted the ark in its "place" in Zion (2 Sam. 6:17). God is saying that His grace is such that He will do exceeding far above what we ever ask or think to do for Him. He would plant and place Israel in an eternal Kingdom, just as David had planted and placed the ark in Zion. As David personally had been given rest from his enemies (:1), so would Israel be granted rest.

These words would have been comforting to the exiles; ultimately they would not be afflicted as they had been by the Babylonians, and would return to their land permanently (2 Sam. 7:10 s.w. for "afflict" in Zech. 10:2; Zeph. 3:19; Lam. 3:33; 5:11). The word used in 1 Chron. 17:9, 'to waste', is also used of the Babylonian wasting of Judah (Lam. 3:4).

2 Samuel 7:11 and as from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. I will cause you to rest from all your enemies-

The constant affliction Israel experienced at the time of the judges was because of their sins; they had no rest from their enemies because of their continual unfaithfulness to Yahweh. These promises are therefore tantamount to saying that God would somehow permanently establish His people, in a way not conditional upon their faithfulness because He would somehow make them faithful. This is the language of the new covenant offered to the exiles, and is achieved today through the work of the Holy Spirit keeping us from falling from the covenant. The "blessing" promised to Abraham is therefore interpreted in Acts 3:25,26 as the power of God turning away His people's hearts from sin. And the same is implied in these promises to David.

Moreover Yahweh tells you that Yahweh will make you a house-

To what was God referring to when He told David that David's son would build him a house? Firstly, we must bear in mind that in hundreds of places, the Hebrew word for "house" means 'household'. The eternal house promised to David is paralleled with the Kingdom; and a Kingdom is comprised of people. This is what is in view, not the building of any literal temple at the Lord's return. The Kingdom is the house of Jacob (Lk. 1:33). That the house of David is the Kingdom is evident from 2 Sam. 7:13,16; 1 Chron. 17:14 (cp. Lk. 11:17). The Kingdom was taken from the house of Saul and given to the house of David (2 Sam. 3:10), but later the Kingdom was taken from the house of David because of Solomon's

apostacy (1 Kings 14:8). This is proof enough that at best the promises to David had only a tiny fulfilment in Solomon's Kingdom.

The New Testament is very insistent that the true temple of God is the body of Christian believers (1 Cor. 9:13; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 10:21; 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 3:12; 11:1,2; 1 Tim.3:15). This string of passages is quite some emphasis. Yet Christ was the temple; he spoke of the temple of his body (Jn. 2:19-21; Rev. 21:22). For this reason, the Gospels seem to stress the connection between Christ and the temple (Mk.11:11,15,16,27; 12:35; 13:1,3; 14:49; Lk. 2:46; 21:38). Christ's body was the temple of God. By being in Christ, we too are the temple (1 Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:21), *our* body is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19). Yet Solomon was not Christ centred; he didn't want to see this connection. And we too can have an over-physical view of the Kingdom, centred around a literal temple in Jerusalem etc., rather than perceiving that the Kingdom / reign of God is, in its essence, over the hearts of men and women like us. The future political Kingdom will be the concrete articulation of the essence of the Kingdom principles which are now being lived out in the hearts of the people who are under the Lord's present kingship.

In the person of Jesus, the essence of the Kingdom came nigh to men (Mt. 10:7; 11:4; 12:28)- and this was why one of His titles is "the Kingdom". The Kingdom of God is about joy, peace and righteousness more than the physicalities of eating and drinking. In this sense the Kingdom was "among" first century Israel. The Kingdom of God is not merely a carrot held out to us for good behaviour. It is a reality right now, in so far as God truly becomes our king. Even in the Old Testament, the word "temple" does not normally refer to the physical temple outside the records of Solomon's building of the temple. It is often stated that the house David's seed was to build would be for the Name of Yahweh. His Name refers to His mental attributes. A physical house is inappropriate to express these.

If the house refers to a household of righteous believers, all becomes plain. This explains why 2 Sam. 7:13,26 parallels God's eternal name with the eternal house and Kingdom which was promised to David. Building a house was a common Hebrew idiom for developing a household (Ruth 4:11; Dt. 25:9). God's promise to David about building him an eternal household was anticipated in His words to Eli: " I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind (i.e. David, 1 Sam. 13:14): and I will build him a *sure house*", in contrast to God's destruction of Eli's household (1 Sam. 2:35). 1 Kings 11:38 clinches the idea that this refers to David: "I will be with thee, and build thee a *sure house* as I built for David". In passing, note that these words to Solomon remind him that God will build *him* a house, in opposition to the way in which Solomon so frequently speaks about building God a house.

2 Samuel 7:12 When your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers-

There is a strong sense that God has determined a number of "days" for our mortal life (Ps. 23:6; 2 Sam. 7:12), and David like all of us wished to know how many those days were for him, in order that he might live an appropriately humble life in response to realizing his frailty (Ps. 39:4). But that predetermined number of days can be cut short (Ps. 102:4,23,24) or extended (1 Kings 3:14; Prov. 9:11). Hezekiah would be the parade example of this; his days were cut short (Is. 38:10), and then lengthened in response to prayer (2 Kings 20:6). God is open to dialogue, His timetable in our personal lives is flexible according to our prayers; and He is also responsive to human behaviour. Like Job we should perceive our life as "my days" (he uses this term multiple times), so that we might use each of them for Him.

I will set up your seed after you, who shall proceed out of your body- "Set up" has a similar meaning to "establish". It is tempting to note that the Hebrew word is often translated "arise", and to wonder if there is here a hint that this seed will experience a bodily resurrection. The possible fulfilment in David's family was precluded by his sin with

Bathsheba and the resultant effects upon his "house"; the same word for "set up" is in 2 Sam. 12:11 of how God would "raise / set up evil out of your own house". His house "was not so with God", as he concluded at the end of his life; and so he with us look for a fulfilment in his Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus, and the house of people being built up / established in Him.

The promise to David concerning Christ precludes his physical existence at the time the promise was made: "I *will* set up your descendant [singular] *after* you, which *shall* proceed out of your body... I *will be* his father, and he *shall be* my son" (2 Sam. 7:12,14). Notice the future tense used here. Seeing that God *would be* Christ's Father, it is impossible that the Son of God could have already existed at that point in time when the promise was made. That this seed "*shall proceed out of your body*" shows that he was to be a literal, physical descendant of David. "The Lord has sworn in truth unto David... Of the fruit of your body will I set upon your throne" (Ps. 132:11). Solomon was the primary fulfilment of the promise, but as he was already physically in existence at the time of this promise (2 Sam. 5:14), the main fulfilment of this promise about David having a physical descendant who would be God's son, must refer to Christ (Lk. 1:31-33).

And I will establish his kingdom-

"Prepared" or "established" is a major theme in the promises of the eternal establishment of David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12,13,16 etc.), and Solomon wrongly assumed that the conditional nature of the promises concerning the seed were just irrelevant to him as he had wisdom. Therefore he uses the word of how his kingdom has been "established" (1 Kings 2:24 s.w.). Solomon's contenders for the throne were all stopped by God, they tried to prepare or establish themselves but it never worked out (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5); and so surely Solomon has the idea in mind that he has been established as the promised Messianic seed of David with an eternally "established" throne and kingdom. This leads him to the conclusion that the outcome of wisdom and folly is in this life, and he has no perspective of a final day of judgment and eternal establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This is why the simplistic dichotomies he presents in Proverbs between the blessed and wise, and the cursed and foolish, are not always true to observed experiences in this life. For it is the future Kingdom which puts them in ultimate perspective.

2 Samuel 7:13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever-

Ultimately, as shown above, this refers to the building up of the house of believers to be the throne of the seed's eternal kingdom. The Lord Jesus will reign upon us, "whose house are we" (Heb. 3:6); we are His throne, the basis of His Kingdom. And that house and throne are being built up now, although it will only be more materially and physically articulated at His second coming and the establishment of His literal Kingdom upon earth. This process of building up is achieved by the colossal work of the Lord Jesus through His Spirit, calling, converting and transforming His people to be His house. This is how the New Testament alludes to these ideas of building and establishing (Acts 20:32; Rom 16:25; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:10). Ps. 89:4 says that this building up of the throne goes on in "all generations". The idea is that the house and throne of the seed is built up from people of all generations. The light never went out for God's Truth and true people. In every generation there were some. This has big implications for those who consider that a very specific theology, especially one based upon 19th century revelations of truth, is required for salvation and membership of God's people.

The fact is that God *did* dwell, temporarily, in Solomon's temple. His glory entered it, and later left it in Ezekiel's time. This is the classic example of the way in which God will go along with men in their mistaken enthusiasm, working with them, even though this is contrary to His preferred way of doing things. A similar example is found in the way God forbade Israel to have a human king, because to do so would be a denial of His superiority

and of their covenant relationship with Him. And yet Israel had a king. God did not turn a blind eye to this. Instead He worked through this system of human kingship. Or take marriage out of the faith. This is clearly contrary to God's ideal wishes. And yet in some cases He is prepared to work through this, in order to being about His purpose. There is even the possible suggestion in Acts 15:10 that God was 'tempted' to re-instate the law of Moses, or parts of it, in the first century, seeing that this was what so many of the early Christians desired to keep. That God is so eager to work with us should in itself be a great encouragement. Yet we must not come to presume upon God's patience, assuming that He will go along with us.

In any case, 2 Chron. 7:12 says that God accepted the temple only as a place of sacrifice, i.e. a glorified altar (cp. 2 Sam. 24:17,18). And yet- God didn't really want sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5). "Now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever" (2 Chron. 7:16) is a conditional promise, followed by five verses of conditions concerning Solomon's spirituality which he overlooked. Like Solomon, we too can fix upon promises without considering their conditionality. There is good reason to think that communally and individually we are increasingly shutting our eyes to the possibility of our spiritual failure and disaster. God constantly warned Solomon about the conditionality of the promises, before the building started (2 Sam. 7:14), during it (1 Kings 6:11-13) and immediately after completing it (1 Kings 9:2-9). Note, too, that Solomon had the idea that if sinful Israel prayed towards the temple, they would somehow be forgiven because of this. God's response was that if they sought *Him* wherever they were and repented, then He would hear them- the temple was not to be seen as the instrument or mediatrix of forgiveness which Solomon envisaged. Likewise, Solomon's implication that prayer offered in the temple would be especially acceptable was not upheld by God's reply to him about this (2 Chron. 6:24-26 cp. God's response in 2 Chron. 7:12,13).

2 Samuel 7:14 I will be his father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men-

Often the promises about the seed in the singular (the Lord Jesus) are applied to us in the plural (e.g. 2 Sam. 7:14 cp. Ps. 89:30-35). Those seminal promises to Abraham hinged around what would be realized *in*, not "by", his seed. All that is true of the Lord Jesus is now true of us, in that we are in Him. Baptism is not an initiation into a church. It isn't something which just *seems* the right thing to do. And even if because of our environment and conscience, it was easier to get baptized than not- *now* this mustn't be the case. We really are *in* Christ, we are born again; now we exist, spiritually! And moreover, we have risen with Him, His resurrection life, His life and living that will eternally be, is now manifest in us, and will be articulated physically at the resurrection.

There are connections between the promises to David about Jesus, and the later commentary upon them in Psalm 89 and Isaiah 53, with reference to the crucifixion.

2 Sam. 7 If he [Jesus] commit iniquity = Psalm 89 If his children [us] forsake my law = Isaiah 53 The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all

2 Sam. 7 I will chasten *him* with the rod of men = Ps. 89 Then will I visit *their* transgression with the rod = Is. 53 For the transgression of *my people* was *he* stricken

2 Sam. 7 And with the stripes of the children of men = Ps. 89 And *their* iniquity with stripes = Is. 53 With *his* stripes we are healed.

The point of all this is to show how our sins were somehow carried by the Lord Jesus, to the extent that He suffered for them. But *how* was this actually achieved? It is one thing to say it, but we must put meaning into the words. I suggest it was in that the Lord so identified with us, His heart so bled for us, that He *felt* a sinner even though He of course never sinned. The final cry "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" clearly refers back to all the many passages which speak of God forsaking the wicked, but never forsaking the righteous. The Lord, it seems to me, *felt* a sinner, although He was not one, and thus entered into this sense of crisis and fear He had sinned. He *so* identified with us. In the bearing of His cross, we likewise must identify with others, with their needs and with the desperation of their human condition... and this is what will convert them, as the Lord's identification with *us* saved *us*.

It is unthinkable that God has any possibility of sinning. The seed of David promised in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 was definitely Christ. Verse 14 speaks of Christ's possibility of sinning: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him". Christ was chastened with the rod of men "and with the stripes of the children of men", i.e. Israel (Is. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24; Mic. 5:1), in His death on the cross. But punishment with rod and stripes was to be given if Messiah sinned (2 Sam. 7:14). Yet Christ received this punishment; because God counted Him as if He were a sinner. His sharing in our condemnation was no harmless piece of theology. He really did feel, deep inside Him, that He was a sinner, forsaken by God. Instead of lifting up His face to Heaven, with the freedom of sinlessness, He fell on His face before the Father in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:39), bearing the guilt of human sin.

"Chasten" is the word used by Solomon when he speaks of the need to accept "reproof" in Prov. 15:12: "A scoffer doesn't love to be reproved; he will not go to the wise". David had spoken of the house of Saul as scoffing at him (s.w. Ps. 119:51). And the line of David had been chosen to replace Saul because he had refused Samuel's reproof. David had accepted reproof and was open to it, notably from Nathan the prophet (Ps. 38:1; 141:5); and so again Solomon's Proverbs are true, but he harnesses them to the justification of himself and his father. But Solomon was only to remain the prophetic son of David if he accepted reproof (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:14); and he didn't. He refused to personalize his own wisdom, as we can.

2 Sam. 7:14 had warned the son of David that if he sinned, he would be punished "with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men". I take this as meaning that he would be punished like ordinary men are punished- and the implication could be that Solomon would have a tendency to think that he was more than human, somehow above the possibility of failing and being punished as an ordinary man, because he might think that he was somehow 'God', or at least, that what happens to all humanity would somehow not happen to him. This tendency to assume that we are somehow different to the rest of humanity, that we can sin in a certain way but they can't, that somehow for us it will all be OK... is as alive in us as it was in Solomon.

2 Samuel 7:15 but My loving kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you-

It was God's Spirit which departed from Saul and came upon David. Yet that Spirit is here called God's grace or loving kindness, and the New Testament makes the same connection between the grace / gift of God and the Holy Spirit. The formation of the seed, both collectively and individually in the Lord Jesus, was through the work of the Spirit. And that Spirit would abide fully and eternally upon the Lord Jesus (Jn. 3:34).

2 Samuel 7:16 Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you-

The translations tend to add "in your presence", implying David's resurrection to behold it. But the grammar is indeterminate. It could as well mean in God's presence, and this is how David interprets it in Ps. 61:7.

Solomon came to overlook the conditionality of the promises because his father had done the same. David on his deathbed speaks of how "God has given one to sit on my throne this day, my eyes even seeing it" (1 Kings 1:48). He forgot how those promises more essentially spoke of his house "for a great while to come", and how only after "you shall sleep with your fathers" would David see "your house and your kingdom established for ever *before you*" (2 Sam. 7:12,16), thus implying David's resurrection. He lost this focus in his enthusiasm for Solomon, and it seems that Solomon followed suite.

Your throne shall be established forever'-

Abigail quotes the promise of a priest being raised up with a "sure house" (1 Sam. 2:35), imagining that David was to become a Messianic king-priest; and to have blood on his

hands would preclude that. Abigail's phrase "a sure / established house" (1 Sam. 25:28) is used in the promises to David (2 Sam. 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38). It's as if she was so in tune with God's ways that she had some premonition of His intentions with David, although she saw these as conditional upon David not shedding the innocent blood of her family. Or perhaps the promise of 1 Sam. 2:35 about a priest with a "sure house" had already been developed by Samuel in relation with David, and Abigail was aware of that. The promises to David which mention a sure house for him would therefore only be confirming what had already been promised.

I suggested on :13 that this establishment of the throne was a process of building up and establishing God's people over the generations, coming to full term in the establishment of the Lord Jesus on David's revived throne in Jerusalem at His second coming. Ps. 89:4 says that this building up of the throne goes on in "all generations". The idea is that the house and throne of the seed is built up from people of all generations. The light never went out for God's Truth and true people.

2 Samuel 7:17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David-

Nathan faithfully relayed the vision he received in these words to David. This is in contrast to how he had over hastily assumed to know God's word and will in the matter the day before.

2 Samuel 7:18 Then David the king went in and sat before Yahweh; and he said, Who am I, Lord Yahweh-

The promises to David are described as the mercy of God (Is. 55:3; Ps. 89:33,34). God having a son is the sign of His love for us, and this must elicit a response in us. David himself marvelled that such mercy had been shown to him: "Who am I... and what is my house... You know Your servant" (2 Sam. 7:18-20). And yet in the very next chapters, we read of how David made a renewed attempt to show mercy to the house of Saul. Mephibosheth says that he is "thy servant... what is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such... as I am?" (2 Sam. 9:8 AV). Mephibosheth is using the very words which David used to God; David is showing mercy to Mephibosheth in the very way in which the promises of God to him were the "mercies" shown to David. Appreciating that the promises concern us personally, and that they reveal such loving grace from the Father, can only lead to a similar response in showing love and grace through entering into the lives and destinies of others.

And what is my house, that You have brought me thus far?-

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant" (Gen. 32:10) was spoken by Jacob on that night of destiny, in recognition of how he was morally unworthy to receive the promises which God had given him (see context). David picked this up in 2 Sam. 7:18, where he comments on his unworthiness to receive the promises to him, which were an extension of those Jacob received.

2 Samuel 7:19 This was yet a small thing in Your eyes, Lord Yahweh; but You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come; this is not the way of men, Lord Yahweh!-

Such is the wonder of God's promise to us that we really have no excuse to sin. Every sin is in a sense a denial of His promises. God told David that he had no excuse for what he did with Uriah and Bathsheba, because he had given him so much, "and if that had been too little, I would have added unto you..." (2 Sam. 12:8). "Too little" sends the mind back to 2 Sam. 7:19, where the promises to David are described as a "little thing"; the promises were so wonderful that David should not have allowed himself to fall into such sin. And us

likewise.

2 Samuel 7:20 What more can David say to You?-

In view of all God had said to David, he had nothing to say to God, and the implication is that he would now not say to God his plans of building a house for God. His later desire and insistence upon doing so would suggest he lost this intensity of understanding and awareness.

For You know Your servant, Lord Yahweh-

See on :18. David is expressing what we often do to God; that we cannot express our gratitude enough in words or praise, we can only ask God to know us, and know how we feel.

2 Samuel 7:21 For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have worked all this greatness, to make Your servant know it-

David spoke of how God's word and "own heart" are parallel (2 Sam. 7:21); God's mind / spirit is expressed in His word, although David may here more understand the "word" as referring to God's purpose (as in Jn. 1:1) rather than the scriptures. David was sure the promises would come true; he speaks in the past tense of how God had worked already these great things.

2 Samuel 7:22 Therefore You are great-

LXX continues from :21: "that he may magnify You". The purpose of God's expression of grace through the promises is so that we who receive them might magnify Him. The Psalms which praise Yahweh's greatness were therefore manifestations of this sense of gratitude for the promises (Ps. 35:27; 40:16; 48:1).

Yahweh God. For there is none like You, neither is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears-

What characterizes Yahweh as the one and only God is His grace, which David has just experienced poured out. Divine grace is the defining feature of the one true faith; no other god, idol or religious system comes close to it.

2 Samuel 7:23 What one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem to Himself for a people, and to make Himself a name, and to do great things for You, and awesome things for Your land, before Your people, whom You redeemed to yourself out of Egypt, from the nations and their gods?-

Israel had been redeemed from the gods of Egypt. Yet they took those gods with them through the Red Sea, and carried the tabernacle of Moloch and Remphan through the wilderness along with that of Yahweh (Acts 7:43). The LXX here brings out this point: "so that thou shouldst cast out nations and their tabernacles from the presence of thy people, whom thou didst redeem for thyself out of Egypt". That Israel carried these tabernacles and gods with them suggests that this was a redemption refused. And David, having experienced the grace which can only come from Yahweh, is resolved to only serve Him and root out all such idolatry.

2 Samuel 7:24 You established for Yourself Your people Israel to be a people to You for ever; and You, Yahweh, became their God-

God had promised to establish David's seed, God's true people, as His throne and people for ever. David recognizes that what had been promised to him had already been offered to Israel; although as noted on :23, they had refused this through their idolatry and failure to be God's exclusive kingdom / people, rejecting Him as their God. It was similar to God's

thought of rejecting His people and working instead through Moses and his seed. God had been persuaded against that, but now David perceives that God is going to work not through Israel as a whole but through him and his seed. The allusion is to Dt. 32:6 where Israel act as the most foolish nation in rejecting the God who established them as a nation.

2 Samuel 7:25 Now, Yahweh God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant, and concerning his house, confirm it for ever, and do as You have spoken-
David seems to feel the need to show his agreement with God's plan (also in :29). This may be because he perceived the similarity with Moses, who was also offered to have God working not with Israel but with him and his seed. And Moses hadn't agreed. But David agrees.

2 Samuel 7:26 Let Your name be magnified for ever, saying, 'Yahweh of Armies is God over Israel; and the house of Your servant David shall be established before You'-
David invites the faithful to join him in praising God for His plan of salvation revealed in these promises; and the Psalms which magnify Yahweh's Name are therefore motivated by these promises.

2 Samuel 7:27 For You, Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, have revealed to Your servant saying, 'I will build you a house'. Therefore Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer to You-
The idea of the Hebrew is that David speaks of being bold in his prayer of praise for the promises made to him ("Therefore hath thy servant been bold to pray this prayer", RVmg.). Yet Heb. 4:16 encourages *us* to be bold in prayer. He was our pattern in prayer.

2 Samuel 7:28 Now, O Lord Yahweh, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant-
The idea is "You are the one and only God". The context is Israel's idolatry, and how God is now working through David and his seed as His Kingdom, rather than through an Israel who rejected Him as the only true God.

2 Samuel 7:29 Now therefore let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue for ever before You; for You, Lord Yahweh, have spoken it. Let the house of Your servant be blessed for ever with Your blessing-
David describes the promises as "blessing" (2 Sam. 7:28,29), a word normally used in the context of forgiveness. So David was aware of the grossness of sin, of the need for self-examination, to ensure that his technical breaches of the Law of Moses were truly a reflection of his friendship with God rather than an indication of spiritual weakness. For David's house to become God's eternal Kingdom would require their blessing with forgiveness in order to be immortalized.

2 Samuel Chapter 8

2 Samuel 8:1 After this it happened that David struck the Philistines and subdued them: and David took the bridle of the mother city out of the hand of the Philistines-

"After this" may not be strictly chronological, because 2 Sam. 7:1 was at a time when David had rest from his enemies. 2 Sam. 7 is included where it is to continue the theme of the ark and Zion which began in 2 Sam. 6. The promised king of Israel would save Israel from the Philistines and their other enemies; Saul had failed in this, but David succeeded as the truly intended king. LXX implies that until this time, Israel were still paying tribute to the Philistines: "David took the tribute from out of the hand of the Philistines".

But the parallel 1 Chron. 18:1 says that "David took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines". Gath would be the 'mother-city', and the word translated "towns" literally means daughters. We note that David had earlier lived in Gath under the protection of Achish and had lied to the people how many Israelites he had slain in his apparent hatred of Saul. They would have considered him a hypocrite.

2 Samuel 8:2 He struck Moab, and measured them with the line, making them to lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive. The Moabites became servants to David, and brought tribute-

David made the captives lay down in three lines. He arbitrarily chose one line to keep alive, and killed the other two lines. This can't be justified as some careful obedience to some Mosaic law. It reads like something out of the Holocaust, an arbitrary slaying of some in order to exercise the whim of one's own power. No wonder David was barred from building the temple because of his attitude to bloodshed. And this was the worse because his parents had been given refuge there (1 Sam. 22:3,4). Perhaps the incident of 2 Sam. 23:20 occurred at this time of 2 Sam. 8:2.

Likewise when Rabbah is captured, David proudly puts the crown of the king on his head, grabs their spoil for himself (not following Abraham's example), "and he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon" (2 Sam. 12:31). Now all that is torture. It's one thing to obey Divine commands about slaying enemies; it's another to willfully torture them, Auschwitz-style. These incidents reveal David at his worst. And again- did he really have to ensure that every male in Edom was murdered (1 Kings 11:15,16)- was that really necessary? What about the mums, wives, sisters left weeping, and the fatherless daughters, left to grow up in the dysfunction of a leaderless Middle Eastern home? Those men were all somebody's sons, brothers, fathers, grandfathers. Was David really obeying some Divine command here, or was this the dictate of his own anger and dysfunctional bloodlust? We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

2 Samuel 8:3 David struck also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah-

Hadadezer = 'helped by Hadad', the sun god. 2 Chron. 8 is a passage which especially makes this point, in that it describes the actions of Solomon in the very language which is used earlier about David.

2 Chron. 8:3 "Solomon went to Hamath Zobah" = 2 Sam. 8:3 "David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob king of Zobah"; 2 Chron. 8:3 "and prevailed" = same word 1 Sam. 17:30; 2 Chron. 8:8 Those "whom the children of Israel consumed not, did Solomon make to pay tribute" = 2 Sam. 8:6 "David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts"; 2 Chron. 8:14 "He appointed according to the ordinance of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges... for so had David commanded" = 1 Chron. 24:1; 2 Chron. 9:15,16 = 2

Sam.8:7 "David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem".

1 Kings 11:4,6 clearly states God's opinion that Solomon was not like David: "his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father... (he) went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father". This double stress, bearing in mind inspiration's economic use of words, is really making a point. Yet the records of Solomon seem to be framed to show that externally, Solomon was indeed following David; he was obsessed with living out parental expectation, and perhaps the expectation of his society, rather than forging his own relationship with God.

As he went to recover his dominion at the River- Grammatically, the subject of the sentence is Hadadezer, and the reference is to the battle of 2 Sam. 10:15-19. Again we see that the records are not chronologically but thematically arranged.

2 Samuel 8:4 David took from him one thousand seven hundred horsemen and twenty thousand footmen: and David hamstrung all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for one hundred chariots-

See on :3. Notice how both David and Solomon dealt with the matter of chariots and horses. Solomon's weakness for horses was perhaps traceable to David's. Solomon unashamedly amassed horses and chariots, in direct disobedience to Divine command (Dt. 17:16). When David his father had captured 1000 chariots and horses, he hamstrung 900 of them and retained 100 of them (2 Sam. 8:4). He had a conscience about the matter, but thought that 90% obedience wasn't bad. And the hamstrung horses were likely used for agricultural work and especially for breeding- breeding yet more chariot horses. David's 90% obedience lead to his son's 100% disobedience in this matter of chariot horses.

Solomon wished to imitate his father David in every sense; his own real personality only really came out in the Ecclesiastes years, when he took to drink, materialism, women and idolatry. It took the influence of his parents many years to wear off. David had weaknesses for horses (2 Sam. 8:4) and many wives; and Solomon followed in these steps too. Note that David had six sons in seven years by six different women, including Gentiles (1 Chron. 3:3). And in addition to these, David had children by "the concubines" (1 Chron. 3:9). Doubtless Solomon reasoned, albeit deep within his psyche, that such behaviour was legitimate because David his father had done it. David seems to have over interpreted the promises made to him about Solomon and the temple, and assumed that his interpretation was certainly correct. And Solomon did exactly the same. The weaknesses of the parents all too easily are repeated by the children to an even greater extent.

There are apparently different numbers given in 2 Sam. 8:4; 10:18 and 1 Chron. 19:18. I see no real problem here once we appreciate that the Hebrew word "thousand" used when giving numbers like this rarely means 1,000 as a number. It is also translated regiment, brigade, family, squadron etc. And to Israelites looking at the Syrian army, it could be described in various ways. There many regiments, families, groups, squadrons, but these subdivisions of an ancient army are all called a "thousand". Depending how one looks at the army and its subdivisions. A modern army would be subdivided into two to four corps, a corps has at least two divisions or legions, a division has two four brigades or regiments, a brigade has two or more regiments, a regiment has two or more battalions, a battalion has a number of companies, a company has a number of platoons, a platoon has a number of squads or fireteams. The problem is that the Hebrew Bible uses the same word for all such military subdivisions, and it is translated "thousand" in many Bibles. Hence the apparently contradictory numbers.

2 Samuel 8:5 When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David

struck of the Syrians twenty two thousand men-

Again we must note that "thousand" refers to regiments / families and is not necessarily to be taken as literally 1,000.

2 Samuel 8:6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought tribute. Yahweh gave victory to David wherever he went-
This was short-lived, because Solomon's adversary Rezon established himself at Damascus (1 Kings 11:23-25).

2 Samuel 8:7 David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem-

"Hadad" was the god of the sun, "Hadadezer" had not been 'helped by Hadad' as his name means, and so David brought these golden imitations of the sun to Yahweh's temple. It is perhaps questionable whether David should have brought idols into Jerusalem; we note that later Judah worshipped sun gods. David's actions here were not blessed, for the LXX adds "And Susakim [i.e. Shishak] king of Egypt took them, when he went up to Jerusalem in the days of Roboam the son of Solomon". Likewise 1 Kings 14:26 LXX mentions that David took golden spears from Hadadezer: "And the golden spears which David took from the hand of the servants of Adraazar king of Soba and carried to Jerusalem, he took them all". These would not have been used as real spears, but were part of the worship of the golden sun which was the main religion in Syria at the time. He would have been better destroying them, rather than bringing idol paraphernalia into Jerusalem. For it later contributed towards the freedom Judah felt to worship sun gods.

2 Samuel 8:8 From Bethah-

LXX Tebah, a son of Nahor the Syrian (Gen. 22:24).

And from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass-
As discussed on :7, these were likely brass [better, 'copper'] idols or idol paraphernalia which he would have been better destroying. LXX adds "Therewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the lavers, and all the vessels".

2 Samuel 8:9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had struck all the army of Hadadezer-

Hamath came under tribute to David (:10), and Solomon, ever seeking to re-live the work of his father David, made a point of building forts there (1 Kings 4:24; 2 Chron. 8:4). But this external imitation of the faith and works of his father wasn't the same as real spirituality; and this is a warning to all those raised as believers. For when he finally individuated as his own man, Solomon had no faith in Yahweh and turned to idols.

2 Samuel 8:10 then Toi sent Joram his son to king David, to greet him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and struck him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass-

These vessels were devoted to God's service by David and then Solomon dedicated them to the temple (1 Kings 7:51). The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from Egypt and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality.

2 Samuel 8:11 King David also dedicated these to Yahweh, with the silver and gold that he dedicated of all the nations which he subdued-

See on :10. David "subdued" the nations, using the word often used of the command to subdue the nations of Canaan (Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). He is presented as a second Joshua, subduing the land as it ought to have been subdued, and therefore becoming what Adam ought to have been in Eden (Gen. 1:28 s.w.). This is another indication that the garden of Eden was effectively the *eretz* or land promised to Abraham.

2 Samuel 8:12 of Syria, Moab, the children of Ammon, the Philistines and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah-

There is no record of David fighting Amalek again, so the spoil in view may be that taken in 1 Sam. 30:16.

2 Samuel 8:13 David made himself a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians in the Valley of Salt, even eighteen thousand men-

This demonstrates that a "name" in Hebrew thought is not just a lexical item. David made his name; it involves personal history, character, reputation etc. These are all what the Yahweh Name is all about. This is the reference of 2 Sam. 7:9, indicating that 2 Sam. 7 is actually referring to events after 2 Sam. 8 and is not in chronological sequence. Chronicles has "And Abishai the son of Zeruah smote Edom in the valley of salt, (to the number of) eighteen thousand men". Perhaps Edom and Syria were confederate; or we should read with LXX, which had "Edom" here rather than "the Syrians". We note that :14 goes on to talk about Edom.

2 Samuel 8:14 He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. Yahweh gave victory to David wherever he went-

This is framed in such terms as to show that Esau / Edom was indeed now subject to Jacob as predicted in (Gen. 27:37-40), and Balaam's prophecy (Num. 24:17,18).

2 Samuel 8:15 David reigned over all Israel; and David executed justice and righteousness to all his people-

David was motivated in doing this by realizing that this is how Yahweh reigns (Ps. 33:5), and that by doing so he would help live out the spirit of the promises to him, that his throne would be eternally established; for that throne was all about justice and righteousness (Ps. 89:14). And so David's throne or way of rulership becomes the basis for how his seed, the Lord Jesus, eternally reigns (Is. 9:7; 32:1; Jer. 23:5,6).

2 Samuel 8:16 Joab the son of Zeruah was over the army; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder-

The men who had been faithful to David during his long wilderness years, when he seemed a lost cause with Saul certain to win against him (1 Sam. 27:1), were the very ones who were the rulers in his kingdom. Despite the very evident weaknesses of men like Joab. And in the type this looks ahead to we who shall be king-priests in the Lord's eternal kingdom (Rev. 5:10), having been loyal to Him and His cause in these apparently hopeless wilderness years.

2 Samuel 8:17 and Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were priests; and Seraiah was scribe-

We notice that no high priest is nominated. David effectively acted as the high priest; see on :18. The "scribe" or historian was a senior advisor in the Hebrew court (2 Sam. 8:17; 2

Kings 18:18,37; 2 Chron. 34:8) because of the huge value attached to history in the Hebrew mind, and as reflected in the Bible being largely history. Advice on how to act was to be based upon historical, or as we would now say, "Biblical", precedent.

2 Samuel 8:18 and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers-

David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (:17; 2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not.

2 Samuel Chapter 9

2 Samuel 9:1 David said, Is there yet any who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?-

These words may have been said in David's heart, or perhaps as a nationwide announcement. David sought to show all grace to the house of Saul, in response to the grace he had received from God. And he didn't let the opportunities to show grace just meet him along life's way, but rather proactively sought them out. And this is a pattern to us. The fulfilment of God's promises is His showing kindness to us (s.w. Gen. 24:12,14); to show kindness is to respond to grace or something done for us (s.w. Gen. 40:14; Josh. 2:12; Jud. 1:24; 8:35; Ruth 1:8; 2 Sam. 10:2). Nothing good had been done to David by the house of Saul; but God had done David so much good. And he reflected that by showing grace to those who had not shown it to him. See on 2 Sam. 10:1.

2 Samuel 9:2 There was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, Are you Ziba? He said, Your servant is he-
As noted on :1, this is an example of proactively seeking out opportunities to show grace. David was apparently unaware of Jonathan's lame son (:3) or else he would have shown this grace earlier. Perhaps Ziba and Mephibosheth didn't quite believe David could show so much grace to the house of Saul after what they had done to him. We take from this the principle that it is always hard to believe real grace.

2 Samuel 9:3 The king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him? Ziba said to the king, Jonathan has yet a son, who is lame of his feet-

See on Ps. 35:14. David wept for Saul as if he was his friend or brother (Ps. 35:14). Who was David's friend and brother? Surely Jonathan his brother-in-law. But he wept for Saul, David says, as he wept for Jonathan. This is testified to historically by David's lament of 2 Sam. 1. And still David sought out the house of Saul, "that I may shew the kindness of God" unto them. It was the experience of Divine kindness that motivated David.

2 Samuel 9:4 The king said to him, Where is he? Ziba said to the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar-
"Lo Debar" is literally 'place of no pasture'; we can assume it was therefore an impoverished area.

2 Samuel 9:5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar-

It could be that David personally did this, hence LXX "David went, and took him out of the house of Machir". He was so eager to personally do the hard work of showing grace.

2 Samuel 9:6 Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David-
"Mephibosheth" is apparently a name which would have arisen from changing his original name, Meribbaal 'man of Baal' (1 Chron. 8:34), to something which means 'the dispeller of shame'. i.e. Baal. The suffix 'baal' could suggest that even Jonathan was closer to idolatry than we would like, and at least he didn't use the 'Yah' suffix in the name of his children. But Mephibosheth had perhaps repented of this, renouncing Baal as shameful, and yet still struggled to believe in the extent of Yahweh's grace to him through David.

And fell on his face, and showed respect. David said, Mephibosheth. He answered, Behold, your servant!-

The record gives us the tragic picture of a fearful (:7) lame man now fallen flat on his face before the powerful king David. And David shows him every grace.

2 Samuel 9:7 David said to him, Don't be afraid; for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your father. You shall eat bread at my table continually-

Mephibosheth's fear reflects the difficulty we all have in accepting grace. Indeed faith in the gospel is effectively a climbing of this mountain, to believe in grace. See on 2 Sam. 1:23; Ps. 35:14. As he hoped for fellowship at the Messianic King's table in the future, so David delighted in inviting his former enemies to partake of his table, now *he* was king (2 Sam. 9:7,11,13). And if we hope to share the Lord's table in the Kingdom, we must share it with our weaker brethren now. I see in all this such a triumph for David, that a man should reflect the love of God to such an extent, to love in the face of such hatred, to not just love those who loved him. The deep sorrow of the Lord Jesus for Judas and all those who turn away is surely typified here. Right at the bitter end, the Lord still referred to him as his friend (Mt. 26:50), even though a few hours before he had been speaking of how the faithful few were his friends, and how he would give his life for his friends (Jn. 15:13-15).

2 Samuel 9:8 He bowed down, and said, What is your servant, that you should look on such a dead dog as I am?-

This was how David had felt about himself (1 Sam. 17:17 LXX; 24:14 cp. 2 Sam. 9:8; 16:9). As he, the dead dog, had been shown grace, so he was determined to show it to other dead dogs. And this is how we should feel towards apparently hopeless cases; for there but for God's grace went I.

The promises to David are described as the mercy of God (Is. 55:3; Ps. 89:33,34). God having a son is the sign of His love for us, and this must elicit a response in us. David himself marvelled that such mercy had been shown to him: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house... You know Your servant" (2 Sam. 7:18-20). And yet in the very next chapters, we read of how David made a renewed attempt to show mercy to the house of Saul. Mephibosheth says that he is "Your servant... what is your servant, that you should look upon such... as I am?" (2 Sam. 9:8). Mephibosheth is using the very words which David used to God; David is showing mercy to Mephibosheth in the very way in which the promises of God to him were the "mercies" shown to David. Appreciating that the promises concern us personally, and that they reveal such loving grace from the Father, can only lead to a similar response in showing love and grace through entering into the lives and destinies of others.

2 Samuel 9:9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, All that pertained to Saul and to all his house have I given to your master's son-

It's not clear whether the "master" of Ziba refers to Jonathan, or whether his master was Mephibosheth and Ziba being told that the inheritance is going to go to Mephibosheth's son Mica (:12). We get the impression that Ziba had abused Mephibosheth's handicap and somehow manipulated to get the land of Saul and Jonathan given to him and his family as an inheritance.

2 Samuel 9:10 You shall till the land for him, you, and your sons, and your servants; and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have bread to eat: but Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants-

There could be here the implication that Ziba had used Saul's land for his own enrichment, and not always given Mephibosheth enough to eat. Mephibosheth is called Saul's son (2 Sam. 9:7,10; 19:24), although he was actually Jonathan's son. This suggests that the son was brought up in Saul's house. This certainly does not give the impression that Jonathan separated himself from his father's house, even though he strongly disagreed with Saul.

There was no fear of guilt by association with Bible characters, but rather a standing up for Godly principle in whatever situation they were in.

The invitation to eat at David's table is emphasized (:7,11,13). Likewise after Solomon's ascension, there was judgment and reward; in the form of being able to eat at his table (1 Kings 2:7 cp. 2 Sam. 9: 7,10; 19:28). After Christ's return, the reward is to break bread with Him (Lk. 14:15; 22:30). Breaking bread with Him now is a sign of joyful fellowship with Him in anticipation of that; it shouldn't therefore be a scary, worrying experience.

2 Samuel 9:11 Then Ziba said to the king, According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so your shall servant do. So Mephibosheth ate at the king's table, like one of the king's sons-

This eating at table with David is stressed three times (:7,11,13). Whom you shared your table with was significant; and the handicapped were often kept out of public view. David's grace is shown by how he opened his table to the otherwise hopeless and obscure. The Lord Jesus did the same, and so should we.

2 Samuel 9:12 Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Mica-
See on :9 for the significance of this mention.

All that lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth-

The idea is perhaps that Ziba had abused Mephibosheth's handicap, and had become wealthy as a result; for her had many sons and servants (:10). But now that is all changed around, in the spirit of grace. Now the crippled Mephibosheth is made the master and Ziba and his family become Mephibosheth's servants.

2 Samuel 9:13 So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem; for he ate continually at the king's table. He was lame in both his feet-

It was common in those days for the handicapped to be isolated from society and not placed in public view. But grace inverted all of that. The lameness of Mephibosheth is emphasized, and juxtaposed against the fact he ate always at David's table, as if they were family.

2 Samuel Chapter 10

2 Samuel 10:1 It happened after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place-

"After this" can signal a change of subject rather than being chronologically significant. The same phrase is used in 2 Sam. 8:1, although the preceding chapter refers to events after and not before that time.

2 Samuel 10:2 David said, I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me. So David sent by his servants to comfort him concerning his father. David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon-

This continues the theme discussed on 2 Sam. 9:1, where the same phrase is used. David was proactively seeking to show grace to all and sundry. It was as if he was looking for an excuse to show grace by saying that Nahash king of the Ammonites had been kind to David; for Saul and David had had conflict with them (2 Sam. 8:12). But he fails to maintain that intensity; for when his grace is now abused, he reacts very harshly. Whereas when he abused God's grace, e.g. over Bathsheba, God was gentle with him. We note that he likewise shows grace to Shimei, and then finally asks Solomon to ensure that Shimei is slain. It is one thing to show grace or forgiveness in a moment, but to maintain that position long term, or when it is abused and rejected, is far harder. But that is what imitating God's grace is all about it.

2 Samuel 10:3 But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun their lord, Do you think that David honours your father, in that he has sent comforters to you? Hasn't David sent his servants to you to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?-

Again, as with Mephibosheth's struggle to believe David's grace, these men couldn't believe David's grace, just as struggle to believe that of the Lord Jesus. Their logic is presented here as being exactly that of Joab in his angry, suspicious interpretation of Abner's visit to David (2 Sam. 3:24,25). Joab was wrong in his interpretation, and so were these princes. It is quite a theme of the historical records that kings are badly advised by their courtiers. We think also of Rehoboam's advisers. Perhaps this is to highlight how the only true interpretation of events and advice for action comes from God and not men.

David sent messengers to Nabal meaning well to him, and they were rudely rebuffed, resulting in his anger which only Abigail's grace and wisdom saved him from (1 Sam. 25). And yet the same situation repeated in its essence when he sent messengers to Hanun who were likewise misinterpreted and rebuffed (2 Sam. 10:3). Again, David got angry- but there was no Abigail to restrain him, and he did get into an impossible fight... from which by grace God delivered him. Could it not be that David failed to learn from his previous experience...? Circumstances repeat within our lives and between our lives and those of others in Biblical history; that we might learn the lessons and take comfort from the scriptures, that man is not alone.

2 Samuel 10:4 So Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away-

Having a beard was then seen as a sign of being a free man; to have a half shaved beard was a sign of servanthood. Doing this was a direct provocation and effective declaration of war, claiming the Hebrews were their servants.

2 Samuel 10:5 When they told it to David, he sent to meet them; for the men were greatly ashamed. The king said, Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return-

We note David's ability to be very sensitive to the situation of others. And yet the same man shed blood abundantly, took no care for the feelings of Michal and Paltiel when he split their

marriage up, let alone cared for Uriah... And yet this is the strange mixture of spirituality and unspirituality which we experience in ourselves and in others all the time.

2 Samuel 10:6 When the children of Ammon saw that they were become odious to David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob, and the Syrians of Zobah, twenty thousand footmen, and the king of Maacah with one thousand men, and the men of Tob with twelve thousand men-

They paid 1000 pieces of silver for the Syrians (1 Chron. 19:6). For "thousand" see on :18. This fearsome confederacy was all part of God's purpose, for the subsequent victories resulted in these smaller kings becoming subservient to David (see on :19). And this is how God uses our worst crises, ultimately towards our blessing. 2 Sam. 23:36 speaks of a Syrian man from Zobah being one of David's loyalest men. Igal would have been a Syrian from Zobah, perhaps one of the soldiers who fought against David (2 Sam. 10:6) and then converted to him. The Gittites who followed David were likewise Philistines from Gath who were once his enemies but converted to his God, and devoted themselves zealously to Him. This is an incredible witness to the power of Yahweh to convert, because such willing defections of individuals to the people and God of their enemies, and being zealously committed to Him, was unheard of in their society.

2 Samuel 10:7 When David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the army of the mighty men- We wonder why David didn't go himself, although he does personally lead the army to the even greater battle with the Syrians which this one provoked. Perhaps this is to prepare us for the statement in 2 Sam. 11:1 that David's remaining in Jerusalem led to his sin with Bathsheba. And we wonder whether that relationship had not already started at this time, with Uriah away at the front so much.

2 Samuel 10:8 The children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entrance of the gate: and the Syrians of Zobah and of Rehob, and the men of Tob and Maacah, were by themselves in the field-

"By themselves" could mean that they had planned to combine with the Ammonite forces at Medeba (1 Chron. 19:7), about 20 miles from Rabbah of the Ammonites. It seems Joab marched at top speed to engage with them before the Ammonites and Syrians met up with each other as one large force. The Ammonites assembled their battle lines at the entrance to Rabbah, but it seems they didn't engage with the Israelites. They were waiting for the Syrians to arrive and combine their forces. When Joab makes the Syrians flee, the Ammonites fled back into their city gate.

2 Samuel 10:9 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians-

He saw the Syrians as a greater strength than the Ammonites. He placed himself between the two armies before they had time to join up with each other. This meant the Israelites would be sandwiched between them. It was a daring but dangerous move, which could easily have led to the annihilation of the entire Israelite army.

2 Samuel 10:10 The rest of the people he committed into the hand of Abishai his brother; and he put them in array against the children of Ammon-

That Joab took the most dangerous part of the engagement speaks much of his bravery. But as we will note on :12, bravery and passing mention of God are not the same as faith and true wisdom.

2 Samuel 10:11 He said-

The idea is, that he planned or thought. The Bible continually stresses that the thought is

the word spoken. And the essence of Biblical spirituality is upon the heart, the thinking.

If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the children of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you-

This is playing on the name "Hadadezer" (:16), which means 'Helped ['ezer'] by Hadad', the sun god. We might have preferred to see Joab alluding to Yahweh being their help; but instead he thinks of help in terms of human strength.

2 Samuel 10:12 Be courageous, and let us be strong for our people, and for the cities of our God; and Yahweh do that which seems good to Him-

As explained on :9, this was a very daring maneuver by Joab. We wonder whether he had real faith in Yahweh, or whether his words here express fatalism rather than faith. There is a significant difference, and often what appears to be faith can be mere fatalism.

2 Samuel 10:13 So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him-

So often the Israelite victories were humanly speaking achieved by surprise attack from an unexpected angle, using unexpected and unusual tactics. It could be that this was due to Divine guidance, telling them to do what was unusual and against secular wisdom. For this is always God's path to victory, thereby demonstrating that victory and success are of His grace rather than human strength.

2 Samuel 10:14 When the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians had fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, and entered into the city. Then Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem-

We get the impression that Abishai didn't attack the Ammonites; the Syrians fled when Joab attacked them, and the Ammonites withdrew into Rabbah when they saw that.

2 Samuel 10:15 When the Syrians saw that they were defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together-

They were mercenaries, and the fact they had failed to achieve what Ammon hoped for didn't require them to fight again. They did so, it seems, because of wounded pride. And this again (as noted on :13) is a feature of God's amazing victories. The pride of Gentile armies is brought down by smaller armies of Israelites using unusual, unexpected tactics because they were guided by Yahweh. Always pride is presented as the great weakness of man.

2 Samuel 10:16 Hadadezer sent, and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the River: and they came to Helam, with Shobach the captain of the army of Hadadezer at their head-

To gather soldiers from beyond the river Euphrates was a huge effort; and now the best general, as they thought, was placed over them. And it all arose from hurt pride and the desire by all means to defeat Israel in vengeance for Joab and his small army putting their army to flight previously, when they had been paid money to defeat Israel.

2 Samuel 10:17 It was told David; and he gathered all Israel together, and passed over the Jordan, and came to Helam. The Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him-

The parallel is drawn between the Syrians coming from the other side of the Euphrates (:16) led by Shobach, and David and his men coming from the other side of the Jordan.

2 Samuel 10:18 The Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed of the Syrians seven

hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen, and struck Shobach the captain of their army, so that he died there-

There are apparently different numbers given in 2 Sam. 8:4; 10:18 and 1 Chron. 19:18. I see no real problem here once we appreciate that the Hebrew word "thousand" used when giving numbers like this rarely means 1,000 as a number. It is also translated regiment, brigade, family, squadron etc. And to Israelites looking at the Syrian army, it could be described in various ways. There many regiments, families, groups, squadrons, but these subdivisions of an ancient army are all called a "thousand". Depending how one looks at the army and its subdivisions. A modern army would be subdivided into two to four corps, a corps has at least two divisions or legions, a division has two four brigades or regiments, a brigade has two or more regiments, a regiment has two or more battalions, a battalion has a number of companies, a company has a number of platoons, a platoon has a number of squads or fire teams. The problem is that the Hebrew Bible uses the same word for all such military subdivisions, and it is translated "thousand" in many Bibles. Hence the apparently contradictory numbers.

2 Samuel 10:19 When all the kings who were servants to Hadadezer saw that they were defeated before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more-

This meant that the smaller kings like Tob, Rehob and Maacah now paid tribute to David rather than to Hadadezer.

2 Samuel Chapter 11

2 Samuel 11:1 It happened, at the return of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah-

This is the classic example of the devil finding work for idle hands; in 2 Sam. 10:7 David had already skipped one battle in this campaign. His remaining in Jerusalem was the set up for David's sin with Bathsheba. That he was lying down on his bed in the late afternoon rather than working would exemplify the same thing. He appears to recognize his attitude problem in Ps. 30:6: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be (spiritually) moved". In the lead up to the sin, God had given him victory after victory- leading him to think that he must therefore be spiritually OK because of his many physical blessings (1 Chron. 18:6 RV). His conscience had been blunted. David may have cleverly alluded to this when he comments that the ark was abiding in a *tent*, and therefore he would not go down to his *house* (2 Sam. 11:11). The tension between a tent and a house is surely intended to take David back to his words in 2 Sam. 7:2, where he laments as unacceptable the fact that he lives in a *house* but the ark is in a *tent*. And David was 'tarrying', living in a settled way, in a house in Jerusalem now.

But David stayed at Jerusalem-

Or AV "tarried". This uses a Hebrew word which does not mean to wait, but rather to permanently dwell. It is also translated 'to marry'. The next verse continues "And it came to pass...", indicating that his permanent residence at Jerusalem was connected with his sin. Are we to infer that David remained at Jerusalem because of his relationship with Bathsheba? Even though they had probably got nowhere near consummating it, subconsciously this was behind David's motive in remaining. The word for "tarried" being the same for 'marriage' could imply that David was still actively married to his other wives who were there in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 11:2 It happened at evening, that David arose from off his bed, and walked on the roof of the king's house-

In the parable, the rich man had his many flocks (i.e. David's wives) with him in the city, of Jerusalem. Walking upon the roof of his house connects with several passages which associate the roof top with a place of idolatry: 2 Kings 23:12; Jer. 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5. It may be that David regularly worshipped the idol of Bathsheba in his mind, upon the bed which he had on the house top. David's sin with Bathsheba is therefore not such a momentary slip. Significantly, it was in that very place where Absalom later lay with his wives in retribution for what he had done (2 Sam. 16:22). From this we could infer that David lay with Bathsheba in that same place on the roof top. This is significant insofar as it shows how exactly the thought leads to the action. David's thoughts in that spot were translated into that very action, in precisely the same physical location. The roof top is also the place of prayer, and in this we see the schizophrenic nature of David's spirituality; he went to pray, and then stood at the edge of the roof in order to view Bathsheba, with his hands on the railing around the roof which surely he would have erected, in obedience to the Law. And he realized that it was evening, and that in accordance with the Law a menstruating woman had to wash and be unclean until the evening. But now, he reasoned, she's clean, and I can sleep with her. He lay with her "for", just because, she was now purified. In this we see the mixing of flesh and spirit which is at the root of most of our failings.

And from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look on- David rightly perceived that what a man thinks alone on his bed is a litmus indicator of his

essential spirituality, and he condemns Saul for plotting sin on his bed (Ps. 4:4; 36:4; 149:5). And yet the same phrase "on his bed" is used for how David plotted the sin with Bathsheba on his bed (2 Sam. 11:2). David was surely taught by his sin that he had been too quick to condemn others for their wicked thoughts upon their beds.

Bathsheba was "very beautiful to *look upon*". And David did just that. Our Lord surely had his eye on that passage when he spoke about him that "*looks upon* a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already" (Mt. 5:28). But it is not just in that specific sin that we can share David's experience; James 1:14,15 speaks of the process of temptation and sin, in any matter, as looking lustfully upon a woman, with the inevitable result of actually committing the sin. In this he may be interpreting David's sin as an epitome of all failure. David is our example. Likewise the Lord's list of the 12 evil things that come out of the heart: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness, evil thoughts...all seem to describe the completeness of David's sin with Bathsheba. It incorporated all these things, and was not just a one time, lustful failure of the moment.

David and Bathsheba knew each other well, and would have developed a close spiritual relationship. Having only known Uriah, both as a father and husband (2 Sam. 12:3), Bathsheba would have been strongly attracted to David, yearning for a relationship with someone other than Uriah. David would have been an alternative father figure to her, and also the same age as her husband Uriah. He would have become her physical and spiritual hero. David must have allowed his feelings for her to grow, until the sight of her quiet obedience to the Law, artlessly exposing her beauty against the setting sun, was just too much. With her husband far away, kidding himself there was a spiritual motive, David shrugged off the voice of conscience. What happened to David's family was related to David's sin. The obsessive love of Amnon for Tamar may have similarities with David's for Bathsheba (2 Sam. 13:2).

2 Samuel 11:3 David sent and inquired after the woman-

There can be no doubt that David knew exactly who Bathsheba was. His enquiring after her may therefore have been to summon her to his private audience, with all that this implied in the context of a monarch. The exclamation of the messenger "Is not this Bathsheba...the wife of Uriah?" was therefore tantamount to saying "Surely you aren't going to? She's the wife of your faithful friend Uriah". When experiencing temptation, the flesh can become extraordinarily blind to reason. The next verse continues: "And David sent (other) messengers, and took her...and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness". This may imply that David set up an irrelevant spiritual pre-condition for himself: 'If she's unclean, then I must take that as a sign, and not sleep with her, because that would be against the Law'. The Law often stipulated that having washed, the person would be "Unclean until even". David had seen her washing "in an eveningtide". By the time she came in to him, the sun would have set; she would have been fully purified from her uncleanness. It was *because* of this that David lay with her; he must have reasoned 'Now that she's clean, even the Law says that I'm allowed to sleep with her! That's a sign from God'. As with us, his spiritual judgment did not completely depart in this crisis of temptation; but it became seriously warped to the point that it was no use. It is significant, in the light of this, that the statement that "David...*enquired* after the woman" uses a Hebrew word which is often used about enquiring of God; as if David asked God whether it was right to go ahead or not.

One said, Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?-

Some anonymous servant tries to stop David in his tracks, as if to say "You surely can't do this to the wife of your faithful servant who lives in the house next door!". The question

'Who is this?' as asked by Boaz of Ruth (Ruth 2:8) is to be understood as a statement of intended action and not read on face value. The same kind of question is asked by David about Bathsheba, even though he knew who she was because she lived next door to him and was the wife of his close friend. Likewise when Saul enquires about who David is after his victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17:56), it is not because he doesn't know him. For David had been already at the court of Saul. The question 'Who is this?' means that the questioner wants to do something for the person being enquired after.

2 Samuel 11:4 David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in to him, and he lay with her-

It takes two, and Bathsheba's compliance seems to be recognized by David when he prays: "Against You, You only have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4). There is no hint in the psalms of David's regret for having sinned against an innocent Bathsheba. *Her* child had to die; the retribution did not just come upon David. The incident is referred to as "the matter of *Uriah*" (1 Kings 15:5); her name does not figure in those sinned against. "She came in unto him, and he lay with her" (2 Sam. 11:4) is an odd way of putting it; it reverses the usual Biblical reference to intercourse as a man coming in to the woman. The reason for this inversion seems to be to balance the blame. And there seems an evident similarity between the way the sin occurred within the city, and the way Dt. 22:24 says that in cases of adultery both parties were to be stoned if the sin occurred within a city and the woman didn't cry out. Bathsheba doesn't seem to have cried out- and so she bears equal blame, it would seem. This makes Bathsheba more of a sinner than a saint. This said, Nathan's parable describes David as killing the sweet lamb (Bathsheba); if she was partly guilty for the actual act, this may suggest a killing of her spirituality by David, at least temporarily. And so we are left with the question of interpretation- Bathsheba: saint or sinner? The record leaves it intentionally open ended, to provoke our reflection upon the text.

For she was purified from her uncleanness; and she returned to her house-

Bathsheba's washing of herself which exposed her nakedness would have been in obedience to the Law. David "lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness" adds weight to this. However, the Law didn't actually state that the woman must wash herself after menstrual uncleanness; but the man who touched her must. So it could be that she had gone beyond the Law in washing herself; such was her spiritual perception, which was a factor in David's attraction to her. David confessed that he had sinned against God (Ps. 51:4), using the very language of faithful Joseph who refused ongoing temptation with these words (Gen. 39:9). Could this not imply that Bathsheba wife of Uriah was similar to Potiphar's wife?

2 Samuel 11:5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, I am with child-

It is possible to infer that for all their spiritual closeness, David and Bathsheba experienced a falling out of love immediately after the incident- as with many cases of adultery and fornication. In contrast to their previous close contact, she had to *send* to tell him that she was pregnant. In addition, before David's repentance he appears to have suffered with some kind of serious disease soon after it: "My loins are filled with a loathsome (venereal?) disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh" (Ps.38:7). It is even possible that David became impotent as a result of this; for we get the impression that from this point onwards he took no other wives, he had no more children, and even the fail safe cure for hypothermia didn't seem to mean much to David (1 Kings 1:1-4). Therefore "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore" (Ps. 38:11) must refer to some kind of venereal disease. The Hebrew word translated "lovers" definitely refers to carnal love rather than that of friendship. It may be that an intensive plural is being used here- in which case it means 'my one great lover', i.e. Bathsheba. We have commented earlier how Amnon's obsessive love for Tamar was an echo of David's relationship with Bathsheba. There may be a parallel

in the way in which afterwards, "Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he loved her" (2 Sam. 13:15). All this would have been yet another aspect of the emotional trauma which David went through at this time; to fall out of love with the woman for which he had almost thrown away his eternal salvation. And in addition to this, all Israel would have got to know about what had happened- with a fair degree of exaggeration thrown in, we can be sure.

2 Samuel 11:6 David sent to Joab, Send me Uriah the Hittite. Joab sent Uriah to David-
The record stresses how much David and Bathsheba relied on sending messages through the servants (2 Sam. 11: 3,4,5,6,19,23,27)- and remember that Bathsheba probably couldn't read, necessitating verbal communication. The palace servants would have gossiped and chatted about little else. When Uriah "slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord" after an evening with them in the bar, there can be no doubt that he came to know the score. He must have guessed the contents of the message which he took back to Joab; and when the command came for him to go on a suicide mission against Rabbah, he went in conscious loyalty to a master whose every intrigue he knew perfectly. This would explain why he refused to go and sleep with Bathsheba; he knew what David was up to. And David would have known that Uriah almost certainly knew what had happened.

2 Samuel 11:7 When Uriah had come to him, David asked of him how Joab did, and how the people fared, and how the war prospered-

For an individual soldier to have been recalled from the front for a personal interview with David was highly unusual. And on the way back, Uriah surely suspected what had happened or would happen, more or less. David's apparent interest in the war and his troops is presented here as so hypocritical.

2 Samuel 11:8 David said to Uriah, Go down to your house, and wash your feet-
Their houses were next to each other, perhaps "go down" referred to a path between the two properties. "Feet" are used as a euphemism; the idea clearly was "And have sex with your wife".

Uriah departed out of the king's house, and a gift from the king was sent after him-
It was now clear to Uriah what had happened. David was trying to buy his silence, and to get him to sleep with his wife so that it would appear any resulting child would be his and not David's.

2 Samuel 11:9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and didn't go down to his house-

Uriah realized clearly what had happened, and was angry. He would rather sleep with the servants than sleep with his wife. He didn't go to see his wife because he was apparently angry with her too- suggesting he suspected she was a willing party to the affair. The servants would have been aware of what had happened; see on :6. And that evening as he purposefully slept with them and they chatted as men do, he would have been confirmed in his guesses. The "gift" sent after him (:8) would have been still in his hand as he slept the night with the servants. They all knew what had happened.

2 Samuel 11:10 When they had told David, saying, Uriah didn't go down to his house, David said to Uriah, Haven't you come from a journey? Why didn't you go down to your house?-

The degree to which David acted in a coolly thought out way is brought out by a few hints in 2 Sam. 11:10-12. His comment to Uriah surely implied 'You've been away a long time- and you don't want to have sex with your wife? Well, you must have been unfaithful then, like

most of you soldier boys'. Remember that this was David talking to a man who had risked his life for him during the wilderness years. How sin totally ruins loving fellowship! See on :12.

2 Samuel 11:11 Uriah said to David, The ark, Israel, and Judah, are staying in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field. Shall I then go into my house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing!-

Uriah lets David know that he knows what's going on; for he uses no euphemisms nor indirect hints, but states plainly he will not be sleeping with his wife. He was clearly very angry with David.

Uriah doesn't swear as Yahweh lives, as is commonly found in the Bible, but by David's own life. Perhaps he felt that Yahweh was no authority to David to make an oath by. We note that this way of swearing by the life of the person being spoken to [rather than by Yahweh] is used of men to Saul (1 Sam. 17:55), by Uriah to David when he knew David had slept with his wife (2 Sam. 11:11) and by Hannah to Eli (1 Sam. 1:26). In every case the implication is that the speaker didn't think that the person being addressed really feared Yahweh.

We can discern in Ps. 132:3 an allusion to the words of David's faithful friend Uriah whom he effectively murdered: "Surely I will not come under the roof of my house, nor go up into my bed...". He refused to go up to his bed nor come under the roof of his own house because he preferred identity with God's suffering people, His "house". David later remembered these words, and alludes to them when he thinks of arranging the building of the temple. The words of Uriah haunted him, and he commendably vows to follow his noble example. In this we see David's humility and repentance.

2 Samuel 11:12 David said to Uriah, Stay here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart. So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day, and the next day-

"Depart" uses a word translated 'to put away' in Mal. 2:16. divorce was only possible for adultery. The implication was 'Tomorrow you can divorce her and there'll be no problem- and I bet you've been unfaithful yourself while away on duty!'. The man after God's own heart had truly fallen from Heaven to earth- knowing what he was doing.

2 Samuel 11:13 When David had called him, he ate and drink before him; and he made him drunk. At evening, he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but didn't go down to his house-

That David could see into the back yard of Bathsheba's house shows that they were almost next door neighbours in Jerusalem. Nathan's parable emphasized this: "There were two men (David and Nathan) in one city (Jerusalem)" (2 Sam. 12:1). That Uriah "didn't go down to his house" after meeting David in Jerusalem could imply that it was just at the end of David's back garden. Even when drunk, he retained his deep inner sense of purpose. To be made drunk is also a figure for being extremely angry (Is. 63:6). Those who make others drunk are cursed in Hab. 2:15.

2 Samuel 11:14 It happened in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah-

David may well have learned to write in order to produce his Psalms, but now he puts that skill to an evil use. Or maybe he got someone else to write it, which again meant that the story would have continued to seep out to the public. To give Uriah the letter would suggest Uriah travelled alone. He surely guessed what it said. He could have destroyed it, but just as he refused to lay with his wife, so he goes along with David's evil plan. He preferred to

die than lose his integrity.

2 Samuel 11:15 He wrote in the letter saying, Send Uriah to the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck, and die-

As noted on :18, David wrote a letter in order to avoid giving a message to a servant to deliver verbally. But literacy levels in ancient Israel were very low, especially for village boys like David and Joab, both from Bethlehem rather than anywhere bigger. David's attempt to cover what he had done would have probably required Joab to get someone to read the letter to him anyway. All attempts to cover the sin led to it becoming ever more well known.

2 Samuel 11:16 It happened, when Joab kept watch on the city, that he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew that valiant men were-

Joab's part in all this should not be overlooked. He had argued back against David over Abner and had himself gone and killed him, and he would later remonstrate with David over Absalom. He could likewise have refused to be a part in all this. It was likely his spiritual jealousy of David which led him to be such an eager participant in the scheme, wanting to bring David down spiritually to his own level. We see here the same articulations of human nature which are in our own lives.

2 Samuel 11:17 The men of the city went out, and fought with Joab. Some of the people fell, even of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also-

David was therefore guilty of more than one murder in all this, and as a soldier himself ought to have known how wrong it was. True soldiers never abandon their wounded, let alone betray their own side to death. David's actions were going to infuriate just about everybody in Israel.

2 Samuel 11:18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war-

"The things concerning the war" appears to be a technical term for a standard military report (:19). It was apparently delivered verbally rather than in writing, so David's letter to Joab was a vain attempt to not risk telling a messenger what to say verbally. But it is doubtful whether Joab could read well, and so Joab was in any case unlikely to have been the only person to know David's command about Uriah.

2 Samuel 11:19 and he commanded the messenger saying, When you have finished telling all the things concerning the war to the king-

This continues the theme noted on :6, that the extensive use of messengers and exposing them to the intrigues was sure to mean that what had happened would become well known. Hence the significance of Uriah refusing to go to his home but sleeping and hanging out with the servants. The more men seek to cover sin themselves, the more it is made apparent. That is the lesson for us all.

2 Samuel 11:20 it shall be that, if the king's wrath arise, and he asks you, 'Why did you go so near to the city to fight? Didn't you know that they would shoot from the wall?-

David was known for how his emotions flared up. Despite his undoubted physique stamina, David was a broken man, even quite early in his life, prone to fits of introspection; dramatic mood-swings (cp. 1 Sam. 24:14 with 25:6,22,34;), sometimes appearing a real 'softie' but hard as nails at others (consider Ps.75:10 and the whole of Ps.101); easily getting carried away: be it with excessive emotional enthusiasm for bringing the ark back, in his harsh response to Hanun humbling his servants, his over-hasty and emotional decision to let Amnon go to Absalom's feast when it was obvious what might well transpire, his anger "flaring up" because of incompetency (2 Sam.11:20 NIV), or in his ridiculous softness for Absalom.

2 Samuel 11:21 who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Didn't a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also'-

Joab warned the messenger to quickly explain to David why the soldiers approached so near the wall of Rabbah, *because* he knew that David would *immediately* quote an example from the history of Israel, to prove that such an approach was unwise. David's familiarity with the spiritual records of Israel's history was therefore well known, and it presumably did not depart from him during the nine months. Psalm 38 speaks of how the guilt of his sin weighed so heavily upon him (Ps. 38:4 NIV), whereas Ps. 32:5 describes how the guilt of sin has now been lifted from him- implying that he wrote Ps. 38 some time after the sin, but before repenting properly. The point is, he didn't crash completely, he didn't turn away from God in totality- he was still writing Psalms at the time!

The fact Joab told the servant to say this is proof enough that he too knew what had happened. It is to his shame that he went along with the evil plan. It was almost as if he wanted it to happen, remembering how David had said Joab was "too hard for me", the spiritual man. And Joab almost wants David's planned sin to happen so he can get equal with David. For in all this David was indeed being "hard" himself, very hard.

2 Samuel 11:22 So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for-

The obedience of David's servants is emphasized. His sin was therefore the worse because he abused loyalty. No wonder he lost so much loyalty because of what he did.

2 Samuel 11:23 The messenger said to David, The men prevailed against us, and came out to us into the field, and we were on them even to the entrance of the gate-

David uses the same word when he reflects that his sins had "prevailed against me" (Ps. 65:3), showing that finally he did finely appreciate the nature and many dimensions of his sin. For Israel to flee before their enemies who were stronger [s.w. "prevailed"] than them is the language of the curse for breaking the covenant. And this was what David had done and was leading Israel into. His spiritual perception was totally subdued beneath his desire to cover his sins in the eyes of men, although the record continually shows that the more he tried to, the more evident his sins became.

2 Samuel 11:24 The shooters shot at your servants from off the wall; and some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also-

The servant also knew all that was going on. So he doesn't wait (as advised) for David to rant about the loss of men near the city wall, he tells David immediately that Uriah was dead. He knew that was the bottom line David wanted to know. We note that in this evil plan, other men died along with Uriah, perhaps to give the murder some semblance of bad luck.

2 Samuel 11:25 Then David said to the messenger, Thus you shall tell Joab, 'Don't let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Make your battle stronger against the city, and overthrow it'. Encourage him-

"Let not this thing displease you" were David's words to Joab. But those very Hebrew words are used again in :27: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord". It displeased God spiritually; and it is therefore reasonable to think that David was saying to Joab 'Now don't think that there's anything really spiritually wrong with what I've done'. Doubtless David tried even harder to persuade himself of this than he did Joab.

2 Samuel 11:26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she made lamentation for her husband-

The record leaves us invited to imagine how sincere was her lamentation. Was it a mere formality, as :27 suggests, or from the heart? If from the heart, she would likely have been angry with David and hardly the wife he wished for.

2 Samuel 11:27 When the mourning was past, David sent and took her home to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son-

The record is purposefully vague about her feelings. We are left to speculate.

But the thing that David had done displeased Yahweh-

God's apparent silence doesn't mean that judgment won't come. David himself perceives this in Ps. 50:21, either having learned from his experience, or having only taught the theory in that Psalm, which he now was to personalize. The phrase used here is only found in 1 Sam. 8:6 about the displeasure concerning "the thing" of Israel wanting a king. The entire sentence is copied word for word in Hebrew. We are left to wonder what the parallels were between these apparently quite different sins. The point is that although human failure may be markedly different (wanting a human king as opposed to arranging murder and adultery), the essence was the same. There was an assumption by both David and the people that they could act as they wished, despite knowing God's revealed will. They despised His word and acted according to their immediate desires, justifying themselves. And here we see the worrying similarities with our own sins, in essence.

2 Samuel Chapter 12

2 Samuel 12:1 Yahweh sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, There were two men in one city-

That David could see into the back yard of Bathsheba's house shows that they were almost next door neighbours in Jerusalem. Nathan's parable emphasized this: "There were two men (David and Nathan) in one city (Jerusalem)". That Uriah "went not down to his house" after meeting David in Jerusalem could imply that it was just at the end of David's back garden (2 Sam. 11:13 etc.).

The one rich, and the other poor-

Reflection on the record enables us to enter a little into the nature and tragedy of David's sorrow; remembering always that David is our example. His love for Abigail, with marriage to her so wondrously arranged, would have been cruelly mocked by his falling for Bathsheba. His abuse of Uriah's loyalty (when almost certainly Uriah knew exactly what David was playing at) would have created a sadness that can only be described as ineffable. David in his early years described himself as a "poor man", indicating his humility; yet the very same word is used by Nathan in the parable about Uriah, as if to bring home to David that he had slain a man who had the humble loyalty which he had had in those early, spiritually formative years (1 Sam. 18:23 cp. 2 Sam.12:1,3,4).

Nathan had likened Uriah to a "poor man" abused by David. But David later asks God to eternally condemn those who persecuted the "poor" (see on Ps. 109:9,16). And it seems Ps. 109 was used by David not only about his persecution at the time of Saul, but also of his sufferings at the time of Absalom's rebellion, after the time of his sin. So it seems David didn't maintain his sense of humility before Nathan.

2 Samuel 12:2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds-

Presumably the idea is that David had many wives and concubines. He had no sexual need for Bathsheba. To take her was selfishness and narcissism in the extreme.

2 Samuel 12:3 but the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and raised. It grew up together with him, and with his children. It ate of his own food, drank of his own cup, lay in his bosom, and was to him like a daughter-

David himself had once been a poor man (1 Sam. 18:23), his family only had a "few sheep" (1 Sam. 17:28). So his abuse of the poor man with only one sheep now he was rich... was therefore the more culpable.

David and Uriah knew each other very well; they had spent David's long wilderness years together. All that time, Bathsheba had been brought up by Uriah (2 Sam.12:3). She was the daughter of Eliam, who had been another of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 11:3; 23:34). Presumably he had been killed and Uriah adopted her, bringing her up from babyhood, mothering her by feeding her from his bowl and letting her sleep in his bosom. This may imply that his own wife died early, and that he brought her and his own children up alone, and then married her when she was older. A very special spiritual and emotional bond must have been forged between those who stuck with David as a down and out, and who later on shared in the glory of his kingdom. That Uriah had such easy access to David would have been unthinkable for an ordinary soldier whom David hardly knew. Nathan criticizes David for having "no pity" on Uriah, implying that David well knew the relationship between Uriah and Bathsheba. Moreover, David would have been a larger than life figure for his followers, and Bathsheba would have grown up with this image of David as the saving hero.

1 Chron. 3:5 could imply that she had no other children before those she had by David. This means that she may have been barren until that point; her conception was certainly brought about by God. Was it that they would both have been aware of the unlikelihood of her bearing children, and therefore perhaps more inclined to take a chance?

2 Samuel 12:4 A traveller came to the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man who had come to him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man who had come to him-

The parable described David's lust as a "traveller" which came to him, implying that this was not his usual frame of mind (and does the 'traveller' needing sustenance of Lk. 11:6 also refer to our sinful tendencies?). The rich man is presented as mean. He has only an appearance of hospitality and generosity towards his guest, for he will not give of his own animals, but takes the poor man's lamb. Whilst David was not typically like this, his behaviour in this matter was indeed callous and mean, beneath a veneer of respectability.

2 Samuel 12:5 David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As Yahweh lives, the man who has done this is worthy to die!-

As noted on :6, this demand for the death penalty was far beyond what the law required for the theft of an animal. David's outrage shows that he was not without moral conscience. But morality can be applied in one part of a man's life but not in others; to one person but not another; to sinners but not to himself. David speaks as God in Eden: "... shall surely die" (AV). This was his problem; he was playing God.

2 Samuel 12:6 He shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity!-

Ex. 22:1 stipulated that stolen lambs should be restored fourfold. The fourfold judgment could be seen as coming upon David in the deaths of Bathsheba's child, then Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah. But David is so used to living beyond the letter of the law, that he assumes he can get this person also put to death. But that was not stipulated in the law. In many ways David had rightly seen beyond the letter of the law, to the spirit of it. This he could act at times as High Priest. But this led him where it can lead us too- to an attitude that he was personally beyond Divine principles. And this led him to the sins related to Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 12:7 Nathan said to David, You are the man-

It is difficult to read Rom. 2:1 without seeing an allusion to David's condemnation of the man who killed his neighbour's only sheep: "Thou art inexcusable, O man, *whosoever thou art* that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself". Surely Paul is saying that David's massive self-deception and hypocrisy over Bathsheba can all too easily be replicated in our experience.

This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul-

David ought to have been moved by God's grace to him historically, to be sexually self controlled. And there we have an abiding principle.

2 Samuel 12:8 I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom-

David loved Saul, his daughters and his son Jonathan; and later David was to marry Saul's wives. These wives were given into David's bosom; in other words, they were really close in their relationship; so close, 2 Sam. 12:8 implies, that David had no real emotional need to take Bathsheba. Even while Saul was alive there was probably some attraction chemistry going on between David and those women. This may well be reflected in Saul's fury with Jonathan: "Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman... thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to... the confusion of thy mother's nakedness" (1 Sam. 20:30 AV). This hints at least two things: firstly, Saul had a bad relationship with his wife; and secondly, he suspected some kind of unfaithfulness in her, perhaps only on a mental level. David had married Saul's

wives (2 Sam.12:8)- including the mother of Jonathan and Michal. So now we can reconstruct the complex spiritual and emotional situation.

And gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that would have been too little- Such is the wonder of God's promise to us that we really have no excuse to sin. Every sin is in a sense a denial of His promises. God told David that he had no excuse for what he did with Uriah and Bathsheba, because he had given him so much, "and if that had been too little, I would have added unto you..." (2 Sam. 12:8). "Too little" sends the mind back to 2 Sam. 7:19, where the promises to David are described as a "little thing"; the promises were so wonderful that David should not have allowed himself to fall into such sin. And us likewise.

I would have added to you many more such things-

When David sinned with Bathsheba, God didn't read him the act about adultery, lust, murder. He reminded David instead how He had delivered David by grace from his enemies, and how He had by grace given him many wives- when this was hardly God's ideal standard. God made concessions to David's weakness- and even gave him the wives of Saul. Seeing David was married to Saul's daughter, this was actually contrary to the spirit of God's own law. But God had showed David great grace in this. And it was *exactly this* which God reminded David of- it was this amazing grace against which David had sinned (2 Sam. 12:7,8). And perhaps David appreciated this when he commented: "I have sinned against the Lord", rather than saying 'Yes, I've broken commandments'. This is the awfulness of sin- any sin. That we who have known such grace could so ignore it and act like we never knew.

We must recognize that there will be anomalies in the lives of our brethren- just as there are in the lives of us all (if only we would examine ourselves ruthlessly enough to see them). And in some ways at some times, God goes along with them. Thus He gave Saul's wives to David (2 Sam. 12:8), which would've involved David being married to both a mother and daughter- for he had married Saul's daughters. And this giving of Saul's wives to David may not have occurred simply after Saul's death. For David's eldest son, Amnon, was borne by Ahinoam (2 Sam. 3:2), who was initially Saul's wife (1 Sam. 14:50). Now this is not to justify sin. Adultery, taking another's wife or husband, is all wrong. Let there be no mistake. But God at times sees the bigger, or longer, perspective, and tolerates things which we may quite rightly find intolerable. And if He loves us despite of our sin and failure- are we surprised that we are invited to show love to others in the face of their sin and failure toward us? A black and white insistence upon God's standards being upheld in the lives of others, demanding their repentance for having hurt us, is what has caused so much division between believers. Whilst God alone will apportion the guilt for this, in the final, unalterable, ultimately just algorithm of Divine judgment, it's worth observing that the fault for division isn't always with the sinners, the wider thinkers, the freewheelers; but with the inflexible intolerance of those in power. See on 1 Sam. 18:20; 20:30.

2 Samuel 12:9 Why have you despised the word of Yahweh, to do that which is evil in His sight?-

David "despised the commandment (word) of the Lord... you despised me" (2 Sam. 12:9,10). David learnt that his attitude to God's word was his attitude to God- for the word of God, in that sense, was and is God. By *our* words we personally will be condemned or justified- because we too 'are' our words. When Samuel told Eli of the prophetic vision which he had received, Eli commented: "It is the Lord" (1 Sam. 3:18). He meant 'It is the word of the Lord'; but he saw God as effectively His word. "The word", the "word of the Kingdom", "the Gospel", "the word of God" are all parallel expressions throughout the Gospels. Our attitude to God's word is our attitude to Him.

The fact that he is condemned for having "despised the commandment of the Lord" in David's sin with Bathsheba indicates that He knew all along what God's will really was. The

fact that the flesh took over does not in any way mitigate his responsibility in this. This is a direct quote from the Law's definition of the sin of presumption: "The soul that doeth ought presumptuously...because he hath despised the word of the Lord... that soul shall utterly be cut off" (Num. 15:30,31). Knowing David's emotional nature and also the fact that he did not completely turn away from God afterwards, we would have expected a quicker repentance if it had been a passing sin of passion. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the sin was of presumption rather than passion. In his prosperity he had said "I shall never be moved" and he was determined that he couldn't be (Ps. 30:6). Hearing those words from Nathan must have struck real fear into David- he was being incriminated for the supreme sin of presumption, for which there was no provision of sacrifice or repentance. It is a mark of his faith and knowledge of God as the God of love, that He is willing to go on to confess his sin, in the hope of forgiveness. "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it" (Ps. 51:16) was spoken by David more concerning this sin of presumption for which there was no sacrifice prescribed, rather than about the actual sin of adultery. However, we must not get the impression that David was a hard, callous man. Everything we know about him points to him be a big hearted, warm softie. David's sin with Bathsheba was in that sense out of character. Yet such is the stranglehold of sin that even he was forced to act with such uncharacteristic callousness and indifference to both God and man in order to try to cover his sin.

You have struck Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon-
God saw David as if *he* had killed Uriah with *his* sword; even though David's command to Joab to retire from Uriah and let the Ammonites kill him was carefully calculated not to break the letter of the law.

2 Samuel 12:10 Now therefore the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife-
Ps. 69:33 had a historical basis in David appreciating that although he had despised God in his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (s.w. 2 Sam. 12:10), God by grace had not despised him. Just as the actual murder of Uriah involved the death of other soldiers, so the bloodshed within David's family was going to be his fault.

It should be noted that the sin of adultery is not highlighted in Nathan's rebuke of David, but rather that David had "killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife". This is twice emphasized in 12:9,10. This is not to say that the sin of weakness, of the moment, was irrelevant in God's sight. But the emphasis on how he had taken Bathsheba as his wife hints that this had been his long term intention, further suggesting that his sin with her was the end result of much prior meditation. This further illuminates the way in which David speaks of his sin with Bathsheba as if it comprised a whole multitude of other sins: "I acknowledged my sin (singular) unto thee... I said, I will confess my transgressions (plural)" (Ps. 32:5 cp. 38:3,4,18). Ps. 25:7 also occurs in a Bathsheba context: "Remember not the sins of my youth..."; as if facing up to his sin with Bathsheba made David face up to sins of years ago, possibly also in a sexual context. Indeed, David went so far down this road of self-examination that the sin with Bathsheba made him realize that it was probably associated with many others which he did not even realize: "Who can understand his own errors? cleanse (s.w. Ps. 51:1,2 re. the Bathsheba affair) thou me from secret faults" (Ps. 19:12). If our own self-examination and repentance is after the pattern of David's, we will appreciate how that each of our sins is associated with so many others. We will be aware how that each spiritual event in our life makes us either weaker or stronger in facing the next one, how that each temptation is intertwined with others, so that in reality we do not commit (say) three or four sins per day. We are constantly failing and winning, and therefore we live in God's mercy; we do not just experience it for the few seconds in which we pray to Him for forgiveness to be granted.

David's sin with Bathsheba is a process we each go through in one way or another.

Not believing in God and not believing in His word of the Gospel are paralleled in 1 Jn. 5:10. God is His word. The word "is" God in that God is so identified with His word. David parallels trusting in God and trusting in His word (Ps. 56:3,4). He learnt this, perhaps, through the experience of his sin with Bathsheba. For in that matter, David "despised the commandment (word) of the Lord... you despised me" (2 Sam. 12:9,10). David learnt that his attitude to God's word was his attitude to God- for the word of God, in that sense, was and is God. By *our* words we personally will be condemned or justified- because we too 'are' our words.

2 Samuel 12:11 This is what Yahweh says: 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house-

David in the Psalms records how he hated those who 'rose up' against him, and that includes Absalom. Saul 'rose up' against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29; 26:2), and then evil men 'rose up' against David out of his own family (2 Sam. 12:11 s.w.), especially Absalom who rose up against his father (2 Sam. 18:31,32 s.w.). But David has a tendency to assume that all who rose up against him were arising against God. It's not always so that our enemy is God's enemy. Relationships and the hand of God in human affairs and relationships is more complex than that. And David in Ps. 139:21,22 goes further, to assume that his hatred of people is justified, because they must, he assumes, hate God because they are against him. Solomon seems to make the same mistake when he alludes to such 'risings up' in Prov. 28:28. We must note that "all in Asia" turned away from Paul personally (2 Tim. 1:15), and yet according to the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Rev. 2,3, there were many faithful individuals amongst them.

And I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he will lie with your wives in the sight of this sun-

Uriah had been David's neighbour. David's neighbour Absalom was to sleep with his wives; perhaps at this time Absalom also had a house next to David's. David was described as Saul's "neighbour"; Saul had abused his neighbour David, and now David was acting no better than Saul. He was only treated differently because his repentance was more genuine.

2 Samuel 12:12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun'-

"Under the sun" is Solomon's favourite phrase in Ecclesiastes, as he describes what he considers as the fallen position of himself, his kingdom, and humanity generally. The only other Biblical usage of the phrase outside of Ecclesiastes is in 2 Sam. 12:12, where the consequences of David's sin with Solomon's mother were to be worked out openly and publically "under the sun". It could be that despite trying to whitewash David and his sin in Proverbs, Solomon at the end of his life feels he is for ever living with the consequence of that sin of his parents; and thus he blames everything he sees as wrong with his life upon that. This would be a typical thing for a man to do, in psychological terms. And I have noted throughout Proverbs how often Solomon is having a dig at Absalom and others who played their part in the outworking of the consequences of the sin.

2 Samuel 12:13 David said to Nathan, I have sinned against Yahweh-

It is amazing how sudden David's proper repentance seems to have come. There is no reason to be unduly afraid of a sudden, emotional confession of sin, prompted by a certain circumstance, as David's was by Nathan's parable. Psalm 51 may well have been prayed but moments after Nathan finished his parable. And Psalm 32, describing the joy of David's repentance, would have followed soon after. "Purge *me*... and I shall be clean... create in me a clean heart" (Ps. 51:7,10) shows that David understood the 'me' which needed cleansing as being his own mind. This was clearly a result of the great level of self-examination which brought forth his real repentance. "Against thee, thee *only* have I

sinned" (Ps. 51:4) was a conclusion wrung out of so much reflection about what he had done; as is his recognition that his "sin" had involved many "transgressions" (Ps. 51:3).

There are an interesting set of allusions to David's sin with Bathsheba in Micah 7, almost leading us to wonder whether Micah too had a *femme fatale* in his life- whom he speaks of in Mic. 7:10 as "she that is mine enemy... shame shall cover her". He says that "I have sinned against the Lord" (Mic. 7:9), using the very same words as David does in 2 Sam. 12:13; and he marvels how God 'passes by' transgression (Mic. 7:18), using the very same Hebrew word as is found in 2 Sam. 12:13 to describe how God "put away" David's sin. And there are many references throughout Micah 7 to David's Psalms of penitence. Could it be that David's sin and repentance served as a personal inspiration to Micah, as well as being held up as the inspiration to all God's people to repent and experience the sure mercies which David did?

A New Testament allusion to David's penitence may be found in 2 Cor.7:7-11: "Ye were made sorry... ye sorrowed to repentance... ye were made sorry after a *Godly* manner (cp. "every one that is *Godly*...", Ps. 32:6)... for *Godly* sorrow worketh repentance to salvation... ye sorrowed after a *Godly* sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation (cp. David's in 2 Sam. 12:5)... what zeal... your mourning, your fervent mind" . Allusion after allusion to David is being piled up here. The eight references to their "sorrow" in four verses is surely a signpost back to David's intense sorrow for his sin with Bathsheba: "My sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3)...my sorrow is continually before me... I will be sorry for my sin...many sorrows shall be to the wicked" who, unlike David, refused to repent (Ps. 38:17,18; 32:10). This association between sin and sorrow is a common one (Job 9:28; 1 Tim. 6:10; Ex. 4:31; Is. 35:10. The last two references show how Israel's sorrowing in Egypt was on account of their sinfulness). We must pause to ask whether our consciousness of sin leads us to a like sorrowing, whether our repentance features a similar depth of remorse.

It would appear that Paul is likening Corinth to David. They too were guilty of sexual "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness" (2 Cor. 12:21). We have seen that in the same way as David's repentance was made in a "day of salvation", so in 2 Cor. 6:2 Paul told Corinth that they were in a similar position to him; they too had the chance of repentance. Those who had heeded this call earlier had experienced the zeal and clear conscience which David did on his repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11). In this case, Paul would be likening himself to Nathan the prophet. This zeal which was seen in both David and Corinth is a sure sign of clear conscience and a joyful openness with God. Again, we ask how much of our zeal is motivated by this, or is it just a continuation of a level of service which we set ourselves in more spiritual days, which we now struggle to maintain for appearances sake?

Nathan said to David, Yahweh also has put away your sin. You will not die-

The Spirit changes Ps. 32:1 ("Blessed is *he* whose transgression is forgiven") to "Blessed are *they*" (Rom. 4:7) to make the same point. "Blessed is the man (e.g. David, or any sinner- David is our example) unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2) is alluded to in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ... not imputing (the world's) trespasses unto them". Through being justified, any repentant sinner will then have the characteristics of Christ, in God's sight. In Christ there was no guile (1 Pet. 2:22), as there was not in David (or any other believer) after the justification of forgiveness (Ps. 32:2). "Blessed is the man... in whose spirit is no guile" (Ps. 32:2) is picked up in Rev.14:5: "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God". The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance "before the throne of God". Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect.

There is another connection with Romans in Ps. 51:4, where David recognizes "Against thee...have I sinned...that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear

when thou judgest". He recognized that God works through our sinfulness- he is effectively saying 'I sinned so that You might be justified...'. These words are quoted in Rom. 3:4,5 in the context of Paul's exultation that "our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God" - in just the same way as David's did! Because God displays His righteousness every time He justifies a repentant sinner, He is in a sense making Himself yet more righteous. We must see things from God's perspective, from the standpoint of giving glory to God's righteous attributes. If we do this, then we can see through the ugliness of sin, and come to terms with our transgressions the more effectively. And Paul quotes David's sin with Bathsheba as our supreme example in this. We along with all the righteous ought to "shout for joy" that David really was forgiven (Ps. 32:11)- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. And yet the intensity of David's repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord's grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). Notice too how Ps. 51:1 "Have mercy on me, O God..." is quoted by the publican in Lk. 18:13. He felt that David's prayer and situation was to be his. And he is held up as the example for each of us.

2 Samuel 12:14 However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to Yahweh's enemies to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die-

We may enquire how the death of a newborn baby would stop people blaspheming. Perhaps the idea is that somehow David was punished with the death penalty, through his representative son dying. There should therefore be no complaint about God's justice. But this seems to me to raise a host of other ethical issues. The child did indeed die because of David's sin; one dimension of sin is the effect it has upon others. It could be argued that this extra punishment was because David's sin had caused others to blaspheme. Yahweh's "enemies" were the Gentiles within the land (s.w. Num. 14:42; 32:21; Dt. 1:42; 12:10 and often). They would learn what had happened and mock Yahweh for having such a king over His people. But David's wife Abigail had referred to Saul and his supporters as Yahweh's enemies (1 Sam. 25:26,29). Perhaps the idea is that the remnants of the house of Saul, who were still against David, would blaspheme Yahweh's choice of David over Saul now that Saul had behaved in the same way as Saul in abusing his "neighbour". We learn from this that whatever causes others to stumble from Yahweh is particularly abhorrent to Him.

2 Samuel 12:15 Nathan departed to his house. Yahweh struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it was very sick-

We wonder why there was a period of sickness before the child died. It was perhaps for David's benefit, to elicit his repentance, to help him see the extent of the damage he had caused. Or perhaps as noted on :16, this was the gap in which David could pray for a change of the judgment pronounced. But in this case, we have to assume that David's fasting and prayer was not intense enough.

2 Samuel 12:16 David therefore begged God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night on the earth-

God had clearly stated that the child would die (:15). But David understood that there is a gap between God's statements of judgment, and His fulfilment of them. And in that gap, in which we also stand, there is a window of opportunity for repentance and changing God's intended judgment. Nineveh's judgment was changed because of this as Moses had changed God's judgments pronounced upon Israel. David knew God well enough to believe that such a change was possible. The fact it wasn't could perhaps be because his prayer and repentance wasn't to the extent God required for this abrogation of judgment to happen.

2 Samuel 12:17 The elders of his house arose beside him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them-

The scene recalls that of Saul, likewise laying prostrate upon the earth the fateful night before his Divine judgment, refusing to eat when encouraged to do so by his servants. David in essence was no better than Saul. But fortunately he had shown Saul the utmost grace, and God showed the same now to David.

2 Samuel 12:18 It happened on the seventh day, that the child died. The servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he didn't listen to our voice. How will he then harm himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?-

David's depression may even have extended to suicidal tendencies. His servants, who knew him well, feared he would take his own life if Bathsheba's baby died: "How will he then do hurt to himself...?" (2 Sam. 12:18; the same word is used in Num. 20:15 concerning Egypt's 'hurting' of Israel). One gets a sense that David had another such fit of self-hate in his reaction to the news that many in Israel would have to die because of his numbering of the people (even though their punishment was just, seeing they had refused to pay the census money required by the Law). It is quite possible that the Lord knew these tendencies well; was He not tempted to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple, to take the Kingdom immediately, in other words to short cut through this life? Indeed, any man driven to the mental lengths of David and Jesus has known these feelings.

2 Samuel 12:19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; and David said to his servants, Is the child dead? They said, He is dead-

These were perhaps the same servants with whom Uriah would have slept and hung out, and perhaps had carried the many messengers associated with the sin. They would have indeed realized that the wages of sin is death, and David's awful sin now led to another death.

2 Samuel 12:20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his clothing; and he came into the house of Yahweh, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he ate- This may be the reference of Ps. 30:11, a Psalm with clear reference to the Bathsheba incident: "You have turned my mourning into dancing for me. You have removed my sackcloth, and clothed me with gladness". David removed his sackcloth when his child died (2 Sam. 12:20-22). It was perhaps at this point that he realized that he had been truly forgiven; hence the strange and much observed paradox of David's relative rejoicing at a time when he was supposed to be mourning for his child's death.

2 Samuel 12:21 Then his servants said to him, What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child was dead, you rose up and ate bread-

This strange change could be attributable simply to David's mood swings. But I suggested on :20 another reason.

2 Samuel 12:22 He said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows whether Yahweh will not be gracious to me, that the child may live?'

David is explaining that his fasting and weeping during the sickness of the child was for God to change His judgments decreed. It was not the weeping of sorrow.

2 Samuel 12:23 But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me-

David would go to the child in that he too would die. But he had no hope for the child's resurrection. There may even be a hint of anger with God here. David had not succeeded in changing God's stated purpose. He knew that God could bring to the grave and bring up again, as Hannah's song had said. But God had not and apparently would not do this; and "I", David, could not save a child from death nor resurrect it. Only God could, and He chose not to.

2 Samuel 12:24 David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her, and lay with her. She bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Yahweh loved him-
Solomon being the one Yahweh loved led him to abuse that love, because he alludes to this in Prov. 3:12; 15:9. As noted there, he assumes that he is therefore righteous and God's supreme delight, because Yahweh loved him. But he failed to perceive that God's love is by grace, and not a reward for our righteousness.

That David's sin is indeed an epitome of all our sins is proved by the way in which the record of it is framed in the language of the fall. Adam is presented as David. Gen. 2:8,17 = 2 Sam. 12:5; Gen. 2:17 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 6:2 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 12:10; Gen. 3:7 = 2 Sam. 12:11; Gen. 3:8 = 2 Sam. 11:24; 12:12; Gen. 3:21 = 2 Sam. 12:13; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 16:11; Gen. 3:19 = 2 Sam. 16:13. It should also be noted that David/Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps. 38:7=Is. 1:6; Ps. 51:7=Is. 1:18; Ps. 65:2=Is. 40:15). David recognized this in Ps. 51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam. 12:4), so the Jews killed Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

2 Samuel 12:25 and He sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he named him Jedidiah, for Yahweh's sake-

The words of Ps. 110:1 are applied by the NT to Jesus, but there is no reason to think that they were not primarily spoke by David with his eye on Solomon, whom he addresses as his Lord, such was his obsession: "The Lord saith unto my Lord..." (RV), and the rest of the Psalm goes on in the language of Ps. 72 to describe David's hopes for Solomon's Kingdom. 'Solomon' was actually called 'Jedidiah' by God through Nathan (2 Sam. 12:25). The 'beloved of God' was surely prophetic of God's beloved Son. When God said "This is my beloved Son", He was surely saying 'Now THIS is the Jedidiah, whom I wanted Solomon to typify'. But David calls him Solomon, the man who would bring peace. I suggest that David was so eager to see in Solomon the actual Messiah, that he chose not to use the name which God wanted- which made Solomon a type of a future Son of God / Messiah. And this led to Solomon himself being obsessed with being a Messiah figure and losing sight of the future Messiah.

2 Samuel 12:26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city-

How the citadel fell is explained in :27. I suggest that 2 Samuel is thematic rather than chronological. This really picks up from 2 Sam. 10, where Syrian support for Rabbah had been cut off, and Rabbah was besieged by Joab. It is unlikely that the siege could have been maintained for a year or so. I suggest therefore that what we read of here happened some time after the sin with Bathsheba, and before David's repentance. The harsh treatment of the captives and proud taking of the crown David hadn't fought for... is all the kind of behaviour to be associated with a man in bad conscience before God.

This may be alluded to in Prov. 16:32: "One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty;

one who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city". This may refer to the hot headed anger of Joab and the "sons of Zeruiah", who had opposed Solomon and sought the throne for themselves towards the end of David's life. It was Joab who had taken the citadel of Zion and also the city of Rabbah, but this is dismissed by Solomon as cancelled out, as it were, by his hot headed lack of mental self control.

2 Samuel 12:27 Joab sent messengers to David and said, I have fought against Rabbah. Yes, I have taken the city of waters-

We see here Joab's strong loyalty to David. "The city of waters" was the settlement on the Jabbok which provided water for the citadel of Rabbah. Once that was taken, it was only a matter of time before Rabbah had to fall, without water. And Joab wanted David to be there to have the glory of entering Rabbah.

2 Samuel 12:28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city and take it; lest I take the city, and it be called after my name-

Whatever carried the name of a person was seen as his property. If a city was conquered, it bore the name of the conqueror (2 Sam. 12:28); the names of owners were on their property (Ps. 49:12); and in this context, God's Name is over His people (Dt. 28:10). So to bear God's Name is to recognize His complete ownership and even conquest of us. And yet there's a significant twist to all this in Is. 43:1: "I have called you by *your* name, because you are mine". It seems like a slip- we expect God to say that He has called us by *His* Name, because we are His. But no- He wishes us to bear both His Name and our own name, He doesn't wish to subsume us beneath His ownership and manifestation to the point that we are not significant as persons.

2 Samuel 12:29 David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it and took it-

Soon after the sin with Bathsheba, but before David's repentance (see on :26), David went to join Joab in the battle for Rabbah- perhaps to give an impression of zeal to Bathsheba and the rest of his people. 'If brave Uriah died there, why, I'm not afraid to be with the boys on the front line either'. After the victory, David proudly placed the crown of Rabbah's king on his own head, pillaging the spoil of the city rather than burning it, and then cruelly tortured the Ammonites; "he (David personally) brought out the people... and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes" (2 Chron.20:2,3). How true it is that one sin leads to another. David's own bad conscience with God led him into this fit of bitterness, in which he so needlessly tortured people who at the most only warranted a quick death. One is left to imagine him making a great deal of how he was doing this in vengeance for the death of Uriah. Whenever we detect unreasonable behaviour, pride, materialism or bitterness within our own lives, we need to ask to what degree this is related to our own lack of good conscience with God.

2 Samuel 12:30 He took the crown of their king from off his head; and its weight was a talent of gold, and in it were precious stones; and it was set on David's head. He brought out the spoil of the city, exceeding much-

The extent of David's fall at this time may be indicated by the way he crowns himself in 2 Sam. 12:30 with the 70 pound gold crown of the Ammonite state god Milcom. Whilst retaining his allegiance to Yahweh, this personal association with a pagan god seems inappropriate. See on :26.

As explained on Ps. 20:1; 21:1, Psalms 20 and 21 appear to be David's prayers before going into battle against Ammon, and Psalm 21 is his thanksgiving for the victory. The setting of the gold crown upon his head is specifically referenced in Ps. 21:3. This however

was straight after his sin with Bathsheba. So David's joy in God's salvation expressed in those Psalms was due to his sense that God had given him this victory by grace when he himself was a sinner. His thanks for giving him eternal life when he put the crown upon him (Ps. 21:4) was therefore in the sense that he believed that despite his sin, he would be eternally saved, and he saw the victory against Ammon as a foretaste of that.

2 Samuel 12:31 He brought out the people who were therein, and put them under saws, and under iron picks, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick kiln: and he did so to all the cities of the children of Ammon. David and all the people returned to Jerusalem-

See on :26. This harsh torture and judgment of others is of the same nature as his harsh judgment of the person in Nabal's parable, demanding the death sentence for a man whom the law of Moses didn't punish with death for what he did. This is a classic case of transference. David is subconsciously transferring his sin and guilt onto others, and then punishing them heavily. This kind of psychological credibility of the narrative encourages us in our faith that it is indeed the inspired word of God.

It's one thing to obey Divine commands about slaying enemies; it's another to willfully torture them, Auschwitz-style. It was the same cruelty he showed in 2 Sam. 8:2. These incidents reveal David at his worst. And again- did he really have to ensure that every male in Edom was murdered (1 Kings 11:15,16)- was that really necessary? What about the mums, wives, sisters left weeping, and the fatherless daughters, left to grow up in the dysfunction of a leaderless Middle Eastern home? Those men were all somebody's sons, brothers, fathers, grandfathers. Was David really obeying some Divine command here, or was this the dictate of his own anger and dysfunctional bloodlust? We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8).

2 Samuel Chapter 13

2 Samuel 13:1 It happened after this, that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her-

The romantic love between the two would not have happened if David had had one wife. There would have been no half sister to fall in love with.

2 Samuel 13:2 Amnon was so troubled that he fell sick because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her-

The obsessive love of Amnon for Tamar may have similarities with David's for Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 13:3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very subtle man-

Truly evil arose for David from his own house, for Jonadab was his nephew. "Subtle" suggests he was going to act like the serpent in Eden, suggesting temptation on the basis of appealing to the human sense of entitlement, regardless of what moral boundaries were crossed.

2 Samuel 13:4 He said to him, Why, son of the king, are you so sad from day to day? Won't you tell me? Amnon said to him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister-

David's brothers had originally not been that supportive of him, as we recall from their attitude when David arrived to fight Goliath. They would never have quite gotten over Samuel's visit to the family when one by one, they were all rejected and David was chosen as the man after God's own heart, which they were not. And now David had morally disgraced himself. Shimeah had likely passed on his feelings about David to his son Jonadab. This is how jealousy complexes pass on through the generations, with an associated desire to bring down a man to one's own level. Jonadab likely at this stage realized the reason for Amnon's depression. Amnon was the firstborn and the logical successor to the throne; as firstborn son of the king, he ought to be able to have anything he wanted, according to Jonadab. And that included crossing any moral boundaries. We see Amnon's sin as a result of a chronic sense of entitlement to anything, whatever moral boundaries that might involve crossing. And this problem of sense of entitlement because of position... remains a problem for many.

2 Samuel 13:5 Jonadab said to him, Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be sick. When your father comes to see you, tell him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and dress the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand'-

Jonadab really was the "subtle" (:3) serpent, suggesting the sin in an indirect way without stating it, and operating on the subliminal level. And this is the essence of all our temptations. What goes on in our heart is played before us in external terms in this story. As with the serpent, the temptation and sin functions through eating. The many temptations and falls into sin which the Bible records are really the essential pattern of every man's sin. It all begins with the subliminal images and unarticulated suggestions. See on :20. This theme of subliminal suggestion is continued in 2 Sam. 14:1.

2 Samuel 13:6 So Amnon lay down and faked being sick. When the king came to see him-
This corroborates with how David visited and prayed for Saul and his family when they were sick (s.w. Ps. 35:13). The Biblical records paint absolutely imaginable and credible character portraits. The uninspired writings are typically unrealistic and inconsistent in their presentations of characters.

Amnon said to the king, Please let my sister Tamar come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand-

Tamara was under the immediate control of her elder brother Absalom. But David as the father and king overrode that. The language of baking cakes and eating from her hand repeats in :5,6,10 to create the impression that Amnon did exactly according to Jonadab's suggestion.

2 Samuel 13:7 Then David sent home to Tamar saying, Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him-

David comes over as involved in the tragedy and would have later felt guilty for letting the plan go ahead; it was all as judgment for his sin of obsessive "love" for Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 13:8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. She took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes-

The cameraman is zoomed in close on her taking the dough, kneading it, pouring it out (:9) etc. We are invited to play Bible television with the whole scene.

2 Samuel 13:9 She took the pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. Amnon said, Have all men leave me. Every man went out from him-

He is quoting the words of Joseph in Gen. 45:1, also in the context of food, and the comment "Every man went out from him" confirms this connection. But his spirituality is all out of context, doing as many do today- quoting bits of the Bible way out of context, to justify their own wrong actions and beliefs. See on :14.

2 Samuel 13:10 Amnon said to Tamar, Bring the food into the inner room, that I may eat from your hand. Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the inner room to Amnon her brother-

The narrative is well written. The details enable us to imagine the scene, and we are prepared for the calamity which is now about to happen.

2 Samuel 13:11 When she had brought them near to him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, Come, lie with me, my sister!-

These are the words of Potiphar's wife to Joseph. See on :9,14 for how the Joseph story is alluded to and used wrongly, way out of context, by Amnon. It was a desperate attempt to justify the unjustifiable. It was the reflection of how David lay with Bathsheba "because she was cleansed from her impurity". That was an irrelevant, out of context spiritual precondition he laid down. And it was reflected in how Amnon was to reason in raping Tamar.

2 Samuel 13:12 She answered him, No, my brother, do not force me! For no such thing ought to be done in Israel. Don't you do this folly-

Sexual sin is likewise termed "folly" (Gen. 34:7). Amnon would be known by all as a "fool" (:13), an empty vain person (Jud. 9:4). Sin is therefore associated with being empty and vain; and our world and its "entertainment" is so full of emptiness, vanity and folly. This is the quintessence of sin.

2 Samuel 13:13 I, to where would I carry my shame? And as for you, you will be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you-

Such marriages were forbidden (Lev. 18:9; Dt. 27:22), although Abraham had done so. We get the impression that David would have yet again considered himself above the law, and allowed this marriage. He had apparently not learned from his sin with Bathsheba; which I suggested arose from his impression that following the spirit rather than the letter of the

law allowed him to actually break basic moral principles. The way Tamar reasons, we might conclude that she was not against marrying Amnon. Perhaps she even liked or loved him; and thus again we see the utter folly of his actions, destroying what could have been a positive marriage just because he wanted immediate gratification of lust. And that of course is a folly played out so often in human life.

2 Samuel 13:14 However he would not listen to her voice; but being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her-

There are various out of context connections with the Joseph story. Amnon has used the words of Joseph (out of context) in :9. He forces her and lays with her, and then her distinctive garment of many colours (cp. Joseph's) is torn. It is all jumbled, because Amnon was jumbling up the references to the Joseph story to wrongly justify himself. He wishes to give the impression that she had acted as Potiphar's wife, hence he throws her out of the house and has the door bolted behind her, as if she is a crazy, sexually obsessed woman who has tried to lay with him. False justification of fleshly actions with quasi Biblical reasoning is a major failure of so many.

2 Samuel 13:15 Then Amnon hated her with exceeding great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her-

We are clearly intended to understand that "the love with which he loved her" was not love but lust. And when gratified, it turned to hatred. Amnon's obsessive love for Tamar was an echo of David's relationship with Bathsheba. All this would have been yet another aspect of the emotional trauma which David went through at this time; to fall out of love with the woman for which he had almost thrown away his eternal salvation. And in addition to this, all Israel would have got to know about what had happened- with a fair degree of exaggeration thrown in, we can be sure.

Amnon said to her, Arise, be gone!-

This, and bolting the door after her, could be read as him implying that she had sexually assaulted him and not the other way around.

2 Samuel 13:16 She said to him, Not so, because this great wrong in sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me! But he would not listen to her-

Her high morals are reflected by her deep sense of hurt at being sent away falsely accused. A woman of lower morals would have been more hurt by the rape, and then shrugged and moved on.

2 Samuel 13:17 Then he called his servant who ministered to him and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her-

As suggested on :15, the bolting of the door suggested she was a crazy woman filled with sexual lust who had to be excluded forcibly from a man's bedroom, and this she found more hurtful than the rape itself (:16).

2 Samuel 13:18 She had a garment of various colours on her; for with such robes were the king's daughters who were virgins dressed. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her-

Again we note the stress upon the door being bolted, which was done because she presumably wanted to return to talk with Amnon. And he wished to give the impression she had sexually thrown herself at him and was crazy.

2 Samuel 13:19 Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her garment of various colours that was on her; and she laid her hand on her head, and went her way, crying aloud as she

went-

A woman of lesser morality would perhaps have kept wearing the symbol of her virginity. But she tore it to show she had lost her virginity, indeed it had been torn from her, and she was in mourning for herself seeing nobody else was. We note the internal credibility of the account in that she had just been cooking, and so there were "ashes" readily available to her, which she threw onto her head.

2 Samuel 13:20 Absalom her brother said to her, Has Amnon your brother been with you?- This continues the theme noted on :5, of specifics not being stated but implied. "Been with you" meant 'raped you', and Absalom's comment that she need not worry too much about it is tantamount to saying 'I will restore your honour by killing him'. We are left to reflect how it is that which is left unspoken, not specifically articulated, which is so often the sin.

But now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house-

See on :33. These words too were apparently suggested to him by Jonadab. He maybe advised Absalom "Tell her not to worry about it, because...". The subliminal suggestion was "Because you are going to regain her honour by killing Amnon". There are Biblical examples of refusing to take guilt when others feel that it should be taken. Recall how the Lord's own parents blamed Him for 'making them anxious' by 'irresponsibly' remaining behind in the temple. The Lord refused to take any guilt, didn't apologize, and even gently rebuked them (Lk. 2:42-51). In similar vein, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Even if I made you sorry with a letter, I do not regret it" (2 Cor. 7:8). He would not take guilt for their being upset with him. Likewise Absalom comforted his raped sister not to 'take it to heart', not to feel guilty about it, as it seems she was feeling that way, taking false guilt upon her.

2 Samuel 13:21 But when king David heard of all these things, he was very angry-

The internal credibility of the character portrayal in the record is shown again. For this is just how he reacted to Nathan's parable about the man who had taken a poor man's lamb.

As we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps. 43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. Like Job, David had no precedents in past spiritual history from which he could take comfort (Job 5:1). David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. He knew that the ideal standard for married life was one man: one woman, and yet he was somehow able to flout this and still be a man after God's own heart. He broke explicit Mosaic commandment by marrying Saul's wives and also his daughter, he airily waived the Mosaic law concerning bloodguiltiness (consider the implications of 2 Sam. 14:4-11), and the need to stone rapists (2 Sam. 13:21). When others tried to do these kind of things, they were severely punished by a God who insisted upon serious obedience to His Law. Consider how Saul was condemned for offering sacrifice instead of a priest (1 Sam. 13:10-13); and Uzziah likewise (2 Chron. 26:16-19). When the woman of Tekoah basically suggested that the Mosaic laws about the rights of the revenger of blood be repealed, David seems to have agreed. When Amnon seeks to rape his sister Tamar, she suggests that he ask David to allow them to marry- and surely, she says, he will agree. Yet this too would have been counter to the spirit of the Law about marriages to close relatives. Yet David went beyond the Law so often; and it is this which perhaps led him to commit the sin of presumption in

his behaviour with Bathsheba. Right afterwards he comments about the man who stole his neighbour's sheep, that it must be restored fourfold; whereas the Law only stipulated double, David felt he so knew the spirit of the Law that he could break the letter of it- in any context. And this was his [temporary] downfall.

2 Samuel 13:22 Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar-

David's anger with Amnon (:21) is contrasted with Absalom's silence about the matter, whilst nursing hatred in his heart which was to come to fruition in the murder of his brother. David's passion, as discussed on :21, is therefore presented as more acceptable than Absalom's secret hatred which came to full term in murder.

Not good nor bad / evil means nothing at all. Adam's choice in Eden was that of everyman in every sin; it was a choice between a total "yes" or a total "no" to God. The desire was to know "good and evil"; and this term is used as an idiom for "everything" (Gen. 24:50; 2 Sam. 14:17,20), the whole area in between good and evil is in this sense "everything" (cp. Gen. 31:24; 2 Sam. 13:22). Adam and Eve were attracted by the possibility of experiencing everything, of having the total knowledge, the omniscience, which is with God alone. Their failure was more than simply eating a fruit; it involved rebellion and pride, a desire to be equal with God-

2 Samuel 13:23 It happened after two full years, that Absalom had sheep shearers in Baal Hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons-

We note that David did not enforce the death penalty for Amnon, even though the law of Moses required this (Lev. 20:17). We compare this with how he ordered the death penalty for the man in the parable who had stolen the poor man's lamb, even though this was beyond the law's requirements. David had been spared the death penalty and so he reflected that grace to his son; and yet we sense there was also parental bias in the case. By not punishing Amnon with death, nor later Absalom, he allowed a situation to develop which would cause yet more bloodshed.

2 Samuel 13:24 Absalom came to the king and said, See now, your servant has sheep shearers. Please let the king and his servants go with your servant-

Absalom comes over as hypocritical as describing himself as his father's servant, when he was planning to murder his father's son.

2 Samuel 13:25 The king said to Absalom, No, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome to you. He pressed him; however he would not go, but blessed him-

The blessing probably involved a gift (1 Sam. 25:27). David surely guessed that there would be some plan by Absalom to slay Amnon, hence his weak argument that they all didn't need to go as it would be expensive for Absalom to entertain them all.

2 Samuel 13:26 Then Absalom said, If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us. The king said to him, Why should he go with you?-

Clearly David guessed what was going to happen, and in that lies the pain for David.

2 Samuel 13:27 But Absalom pressed him, and he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him-

We sense David's weakness, giving in to pressure, quite unlike in his days before his sin with Bathsheba. And of courses he had no specific reason to deny Amnon's presence, apart from his premonition that Absalom was planning to kill Amnon.

2 Samuel 13:28 Absalom commanded his servants saying, Mark now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine; and when I tell you, 'Strike Amnon', then kill him. Don't be afraid. Haven't I commanded you? Be courageous, and be valiant!-

That Amnon was made drunk by Absalom recalls how David had made Uriah drunk. Every aspect of David's sins was now being repeated in the behaviour of his sons.

2 Samuel 13:29 The servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man got up on his mule, and fled-

This is the first mention of mules in the Bible. They were cross bred in disobedience to Lev. 19:19. We get the impression that a generally slack attitude to what might have been considered minor matters of the law was associated with the major sin of murder. This is the problem when we start to think that some parts of God's laws can just be ignored. David was fond of them, having his own mule (1 Kings 1:33), and Solomon was willing to receive them as tribute (1 Kings 10:25).

2 Samuel 13:30 It happened, while they were in the way, that the news came to David, saying, Absalom has slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left!-

As to why this happened, see on :31. That such a gossip should arise is not surprising, once we realize that Absalom coveted the throne. He would not be against slaying all possible competitors for it, not least the firstborn son Amnon. This was clearly part of his motivation for the murder, and not simply vengeance for Tamar's rape.

2 Samuel 13:31 Then the king arose, and tore his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn-

We wonder why David was given this false news to start with. It was perhaps to make him consider the possibility that all the promises about his "seed" had now been abrogated, seeing all his seed had been cut off. Those promises would have been in his mind as he lay on the earth. That posture however is associated with prayer. Perhaps he was praying that through his disgraced daughter Tamar, there would somehow come the promised Messianic seed. Through this trauma he was therefore driven closer to his longing for the Christ, just as we may be, e.g., through a false alarm due to a cancer scare.

2 Samuel 13:32 Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered, Don't let my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead; for by the appointment of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar-

Jonadab is not specifically stated as having given the idea of this murder to Absalom, but given his behaviour from :5, suggesting sin in a subliminal way, we can assume that he had done the same. "Why not invite Amnon to a feast on your property, you can all get drunk together..." was the subliminal way of suggesting "And you can get him murdered there, away from the court scene in Jerusalem".

2 Samuel 13:33 Now therefore don't let my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead; for Amnon only is dead-

This idea of 'don't take it to heart' is exactly what Absalom said to Tamar (see on :20), and we are therefore led to believe that Absalom's words to Tamar were also put in his mind by Jonadab's suggestion. Jonadab knew exactly what was going to happen, even though he was not present; because it was all of his subliminal suggestion to Absalom. He was really a very evil man, but the world around us bombards us with such subliminal suggestion.

2 Samuel 13:34 But Absalom fled. The young man who kept the watch lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming by the way of the hillside behind him- This situation is going to be repeated when David later anxiously waits for news of the battle between his supporters and Absalom. He is going to again be waiting anxiously for the news from a messenger and weeping bitterly at the news of Absalom's death (2 Sam. 18:33). Situations repeat in our lives, and even if we cannot attach meaning to event at the time, we at least have the comfort that they bear the same hallmark of Divine involvement in our lives, according to some plan- even if we may not discern it.

2 Samuel 13:35 Jonadab said to the king, Behold, the king's sons are coming! It is as your servant said-

We sense his smugness. All this was of Jonadab's suggestion, living out the jealousy complex of his father against his brother David. As Jonadab's father had been jealous of his brother David, so now it was all repeating. For Absalom's desire to remove Amnon was not simply in order to avenge his sister, but because Amnon was in line for the throne which he coveted.

2 Samuel 13:36 It happened, as soon as he had finished speaking, that behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice, and wept. The king also and all his servants wept bitterly-

Perhaps the bitterness of David's grief was because "Amnon" is a form of the word used in the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7:16, that his seed would be "established". He likely imagined that his firstborn son would perhaps be that promised seed. But now Amnon lay dead in shame, slain by his own brother, for having raped his own half sister. David's disappointment in his own family life ["my house is not so with God"] was intended to drive him more strongly towards faith in his future "son", the Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus.

2 Samuel 13:37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai the son of Ammihur, king of Geshur. David mourned for his son every day-

Talmai was Absalom's grandfather (2 Sam. 3:3). Had the Israelites driven out Geshur as they should have done (Josh. 13:13) and David not married a Gentile, then this situation might not have arisen. Absalom would have been left with no supportive place to run. "Geshur" means "joining" and such a joining in marriage to these people is another example of David's unwisdom with women.

2 Samuel 13:38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years-

"Absalom fled" is stressed three times. Or this may also be because a longer account has been abridged, under inspiration. This would also account for the fragmentary style of the narrative at this point. "Three years" may be a summary period and not necessarily to be taken literally.

2 Samuel 13:39 King David longed to go forth to Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead-

It's possible that David didn't remain feeling like this for Absalom; see on 2 Sam. 14:1,24. David had ineffable sadness in his personal life. He so loved his son Absalom, his very *soul was consumed* for that strapping young man (2 Sam. 13:39 AVmg.); but that son bitterly hated David, and coolly plotted to destroy him and his reputation. David loved Abigail and Ahinoam, but those fairy tale romances took a bitter blow when David fell for Bathsheba. David loved his parents, especially caring for their safe keeping in his wilderness years; only to be forsaken by them (the Hebrew means just that), and to be rejected by his brothers and sisters (Ps.27:10; 38:11; 69:8; 88:18). David loved Solomon and gave very

special attention to teach him the real spirit of the Truth, taking time out from a hectic public life to do so; only for that beloved son to turn away in later life, to fast women, alcohol, materialism, and the perversions of idolatry. David's disappointment in his own family life ["my house is not so with God"] was intended to drive him more strongly towards faith in his future "son", the Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus.

2 Samuel Chapter 14

2 Samuel 14:1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was towards Absalom-

We wonder at Joab's motives. Did he do this because he wanted David to get what he wanted, which was Absalom's return? Or because he wanted Absalom to be king? Men seek for power. Some want to be the king who is crowned (Absalom would be a parade example). Others like Joab want to be the kingmaker, rejoicing that their power gave power to others. Biblical history is designed to help us realize that all the types of characters we meet have been around before, and we are to learn from how the Bible records their behaviour. But the Biblical record is often purposefully open, inviting us to imagine the possible situations and motivations. Hence the word translated "towards" is intentionally ambiguous. It can also mean "against", as in 2 Sam. 14:13; Dan. 11:28. In which case, Joab is seeking to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem and to manipulate David concerning Absalom. Such are the games people play, to this day; see on :24.

2 Samuel 14:2 Joab sent to Tekoa and fetched there a wise woman and said to her, Please act like a mourner, and please put on mourning clothing and don't anoint yourself with oil, but be as a woman who has mourned a long time for the dead-

This continues the theme of subliminal suggestion in the previous chapter; see on 2 Sam. 13:6. This chapter is all about that. We get the impression that after the sin with Bathsheba, the once strong man David became the subject of all manner of manipulation.

2 Samuel 14:3 Go in to the king, and speak like this to him. So Joab put the words in her mouth-

As noted on :2, the situation here recalls how Jonadab manipulated Absalom and put words and ideas in his head. Here Joab manipulates a woman in order to pursue his own agenda regarding Absalom.

2 Samuel 14:4 When the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, showed respect and said, Help, O king!-

This recalls how David had fallen with his face to the ground begging God somehow for a way forward after he had heard that all his sons had died (2 Sam. 13:31). This is another connection with the events of 2 Sam. 13.

2 Samuel 14:5 The king said to her, What ails you? She answered, Truly I am a widow, and my husband is dead-

Immediately David would have thought of how he had made Bathsheba a widow by murdering her husband.

2 Samuel 14:6 Your handmaid had two sons, and they both fought together in the field, and there was no one to part them, but the one struck the other and murdered him-

"Strove / fought" is the word used by Solomon in Prov. 13:10: "Pride only breeds quarrels, but with ones who take advice is wisdom". This is true, but so many of Solomon's Proverbs include some self justification. "Quarrels" is the word used here in the parable about the strivings between David's sons. He is implying that all the quarrels about his being the one to have the throne merely came from pride, and the wise will accept Solomon's kingship. He harnesses Divine truths in order to justify himself, and this is a warning for all who claim to hold Divine truth.

2 Samuel 14:7 Behold, the whole family has risen against your handmaid and they say, 'Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he

murdered, and so destroy the heir also'. Thus they would quench my coal which is left, and would leave to my husband neither name nor remainder on the surface of the earth-

It would appear that the legislation about the cities of refuge wasn't being practiced at this time. The parallel in David's family would suggest that "the whole family" wanted to kill Absalom, although it could be that they felt likewise about Amnon. The woman is arguing that the Mosaic laws about the avenging of blood didn't take into account her feelings as the mother of the brother who had to be slain. And further, the principle of keeping the name of the dead alive would be broken. She correctly argues that principles are in conflict in this case; and this is often the situation when any legal code, including the Mosaic, is applied. Thus the Lord brings out the point that priests "worked on the Sabbath" to circumcise a child. The reason for these clashes of principle within Divine law was in order to force people to perceive the spirit of the law, and follow that and not the letter. The very structure of the Mosaic law was therefore actually designed to guard against legalistic approaches to it.

2 Samuel 14:8 The king said to the woman, Go to your house, and I will give a command concerning you-

The slayer of innocent blood was to be slain without pity: "you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you" (Dt. 19:13). But David seems to have stepped up to a higher level when he told the woman of Tekoah that he would protect her son from revenge murder, after he had slain another man. The woman pointed out that if her son was slain, the inheritance would be lost in her husband's name. Here was a case where two principles seemed to be at variance: the need to slay the guilty, and the need to preserve the inheritance. The higher level was to forgive the slayer of innocent blood, even though the Law categorically stated that he should be slain. The Law of Moses is full of such examples of where different levels of response are offered. Thus in the case of adultery, a man could apply the trial of jealousy (Num. 5), kill his wife, divorce her- or, forgive her, as Hosea did. The very existence of these different levels of response is designed, as they are today, to elicit our maximum level of response. For it surely is always a case of "my utmost for His highest", and a minimalist response to His grace is self evidently inappropriate.

2 Samuel 14:9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king, My lord O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house; and the king and his throne be guiltless-

"The iniquity" in view would perhaps refer to the disobedience which she was suggesting to the laws about the avenging of blood. She wanted more than what David had said, she wanted a concrete pronouncement from him as it were abrogating obedience to that law. And she said she would bear the iniquity of doing so. But this is not how guilt for sin or abrogating God's law is to be dealt with. David was being provoked to consider taking upon himself the "sin" of not demanding Absalom's blood be shed, and indeed restoring him.

2 Samuel 14:10 The king said, Whoever says anything to you, bring him to me, and he shall not touch you any more-

So David is waiving the Mosaic law concerning bloodguiltiness, as he did the need to stone rapists (2 Sam. 13:21). When others tried to do these kind of things, they were severely punished by a God who insisted upon serious obedience to His Law. Consider how Saul was condemned for offering sacrifice instead of a priest (1 Sam. 13:10-13); and Uzziah likewise (2 Chron. 26:16-19). When the woman of Tekoah basically suggested that the Mosaic laws about the rights of the revenger of blood be repealed, David seems to agree. When Amnon seeks to rape his sister Tamar, she suggests that he ask David to allow them to marry- and surely, she says, he will agree. Yet this too would have been counter to the spirit of the Law about marriages to close relatives. Yet David went beyond the Law so often; and it is this which perhaps led him to commit the sin of presumption in his behaviour with Bathsheba. Right afterwards he comments about the man who stole his neighbour's sheep, that it must

be restored fourfold; whereas the Law only stipulated double, David felt he so knew the spirit of the Law that he could break the letter of it- in any context. And this was his [temporary] downfall.

As we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps. 43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. Like Job, David had no precedents in past spiritual history from which he could take comfort (Job 5:1). David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20; and 2 Sam. 19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not. He knew that the ideal standard for married life was one man: one woman, and yet he was somehow able to flout this and still be a man after God's own heart. He broke explicit Mosaic commandment by marrying Saul's wives and also his daughter.

2 Samuel 14:11 Then she said, Please let the king remember Yahweh your God so that the avenger of blood destroy not any more, lest they destroy my son. He said, As Yahweh lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the earth-

As explained on :10, this is David waiving parts of God's law, and yet doing so from an understanding of grace and pity. And of course the whole situation was designed to lead him to agree to apply these principles to Absalom.

2 Samuel 14:12 Then the woman said, Please let your handmaid speak a word to my lord the king. He said, Say on-

The woman isn't prepared to leave things at the level of subliminal appeal. Perhaps now she speaks on her own behalf, and no longer following the script Joab had given her. The next verses appear to be her own more spiritual argument, at the end of which she basically admits she has been set up to say the script she just has; but despite that, in spiritual terms, she can see a good case for having Absalom back.

2 Samuel 14:13 The woman said, Why then have you devised such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring home again his banished one-

The woman understood the implications of the promise in Eden when she tells David that "neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him" (2 Sam. 14:14 AV). Whom did God banish? Adam, and all his children. But God 'devised means' through the promises of Gen. 3:15 so that this banishment was not permanent expulsion. The means devised was the death and resurrection of His Son, the seed of the woman. But the woman's point was that therefore, David ought to restore his sinful son, whom he had banished- for "the king does not fetch home again his banished" (2 Sam. 14:13). Her point was that as God sought to restore His banished sons, through the pain and cost to Him of the blood of His Son, so we ought to likewise be inspired to win back the banished. And so we look to those banished from ecclesial life by disfellowship, church politics, personal animosities of past decades, or simply their own outright sins; or those marginalized by poverty, education, disability, health, geography... these are the banished whom we ought to be winning back. And the power in all this arises from the implications of those promises in Eden. Truly the woman of Tekoah was, as she is described, a "wise woman".

2 Samuel 14:14 For we must die, and are as water split on the ground, which can't be gathered up again; neither does God take away life, but devises means that he who is banished not be an outcast from him-

Her point was that as God in some sense breaks His own laws, e.g. that sin leads to permanent death, so surely David likewise could have the same spirit of grace and bring about the salvation of someone rightly appointed to death. See on :13. It could be argued that her logic is wrong, for the wages of sin is indeed death and God in that sense does take away life. But perhaps her point is that God indeed told Adam that in the day he sinned he would die; but in His grace, He didn't carry out that sentence immediately. Just as Nineveh wasn't destroyed in 40 days as God had stated. Instead, God gave more time- in the hope that Adam would not have to be outcast, and His purpose was to bring Adam back into Eden. That was why God didn't make Adam die "in the day" that he ate of the fruit. And so, the woman reasons, if God's attitude to death and punishment shows such grace, we surely ought to not insist upon His law of death for sinners being immediately obeyed. We should follow His example of letting His grace and hope for our restoration be stronger than the need to punish sin with death.

2 Samuel 14:15 Now therefore seeing that I have come to speak this word to my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and your handmaid said, 'I will now speak to the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his servant'-

The woman has now totally departed from the script Joab had given her, contrasting positively with how in the previous chapter, Absalom followed Jonadab's script exactly. She admits she has been put up to what she has done. And she seems to be saying that despite this, she does indeed see the logic in the request. See on :12.

2 Samuel 14:16 For the king will hear, to deliver his servant out of the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God-

I suggested on :12,15 that she admits she has been set up with her story. So I think here she means "the king *would have* heard me, had I really been in such a case as I presented to him".

2 Samuel 14:17 Then your handmaid said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king bring rest; for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad. May Yahweh your God be with you'-

See on :20. Adam's choice in Eden was that of everyman in every sin; it was a choice between a total "yes" or a total "no" to God. The desire was to know "good and evil"; and this term is used as an idiom for "everything" (Gen. 24:50; 2 Sam. 14:17,20), the whole area in between good and bad / evil is in this sense "everything" (cp. Gen. 31:24; 2 Sam. 13:22). Adam and Eve were attracted by the possibility of experiencing everything, of having the total knowledge, the omniscience, which is with God alone. Their failure was more than simply eating a fruit; it involved rebellion and pride, a desire to be equal with God.

In this context, the woman means that she recognizes David's great sensitivity and wisdom, and knows that he would see through her story as a put up situation. But she truly respects him and wishes Yahweh to be with the king. Indeed it seems David was well known for his sensitivity and the ability to hide things from him (see on 2 Sam. 18:13). His wide life experience mixed with his spirituality led to this sensitivity.

2 Samuel 14:18 Then the king answered the woman, Please don't hide anything from me

that I ask you. The woman said, Let my lord the king now speak-

David uses the words of Joshua to Achan (Josh. 7:19), possibly implying he thinks she has sinned and needs to repent for her part in this ruse to manipulate him.

2 Samuel 14:19 The king said, Is the hand of Joab with you in all this? The woman answered, As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken; for your servant Joab, he urged me, and he put all these words in the mouth of your handmaid-

The woman's honesty is commendable, and she contrasts well with Absalom in the parallel situation of the previous chapter, who was manipulated by Jonadab. "Urged" is the usual word "commanded", as if Joab had in some way ordered or even manipulated this woman to in turn try to manipulate David.

2 Samuel 14:20 to change the face of the matter has your servant Joab done this thing- AV "to bring about this form of speech", in other words, the entire performance from her had been designed to David pronounce that the law about the avenging of blood could be suspended in her case; and thereby set a legal precedent for the return of Absalom.

My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are on the earth-

David's soul was broken as a result of his own mistakes and his general experience of life. David's depression resulted in him manifesting all the classic characteristics of the highly strung person. But it led him to his great sensitivity and almost telepathic ability to enter into other's problems was legendary throughout Israel, and this was one of the things which endeared him to his people (1 Sam. 22:22; 2 Sam. 14:17,20; 18:13)- and there is a powerful similarity here with our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The woman thought that Angels know everything and therefore David was like an Angel. Angels don't know *everything*. Yet the woman's immature concept isn't corrected. This is not the style of God's engagement with us through the Bible, and it explains why the wrong ideas about demons aren't corrected specifically in the New Testament.

2 Samuel 14:21 The king said to Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing. Go therefore, bring the young man Absalom back-

"Bring... back" is the word also used for the return of the exiles. I have suggested that all the historical records were rewritten with the exiles in view. This theme of those who deserved to stay in exile being restored by grace was appropriate to them; although most refused to accept they had done anything wrong, and preferred the life in exile.

2 Samuel 14:22 Joab fell to the ground on his face, showed respect, and blessed the king. Joab said, Today your servant knows that I have found grace in your sight, my lord O king, in that the king has performed the request of his servant-

"Performed the request of his servant" uses the very words of :20 "Your servant Joab has done [s.w. "performed"] this thing [s.w. "request"]". Joab absolutely accepts he had manipulated the woman, and we sense he is ecstatic that he has got his way. There is no record of any contact between him and Absalom at this stage. As discussed on :1, we are still left wondering whether Joab wants this because he wants David to get what he wants; or whether he wants to play the kingmaker in making Absalom king, although he later falls out with Absalom and turns against him.

2 Samuel 14:23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem-

Joab was certainly enthusiastic for Absalom's return, personally going to Geshur to escort him. It was a round trip of 500 km., a major journey. See on :1 and :22 as to his motives.

2 Samuel 14:24 The king said, Let him return to his own house, but let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and didn't see the king's face-

If David was indeed still longing to see Absalom as he was in 2 Sam. 13:39, we wonder why he would say this. I discussed on :1 how the word translated "towards" is intentionally ambiguous. It can also mean "against", and we are left guessing whether David's heart is towards or against Absalom; and that affects how we understand Joab's game plan. The narrative creates suspense and has all the elements of a good story, as the readership is left wondering about these things. This was a paradigm in literature far ahead of its time in contemporary writings. David may have changed his feelings about Absalom when he perceived that in fact Absalom wanted the throne from David. Or perhaps the ambiguity in the narrative reflects David's own mixed feelings. Part of him indeed wanted to see Absalom (2 Sam. 13:39), and he shared the argument of the woman of Tekoah about showing him grace. But another part of him recognized that Absalom wanted to kill him as he had Amnon, in order to take the throne for himself.

2 Samuel 14:25 Now in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him- Absalom is presented as similar to Saul- externally attractive to Israel, and apparently the man born to be king according to his appearance. "No blemish" is the language of how the High Priest and sacrifices were to be. His "crown" of hair would then be associated with the High Priest's mitre, imitated by the uncut hair of the Nazirite. All this suggests that potentially he could indeed have been a priest-king. There were many potential ways forward for the promises to David to be fulfilled, and perhaps he was one of them. And yet they all came to nothing, Solomon especially, until they came to full term in the work and person of the Lord Jesus.

2 Samuel 14:26 When he cut the hair of his head (now it was at every year's end that he cut it; because it was heavy on him, therefore he cut it); he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight-

Immediately we sense his vanity, cutting his own hair and weighing it. LXX "two hundred shekels according to the royal shekel", GNB "about five pounds according to the royal standard of weights" David had apparently standardized the weight of a shekel. This would have been the equivalent to the "shekel of the sanctuary" often mentioned in the law of Moses. The priests were intended to have a standard shekel which was kept in the sanctuary; but it seems David did this priestly work by creating such a shekel. This is yet another example of David acting as priest and spiritual leader of Israel, effectively as High Priest.

2 Samuel 14:27 To Absalom there were born three sons and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a beautiful appearance-

This woman was named after Absalom's sister whom Amnon had raped. LXX adds "and she became the wife of Roboam the son of Solomon, and bare him Abia" although that contradicts 1 Kings 15:2; 2 Chron. 11:20-22. According to 2 Sam. 18:18, Absalom had no sons. Perhaps his three sons of 2 Sam. 14:27 had died in their youth or childhood. for infant mortality was high in those times. Or maybe he had fallen out with them, and they had disowned each other.

2 Samuel 14:28 Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem; and he didn't see the king's

face-

To see a king's face implies acceptance by him. So as discussed above, David's longing to see Absalom in 2 Sam. 13:39 had changed. Something had changed, and I suggest that may have been because he perceived that Absalom wanted him dead because he wanted the throne.

2 Samuel 14:29 Then Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king; but he would not come to him: and he sent again a second time, but he would not come-

Joab had clearly promised Absalom that he could get him an audience with the king. But something had changed; perhaps Absalom had made clear his plans to kill his father and become king. Or there had been some personal fallout between Absalom and Job. Or maybe Joab decided that his own pride and power could not or would not be best served by being a kingmaker to Absalom, but would be better served by continual loyalty to David.

2 Samuel 14:30 Therefore he said to his servants, Behold, Joab's field is near mine, and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire. Absalom's servants set the field on fire-

We note how the ruling classes of Israel had their own forms of livelihood. Saul still retained his farm, Absalom had sheep, Joab grew barley. There was no very developed system of taxation for the ruling classes to live off. Again, the record has absolute internal consistency. Likewise in 2 Sam. 23:11, Shammah defended a field of barley because it was valuable to the Israelites. And in this we have a corroboration of this record with how Absalom had burnt Joab's field of barley. We may wonder why Joab slew Absalom. It could have been that to lose a field of barley was to lose food for many months or even a year. It was therefore a major loss to Joab. As Shammah defended a field of barley with his life, so Joab was so vengeful at the loss of his field of barley that he later slew Absalom.

2 Samuel 14:31 Then Joab arose and came to Absalom to his house and said to him, Why have your servants set my field on fire?-

The plan of getting Joab to come to him certainly worked, although it was a desperate one.

2 Samuel 14:32 Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent to you saying, 'Come here, that I may send you to the king to say, Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me to be there still. Now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there is iniquity in me, let him kill me'-

Job had had a change of mind as to how Absalom could best serve his own interests of pride and power, and the result of that was that Absalom was left in limbo. There certainly was iniquity in Absalom because he had slain his brother Amnon. We see here how conscience for sin so easily declines over time, and the passage of the years works a kind of pseudo atonement. But God's dealing with sin is not like this. We may forget about past sins or the wonder of having been forgiven them, but God doesn't (2 Pet. 1:9).

2 Samuel 14:33 So Joab came to the king and told him; and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom-

We are not told the content of their discussion or whether David formally extended forgiveness to Absalom. The next we read in 2 Sam. 15 is that Absalom is moving freely in Jerusalem and garnering support for his putsch. The depth of coverage of the record varies; we are given detailed descriptions of Tamar kneading the dough for the cakes she made Amnon, whereas here, when we would love to know what David and Absalom said to each other- there is nothing. Did Absalom repent? Did David forgive? What was the role of Joab? I suggest that this is intentional, because these records are designed to promote our reflection and imagination, so that we might enter deeper into the characters portrayed.

2 Samuel Chapter 15

2 Samuel 15:1 It happened after this, that Absalom prepared him a chariot and horses, and fifty men to run before him-

"Prepared" or "established" is a major theme in the promises of the eternal establishment of David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12,13,16 etc.), and Absalom thought he could prepare / establish his own kingdom, himself. Solomon wrongly assumed that the conditional nature of the promises concerning the seed were just irrelevant to him as he had wisdom. Therefore he uses the word of how his kingdom has been "established" (1 Kings 2:24 s.w.). Solomon's contenders for the throne were all stopped by God, they tried to prepare or establish themselves but it never worked out (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5); and so surely Solomon has the idea in mind that he has been established as the promised Messianic seed of David with an eternally "established" throne and kingdom. This leads him to the conclusion that the outcome of wisdom and folly is in this life, and he has no perspective of a final day of judgment and eternal establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This is why the simplistic dichotomies he presents in Proverbs between the blessed and wise, and the cursed and foolish, are not always true to observed experiences in this life. For it is the future Kingdom which puts them in ultimate perspective.

2 Samuel 15:2 Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate. It was so, that whenever any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgement, then Absalom called to him and said, What city are you from? He said, Your servant is of one of the tribes of Israel-

This is the situation which David complains of in Ps. 69:12: "Those who sit in the gate talk against me". It was David's own son who stood in the gate talking against his own father (2 Sam. 15:2-6). This was the typical consequence of David's sin with Bathsheba which Nathan had predicted; and yet when it happened, David complains about it, as if still struggling to accept Nathan's words, and not focused enough upon the simple wonder of the fact he had been forgiven and his life preserved by God's amazing grace.

2 Samuel 15:3 Absalom said to him, Behold, your matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed by the king to hear you-

We note his hypocrisy. He criticizes David for not delegating power because David wants it all for himself; as an excuse for Absalom wanting power. Absalom has no interest in justice, only in his own power. For he tells everyone that their case is good and just- and he will give them what they want if he is the judge. We note that David had centralized judicial power in himself; and yet he was hopelessly compromised as a judge by what he had done with Uriah and Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 15:4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that each man who has any suit or cause might come to me, and I would do him justice!-

Absalom told everyone that he would give them justice, even though the people who came to him were probably against each other. He promised whatever people wanted, in return for them giving him power. This is the spirit of politics to this day.

2 Samuel 15:5 It was so, that when any man came near to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand and took hold of him and kissed him-

This could imply that he didn't let people prostrate themselves before him, but lifted them up and hugged them. This was the style of greeting used by Joab in 2 Sam. 20:9, and we wonder if this continues the theme of the last two chapters- a man influencing another. Maybe we are to get the hint that Joab was influencing Absalom still, although when Absalom finally grabs power, Joab decides to still support David.

2 Samuel 15:6 Absalom did this sort of thing to all Israel who came to the king for judgement. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel-

LXX "made his own"; the hearts of Israel were stolen from David to Absalom. Perhaps this was to make David reflect upon how he had stolen the lamb of Uriah, according to Nathan's parable. Solomon's later condemnations of those who steal were true enough (Prov. 6:30; 9:17), but as ever with the Proverbs, Solomon harnesses God's truth to his own justification and the criticism of those whose supporters he deemed were still a threat to his throne.

2 Samuel 15:7 It happened at the end of forty years that Absalom said to the king, Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to Yahweh, in Hebron-

"Forty years" creates chronological problems. Some texts read "four years". I have elsewhere commented that this is a symbolic period and not to be always read literally; for if the forty year reigns of Saul, David and Solomon are read literally, we again have chronological problems. Absalom's claim to have vowed to Yahweh was again hypocritical. There is no historical record of him having made such a vow, nor of his presence in Hebron, the previous capital of Judah before Jerusalem was taken from the Jebusites. Hebron would have been the second city in Judah after Jerusalem. It was his birthplace, so perhaps that fact was being twisted by him.

2 Samuel 15:8 For your servant vowed a vow while I stayed at Geshur in Syria saying, 'If Yahweh shall indeed bring me again to Jerusalem, then I will serve Yahweh'-

Jacob had vowed: "If God will be with me... then shall Yahweh be my God: and this stone... shall be God's house" (Gen. 28:20-22- words quoted by faithless Absalom in 2 Sam. 15:8). The implication was that Jacob didn't consider Yahweh to be his God at that time. And yet God had promised Abraham that he would be the God of his seed (Gen. 17:7,8); Jacob was aware of these promises, and yet he is showing that he did not accept their personal relevance to him at this time. And Absalom quoted them about himself. This accords with how Amnon likewise quoted words of Joseph out of context to justify his sin against Tamar. Likewise Bible phrases and precedents can be quote right out of context in order to justify what is clearly wrong. Absalom was kidding himself that murdering or deposing his father was going to be 'serving Yahweh', just as all manner of evil is done in the name of doing God service. Perhaps the Lord alludes to this in Jn. 16:2. See on 2 Sam. 17:13.

2 Samuel 15:9 The king said to him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron-

David had enough power to still need to give Absalom his blessing to travel. And he must have guessed what would happen. But he was hopelessly compromised. It had been the same when Absalom had begged the king to allow Amnon to come to his shearing festivity, when David again had surely guessed what would happen.

2 Samuel 15:10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel saying, As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron!'-

Hebrew tenses are not exact, so we are to read that Absalom "had sent spies". See on :36. Hebron was the old capital of Judah. We discern from 2 Sam. 19:11 that Judah was now the least supportive of David.

2 Samuel 15:11 Two hundred men went with Absalom out of Jerusalem, who were invited and went in their innocence; and they didn't know anything-

These men were presumably leaders of Judah, and were invited to Hebron to celebrate Absalom's devotion to Yahweh's service at the feast he had proclaimed there (:7). They were unaware of his plans. But his idea was that they would fall in behind him, and David would be left in Jerusalem without most of his government. To use a feast of dedication to

Yahweh in this way is as bad in our days as manipulating the breaking of bread feast to our own ends.

2 Samuel 15:12 Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he was offering the sacrifices. The conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom-

Those sacrifices were supposed to represent Absalom's dedication to Yahweh's service (see on :7,11). It was cruel abuse of the things of God.

Ps. 3:1,2 refers to this time. The people considered that God wouldn't now help David (Ps. 3:2); there was a spiritual argument used against David, no matter how wrong it was. We have here a classic example of a collapse mentality, whereby a feeding frenzy begins against an innocent man, and quasi spiritual arguments are brought in to support it. "Many" in Ps. 3:1,2 is the same word used for how the people "increased" with Absalom. "Rise up" in Ps. 3:1 is the word used of Ahithophel wishing to 'rise up' and pursue David (2 Sam. 17:1; 18:31). In response to the rising up of others against him, David asks God to 'rise up' (Ps. 3:7 s.w.). David's prayer in Psalm 3 was answered, and Ahithophel 'rose up' and committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23).

The person in view in Ps. 41:9; 55:13,14 is clearly Ahithophel, David's counsellor, the "man of my peace" (2 Sam. 15:12). He was Bathsheba's grandfather, so we can imagine how his bitterness with David developed.

This is alluded to by Solomon in Prov. 21:27: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he brings it with a wicked mind!". Solomon may have in view Saul's rejection from the kingship for his wrong attitude to sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:21,22). Likewise the attempts of Absalom and Adonijah to take the throne from David and Solomon involved the offering of sacrifices (2 Sam. 15:12; 1 Kings 1:9). What Solomon says in the Proverbs is true on one level, but he harnesses Divine truth to justify himself and his own agendas; just as we can.

2 Samuel 15:13 A messenger came to David saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom-

David surely already perceived that over the years, Absalom had already stolen the hearts of Israel. The repeated stress upon the "men" of Israel may suggest Absalom was particularly attractive as a leader to the men; whereas David had been attractive to the women of Israel.

2 Samuel 15:14 David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for else none of us shall escape from Absalom. Make speed to depart, lest he overtake us quickly and bring evil down upon us and strike the city with the edge of the sword-

David knew that Absalom intended to murder him and his supporters. It was David's servants who had perished along with Uriah (2 Sam. 11:17), and David desperately wanted to learn from this and not again bring death to his servants as a result of his folly.

"Overtaken" is the word used of how David was overtaken by his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 40:12). The way he was saved from being overtaken by Absalom in judgment for this was perhaps an answer to his prayer of Ps. 40:12.

2 Samuel 15:15 The king's servants said to the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king chooses-

We are intended to sense their extreme loyalty to David. They had of course realized his failures, but on balance believed that he was the anointed king of Israel and was overall a man of God worthy to be followed. We too at times need to stop ourselves judging a brother

or sister in Christ for their out of character failures.

2 Samuel 15:16 The king went forth, and all his household after him. The king left ten women, who were concubines, to keep the house-

He would have recalled Nathan's prediction that his wives would be slept with by his usurper. He took his wives with him but left the concubines, surely knowing their fate. He did not seek to stop that prophecy coming true; he humbled himself to accept his sin and the judgment pronounced for it. See on 2 Sam. 16:21.

2 Samuel 15:17 The king went forth, and all the people after him; and they stayed in Beth Merhak-

The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us. "Beth Merhak" is literally 'the last / far house', the last house on the edge of Jerusalem, on the banks of the Kidron.

2 Samuel 15:18 All his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all the Gittites, six hundred men who came after him from Gath, passed on before the king-

The figure of 600 may not be literal, and alludes to the 600 men whom David commanded whilst fleeing from Saul in earlier years. They were maybe called "the men of Gath" not because they were Philistines from Gath, but because they had been with David in Gath when he lived there for over a year when fleeing from Saul. Their loyalty had not been ultimately swayed by David's failure with Bathsheba. They recalled David's undoubted faith, spirituality and bravery as a soldier of Yahweh, and didn't allow themselves to be fazed by his temporary failure over Uriah. LXX adds "and halted at the olive tree in the wilderness". The idea may be that the mount of Olives was still as it were with David in the desert, just as God's presence was just as much with him there as in the tabernacle and before the ark in Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 15:19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, Why do you also go with us? Return, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile. Return to your own place- Naturally David feared that his ranks would be infiltrated by Absalom's agents. Ittai was a Philistine who had only recently joined David's ranks (:20); all the indications were that he was an agent for Absalom. David refers to Absalom as "the king", accepting that he was no longer king.

2 Samuel 15:20 Whereas you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us, since I go where I may? Return, and take back your brothers. Mercy and truth be with you-

Although David was sceptical of Ittai, he speaks to him in spiritual terms, wishing this Gentile the "mercy and truth" of covenant relationship with Yahweh. LXX "and the Lord shew thee mercy and truth". This is just how David had spoken to the men of Jabesh (2 Sam. 2:5,6). We are shown how David's past experiences were now repeating in this crisis, and he was demonstrating that he had learned the lessons. Our crises are likewise designed to evoke memories of past experiences, and we are to demonstrate that we have learned the lessons. Likewise "I go where I may" is just how he had felt at the time of Saul's persecution (1 Sam. 23:13). He felt circumstances repeating, and perhaps hoped that Yahweh would likewise miraculously preserve him against seemingly overwhelming odds.

2 Samuel 15:21 Ittai answered the king and said, As Yahweh lives, and as my lord the king

lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, even there also will your servant be-

By using the term "Yahweh" and swearing by Him, Ittai shows that he has accepted covenant relationship with Yahweh. And his promise of loyalty to David is expressed in terms of the Gentile Ruth's words to Naomi, when also in exile (Ruth 1:16,17).

2 Samuel 15:22 David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones who were with him-

David accepted Ittai as sincere. And we marvel at the power of God's truth. A Philistine, from Goliath's home town, had accepted covenant relationship with Yahweh and therefore accepts His anointed king, David. Even though David had lied to the men of Gath and later slain them, and had recently disgraced himself again over Bathsheba. The power of God's truth was greater than all the disadvertisements for that truth in Yahweh's chosen representative. And this is a powerful challenge to those who turn away from God because of the bad examples of His representatives.

2 Samuel 15:23 All the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over towards the way of the wilderness-

Although Absalom is presented as having much support, "the country" is presented as sharing in the tragic grief of this sad procession of David going into exile. The triple emphasis upon "passed over" shows David's unity with his people and theirs with him. The exiles reading this would have seen the similarities with their own exile from Zion. It was also due to the effect of their sins; but they too had hope of restoration, despite much opposition. The crossing over Kidron was to be repeated by the Lord Jesus (Jn. 18:1), suffering as if He were a sinner although He was personally innocent. "The way of the wilderness" was the road to Jericho, used by the Lord Jesus in His parable of the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho being beaten [= suffering for his sins, in the parable], and being saved by grace and now law. Surely the Lord had David in mind, and is presenting the long day of his tragic exile as being the experience of everyman.

2 Samuel 15:24 Behold, Zadok also came, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God; and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people finished passing out of the city-

David had learned from previous history and experience that the ark should not be used as a talisman. He had learned in his wilderness years that God's presence was just as close in a man's heart as if that man were in His presence before the ark. We note too that they "set down" the ark having learned the lesson from David's inappropriate transportation of the ark on a wagon previously. Passing out of the city is parallel with passing over Kidron (:23), because that was the border of the city (see on :17). Again we see internal corroboration and consistency within the records.

2 Samuel 15:25 The king said to Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I find grace in the eyes of Yahweh, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His dwelling place-

The lesson for the exiles was that restoration from exile was to be by grace and not at all because they deserved it or had been unjustly treated. David has in view Jacob as he fled into exile, also a sinner justly on the run; but he too was eventually to be restored. David prayed for restoration to the place of the ark (Ps. 43:3), so his words should not be read as mere fatalism.

The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25 cp. 1 Kings

8:30; 2 Chron. 30:27; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple, and is therefore at times referred to as the heavenlies in the New Testament.

2 Samuel 15:26 but if He say thus, 'I have no delight in you;' behold, here am I. Let Him do to me as seems good to Him-

These words are applied directly to the exiles, when they are assured that at their restoration, Yahweh would delight in them (Is. 62:4), just as finally He did in David (2 Sam. 22:20). David also has in view how the land of the Kingdom was to be given by grace if Yahweh delighted in His people, even though the obstacles to possessing it appeared huge (Num. 14:8). And he too stood near the Jordan river as they had done. He reasoned from Biblical precedent. David on this long day of exile (see on :17) is David at perhaps his best in spiritual terms.

2 Samuel 15:27 The king said also to Zadok the priest, Aren't you a seer? Return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar-

The connection between being a seer and needing to therefore return to Jerusalem is unclear. Hence LXX "See! thou shalt return...".

2 Samuel 15:28 Behold, I will stay at the fords of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me-

"The plain of the wilderness" (AV) is the plain of Jericho (Josh. 5:10; 2 Kings 25:5; 2 Sam. 2:29; 17:16). "The way of the wilderness" in 2 Sam. 15:23 was therefore the road to Jericho, used by the Lord Jesus in His parable of the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho being beaten [= suffering for his sins, in the parable], and being saved by grace and now law. Surely the Lord had David in mind, and is presenting the long day of his tragic exile as being the experience of everyman.

2 Samuel 15:29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they stayed there-

David was concerned for the ark. His desire it not accompany him reflected that, and also his willingness to accept that he may be killed by Absalom and the ark destroyed in the fighting. He knew his son had no real respect for Yahweh. And he knew from his earlier experiences that God's presence would be with him whether or not the ark was with him.

2 Samuel 15:30 David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered, and went barefoot: and all the people who were with him covered each man his head; so they went up, weeping as they went up-

This may be slightly out of chronological sequence. But it is noted that David went there to worship (:32). We note how the Lord Jesus was likewise around the mount of Olives before He crossed the Kidron in Jn. 18:1. His covered head and going barefoot would suggest he recognized it was holy ground, and that he was there as a sinner. He was to likewise cover his head in mourning when Absalom was dead and the rebellion was over (2 Sam. 19:4), just as he did when Absalom came to power (2 Sam. 15:30). We get the impression that it was grief every way for David, whether Absalom lived or died. And this is indeed the take away lesson for us- that the outcome of sin is a lose lose situation.

2 Samuel 15:31 Someone told David saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. David said, Yahweh, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness- Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather, and his defection was surely not unexpected to David. But we can imagine the bolt of pain which he experienced as he received the news.

This turning of wisdom into foolishness is alluded to be in Is. 44:25. The exiles were being comforted that all the wisdom of Babylon would likewise be turned into foolishness, and they would likewise be restored. David's prayer was considered and answered by a decree passed in the court of Heaven; see on 2 Sam. 17:14).

2 Samuel 15:32 It happened that when David had come to the top, where God was worshipped, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn, and earth on his head-

The mount of Olives was clearly one of the "high places" where Yahweh was legitimately worshipped (1 Sam. 7:17; 9:13); hence David ascends it barefoot as if on holy ground. Such high places were not God's ideal intention, especially as this mount was so near to the sanctuary. But He still accepted worship there, such is His desire by all means to meet with man even on less than ideal terms.

2 Samuel 15:33 David said to him, If you pass on with me, then you will be a burden to me-
This may have been because of his age. As in 2 Sam. 19:35, it was older men who had known David in earlier years who were faithful to him at this time.

2 Samuel 15:34 but if you return to the city and tell Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king. As I have been your father's servant in time past, so will I now be your servant; then you will defeat for me the counsel of Ahithophel'-

This raises the question as to whether lying is always wrong, necessarily. Rahab's lies and those of the Hebrew midwives at the exodus are rewarded as acts of faith. But this is of course a slippery slope. But such open questions are left for our reflection, underlining that spiritual life cannot be run by laws but by principles.

2 Samuel 15:35 Don't you have Zadok and Abiathar the priests there with you? Therefore it shall be, that whatever thing you shall hear out of the king's house, you shall tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests-

David's experience of having friends within the court of Saul prepared him for having friends within the court of Absalom, when both those men were hunting him. One experience prepares us for another, years later.

2 Samuel 15:36 Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send to me everything that you shall hear-

We get the impression David is being presented as matching Absalom's "spies throughout all Israel" (:10) with his own smaller scale espionage system. And his worked, whereas Absalom's much larger system failed. It was David against Goliath all over again.

2 Samuel 15:37 So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city; and Absalom came into Jerusalem-

Absalom entered Jerusalem the day David fled (2 Sam. 17:1). The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us. Ahithophel's advice to attack David immediately was undoubtedly the best advice.

2 Samuel Chapter 16

2 Samuel 16:1 When David was a little past the top, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of donkeys saddled, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits and a skin of wine-
As noted on 2 Sam. 15, the circumstances David faced repeated incidents throughout his earlier life, or the essence of them. He had earlier unexpectedly encountered a gift of 200 loaves of bread coming towards him in the wilderness, from Abigail (1 Sam. 25:18). She may well have been with him at this time too. Raisins and wine were also part of the present Abigail had sent him. The situations were clearly controlled by God. David was being comforted, as we are by perceiving these things, that situations never spin totally out of Divine control. Even in our lowest moments there are evidences that somehow God is involved, even if we cannot attach meaning to event.

2 Samuel 16:2 The king said to Ziba, What do you mean by these? Ziba said, The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as are faint in the wilderness may drink-
We will learn from 2 Sam. 19:26,27 that Ziba had deceived Mephibosheth, who had desperately wanted to come to support David. It could be that Ziba was going over to Absalom's side, and the present was intended for him; whilst he abandoned his master Mephibosheth, who wanted to support David. But encountering David and his sizeable party on the road, Ziba changed his position and claimed the gift was for David, and Mephibosheth was aiming to become king.

Psalm 23:5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" refers to this time. Shimei and other "enemies" were aware of his path. The reference is to the feasts prepared for him in the desert by Ziba (2 Sam. 16:2) and Barzillai (2 Sam. 17:27-29). But the phrase "prepare a table" is that used of the preparation of the table of shewbread (Ex. 40:4), and it is used in a religious sense in Is. 65:11; Ez. 23:41. Perhaps David held some kind of religious ceremony whilst on the run, the equivalent to our breaking of bread meeting. And his experience of the Lord's table strengthened him with great encouragement, as we also can experience.

2 Samuel 16:3 The king said, Where is your master's son? Ziba said to the king, Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem; for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore me the kingdom of my father'-
A bit of reflection would have indicated the untruth of this; because clearly Absalom was obsessed with becoming king, and would not want to restore the house of Saul after all they had done to the house of David. Further, Mephibosheth was from Benjamin, and it was the people of Judah, especially those in Hebron, who wanted Absalom to rule over them. It was he and not the reclusive cripple Mephibosheth who had stolen the hearts of Israel.

2 Samuel 16:4 Then the king said to Ziba, Behold, all that pertains to Mephibosheth is yours. Ziba said, I do obeisance. Let me find grace in your sight, my lord, O king-
Although the news was fake, David didn't know that at the time. It would have seemed that all the grace he had shown to the house of Saul was in vain, and had not resulted in any loyalty but rather in an ill fated, opportunistic attempt to grab power for himself. This fake news was surely used by God to provoke in David a collapse mentality, which was intended to make him cast himself further upon God's grace alone.

2 Samuel 16:5 When king David came to Bahurim, behold, a man of the family of the house of Saul came out, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera. He came out and cursed continually as he came-
Psalm 7 is relevant to this cursing. Ps. 7:1 describes it as "A meditation by David, which he

sang to Yahweh, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite". But Cush may be another name for Shimei; or perhaps "the black one of Benjamin" may be another term for Saul. But much in the Psalm is so appropriate to Shimei's cursing of David as he fled from Absalom. But it could equally refer to some supporter of Saul the Benjamite during David's wilderness years. Most likely it could be that a Psalm composed in the wilderness years was later rewritten by David with reference to Shimei's abuse of him.

Psalm 109:17 also seems to reference Shimei: "Yes, he loved cursing, and it came to him. He didn't delight in blessing, and so it was far from him". This points towards Shimei, whose cursing of David at the time of Absalom's rebellion clearly hurt David very deeply. At the time, David forgave him. But he didn't maintain that intensity of forgiveness, because on his deathbed he asks Solomon to ensure Shimei even as an old man is slain because of it. His statement here that the cursing "came to him" may be a 'future perfect', stating the future as if it has already happened, as a way of stating intention. And David expressed this intention to Solomon to ensure Shimei was cursed with death for his cursing. We too struggle to maintain levels of forgiveness we grant to people, and we perceive how God's "frank" and permanent forgiveness (Lk. 7:42) is of an altogether higher quality and nature than our forgiveness.

2 Samuel 16:6 He cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David; and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left-

Death by stoning was the punishment for adultery, and it was hard for David to argue that this was inappropriate. He had been saved from that by grace, but now it seemed that God was demanding that the death penalty be carried out. David would have been beating himself up that he had not responded to the grace shown him as he ought to have done.

David was marching through a valley with steep sides, from the top of which Shimei could cast stones. Psalm 23 refers to this march, especially Psalm 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death". There was naturally the fear of an ambush, for David's location was thereby clearly known to his enemies. Yet "I will fear no evil, for You are with me". David's sense that 'God is with me' is that of 'Emmanuel', God with us, the great comfort to the exiles in Isaiah's restoration prophecies. He felt the essence of the result of the yet future work of the Lord Jesus.

2 Samuel 16:7 Shimei said when he cursed, Be gone, be gone, you man of blood, and base fellow!-

Shimei called David a "bloodthirsty man" (:7,8 s.w.). And the same words are used by God about David (1 Chron. 28:3). So we can wonder whether David was too quick in Ps. 5:6 to assume that the 'man of blood' who was hated by God and was of course not him.

2 Samuel 16:8 Yahweh has returned on you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned! Yahweh has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son! Behold, you are caught by your own sinfulness, because you are a man of blood!-

It was the blood of Uriah and the soldiers killed alongside him which was being punished. But Shimei says that David had shed the blood of the house of Saul. This was all a cruel mixture of truth and error. David would likely have noted the reference to the house of Saul, and wrongly corroborated it with Ziba's claim that in fact Absalom was planning to be co-regent along with Mephibosheth.

2 Samuel 16:9 Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?-

This was how David had felt about himself (1 Sam. 24:14 cp. 2 Sam. 9:8; 16:9). So his humility precluded him from having Abishai's attitude.

Please let me go over and take off his head-

The Philistines in 1 Sam. 29:4 recalled how David had carried the head of Goliath to Saul (1 Sam. 17:57). To carry the heads of a king's enemies was a way to get the king's favour, as in Jud. 7:25; 2 Sam. 4:8; 16:9; 20:21; 2 Kings 10:6-8. Again we see the inspired, historical record has consistency. It would have required a clever editor to insert this theme of beheading to curry a leader's favour throughout the entire Biblical record. But the histories were clearly written at different times; a later hand would not have thought of all these realistic touches to sprinkle so consistently throughout it. The internal harmony of the Bible is to me the greatest indication that it is what it claims to be, the Divinely inspired word of God, evidencing His editing throughout.

2 Samuel 16:10 The king said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? Because he curses, and because Yahweh has said to him, 'Curse David', who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'

David assumes that "the Lord hath said unto [Shimei], Curse David"; but later he orders Solomon to punish Shimei for doing this. So it seems that David had a way of assuming God had spoken when it was more his own assumption. It is another example of David's tendency to wildly over interpret, which led him to a mistaken obsession about building the temple and assuming Solomon to be his Messianic seed.

Or we could read this as an example of where Yahweh confirms an evil man in his evil way, telling him to do what he wants to do; just as the evil spirit from Yahweh confirmed Saul in his downwards path.

2 Samuel 16:11 David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, who came forth from my bowels, seeks my life. How much more this Benjamite, now? Leave him alone, and let him curse; for Yahweh has invited him-

David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: he later asked Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident (1 Kings 2:8,9). And one wonders whether it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote: "Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man...as he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so may it be far from him. He clothed himself also with cursing as with a garment..." (Ps. 109:16-18).

2 Samuel 16:12 It may be that Yahweh will look on the wrong done to me, and that Yahweh will repay me good for the cursing of me today-

Hannah's request in 1 Sam. 1:11 that God look upon her affliction and answer it was heard, and she became an inspiration to her descendant David; who often makes the same request, unashamed to be inspired by the example of a woman (s.w. 2 Sam. 16:12; Ps. 9:13; 25:18 and so often in the Psalms).

2 Samuel 16:13 So David and his men went by the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside opposite him, and cursed as he went, threw stones at him, and threw dust-

The language of cursing and dust recalls Gen. 3:19. That David's sin is indeed an epitome of all our sins is proved by the way in which the record of it is framed in the language of the fall. Adam is presented as David. Gen. 2:8,17 = 2 Sam. 12:5; Gen. 2:17 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 6:2 = 2 Sam. 12:9; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 12:10; Gen. 3:7 = 2 Sam. 12:11; Gen. 3:8 = 2 Sam. 11:24; 12:12; Gen. 3:21 = 2 Sam. 12:13; Gen. 3:17 = 2 Sam. 16:11; Gen. 3:19 =

2 Sam. 16:13. It should also be noted that David/Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps. 38:7=Is. 1:6; Ps. 51:7=Is. 1:18; Ps. 65:2=Is. 40:15). David recognized this in Ps. 51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam. 12:4), so the Jews killed Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

2 Samuel 16:14 The king, and all the people who were with him, became weary; and he refreshed himself there-

The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us.

2 Samuel 16:15 Absalom, and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him-

Absalom entered Jerusalem the day David fled (2 Sam. 15:37; 17:1). Ahithophel's advice to attack David immediately was undoubtedly the best advice.

2 Samuel 16:16 It happened, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, had come to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, Long live the king! Long live the king!-

Hushai doesn't define which king he has in mind. This raises the question as to whether lying is always wrong, necessarily. Rahab's lies and those of the Hebrew midwives at the exodus are rewarded as acts of faith. But this is of course a slippery slope. But such open questions are left for our reflection, underlining that spiritual life cannot be run by laws but by principles. See on 2 Sam. 17:20.

2 Samuel 16:17 Absalom said to Hushai, Is this your kindness to your friend? Why didn't you go with your friend?-

There is a kind of parallel here with David probing Ittai as to whether he wasn't in fact an agent of Absalom (2 Sam. 15:19).

2 Samuel 16:18 Hushai said to Absalom, No; but whoever Yahweh and this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his will I be, and with him I will stay-

This again (as noted on :16) is phrased ambiguously; for Hushai believed that Yahweh and the true Israel of God had chosen David and not Absalom.

2 Samuel 16:19 Again, whom should I serve? Shouldn't I serve in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father's presence, so will I be in your presence-

Hushai accepts that David has indeed lost the throne, for the time being.

2 Samuel 16:20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, Give your counsel what we shall do-

Ahithophel's counsel directly leads to the fulfilment of Nathan's prophecy that a usurper would sleep with David's wives. Perhaps he based his counsel about this upon Nathan's words. But probably those words of Nathan had been privately stated to David and not generally known. So we reflect how Ahithophel's advice and Absalom's acceptance of it was all of their own genuine freewill. And yet it was to fulfil God's word of punishment.

2 Samuel 16:21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, Go in to your father's concubines, that he has left to keep the house. Then all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong-

Ahithophel assumed that such behaviour would make David hate Absalom. But he had not factored in David's deep spirituality and humility. For this did not make David hate Absalom, and at his death, David was heartbroken, despite having been reestablished as king. Further, I suggested on 2 Sam. 15:16 that David left his concubines in Jerusalem fully aware of what would happen according to Nathan's prophecy. But he did not seek to stop that prophecy coming true; he humbled himself to accept his sin and the judgment pronounced for it.

2 Samuel 16:22 So they spread Absalom a tent on the top of the house; and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel-

Walking upon the roof of his house connects with several passages which associate the roof top with a place of idolatry: 2 Kings 23:12; Jer. 19:13; 32:29; Zeph. 1:5. It may be that David regularly worshipped the idol of Bathsheba in his mind, upon the bed which he had on the house top. David's sin with Bathsheba is therefore not such a momentary slip. Significantly, it was in that very place where Absalom later lay with his wives in retribution for what he had done (2 Sam. 16:22). From this we could infer that David lay with Bathsheba in that same place on the roof top. This is significant insofar as it shows how exactly the thought leads to the action. David's thoughts in that spot were translated into that very action, in precisely the same physical location.

2 Samuel 16:23 The counsel of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if a man inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom-

Ahithophel was perhaps indeed inspired at times to speak God's words as a prophet. But this didn't mean therefore that all he said was true. The fact Absalom will now prefer Hushai's advice over Ahithophel's shows how Absalom didn't respect God's word. He ignored the words of the man accepted as an inspired prophet, and instead followed advice which was designed to appeal to his pride.

2 Samuel Chapter 17

2 Samuel 17:1 Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, Let me now choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David tonight-

Absalom entered Jerusalem the day David fled (2 Sam. 15:37). The day David fled Jerusalem is recorded in more detail than any day in Biblical history. The tragedy of a good man having to suffer for his sins is thereby underlined to us. Ahithophel's advice to attack David immediately was undoubtedly the best advice. Even if we understand a "thousand" as a military grouping rather than a literal figure, this was a considerable number of men to have available. Truly the support for Absalom was not inconsiderable.

Psalms 3 refers to this time. "Many" in Ps. 3:1,2 is the same word used for how the people "increased" with Absalom (2 Sam. 15:12). "Rise up" in Ps. 3:1 is the word used of Ahithophel wishing to 'rise up' and pursue David (2 Sam. 17:1; 18:31). In response to the rising up of others against him, David asks God to 'rise up' (Ps. 3:7 s.w.). David's prayer in Psalm 3 was answered, and Ahithophel 'rose up' and committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23).

2 Samuel 17:2 I will come on him while he is weary and exhausted, and will make him afraid. All the people who are with him shall flee. I will strike the king only-

This was clearly designed to appeal to what Absalom wanted to hear and to happen. He wanted power over the people; he therefore wanted his father dead, believing that this would mean that his father's supporters would give up and come under his power.

2 Samuel 17:3 and I will bring back all the people to you. The man whom you seek is as if all returned; and so all the people shall be in peace-

The LXX reveals deeper the flattery used here. The idea was that the people with David of course really loved Absalom and had been with him in their hearts, but had just temporarily left him to go with David; and they would very easily return to Absalom without the need for bloodshed, if David alone were to be slain: "And I will cause all the people to return unto thee, as the bride returneth to her husband. Only one man's life dost thou seek, and unto all the people there shall be peace".

2 Samuel 17:4 The saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel-

As noted on :3, it was indeed excellently expressed advice. It appealed to Absalom's pride, and the elders would commend it as designed to avoid mass bloodshed. The same mentality is employed as in the argument to kill the Lord Jesus- it were better one man died at the hands of Rome than many, so went the argument.

2 Samuel 17:5 Then Absalom said, Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he says-

"Hear likewise" could suggest that Absalom assumed that such excellent advice would surely likewise be agreed by Hushai also.

2 Samuel 17:6 When Hushai had come to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him saying, Ahithophel has spoken like this. Shall we do what he says? If not, speak up-

The Divine author is as a cameraman zoomed in upon the scene. What might otherwise seem superfluous recording of words is done so that we can enter more fully into the scene, waiting with baited breath, as it were, to see if Ahithophel's smart advice is going to be followed. It was such good advice in the context that it would seem impossible to overturn it.

2 Samuel 17:7 Hushai said to Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time-

"At this time" could imply that the previous counsel, to sleep with David's concubines, was

"good" (2 Sam. 16:21). Hushai was willing to go along with that because he knew that this is what Nathan's prophecy had stated would happen. But there had been no Divine word about David being slain by Absalom.

2 Samuel 17:8 Hushai said moreover, You know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are bitter in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field- How to love the unlovely, to live without bitterness, to not be a psychological victim of our past experiences, is absolutely vital for the true child of God. In David and above all the Lord Jesus we see this achieved so supremely. He was at times bitter, as the imprecatory Psalms reveal, and as Hushai commented, David was a man "bitter of soul" (2 Sam. 17:8 RVmg.). But there is also every reason to think that David at this point was not in fact bitter over what he had lost. He accepts he has sinned and is being judged, and throws himself upon God's grace to restore him. But his tendencies to bitterness were well known, and so Hushai's claims about David were absolutely credible to his audience. And he advises therefore not to assume too easily that such a bitter man would give up without there being bloodshed. And avoiding bloodshed was important in order to keep Absalom's demand for loyalty credible.

Your father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people-

The idea of attacking the entire group and hoping to thereby get David... was unrealistic, Hushai argues. He likely would not lodge with the people. He would be like Jacob in his night of crisis, fleeing from Laban and meeting Esau.

2 Samuel 17:9 Behold, he is now hidden in some pit, or in some other place. It will happen, when some of them have fallen at the first, that whoever hears it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom!'-

Hushai imagines that Ahithophel leading a band of men to take David will not be a good idea. For Ahithophel was seen as a prophet, a spiritual man, an advisor- and not a military man. By contrast, David and his men were military men; and had a long track record of winning battles against superior forces. Hushai plays on the deep concerns about not causing bloodshed. The image of David hiding in a "cave" (Heb.) naturally recalls his hiding in a cave and nearly having the mastery over Saul. Hushai wishes to recall these classic images of David and warn against thinking that a quick victory over him was possible.

2 Samuel 17:10 Even he who is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, will utterly melt; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men-

The military prowess of David and his close circle was legendary. And everyone wanted to avoid bloodshed and find a way of destroying David alone. Playing on that concern, Hushai started to make huge sense to all present.

2 Samuel 17:11 But I advise that all Israel be gathered together to you, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude-

We must remember that baptism means that we are *now* the seed of Abraham, and the blessings of forgiveness, of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and God's turning us away from our sins are right now being fulfilled in us (Acts 3:27-29). Israel were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore (2 Sam. 17:11; 1 Kings 4:20), they possessed the gates of their enemies (Dt. 17:2; 18:6)- all in antitype of how Abraham's future seed would also receive the promised blessings in their mortal experience, as well as in the eternal blessedness of the future Kingdom.

And that you go to battle in your own person-

This was an appeal to Absalom's pride. he was not a military man, but being the figurehead of an inevitable victory by sheer force of numbers was going to appeal to him. And the idea was that the force of numbers would mean that only David and his immediate hard core followers would put up a fight; and it was they who needed to be eliminated and not anyone else.

2 Samuel 17:12 So shall we come on him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light on him as the dew falls on the ground; and of him and of all the men who are with him we will not leave so much as one-

This is inviting Absalom to act as Saul, using spies and intelligence to track down David to some hiding place and then suddenly come upon him. The idea was to kill not only David but his immediate band of warriors. These were the very men to whom the kingdom of Israel owed its existence. To agree to slay them all was really treason of the worst sort. But jealousy means that all true qualifications and history of the other people are ignored, in the mad obsession with their destruction. The same thing goes on in church infighting today.

2 Samuel 17:13 Moreover, if he be gone into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there isn't one small stone found there-

This alludes to the tearing down of a leprous house. There was the quasi religious claim that Absalom's putsch was in fact his devoted service of Yahweh (2 Sam. 15:8); and this is now accompanied by the suggestion that any supporting David were an unclean, leprous city which must be pulled down stone by stone.

2 Samuel 17:14 Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For Yahweh had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that Yahweh might bring evil on Absalom-

When David had prayed for Ahithophel's wisdom to be turned to foolishness (2 Sam. 15:31). In response to this, Yahweh had 'ordained' in the court of Heaven that this was to happen. And He worked upon the psychology of those men and their perceptions, so that Ahithophel's advice was defeated.

Was it really *good* counsel? Not in God's eyes. It was only 'good' for Absalom from a fleshly viewpoint. And yet the record speaks from Absalom's perspective; it speaks of something definitely evil as being "good" within the context in which it was given. Thus the record here refers to men's bad thinking as if it is correct. This explains why there are no footnotes throughout the Bible, pointing this kind of thing out; and why the wrong understandings of demons aren't specifically corrected in the New Testament.

2 Samuel 17:15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Ahithophel counselled Absalom and the elders of Israel that way; and I have counselled this way- Hushai of course was desperately playing for time. He knew that David and his group were not far away, having only left Jerusalem the same day Absalom arrived there. The small group who were loyal to David within the court of Absalom correspond with those within the court of Saul (see on :17). Like all our crises, this one was really intended to allow David to apply all he had learned over the years.

2 Samuel 17:16 Now therefore send quickly and tell David saying, 'Don't lodge this night at the fords of the wilderness, but by all means pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people who are with him'-

"The plain of the wilderness" (AV) is the plain of Jericho (Josh. 5:10; 2 Kings 25:5; 2 Sam. 2:29; 17:16). "The way of the wilderness" in 2 Sam. 15:23 was therefore the road to Jericho, used by the Lord Jesus in His parable of the man going down from Jerusalem to

Jericho being beaten [= suffering for his sins, in the parable], and being saved by grace and now law. Surely the Lord had David in mind, and is presenting the long day of his tragic exile as being the experience of everyman.

2 Samuel 17:17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz were staying by En Rogel; and a female servant used to go and tell them; and they went and told king David. For they didn't want to be seen to come into the city-

We noted on :15 the similarities with the time when a minority in the court of Saul were loyal to David. Jonathan and David could not be seen together and had to communicate very carefully; and so it was here. The female servant, the lowest of the low in society, as both a woman and a slave, was the vital and crucial link between the two young men and the faithful priests in the city. This is typical of how God works.

2 Samuel 17:18 But a boy saw them, and told Absalom. Then they both went away quickly, and came to the house of a man in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down there-

There were clearly a number of faithful supporters. The poor servant woman, the wealthy home owner in Bahurim... and yet they are presented as struggling against the "boy" who noticed and reported things, and Absalom's servants (:20). It was really a repeat of the situation with Saul and David.

2 Samuel 17:19 The woman took and spread the covering over the well's mouth, and spread out bruised grain on it; and nothing was known-

"The woman" could refer to the servant girl of :17, or it could be as GNB "The man's wife".

2 Samuel 17:20 Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house; and they said, Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan? The woman said to them, They have gone over the brook of water. When they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem-

Literally, 'they are over the water'. And they were over water, because they were hiding in a well just above the water at the bottom of it (:18). Again, as discussed on 2 Sam. 16:16, this raises the question as to whether lying is always wrong, necessarily. Rahab's lies and those of the Hebrew midwives at the exodus are rewarded as acts of faith. But this is of course a slippery slope. But such open questions are left for our reflection, underlining that spiritual life cannot be run by laws but by principles. Indeed the way the woman lies about two men of God by saying they had gone away over a river is so similar to Rahab's situation. It could be that the woman was inspired by Rahab.

2 Samuel 17:21 It happened, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David; and they said to David, Arise and pass quickly over the water; for thus has Ahithophel counselled against you-

The implication was that Absalom was so vain and unstable that he might still change his mind and follow Ahithophel's advice.

2 Samuel 17:22 Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they passed over the Jordan. By the morning light there lacked not one of them who had not gone over the Jordan-

The crossing of Jordan after the lie of a woman definitely recalls the faithfulness of Rahab in lying about another two men of God; see on :20. All the people passing over Jordan uses the very words of Josh. 3:17, as if this retreat was going to turn into a magnificent defeat through their restoration. It also recalls Jacob passing over Jordan, in the direction David was going, and then finally returning in restoration by God's grace (Gen. 32:10). All this

was intended as encouragement to the exiles in Babylon as they read these records.

2 Samuel 17:23 When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, and arose, and went home, to his city, and set his house in order, and hanged himself; and he died, and was buried in the tomb of his father-

Ahithophel's suicide was a kind of answer to David's prayer at this time in Ps. 5:10: "Hold them guilty, God. Let them fall by their own advice; thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You". Whilst his suicide was completely his decision, it was also an answer to David's prayer at this point.

As believers in the representative nature of the Lord's sacrifice, we are thereby empowered to break out of the routine of our lives. Life becomes valuable; we number our days with wisdom (Ps. 90:12). We no longer fear failure, for firstly we know there is forgiveness in Christ, and secondly, our focus is upon living the real life of ultimate discovery and adventure, able to live with the fears which this presents to us. Failure is no longer a problem to us; for the aim is ever before us. We will not be like Ahithophel, committing suicide because he ran out of political highway and lost his power to others. Our failures are nothing more than temporary setbacks, as the baby who stretches out her hands to the lamp on the ceiling and cries because she can't reach it. We take them all, even our sins, in the spirit of the cross- the supreme failure which became the supreme triumph of God and the true person.

2 Samuel 17:24 Then David came to Mahanaim. Absalom passed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him-

Mahanaim had at one time been the capital of the Israelite kingdom under Abner and Ishbosheth, during the seven years when Abner had led the opposition to David's kingdom in Judah. And now David found refuge there. He had shown much grace to the house of Saul at that time, and now, many years later, he was finding grace in the one time capital of his opposition.

2 Samuel 17:25 Absalom set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man, whose name was Ithra the Israelite, who went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother-

There is much unclarity over "the Israelite", because that seems obvious, unless the point is that he was not of Judah. The texts read "Jezreelite", and 1 Chron. 2:17 has "Jether the Ishmeelite". In this case the idea is that this man was not an Israelite, and had slept with the daughter of the serpent, Nahash. The patriotic, brave and loyal Joab was followed by someone of poorer qualification, even though his relative had slept with this man.

2 Samuel 17:26 Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead-

The description of Barzillai as a Gileadite (:27) shows that Absalom did not enjoy universal support from the rest of Israel.

2 Samuel 17:27 It happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim-

As happens in a crisis, all manner of people came out of the woodwork and showed their respects. David had been friends with Nahash but had fought against his son Hanun, Shobi's brother (2 Sam. 10:2). But a theme of this time of crisis is that Gentiles who had once been David's enemies, and whose families and relatives David had slain in war such as Ittai (see on 2 Sam. 15:19-21), now come out on David's side. They could only have done so because they had been converted to the God of Israel by David, their one time national enemy. Rogelim in Gilead likewise may well have been Gentile territory, and his descendants were

unable to prove their genealogies (Ezra 2:61-63), although they wished to serve as priests and support the restored Kingdom, just as their ancestor supported David's restoration. Machir was the man who had allowed Mephibosheth to stay with him (2 Sam. 9:4,5), and would have been deeply impressed by David's huge grace to Mephibosheth and the house of Saul. He thereby realized that David was a man of God despite out of character failings.

2 Samuel 17:28 brought beds, basins, earthen vessels, wheat, barley, meal, parched grain, beans, lentils, roasted grain-

"Beds" suggests that they stayed there for some time and were fed by their hosts. This would have been a considerable commitment. David "lay" at Mahanaim (2 Sam. 19:32), suggesting he was sick.

2 Samuel 17:29 honey, butter, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David, and for the people who were with him, to eat: for they said, The people are hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness-

Psalm 23:5 "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" refers to this time. Shimei and other "enemies" were aware of his path. The reference is to the feasts prepared for him in the desert by Ziba (2 Sam. 16:2) and Barzillai (2 Sam. 17:27-29). But the phrase "prepare a table" is that used of the preparation of the table of shewbread (Ex. 40:4), and it is used in a religious sense in Is. 65:11; Ez. 23:41. Perhaps David held some kind of religious ceremony whilst on the run, the equivalent to our breaking of bread meeting; perhaps Barzillai's feast was turned into a religious experience. And his experience of the Lord's table strengthened him with great encouragement, as we also can experience.

Psalm 42 clearly has reference to David's time at Mahanaim, which could have been months (2 Sam. 17:24; 19:32), whilst fleeing Absalom. David "lay" there for some time (2 Sam. 19:32), as if he was ill at this time. This was the original context of the Psalm, but David sitting by the waters in exile was obviously relevant to the captives sitting by the rivers of Babylon. Hence the title in the Syriac: "A Psalm which David sung when he was an exile and desired to return to Jerusalem"; the Arabic "A Psalm for the backsliding Jews". Psalm 42 is all relevant to this time in David's life:

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, God- The theme of water in this Psalm (:7 too) is appropriate to David being by the waters of the Kidron and then the Jordan as he fled from Absalom. David sitting by the waters in exile was obviously relevant to the captives sitting by the rivers of Babylon.

Psalm 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?- This reveals David's special longing for the sanctuary in Zion, where he 'appeared before God' to keep the Mosaic feasts (Ex. 23:17). But the application to the Lord Jesus is very clear- His was the ultimate, actual appearance before God in Heaven.

Psalm 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually ask me, Where is your God?- This would imply that David's enemies had access to him whilst he lay at Mahanaim in exile from Absalom; we recall how Shimei followed David on the route, cursing him as he went. Or perhaps his own supporters were saying this. The exiles were likewise mocked in Babylon; and the Lord Jesus likewise on the cross.

Psalm 42:4 These things I remember and pour out my soul within me, how I used to go with the crowd, and led them to God's house, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a holy day- This is David recalling how he used to lead the people towards the sanctuary on Zion on feast days. "God's house" however suggests the temple, and this was not built in David's time. So this may well have been added under inspiration when the Psalm was used by the sons of Korah in the Babylonian exile; see on :1.

Psalm 42:5 Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God!- This kind of self-

talk should characterize all of God's true people. For this is the very essence of spiritual mindedness. Psalm 42 has many echoes of the cross, although primarily it refers to David's longing for the tabernacle whilst exiled by Absalom. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (:5 AV) is the same in the Septuagint as Mt. 26:38 "Now is my soul troubled".

For I shall still praise Him for the saving help of His presence- Perhaps applicable to a vision of glory appearing to the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, transferring some of the glory of His countenance to Jesus as He did to Moses, so that the Lord's arresters initially fell down when they saw Him. David spoke of praising God for the health of His face; and then talks of how God is the source of the health of *his* face (Ps. 42:5,11 RV). It's as if the glory of the invisible God rubbed off upon David, as it did literally for Moses, whose faced became radiant with the glory of the Angel who spoke to him.

Psalm 42:6 Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon, from the hill Mizar- This may have been the area of Mahanaim, where it seems David remained whilst in exile from Absalom (2 Sam. 17:24). "The heights of Hermon" is literally 'the Hermons', LXX "the Hermonites", perhaps referring to the mountain range which began at Mount Hermon and continued to the Mahanaim area. "Mizar" is unknown, but could be read as "the little hill" (LXX). However, this interpretation of the geography could appear forced, especially with the reference to "cataracts" in :7. Hence Ray Stedman suggested that David was recalling "an experience that he had when he was in the northern part of Israel near Mount Hermon, at the head of the Jordan River, on a little peak of the range where Mount Hermon is located, called Mount Mizar (which, incidentally, means "little mountain"). On that occasion he could hear the waterfalls of that mountainous region, the thundering cataracts. He became aware of how they seemed to be calling to one another, "deep calling unto deep," and it reminded him that the deeps in God call out to the deeps in man".

Psalm 42:7 Deep calls to deep at the noise of Your waterfalls. All Your waves and Your billows have swept over me- Waterfalls" is better "cataracts", perhaps referring to the spot on the Jordan River where he was sitting as he composed this Psalm. See on :6. David like Jonah feels he has drowned and is in a living death.

Psalm 42:8 Yahweh will command His grace in the daytime. In the night His song shall be with me: a prayer to the God of my life- Yahweh's song connects with how the exiles also by the waters (of Babylon) were asked to sing Yahweh's song, the Psalms used in temple worship. David says that he will sing Yahweh's song, the temple liturgy, even though in exile from the temple. For he realizes that God's presence is not limited to the sanctuary. GNB may be correct in suggesting: "May the LORD show his constant love during the day, so that I may have a song at night". "The God of my life" could mean the God who alone could preserve David's life; or the God who was the focus of David's life.

Psalm 42:9 I will ask God, my rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?- The prototype of Christ feeling forsaken was in David feeling forsaken by God when he fled from Absalom (Ps. 42:9; 43:2; 88:14); but clearly he was not actually forsaken. Despite these feelings, David was spiritually mature enough to still consider God as his "rock", even though he felt God wasn't coming through for him as he expected. He expresses the same in Ps. 43:2. "Oppression" was what God's later people were to suffer at the hands of their enemies (s.w. Is. 30:20; Dt. 26:7); David's suffering was seen as that of God's later people, and so his Psalms were reused in this context.

Psalm 42:10 As with a sword in my bones, my adversaries reproach me, while they continually ask me, Where is your God?- David was sensitive to words; whilst in exile from Absalom, his enemies clearly had access to him and were communicating with him "continually". And he felt those words as swords. The sword that pierced Christ's soul on the cross was the sword of the abuse which was shouted at Him then (Ps. 42:10); and the piercing of Christ's soul, Simeon had said, was the piercing of Mary's soul too. In other words, they were both really cut, pierced, by this mocking of the virgin birth. Neither of them were hard and indifferent to it. And the fact they both stood together at the cross and faced it together must have drawn them closer, and made their parting all the harder. She alone knew

beyond doubt that God was Christ's father, even though the Lord had needed to rebuke her for being so carried away with the humdrum of life that she once referred to Joseph as His father (Lk. 2:33). For everyone else, there must always have been that tendency to doubt.

Psalm 42:11 Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him, the saving help of my countenance, and my God- "Despair" is the word used of David's feelings after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 38:6). It is the word for bowing down, for humility. But nobody likes being bowed down in humility, and David likewise wriggles against it. But we see here the kind of self-talk which is characteristic of all those who are truly spiritually minded. This 'bowing down' was to characterize the sufferings of Judah for their sins (s.w. Is. 2:11; 5:15; 26:5). David was possibly asking himself a rhetorical question- Why was he bowed down? Because God wanted to humble him so that He might restore him. But "help" is the usual word for 'salvation', and "countenance" is the usual word for 'face'. 'Save my face' would be a fair translation. And here again we encounter our concerns as to whether David's repentance was as thorough as it might have been. He did indeed confess his sin and seek forgiveness. But so much of his praying at this time is for God to save him from shame, and to judge and destroy and eternally condemn those at whose hands he was receiving judgment for his sins. And this was the problem with the exiles whom he later came to represent.

2 Samuel Chapter 18

2 Samuel 18:1 David numbered the people who were with him, and set over them captains over thousands and captains over hundreds-

This would imply David had major support. However, "thousands" and "hundreds" are often not to be read literally, but refer rather to regiments or military divisions.

2 Samuel 18:2 David sent forth the people, a third part under the hand of Joab, a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite-

We note how David had come to trust Ittai to lead his troops, having only recently doubted his loyalty (2 Sam. 15:21,22). He was persuaded of his sincerity and not disappointed. We marvel at the power of God's truth. A Philistine, from Goliath's home town, had accepted covenant relationship with Yahweh and therefore accepts His anointed king, David. Even though David had lied to the men of Gath and later slain them, and had recently disgraced himself again over Bathsheba. The power of God's truth was greater than all the inadvertent misdeeds for that truth in Yahweh's chosen representative. And this is a powerful challenge to those who turn away from God because of the bad examples of His representatives.

The king said to the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also-

The significance of this is that David is harking back to how he had not gone out to war with his armies at the time of 2 Sam. 11:1, and it had led him into the sin with Bathsheba. At every point we find him repentant and playing along with how God too was referring him back to previous points in his life. It seems that after the sin, David insisted on going out with his troops to battle even when he was too old to effectively do so (2 Sam. 21:17).

2 Samuel 18:3 But the people said, You shall not go forth; for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us-

They had been informed of the reasoning of Ahithophel and Hushai. They realized that Absalom wanted David personally dead, and they reflect their loyalty to David by reasoning as they do. Hence his forces at this time are called "the servants of David".

But you are worth ten thousand of us. Therefore now it's better that you are ready to help us from out of the city-

It had become a kind of proverb in Israel that David was worth ten thousand, after the words of the women at the time of David's victory over Goliath in his youth (1 Sam. 18:7); it was said right towards the end of his life, and contributed towards the jealousy felt toward him. People failed to perceive that the whole conflict was about the glory of God and not the human channel through which that was achieved.

2 Samuel 18:4 The king said to them, I will do what seems best to you. The king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands-

2 Samuel 18:5 The king commanded Joab, Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. All the people heard when the king commanded all the captains concerning Absalom-

These are terms of endearment. "Young man" is literally 'boy' or 'child', and "deal gently" means to be 'soft', as one would deal with a baby. David comes over as besotted and out of touch with reality to ask that this murderer be treated delicately like a baby.

2 Samuel 18:6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the forest of Ephraim-

Although Absalom was of Judah, his army is described as "Israel", as if David's men were

the true Judah. By making this assault it would see that Absalom had not taken Hushai's advice, and had rushed ahead to try and remove David as soon as possible, so as to cement his power. The tragedy for Ahithophel was that his advice was more or less followed; his suicide in protest at Hushai's being thought better was therefore premature and rooted in hurt pride.

2 Samuel 18:7 The people of Israel were struck there before the servants of David, and there was a great slaughter there that day of twenty thousand men-

"Were struck" could imply there was some Divine involvement and striking down of Absalom's forces, which David's servants followed up on. This could explain the rather strange statement that the forest ate up more of Absalom's men than David's men killed with the sword (:8).

2 Samuel 18:8 For the battle was there spread over the surface of all the country; and the forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured-

This is what David had prayed for in the Psalms; that his enemies at the time of Absalom's rebellion would be "consumed" (e.g. Ps. 71:13). David's desire was heard in that the sword and the forest devoured or consumed Absalom and his forces (2 Sam. 18:8). But when the prayer was answered, David wept bitterly for the loss of Absalom. We are thereby warned to be careful what we pray for, lest we receive it- which in some form we will. The forest would have been full of steep gorges leading down to the Jordan. But as suggested on :7, there may be reference here to some supernatural destruction of men. Or the idea may be that more perished whilst being chased in the forest, than in the actual battle.

2 Samuel 18:9 Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, so that he was taken up between the sky and earth; and the mule that was under him went on-

It is stressed that Absalom had a mule, which was also the animal used by him to escape at the time he slew Abner. It was appropriate that at his death, he was also on a mule. And even more so, because the mule was a crossbred animal, which was against the Mosaic law. All through, Absalom comes over as a man who paid no respect to God's law in matters great or apparently small.

2 Samuel 18:10 A certain man saw it and informed Joab and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak-

Contrary to pictures in children's Bibles, the idea is not that Absalom was suspended by his long hair. It seems rather that his head hit the forked boughs of the oak tree, and he was stunned and left hanging. His head and not his hair "caught hold of the oak" (:9).

2 Samuel 18:11 Joab said to the man who told him, Behold, you saw it, and why didn't you strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten pieces of silver, and a belt-
The belt may refer to a military rank; Joab says he would have promoted the man and given him money, unless the "ten pieces of silver" also refers to some kind of badge of office.

2 Samuel 18:12 The man said to Joab, Though I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I still wouldn't put forth my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai saying, 'Beware that none touch the young man Absalom'-

The incident shows the intense loyalty of this anonymous man. David had a way of inspiring such deep loyalty; and this looks ahead to how we should be inspired by the Lord Jesus,

refusing all material advantage for the sake of obedience to His word and wish, even if those wishes appear nonsensical to us.

2 Samuel 18:13 Otherwise if I had dealt falsely against his life (and there is no matter hidden from the king), then you yourself would have set yourself against me-

David's soul was broken as a result of his own mistakes and his general experience of life. David's depression resulted in him manifesting all the classic characteristics of the highly strung person. But it led him to his great sensitivity and almost telepathic ability to enter into other's problems was legendary throughout Israel, and this was one of the things which endeared him to his people (1 Sam. 22:22; 2 Sam. 14:17,20; 18:13)- and there is a powerful similarity here with our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew seems to mean that the man knew that had he killed Absalom, then Joab would have been the first in saying that he must be killed for having slain the king's son. Perhaps David had implied there would be the death penalty for doing this. And yet as with Amnon and Absalom, he refuses to carry out the death penalty against Joab for slaying Absalom. And again, this led to further problems for him in that finally Joab too would revolt against him. David didn't carry out these death penalties because he realized he must reflect the grace shown to him in not having to die for what he had done to Uriah. And yet reflecting grace is not cheap; for David, in each of these cases, it meant long term suffering. Yet we marvel at God's way; for the promise that David not die but instead would suffer huge grief in his family life was a result of his subsequently responding to the grace shown him. We see here how God's word comes true through the faithful response of His people to His grace.

2 Samuel 18:14 Then Joab said, I'm not going to wait like this with you. He took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak-

Heb. 'in the heart of the terebinth', possibly implying that this oak was associated with idolatry, and Absalom died caught up in his own idolatry, both literally and in terms of worshipping his own ego and obsession with the throne. The "darts" were likely sharpened sticks, for he grabbed whatever was at hand. "The heart" would refer to the trunk of his body, seeing Joab didn't actually succeed in killing Absalom with them (:15).

2 Samuel 18:15 Ten young men who bore Joab's armour surrounded and struck Absalom, and killed him-

The only other reference to "ten young men" is to the ten young men of David in 1 Sam. 25:5. We wonder if David had used this group of ten young men in murdering others, and now a similar group were used to slay his beloved son.

2 Samuel 18:16 Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel; for Joab held back the people-

"The people" could possibly refer to the followers of Absalom. I say this because the Proverbs are full of allusion to David's history, as David sought to ever glorify his father David and set him up as the parade example of wisdom. And Prov. 24:16 uses the same word for 'holding back' people from destruction. We get the impression that the possible translation "Joab wished to spare the people" may be valid, according to the context. Joab didn't want there to be bloodshed. It recalls the situation in 2 Sam. 2:28 where again Joab had blown a trumpet to restrain civil war. We see the mixture of spirituality and unspirituality in Joab. He genuinely wished to stop the bloodshed, and yet he slew Absalom. Again the record leaves us wondering as to his motives. He had apparently initially supported Absalom's bid for the throne; was he trying to show for all time that he didn't

support Absalom? Was he so loyal to David that he realized Absalom had to be slain, and anyway, Absalom was worthy of death for having slain Amnon? Or was he simply wanting revenge for Absalom burning down his barley field? Surely all these elements featured in his thinking. Human motivation is so complex, and therefore God alone can judge it.

2 Samuel 18:17 They took Absalom, and cast him into the great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Then all Israel fled everyone to his tent-

Josh. 7:26 describes the covering of Achan with a cairn likewise; for he too was the troubler of Israel. Again we see the mixture of thinking in the characters before us; Biblical allusion mixed with disobedience to David. Raising a heap of stones was another way of saying that the people were stoning the dead person; and stoning was the punishment for the disobedient son (Dt. 21:20,21).

2 Samuel 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself the pillar, which is in the king's vale; for he said, I have no son to keep my name in memory. He called the pillar after his own name; and it is called Absalom's monument, to this day-

Perhaps his three sons of 2 Sam. 14:27 had died in their youth or childhood. For infant mortality was high in those times. Or maybe he had fallen out with them, and they had disowned each other. "The king's vale" is that of Gen. 14:17. Having built the memorial there, Absalom had thereby again hinted at how he considered himself fit to be a king. His vanity was clearly expressed. The pillar to his own glory is contrasted with the heap of stones of :17, which was his true memorial- casting him in the inglorious role of Achan the troubler of Israel.

2 Samuel 18:19 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, Let me now run and bear the king news, how that Yahweh has avenged him of his enemies-

David had prayed that God would judge and avenge him of his enemies (Ps. 43:1 and often). But we must be careful what we pray for; because we do receive the answers. Those angry prayers of David were not mixed with grace, and so he now received their answer- when it was not what he wanted.

2 Samuel 18:20 Joab said to him, You shall not be the bearer of news this day, but you shall bear news another day. But today you shall bear no news, because the king's son is dead-

See on :21,22. There was in Hebrew an association between carrying tidings, and good news. You didn't carry tidings if there was no good news. This is the background for the Greek word *evangelion* translated 'Gospel' which means, strictly, 'good news that is being passed on'; for example, the good news of a victory was passed on by runners to the capital city. Once it had been spread around and everyone knew it, it ceased to be *evangelion*; it was no longer news that needed to be passed on. But in that time when there was a *joyful urgency* to pass it on, it was *evangelion*. Notice, heralding is not the same as lecturing. Our community for far too long equated preaching, good newsing, with lecturing. Lecturing seeks no result; whereas the herald of God has an urgency and breathlessness about his message. There must be a passion and enthusiasm in us for the message of Christ and His Kingdom. More to be feared than over emotionalism is the dry, detached utterance of facts as a droning lecture, which has neither heart nor soul in it. Man's peril, Christ's salvation... these things cannot mean so little to us that we feel no warmth or passion rise within us as we speak about them.

2 Samuel 18:21 Then Joab said to the Cushite, Go, tell the king what you have seen! The Cushite bowed himself to Joab, and ran-

Bearers of good news were often given presents (:22), and bearers of bad news could be punished. Joab wanted to save Ahimaaz from this, so again we see a level of decency in the mixed character of Joab. Messengers of low rank were often sent with bad news (:27), and so Joab sends a Cushite, an Ethiopian servant, to carry the news.

2 Samuel 18:22 Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said yet again to Joab, But come what may, please let me also run after the Cushite. Joab said, Why do you want to run, my son, since that you will have no reward for the news?-

As discussed on :21, good news was rewarded with a gift. Joab appears to want to save Ahimaaz from the shame of bringing bad news. He already realizes that the victory is going to be bad news for David.

2 Samuel 18:23 But come what may, he said, I will run. He said to him, Run! Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the Plain, and outran the Cushite-

The *kikkar*, or Jordan valley. The battle had been fought on the east of Jordan. Ahimaaz ran up the valley and then turned inland, whereas the Cushite took the more direct route through the forests, which ended up being slower.

2 Samuel 18:24 Now David was sitting between the two gates-

David was sitting in the space between the inner and outer gates. Over this was a room (:33), and the watchman was over the outer gate. It was in this kind of space that Joab had murdered Abner, and David may have been thereby prepared for news that Joab had committed yet another murder he disapproved of. We marvel at the sensitivity of the record, which can only be Divine, and is quite different to contemporary historical writings which are always grossly exaggerated and pay no attention to such details.

And the watchman went up to the roof of the gate to the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man running alone-

The word for "watchman" here is that used in Ps. 5:3, where David says he "will watch expectantly" for the answer to his prayer. We must be careful what we pray for. Because we will likely receive it in some form. If indeed the context of Ps. 5 is that of Absalom's rebellion, then we have to note that this same word for 'watching expectantly' is used repeatedly of the expectant watching for news of the battle with Absalom (2 Sam. 18:24-27); and the news was not what David wanted to hear. Absalom had been slain. But he had asked God to save him from Absalom's rebellion, and promised to "watch expectantly" for the answer.

2 Samuel 18:25 The watchman cried, and told the king. The king said, If he is alone, there is news in his mouth. He came closer and closer-

David's under his breath comments of millennia ago are recorded here, so that we might enter into the stress of the situation. Those comments are absolutely credible as what he would have muttered as the news is about to break for him. The messenger was alone, not accompanied by a host of fleeing people. Being alone might be read as good news. And David was clutching at any straw which might mean good news for him.

2 Samuel 18:26 The watchman saw another man running; and the watchman called to the porter, and said, Behold, a man running alone! The king said, He also brings news-

"To the porter" is LXX "into the gate"; he was calling to David who was sitting in between the gates. It is obvious that a messenger running was bringing news. But David's muttered comment is noted because of the scale of detail this scene is being recorded at. And such comments are absolutely typical of someone nervously awaiting highly significant news.

2 Samuel 18:27 The watchman said, I think the running of the first one is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. The king said, He is a good man, and comes with good news- This kind of throw away comment is typical of people in great anxiety. The record has every reason to be believed. These words were really said, these things truly happened. As noted on :21,22, good news was carried by men of higher standing than those who carried bad news. Therefore David's hopes were raised, thinking that this must mean there was "good news". Although he realized that "good news" to those around him might be bad news for him, i.e. the death of his son.

2 Samuel 18:28 Ahimaaz called and said to the king, All is well. He bowed himself before the king with his face to the earth and said, Blessed is Yahweh your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted up their hand against my lord the king!- Ahimaaz could not bring himself to tell David the bad news about Absalom. Surely he knew that he was dead. Like Joab, he knew David would be saddened by this, but focused upon the bigger picture- David's side had won, thanks to Yahweh's help. "Delivered up" is literally 'shut up' (s.w. Ps. 31:8), which could mean they had been conquered and taken captive. The intensity builds, as David clings to the hope that Absalom has been captured and not killed.

2 Samuel 18:29 The king said, Is it well with the young man Absalom? Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, even me your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I don't know what it was- David knew from 2 Sam. 12:10 that the sword would not depart from his house. He had seen Amnon slain, and he obviously sensed Absalom must also die. But he was quite naturally praying and hoping against hope that somehow the predicted consequences of his sin with Bathsheba might be limited. Surely he must have asked himself multiple times "Why, why ever did I do that?". The huge consequences of that brief period of sin remain as a warning to us all.

2 Samuel 18:30 The king said, Turn aside, and stand here. He turned aside, and stood still- After such a long run, it would have been hard to stand, let alone to stand still. He did so in reflection of his deep respect for David.

2 Samuel 18:31 Behold, the Cushite came. The Cushite said, News for my lord the king; for Yahweh has avenged you this day of all those who rose up against you- David in the Psalms records how he hated those who 'rose up' against him, and that includes Absalom. Saul 'rose up' against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29; 26:2), and then evil men 'rose up' against David out of his own family (2 Sam. 12:11 s.w.), especially Absalom who rose up against his father (2 Sam. 18:31,32 s.w.). But David had prayed too quickly in his Psalms against those who rose up against him; and now he will have his answer. We must be careful what we pray for, for in a sense we will receive it.

2 Samuel 18:32 The king said to the Cushite, Is it well with the young man Absalom? The Cushite answered, May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you to do you harm, be as that young man is- See on :31. "Enemies... who rise up against you" is a quotation from Dt. 28:7. This was to be the blessing for obedience to the covenant, and the curse upon those outside of the covenant. The Cushite had likely thought hard about how he was going to express the news, and he chose a Biblical quotation through which to do so- perhaps a good pattern for us in such difficult situations. And indeed he was correct; Absalom had indeed despised the covenant, and David [for all his sins] had been faithful to it. And the Cushite servant

perceived that; David's out of character failures didn't mean he had been unfaithful to the covenant. And that is how we too must consider those who fail in out of character ways.

2 Samuel 18:33 The king was much moved, and went up to the room over the gate, and wept. As he went, he said, My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! I wish I had died for you, Absalom, my son, my son!-

This situation is a repeat of when David had anxiously waited for news of the commotion caused at Absalom's party when he slew Amnon (2 Sam. 13:34). Now again he will weep bitterly for the death of a son. Situations repeat in our lives, and even if we cannot attach meaning to event at the time, we at least have the comfort that they bear the same hallmark of Divine involvement in our lives, according to some plan- even if we may not discern it.

2 Samuel Chapter 19

2 Samuel 19:1 It was told Joab, Behold, the king weeps and mourns for Absalom-
Why is this added? Joab was fully aware the king would be upset for the loss of Absalom. Perhaps it is noted here to provoke us to imagine the kinds of feelings and self talk Joab had when he was told this.

2 Samuel 19:2 The victory that day was turned into mourning to all the people; for the people heard it said that day, The king grieves for his son-
The king's grief became that of the people. They are presented as at one with him. His spirit was theirs. And this looks ahead to the relationship between the Lord Jesus and His people.

2 Samuel 19:3 The people sneaked into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle-
Truly the victory was turned into a defeat. "The city" is Mahanaim, not Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 19:4 The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, My son Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son!-
David covered his head in mourning when Absalom was dead and the rebellion was over, just as he did when Absalom came to power (2 Sam. 15:30). We get the impression that it was grief every way for David, whether Absalom lived or died. And this is indeed the take away lesson for us- that the outcome of sin is a lose lose situation.

2 Samuel 19:5 Joab came into the house to the king and said, You have shamed this day the faces of all your servants, who this day have saved your life, and the lives of your sons and of your daughters, and the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines-
This implies that David's wives and little ones all went with him in the tragic departure from Jerusalem. David's "servants" were specifically his soldiers, who are repeatedly called "David's servants".

2 Samuel 19:6 in that you love those who hate you, and hate those who love you. For you have declared this day, that princes and servants are nothing to you. For today I perceive that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it would have pleased you well-
Had Absalom won, he would have killed both David and all his inner circle. And that, Joab concludes, would have been pleasing to David.

We see the internal harmony of the record in that Joab's reaction to Abner's being sent away in peace (2 Sam. 3:24) is in spirit so similar to his frustration here with David over the death of Absalom. We note the internal consistency in the record of Joab's character; another reason to believe these records are absolutely credible and inspired by God.

The more we look for it, the more we see other examples of where material relevant to David is applied directly to all believers in the New Testament, thus setting him up as our example and realistic pattern. Joab's comment about the way David loved his enemies (2 Sam. 19:6) was thus verbatim picked up by the Lord and set up as the example for each of us. And yet David only came to be so kind and forgiving because of his experience of God's forgiveness to him over the Bathsheba incident.

2 Samuel 19:7 Now therefore arise, go out, and speak to the heart of your servants; for I swear by Yahweh, if you don't go out, not a man will stay with you this night. That would be worse for you than all the evil that has happened to you from your youth until now-
Joab speaks to David roughly, and not at all as a man should speak to his king. This was

partly his style, but it also is a tacit reflection upon David's loss of power. Joab speaks the truth when he implies that David was about to lose all power because of his attitude to Absalom's death; he no longer had a strong power base. We can better understand why Solomon in his Proverbs is always making sideways swipes at his potential competitors for the throne. He did not inherit a strong position and had to establish his hold on power.

2 Samuel 19:8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. They told all the people saying, Behold, the king is sitting in the gate. All the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled every man to his tent-

Now "the people" of David are contrasted to "Israel", implying David's supporters are the true people of God. They passed before David in some formal procession in order to receive his thanks.

2 Samuel 19:9 All the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, and he saved us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom-

The strife, or conflicting opinions / judgments (Heb.), regarded who they should respect as their king. Sadly there was no expressed opinion that they should again accept God as their king. There were clearly no other credible options as king apart from David, and the people always remembered that David had fulfilled the Divine potential for the king of Israel- that he would save them from their enemies. Absalom and nobody else had done this.

2 Samuel 19:10 Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why don't you speak a word of bringing the king back?-

Their anointing of Absalom was effectively a disannulling of David's Divine anointing as their king. They therefore felt leaderless unless there was some formal ceremony whereby David was restored as king. LXX adds "And the word of all Israel came to the king". Typically the word of the ruler went out to all Israel, but this is stated the other way around, hinting at David's weakness. The initiative for David's restoration came from the ten tribes, and was only later accepted by Judah (:11). All Israel were to be united by their common acceptance of having betrayed their intended king, and by the experience of his grace. See on :16.

2 Samuel 19:11 King David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests saying, Speak to the elders of Judah saying, 'Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house? Since the speech of all Israel has come to the king, to return him to his house-

See on :10. Judah had been the strongest supporters of Absalom, for he had been declared king in Hebron, the historical capital of Judah (2 Sam. 15:10). Yet it was the ten tribes who proposed the restoration of David as king. Clearly those closest to David [the tribe of Judah and the people of Jerusalem] were the most disgusted and disillusioned by his behaviour with Bathsheba and Uriah.

2 Samuel 19:12 You are my brothers, you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?'

This could be read more as an assurance of forgiveness than a rebuke. The suggestion was that they did want the restoration of David as king, but they should be more vocal about it; and the message thereby assured them that David was not looking to take any vengeance for their betrayal. See on :13.

2 Samuel 19:13 Say to Amasa, 'Aren't you my bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you aren't captain of the army before me continually in place of Joab'-

Eph. 5:30 makes the amazing statement that even now, "We are of members of His body,

of His flesh, and of His bones". In a very detailed study of this language, Henricus Renckens concluded: "In Israel, in order to say that someone was a blood relation, one said: "He is my flesh and my bones" (Gen. 29:14; Jud. 9:2; cp. Gen. 37:27; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13 ff.; Is. 58:7)". This is how close we are to the Lord Jesus- blood relatives. This language could in no way be justified if Jesus were God Himself in person.

David is repeating the lessons he learned after the death of Saul, where he showed huge grace to his enemies- and it worked. Even though it ran against the grain of all secular sense and wisdom. And so now he does the same, in offering the post of commander-in-chief to the general of the rebel army.

2 Samuel 19:14 He bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as one man; so that they sent to the king, saying, Return, you and all your servants-

We see the fickle nature of human hearts. They had been won by David from Saul, then Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Judah, and now David bows those hearts back to him, in a very short space of time; and then those hearts are won by Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:2. We think of how the people who once cried "Hosanna" were soon shouting "crucify Him!", and soon after that were so supportive of the apostles preaching Jesus as Christ that the authorities were scared to touch them.

2 Samuel 19:15 So the king returned, and came to the Jordan. Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to bring the king over the Jordan-

Judah accepted the implicit assurance of :11 that David was not going to be seeking vengeance for their betrayal of him.

2 Samuel 19:16 Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite, who was of Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David-

The common experience of David's grace bound together the house of Saul the Benjamite who had persecuted him, along with those of David's betrayers within Judah. Grace is the basis for true unity amongst God's people, rather than any set of agreed theologies. The message for the exiles was that the restoration of the Davidic king was to unite them, along with the ten tribes, as explained on :10.

2 Samuel 19:17 There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went through the Jordan in the presence of the king-

"Went through" implies they charged into the river, to demonstrate their zeal to bring the king back- when in fact both Shimei and Ziba had been really on Absalom's side, and had entertained the hope of using the situation to forge a coalition between Absalom and the remnants of the pro-Saul party of Benjamin. "A thousand" may not be a literal number, but can refer to a family or regiment.

2 Samuel 19:18 A ferry boat went to bring over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, when he had come over the Jordan-

Grammatically, the "he" seems to refer to Shimei. He went over the Jordan and met David on the eastern bank, before David himself had passed over as recorded in :39.

2 Samuel 19:19 He said to the king, Don't let my lord impute iniquity to me, nor remember that which your servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart-

In the same way as God did not impute iniquity to David (Ps. 32:2), so David did not

'impute iniquity' to Shimei for cursing him, and did not carry out a rightful death sentence against that man (2 Sam. 19:19,21). Note how Shimei uses the very same wording which David used in *his* repentance: "I have sinned" (2 Sam. 19:20).

2 Samuel 19:20 For your servant knows that I have sinned. Therefore behold, I have come this day the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king-
See on :19. Shimei's claim to sincere repentance is rather mitigated by this exaggerated claim, that he was the "first" representative of Ephraim, an idea which covered all of the ten tribes, to welcome the restored David. But David is full of grace at this time and forgives him, without pointing out the fact he was still telling untruths.

God told Shimei to curse David (2 Sam. 16:10). Afterwards, Shimei repents and acknowledges that by doing so he sinned (2 Sam. 19:20). And although David recognized that God had told Shimei to curse him (2 Sam. 16:10), David tells Solomon not to hold Shimei "guiltless" for how he had cursed him (1 Kings 2:9). As with the evil spirit from Yahweh working upon Saul, a man is encouraged by God to do the sinful act in which he has set his heart.

2 Samuel 19:21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered, Shall Shimei not be put to death for this, because he cursed Yahweh's anointed?-

To curse God's representative was seen as cursing God (1 Kings 21:10; Ex. 22:28). And so to curse "Yahweh's anointed" was seen as cursing Yahweh (2 Sam. 19:21) and worthy of death. "Yahweh's anointed" was a title for the High Priest (Ex. 22:28), and confirms that David was seen as both King and High Priest. David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam. 6:13-20), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not.

2 Samuel 19:22 David said, What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be adversaries to me?- The Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament uses the Greek word *diabolos* to translate the Hebrew 'Satan'. Hence Devil and Satan are effectively parallel in meaning. Thus we read in the Septuagint of David being an adversary [Heb. *Satan*, Gk. *diabolos*] in 1 Sam. 29:4 ["turns against us"]; the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sam. 19:22), Hadad, Rezon and other opponents to Solomon (1 Kings 5:4; 11:14,23,25). We face a simple choice- if we believe that every reference to 'Satan' or 'Devil' refers to an evil cosmic being, then we have to assume that these people weren't people at all, and that even good men like David were evil. The far more natural reading of these passages is surely that 'Satan' is simply a word meaning 'adversary', and can be applied to people [good and bad], and even God Himself- it carries no pejorative, sinister meaning as a word.

When reviewing the references to *ha-Satan* ("the adversary") in the Old Testament, it's significant that a number of them occur in the context of the life of David. There was an incident where David behaved deceitfully with the Philistines with whom he once lived, and he is described as being "a Satan" to them (1 Sam. 29:4). That's another example of where the word 'Satan' doesn't necessarily have an evil connotation- a good man can be an adversary, just as Peter was (Mt. 16:21-23) and God Himself can be (2 Sam. 22:4). But we find that David and his dynasty were afflicted with Satans, adversaries, from then on. The word is used about human beings who were adversarial to them in 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kings

5:4,18; 11:14-22,25; Ps. 109:6,20 (Heb. "They say, "Appoint a wicked man against him, let an accuser [*Satan*] stand on his right hand"". David's enemies are described by a word related to 'satan' in Ps. 38:20; 71:13; 109:4. Note that it is stated that *God* stirred up men to be 'Satan' to David and Solomon- whatever view we take of 'Satan', clearly it or he is under the direct control of God and not in free opposition to Him.

Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For don't I know that I am this day king over Israel?-

David is here learning from the spirit of his enemy Saul (1 Sam. 11:13). This shows David's generous spirit, in learning from the good attitudes of a man who in other parts of his life was wrong and abusive to him, and rejected by God.

2 Samuel 19:23 The king said to Shimei, You shall not die. The king swore to him-

David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: he later asked Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident (1 Kings 2:8,9). And one wonders whether it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote: "Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man...as he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so may it be far from him. He clothed himself also with cursing as with a garment..." (Ps. 109:16-18).

2 Samuel 19:24 Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king; and he had neither groomed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace-

See on 2 Sam. 1:23. Mephibosheth is called Saul's son (2 Sam. 9:7,10; 19:24), although he was actually Jonathan's son. This suggests that the son was brought up in Saul's house. This certainly does not give the impression that Jonathan separated himself from his father's house, even though he strongly disagreed with Saul. There was no fear of guilt by association with Bible characters, but rather a standing up for Godly principle in whatever situation they were in.

Mephibosheth's lack of care for himself was part of his sorrow at what had befallen David, and it was proof enough that Ziba had misrepresented him to David as planning to become king. For in that case he would have shaved and made himself as attractive a candidate as possible. Having not pared his nails or beard was evident proof that he had been in mourning for some time, since David had fled Jerusalem. See on :25.

2 Samuel 19:25 It happened, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, Why didn't you go with me, Mephibosheth?-

But David has still not even crossed the Jordan (:39). This is out of chronological sequence, and refers to a future meeting between the two in Jerusalem (:30, in David's own house). It continues the theme of Ziba in :17. Mephibosheth's "coming down" in :24 would therefore mean 'came down from his house in the highlands of Benjamin near Gibeah to Jerusalem,' not 'came down from Jerusalem to the Jordan'.

2 Samuel 19:26 He answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said, I will saddle me a donkey that I may ride thereon, and go with the king; because your servant is lame-

Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem near David's palace, for he ate at his table every day with him. He had wished to leave Jerusalem along with David's sad group who fled from Absalom, but perhaps he only heard of the crisis too late and anyway Ziba had deceived him so that it was too late to leave. Clearly Ziba intended to manipulate things so that he would forge a coalition between the Saul supporters and Absalom, using Mephibosheth as a pawn

in his game. He as the kingmaker would have had the real power in the coalition. This manipulation of others and revelling in being the kingmaker was exactly Joab's weakness, and we see how Abner had failed in this way with Ishbosheth. The repetition of the themes shows how human nature articulates itself in the same way despite the differing situations. And this is the whole purpose of these narratives.

2 Samuel 19:27 He has slandered your servant to my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God. Do therefore what is good in your eyes-

Mephibosheth's absolute joy at David's restoration means that he is happy to be slandered, misunderstood by David and even lose all his property (:30)- for joy at the restoration. This was a powerful challenge to the exiles in Babylon, many of whom weighed up what the restoration might cost them, and sided with remaining in exile rather than entering into the abandon and joy of the restoration. And the message of the Gospel is for us too a message of the Davidic kingdom being restored. Whether we are slandered or misunderstood should be made irrelevant by the wonder of that reality.

2 Samuel 19:28 For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king-

This could refer to how David had not slain the house of Saul, and also possibly to the events of 2 Sam. 21:6-9, which may not be placed in chronological sequence and may have already happened at this time.

Yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right therefore have I yet that I should cry any more to the king?-

The wonderful honour of sitting at the Lord's table should likewise mean for us that all anger at slander or being disbelieved (:27), or loss of personal wealth (:30), is thereby eclipsed.

2 Samuel 19:29 The king said to him, Why do you speak any more of your matters? I say, you and Ziba divide the land-

As discussed on :27,28, all argument between brethren and all concern about material things should be made irrelevant by the wonder of the restored Kingdom and our experience of the grace which allows us to be there. David had earlier responded to Ziba's slander that Mephibosheth had betrayed David by giving Ziba all Mephibosheth's land, in faith that he would one day be restored as king. But now he appears to tell the two men to just divide the land. Or he could be saying that they should return to the original 'division' of the land, whereby the land was Mephibosheth's but Ziba farmed it.

2 Samuel 19:30 Mephibosheth said to the king, Yes, let him take all, because my lord the king has come in peace to his own house-

As discussed above, Mephibosheth was so thrilled with the restoration of the Kingdom that all issues of material things were now seen as irrelevant by him. If he was to continue to sit at David's table (cp. our participation at the memorial feast), then such matters were irrelevant. This is a powerful challenge to us, the weak and lame who sit by grace at the table of the Son of David.

2 Samuel 19:31 Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim; and he went over the Jordan with the king, to conduct him over the Jordan-

Rogelim in Gilead may well have been Gentile territory, and his descendants were unable to prove their genealogies (Ezra 2:61-63), although they wished to serve as priests and support the restored Kingdom, just as their ancestor supported David's restoration. As noted on 2 Sam. 17:27, some of David's most loyal friends at this time of crisis were Gentiles.

2 Samuel 19:32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even eighty years old: and he had provided the king with sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man- This would imply that David was there for some while at the time of 2 Sam. 17:29 (see note there), and "while he lay..." sounds as if he was ill at that time.

2 Samuel 19:33 The king said to Barzillai, Come over with me, and I will sustain you with me in Jerusalem-

As Barzillai had sustained David with a feast in the wilderness, David wanted to have Barzillai at his table in Jerusalem, and to be "sustain" him for the rest of his life. As with Mephibosheth, to eat at David's table was the sign of ultimate acceptance. And this is the wonderful significance of our sitting at His table at His invitation today. We are never to deny others a place at that table.

2 Samuel 19:34 Barzillai said to the king, How many are the days of the years of my life, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem?-

In essence he has the same attitude as Mephibosheth. He is so thrilled at the good news of the restored kingdom of David that he despises all material advantage to himself. And this is our pattern, if we really grasp the good news of the restored Kingdom (Acts 1:6).

2 Samuel 19:35 I am this day eighty years old. Can I discern between good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be yet a burden to my lord the king?-

Solomon's whole description of old age in Ecc. 12 is based on his father's experience with Barzillai here. Even in the cynicism of Ecclesiastes, written in Solomon's later life, he still uses words and phrases which have their root in his father David- e.g. his description of women as snares in Ecc. 7:26 goes back to how his father dealt with women who were a snare (1 Sam. 18:21). Solomon was living out his father, using the same phrases his father had used, and yet he clearly had no real personal commitment to Yahweh as he turned away to idols in his old age. The lack of true zeal within our community, after several generations 'in the Truth', may be related to all this too. We each need to seriously examine ourselves in this connection, and know the meaning of personal conversion.

2 Samuel 19:36 Your servant would but just go over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king repay me with such a reward?-

Again we are awed by this man's selfless response to the restoration of the Davidic kingdom, which good news we receive in the good news of the Kingdom of God. He wasn't interested in personal reward, his focus was upon the glory of God and His appointed "son" David. And we too will not see things so much in terms of our personal "reward" in God's Kingdom when it is finally restored, but will instead be consumed with the joy of the fact that God's Kingdom has been restored.

2 Samuel 19:37 Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, by the grave of my father and my mother. But behold, your servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good to you-

We could infer from the reference to "the habitation of Chimham which is by Bethlehem" (Jer. 41:17) that Chimham was given a piece of land from David's personal inheritance at Bethlehem. This was the depth to which David appreciated loyalty to him at a time when he seemed a hopeless cause. And the same will be seen true in the rewards given by the Lord Jesus to those who have followed Him now, when true Christianity seems a hopeless cause.

2 Samuel 19:38 The king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good to you. Whatever you require of me, that I will do for you- Perhaps the grant of land in David's patrimony in Bethlehem (see on :37) was what Barzillai asked for Chimham. He was happy himself to be buried in the inheritance of his parents, but wished something more for Chimham.

2 Samuel 19:39 All the people went over the Jordan, and the king went over. Then the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned to his own place- We note the order. The people went over first, followed by the king. He was no longer their charismatic leader, but they were his advance guard. We are left with a lovely impression of Barzillai, but his name means 'hard / iron hearted', and we marvel at how the hard hearted were so transformed by David's grace and the joy of the prospect of the restored Davidic kingdom- a pattern for us all.

2 Samuel 19:40 So the king went over to Gilgal, and Chimham went over with him. All the people of Judah brought the king over, and also half the people of Israel- It was the ten tribes who had first proposed the restoration (:9,10). But it seems due to wanting to steal the show for themselves and other tribal jealousy issues, the elders of Judah hadn't invited them to the celebration at Gilgal. Therefore only some of them were present. But during the celebration at Gilgal, which would have lasted some days, the rest of the ten tribes representatives arrived; "all the men of Israel" (:41).

2 Samuel 19:41 Behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king and his household, over the Jordan, and all David's men with him?- See on :40. They were seeking for David to rebuke Judah, especially as it appears that David's men were apparently open to this special treatment by the men of Judah. There is no recorded response of David; for the men of Judah butted in with their response first, and this is adequately answered by the men of Israel in :43. Perhaps this reflects David's passivity at the time. Or maybe it is one of those open ended points in the narrative, intentionally left hanging so that we imagine what his gracious response would have been. For at this time he was the master of all grace and unity to all.

2 Samuel 19:42 All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is a close relative to us. Why then are you angry about this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's cost? Or has he given us any gift?-

Their idea was that they were totally genuine in their desire to see David restored, and it was not because they hoped for any personal benefit from him. Saul had practiced nepotism, aiming to enrich his own tribe of Benjamin (1 Sam. 22:7), but David had not done so to Judah. Again the theme taught by the reactions of Mephibosheth and Barzillai is continued- we should rejoice in the prospect of the restored kingdom of David not because we look for any personal benefit, but because of the wider glory of God.

2 Samuel 19:43 The men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more claim to David than you. Why then did you despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? The words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel-

See on :40. Their argument reflects how David had always actively stood for the unity of all Israel, and the ten tribes could therefore argue that he was as it were ten parts theirs. LXX adds: "And I am the firstborn rather than thou". The right of firstborn had been removed

from Reuben and transferred to Joseph, who had a double portion (Dt. 21:17) and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, "the house of Joseph" (2 Sam. 19:20), therefore could rightly claim to be the most significant part of all Israel. Their logic was indeed stronger, but the matter was allowed to pass. The joy of the prospect of the Kingdom should lead us also to pass over all these kinds of slights and weaknesses of our brethren.

2 Samuel Chapter 20

2 Samuel 20:1 There happened to be there-

That wonderful scene of grace and unity at David's restoration in 2 Sam. 19 was attended by some who were unmoved by it; and sought for their own faction to have power.

A base fellow, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew the trumpet and said, We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, Israel!-

True as the Proverbs are which condemn "a worthless / wicked person" (Prov. 6:12; 16:27; 19:28), again we have a subtext of Solomon seeking to justify himself and his father David, and to criticize the various competitors to Solomon's throne. "A worthless person" is the term used for Nabal (1 Sam. 25:17), those in David's camp who were not fully supportive of David (1 Sam. 30:22), Sheba who plotted to overthrow the Davidic line as king (2 Sam. 20:1), and particularly of those who wanted to overthrow Solomon as king (2 Chron. 13:7).

2 Samuel 20:2 So all the men of Israel changed from following David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah joined with their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem-

We see the fickle nature of human hearts. They had been won by David from Saul, then Absalom had stolen the hearts of the men of Judah, and in 2 Sam. 19:14 David bows those hearts back to him, in a very short space of time; and then those hearts are won by Sheba in 2 Sam. 20:2. We think of how the people who once cried "Hosanna" were soon shouting "crucify Him!", and soon after that were so supportive of the apostles preaching Jesus as Christ that the authorities were scared to touch them.

2 Samuel 20:3 David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in custody, and provided them with sustenance, but didn't go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood-

These were presumably the concubines with whom Absalom had slept. The implication could be that this was when he first returned from exile in Mahanaim. Which would mean that the revolt of Sheba was almost immediately after he had crossed the Jordan, making a mockery of the 'unity meeting' held at Gilgal in 2 Sam. 19 to officially restore David as king.

2 Samuel 20:4 Then the king said to Amasa, Call me the men of Judah together within three days, and be here present-

David had replaced Joab as head of the army with Amasa (2 Sam. 19:13). David was repeating the lessons he learned after the death of Saul, where he showed huge grace to his enemies- and it worked. Even though it ran against the grain of all secular sense and wisdom. And so now he does the same, in offering the post of commander-in chief to the general of the rebel army. Joab was obviously deeply resentful of this and totally didn't understand grace.

2 Samuel 20:5 So Amasa went to call the men of Judah together; but he stayed longer than the set time which he had appointed him-

As Samuel tarried longer than the set time Saul expected (1 Sam. 13:8), so Amasa "tarried longer than the set time which [David] had appointed him" (2 Sam. 20:5). Circumstances repeat within our lives and between our lives and those of others in Biblical history; that we might learn the lessons and take comfort from the scriptures, that man is not alone. Amasa's delay and failure to immediately chase after Sheba was interpreted as meaning that he was again being disloyal to David as he had been during Absalom's rebellion. But we do not know why he delayed, although the note on :13 suggests there were genuine

reasons and Amasa was loyal to David still. What we do know is that Joab will now deceive him and kill him, clearly motivated by jealousy over the fact he had been replaced by Amasa as the leader of the army. Although he would have justified it by claiming as he did when he murdered Abner, that Amasa was a threat to David. Again we see how Joab's self interest and pride precluded him from understanding grace.

2 Samuel 20:6 David said to Abishai-

Amasa had been appointed general, but he was absent. Instead of treating Joab as the second in command, David addressed Joab's brother Abishai as the de facto army general. All this provoked huge resentment in Joab. It seems David had a personality clash with Joab, frustrated at his refusal to understand grace and complaining that Joab was "too hard" for him.

Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your lord's servants, and pursue after him, otherwise he will get himself fortified cities, and escape out of our sight-

David is far more proactive and not as mournfully passive as he was during Absalom's rebellion. This reflects how he realized that Absalom's putsch was the fulfilment of Nathan's words to him about the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba. But he clearly didn't see Sheba's power grab in the same light.

2 Samuel 20:7 There went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, the Pelethites and all the mighty men; and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri-

The abiding loyalty of these men to David (2 Sam. 8:18; 15:18) is incredible. Joab's sad end at Solomon's hands in 1 Kings 2:28 is the more tragic.

2 Samuel 20:8 When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them-

Amasa had presumably been raising an army in Benjamin.

Joab was clothed in his battledress that he had put on, and on it was a sash with a sword fastened on his waist in its sheath-

The only person in David's life whose belt is noted is Joab (2 Sam. 20:8; 1 Kings 2:5). But Ps. 109:8,19 wish curses upon the man who was well known for his belt. See notes there for the extent of David's anger with Joab and his desire for the man's condemnation because of it- even though David was not himself perfect.

And as he went forth it fell out-

It seemed that the sword at Joab's side accidentally fell out of its scabbard as he went toward Amasa to greet him (2 Sam. 20:8) – but it was on purpose, of course. The Bible sometimes describes things as they appear, even if that appearance is incorrect. This explains why the wrong understandings of demons aren't specifically corrected in the New Testament.

2 Samuel 20:9 Joab said to Amasa, Is it well with you, my brother? Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him-

Amasa was surely aware of how Joab had slain Abner, but as will be discussed on :10, on another level, he took no cognizance of this. "Well with you" is the word *shalom*, and is referred to in Solomon's comment that Joab shed the blood of war in peace, perhaps meaning 'in the name of peace' (1 Kings 2:5).

2 Samuel 20:10 But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand. So he struck

him with it in the body, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and didn't strike him again; and he died. Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri- Joab had murdered in the same way in 2 Sam. 3:27. We note the internal consistency in the record of Joab's character; another reason to believe these records are absolutely credible and inspired by God. See on 2 Sam. 19:6. The blood of Amasa went all over Joab, even into his sandals (1 Kings 2:5).

We wonder why Amasa "took no heed to the sword...". Drivers can see an accident coming, but not swerve; there is a lack of cognition somewhere in the human psyche. Pilots take off at times knowing that their wings are frozen, and crash. Amasa saw the sword and must have seen the possibility of death, but didn't take cognizance of it. Samson must have known, on one level, what Delilah would do. The human Lord Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, and yet acted on another level as if He didn't. It should have been obvious to the British and French that Germany would start a war in 1938. But mankind is in amnesia, somewhere, somehow, we fail to recognize the obvious. Likewise with the nearness of the Lord's return, with the urgency of our task in witness, with the evident need to follow God's word- this lack of cognizance so often comes into play. We really ought to pray, earnestly, for open hearts and eyes and obedient lives before our daily reading.

It is part of human nature not to perceive the obvious when we have a subconscious reason not to, or a distraction. Maybe Amasa was more concerned about fighting Sheba, and considered that Joab would of course not touch him because they were soldiers fighting on the same side. Or we can know something on one level, but not on another. It helps explain why the Lord Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him (Jn. 6:64), and yet how He could really trust in Judas as his own familiar friend, confide in him (Ps. 41:9), tell him that he would sit with the other eleven on thrones in the Kingdom (Mt. 19:28). This was ever a serious contradiction for me, until considering the Samson : Delilah relationship in depth. A man can know something about someone on one level, but act and feel towards them in a quite different way than this knowledge requires. In the same way, it was in one sense true that the Jews "knew not whence I come" (Jn. 8:24,14 RV) and yet in another sense they knew perfectly well the Divine origin of Jesus (Jn. 7:28). David likewise must have known Absalom's deceit; but he chose not to see it, for love's sake. "They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things [just as Absalom did in the gate]... but I, as a deaf man, heard not" (Ps. 38:12,13). One also gets the sense that the Gibeonites' deception was somehow guessed by the elders of Israel, but against their better judgment they disregarded the telltale signs (Josh. 9:7). Amasa, taking no heed to the sword in Joab's hand... against his better judgment, surely, is another example.

2 Samuel 20:11 There stood by him one of Joab's young men and said, He who favours Joab, and he who is for David, let him follow Joab!-

We see here the beginnings of Joab's move towards trying to himself seize power at the time of Adonijah's rebellion. He places his name before David's, and asks men to follow him rather than David. We learn how evil actions begin with baby steps towards them.

2 Samuel 20:12 Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the midst of the highway. When the man saw that all the people stood still, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a garment over him, when he saw that everybody who came by him stood still- It was a particularly bloody murder (1 Kings 2:5). "The men" were the troops Amasa had raised to be loyal to David; see on :13.

2 Samuel 20:13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri-

"All the people" refers to the troops Amasa had raised to fight on David's side against Sheba; they followed Joab, which would indicate that Amasa's delay in coming was not due to any disloyalty to David; see on :5. So this delay was used as an excuse by Joab to doubt Amasa's loyalty, and use that as a cover for slaying him- when his motive was really personal jealousy. This covering of the motive of personal jealousy goes on all the time in life.

2 Samuel 20:14 He went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, and to Beth Maacah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him-

The location of any place called Berim is unknown, so we may go with LXX "and all the chosen men were gathered together".

2 Samuel 20:15 They came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maacah, and they cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart; and all the people who were with Joab battered at the wall, in order to throw it down-

"Battered" translates a word meaning 'to undermine' or to dig pits. By all means they were seeking to tear down the wall, yet we will see on :18 that Joab had disobeyed the command of Dt. 20:10 to firstly dialogue before besieging a city.

2 Samuel 20:16 Then a wise woman cried out of the city-
LXX "from the wall".

Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, 'Come near here, that I may speak with you'-

This coming near to a city wall recalls the murder of Uriah, again under Joab's command and with Joab's full complicity. Joab would immediately have thought 'I must be careful not to be killed as Uriah was'. All these rebellions were related to David's sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, and there are many conscious and unconscious allusions back to it.

2 Samuel 20:17 He came near to her; and the woman said, Are you Joab? He answered, I am. Then she said to him, Hear the words of your handmaid. He answered, I do hear-
Abigail's plea "Hear the words of your handmaid" (1 Sam. 15:24) was repeated by the woman of 2 Sam. 20:17. But Abigail herself had modelled her behaviour on women like Rebekah (1 Sam. 25:23 = Gen. 24:18,46). This is how functional fellowship occurs between God's people, both over time and in contemporary relationships. We copy that which is Godly and good which we observe in other believers, both those we know and those we meet in the Bible.

2 Samuel 20:18 Then she spoke saying, They used to say in old times, 'They shall surely ask counsel at Abel'; and so they resolved things-

The text is difficult. The idea may be that as in AVmg. "They plainly spake in the beginning, saying, Surely they will ask of Abel, and so make an end", meaning that Joab ought to have done as in Dt. 20:10 and summoned the city to surrender before besieging it. Joab comes over as over hasty and with no interest in following the Biblical rules of engagement. Hence LXX also hints at this: "It was asked in Abel and in Dan whether the customs have failed which the faithful of Israel ordained".

2 Samuel 20:19 I am among those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why will you swallow up the inheritance of Yahweh?-
Joab was looking to destroy the city for the sake of his mission against Sheba. The woman's argument is that which should be used against all such campaigns which are based around guilt by association. The grammar suggests she speaks of herself as a personification of the city: "I am peaceable faithful ones of Israel". Cities are often called mothers (as 2 Sam.

8:1), and their surrounding villages are called their daughters.

2 Samuel 20:20 Joab answered, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy-

Joab may mean 'I am personally not doing this to you, I have a Divine mandate to destroy a false leader called Sheba'. But that doesn't actually answer the woman's wisdom of :19. Joab ought to have asked for the head of Sheba at the start, but he doesn't apologize for his actions and his refusal to seek dialogue first; see on :18.

2 Samuel 20:21 The matter is not so. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand against the king, even against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. The woman said to Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall-

The Philistines in 1 Sam. 29:4 recalled how David had carried the head of Goliath to Saul (1 Sam. 17:57). To carry the heads of a king's enemies was a way to get the king's favour, as in Jud. 7:25; 2 Sam. 4:8; 16:9; 20:21; 2 Kings 10:6-8. Again we see the inspired, historical record has consistency. It would have required a clever editor to insert this theme of beheading to curry a leader's favour throughout the entire Biblical record. But the histories were clearly written at different times; a later hand would not have thought of all these realistic touches to sprinkle so consistently throughout it. The internal harmony of the Bible is to me the greatest indication that it is what it claims to be, the Divinely inspired word of God, evidencing His editing throughout.

2 Samuel 20:22 Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. They cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. He blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each man to his tent. Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king- Joab has before blown a trumpet to end a civil war and further bloodshed. Although he was a renowned and unjustified murderer, he seems also to have had a genuine concern to limit bloodshed within Israel. This is the kind of contradiction within human characters which is brought out continually in the record; we see it especially in David's character. We reflect upon it, and realize these were not just isolated individuals, but are typical of us all. Solomon later alludes to the wisdom of this woman in this situation (Ecc. 9:13-16), again with the unspoken implication that Joab was a fool. Solomon's writings are true enough but constantly contain attacks upon those with whom he or his father had had conflicts; and Solomon slew Joab as a contender against his power base.

2 Samuel 20:23 Now Joab was over all the army of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites-

That is, Joab was restored to be over the army, as David had given that job to Amasa as a sign of grace to his betrayers.

2 Samuel 20:24 and Adoram was over the men subject to forced labour; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder-

This is a similar list to that in 2 Sam. 8:6-8, but with the addition of the office of Adoram "over the men subject to forced labour". This was exactly what Samuel had predicted Israel's king would do. And it seems David fell into this too, and Solomon took that un wisdom far further, to the point that people complained he was beating and whipping them with his demands.

2 Samuel 20:25 and Sheva was scribe; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests-

We note how those faithful to David in his wilderness years were in office for 40 years (2

Sam. 8:6-8). This is highly unusual in political circles. The impressive long term continuity in David's inner circle reflects a unity which was achieved by genuine respect and loyalty towards David and his specific Divine anointing as king. Likewise only a truly Christ-centered approach brings true unity amongst God's people and servants.

2 Samuel 20:26 and also Ira the Jairite was chief minister to David-

The similarity with the list of 2 Sam. 8:6-8 but this office replaces the comment that "David's sons were chief rulers". They had either been killed or were deemed by David unsuitable. We notice that Solomon, the son with whom David came to be besotted after the loss of Absalom, doesn't figure in any of this, perhaps because of his youth.

2 Samuel Chapter 21

2 Samuel 21:1 There was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David sought the face of Yahweh. Yahweh said, There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put to death the Gibeonites-

The record in 2 Samuel is not necessarily chronological but follows themes. This material may be inserted here to follow on from the mention of Gibeon in 2 Sam. 20:8, where Joab had killed Amasa. The seven victims were all young and unmarried, which would suggest a date earlier in the reign of David. And it would be more appropriate that judgment for Saul's misbehaviour came early on in David's reign, rather than as it were being remembered much later.

2 Samuel 21:2 The king called the Gibeonites and said to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn to them: and Saul sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah)-

Joshua 9 records how the Gibeonites had been promised security by Joshua, although they were Hivites who were to have been destroyed (Josh. 9:7; Dt. 7:2). Saul's apparent zeal to obey part of God's word whilst ignoring the covenant made by Joshua recalls how he murdered or expelled all witches (1 Sam. 28:9), in almost fanatic obedience to Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6. Saul's zeal to punish the apostate was really a classic case of psychological transference. He knew, subconsciously, that he was a sinner and deserved punishment for his sins. So he transferred those sins on to others, and punished them, revelling in it. But he was picking up verses from the Bible out of context, and with the witches, he himself used one. It was this attitude which was deeply displeasing to God. And the fact all Israel had known of this and done nothing to honour the covenant made in their name with the Gibeonites... meant that all Israel had to suffer the results of the famine.

2 Samuel 21:3 and David said to the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of Yahweh?-

"Atonement" is not used here in a religious sense but simply meaning a covering, which the Gibeonites understand as hinting at a financial payment (:4). For David personally had not sinned against them, and atonement in the religious sense was only appropriate towards God. But the Gibeonites like to use it in a religious sense, playing God by demanding that without the shedding of blood there could be no reconciliation with them.

2 Samuel 21:4 The Gibeonites said to him, It is no matter of silver or gold between us and Saul, or his house; neither is it for us to put any man to death in Israel-

The law of Moses forbade the payment of money as compensation for murder (Num. 35:31). That David had apparently hinted at this possibility in :3 would therefore suggest that he was willing to break the letter of the law of Moses, a feature of David's which was largely an outcome of his understanding so well the spirit of the law. And yet it was to lead him into the sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. And yet it has to be said that this was a difficult legal situation. God had shown that the sin of Saul needed some atonement, but Saul was dead. The Gibeonites were asking for blood as atonement, although they accept it is not within their power to execute this.

He said, Whatever you say, that will I do for you-

This was unwise, because David was to be asked to break the law. But he perhaps lacks the humility to pull out of this blanket promise he has now made.

2 Samuel 21:5 They said to the king, The man who consumed us, and who devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the borders of Israel-

This implies Saul's campaign against them had been widespread and systematic. See on :2.

2 Samuel 21:6 let seven men of his sons be delivered to us, and we will hang them up to Yahweh in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of Yahweh. The king said, I will give them-
Their allusion is to Num. 25:4, where the bodies of the leaders in the worship of Baal were hung up to turn away Yahweh's anger (cp. :1). But the seven sons of Saul were not personally responsible for the sin. And David had solemnly vowed before Yahweh to Saul and Jonathan on at least two occasions that he would not destroy their seed. David's acquiescence therefore was wrong, and like Herod and other kings trapped by their own pride to fulfil their promises, so David agrees to the death of Saul's sons. He ought to have said something like "I have vowed a vow not to do this, I believe in grace, and will not allow this to happen. I will throw myself down before Yahweh and beg for this situation to be resolved another way". But pride stops him. Yet David generally was humble in this kind of thing. So as with the sin with Bathsheba, I take this to be an out of character failing of David.

2 Samuel 21:7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of Yahweh's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul-

As noted on :6, David had made a similar oath before Yahweh to Saul (1 Sam. 24:21,22). But he seems to justify breaking that by arguing that he was honouring a similar oath he had made to Jonathan. I suggested on :6 what his response ought to have been.

2 Samuel 21:8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite-

David comes over as wrong all around in this matter. Michal was his former wife. He had broken up Michal's marriage with Paltiel even though Paltiel wept over it. And now he slays Michal's five sons. If this is the same Barzillai who was later so kind to David at the time of Absalom's rebellion, then we see that man's grace, forgiving David for slaying his five grandchildren. And it contrasts with David's low estimate of the value of human life which we again see.

God sees to the end of a man's history, to the end of human history, He weighs men, and weighs them up in grace. Further, we all likely struggle with the unspirituality of others against us. We ponder how brother X or sister Y can really be a Christian, can have any real relationship with God, because of how we see them act. This struggle over these kinds of issues is, in my experience, the number one reason why people leave Christian communities. The raw anger, hatred and viciousness they see in others disillusion them, and they walk. The pull of materialism, of false doctrine etc., are actually not significant reasons in the majority of cases I know of where a believer has quit the community of believers. It's nearly always personal disillusion with the evil side of their brethren. All I can say is, Consider David's poorer side. Think of men like Adriel and Phaltiel, women like Rizpah, the mothers of Moab and Edom, who all likely considered David a sadistic maniac-given their experience of him. And, of course, Uriah, who surely knew all along what was going on. They saw the weaker side of David. Thanks to the extent of Biblical revelation about David, we see a wider picture. And even if that wider picture remains invisible to us concerning brother A and sister B, try to imagine that they have a prayer life, read Scripture, are loved by God, and probably in some ways and to some extent do respond to that love... and leave the final analysis of human character to the God who judges, weighs and knows far deeper, more graciously, more hopefully, than we ever can in this life.

David had loved Jonathan's sister Michal, and she loved him; only for her to come to despise David's spirituality, and to be unfaithful to him (2 Sam. 21:8 implies she had even

more relationships than just with Paltiel). But then David killed her five sons. She was part of the ineffable sadness of David's personal life.

2 Samuel 21:9 He delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before Yahweh, and all seven of them fell together. They were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, at the beginning of barley harvest-

That is, at Passover (Dt. 16:9). At the time when David ought to have been celebrating God's deliverance from death by grace, he was putting to death innocent young people, who may have been no more than children.

2 Samuel 21:10 Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her on the rock-

To form a tent for her to live in whilst she protected the bodies day and night from wild animals.

From the beginning of harvest until water was poured on them from the sky-

The heavy rains usually came about six months after the beginning of harvest.

She allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day, nor the animals of the field by night-

The idea of blood sacrifice being required to bring rain suggests that the Gibeonites believed in a rain god. Yet when David is asked to give seven men of the family of Saul as a blood sacrifice to appease the rain god who was not sending rain, David agrees. He doesn't make the Biblical argument that rain being withheld indicates the need for repentance before Yahweh, and that sacrificing humans is wrong and won't change anything in this context. He gives in to the false understanding of the Gibeonites, breaking his undertakings to Saul and Jonathan by doing so, and selects seven men to be slain and hung up. We read of the mother of two of them, Rizpah, lovingly watching over the bodies of her sons day and night, with all the distraction of true love (2 Sam. 21:10). David didn't have to do this. But he did. We get the impression this was another example of his wrong attitude to the shedding of blood (1 Chron. 22:8). He doesn't seem to have cared for the mother's feelings, nor for the lives of her sons. And note that David makes up the total of seven men by having the five foster sons of his own estranged wife Michal slain. Was this not David somehow hitting back at Michal, who had mocked him for his style of worship in 2 Sam. 6? And how did Adriel, the father of those five sons, feel? He wasn't of the house of Saul, but because of David's desire to placate someone else, he lost all his sons, just because his wife had died and Saul's daughter had raised them. And yet this same David is recorded as saying soon afterwards: "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his ordinances were before me; And as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also perfect toward him; And I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in his eyesight" (2 Sam. 22:22-25).

2 Samuel 21:11 It was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done-

It seems it took David the six months alluded to in :10 to respond. He gathers up the bones of the men or boys, along with those of Saul and Jonathan, and gives them a decent burial.

2 Samuel 21:12 David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh Gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth Shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, in the day that the Philistines killed Saul in Gilboa-
The last mention of the David : Jonathan relationship is in 2 Sam. 21:12-14, where we read that David personally ("he" cp. they") took and carried the bones of Saul and Jonathan to

their final resting place. The love of David for Jonathan is apparent. We are invited to imagine David carrying the bones of his best friend, perhaps just the ashes of them (1 Sam. 31:12,13), cradling them (or the container) in his arms, weeping as he walked. How about this for pathos. The words of David's lament in 2 Sam. 1 would have surely come to his mind. It is almost certain that David memorized them, seeing it was taught as a song of remembrance (2 Sam. 1:18). There would have been the restimulation of so much. So that is how the Spirit concludes the story, David walking off into the sunset with the bones of Jonathan. It should be remembered that this occurred after David's disgrace with Bathsheba. The thought must surely have gone through his mind: It's a good thing dear Jonathan isn't here to see it. The very name of the prophet Nathan, the expositor of David's sin, would have restimulated David. For 'Jonathan' means 'Yahweh-Nathan'. It is quite likely that in practice David would not have pronounced the 'Yah' prefix; he would have called Jonathan 'Nathan' (how many 'Jonathan's do you know whose name isn't abbreviated by their friends?). The reason why there is so much pathos in the story, so powerfully expressed, is to set us a standard of love and feeling towards Christ; for Jonathan represents us, and the love of David for him really is a reflection of the love of Christ for us. Truly do we sing that "Thou art far above / dearest of human love".

2 Samuel 21:13 and he brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son: and they gathered the bones of those who were hanged-
The extreme grief of Rizpah is intentionally contrasted with this symbolic gesture from David in at least giving the sons an honourable burial, although it took David six months to do so. He is presented as callous in the face of very genuine grief caused by his pride and refusal to honour his covenant before Yahweh that he had made with Saul.

2 Samuel 21:14 They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. After that God responded to the prayer for the land-
David was wrong in killing those seven men or boys. God is not appeased by blood sacrifice in that sense. After the horror of what he had done was brought to his attention, David buried the bones of Saul as if he felt he should have been more respectful to the house of Saul (2 Sam. 21:12) and only then God responded to the prayer for the famine to be lifted (:14)- as if He sought respect for the house of Saul and not the disrespect of killing seven random relatives of Saul's on the say-so of mere men. If indeed God wanted the sacrifice of those men, we would surely read that immediately after their murder He lifted the famine; but He did so only after David had subsequently shown respect to the house of Saul as a token of regret and repentance for what he had authorized.

2 Samuel 21:15 The Philistines had war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines. David grew faint-
The material in 2 Samuel isn't chronological. The material we have now at the end of the book appears to be various cameos of the life of David which are for some reason not incorporated into the book as a whole. Perhaps the common theme in them all is that they mention David's weaknesses in various ways. We now read of how David was "faint", physically weak during a battle. It is one of a number of hints that he did not enjoy good health. We think of him laying sick at Mahanaim during Absalom's rebellion, and the copious evidence in the Psalms that he had a breakdown of his health soon after the sin with Bathsheba. These events are located in 1 Chron. 20:4-8 immediately after the capture of Rabbah, which was again not David at his spiritually strongest.

2 Samuel 21:16 and Ishbibenob, who was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being armed with a new sword, was about to have slain David

We wonder therefore whether David's faith failed him at this point, or whether he did not have the level of faith he showed when he triumphed over Goliath. David had mocked armour as a source of strength, and yet this suggests David almost perished because of the weaponry of this Philistine. I suggested on :15 that the cameos from the life of David which conclude 2 Samuel all have the common theme of David's weakness.

2 Samuel 21:17 But Abishai the son of Zeruah helped him, and struck the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him saying, You shall go no more out with us to battle, that you don't quench the lamp of Israel-

The significance of this is that David is harking back to how he had not gone out to war with his armies at the time of 2 Sam. 11:1, and it had led him into the sin with Bathsheba. At every point we find him repentant and playing along with how God too was referring him back to previous points in his life. It seems that after the sin, David insisted on going out with his troops to battle even when he was too old to effectively do so (2 Sam. 18:2).

2 Samuel 21:18 It came to pass after this, that there was again war with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was of the sons of the giant-

We note that the *Rephaim* had children like other human beings (2 Sam. 21:16,18; Dt. 3:11), inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8). The "giants" of Gen. 6:2-4 were therefore humans and not celestial beings. "Gob" is LXX Gath; see on :20 for the significance.

2 Samuel 21:19 There was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite's brother, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam-

Elhanan was from the small village of Bethlehem, and therefore was likely a childhood friend of David's. He like us with the Lord Jesus was inspired by David's victory over Goliath. He saw what was potentially possible for man in faith, just as we are shown through the Lord's victory on the cross what is possible for men apparently saddled with human nature.

2 Samuel 21:20 There was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, twenty four in number; and he also was born to the giant-

David fought the Philistines at Gath (see on :18), and yet we note that he lived with Achish at Gath for over a year, and some of his most loyal followers were Philistines from Gath like Ittai. His victories over them therefore elicited humility and faith from some of the Philistines there. They realized that David and his men won their victories not in their own strength, but because of Yahweh. And they humbly came into covenant relationship with the God of their enemies, and fellowship with their one time enemies and murderers of their friends and families. It is humility which is the critical requirement in coming to the true God, and no amount of apparently high powered intellectual argument and slick presentation can replace that.

2 Samuel 21:21 When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimej, David's brother, killed him-

Goliath's defiance of Israel is a major theme (1 Sam. 17:10,25,26,36,45). Later Philistine defiance is described with the same word (2 Sam. 21:21; 23:9). David's victory over Goliath was inspirational to other Israelites, just as the Lord's triumph on the cross should be to us. Jonathan was brother to the crafty Jonadab, who led Absalom into major sin by his subliminal suggestions. We see how faith and unbelief can exist within the same family.

2 Samuel 21:22 These four were born to the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of

David, and by the hand of his servants-

David took five stones to kill Goliath but used only one. Was he faithless and doubting that the first one would hit home? Or did he aim to use the other four on Goliath's four giant sons (2 Sam. 21:16-22)? Do those five stones represent the five books of Moses which Ps. 119 tells us was Christ's study all the day, it being through the word that Jesus overcame the mind of sin? If he did aim to use the other four on Goliath's four giant sons, that shows supreme spiritual ambition. In reality those four were killed later by David's closest followers- and they must have their counterparts amongst us.

2 Samuel Chapter 22

2 Samuel 22:1 David spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul-

This is largely the material found in Ps. 18. The Psalm concludes with a reference to David as the anointed, so this could be a Psalm composed when Saul was slain and David was finally declared king, and his anointing came to fulfillment. It is a "song" but it has no strophes (unlike most of the Psalms), perhaps because it was intended for use at a procession.

Ps. 18:1 adds "I love You, Yahweh, my strength". This bald statement "I love You" is intentionally startling, and is the only place where we read this; usually we read the word of God's love to man. Here, David simply tells God "I love You"

2 Samuel 22:2 and he said, Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, even mine-
This is the language of rocky terrain, the type where Saul chased David and God saved him multiple times.

David's description of how the cherubim acted in his life in 2 Sam. 22 is full of Angelic language:

v. 2 "My rock"- an Angel (Gen. 49:24)

v. 3 "My shield"- the Angel who made the promises to Abraham (Gen. 15:1)

v. 3 "My saviour"- as the Holy Spirit Angel was to Israel (Is. 63:8-10)

v. 7 "He did hear my voice out of His temple, and my cry did enter into His ears"- the language of Angelic limitation regarding the Angel who dwelt in the temple.

v. 9 "fire"- God makes His Angels a flame of fire (Ps. 104:3,4).

v. 10 "came down " - God manifest in the Angels, as at Sodom and Babel.

v. 11 "a cherub. . did fly. . wings of wind". Gabriel could "fly swiftly"; the Angels are made "spirits"- winds.

v. 12 "darkness. . thick clouds"- the Angel dwelt over the darkness of the Most Holy and in the pillar of cloud; cp. the scene during the Angelic manifestation at Sinai.

v. 15 "arrows. . lightning"- Angel cherubim language

v. 16 "the blast of the breath (spirit) of His nostrils". God's spirit is manifested through Angels.

v. 17 "He sent from above, He took me"- the physical movement of the Angels from Heaven to earth to obey God's word

v. 25 "Before His eyes"- Angels

v. 37 "Thou hast enlarged my steps. . so that my feet did not slip"- the Angel keeping David from sinning?

23:1 "God of Jacob"- an Angel

23:3 "the rock of Israel" (an Angel) inspired David- which is the work of Angels.

2 Samuel 22:3 God, my rock, in Him I will take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge. My saviour, You save me from violence-

David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

Truly David is our example. David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. "The God of my rock is *my* shield... he is a shield to *all* them that trust in him" (2 Sam. 22:3,31). "*I* am in a great strait; let *us* fall now into the hand of the Lord" (2 Sam. 24:14) reflects this. When he sung Psalms, he invited them to come and

sing along with him (Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). And many of these Psalms of praise seem to have their origin in his experience of forgiveness regarding Bathsheba.

2 Samuel 22:4 I will call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies-

David's focus of all his praises upon Yahweh was what he wanted his people to follow (Ps. 22:3). The implication of "worthy" could imply a contrast with other gods, as in Ps. 96:4 "He is to be feared / praised above all gods". This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on Ps. 18:31; Ps. 12:8; 16:4), and that idolatry was prevalent in Israel at the time.

2 Samuel 22:5 For the waves of death surrounded me. The floods of ungodliness made me afraid-

Ps. 18:4 "the cords of death". David felt as if he had been a sacrifice bound to an altar, as man drowning in water, and therefore about to be pulled into the grave (Ps. 18:5). The allusion is to Isaac and his miraculous deliverance from such cords, thanks to the ram in the thicket whom David is later to understand as representative of the future Messianic saviour; for the Lord quotes David's "My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1) as the Aramaic *sabachthani*, "entangled", the word used of the ram entangled in the thicket.

2 Samuel 22:6 The cords of Sheol were around me, the snares of death caught me-

See on :5. David felt he had come face to face with death, to the point that his salvation was effectively a resurrection. The response to this near death situation is described here, but it is hard to locate such an incident in the historical records. Perhaps there was a particular salvation from death at Saul's hands which isn't recorded, but David alludes to it here.

"Caught me" is Ps. 18:5 "Came on me", or literally 'went before me'. The same word is used in Ps. 59:10: "My God will go before me with His grace". David was inside his house surrounded by his enemies (Ps. 59:1), and escaped through a window. As he planned the escape, he believed that God's grace would go before him. At the end of his life he appears to reflect upon this incident, glorying that although he was "compassed about" with the threat of death, seeing the house was surrounded by Saul's men intending to kill him; yet God's grace had somehow gone before David and prepared a way of escape (Ps. 18:5,18 s.w.).

The Ras Shamra texts speak of the insatiable appetite of Mot for dead people- he eats them ceaselessly with both hands. There are frequent parallels drawn between Mot / Mawet, and the grave: 2 Sam. 22:5,6; Is. 28:18; Hos. 13:14; Job 28:22; 30:23; Ps. 6:5; 18:5; 89:48; 116:3; Prov. 2:18; 5:5; 7:27. The point is that Mot / Mawet doesn't exist, it is simply to be understood as the grave. For very often, language used about Mot in the pagan literature is applied to God in order to show Mot's effective non-existence. The significance of this point is that at times, the Bible refers to pagan ideas about 'Satan' like figures in order to deconstruct them, and show their effective non-existence in the light of the supremacy of the one true God.

2 Samuel 22:7 In my distress I called on Yahweh. Yes, I called to my God. He heard my voice out of His temple. My cry came into His ears-

David imagines his prayers as coming into the heavenly throne room, and eliciting a response. His later obsession with building a physical temple for God was a departure from how he had earlier perceived God's temple- as being in Heaven, and accessible by faithful prayer.

2 Samuel 22:8 Then the earth shook and trembled. The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, because He was angry-

It is hard to locate such an incident in the historical records. Perhaps there was a particular salvation from death at Saul's hands which isn't recorded, but David alludes to it here. Or perhaps the language here is that of theophany and God manifestation; it may not literally describe things which happened, but the hand of God in saving David was no less than as if He had appeared as He did at Sinai. For the language of earth shaking and quaking is that of the Sinai theophany and the deliverance from Egypt.

1 Sam. 2:8; 2 Sam. 22:8 speak as if Heaven / the sky rests on the mountains, from where earth seems to touch the heavens (Is. 13:5), with the stars stretched out in the north (Job 26:7). This reflected the geo-centric view held by people at the time. The point surely was that *however* people understood creation to have happened, God had done it, and in wisdom.

2 Samuel 22:9 Smoke went up out of His nostrils. Fire out of His mouth devoured. Coals were kindled by it-

This sounds like the symbolic language of theophany and God manifestation, rather than describing actually observed events in literal terms. The allusion is clearly to what happened at the exodus and Sinai, which David felt had been repeated for him in essence; as it is for all in covenant relationship with the God who saves.

2 Samuel 22:10 He bowed the heavens also-

The same phrase used of Moses stretching out his hands toward the heavens, and God responding by delivering His people (Ex. 9:22,23; 10:21).

And came down. Thick darkness was under His feet-

As Yahweh came down at Sinai (Ex. 19:11 s.w.). The idea is that as God had miraculously intervened for the salvation of His people in history, so David felt He had in his life; although there is no historical record of such dramatic scenes as on Sinai and at the Red Sea. We likewise experience His interventions; they aren't as dramatic as in history, but none less dramatic in ultimate reality. This coming down in a saving theophany was what David had in fact prayed for in Ps. 144:5. He asked for a theophany to save him, no less than what happened at Sinai (s.w. Ex. 19:18-20), when again God had as it were made the mountains smoke by His touch. We marvel at David's spiritual ambition, unafraid to ask for a similar theophany to save him. And here he reflects at the end of his life that this prayer was in fact answered. The relevance to the exiles is that Yahweh was prepared to "bow" (s.w. "stretch out") the heavens and "come down" to restore the exiles; but they chose not to make use of that huge potential (s.w. Is. 40:22; 42:5; 64:1).

God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so- but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time (1 Pet. 3:18-21).

2 Samuel 22:11 He rode on a cherub, and flew. Yes, He was seen on the wings of the wind-

"Wind" and "spirit" are the same words in Hebrew. The cherubim chariot are presented as God's vehicle of manifestation, and this was language the exiles would've been familiar with through the visions of Ezekiel. Yet this is not to say that David also had such a vision. Rather did he perceive God's huge cherubic activity through the various experiences of

salvation and grace he had in his life. And this is the same for us.

2 Samuel 22:12 He made darkness pavilions around Himself: gathering of waters, and thick clouds of the skies-

All the scene at God's manifestation on Sinai. The Old Testament describes Yahweh, the one true God, as riding through the heavens on chariots to the help of His people Israel (Dt. 33:26; 2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3; Is. 19:1; Hab. 3:8). But Baal was known as the *rkb 'rpt*, the one who rides upon the clouds; and he is here being deconstructed.

2 Samuel 22:13 At the brightness before Him, coals of fire were kindled-

The "coals of fire" speak of Divine judgment (Ps. 140:10), and were part of the cherubim vision (Ez. 1:13; 10:2). Hail and thick clouds were the judgment threatened upon the Assyrians in Hezekiah's time (Is. 28:2; 30:30). David's experience becomes developed as relevant to the manifestation of God in salvation in other contexts.

2 Samuel 22:14 Yahweh thundered from heaven, the Most High uttered His voice-

Ps. 18:13 adds "hailstones and coals of fire", alluding to the destruction of Sodom. And yet there is no recorded incident of God consuming David's enemies like this. But he felt that God had indeed come through for Him in no less powerful a way. And we can feel and experience the same.

2 Samuel 22:15 He sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and confused them-

This continues the thanksgiving that his prayer of Ps. 144:6 had been answered. He had asked for a saving theophany of the magnitude of what was seen at Sinai. Now at the end of his life, David was thankful that this prayer had in fact been answered. David rejoices that Divine "arrows" were sent to destroy his enemies (Ps. 7:13; 18:14; 45:5; 64:7; 144:6), in fulfilment of God's promise to do so to the sinful within Israel (Dt. 32:23,42). But David had realized that those same arrows had been fired by God into him in judgment for his sin (Ps. 38:2). This realization was perhaps to help David understand that his rejoicing in Divine arrows of judgment being fired at his enemies had not been mature; for he himself had to realize that he was worthy of the same.

2 Samuel 22:16 Then the channels of the sea were exposed, the foundations of the world were laid bare by the rebuke of Yahweh, by the blast of the breath of His nostrils-

The opening word "then" is significant. As the channels of water were laid bare at the exodus, so God had acted for David. As discussed above, this section sounds like the symbolic language of theophany and God manifestation, rather than describing actually observed events in literal terms. The allusion is clearly to what happened at the exodus and Sinai; the essence of what God did then was experienced by David, just as it can be by us in our crises.

2 Samuel 22:17 He sent from on high and He took me, He drew me out of many waters-

"Waters" are usually symbolic of armies or nations. David felt he had been surrounded and faced with certain death, but had been as it were airlifted to safety by God. The language here says that God has done this, but it is parallel with David's prayer for this to happen in Ps. 144:7. This triumphant song is therefore praise for the prayer of Ps. 144 being answered. We cannot locate any particular historical incident of fulfilment; perhaps it was too personal and wonderful to be recorded. Just as a Christian man or woman might feel it inappropriate to record God's most dramatic salvation of them when they write their autobiography.

2 Samuel 22:18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for

they were too mighty for me-

That thanksgiving was because he had prayed for salvation from "those who hate me" in Ps. 9:13 (s.w.). We have here a direct example of gratitude for answered prayer. It seems Saul and his supporters were the initial reference of the "strong enemy" (see on :1). These words are an allusion to his prayer of Ps. 69:14. Now at the end of his life David reflects that he has been delivered from those who hated him (s.w.). At the time, he wept bitterly for Absalom's death; but now in maturity he realized that this was in fact an answer to his prayers.

2 Samuel 22:19 They came on me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support-
The phrase "day of calamity" is consistently used of a day of Divine condemnation, especially of Judah at the hand of the Babylonians (Dt. 32:35; Job 21:30; Jer. 18:17; 46:21). Perhaps the Psalm was reworked as comfort for the exiles, that they could be saved even out of the day of their condemnation. And maybe David has the idea that he had been worthy of Divine condemnation, and the judgment was being articulated at the hands of his enemies- but by grace alone, God saved him from it.

2 Samuel 22:20 He also brought me out into a large place. He delivered me, because He delighted in me-

"Delighted" is the same word as in Ps. 51:6 "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts". This is the word here used by David at the end of his life of how God desired or delighted in him. Perhaps this desire or delight was because of the "truth" in David's heart in recognizing his sins and accepting God's grace. He had left God to decide whether He delighted in him when he fled Absalom (2 Sam. 15:26), and now he triumphs that God had done so, by grace (2 Sam. 15:25).

When the Lord's mockers jeered "If he desireth him" (RV), they were alluding to the LXX of Ps. 18:19 and 91:11. God cannot be tempted, otherwise He would have responded. 'If God *likes* Him', is what they were really implying.

2 Samuel 22:21 Yahweh rewarded me according to my righteousness. He rewarded me according to the cleanness of my hands-

David was yet to learn that he himself was a sinner and no man apart from the Lord has clean hands or total personal righteousness. Yet David twice repeats this self righteousness. If this were written at the end of his life, then he appears to have lost the intensity of contrition for sin he had at the time of his repentance about Bathsheba. We too can allow the passage of time to blunt our sense of wonder at God's grace to us, and even reinterpret our sins as nothing major.

2 Samuel 22:22 For I have kept the ways of Yahweh, and have not wickedly departed from my God-

If David at the end of his life could say that he was upright and had kept himself from his iniquity (2 Sam. 22:21-24). He could only say this by a clear understanding of the concept of imputed righteousness. Paul's claim to have always lived in a pure conscience must be seen in the same way.

"Wickedly departed" is the word usually translated "condemn" (e.g. Ps. 37:33). Those who depart from God condemn themselves. This is a major Biblical theme; that the condemned are more self-condemned rather than condemned by God. "We make the answer now". But later David was to realize that he too had wickedly departed from God, and confession of that was vital for salvation (s.w. Ps. 106:6).

David felt preserved by God from Saul and his other enemies (1 Sam. 30:23; 2 Sam.

22:44), because he had preserved or obeyed [s.w.] God's ways (2 Sam. 22:22,24; Ps. 18:21,23); whereas Saul didn't obey / preserve them and was destroyed (1 Sam. 13:13,14; 1 Chron. 10:13). Hence Ps. 145:20: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy".

2 Samuel 22:23 For all His ordinances were before me. As for His statutes, I did not depart from them-

Depart or "Put away" (Ps. 18:22) is the word used for how God departed from Saul because he didn't keep God's statutes (1 Sam. 16:14; 18:12; 28:15). David is therefore comparing himself favourably with Saul; for this is his triumph song after Saul has been slain (see on :1).

2 Samuel 22:24 I was also perfect towards Him-

A true seed of Abraham, who were to walk with or before Yahweh blameless (s.w. Gen. 17:1).

I kept myself from my iniquity-

This sounds like a boast in his iron willed self-control. He would never be able to boast like this after the sin with Bathsheba. It is God by His grace who keeps men from sinning (Gen. 20:6), and not the rigid self-discipline of the deeply religious.

2 Samuel 22:25 Therefore Yahweh has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in His eyesight-

David was yet to learn that he himself was a sinner and no man apart from the Lord has clean hands or total personal righteousness. Yet David twice repeats this self righteousness. In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Ps. 18:23-26 has David describing his own uprightness before God, and how God only shows His grace to the pure and upright. How little did he understand grace! Worse still, he several times bids God judge men according to their sins (Ps. 5:10). It is against this background that we must understand the significance of David's statements that after Bathsheba, after how God did *not* deal with him according to his sin, there were no rebukes of others now in his mouth. Realizing the extent of his personal sin and the depth of God's grace led David to not only be less reproachful of others; but also to be less hurt by their unkindness to him. And in these things we surely have a great lesson to ourselves.

2 Samuel 22:26 With the merciful You will show Yourself to have bowed the neck; with the perfect man You will show Yourself perfect-

We have here the mixture of spirituality and yet arrogance which we can often detect in ourselves. David recognizes his salvation has been through God's mercy; but he sees himself as having earned this mercy by being "perfect". The same word is used of Job, but he had to be taught that that status was a case of having righteousness imputed to him by grace; and because David was unwilling to really learn this, he had to be taught it through the righteousness imputed to him after his sin with Bathsheba.

David especially recognized the humility of God. In 2 Sam. 22:26 he uses an unusual word to describe how God is "merciful" to His faithful people. The word only occurs elsewhere in Prov. 25:10 concerning 'bowing the neck' in shame or reverence. And this is what the Hebrew means: to bow the neck. This, David recognized in his time of spiritual maturity, was what God does in response to those who shew a truly spiritual attitude to their brethren.

2 Samuel 22:27 With the purified You will show Yourself pure, with the crooked You will show Yourself tortuous-

David sees himself as the pure, and Saul as the crooked. Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "contemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshiped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

2 Samuel 22:28 You will save the afflicted people, but Your eyes are on the proud, that You may bring them down-

Again David perceives Saul as proud, and Saul's initial apparent humility must therefore be considered in this context. Perhaps he became proud, or maybe he had always been that way, and only appeared humble. But the word "people" may have been added when the Psalm was used by the exiles, for salvation for "the afflicted people" was the prophetic message to them (s.w. Is. 49:19).

2 Samuel 22:29 For You are my lamp, Yahweh. Yahweh will light up my darkness-

The phrase is only used of the lighting of the lamps in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:37; Num. 8:2). I noted on Ps. 17:8 that David sees himself as located on the mercy seat, in the Most Holy place.

2 Samuel 22:30 For by You, I run against a troop. By my God, I leap over a wall-

Such victories were given to David against the Philistines; the idea is as in GNB "You give me strength to attack my enemies and power to overcome their defenses". "Troop" is the word used of the Amalekites whom David overcame (1 Sam. 30:8,15). The leaping over a wall may refer to the way that Zion was captured (2 Sam. 5:6-8).

2 Samuel 22:31 As for God, His way is perfect. The word of Yahweh is tested. He is a shield to all those who take refuge in Him-

The word" specifically in view may be the prophetic word that David would be king and thereby overcome all of Saul's machinations (see on Ps. 119:1).

2 Samuel 22:32 For who is God, besides Yahweh? Who is a rock, besides our God?-

David in his Psalms repeatedly alludes to the song of his ancestor Hannah. He effectively quotes 1 Sam. 2:2 here; although I argue throughout 1 Sam. 2 that Hannah's was apparently lifted up with pride and the vengeance of the underling who has overcome the oppressor. And there is reason to think that David had elements of this weakness too.

David perceives his victory over Saul as the vindication of Yahweh above other gods. This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on Ps. 12:8; 16:4).

2 Samuel 22:33 God is my strong fortress. He makes my way perfect-

A reference to his victory over Goliath without human armour, trusting completely in God (see on :34,35).

2 Samuel 22:34 He makes His feet like hinds' feet, and sets me on my high places-

As in :35, this may be a reference to his victory over Goliath, which he saw as the epitome of all his victories. For he ran swiftly towards Goliath before releasing the stone which slew him.

2 Samuel 22:35 He teaches my hands to war, so that my arms bend a bow of brass-

Perhaps alluding to how it was David's dexterity of hand as a slinger which gave the victory over Goliath. But he recognizes that this was all of God. He is careful not to exalt as if his strength was his own.

This is another allusion to the song of Hannah (see on :32). Here, it is to "The bows of the mighty men are broken". Seeing children are as arrows (Ps. 127:4,5), the bow may refer to the womb, in Hannah's mind. And she is now wishing her barrenness upon her enemies who had once mocked her. This is hardly the right attitude, and yet David applies it to himself. And there is reason to think that David had elements of this weakness too. He thought it was acceptable to be like this because Hannah had been. And that is the problem with setting bad examples.

2 Samuel 22:36 You have also given me the shield of your salvation. Your gentleness has made me great-

God's gentleness, His humility / bowing down (Heb.) has made us great, lifted us up (Ps. 18:35). And we respond to it by humbling *ourselves*. Paul's take on "the shield of your salvation" is that it means "the shield of faith" (Eph. 6:16). If we enquire 'Faith in exactly what?', the answer is 'faith in salvation at the end of the day, that God will finally save me'.

2 Samuel 22:37 You have enlarged my steps under me. My feet have not slipped-

David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

2 Samuel 22:38 I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them. I didn't turn again until they were consumed-

This is written *after* God had subdued Saul and David's other enemies (:1). He is taking this as a portent of future victory against all other enemies. But I will explain on :40-43 that David did not use all the potential authority and power of judgment which he was given.

2 Samuel 22:39 I have consumed them, and struck them through, so that they can't arise. Yes, they have fallen under my feet-

Ps. 18:38 changes the tenses: "I will strike them through, so that they will not be able to rise. They shall fall under my feet". See on :38. This refers to the potential power of

judgment David felt he had been given, but this is not to say he would use it.

2 Samuel 22:40 For You have armed me with strength for the battle. You have subdued under me those who rose up against me-

David reflects how his victory in battle by God's strength meant that all was subdued under him (s.w. Ps. 8:6), a Psalm about the victory over Goliath). The victory in battle which he had in view was supremely that over Goliath, his most major and applauded victory. To a far greater extent, the victory of the Lord Jesus meant not simply the subjugation of Israel beneath Him, but of all creation, including the natural creation.

2 Samuel 22:41 You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, so that I might cut off those who hate me-

Those who hated David surely refer to the house of Saul (:1). But David did not cut them off- even though he was given the opportunity of doing so.

2 Samuel 22:42 They looked, but there was none to save; even to Yahweh, but He didn't answer them-

A reference to God refusing to answer Saul just before he died (1 Sam. 28:6). The Lord Jesus was well aware of the connection between God's refusal to answer prayer and His recognition of sin in the person praying (2 Sam. 22:42 = Ps. 2:2-5). It is emphasized time and again that God will not forsake those who love Him (e.g. Dt. 4:31; 31:6; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kings 6:13; Ps. 94:14; Is. 41:17; 42:16). Every one of these passages must have been well known to our Lord, the word made flesh. He knew that God forsaking Israel was a punishment for their sin (Jud. 6:13; 2 Kings 21:14; Is. 2:6; Jer. 23:33). God would forsake Israel only if they forsook Him (Dt. 31:16,17; 2 Chron. 15:2). We can therefore conclude that His desperate "Why have You forsaken me?" was because He was so intensely identified with our sins that in the crisis of the cross, He indeed felt forsaken because of sin. He did not sin, but felt like a sinner; He thereby knows how sinners feel.

2 Samuel 22:43 Then I beat them as small as the dust of the earth. I crushed them as the mire of the streets, and spread them abroad-

I noted on :41 that David didn't execute the judgments against the house of Saul which he could have done. The language of being "crushed" or "cast out" and being driven by the wind is that of Divine judgment. It could be that David intends us to understand that although he was given the opportunity of judging them ["that I might cut off...", :41], he didn't- he left it to God's judgment.

2 Samuel 22:44 You also have delivered me from the strivings of my people. You have preserved me to be the head of the nations. A people whom I have not known will serve me- David expected in faith that now he was solidly established as Israel's king, the surrounding Gentiles would come to serve him and his God (see on :50).

"Let people serve you" was the blessing promised to Jacob in his moment of weakness, as he crouched before his father in fawning deception (Gen. 27:29). And yet David applies this promised blessing to himself (2 Sam. 22:44).

David felt preserved by God from Saul and his other enemies (1 Sam. 30:23; 2 Sam. 22:44), because he had preserved or obeyed [s.w.] God's ways (2 Sam. 22:22,24; Ps. 18:21,23); whereas Saul didn't obey / preserve them and was destroyed (1 Sam. 13:13,14; 1 Chron. 10:13). Hence Ps. 145:20: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy".

2 Samuel 22:45 The foreigners will submit themselves to me. As soon as they hear of me, they will obey me-

David's vision was that his kingdom would take the good news of Israel's God to the surrounding Gentiles (see on :50). Some of them would submit to David and his God, whereas others would not (:46).

2 Samuel 22:46 The foreigners will fade away, and will come trembling out of their hiding places-

This may allude to how Saul's persecutors of David included "foreigners" such as Cush (see on Ps. 7:1) and Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 22:22).

2 Samuel 22:47 Yahweh lives! Blessed be my rock! Exalted be God, the rock of my salvation-

David had earlier lamented that Saul "My enemy" (= Saul, 1 Sam. 18:29; 19:17) was "exalted over me" (Ps. 13:2 s.w.). The David who had once triumphed over his enemy Goliath now felt that Saul was triumphing over him. This, in the bigger Divine picture, may have been to keep David from pride at the amazing victory and triumph. And he learned the lesson. David was indeed to triumph / be exalted over Saul (:49), but he saw it is God triumphing / being exalted. His praise Psalms are full of this word and idea- of the exaltation of God (Ps. 57:5,11) and not himself.

2 Samuel 22:48 even the God who executes vengeance for me, who brings down peoples under me-

An allusion to how David had restrained himself from murdering Saul when he could have done, and instead had trusted in God to execute vengeance. Here David reflects that God had indeed cast down the peoples *under him* (2 Sam. 22:48; Ps. 18:47); by saying this he considers that his prayer of Ps. 56:7 has been answered: "In anger cast down the peoples, God". Perhaps when he prayed it, he just wanted God's anger to be poured out immediately, the day of judgment to come there and then, when the scales will be adjusted and men and nations cast down or lifted up. But he reflects that in a sense that had happened in his life, in that the peoples were cast down beneath *him*.

2 Samuel 22:49 who delivers from my enemies. Yes, You lift me up above those who rise up against me. You deliver me from the violent man-

See on :47. The violent man was initially Saul (see on :1). The Hebrew word *hamas* [basically meaning 'physical violence arising from wicked plans'] is quite common in Scripture, and the usages speak of how God is provoked by *hamas* to bring judgment upon the enemies of His people (Gen. 6:11-13; Mic. 6:12; Zeph. 1:9) and also to intervene in order to save His people (Ps. 18:49; Ps. 72:14). How amazingly appropriate that an organization actually called *hamas* has arisen in these last days to do violence to Israel! If Biblical history means anything to us, clearly enough God's intervention in appropriate judgment and salvation cannot be far off. Note how Hagar's persecution of Sarah- typical of the Arab-Jew conflict- is described as her *hamas* (Gen. 16:5).

2 Samuel 22:50 Therefore I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations. I will sing praises to your name-

David was one of the few in the Old Testament who had a sense of taking the good news of Yahweh's covenant to the Gentiles. And he apparently did so through exporting his musical productions to the surrounding peoples, who may well have been able to understand David's Hebrew.

2 Samuel 22:51 He gives great deliverance to His king, and shows grace to His anointed, to David and to his seed, for evermore-

The Psalm concludes with a reference to David as the anointed, so this could be a Psalm composed when Saul was slain and David was finally declared king, and his anointing came to fulfilment. But the reference to eternal salvation for "his seed" could suggest it was composed after he had received the promises of 2 Sam. 7.

2 Samuel Chapter 23

2 Samuel 23:1 Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse says, the man who was raised on high says, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel- 2 Sam. 23:1-5 gives quite some insight into the nature of David's spiritual maturity at the end. He comes over as:

Sure of his salvation

Aware of his own failures and frailty, acknowledging that his family 'was not so with God'

Deeply aware of God's grace

Having a clear vision of Jesus the future Messiah, even foreseeing how He would be pierced with a weapon and slain by wicked men- in order to attain our salvation

Aware that his own rulership was pathetically inferior to that of the Lord Jesus

Appreciative that all these wonderful things are rooted in the covenant made to himself, which was all his salvation and desire.

These very same themes we find recurring in the lives of many other servants of God.

2 Samuel 23:2 The Spirit of Yahweh spoke by me. His word was on my tongue-

This is a classic statement of Divine inspiration, putting His word upon the tongue of the inspired writers and speakers of His word.

2 Samuel 23:3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, 'One who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of God-

This may have been spoken to David by Samuel when he was first anointed; or by special revelation to David when he first became king. Prov. 29:2 alludes to this, saying that when the righteous rule, the people rejoice (s.w.). The king of Israel was to ever remember that God was the ultimate king; and was to rule therefore in respect of Him.

2 Samuel 23:4 shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, like the clear shining after rain'-

This suggests that the ruler in view was to be as the sunrise, after the clouds and darkness of the night have dispersed. This was indeed how David's reign appeared after the reign of Saul. But the clouds returned in the course of David's reign, and it looks ahead to the coming of David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus, to arise as the dawn and re-establish David's kingdom as God's eternal Kingdom on earth (s.w. "sun rises" Mal. 4:2). "Clear shining" is the word used for the "brightness" of the cherubim which were to return to Zion along with the exiles to establish eternal brightness there, with a restored Davidic king (Ez. 1:4; 10:4).

2 Samuel 23:5 Most certainly my house is not so with God-

David is one of the major Old Testament types of the Lord Jesus. The words of David in Ps. 16 are quoted in Acts 2:25,29 concerning Jesus: "I have set the Lord always before me... He is at my right hand... You will not leave my soul in hell, neither will You suffer Your holy one to see corruption". These are words describing David's feelings about his own death and resurrection; and yet so identified was he with the Messiah, that they are quoted as being directly true of Jesus. But Acts 2:29 also quotes these words with a slightly different spin- in that David saw the Lord Jesus always before him, and it was this sense that stabilized him. This could only have been true in that David understood all his feelings and present and future experiences [e.g. resurrection, not being suffered to corrupt eternally] as being typical of the Lord Jesus. He so understood himself as a type of the One to come that he saw this person as ever with him. This is the extent of the typology. 1 Chron. 17:17 in Young's Literal has David saying: "Thou hast seen me as a type of the man on high" [i.e.

Messiah]. David describes himself at ease with clearly Messianic titles such as 'the Christ', 'the man raised on high', and then goes on to speak of the Messiah who *is to come* on the "morning without clouds", admitting that "verily *my* house is not so with God" (2 Sam. 23:1-5). This is only really understandable if we accept that David consciously saw himself as a type of the future Messiah.

There is an intended ambiguity in the Hebrew text of 2 Sam. 23:5. The AV has: "Although my house be not so with God...this is all my salvation"; whilst the NIV and other translations suggest the opposite: that because his house *was* in order, therefore this was all his salvation and desire fulfilled. Solomon and David were sure that the house of David was "with God", and yet from God's perspective they weren't, and the fulfilment of the promises would have to be in the future Messiah.

Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He doesn't make it grow-
David's "desire / delight" was in God's law (Ps. 1:2 s.w.) and also in the things of the future Kingdom of God (s.w. 2 Sam. 23:5); our "delight" in those things is reflected in our attitudes to God's word. And we shall be finally judged according to our 'delights', our dominant desires (s.w. Ecc. 3:17; 8:6). The Lord Jesus was devoted to sharing Yahweh's "delight" (Is. 53:10). We shall be judged according to what are our dominant desires.

Is. 26:8,9 parallels "the desire of my soul" with "my spirit"; it is the dominant desire of a man. For David, the salvation promised to him through Christ was "all my desire" (2 Sam. 23:5). The direction of his life was towards that end.

2 Samuel 23:6 But all of the ungodly shall be as thorns to be thrust away, because they can't be taken with the hand-

The ungodly, like thorns, cannot be taken away by human hand. The sensitivity of the Lord Jesus constructed the parable of the wheat and weeds with the aim of showing the thoughtful how deeply inappropriate is their desire to root up the tares. He clearly had in mind the prophecy of Himself in 2 Sam. 23:6,7: "The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken by (human) hands: but the man that shall touch them (Christ) must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place (just outside Jerusalem) "where Christ was "fenced with iron". It isn't possible for us to uproot the tares because this can only possibly be done by the one who totally uprooted sin in Himself, dying to it on the cross. This association between Christ's right to judge and His victorious death is shown by the way the "tares" will be burnt in the same area as He was crucified in. Phil. 2:9-11 reasons along the same lines; because Christ died for us, He *therefore* has the right to have every knee bowing to Him at the judgment. On account of being "the Son of man" and yet also being our perfect Messiah, He has the right *therefore* to be judge (Jn. 5:27 cp. Dan. 7:13,14). The Lord understood all this; and to the thoughtful, those who would grasp His allusion to 2 Sam. 23, He was saying: 'If you think you can root up the tares, if you think you have that wisdom to identify the tares, you are really insulting the greatness of what I achieved on the cross. It's only on account of that that I have the ability and right to divide wheat from tares, sheep from goats'.

But Adam Clarke understands this simply as "A metaphor taken from hedging; the workman thrusts the thorns aside either with his bill or hand, protected by his impenetrable mitten or glove, till, getting a fair blow at the roots, he cuts them all down. The man is fenced with iron, and the handle of his bill is like the staff of a spear. This is a good representation of the dubbing-bill, with which they slash the thorn hedge on each side before they level the tops by the pruning-shears. The handle is five or six feet long. This is a perfectly natural and intelligible image".

2 Samuel 23:7 but the man who touches them must be filled with iron and the staff of a spear-

See on :6. David recognizes that he had failed, that his house was "not so with God", and yet through the future Messiah, "the light of the morning", who would be pierced by a spear, the promises to him regarding his eternal future would indeed be fulfilled (2 Sam. 23:4,5,7).

They shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place-

This could mean that in the place where the Messianic seed was to be filled with the iron of a spear, those who did this to Him would be burnt. Perhaps they will be literally resurrected to judgment and burnt in the valley of Hinnom, near the place of the Lord's crucifixion.

2 Samuel 23:8 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb Basshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite, who slew eight hundred at one time-

"Captains" is a form of the word translated "thirty" used in :23, and is evidence that the "thirty" are not to be read as a literal number; in any case, 37 names are given for the "mighty men", not 30. And there are more in the parallel record in Chronicles. Likewise "hundred" need not be taken literally as 100, rather like the term "legion", and can refer to a military group.

2 Samuel 23:9 After him was Eleazar the son of Dodai the son of an Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines who were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel had fled away-

"Defied" is the word used of how Goliath had defied Israel (1 Sam. 17:10,25,26,36,45). Later Philistine defiance is described with the same word (2 Sam. 21:21). David's victory over Goliath was inspirational to other Israelites, just as the Lord's triumph on the cross should be to us.

2 Samuel 23:10 He arose, and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand froze to the sword; and Yahweh worked a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to take spoil-

We note that Yahweh worked a great victory through David over Goliath (same phrase in 1 Sam. 19:5; see on :12), specifically *without* a sword. But this man was inspired by David and used in the same way, although his faith was perhaps weaker in that he used a sword, unlike David who turned down the offer of Saul's sword.

2 Samuel 23:11 After him was Shammah the son of Agee a Hararite. The Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the people fled from the Philistines-

The Chronicles record says it was full of barley, so perhaps lentils were grown together with barley. Shammah defended the field of barley because it was valuable to the Israelites. And in this we have a corroboration of the record with how Absalom had burnt Joab's field of barley (2 Sam. 14:30). We may wonder why Joab slew Absalom. It could have been that to lose a field of barley was to lose food for many months or even a year. It was therefore a major loss to Joab. As Shammah defended a field of barley with his life, so Joab was so vengeful at the loss of his field of barley that he later slew Absalom.

2 Samuel 23:12 But he stood in the midst of the plot and defended it, and killed the Philistines-

"Defended" or "delivered" is the word used for David's victories (1 Sam. 17:37; 30:8,18,22) which were clearly so inspirational to his men, as the Lord's victory should be to us.

And Yahweh worked a great victory-

The record continually gives the glory to Yahweh for working through His willing workers. They did not achieve these victories in their own strength alone. The very phrase as in :10 of 1 Sam. 19:5 describing how Yahweh gave David the great victory over Goliath. This was clearly inspirational to David's men in their own battles, just as the Lord's victory on the cross should not be seen simply as a historical achievement for us, but an abiding inspiration to us to in essence do likewise.

2 Samuel 23:13 Three of the thirty chief men went down-
Not literally thirty; see on :23.

And came to David in the harvest time-
1 Chron. 11:15 "to the rock"; see on :14.

To the cave of Adullam; and the troop of the Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim-

The giants of the Philistines were in the valley of the giants. And they even had a garrison in David's home town (:14). They appeared insuperable. This refers to an incident during the campaign of 2 Sam. 5:17.

2 Samuel 23:14 David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem-

The hideout of 2 Sam. 5:17. The rock or hill of Adullam was surrounded by valleys fully viewable from the top of the hill, making it a strong position. Yet despite the obvious tactical advantages of the place, David's Psalms repeatedly describe Yahweh as his rock, stronghold and fortress.

2 Samuel 23:15 David longed and said, Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!-

This has absolute psychological credibility. A leader of partisans sitting with his men in a cave, bitterly reflecting that the enemy have placed a garrison in his home village... would indeed make such a passing, under his breath comment like this.

2 Samuel 23:16 The three mighty men broke through the army of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: but he would not drink of it, but poured it out to Yahweh-

We see here the intense personal loyalty to David which is a theme throughout the record. It looks forward to that which there is to be between the Lord Jesus and we who follow Him in these outlaw days of our generation.

2 Samuel 23:17 He said, Be it far from me, Yahweh, that I should do this! Isn't it the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. The three mighty men did these things-

Despite the intense personal loyalty which David inspired, he is to be commended for not allowing this to turn into a mere personality cult. He poured out that water to Yahweh, feeling unworthy to drink it. We note that water represented blood. This is a warning against being too literalistic in requirements concerning the elements of the breaking of bread service. David perceived the spirit of the law about drink offerings, and "poured [water] out to Yahweh" (:16) in a cave, not being a Levitical priest, and far from the sanctuary.

2 Samuel 23:18 Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of the three. He

lifted up his spear against three hundred and killed them, and had a name among the three- "Hundred", like "legion", need not be read literally; it could refer to a group or military subdivision. Again the idea of singularly attaining victory against a multitude is a replication in spirit of David's victory over Goliath.

2 Samuel 23:19 Wasn't he the most honourable of the three? Therefore he was made their captain: however, he didn't attain to the three-

This apparently means that he was demoted. This happened several times, as David considered that military valour was not the prime qualification for the post of army general, but rather perceiving grace and not shedding the blood of war in peace. Because Joab clearly failed to understand grace, David replaced him with Amasa- whom Joab later murdered out of jealousy.

2 Samuel 23:20 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done mighty deeds-

Benaiah was one of David's senior military commanders (2 Sam. 8:18; 1 Chron. 27:5), and the Hebrew of 2 Sam. 23:20 can be translated "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada the priest, as head", i.e. of a group of David's mighty men. The Jehoiada in view as his father would therefore be Jehoiada the priest. The idea is that priests were also military leaders within David's army, indeed it seems there were a large group of them as ordinary soldiers in 1 Chron. 12:27. This shows how priesthood was not understood as abstract spirituality, but that spirituality was articulated in practice. And this, along with the hints in the names of the mighty men that some were Levites, is significant in that the Levites were not numbered as they were exempt from military service (Num. 1:47). But these chose to do it. See on 2 Sam. 24:5.

He killed the two sons of Ariel of Moab: he went down also and killed a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow-

Perhaps this incident occurred at this time of the campaign in 2 Sam. 8:2. Although that campaign was not David and his men at their spiritual best; see note there. We see him following the path of David, whose victory over a literal lion gave him courage to fight Goliath. So Benaiah was inspired by David personally to kill a lion, and then kill two lion like men (AV) of Moab. The lion would have been driven by the cold from the forests, and was preyed upon people. Benaiah therefore risked his life for the sake of his people, and slew the lion.

2 Samuel 23:21 He killed an Egyptian, a goodly man-

Literally, a man to look at. This was because he was five cubits tall (1 Chron. 11:23).

And the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear-

Again this is a repeat of the spirit of David's victory over Goliath, coming to Goliath with a staff and sling, and slaying him with his own weaponry. The point is repeatedly made that like the Lord's victory on the cross, David's over Goliath was programmatic for the inspiration of his followers to be like him.

2 Samuel 23:22 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did these things, and had a name among the three mighty men-

As noted on :19, there seems to be the idea that some of these men were demoted. Thus Benaiah was both amongst the three, but didn't attain / remain amongst them (:23). "The three" is likely not to be read too literally, but may be a technical term for a group office, like "the thirty"; see on :23.

2 Samuel 23:23 He was more honourable than the thirty, but he didn't attain to the three-
The numbers "three" and "thirty" are not necessarily to be taken literally. A form of the word for "thirty" is used of the "captains" in :8, and of Pharaoh's captains (Ex. 14:7; 15:4); in any case, 37 names are given for the "mighty men", not 30. And there are more in the parallel record in Chronicles.

David set him over his guard-

Heb. 'David appointed him to his audience', he was a member of David's inner circle of advisers on the basis of his faith shown in personal life, and not because of any possession of only theoretical wisdom.

2 Samuel 23:24 Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem-

Elhanan had also replicated David's victory over Goliath; see on 2 Sam. 21:19.

2 Samuel 23:25 Shammah the Harodite, Elikah the Harodite-

This Shammah was "Shammuth the Izrahite" of 1 Chron. 27:8. "Izrahite" there could be "the Zarhite" a man descended from Zerah the son of Judah. But he was from Harod (2 Sam. 23:25), near mount Gilboa in the north. Perhaps he was given this name because he had done something valiant for Saul in the last fateful battle he fought in that area against the Philistines.

2 Samuel 23:26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite-

He is called a man of Ephraim in 1 Chron. 27:10. But Beth-Palet [he was a "Paltite", 2 Sam. 23:26] was a town in the tribe of Judah. We get the impression that many of these men were living outside the territory of their native tribes. That could have been for various reasons, but perhaps we are to conclude that the men who supported David were [as with us and our loyalty to Jesus] those who had had non standard personal lives which left them isolated from their home areas.

2 Samuel 23:27 Abiezer the Anathothite-

A priestly town in Benjamin. Perhaps he too was a priest; see on 2 Sam. 23:20.

Mebunnai the Hushathite-

Sibbechai of 2 Sam. 21:18. He was a descendant of Zerah of Judah (see also on :25) (1 Chron. 4:4; 27:11).

2 Samuel 23:28 Zalmon the Ahohite-

Called Ilai in 1 Chron. 11:29. There is only one Hebrew letter different. This would be an example of slight errors in copying which are found in the Hebrew text, although overall it is Divinely inspired.

Maharai the Netophathite-

This was near Jerusalem and the Levitical singers lived there after the exile (Ezra 2:22; Neh. 11:28); so he too may have been a Levite living in Judah. See on :20.

2 Samuel 23:29 Heleb the son of Baanah the Netophathite-

See on :28.

Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin-

He was from Saul's birthplace, and so would have rejected Saul for David, although David was not from his tribe. He did what was counter instinctive and countercultural, as all David's followers did. And as do the followers of his greater Son.

2 Samuel 23:30 Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash-
Pirathon was in Ephraim (Jud. 12:15), and there was always antipathy between Judah and Ephraim. So as noted on :29, here again was a man who stepped out from his surrounding cultural expectations in loyalty to David.

2 Samuel 23:31 Abialbon the Arbathite-
Beth Arabah was a small settlement right out in the desert (Josh. 15:61; 18:22), therefore also called Arabah (Josh. 18:18). From such a poor and obscure place there arose a man who was attracted to David's cause (2 Sam. 23:31), just as the Lord calls all manner of unusual people to Himself today.

Azmaveth the Barhumite-
Coming from Bahurim, he would have been aware of David's shameful behaviour there (see on 2 Sam. 3:16) and yet he still followed David. He would have seen David's actions to Michael and Paltiel as out of character with David generally, and didn't allow his loyalty to be fazed by them.

2 Samuel 23:32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan-
Eliahba was from Shaalabbin in Dan in the far north, very far from David's origins (2 Sam. 23:32; Josh. 19:42). But somehow he encountered David, and loyally followed him. We marvel at the extent of those who followed David; they were from all over Israel. In those days of limited communication, we wonder how he came to know David well enough to give his life to his cause. But it is the same marvel as we reflect how people are called to the Lord Jesus today.

2 Samuel 23:33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Ararite-
To reconcile this with the record in Chronicles, we may need to read Shammah as one of the sons of Jonathan of the preceding verse. We could then read this verse along with the last part of :32 as "Jonathan the son of Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite."

2 Samuel 23:34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacathite-
Beth-Maachah was a town in Naphtali (2 Sam. 20:14), confirming the impression that David's closest supporters were not just local family friends, but men providentially drawn to him from all over Israel.

Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite-
Eliam was the father of Bathsheba, making Ahithophel her grandfather. We can more readily understand why he turned against David after his shameful behaviour with his granddaughter.

2 Samuel 23:35 Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite-
Arab is in Judah whereas Carmel is in northern Israel. The juxtaposition of the two confirms the impression that David's supporters were from all over Israel. The way they were all united together around this man from Bethlehem is amazing, and points forward to the gathering of the disparate followers of the Lord Jesus around Him today.

2 Samuel 23:36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite-
Chronicles has "Joel the brother of Nathan" but Igal and Joel in Hebrew are very similar. Igal would have been a Syrian from Zobah, perhaps one of the soldiers who fought against David (2 Sam. 10:6) and then converted to him. The Gittites who followed David were likewise Philistines from Gath who were once his enemies but converted to his God, and devoted themselves zealously to Him. This is an incredible witness to the power of Yahweh

to convert, because such willing defections of individuals to the people and God of their enemies, and being zealously committed to Him, was unheard of in their society. See on :37.

2 Samuel 23:37 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armour bearers to Joab the son of Zeruiah-

As noted on :36, the one time enemies of David such as Zelek the Ammonite became his most committed followers. Or perhaps his conversion was a result of the one time friendship between David and Ammon, and the support for David by Shobi (2 Sam. 17:27). Likewise Naharai was from Beeroth, which although counted to Benjamin (2 Sam. 4:2) was inhabited by Gentile Gibeonites, whom Saul had persecuted.

2 Samuel 23:38 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite-

The faithful Ithrites (2 Sam. 23:38) were from Kirjath Jearim (1 Chron. 2:53), perhaps converted to a more spiritual outlook by the long presence of the ark amongst them (1 Sam. 7:2).

2 Samuel 23:39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all-

As noted on :20, the number "thirty" need not be read literally, Uriah is mentioned last to draw attention to him. His father in law was also one of the mighty men (:34), so the shame of what David did was felt very strongly in the ranks of his closest followers.

2 Samuel Chapter 24

2 Samuel 24:1 Again-

I will suggest on :25 that there are similarities with the cursing of the land at the time of 2 Sam. 21:14. So "again" may mean that this final cameo of Davidic history is another example as that of 2 Sam. 21, of where Yahweh's anger was against the land of Israel and He was then "intreated for the land" by repentance and sacrifice.

The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel-

This common phrase is typically used of God's anger with Israel for idolatry, which was clearly a problem amongst them even at David's time. He didn't want to punish them. The census gave them the opportunity to pay a half shekel each for "atonement money" (Ex. 30:12-15), lest they be struck with plague. It seems God worked through David's fear of an invasion or forthcoming battle with a 'satan' / adversary, so that he took a census and the people had the chance to pay that atonement money in loyalty to Yahweh. But they didn't- and so they were struck with plague. David's feeling of guilt over the matter is understandable, but I will argue on :10 that it was more a case of false guilt.

And He moved David against them saying, Go, number Israel and Judah-

This is an example of God's Spirit moving people to do things, operating on their heart through circumstances- in this case, the 'satan' of some opposition which provoked David to take a census of his fighters.

The books of Samuel and Chronicles are parallel accounts of the same incidents, as the four gospels are records of the same events but using different language. 2 Sam. 24:1 records: "Yahweh... moved David against Israel" in order to make him take a census of Israel. The parallel account in 1 Chron. 21:1 says that "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David" to take the census. In one passage God does the 'moving', in the other Satan does it. The only conclusion is that God acted as or through a 'Satan' or adversary to David. He did the same to Job by bringing trials into his life, so that Job said about God: "With the strength of Your hand You oppose me" (Job 30:21); 'You are acting as a Satan against me', was what Job was basically saying. Or again, speaking of God: "I must appeal for mercy to my accuser (Satan)" (Job 9:15 NRSV). The idea is sometimes used to describe our greatest adversary, i.e. our own sin, and at times for whole systems or empires which stand opposed to the people of God and personify sinfulness and evil. But it seems obvious that it is a bizarre approach to Bible reading to insist that whenever we meet these words 'Satan' and 'Devil', we are to understand them as references to a personal, supernatural being.

Perhaps the satan which moved David to number Israel was a Satan-Angel, as in the case of the righteous Angel involved with Balaam, acting as a satan / adversary, and with Job. The parallel with Balaam is that God sent a Satan-Angel against him because His anger was kindled against Balaam (Num. 22:22, the same phrase as in :1). The Angel may have acted directly on David's heart to bring about a trial for both David and Israel. This is one of the many indications that the numbering of the people was not David's sin. See on :10. But the adversaries to David and Israel were at that point the surrounding nations. Even if an Angel was involved, the immediate 'satan' would have been an approaching enemy army; and David wanted to know how many men he had to fight off that invasion. Or it could have been an extension of the gathering of troops made at the time of 2 Sam. 20:4, when David wanted to know how many soldiers he could really count on after Absalom's rebellion. See on :2.

2 Samuel 24:2 The king said to Joab the captain of the army, who was with him, Now go back and forth through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number the people, that I may know the sum of the people-

The list of David's mighty men just given in 2 Sam. 23 included men literally from Dan to Beersheba. I suggested on :1 that the occasion of this census may have been when David

wanted to know how many soldiers he could really count on after Absalom's rebellion. It's possible that although out of chronological sequence, the catalogue of mighty men in 2 Sam. 23 was the result of this census. This would explain Joab's comment in 1 Chron. 21:3 "Are they not all my Lord's servants?", as if to say 'Loyalty to you is not in question, taking a census won't prove loyalty to you'.

2 Samuel 24:3 Joab said to the king, Now may Yahweh your God add to the people, however many they may be, one hundred times-

Joab is alluding to Dt. 1:11. For all his unspirituality, he did also have a spiritual side. He was not unaware of the scriptures, and seemed to want to do what was genuinely best for Israel. Men with deeply mixed motives is quite a theme of the Bible's historical records; and that is because they are true to life. For that is how people are.

And may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king delight in this thing?-

The numbering of Israel was another weak moment for David (note 2 Sam. 24:3,4,10), leading to suffering for others. Yet this same David had written that "there is no king saved by the multitude of an host" (Ps. 33:16). Perhaps this was an expression of repentance after this incident; or, if written before it, an example of David being over confident of his faith. "Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?" (1 Chron. 21:3) suggests Joab suspected the people would not pay the half shekel required when a census was taken, and so would be led into sin. Although it was their fault, the situation was provoked by God Himself provoking David to take the census, because His anger was kindled against Israel (:1). This would then be an example of God confirming a sinful people in the way they wished to go.

2 Samuel 24:4 Notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the army. Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel-

The army captains likewise agreed with Joab that the census was not a good idea. This incident is at a time when David's word prevails against Joab and the generals, and we get the impression that this would not have happened after his sin with Bathsheba, after which Joab speaks and acts towards David in a belligerent manner. So the incident may be not in chronological order; indeed none of the cameos of Davidic history at the end of 2 Samuel are in chronological order.

2 Samuel 24:5 They passed over the Jordan, and encamped in Aroer, on the right side of the city that is in the middle of the valley of Gad, and to Jazer-

The list of cities given in this section is detailed, and if they just describe the itinerary and maximum extent of the route taken by the generals in making the census, we wonder why such detail is given. I suggest that the areas named were those where they found significant numbers of men loyal to David and willing to fight for him. For that was the purpose of the census. Jazer was a priestly city (Josh. 21:39). Yet it was on the very borders of Hebrew territory, suggesting that Israel gave the Levites the remotest and very poorest of their cities, rather than the best. Yet we also see the theme discussed on 2 Sam. 23:20 continued- that the Levites, although exempted from military service by the Law (Num. 1:47), were often to be found amongst David's most loyal soldiers.

2 Samuel 24:6 then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; and they came to Dan Jaan, and around to Sidon-

"Tahtim Hodshi" is unknown, so we can go with LXX "to the land of the Hittites to Kedesh". Sidon likewise was never really inhabited by the Hebrews (Jud. 1:31) but rather by the Phoenicians, who are therefore called the Zidonians. But the idea may be that in these Gentile areas, David had soldiers he could count on. Because it is a theme of the list of

commanders in 2 Sam. 23 that David's most loyal supporters were often Gentiles or from distant, isolated areas. This is often the case with the Lord's supporters in this life.

2 Samuel 24:7 and came to the stronghold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites; and they went out to the south of Judah, at Beersheba-

This could be simply defining the borders of the areas covered. But there is also the possibility that just as the mighty men of David were from various odd places, there were pockets of loyalty to David in various unusual places such as the city of Tyre- which was never generally inhabited by the Israelites. And likewise, the list of the mighty men in 2 Sam. 23 include Gentiles who had previously been David's enemies. And so it is possible that amongst the Canaanites, there were groups of men loyal to David who could be counted as his loyal soldiers.

2 Samuel 24:8 So when they had gone back and forth through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days-

The maximum human gestation period may have been thus understood at the time. We can understand the concern of Joab and the generals; they were going to be scattered throughout Israel and this would leave the nation very weak and open to attack. We see the contradiction, the fear was of some 'Satan', some external group of attackers, and yet by the military leadership scattering amongst Israel to take the census, they were left even weaker before the threat. We wonder at what stage David was ever able to allow his army generals nine months to take a census. We get the impression that he was under constant military threat, especially after the sin with Bathsheba. So this incident may have occurred well before that.

2 Samuel 24:9 Joab delivered the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men-

According to 1 Chron. 21:5, there were 1,100,000 "men that drew sword" in Israel. According to 2 Sam. 24:9, there were 800,000 "valiant men" in Israel, according to the same census. One way to reconcile this is to focus on this distinction between "valiant men" and standard soldiers. The Samuel record is perceiving that there was a higher level of commitment amongst some who were numbered. There were the enthusiasts, and those who merely could draw a sword. They were all living on different levels.

The numbers are also difficult because the Hebrew word for "thousand" need not mean a literal 1,000, but it is at time used to refer to a military subdivision. And it can have different definitions in some areas and at some times and by some writers. That is likely the reason for the difference between the numbers presented in Samuel and Chronicles, rather than textual corruption. If taken literally, the numbers are unrealistic; nearly 2 million soldiers (according to Chronicles) in the combined kingdom would imply a huge total population. Even if there were six million population in the territory they then inhabited (about 11,000 square miles), this would give an average population density of 600 / square mile. It seems really doubtful that the country could have supported this.

The Levites were not numbered as they were exempt from military service (Num. 1:47), indeed Joab didn't number Benjamin or Levi (1 Chron. 21:6) which would further heighten the total population.

"Drew the sword" is the same phrase used in 1 Chron. 21:16 of how the destroying Angel had a drawn sword in his hand. The idea seems to be that God's Angelic power was more than a match for thousands of Israelites with their drawn swords. This would be an argument in favour of the idea that David did indeed sin at this time by trusting in his own swords, although the greater sin appears to have been with the people; see on :10.

2 Samuel 24:10 David's heart struck him after that he had numbered the people-

This phrase is used three times of David; his heart struck him concerning cutting off Saul's skirt (1 Sam. 24:5- false guilt), about Bathsheba (Ps. 102:4- true guilt) and now about numbering the people (2 Sam. 24:10), which I suggest was a mixture of true and false guilt.

David said to Yahweh, I have sinned greatly in that which I have done-

The response is similar to that to the sin with Bathsheba, again before a prophet. Balaam also said the same words (Num. 22:34), and again we find an Angel 'standing'. Although David did take false guilt, it seems there was some element of real failure.

But now, Yahweh, put away, I beg you, the iniquity of Your servant; for I have done very foolishly-

The allusion is to the foolishness of Saul (1 Sam. 13:13). He feels he is no better than Saul for his trust in human strength; see on :14. 1 Chron. 21:6,7 says that David's "word" of command of the census was "abominable" to Joab, and also God was "displeased" with "this thing", the same Hebrew translated "word". Unless this refers to His displeasure with Joab for despising David's word. Yahweh had likewise been "displeased" with David in the matter of Uriah (2 Sam. 11:27 s.w.). But although David's lack of faith wasn't good, it seems to me on balance that he was largely taking false guilt. Perhaps we are to read that God was displeased with Israel's lack of response to the word of command about the census, seeing Israel didn't pay the half shekel required at the time. Indeed David's trust in human numbers would not have been pleasing to God, it was a slip backwards. But we wonder whether he took false guilt in this matter. For it was allowable to take a census of Israel, although there was to be a half shekel tax paid at the time, which if not paid would result in plague (Ex. 30:12-15). Joab perhaps guessed that those numbered would not pay this and therefore the census would lead Israel into sin. This is why God chose the punishment of plague; not upon David, but upon Israel. Yet David perhaps realized all that, but knew that his lack of faith in wanting a census, his lack of consideration for the weakness of others, would lead them into sin and punishment. And therefore he felt guilty. It could be argued that his sacrifice atoned for himself and for the people, but they still suffered for not having paid the required "atonement money". But then we must balance against this the comment that "David had done that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and didn't turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5). No mention is made of the matter of the census. There is true guilt, the guilt we should take for our actual sins; and false guilt, the guilt put on us by others and the malfunctioning of the human conscience. In this matter of David's guilt about the census, we may have an example of a man taking false guilt. The fact Israel and not David were punished with plague would rather confirm this. It may be impossible for us to sort out within us what is true guilt or false guilt, at least not be any intellectual process. But we can rest assured that all our guilt, of whatever kind, is met in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate guilt offering.

2 Samuel 24:11 When David rose up in the morning, the word of Yahweh came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying-

Gad was to write his record of these things (1 Chron. 29:29), so maybe his record has been incorporated here into 2 Samuel.

2 Samuel 24:12 Go and speak to David, 'Thus says Yahweh, I offer you three things. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you'-

When given a choice, Ahaz declined to choose, and was condemned for it (Is. 7:11). David declines to choose, because he preferred to fall into God's hands of grace than decide himself; and is not condemned. The same actions can be committed with different motives,

and therefore only God can judge. But the invitation to "choose one of them" was for David's education, to elicit his reflection as to whether it was appropriate that he were punished, or the people; or he be punished along with the people. God's choice of plague was in accordance with the teaching of Ex. 30:12-15, that if Israel didn't pay the atonement money at the time of a census, they would be punished with plague.

2 Samuel 24:13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said to him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land?-

LXX "three years", in line with 1 Chron. 21:12. As king, this would not have hurt David personally. He was asked to consider whether this was appropriate.

Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days of plague in your land? Now answer, and consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me-

Famine, war and plague are the three Divine judgments listed in Ez. 14:21 as coming upon Jerusalem at the time of the exile. David had already experienced war and famine (because of the Gibeonites, 2 Sam. 21). Now he was to experience plague. The lesson to the exiles was that these judgments had indeed come because of sin, but the experience of them could be cut short by intense prayer and repentance after the pattern of David. For Yahweh "relented" of the three days plague because of David's prayer and sacrifice. See on :15. We see here the open ended nature of His purpose.

2 Samuel 24:14 David said to Gad, I am in distress-

The phrase "sore distressed" in 1 Chron. 21:13 is that used of Saul's great distress on the night of his final condemnation (1 Sam. 28:15). David felt he had been foolish as Saul had been (2 Sam. 24:10 = 1 Sam. 13:13). David had replaced Saul because of Saul's apostasy, but he was being made to realize through this experience (even if it was all false guilt), that he too was a sinner and saved by his acceptance of grace, and not because he was intrinsically better than Saul.

Let us fall now into the hand of Yahweh; for His mercies are great. Let me not fall into the hand of man-

David appealed to God's mercy in the matter of Bathsheba (Ps. 51:1). Perhaps he learned from that, and chose to throw himself upon that same mercy. But the exact timing of this incident isn't clear. Perhaps it was because of learning about God's grace through this incident that he later learned to throw himself upon God's great mercy when he sinned with Bathsheba and against Uriah. David's experience of God's grace stayed with him when he faced up to the results of his errors in the future. From experience, he can ask to fall into the Lord's hand rather than man's, because "His mercies are great" (2 Sam. 24:14)- using the same two Hebrew words he had used when Nathan came to him in Ps. 51:1: "Have mercy upon me... according unto the *multitude* [Heb. 'greatness'] of thy *tender mercies*". And so the experience of God's gracious mercy over one sin fortifies us to believe in His grace when, sadly, we fall again; although, in passing, I think that in 2 Sam. 24, David himself didn't really do so much wrong. Yet he perceived himself to have sinned, so the point is still established.

Truly David is our example. David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. "The God of my rock is *my* shield... he is a shield to *all* them that trust in him" (2 Sam. 22:3,31). "I am in a great strait; let *us* fall now into the hand of the Lord" (2 Sam. 24:14) reflects this. When he sung Psalms, he invited them to come and sing along with him (Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). And many of these Psalms of praise seem to have their origin in his experience of forgiveness regarding Bathsheba. The Lord based His parables of the lost sheep and the man finding the treasure of the Gospel in a field on the statements of David (Ps. 119:162,176), as if He saw David as representative of all those who would truly come to Him. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps. 32:1),

David wrote, after experiencing God's mercy in the matter of Bathsheba. But Paul sees this verse as David describing "the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6). Each of us are in need of a like justification; therefore we find ourselves in David's position.

God is kinder than men. It's better to be punished by Him than by men. This puts paid to the Catholic conception of God as a merciless torturer of wicked men. Clearly the doctrine of eternal torments was invented by men, not God.

2 Samuel 24:15 So Yahweh sent a plague on Israel from the morning even to the appointed time; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men- "The appointed time" could refer to the time of the evening sacrifice, which David was to offer on Araunah's property and not at the sanctuary. Or the idea may be that there was an "appointed time" of suffering but it was not defined, because it was open ended- the terminus depended upon the intensity of David's prayers and sacrifice. The three day period of plague (:13) was changed because "Yahweh relented" (:16)- because of David's prayer shortening the stipulated time period. This is why there can be no prescriptive chronology of events in the last days, nor date set for the Lord's return. The appointed time is variable, depending upon factors such as human prayer, repentance and taking the Gospel to all the world.

LXX "So David chose for himself the mortality: and they were the days of wheat-harvest; and the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from morning till noon, and the plague began among the people"

2 Samuel 24:16 When the angel stretched out his hand towards Jerusalem to destroy it- 1 Chron. 21:16 says that the Angel had a "drawn sword" in hand, the same words used of the Angel before Balaam (Num. 22:23,31). His donkey "turned aside", using the same word for "stretched out" here. The sin of Balaam was connected with idolatry, and I suggested on :1 that this was the reason for God's anger being kindled against Israel. The sin of Balaam has connections with that of Israel, but not particularly with that of David. Again we get the impression the judgments were for the sake of the sins of the people, the anger of Yahweh was with them, rather than with David for wanting to take a census.

Yahweh relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who destroyed the people, It is enough. Now stay your hand. The angel of Yahweh was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite-

This could imply that Araunah's area was about to be destroyed. But it seems we have here an example of the summary being made, and then we read how that came about. Perhaps David was in Jerusalem, maybe praying at the sanctuary, and saw the Angel standing over the nearby hill of Jebus or Moriah. His prayer and obedient, urgent sacrifice then stopped the Angel right there. The Angel "stood" by the threshing floor (1 Chron. 21:15), as if the Angel's path of destruction was stopped right there by the sacrifice offered in that place.

The encouragement for the later generation of Jews was that the evil planned upon Jerusalem could be relented from; if there was genuine repentance. God's hand here was "stayed", but the encouragement was that God would not "stay" His hand in His program of redemption; the same word is often translated "fail" in the assurance that God will not fail His people in ultimately restoring them.

This "destroying Angel" (1 Chron. 21:15 RV) is surely "the destroyer" who operated in the wilderness. We see here one Angel having the ability to formulate a purpose and another blindly carrying it out until told not to- a scenario which we see repeated elsewhere (e. g. at the Passover and in Ez. 9). It was only David's prayer which led to "the destroyer" ceasing. Notice how the Angel repented and then encouraged David to offer a sacrifice so

the Angel would be "intreated for the land" (:19,25). Similarly, the Angel repented of punishing Israel and wanted to restore them, and to enable this to happen He encouraged the people through Ezra to be spiritual. Thus Angelic repentance has to be confirmed by human action.

2 Samuel 24:17 David had spoken to Yahweh when he saw the angel who struck the people, and had said-

1 Chron. 21:17 adds "David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord standing between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. And David and the elders, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces".

Behold, I have sinned, and I have done perversely; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me, and against my father's house-

This was effectively asking God to abrogate the promises about his family of 2 Sam 7.

Thanks to David building an altar at his own expense and asking God to kill him and his family, God stopped the plague upon Israel (2 Sam. 24:16,17- the stretched out hand of God in destruction was what David asked to be upon him and his family). Israel were suffering the effect of their own sin, in not paying the temple tax (Ex. 30:11-16); but in the spirit of Christ, David was willing to die for them. And his dominant desire was counted as if it had been done, and thanks to his self-sacrificial spirit, the people were saved when they personally were unworthy. The wrath of God can be turned away by the actions of those He is angry with (Num. 25:4; Dt. 13:15-17; Ezra 10:14; Jonah 3:7,10; 2 Chron. 12:7; Jer. 4:4; 21:12). And yet that wrath can also be turned away by the prayers of a third party (Ps. 106:23; Jer. 18:20; Job 42:7). This means that in some cases, our prayers for others can be counted as if they have repented. We can gain our brother for God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7). Through *our personal* dying to the flesh, the life of Christ is manifest not only in us, but is made available to others: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:10-12). The life that is even now made manifest *in us* is also made available to work in others because death to the flesh has worked in us personally.

2 Samuel 24:18 Gad came that day to David-

At the direction of the Angel (1 Chron. 21:18).

And said to him, Go up, build an altar to Yahweh on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite-

2 Chron. 3:1 implies David assumed that the spot where the Angel appeared to him in 2 Sam. 24:17,18 was where he should build the temple. It is another example of David's tendency to wildly over interpret, which led him to a mistaken obsession about building the temple and assuming Solomon to be his Messianic seed.

2 Samuel 24:19 David went up according to the saying of Gad, as Yahweh commanded-

1 Chron. 21:16 says that David went along with the elders of Israel, clothed in sackcloth. David is always presented as totally obedient to the prophets in his life (Samuel, Nathan and Gad), unlike Saul who was consistently disobedient to God's word through Samuel.

2 Samuel 24:20 Araunah looked out-

From the place in the threshing area where he was threshing wheat, where he and his four sons had hidden from the presence of the Angel (1 Chron. 21:20). The records in Chronicles and Samuel perfectly fit with each other, although clearly focusing upon different elements

of the scene; just like the gospel records.

And saw the king and his servants coming on towards him. Then Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground-

Chronicles has "saw the Angel". 2 Sam. 24:20 "saw the king". This may reflect the confusion between *malak* ["Angel"] and *melek* ["king"], especially as ancient Hebrew didn't add the vowel points and the consonants of the two words are the same, *m-l-k*. Or it could be that Araunah saw David and also at the same time saw the Angel behind him in some form.

2 Samuel 24:21 Araunah said, Why has my lord the king come to his servant? David said, To buy your threshing floor, to build an altar to Yahweh-

The urgent thing required was sacrifice to God represented by the Angel hovering over the hill where both men were standing, about to slay the people of Jerusalem. We wonder why David firstly asks to buy the threshing floor, as this was a long process which Araunah may have needed to think carefully about as it was his home. Maybe this is a hint that Araunah was not a worshipper of Yahweh and therefore the land must be bought before an offering to another God could be made upon it. There is more evidence for that on :23. Or it may be that David wanted to offer the most genuine sacrifice, which was thought to be offered upon one's own property. He offered to buy the threshing floor "for the full price" (1 Chron. 21:22), the same phrase used of Abraham's purchase of property from the Canaanites in Gen. 23:9. This confirms the impression that Araunah was a Canaanite and not an Israelite.

That the plague may be stopped from afflicting the people-

This is the very phrase of Num. 16:48,50 and Num. 25:8; Ps. 106:30, where the people of Israel suffered from plague because of their idolatry, and Aaron stopped it, standing between the living and the dead. David was in an identical position to Aaron, again acting as the High Priest. And again we have evidence that the essential sin being punished was not David's taking of a census, but Israel's sin (see on :1).

2 Samuel 24:22 Araunah said to David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Behold, the cattle for the burnt offering, and the threshing instruments and the yokes of the oxen for the wood-

Chronicles adds "and the wheat for the meat offering". LXX "and the wheels and furniture of the oxen for wood". "The threshing instruments" may have referred to quite a major and expensive piece of equipment. But Araunah totally senses the urgency of the situation and is willing to offer even this as wood.

2 Samuel 24:23 all this, my king, does Araunah give to the king. Araunah said to the king, May Yahweh your God accept you-

AV "All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king". This could mean that Araunah ['the scarlet one', maybe hinting at royalty] was king of Jebus at the time; or had once been. The way Araunah speaks of "Yahweh *your* God", whereas David speaks of "Yahweh *my* God" (:24) could support the idea that he was a Gentile. But he was genuinely willing to give freely toward the offering of sacrifice to Yahweh. There are three different spellings of Araunah's name in the record, and this might suggest his name was unusual and a Gentile name, which could be legitimately be transcribed in different ways in Hebrew. See on :21.

2 Samuel 24:24 The king said to Araunah, No; but I will most certainly buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to Yahweh my God which cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver-

I have suggested that the historical records were in places edited and made relevant for the

exiles; and given their mean attitude to offerings in Mal. 1:10,13,14, David's example and principle would have been pertinent. And this is an abiding principle; sacrifice is to be costly, we are to be left "minus", rather than being without cost to us.

1 Chron. 21:25 speaks of 600 shekels for "the place", whilst 2 Sam. 24:24 mentions 50 shekels for the threshing floor and oxen. The entire area was later bought, in order to build the temple on that site (1 Chron. 22:1; 2 Chron. 3:1).

2 Samuel 24:25 David built an altar to Yahweh there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So Yahweh heard the prayer for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel- LXX "And the Lord hearkened to the land", as if His pity was stirred by the tragedy seen there. The idea is the same as in 2 Sam. 21:14, that the sin had affected the land, but sacrifice meant that the land's suffering stopped once it had been repented of and atoned for. 1 Chron. 21:26 adds that God "answered him from the sky by fire on the altar of burnt offering". This is just the language of God justifying Himself over Baal at the time of Elijah. I have suggested throughout that the plague was essentially punishment for Israel's idolatry; see on :1. The Angel put the sword back into its sheath (1 Chron. 21:27) at Yahweh's command. We have here a visual representation of God's sensitivity to human prayer and repentance. Burnt offerings always precede peace offerings (2 Sam. 24:25), because sacrifice is the principle upon which we can have peace with God. But David remained traumatized by the incident, fearing the sword he had seen (1 Chron. 21:30). This was a similar reaction by him to how he feared association with the ark for some period after the slaying of Uzzah (1 Chron. 13:12,13). The similarity in reaction is another indication that the record is true and the character portrayals absolutely consistent, as could only be true of a Divinely inspired record.

LXX adds "and Solomon made an addition to the altar afterwards, for it was little at first". The site was purchased for this; see on :24.