

(2 Samuel) the Sweet Psalmist and the Mighty Men

by David Guzik

David's identity and legacy are rooted in his deep inner life with God, not his accomplishments or successes.

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Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1, 2 Samuel 24:1, 2 Samuel 24:10, Psalm 30:5, Psalm 71:1, Matthew 6:33, 1 Timothy 6:12

Topics: "Leadership Principles", "Trust In God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a short psalm written by David towards the end of his life. The psalm contains wisdom and lessons from David's life. The speaker admires David for living a life that seemed larger than others, accomplishing more in one lifetime than most people do in several. David's humble beginnings are highlighted, as he came from a humble farming family. The importance of justice in leadership is emphasized, as David reflects on the need for rulers to exercise justice and rule in the fear of God. The speaker also emphasizes David's trust in God and his belief that God will take care of his enemies. The psalm ends with David acknowledging that his own house may not have the same blessings as described earlier, but he still trusts in God.

Transcript

2 Samuel, chapter 23, begins, Now, these are the last words of David. Now, you shouldn't count it as necessarily being the words he spoke on his deathbed. That doesn't seem to be the sense here.

The last words of David, what's probably meant by it, was these were the words he spoke last in his poetic ministry. This was the last psalm, probably, that he ever wrote. Where it says, again, beginning, This short psalm, we have a beautiful song of wisdom from David.

It's at the end of his life, and it's as if he's gathering it all up in a small box and presenting it to us, just some of the great lessons of life, some of the great attitude he's gained, and what a life his was. I'm fascinated by men and women who seem to live lives bigger than the rest of us. God raises up such remarkable men and women, people who seem to fit in enough accomplishment to last four or five lifetimes, and they somehow manage to fit it into one.

That's David. Look at the titles he gives to himself there in verse one. That sort of encapsulates the whole thing for you if you want to look at it just in the terms of identity.

First, it says, The Son of Jesse. Jesse was a humble farmer. That title reminds us of David's humble beginning.

David didn't grow up from royal stock. He grew up, if you might say, on the wrong side of the tracks. His family wasn't poor, but they were humble.

They weren't exalted. They weren't rulers in Israel. So he says, I'm just the son of Jesse.

And then the next line there says, Thus says the man raised up on high. Now, he doesn't say he raised himself up. When he says the man raised up on high, the idea is that someone else has raised him up, and that someone else, of course, was the Lord God.

David allowed God to raise him up so that he could confidently rest in that title. The man who is raised up on high. You know, when we try to advance ourself through self-promotion, through just plain old sweat and hard work, and there's really very little of the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit over what we do and who we are, then how can you say that? How can you go to bed at night and know that it was the Lord who raised you up? You know, you can accomplish remarkable things just by the force of human will and sheer hard work and intellect.

You can accomplish some amazing things, but you can't say what David said. David lived his life striving for such great things before God and being used in such a great way. He was the man raised up on high.

Then it says next, the anointed of the God of Jacob. Now, he was anointed, but he was anointed by God, not by himself. Oh, there's a lot of self-anointed people out there.

He wasn't anointed by just a group of people or a committee. He wasn't anointed by merely man. He had a unique empowering and enabling from God.

He sees himself as a humble man, the son of Jesse, as a man blessed by God, raised up on high, as the anointed of God. And then finally, don't you love this last line there in verse one? And the sweet psalmist of Israel. Couldn't we extend it out? Wouldn't you say that he's the sweet psalmist of America and of Brazil and of Russia and of any nation on this earth? Has there ever been a sweeter psalmist, a sweeter singer of songs before God? David's beautiful gift of eloquence and expression before God shows us how we can pour our hearts out before God.

You see, this title reminds us of David's deep inner life with God. Oh, and that's the difference. That's what made David, David.

It wasn't killing Goliath. It wasn't surviving Saul. It wasn't reigning over a prosperous nation.

What made David, David? It's his deep inner life with God. Many years ago, Hollywood came out with a very cheesy movie about the life of David. And Richard Gere, of all people, played King David, if you can imagine that.

And Richard Gere played King David just like you would expect Richard Gere to play David. There wasn't a whiff of a relationship with God in the life of this man. And invariably, that's where the movies get it wrong because that's a very difficult thing, I would suppose, to portray on film.

But oh, this is what made David, David. He was the sweet psalmist of Israel. And now he says, verse two, the spirit of the Lord spoke by me and his word was on my tongue.

The God of Israel said the rock of Israel spoke to me. He who rules over men must be just. You see, as David looks back over his life and his reign, he's struck with the great need for rulers to exercise justice.

He knew this by seeing the goodness of justice provided and he saw it in the curse of justice denied. If you're going to rule over men, you have to be just. Listen, if you're going to be a doctor, you've got to be smart and not give people the wrong things.

And if you're going to be a ruler, you have to be just or you'll end up doing more damage than good. Then he says in the beginning of verse four, ruling in the fear of God, that's the key to justice in the work of a leader. When leaders rule in the fear of God, they reveal, they recognize that a God of justice reviews their work.

There's a God who's perfectly just. He's looking over everything I do. So I have to exercise justice and that God of all justice is going to require an accounting of how I have led as a ruler.

Now, this blessed ruler who rules over men and justice and rules in the fear of God, look at how it describes him here in verse four. He shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after the rain. So here David's reflecting on how a wise ruler is blessed when he rules with justice.

Not only is he a blessing for those that he rules over, but he himself is blessed. And those David's reign wasn't perfect. It was blessed.

What a blessed reign it was, how it was blessed for Israel nationally. They grew in population, they grew in gross domestic product, if you will. They grew in all those measuring statistics that people use to measure the greatness of nations.

But they grew before God as a nation. David's reign, it was not perfect. It was blessed.

And his reign is the one most identified with the reign of the Messiah himself. Look at it there in verse four. It says he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

You know, many people believe that David wasn't even speaking of his own reign there, but he was actually speaking of the reign of the Messiah. And I'm sure in a sense he had both in view. He looks at the highlights, the glorious aspects of his reign, and he sees them, and they're real and they're there.

Yet at the same time, he realizes that only the Messiah is going to exercise those things in perfection in his reign. Isn't that strange? You know, from one perspective, David's reign was a disaster. He suffered under a very dark scandal, the whole thing with Bathsheba and Uriah.

You know, it's like saying, well, you know, Richard Nixon was a pretty good president, except for that Watergate thing. You know, one scandal can mar a presidency. And then again, you not only have that, he suffered repeatedly under family crises.

He suffered an attempted insurrection from his own son, and then he suffered under another civil war and from three years of famine. Ladies and gentlemen, this wasn't the shiniest example of a glorious reign. Now, contrast David's reign with the reign of Solomon.

In comparison to David's reign, Solomon's period as king seemed perfect. Solomon enjoyed a reign of peace, of tremendous prosperity, of great prominence, and of glory. Yet, look at how the Bible looks at the reign of David and the reign of Solomon.

You know, over and over again, David is lifted up as Israel's ideal king. I would even suggest to you that the scriptures point out for us that in the millennium, this great time to come when Jesus Christ will reign over planet Earth for a thousand years, and the governments of this Earth will become the governments of our Lord, that Jesus Christ is going to put glorified David as ruler over Israel. That's privilege.

Now, how do you think Solomon is presented? I mean, surely his reign was better than David's, right? No great scandals, no great civil wars. Surely his reign was a lot more honored than David's. No.

You know, Solomon's career is barely mentioned in the rest of the scriptures. When it is mentioned, it's almost in a backhanded way. Did you ever notice that in Matthew chapter 5? When the few times Solomon is mentioned, Jesus says, you know, you worry about all these things.

Look at the flowers of the field. Not even Solomon was arrayed like one of these flowers in its glory. Well, he mentions Solomon, but it's like, yeah, well, Solomon didn't have it as good as these flowers.

What was the difference between David and Solomon? David was the man with the deep personal relationship with God. If you were to ask David, what do you want more than anything? David, I'll give you anything. Now, Solomon was asked that question, right? Isn't that remarkable? God came to Solomon like Aladdin had the genie come to him.

What do you want? I'll give it to you. Now, was Solomon's answer good or bad? Well, it was good. I want wisdom.

Oh, what a great responsibility I have in leading these people. I need wisdom from you. And God gave Solomon wisdom.

I would suggest to you that Solomon's answer was good. You might even say it was better than many other potential answers. But I'd say to you that his answer wasn't best.

If you were to ask David, David, I'll give you anything you want. The Lord would say to David, what do you want? David would say, oh, I just want to dwell in your courts. How lovely is your dwelling place, oh Lord.

One day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. Do you see David's heart? Now, what Solomon wanted was good. You can't fault him for it.

But it wasn't best. Solomon's passion was personal improvement. I want to be better.

David's passion was God himself. I want you to think about this for a moment. Is God your goal? Or is he the way you're going to get to your goal? You have your goal out there.

Well, man, I want a successful family and a great business. And, you know, the really great career. And I want to be happy.

And those are my goals. And, man, God's going to get me there. Well, you know what? It's better than a lot of ways, a lot of things.

But is that the best? Not by any means. You know what the best is, is to have the heart David had. Where God is your goal.

That's the prize. That's the end. That's the victory right there.

You can also say that David, he endured to the end, loving and serving God in the final chapters of his life. But Solomon, he forsook God in his later years. Using God as the way to get to your goal doesn't satisfy.

And it didn't satisfy Solomon. And look at David as he continues in this great psalm, verse five. He says, although my house is not so with God.

Now, let me explain to you what he means by that. He looks at this tremendous picture of blessing. Did you see it there at the end of verse four? He should be like the light of the morning when the sun rises.

A morning without clouds like the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Because although my house is not so with God. Listen, I know I haven't had it this great.

I know that I've had these troubles in my own reign before God. I know it, Lord. He knew that the complete blessedness of a just ruler's reign.

Well, David didn't achieve that. But notice what he says in the rest of verse five. Yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant.

You see, David knew that this everlasting covenant with God was not based on his own perfection as a ruler. It was based on God's gracious commitment to his everlasting covenant. Yet he's made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things insecure.

For this is all my salvation and all my desire. Will we not make it increase? But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear.

And they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place. David could only say that this great covenant was all his salvation and all his desire. Because the covenant was based on God's faithfulness, not on David's faithfulness or obedience.

David knew that his own obedience wasn't enough to be a foundation for all of his salvation and all of his desire. It had to be God towards him. Now, as I look at David's life, I would say, yes, his light was dimmed because of his sin and his consequences.

But it was by no means extinguished. It shined till the end. And even here in this last psalm, David expresses his great trust in the Lord, his great trust in God and in his covenant.

But he knows by the same token that the sons of rebellion shall be as thorns thrust away. You know, the covenant's based on God's faithfulness, but obedience still matters. God will still oppose the sons of the rebellion and they're going to end in ruin.

David knew that he could trust the Lord to take care of his enemies, to take care of wicked men. That's David's whole theme. God's in control.

I don't have to take care of wicked men. God will take care of them. I don't have to worry about Saul.

God will worry about him for me. I don't have to worry about Absalom. God will worry about him for me.

This great relationship that David had with God, that is the reason why David was Israel's most prominent king. You know, he's also the most prominent ancestor of Jesus Christ. Did you ever stop and consider what the first few words of the New Testament are? Keep your finger here in 2 Samuel 23.

Turn over. Matthew 1.1. Look at the first few words. The first twelve words of the New Testament.

Matthew 1.1. The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David. That title is used more of Jesus, son of David, than just about any other title. Certainly any title connected with another human being.

Jesus is identified by name more closely with David than with anybody else. Now David was a remarkable man with a remarkable relationship with God. And you see that this is why he was truly the sweet psalmist of Israel.

But at the same time, notice it here, verse 8. He had godly men around him. These are the names of the mighty men whom David had. Dosheb Beshet, the Dachomanite, chief among the captains.

He was called Adino the Esnite because he had killed 800 men at one time. And after him was Eleazar, the son of Dodo, the Aholite of one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle and the men of Israel had retreated. He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary and his hand stuck to the sword.

The Lord brought about a great victory that day. The people returned after him only to plunder. And after him was Shammah, the son of Agi the Herite.

The Philistines had gathered together in a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. The people fled from the Philistines, but he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it and killed the Philistines. And the Lord brought about a great victory.

Well, here we have the three most valuable players among the mighty men of David. This is the Hall of Fame. And these are the guys that get top mention.

I want you to notice this. It says in verse eight, these are the names of the mighty men whom David had. David was nothing without his mighty men.

And his mighty men were nothing without him. You know, he was their leader. But let's face it.

A leader is nothing without followers. And David had the mighty men to follow him. Now, these men didn't start out as mighty men.

Do you remember where these men started? These are the ones that came to David when he was in a Doolam cave and they came to him distressed, indebted and discontent. What a great group of people to lead. Right.

But they came to David there in a Doolam cave with this kind of heart. I want you to notice something. These men were mighty men.

And it all started out with that. They came to David and they identified with him when his fortunes were at the lowest ebb. At that time, he was regarded as a rebel and an outlaw.

There was a price on his head. And any one of those men who came to David at a Doolam cave could have got himself a rich reward by cutting off David's head and delivering it to King Saul. They identified themselves with a wanted man, but they remained faithful to him throughout their lives.

Spurgeon said on this idea, happy are they who can follow a good cause in its worst estate for theirs is true glory. Oh, there's a lot of hangers on when things are going great. But David's mighty men weren't like that.

They came and they identified with David when he was at his lowest. There's something special about that. Friends, let me tell you that the day for mighty men and women, heroic men and women for God, that day isn't over.

We need it right now today. And you think, well, who am I? I just live my regular life and I'm just trying to pay the bills and watch the kids and all the rest of it. No.

Have you no idea? How the work of God around the world in part depends on your life and on your victory, your personal testimony. It's all relevant to the cause of God today. You take a Christian that you think is some Christian out, out working among savages or in the midst of a Muslim country, but with his head on the chopping block every day at the barest thread being held on.

And well, now that's a real worker for God. But listen, the work of that man or that woman on the very front lines of the cause of Jesus Christ, it's related to what you do every day in your personal battle against the forces of darkness. What do you mean by that? Well, listen, if you were right with God the way that you should be and focused on the things of the Lord abiding in him.

Would you have much more power in prayer? Yes, you would. Then would your prayers for that missionary mean so much more? You better believe they would. Say, well, why is the endeavor of that missionary over there so weak? Well, look at the people who pray for him.

Either they don't pray at all or they pray, but their own lives are lives of such defeat before God that there's no power in their prayers. Well, they cast up words to heaven. There's nothing behind them.

Alan Redpath said, victory for the church on the whole world front depends upon victory in your life and in mine. Home and foreign situations cannot be detached. Ladies and gentlemen, we're every one of us on the front lines.

Every one of us has the opportunity to achieve great things for God. When's the last time you were in a spiritual battle and you won? I mean, you won. Oh, it was tough.

I'm not talking about the easy one where that's what we all want. We all want to be like Superman and the bullets just bounce off our chest. No, I mean the difficult one.

It was a battle. It was a struggle. But you kept your eye on Jesus Christ and you did not faint in prayer and you kept your relation with him alive and vibrant.

And you walked through that and you came through it as a victor. Not content just to survive as a whipped puppy dog, you know, barely hanging on. No, it was a great victory for Jesus Christ and for his glory.

Does that make you any any less qualified to be a mighty man or a mighty woman of God? Just like these of David. I fear that the church today has settled into such an acceptance of mediocrity. Such an acceptance of a low vision.

Where we look to fulfill the bare minimum of what we might do before God, of what makes us happy in pleasing God or in following after him and the rest of it. Well, we just throw out the window. There's none of this attitude or very little of it.

I don't want to sound overly harsh, but there's very little of this attitude of these mighty men of God. Where I'm going to find something, even if that's a low estate, and I'm going to stick to it. And I'm going to be, I'm going to be like Adino the Esnight.

Did you see it there? It's just a remarkable story. Story right there. Verse 9. After him was Eliezer, the son of Dodo, the Allah.

Excuse me, we're at verse 8. He was called Adino the Esnight because he killed 800 men at one time. Don't you think you should back down when you're facing 800 men and it's just you? Can't you read the writing on the wall? You can't win this one. And how many times has the devil told you that in your ear? How many times has every circumstance or everything seemed to contrive against you to tell you, you can't win this one.

Well, the mighty man of God, Adino the Esnight, I'm going to do it. And then look at this, Eliezer, the son of Dodo. He's my favorite here.

Eliezer, the son of Dodo, the Ahurite, who was one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle. And the men of Israel had retreated. Okay, so there's David and a few of those mighty men.

And there's Adino the Esnight. And all the rest of Israel retreats as if they have a good section of soldiers. It looks like it's going to be a fair fight, but for some reason, the Israelites get scared and they flee.

And so it's Adino, it's David, it's a couple others. And they look around, did you see what they did in verse 9? They defied the Philistines. Oh, you're going to come take us, are you? No, you're not.

And look at what they did in verse 10. He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary and his hand stuck to the sword. He couldn't let it go.

He had such a grip on that sword. It was so drenched in the blood of his enemies. And it was used as such a mighty weapon in his hand that that man, in his solitary stand for the Lord, won a great battle.

Oh, well, you know, I'll do it. If a lot of other people will help me, then I'll do it. No, but Eleazar, in his great stand, his solitary stand, what an example it is for us today.

Spurgeon said, solitary prowess is expected of believers. I hope that we may breed in this place a race of men and women who know the truth and know also what the Lord claims at their hands and are resolved by the help of the Holy Spirit to war a good warfare for their Lord, whether others will stand at their side or not. Well, do you see that, Eleazar? Everybody's forsaken me.

It doesn't matter. I'm going to defy the Philistines and I'm going to battle them. And I'm going to if it doesn't matter, I'm not going to let go of this sword.

No way. They're all gone. They all left everybody around me.

They've all left. Well, then I will defy the Philistines. I will defy the enemies of God.

And did you see verse 10? He arose and attacked. He attacked for heaven's sakes. One against two knows how many.

So what does he do? Well, I don't have any place to retreat to. I may as well attack. And that's what he did until his hand was wearing his hand stuck to the sword.

The Lord brought about a great victory that day and the people returned after him only to plunder. Oh, well, now they come, don't they? There you are, Eleazar. You've won the battle.

You're the one with the hands stuck to the sword. You just can't get it off. At the same time, you win the battle.

You turn the tide by your solitary stand. And then everybody else wants to come up and benefit from your victory. Now, how do you think Eleazar handled it? Did he say, no, you guys can't have the plunder? No.

He said, come on in. You guys were cowards. You were undecided.

But they saw a brave man in there fighting the fight and they rallied around him. That's what mighty men and women of God do. They provide such an example that other people rally around.

Oh, they do it late. Oh, they do it when it's much easier to do it. Of course they did.

It's a lot easier to go in there once Eleazar has turned the tide. But he brought others around, didn't he? Then you have Shammah, verse 11. Shammah, the son of Agi the Harite, this leader among David's mighty men, stationed himself in the middle of a field.

And when others fled, he held the ground single-handedly until the Lord brought about a great victory. That's what we need today. Mighty men, mighty women of God, willing to be heroic, willing to stand alone.

Well, here's another example of a great exploit from these days. Verse 13. Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam.

And the troop of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David said with longing, Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate.

You can see this, can't you? David. David there in the camp of the men. And we don't know when this was.

It could have been before he was king, when he was there in those days, when he knew he was at the cave of Adullam. Could have been afterwards, when David was king and fighting the Philistines and back at the cave of Adullam. We don't know for sure.

But you can see David walking around saying, Oh, I remember how that water tasted from that well in Bethlehem. You know, I used to drink from that well when I was a kid. Oh, it was a hot day.

We'd go to the well because we were thirsty. And just a taste of that water from that particular well. Oh, it was great.

I remember that. Oh, I long for that. He's wrapping it all up, his present danger.

He thinks of the nostalgic days of safety and innocence in his youth. And he wants some of that back again. So what does he do? He just throws this common out.

It's not a command, is it? Did he say to anybody, give me some of that water? No, he's just talking out loud. Oh, boy, do I remember how great that was. So what do these guys do? Fantastic.

So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, took it and brought it to David. Well, can you believe that? These guys, they're saying, well, David wants some water from the well of Bethlehem. Let's go.

Oh, wait, you got to fight through a whole Philistine garrison. Oh, who cares? We're David's mighty men. We'd do that.

Our king, our commander, he wants a drink. Well, let's go get it for him. And so you can just imagine these guys.

This is part of the most fun they ever had in their life. You know, just going out, bold men, reckless in adventure for the glory of their commander. And so they go and they get this water and they bring it back to David.

And do you see what happened there? Verse 16. Let's start again at the beginning. So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and took it and brought it to David.

Nevertheless, he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord. They might think these guys would be pretty mad. Come on, David, drink the water at least.

No, but look at what he says. Verse 17. You said far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this.

Is this not the blood of the man who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore, he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men. David was so honored by the self-sacrifice of these three mighty men that he felt that this water was too good for him.

He said, look, it's only good enough for God. And so when he poured it out, he wasn't wasting it. It was as if it was a sacrifice unto the Lord.

Lord, this will only be good to you. The great sacrifice of these men can only be honored adequately by giving this water unto the Lord. And so it honored the sacrifice of these men.

Verse 18. We encounter a couple more of the mighty men. Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zariah, was chief of another three.

He lifted his spear against 300 men, killed them, and won a name among these three. Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore, he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the first three.

Benaniah was the son of Jehodiah, the son of a valiant man from Kabzel, who had done many deeds. He killed the two lion-like heroes of Moab. He had also gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day.

And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. These things Benaniah the son of Jehodiah did, and won a name among the three mighty men.

He was more honored than the 30, but he did not attain to the first three. And David appointed him over his guard. Don't you love that? I like this second guy.

This fellow named Benaniah. I just love that business about killing a lion in a pit on a snowy day. I mean, if it's not enough to kill a lion in a pit, to go out and do it on a snowy day, that just adds all the more glory to it.

And this Egyptian who comes to him with a big spear in his hand, not only does he take the guy on, but he ends up killing him with his own spear. I don't know, it's just great. You just can't beat that.

And so these were the kind of mighty men, the kind of warriors that David had around him. You know, when you get to verse 24, you have a whole list of the mighty men. I'm not going to read verse 24 through 39.

There's no need for me to go through that tongue twisting, linguistic gymnastics just for your entertainment. But you can see all the names there. Actually, the names of note come towards the end of the list.

You have some of the names there. You see that there was Eliam, the son of Ahithophel. He's mentioned right there in verse, oh good heavens, verse 34 where it says, Eliam, the son of Ahithophel the Gileadite.

This man is notable of mighty men because he was the father of Bathsheba. We find that out from 2 Samuel 3.11. And it shows that Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. This explains one of the reasons why Ahithophel later turned on David and sided with Absalom against David.

We also see the name of Uriah the Hittite, named the last of all, sort of ominously. Of course, he was the husband of Bathsheba. It says there at the end of verse 39, 37 and all.

These remarkable men were the foundation of the greatness of David's reign. I would say more than any other victory over any outside foe, the real influence that David had on the men nearest to him. That's the real legacy of David's ministry.

That's the real legacy of his greatness. And we need to understand that these men did not come to David as great men. No.

Under his leadership, they were transformed from men who were in distress, in debt and discontented. They were transformed into his mighty men. What a glorious story that is.

Now, we're going to close this evening by taking a look at the first nine verses of 2 Samuel 24, where we have this last account of the book, of this census that David was moved to take. We read verse 1. Again, the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. And he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

The king said to Joab, the commander of the army who was with him, Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Bathsheba, and count the people that I may know the number of the people. If you look at it there in verse 1, it's sort of interesting. It says that the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.

Okay, you got that picture. And then the next line says, And he was moved against David to say to them, Go, number Israel and Judah. Now, the translators of the New King James Version, by the way, that's the translation we use here.

I don't think there's any translation of the Bible that's perfect. They all have their strengths and they all have their weaknesses. But I strongly believe that the King James Version and the New King James Version are based on a superior manuscript tradition than some of the other versions, such as the NIV or the New American Standard.

Not that I think that the NIV or the New American Standard are bad translations. I just think that the New King James is better, that it's based on a better manuscript tradition. Sometimes people ask me, well, you know, what Bible translation is best? Sometimes I will tell them, the best Bible translation is the one that you'll read.

You know, you can have the best Bible translation. Oh man, oh boy, crosses all the T's and dots all the I's. But you don't read it, it doesn't do you any good.

In any regard, the translators of the New King James Version think they know who the He is in verse 1. Did you see that? Again, the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He moved David. Now, they believe that the He is the Lord. And just taking it, if all you had there was 2 Samuel chapter 24, verse 1, we'd probably say, well, yeah, it's the Lord.

But I think we have enough reason for saying that the He of 2 Samuel 24, verse 1, shouldn't be capitalized and shouldn't be attributed unto the Lord. If you want to take a look, again, you can put your finger here. Turn to 1 Chronicles chapter 21.

We read there, 1 Chronicles chapter 21. Now, Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. Well, here we're told specifically who it was that moved David.

Satan. Now, the Lord was angry against Israel. We learn that from 2 Samuel 24.

He was angry against Israel, and so He allowed Satan to do this. He gave him some slack in his leash, so to speak. And Satan was more than happy to do this.

You see, the best explanation here is that Satan moved David and that Satan is the He of 2 Samuel 24. Yet, make no mistake about it, the Lord expressly allowed it as a chastisement against David. Why? Well, to put it bluntly, there was some pride in David's heart.

We'll see this in a few minutes. But take a look again at verse 24 where it says, Go number Israel and Judah. Now, why would that be something that Satan would whisper into the ear of King David? You know, by the Constitution of the United States, there's supposed to be a census of the population taken every 10 years.

Well, I don't think it was Satan whispering into the ears of the constitutional framers saying, you know, number the people every 10 years. Well, why was it Satan whispering this into the ear of David at this

time? Well, this is dangerous because of a principle stated in Exodus chapter 30, verse 12. It says there, When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.

In other words, God instructed Moses that when they were to take the census in the days of Moses, they were to get a little bit of what you might call atonement money from each person that they counted. And they were to give it unto the Lord so that God would look at that atonement and not bring a plague upon the people for numbering. I still don't get it.

Why would God not want them to count the people who are in Israel? Well, you have to go back to the thinking of the ancient world. And in that part of the ancient world, it was understood that you only counted something if you owned it. And this speaks to the principle of God's ownership of his people.

I mean, look, it's just not kosher for you to go and count the money in your neighbor's bank account. Why? It doesn't belong. Well, I just like to count.

I'm sorry. I just want to count your money. I just like to count things.

You know, you're like the count on Sesame Street. Well, no, no, not at all. That's not permitted.

That money is not yours. It's not your place to count that money. Well, that idea of counting and ownership was very much a large idea in David's day.

And Israel didn't belong to David. Israel belonged to God. It was up to the Lord to command accounting.

And if David were to count, he should only do it at God's command. And he should only do it by receiving ransom money to atone for the counting. But David didn't do those things.

So he floats the idea by his staff. Verse three. And Joab said to the king.

Now, may the Lord your God add to the people a hundredfold more than they are. And may the eyes of my lord, the king, see it. But why does my lord, the king, desire this thing? Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army.

So Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of the king to count the people of Israel. Again, you got to love Joab. He's not afraid to speak up when he thinks David was wrong.

David, pardon me. Why on earth do you want to do this? Do you want to see how many people you got? Do you want to see how much Israel has grown in the years during your reign? David, I pray they grow more and more. But I'm counseling you.

Don't do this thing. It also tells us in verse four that the captains of the army were against it. But David didn't listen to them.

Joab tactfully asked David to reconsider his foolish desire to count the nation. You should also see that Joab hinted at the motive behind the counting pride. You see, it seems that the thing that David desired was the increase of the nation.

Look at verse three again. Now may the Lord your God add to the people a hundredfold more than they are. And may the eyes of the Lord the king see it.

But why does my Lord the king desire this thing? Either he wants Israel to grow more or he wants to see how much they have grown. Maybe he wanted to see if they had enough force to conquer a neighboring nation. It seems that at this point, late in his reign, David was tempted to take some of the glory to himself.

To see how much Israel had grown and prospered during his reign. Joab tried to warn him. The captains of the army tried to warn him.

David didn't listen and they went ahead and did it. And they crossed over the Jordan and camped in Ararah, which is on the right side of the town, which is in the midst of the ravine of Gad and towards Jazir. And they came to Gilead and the land of Tatim-Hashti.

And they came to Danjan and around Sidon. And they came to the stronghold of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites, the Canaanites. And they went out from south Judah as far as Beersheba.

So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there were in Israel 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword.

And the men of Judah were 500,000 men. So did you see this? They go all throughout the land and they count a total of 1.3 million fighting men among the twelve tribes. If you calculate this out, 1.3 million fighting men, you have estimates that the total population of Israel then was perhaps something about 5 or 6 million, which is a considerable population.

It shows how much Israel had been blessed in the days of David. But David is at a critical point here. David, you're venturing into something that the Lord didn't want you to do.

Satan is the one who moved upon your heart to count the nation. God gave you advisors to counsel you out of this, but you would not listen to them. And now you've got the count.

What's going to happen next? Well, we'll have to save that for next time when we finish up the book of 2 Samuel, the next time we're together. To me, it's a very fitting conclusion to the book. We don't want to miss what we've seen tonight.

This man with a great and remarkable relationship with the Lord. Folks, I don't know how to put it any more plainly or any more strongly. That's what it's about.

Your relationship with Jesus and my relationship with Jesus. Are you doing great things for God? God bless you. How's your relationship with Jesus? Is it deeper with him? Is it sweeter? Does prayer flow easier? Do you have a more peaceful, more flowing relationship with Jesus than you did a year ago or two years ago or five? It's just the relationship growing better and better.

Through my years as a pastor, I've counseled many troubled couples. And I think that I've noticed through a lot of marriage counseling that basically what most couples are looking for in marriage is peaceful coexistence. Honestly, that's what they want.

I want to do my own thing and peacefully coexist with this other person. Well, listen, peaceful coexistence is better than open warfare. Anybody would say that.

But you know what? That's not God's goal for your marriage at all. Peaceful coexistence. That's not it.

I mean, your relationship should be growing deeper and more sweet and more glorious. That's just how it should be. Now, take the same principle over to your relationship with the Lord.

How many of us really just kind of long for peaceful coexistence with God? You know, God, just bless me and love me and you know that. But, you know, that's cool, Lord. Can I say that that's not what God wants? God wants a deeper and a more meaningful relationship with you day by day, week by week, year by year.

I've come to the place in my life where I see that every day, my personal relationship with God, my personal time with God is the most important thing I can do that day. Because primarily, God didn't put me on this earth to be a great speaker or a great pastor or a great writer or even a great husband and dad. All of those things are fine callings and worthy of the occupation of my time and effort.

But those aren't the real reason I was created. I was created to have a living, deepening relationship with the God who made me and saved me. David knew that.

That's why the sweet psalmist of Israel, that's why his songs ring true to us today. Father, give us some of that heart. Give us some of the great heart of King David that just longs for you, Lord.

That values time with you like refreshing water in the midst of a desert. Pour out your spirit upon us, Lord. Draw us closer and deeper to you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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