

MONDAY, 5/27

Read 2 Samuel 5:6-10.

Now that David is king over all of Israel, he sets out to consolidate his power. The first box to check on his list is to take the city of Jerusalem. David wants to make Jerusalem the capital city of the newly unified nation. Jerusalem was a central location for the twelve tribes of Israel; in fact, two main roads in the ancient world converged near Jerusalem. One road ran east to west; and the other, north to south. This made travel and trade easily accessible for the city.

In order to take the city, David must defeat the Jebusites. The Jebusites were Canaanites who had occupied the city even before the events of the book of Joshua.

As one might imagine, the Jebusites are put off with the attack. They mock David by saying that even the "blind and lame" could fight him and his army off. They believe their walls are impenetrable. That might have been the case, but David is able to find a weakness in their defense. He and his men enter the city through the water shaft that supplied the city with fresh water. David takes a jab at the Jebusites while taking their city.

After David takes up residence in the fortress at Jerusalem, the writer of 2 Samuel commented that David has become even more powerful. Just a short time into his reign, and already David is beginning to enjoy success.

This power is due to the fact that "God Almighty was with him." God blessed David as a part of His promise to establish David's dynasty. This follows along with one of the main themes of 1 & 2 Samuel regarding humility. David trusted the Lord, and, as a result, God trusted him. God knew that He could trust David to carry out His will, so God blessed David and all that he did.

When we are humble in spirit, desiring God's will over our own, we show the Lord that we can be trusted. Since we want God's glory more than anything else, we are also in a position to be blessed without it ruining us. Think about it this way: if God blesses someone who is seeking their own fame, they will use that blessing for their own gain. All the blessing will do is add to fuel to their pride and thus accelerate their downfall. However, when we are humble, every blessing is seen as a gift, thus evoking gratitude and a desire to return the blessing to the Lord. It can lead to our furthering God's will and Kingdom.

I wonder if your heart is in a place where God can trust you with His blessing. Would you use His blessing for yourself alone, or would you seek ways to honor the Lord with it?

Praying Together:

"Father, You are a God of blessing. You want us to be the kind of people You can trust with Your blessings. Work in our hearts that we may seek Your glory above all things. Amen."

TUESDAY, 5/28

Read 2 Samuel 5:11-16.

Yesterday I mentioned that as the new king, David has some boxes to check in order to establish his power. The first box was to find a capital city. He checks that one in verses 6-9. The second box is to build a house. He checks that box in verse 11.

David recruits stonemasons and carpenters to build a palace. What a turn of events to go from living in caves to a castle! When his palace is completed, David realizes that God's promise was being fulfilled. He is king over the nation and set to rule over God's people.

Notice in verse 12 that God did all of this not for David alone, but for "the sake of His people Israel". God didn't establish David as king to bless only him. God wanted to bless all of His people through David's reign. This goes back to the nature of the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 12. It was to bless every nation through him, not just Abraham.

There is a good point for us to consider here. God wants to bless us, but He wants to do more than bless only us. God wants to bless others through us. God does great things for David so that David can do great things for God's people. I wonder what great things God has done or is doing for us so that we can do great things for others.

In verse 13, David goes one step further in establishing his power by taking more wives and concubines. This is where we see the kinks in David's armor. In many ways, David is a man of great faith and integrity, but he has a glaring weakness. His struggle is that he sees women as a means of pleasure and political gain. He uses them as such. This isn't the first instance either. We see him do this in 1 Samuel even before he was king.

This is a glaring sin given in Deuteronomy 17:17; a king was commanded not to take many wives "or his heart will be led astray". These words are prophetic in some ways given that as David accumulates more women, it is this sin that leads to his downfall in a few chapters.

Let this story be a reminder to us that sin left unchecked will lead to our downfall. It will eventually bring harm to us and others. That will be the focus in a few weeks when we get to the story of David and his sin against Bathsheba, but let's be mindful as we see him falling further into a trap of his own making.

I wonder what sin or sins in your life are unchecked. Of what sin do you need to repent and seek God's forgiveness and help?

Praying Together:

"God, I know that You have blessed me in many ways. Show me how I can use those blessings for the good of others and Your Kingdom. Also, reveal to me the sins I need to lay at Your feet. I don't want to harbor sins that will harm me or others. I give them to You. May Your grace restore me and empower me for new living. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, 5/29

Read 2 Samuel 5:17-19.

When David's old enemies, the Philistines, learn of his promotion, they want to put an end to his story. They continue to harbor ill will toward David ever since he lopped off Goliath's head. The Philistines are serious this time. They come in full force to shut David down. David retreats to safety to figure out a plan. What will David do?

Notice that the first thing David does when considering his next steps is to inquire of the Lord. He seeks God's will before he begins to make his own plans. This is refreshing given Saul often just did what he thought was the right thing to do. David instead turns to the Lord and asks for His direction. In this way, he is indeed a man after God's own heart.

When I think about my own life and specifically prayer life, I confess it is easier to be like Saul than like David. I wonder how many times I have acted before asking God's will. Sure enough, I eventually pray, but instead of asking for God's guidance, it is to ask God to bless the mess I've made.

This is not the pattern for disciples. Jesus, God's very own Son, sought His Father's will. He inquired of His Father before He acted. If Jesus called out to God before He commenced in God's activity, how much more do we need to see Him?

We want to be a people who seek God's direction and will. It should be our desire to want what God wants. We should be the ones who trust the Lord and where He is leading us. We must be diligent about seeking Him in prayer. We are called to lean upon His wisdom rather than our own.

In the coming chapters, we will see how often God's ways aren't our ways. He asks David to do some seemingly silly things in battle, things David would not have chosen as a good military strategy. God does this to see if David trusts Him. When David does what God asks, there is victory. The same can be said for us. God's ways are not always our ways, yet God's ways are always best. May we seek Him and His ways for our lives.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, we have so much to learn from You. Teach us to pray. Teach us to turn to You for wisdom and help. We often don't know the ways we should go. Show us. Lead us, so that in every way we bring You glory. Amen."

THURSDAY, 5/30

Read 2 Samuel 5:20-25.

David's enemies, the Philistines, line up against David and his forces. David has already sought God's direction and help in prayer. David knows the victory belongs to them.

Fighting breaks out, and the Philistines are defeated. Verse 21 tells us that the Philistines abandon their idols during the fight. There is significance in this little detail. It shows how their idols are nothing compared to the might of Israel's God. The Philistines' idols are so useless they are left behind on the battlefield. After all, no idols can stand before God Almighty.

This doesn't keep the stubborn Philistines from trying again to topple David. In this new battle, David again inquires of the Lord. He prays to God for direction and help. God gives David a different approach to this fight. Rather than taking them head on, which was a common war tactic, God has the armies surround the Philistines and attack them in front of the poplar trees. Why are they to attack near the poplar trees? They are to do so because the Lord will go out before them there.

Verse 24 reads, "As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the poplar trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army." What a powerful promise. God will go out and fight for His people.

This is a change from King Saul's approach. Rarely did he inquire of the Lord. He either went into battle without seeking God's help or he refrained from the fight out of fear. As a result, God did not intervene on behalf of His people. God will not go where He is not welcomed.

Here, however, God marches onto the battlefield for His people. The people wanted a king to go out and fight their battles. While David is willing to take to the battlefield, he calls upon the Lord to go before them.

We need the reminder that the Lord also fights our battles. Our enemies look much different than the Philistines. Our fight takes the form of stress, fear, financial struggles, health concerns, grief, and more. Whatever your battle is, know that God is fighting for You if you call upon Him. May you hear the sound of His marching on the treetops so that You know He is near. Even if you don't, trust that He is there with you in the thick of it. God fights for His people. He is fighting for you.

Praying Together:

"Father, thank You for fighting for us. Thank You for going before us in our struggles. We trust that You are in the thick of it alongside us. We are not alone. We are never alone. Amen."

FRIDAY, 5/31

Read 2 Samuel 6:1-5.

The narrative shifts in chapter 6 from the fighting against the Philistines back to Jerusalem. For David to consolidate his power, there is one thing left to do: he must bring the Ark of the Covenant to Israel's new capital city Jerusalem.

The Ark of the Covenant was the representation of God's presence on earth. The Ark contained the two stone tablets with the Ten Commandments and a portion of the manna. It had accompanied the people through their wanderings in the wilderness and as they settled in the Promised Land. It is only fitting that it would find a new home in Israel's capital city of Jerusalem.

As they bring the Ark to Jerusalem, they celebrate this historic moment. From its inception, the Ark had been with them when they were wanderers. Now, they are an established nation. The God whom this Ark pointed to had surely been with them. The people, in response to the moment, celebrated "with all their might". I'm sure that was a sight to behold. I can't help but wonder if we would dare bring such energy to our worship. What would it look like to put all of our hearts into our singing and praying?

In John Wesley's *Directions for Singing*, he said, "Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep, but lift up your voice with strength." That always makes me laugh. Most of us wouldn't think of singing "lustily" as something to aim for. The word carried a slightly different tone in his day. It means to sing with vigor and passion.

As much as I might chuckle at his rule, it is a sound one (no pun intended). Ask yourself this: does your singing sound more like you're half dead or fully alive? Do you sound like you're asleep, or is your joy bursting out of your body? I think we all know which it ought to be.

I hope we take note of the passion we discover in these verses. May the Spirit fill our praises and may we find courage in our voices as we declare God's goodness together.

Praying Together:

"Spirit, fill us as we worship. Wake us up to the glory of God, and may we declare it as the Good News that it is. May the world see our hearts as they burn with passion for You, Lord. Amen."

SATURDAY, 6/1

Read 2 Samuel 6:6-15.

This passage is a head scratcher for many people. Why would God's anger break out against Uzzah who only tried to steady the Ark so that it wouldn't fall?

Well, that's a great question. If you look back to 1 Samuel 5, you will encounter the story of Israel's enemies taking possession of the Ark. When they brought it to their cities, the Lord broke out against them. I'm not sure it was quite like Spielberg depicted it in *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, but they got the message. The reason God broke out against them was because they were unclean and unfit to house God's presence.

There is a correlation to the story with Uzzah. Even though he wasn't trying to do anything bad to the Ark, he wasn't spiritually and ritually prepared to touch it. The Ark was God's presence in the world. His holiness and power were attached to the Ark. In our sinful state, we are not able to be in such a presence even if our intentions are good.

It is an unfortunate event. David becomes angry at Uzzah's death, but his anger quickly turns to fear when he considers that the Ark was coming to his home. What if he touched it? Would God strike him down?

David chooses to send the Ark to Obed-Edom's house. Wouldn't you like to receive that order from the king? I'm sure he was thrilled. It turns out that the Lord blessed Obed-Edom's household when he housed the Ark. Soon David would bring the Ark back to his own home.

So, what can we learn from this passage? This passage shows us both the beauty and awesome power of God. It reminds us that joy and fear are both appropriate responses to God. God's has power and authority like no other. He is to be revered with our highest regard, which is a response of humility. He is also the God who blesses, and He does just that.

We have to remember that while God's anger may break out from time to time in scripture, it is His grace that breaks into the world through the gift of His Son. God's heart isn't against us, but for us. When we turn to Him in faith, though we revere Him, we do not have to fear His anger toward us for that has to do with judgment. We know that we are recipients of grace. When we oppose Him, we can expect to experience His judgment.

Praying Together:

"Lord, You have come to the world so that we might be saved through You. As You said, the world already stands condemned because of sin, yet You came to save us. We stand in awe of Your mercy and Your covenant love that led You to our cross. Thank You for saving us. Amen."

SUNDAY, 6/2

Read 2 Samuel 6:16-23.

With the Ark on its way into the heart of Jerusalem, King David leads the procession. Here, the king offers sacrifices to the Lord, serving in the role as a priest. Many people will call David the priest-king, a name that will be fitting for only one other in his line, Jesus.

David dances before the Ark. As his wife Michal watches, she becomes disgusted with what she sees. David, who is caught up in the festivities, has danced so vigorously that he has potentially exposed himself. It is either this or the nature of his dancing that was considered inappropriate for a king. Either way, Michal is repulsed by what she witnessed. She confronts David, and the two have a heated discussion.

David refuses to apologize for the incident since he was worshiping the Lord. David is more concerned with God's glory than he is his own dignity. When we think of it that way, that is a wonderful perspective to have with worship. How often do we hold back our voices or refrain from any movement for fear of what others might think? I can't help but wonder if we are thinking more about them than we are the Lord in our worship.

There is more behind this disagreement than David's dancing. A few chapters before, David had taken Michal back to be his wife. Saul had given Michal to David to be his wife but took her back after Saul tried to kill David. Michal was married to another man, but when David became king of Judah, he tore Michal away from her husband. It appears the two were in love, and it was a grievous event for them. I'm sure part of what Michal is expressing here is pent-up anger toward David.

In the end, they do not have children together. It isn't clear whether God closed her womb or if David set her aside and chose not to have a child with her. The latter is more likely given the description. This explains why a child from Saul's line doesn't succeed David as king; in fact, Saul's line will end here.

A takeaway for us again has to do with worship. David expresses his passion and desire through worship. He felt a freedom to use whatever gifts he possessed to bring glory to God. Now, I'm not asking you to dance in the aisles, but I do want you to be challenged by this. I know we aren't Pentecostal, but I do believe many of us have room to be more expressive and passionate in our worship. I mean that in every element of our worship, not just in singing. I wonder what it would look like for you to put more of yourself into worship. I wonder what worries you about doing so.

Praying Together:

"Father, You are worthy of our praise. Forgive us when we are more concerned in our worship with what others think of us than bringing You glory. We set our hearts upon You. May You be praised with our whole being. You are more than worthy of all we can give. Amen."