



Reflections From Israel's Messianic Line

Summaries by Sergio R. Tangari

REFLECTIONS FROM 1 & 2 SAMUEL

My goal in writing reflections from 1 & 2 Samuel are the following: First, to encourage you the reader that if you will pay attention to the words on the page and listen carefully you will mine a lot of truth for life without the need of a commentary or any secondary source. That is, “take up and read” to enrich your soul Christian.

Second, I write to give you a model of how observations can be done in scripture that do not read into the text something foreign to the author’s intent. This will help you experience the joy of discovery and increase your confidence in your ability to comprehend God’s word.

Third, by doing the above my hope is that you will be able to hear God’s voice all the more clearly because it is the word of God that is forever settled in heaven, and not our subjective impressions however valid they may be. That is, we have a more sure word of prophecy according to Peter—meaning the inscripturated word of God—then a glorious experience we may claim to have (2 Peter 1:16-21). Too often we Christians have bizarre ideas of what “God” is supposedly speaking to us and when it contradicts the Bible, be assured we are not hearing his voice.

1 SAMUEL 1-3: “A MOTHER’S PRAYER, A FATHER’S INDULGENCE & A PROPHET’S EXALTATION”

As redemptive history continues to unfold, there are a few thoughts which have arrested my attention from these four chapters. First, *Hannah’s life* with her barrenness and subsequent birth of Samuel who would grow to become a prophet in Israel, were God ordained (1:5, 20). After her many bitter travails, she erupts in a song of gratitude recounting the LORD’s absoluteness (2:2); his knowledge and judgments (2:3); and his sovereign actions (2:6-10). Truly, God hears the weeping of his people and answers their cries in his time.

Second, *the description of Eli’s two sons is daunting*. The text says that they were, “...worthless men, they did not know the LORD” (2:12-17, 22-25). In Joshua and Judges this same clause is used of evil men who despise God and thus his ways (Judges 9:4; 11:3). Eli became the means for his sons’ destruction and curse because he neglected to discipline them (2:27-36; 3:12-14, 18).

Third, *Samuel is exalted as Israel’s prophet*. It was evident to all of Israel that he was exalted and chosen by God to be a prophet (3:19-21) and this resulted in response to his mother, Hannah’s prayer (1:27-28). This is amazing, God is the sovereign who accomplishes his providential purposes through the prayers of the frail, insignificant, and even those despised in society (to be barren was socially seen as a curse).

It's good to pour out our hearts before the LORD who hears the cries of his own. When parents don't discipline their children they both despise the LORD and contribute to the destruction of their offspring.

1 SAMUEL 4-8: "GOD DICTATES HOW HE'LL BE WORSHIPPED, NOT US"

There's a biblical theme revealed through the Ark of the Covenant being placed in the temple of Dagon in Ashdod as a result of the Philistines defeating Israel in battle (4:10-11). The theme, "God is to be worshipped as he demands and those who refuse to comply –die!" This theme culminates in Paul's confession of Jesus that, "...every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father" (Phil.2:5-11)

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The glory of God ultimately tabernacle in the person of his son, the Ark of the Covenant a foreshadowing of such, belonged to Israel and was to be in Israel not in some pagan temple (5:1-8; 4:22). God is to be worshipped very specifically and never to be treated tritely for he is the Holy One (6:20). Both the Philistines and the Israelites were dealt the death blow because of their irreverent ways toward the LORD God (**5:11-12**; 6:19)

¹¹ They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, so that it will not kill us and our people." For there was a deadly confusion throughout the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. ¹² And the men who did not die were smitten with tumors and the cry of the city went up to heaven."

Not only is God to be worshipped in a certain way, he does not play favorites with family members if they are negligent with their duties as was the case with Samuels sons Joel and Abijah in Samuel 8:1-3:

And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. ² Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba. ³ His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.

Their wickedness prodded Israel to ask for a king to be placed in Israel like all the other nations. Like a polluted stream is a ruler that takes bribes and perverts justice and thus these sons polluted Israel with their wickedness.

Some hold that the God of the *Old Testament* (more accurately it's the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets) is unapproachable, angry and not merciful while the God of the New Testament is approachable, calm and full of mercy. But that notion is false for both "Testaments" unfold the theme of God being very specific in how he is to be worshipped (Jn.4:21-26; Rev.). Moreover, those who neglect his son will be eternally condemned (Rev.20:11-15; 21:1-8).

In our 21st century pluralistic religious climate God has revealed his word to us but if we twist it to mean something it does not (E.g., all religions are basically teaching the same thing, and all roads lead to heaven) than what awaits is not total mercy and grace but just wrath. Why? Because God has spoken!
(SDG)

1 SAMUEL 9-12: "ISREAL'S SIN REVEALED, SAUL'S EXALTED & SAMUEL INTERCEDES"

These sections of I Samuel present to us the life of Saul, his lineage, choosing, and final exaltation (9:1-2, 15-10:1-27). This timid, tall, dark and handsome Benjamite fellow was God's choice for ruling the people (9:21).

His looks or lack of courage could not stay God's hand of power to change Saul into a useful vessel, when the Spirit of the LORD came upon him (10:5-6, 17-11:7). When God moved in this man's life, his frailties were turned into strength. Not only did Saul prophecy (an activity normally reserved solely for prophets), but when the time required, his timidity turned into ferocity.

In Scripture, God delights to take our weaknesses and demonstrate his power in and through them so that we will learn to rely on his power and not our own strength. This strength comes from fearing the LORD, a message Israel's forefathers heard and mostly disobeyed, and now the king is being reminded of:

"If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns

over you will follow the LORD your God. ¹⁵ If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers.” (12:14-15)

God loves his people and in the covenant, loyalty is central to flourishing. When disloyalty occurs, it's called adultery (i.e., spiritual), for it involves going after and worshipping the futile false gods of the surrounding nations (12:16-22, 24-25), rather than the LORD of creation.

By asking for a king Israel sinned (this act was evil in the LORD's sight because rather than being ruled by Him, they preferred to be ruled by mere man in order to be like the surrounding nations 12:20), yet Samuel the prophet still encouraged the people to repent and to serve the LORD with all their heart (12:20-21). *What we worship rules us; what/who we obey becomes our master. The apostle Paul said that people are either, slaves of God or to sin, the former bringing life, the latter ending in death (Rom.6).*

Nevertheless, even though Israel is weak God still promises not to abandon His people **not** on account of their value (even though they are precious image bearers), but because of God's great name whose pleasure it is to make Israel His own:

“For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.” (12:22)

I'm overwhelmed with how I can relate to Israel in their penchant bent to go astray. The word then as is now, is the LORD's! It is our life, and to despise it is to embrace death. Jesus summoned up the matter:

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (Jn.17:3)

All of the Old Testament narratives and prophetic messages culminate in this text for the purpose of God's design from eternity past was to have a people for Himself to the praise of His glorious grace (Eph.1:1-14). Thus, to reject God as the *only* true God is akin to rejecting His kingship over us also. It is only through His Spirit indwelling us that we gladly welcome His reign into our lives.

My heart is both burdened and gladdened. It rejoices to see youngsters make professions of commitment to Christ Jesus the Lord by becoming church members and publicly declaring to live in community under the King's rulership.

Yet, there's much sorrow when I see other youngsters leaning toward the kingdom of heaven but choosing to stray away from it. This grief calls for weeping accompanied by intercessory prayer. This was Samuel's attitude and must be ours:

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way.²⁴ Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. ²⁵ But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away." (12:23-25)

Not only should we continue to pray for those going astray, but we must also instruct them in the ways of the LORD lest they continue to go astray and die in their rebellion.

In the home husbands and wives need to come together and intercede on behalf of their straying children, continuously instructing even the most recalcitrant child, understanding that this can only be accomplished through God's power and wisdom. If we cease to pray for those who have gone astray (or are lost), we give God a vote of no confidence. In essence, we indict God of not being faithful to care for broken lost people but the cross of Christ puts that lie forever to rest.

LORD, teach us to submit to your Kingship in word and deed, remind us that in our weakness your power is made perfect, and keep our hearts receptive to your ways when ours want to rule.
(SDG)

1 SAMUEL 13-16: "CHRONICLES OF A FOOLISH LEADER/KING"

As I read these four chapters my attention kept coming to King Saul's disposition as a man and a leader of God's people. First, *Saul did not understand the limits of his authority*. This is evident when he chooses to sacrifice offerings to the LORD which is only the duty of Samuel the prophet (13:9-14). God calls Saul "foolish" because he did not heed the commandment given (13:13) but took matters into his own hands. He, unlike David, was not a man after God's own heart—one whose disposition is to love and live according to God's inscripturated self-disclosure (13:14).

Second, *Saul put confidence in people rather than in God*. The king here has a lapse of faith and disobedience results (13:11-12). Unlike Jonathan his son, who understood that victory in battle did not come from people or the performance of

religious duties, but it came from the LORD (14:6-23), Saul did not get this. In fact, it was Saul's fear of people rather than fear of God that proved to be his snare. To lead as God demands will usually result in angering the crowds are creatures, not the Creator.

Third, *Saul was rash in making decisions*. Rash oaths are impulsive decisions made on the spot that increase the burden of leading and a tendency to guard against. Saul's rashness to speak and to act clouded his judgement and often proved detrimental to Israel (14:24-52). Again, disobedience to God's word is the downfall of any leader (15:1-29) and Saul's story is a sad example of said negligence. Obedience that pleases God is never partial, but absolute (15:20-21).

Who can be totally obedient? For even David, the man after God's own heart had horrible lapses of faith! David's son, Jesus of Nazareth perfectly obeyed. As such, he is not only the true reigning king, but our assurance of acceptance before a holy God. That is, because of his obedience, I'm to walk as he did who gave the Spirit to comfort and guide me in His ways.

Fourth, *Saul did not delight in obeying God*. The text says, "...to obey is better than sacrifice..." (15:22) and is a loaded truth claim. Essentially it's telling God's people that ritual apart from adherence to His revelation of how He's to be worshipped and what is to be done, is greater than "mere" acts of religious actions. Here again, God is exalting and showing the primacy of His word compared to "all other things". It's God's word that created everything, sustains everything and that gives His people light in their darkness—especially to his leaders.

May God's word ever be our delight which always leads us to You LORD of heaven and earth, the source of all that is.

(SDG)

1 SAMUEL 17: "DELIVERANCE COMES SO THAT PEOPLE MAY KNOW ISRAEL'S YAHWEH"

This chapter is perhaps one of the most loved and least understood in all of the Bible by both believers and non-believers alike. It's the story of David and Goliath, the underdog facing insurmountable odds for success. It's a story of courage under fire where the dream is truly impossible to attain. It's a story of a boy coming of age in battle demonstrating his mettle. The above is true. It's more than *just* a story, but one that happened in space time history. But this

story rather than primarily focusing on the characters, the observant reader will note that it's about the *present* Author.

The story unfolds with the Philistine armies set in battle array in Socoh and across the valley Saul and Israel camped in the valley of Elah. Goliath, a nine foot specimen of a man, a fierce warrior and ominous presence taunted Saul and Israel's army's to come and fight him for forty days (1-7)

*⁸ He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel and said to them, "Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us." ¹⁰ Again the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together." ¹¹ When **Saul and all Israel** heard these words of the Philistine, they were **dismayed** and **greatly afraid**.*

Like the scene in the movie "Troy" where one king's star warrior challenges the opposing king's champion fighter to determine who's king will be served, so also in this account the same obtains. But unlike the figure of Achilles—known for his fierce battle skills, David—the son of Jesse—the shepherd youth comes forth as the unexpected and unknown hero—or so it seems (Vv.12-19).

After a month of Goliath's taunts David comes on the scene and inquires what the problem is, what the reward for killing Goliath is and then takes on the challenge (Vv.20-25). It seems that for Eliab his brother, David was a despicable nuisance and perhaps sibling rivalry's obtained growing up (Vv.26-30). It seems however that David understood something Saul and Israel had forgotten—they were God's covenant people, the Philistines were not:

"Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" (V.26)

To be circumcised in Israel hearkened back to the God of the fathers who fought many battles for Israel and would continue to do so even that day. He is Yahweh, the God of the covenant who overthrew Egypt's mighty armies and is unchanging. So David recalls Israel's historical past but recalls his as well. This youth, the

shepherd boy going up against this seasoned warrior, gives a brief biography that's telling:

³² David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth." ³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God." ³⁷ And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you."

God had been preparing David for this fight for many years and through many difficult trials. It was in said crucible that David the youth learned to trust in the God of Creation and the Covenant. Thus, this situation would be no different; instead of killing a lion and bear who threatened David's sheep, he would be killing the elite warrior who for forty days had been threatening and terrorizing his people Israel.

Goliath came out with full battle armor and sword, but David with five stones and a sling. After Goliath's many taunts and scorn, David replies with a promise of his doom based on the status and purpose of Yahweh:

*⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but **I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.** ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; **for the battle is the LORD's and He will give you into our hands.**" ⁴⁸ Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground. ⁵⁰ Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him;*

but there was no sword in David's hand.⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

David went from being an obscure youth to the champion of Israel, but little did he know what trials his faith in God and courage would bring into his life (Vv.52-58).

David had a relationship with God that was vibrant, not static. He walked with God from his youth and when the time came he glorified the God of heaven, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The thrust of this account is not that we need heroes; that underdogs can have their day; that courage requires one to be in battle; etc. I think God through the Holy Spirit is saying to his people even today that regardless of the opposition (be it great or small) you can trust that I'll be there to deliver you according to my purposes for the glory of my name so that the nations will **know** there's a God in Israel who has ultimately revealed himself in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

May a youth movement be raised up in these last days LORD who will dare to walk with you and not be distracted with the Goliaths of our day, may they so be filled with an understanding of your word that when the time to act in righteousness arises, they don't back down but trust in your presence to deliver according to your purposes, not theirs. And may those saints who have walked with you for years, who have lost a passion for your kingdom, find the fire of heaven they once imbibed to glory of your matchless name!
(SDG)

1 SAMUEL 18-21: "SAUL'S MADNESS AND DAVID'S TROUBLES—GOD ORDAINED"

These chapters unfold to us the colorful and painful account of two distinct kings. On the one hand, Saul, is trying to hold onto that which God has removed from him—the kingdom. On the other hand, David desires to be a faithful subject to the king—he's not trying to overthrow Saul and take what's rightly his by God's command (the throne).

In chapter 18 we see David welcomed into the house of Saul. The king's son, Jonathan is taken by the person of David such that the text says; *"The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David...Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself"* (18:1-3). Moreover, when the woman sang of

Saul's exploits compared to David's it was obvious the young man was the people's choice, not King Saul; "*Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands*" (18:7). Thus, David's popularity boiled over Saul's jealousy and rage such that he would never trust David (18:9)

What occurs next is baffling, troubling and often denied by professing believers regarding God's way of accomplishing his purposes. The text reads:

*¹⁰ Now it came about on the next day that **an evil spirit from God** came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul's hand. ¹¹ Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice. ¹² Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. ¹³ Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. ¹⁴ David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him. ¹⁵ When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him. ¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.*
(18:10-16)

Here, we are told that God, not Satan, sent an evil spirit on Saul that essentially drove the king mad. The kingdom had already been removed from Saul (15:35-16:7), it was only a matter of time for that to materialize. In God's providential plan to exalt David, Saul's madness and spear would be used to teach David to trust in the LORD and show Saul he was no longer God's man.

There were at least four other murderous attempts by Saul toward David but these would fail (18:17-19:12) for he had favor with Saul's house (Michal Saul's daughter and Jonathan his son). Again, in chapter 19 the text re-iterates the origin of Saul's madness and rage:

⁹ Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand. ¹⁰ Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night."

The author is making it clear that these horrible turn of events are coming ultimately from God's hands, not Satan's. God ordains his purposes which are often hidden from us. David could have cursed God and died, but instead he

chose to trust the LORD. In chapters 20-21, the text reveals Saul's incessant desire to murder David, Jonathan's determination to save David, and David's survival skills through deception and manipulation.

Much can be considered here, yet the core which must not be overlooked is that God is always working things out through the drama of human history where our choices are significant but never ultimate. Kings come and go but this King was chosen by God for he was a man after His own heart (frail as he was nevertheless a godly man).

Often, God will use our enemies to sanctify us on the journey of faith, often it will be difficult to bear but He is present to help, frequently it will be a puzzle to us but not to Him, commonly it will frustrate us but He is working all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. May we trust the God who is there when our souls demand answers and none are forthcoming.

(SDG)

1 SAMUEL 22-24: "A TALE OF TWO KINGS—Part 1"

The trials of David continue to unfold as he hides from King Saul in caves and forests (22:1-5). In chapter 22 a turn of events reveals the type of man David was:

*"So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him. ² Everyone who was in **distress**, and everyone who was in **debt**, and everyone who was **discontented** gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him."* (Vv.1-2)

There was a quality of character and leadership that David possessed that even in the worst of times his brothers (who once despised him) came to him for direction and hope. David gathered unto himself (I think by God's doing) people that were also like him: *distressed, indebted and discontented*. How ironic that David would be surrounded by people who could relate to his plight, but it seems that God will often do that for us so that we don't lose heart in the battles of life.

Saul's madness once again manifests as he has the priests of Nob killed because they helped David in his hour of need. When Ahimelech inquires of Saul and recounts David's faithfulness it only leads to his death (22:11-19):

“¹¹ Then the king sent someone to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father’s household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king. ¹² Saul said, “Listen now, son of Ahitub.” And he answered, “Here I am, my lord.” ¹³ Saul then said to him, “Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as it is this day?” ¹⁴ Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, “And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king’s son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house? ¹⁵ Did I just begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair.” ¹⁶ But the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father’s household!” ¹⁷ And the king said to the guards who were attending him, “Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me.” But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD. ¹⁸ Then the king said to Doeg, “You turn around and attack the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. ¹⁹ And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep he struck with the edge of the sword.”

This type of madness reveals not only that God had taken the kingdom from Saul but also that his thirst for righteous blood demanded to be satisfied. Even though David is fleeing from Saul, he nevertheless makes time to ask God whether or not to help Keilah from being plundered by the Philistines (23:1-12). The term for prayer used here is “David *inquired* of the LORD” as to which actions to take.

The text does not say to us that God used an audible voice, but what else could it be when the text reads, “*And the LORD answered...and the LORD said*” when speaking to David? Assuredly, David was clear and acted accordingly. This was intercessory prayer. Ironically, the very people David rescued here from the Philistines would be the same people that would turn him over to King Saul given the opportunity.

What we see here is that David asks for direction from God concerning battle strategy and it’s granted, David asks if a people will either betray him or protect him and God answers him. When sovereigns inquire of the LORD,

answers often come. What Saul however does not seem to get is that unless the LORD deliver David into his hands, he won't be successful.

Perhaps the most revealing account between these two kings is where Saul's thirst for David's blood remains unquenched, but David stays his opportunity to kill Saul (24:1-9). David knew he had done nothing wrong toward Saul but he also knew that God is the one who exalts leaders and removes them ultimately. The text reads;

¹⁰ Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.'

The difference between David and Saul: the latter is merciless and mad; the former is merciful and sober. When rulers reject God's ways, they meander in a degree of madness that blinds their judgment. This section ends with Saul's confession and plea to David which are moving and sobering:

²⁰ Now, behold, I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. ²¹ So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father's household." ²² David swore to Saul. And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Saul's confession reveals that he knew what he was doing was wrong but he couldn't help himself (again, I think it's because God's favor was no longer on him). Nevertheless, he pleads for David to be gracious to his house in spite of Saul's wickedness and his request is granted. This love/hate relationship is somewhat sick but also reveals the human condition that even when our enemies desire our harm, we can by God's spirit truly bless them. David's dealings with Saul instruct believers on how to trust God with our enemies and treat them nevertheless with mercy. Astounding!
(SDG)

1 SAMUEL 25-31: "A TALE OF TWO KINGS—Part 2"

The Christian author Gene Edwards wrote, "A Tale of Two Kings" where the lives of King Saul and David are considered and with penetrating insight the author calls the reader to careful self-reflection. Undoubtedly he used portions

from these texts to peer into the souls of two men that are instructing believers today in *how* and *how not to* approach life.

First, *the man after God's own heart is depicted as a fierce warrior* (25:2-38; 27:8-11; 30:1-20) whose skill in battle was nothing to be trifled with. David, unlike Saul, understood authority and those in such places are to be revered even if they are wicked. This is clearly witnessed when David stays his weapon from murdering King Saul—opportunities that repeatedly presented themselves to him (26:8-25). Thus, David was a fierce warrior who understood authority but could also demonstrate a reasonable tender heart when properly approached (25:18-35). Too often, leaders are harsh, not patient nor reasonable and those under their care suffer deeply.

Second, *David also understood (unlike King Saul) that the kingship comes from God, not from man's strength*. This is evident when the Amalekites raided the Negev and Ziklag:

*"Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; ² and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way. ³ When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive. ⁴ Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep. ⁵ Now David's two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. ⁶ Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. ⁷ Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸ David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all."
(1 Sam. 30:1-8)*

How did he strengthen himself in the LORD? I think the man after God's own heart recounted God's acts in redemptive history and trusted in God's promise to him of being king over Israel (Ps.18:2; Rom.4:20). Thus, David with his actions would sing with us today, "When all around my soul gives way, he then is

all my hope and stay. On Christ the Solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand.”

Unfortunately Saul’s account is much different, much sadder and much more difficult to bear. First, *Saul, unlike David, was a man after his own heart, not God’s*. Because of this, Saul’s pride caused him to lose his mind (E.g., see Dan.4 where Nebuchadnezzar goes mad because of pride), to turn on those who were most loyal to him, which resulted in God’s word of promise—his kingship is removed (1 Sam.28:6-25; 31:6).

Second, *Saul’s life reminds us that greatness will be absolutely diminished because of pride*. God said, “...to obey is better than sacrifice”, but Saul did not get it, he did not understand. His pride blinded him to God’s word. Thus, he did not do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before God. But David did. Why? Ultimately I think it’s because David was God’s choice, not the people’s selection. Ponder this.

(SDG)

2 SAMUEL 1-4: “MUCH BLOODSHED PRECEDED DAVID’S KINGSHIP”

The saga of turmoil, deceit, betrayal and murder continues in 2 Samuel. King Saul, David’s number one enemy, is now dead but David’s troubles remain. In chapter one the messenger who (supposedly) killed Saul thought he was bringing David good news (1:1-16) but unwittingly delivered his own death sentence:

“¹⁰ So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown which was on his head and the bracelet which was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord...¹⁴ Then David said to him, “How is it you were not afraid to stretch out your hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed?”¹⁵ And David called one of the young men and said, “Go, cut him down.” So he struck him and he died.¹⁶ David said to him, “Your blood is on your head, for your mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed the Lord’s anointed.’” (1:10, 14-16)

David’s understanding of not touching the LORD’s anointed king is once again seen as he avenges Saul’s (supposed) killer. According to 1 Samuel 31:3-5, the Philistine archers had severely wounded Saul and rather than being made sport of by the enemy, Saul chose suicide by falling on his own sword. Even Saul’s armor bearer chose suicide over killing the king because he feared the LORD’s

anointed. Somehow these men understood that God had exalted Saul to be Israel's monarch and refused to be the instrument of his death.

People have used this text and ones like it to insulate popular televangelist's from public criticism regarding their teaching, but that is a misunderstanding and resulting misapplication of this text (See Acts 17:11 the Bereans). What I think we are to minimally understand is that those ruling are God's vice-regents (however evil they may be) and to take personal vengeance on them is not our place but God's. David modeled this. There are many issues here I'm not prepared to consider, so I'll leave it you the reader to further investigate. But David's response is moving:

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

This is called the "Song of the Bow" and the refrain, "*How the mighty have fallen*" is used three times for emphasis (1:19, 25, 27) and unveils to us that for David the Monarchy was highly precious to God and to him. It's amazing that David would weep over the man that persecuted him and longed for his death, but he did. Why? I think he understood but for the grace of God, the roles could have been reversed and he would have been the madman. The reason I say this is because the man after God's own heart understood divine mercy, through God's mercy.

In chapters two and three David is crowned Judah's king and Saul's son Ish-bosheth becomes Israel's monarch. Sadly a bloody civil war ensues between the house of Saul and David, Abner the son of Ner is killed by Joab for spying on David, and David chants a lament for him. Even though Saul is dead, his descendants remain David's enemies and yet he weeps over their deaths. Why? Perhaps it's because this warrior king understood how horrible death is—even of his own enemies, perhaps because he was heart-broken over Saul's rejection of him. The bloodshed nevertheless continues in chapter four where Saul's son (Ish-bosheth) is murdered and David avenges his life:

⁹ David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, "As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, ¹⁰ when one told me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the

reward I gave him for his news. ¹¹ How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood from your hand and destroy you from the earth?"¹² Then David commanded the young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hung them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron."

It's a bloody and distressful history that preceded David's monarchy. Yet, he was eventually crowned Israel and Judah's king. Yet David's troubles would continue. His life reminds me that to live is to suffer regardless of any status. Decisions to live for God or rebel against His will confront us daily, and while our enemies too often seem "only" bad, God often uses them to teach us to rely on Him, who is King over all.

(SDG)

2 SAMUEL 5-8: "KING DAVID'S GREATNESS IS ULTIMATELY ATTRIBUTED TO GOD"

In these chapters what stands out to me is why David was great and increased in his greatness: "for the LORD God of hosts was with him" (5:10; 7:8-17, 18-29). The chief player in the history of Israel is never the people, but God who is over all. They, like we, forget that.

I look back at my life and can recall, with embarrassment, the times I longed to be exalted among God's people in order to lead them through the teaching of God's word. But God's plans are not mine. A look at David's life is a reminder that God's providence in all of life is for the most part hidden from his people. God's purposes for our lives are always His, never ours because He's the creator and we are His creatures.

When it comes to plans I have and the direction I sense I'm getting from the LORD don't actually pan out, it's important to remember that as God lead David so He in a certain sense leads me. Often the direction is hazy but nevertheless I should not forget that God's presence is ever with me to bring honor to His name through those works prepared beforehand that I should walk in (Eph.2:10).

2 SAMUEL 10-13: "KING DAVID'S SIN HAS FAR REACHING CONSEQUENCES"

As I read these chapters, my heart was grieved by the events which transpired. The account of Bathsheba, Uriah's death and Absalom's vengeance on

his brother are deeply grievous but not new. Throughout recorded history narratives of adultery, betrayal and familial murder adhere. In Genesis, Cain's twistedness records him murdering his brother Abel. Life is messy, and David's family makes up part of that human mosaic. I want to make two main observations.

First, as I consider what King David schemed, my soul recoils because that could have been me. Most of us don't know what it's like to have a monarch's power such that any whim we lust after can be quickly attained. The king here abuses his power by committing adultery but can't hide the fact that Bathsheba, Uriah's wife is pregnant, so eventually he betrays Uriah by having him murdered. The man after God's own heart, like Saul, lapsed into his own heart's sinful passions and death resulted. David's heart became cold and calloused toward his LORD—Israel's Shepherd—such that even King Saul could not rival his betrayal. Here, the seeds of death were sown which launched the demise of David's kingdom and family.

Almost always, the little things **are** the big things. In David's case, the little things lead to the bigger things. David starts by neglecting his duties as king (e.g., he was supposed to be leading Israel's army in battle), and replaces them with leisurely pleasure (e.g., he saw Bathsheba's beautiful body as she bathed), followed up by a power play (e.g., he had Bathsheba brought to him), then consummates his erotic lust (e.g., he commits adultery), attempts to cover up his adultery (e.g., he betrays faithful Uriah through murder) and lastly must be confronted by Nathan the prophet to unveil David's sin: "you're the man". (Chapters 11-12) After this episode, neither the kingdom nor David's family was ever the same.

Second, the unraveling of the kings' family is sadly depicted in David's passivity when Tamar is raped. I mentioned that families are messy and in this case Tamar, David's daughter is raped by her brother Amnon. But upon hearing this news David takes no action (13:2). Many commentators hold that David's own sin (greater than his sons) paralyzed him from doing justice. The text does not say, but knowing human nature, it's quite probable. Nevertheless Absalom takes matters into his own hands and murders his brother Amnon. Like his father David, now Absalom had blood on his hands. So there are two sons; one brother rapes his sister, the other brother murders his brother and their father (even though God had forgiven David for his previous

sins) can't act righteously. The shame, betrayal, rage and passivity here are difficult to bear. Yet, they serve as a sober reminder of the far reaching significance and effects of our choices.

While David was forgiven for his adultery and murder, nevertheless, he seemed to struggle with guilt which resulted in a tarnished ability to rule well in his kingdom and also in his family. Forgiveness of sin does not negate the possibility of reaping what we have sown. Clearly Davids' life attests to this fact. What believers must never forget however is that even our sin God will use for our good (Rom.8:28-29).

The effects of David's past sins seem to have kept him from properly ruling in the present which resulted in a home life that was out of control and did not epitomize what a covenant family should mirror—God's glory. Like David's sin, our sin has far reaching consequences that unless properly dealt with, may ruin our families and homes.

LORD, stay my passions by your Spirit today, and when I stumble and fall, rescue me from a soul that's been sin torn, as I latch on to the altar's horn, for your names sake this my plea, keep my heart close to You. (SDG)

2 SAMUEL 14-19: "THE SAD DRAMA OF DAVID'S LIFE CONTINUES TO UNFOLD"

In these chapters we continue to behold the demise of King David's family through the shameful conspiracy of his son Absalom to overthrow King David from the throne of Israel, the continued defaming of his father's concubine before all Israel, the end of Absalom's life, and the king's tenderized heart in the midst of all these events. King David was a broken man.

Nevertheless, through it all David demonstrates his resolute trust in the sovereignty of the LORD God Almighty, whether it favors his rule or threatens it. His brokenness does not prevent him from understanding God's rule over his own times. Reading these passages remains heart wrenching for me seeing both the greatness and wretchedness of God's servants. Oh God, move in my life! (SDG)

2 SAMUEL 20-23: "BEHOLDING THE TWILIGHT OF KING DAVID'S LIFE"

Even in the twilight of his years, King David had to deal with people revolting against his rule while God demonstrated to him his kindness. Getting old is not for the faint of heart, it takes courage. Especially moving is the long

psalm David writes at the end of his life where battle wearied in the field of life, he still praises God— Israel's true king of who is ever merciful.

Chapter 23 is also deeply stirring because it names David's mighty men. These too have a special place in God's heart for without them David would not have ruled well. These men were faithful to the King through the good times and the bad. Their mention is an enormous honor.

As a man I wonder if I would have been mentioned (I'm a civilian, not a soldier,). All of us (I think) have an innate desire to be recognized by our peers for our accomplishments, but what about a life lived that's recognized by God? That's special. May the LORD help us all—leaders and followers—live a life that's honorable we live it before his sight.

(SDG)