

The Life of David

David's Victories

2 Samuel 8:1-18

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David's Victories

Scripture

Second Samuel 7 is a wonderful chapter. It first describes God's amazing promise that he will build an eternal kingdom for David. Then we read of David's marvelous prayer in response to God's promise to him. Second Samuel 8 shows us how God's kingdom was established under David.

Let's read about David's victories in 2 Samuel 8:1-18:

¹After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.

²And he defeated Moab and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground. Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.

³David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates. ⁴And David took from him 1,700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstringed all the chariot horses but left enough for 100 chariots. ⁵And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians. ⁶Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. ⁷And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸And from Bethah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took very much bronze.

⁹When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of Hadadezer, ¹⁰Toi sent his son Joram to King David, to ask about his health and to bless him

because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him, for Hadadezer had often been at war with Toi. And Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze. ¹¹These also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, ¹²from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

¹³And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt. ¹⁴Then he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.

¹⁵So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people. ¹⁶Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder, ¹⁷and Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were priests, and Seraiah was secretary, ¹⁸and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and David's sons were priests. (2 Samuel 8:1-18)

Introduction

Jesus taught his disciples a prayer that we call "The Lord's Prayer." It should be called "The Disciples' Prayer" because it is a prayer that is prayed by the disciples of Jesus. The prayer has an introduction, six petitions, and a conclusion. The second petition is, "Your kingdom come." Question 102 in *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks, "What do we pray for in the second petition?" The answer is, "In the second petition, (which is, thy kingdom come) we pray, that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened."¹

¹ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*, 3rd edition. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

We tend to think that the kingdom of which Jesus spoke began with Jesus. However, the kingdom of which Jesus spoke really began with David. That is the promise that God made with David (that we call the Davidic covenant) in 2 Samuel 7:16: “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” David’s victories in 2 Samuel 8 show us that God was establishing his kingdom under David. Dale Ralph Davis notes, “But the kingdom teaching of 2 Samuel 8 transcends the immediate historical situation—it describes what will always be true when God’s kingdom is present and when it comes in its final form. So 2 Samuel 8 is both report and preview, both history and prophecy.”²

Lesson

Second Samuel 8:1-18 shows us how God’s kingdom was established under David.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. The Conquests of the Kingdom (8:1-6, 13-14)
2. The Spoils of the Kingdom (8:7-12)
3. The Administration of the Kingdom (8:15-18)

I. The Conquests of the Kingdom (8:1-6, 13-14)

First, notice the conquests of the kingdom.

Second Samuel 8 summarizes the conquests that took place during David’s reign. The victories in this chapter are not necessarily in chronological order nor is it a list of all of David’s victories (as we will later learn about further victories).

David’s conquests expanded the kingdom west (Philistines), east (Moabites), north (Aram), and south (Edom). The kingdom

² Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 110.

boundaries were extended to what God had originally promised to Abraham (cf. Genesis 15:18). One commentator mentioned that David's conquests expanded the kingdom tenfold.

Bear in mind that 2 Samuel 8 is a summary of David's victories. We read this chapter and we may be prone to think that these victories were easily accomplished. Week 1—the Philistines, week 2—the Moabites, week 3—Aram, and so on. In fact, these conquests took many years of planning and execution.

The first kingdom conquest was westward against the Philistines. They lived on the west of Israel on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. You may recall that it was David who killed the most famous Philistine warrior—Goliath (cf. 1 Samuel 17). But the pesky Philistines regrouped and constantly attacked Israel. King Saul died fighting against the Philistines at the battle on Mount Gilboa (cf. 1 Samuel 31). However, once David became king over a united Israel, he drove the Philistines out of Israel. Verse 1 says, **“After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.”** David's victory against the Philistines was so powerful that the Philistines never again posed a serious threat to the Davidic kingdom.

The second kingdom conquest was eastward against the Moabites. Verse 2 says, **“And he defeated Moab and he measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground. Two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared. And the Moabites became servants to David and brought tribute.”** When we read the account of David's routing of the Moabites, we may wonder why he put two out of three Moabites to death. I understand that it was common for victorious armies to kill enough of the defeated foe so as to put the rest under fearful subjection. Another theory is that the Moabites treacherously killed David's parents after he had taken them to Moab for their safety, and that David was now paying back the Moabites. We do know that centuries earlier the Moabites posed a spiritual threat to

the Israelites through the temptation of intermarriage (cf. Numbers 25:1-9). John Calvin notes that since “our Lord gave [the Moabites] so many occasions to moderate themselves and yet they grew worse and inflamed themselves in all cruelty, it was quite fair for them to be punished in good measure, once for all, and for their arrogance to be broken.”³ So, just like the Philistines, the Moabites were no longer a threat to Israel.

The third kingdom conquest was northward against Aram. Verses 3-4 say, **“David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the river Euphrates. And David took from him 1,700 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers. And David hamstringed all the chariot horses but left enough for 100 chariots.”** To “hamstring” a horse is to cut the sinew in the back legs so as to render the animal incapable of speed. They would become farm horses rather than chariot horses. Verse 5 says that **“when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 men of the Syrians.”** Reading the text, one gets a sense of how powerful and capable David was as he conquered surrounding territories. To ensure that those whom he defeated remained submissive to him, verse 6a says that **“David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought tribute.”** Like the Philistines and the Moabites, Aram was no longer a threat to Israel.

And the fourth kingdom conquest was southward against Edom. Verse 13 says, **“And David made a name for himself when he returned from striking down 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt.”** The Edomites were actually descendants of Jacob’s brother, Esau. According to Psalm 60, the Edomites had attacked Israel, and this is what prompted David to attack them. And as he did with Aram in the north, David **“put garrisons in Edom;**

³ John Calvin, *Sermons on 2 Samuel 1–13*, trans. Douglas Kelly (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 406.

throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants" (8:14a). Thus, David conquered all those who surrounded him.

As we read about the conquests of the kingdom, our esteem for David grows. Historians and military strategists affirm David's prowess and skill. But, when we look closely at the Bible we read not once but twice, at the end of verses 6 *and* 14, **"And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went."** Whenever something is repeated in Scripture, it should tell us that God wants us to note that it is very important. The source of David's victories came from the Lord. Yes, David was used by God, but the source of his power was the Lord himself.

This reminds me of Paul. He wrote to the Corinthians, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Serving God does not lead to passivity. Yet, every Christian recognizes that every accomplishment is due to the Lord.

Recently, our Missions Committee Chair resigned because she is moving to be with her family in Nevada. At her last meeting with the Missions Committee, committee members thanked her for the wonderful job she had done as leader. I noticed how sweetly she thanked the committee members but quickly added that everything she was able to accomplish was because of the Lord. What a wonderfully biblical attitude!

This account of David really points us to his Greater Son, Jesus Christ. As Richard Phillips says, "The right way to interpret David's life is not to put ourselves pridefully in his place, but to see ourselves as his subjects who serve but also depend wholly on our Warrior-King."⁴ The kingdom that God began with David

⁴ Richard D. Phillips, *2 Samuel*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Iain M. Duguid, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018), 170.

ends with Jesus who reigns forever and ever. Jesus is the king who triumphs over all his enemies. Jesus is the king who conquers all opposition and his kingdom has no end. Jesus' kingship is wonderfully summarized in Answer 26 in *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, "Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling, and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies."⁵

People in all ages oppose the kingdom of God. David illustrates that the kingdom of God will conquer all opposition, not because of David's prowess but because of God's power. And Jesus will conquer all his enemies and his kingdom will extend to the ends of the earth.

So, first, we see the conquests of the kingdom.

II. The Spoils of the Kingdom (8:7-12)

Second, observe the spoils of the kingdom.

Verses 7-8 say, **"And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took very much bronze."** We are not told how much David took, but it must have been a considerable amount. Moreover, **Toi king of Hamath** heard about David's victories, and so he **sent his son Joram to King David with articles of silver, of gold, and of bronze** (8:9-10). David's wealth continued to grow.

Here is where we see that David was not like other kings. They took the spoils of war and increased their own personal portfolios. But of David we read in verses 11-12, **"These also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, from**

⁵ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*, 3rd edition. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.” The spoils gained by David did not go into his own pocket but they were **dedicated to the Lord** for the benefit of his people.

David once again points us to his Greater Son, Jesus Christ. Just as David accumulated great spoils through his conquests, so Jesus has also secured great blessings for his people. Jesus' death secures forgiveness of sins for those who put their trust in him. Jesus' death secures adoption into God's family for each person who believes in him. Jesus' death secures eternal life for those who trust in him. And Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit as the divine enabler who gives believers righteousness, peace, and joy.

The spoils of the kingdom, which are the blessings that Jesus secures, are available to any person who is willing to submit to Jesus. There is no one who is beyond hope and help.

Chuck Colson tells the story of a young woman who confessed to her psychiatrist that she was exhausted by her life-style—an unending cycle of parties, drugs, sex, and alcohol.

“Why don't you stop?,” her psychiatrist asked.

She sat up immediately. The suggestion astounded her. “You mean I don't have to do what I want to do?”⁶

So, first, we see the conquests of the kingdom. Second, we notice the spoils of the kingdom.

III. The Administration of the Kingdom (8:15-18)

And third, see the administration of the kingdom.

Verses 15-18 actually close off a major section by the author of Samuel. The Book of Samuel is like a large book that has, say, thirty chapters. These chapters are divided into three sections with about ten chapters in each section. The author of Samuel closes off each section with a summary statement. He uses a summary

⁶ Charles Colson, *Against the Night* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1989), 58.

statement at the close of the Samuel section (1 Samuel 7:15-17), at the close of the Saul section (1 Samuel 14:47-52), and now at the close of the first David section (2 Samuel 8:15-18), which is sometimes also called the History of David's Rise.

Verse 15 says, **“So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.”** This is an extremely important statement. It is a summary of David's reign. It is also the first of many occurrences in the Bible of the phrase **“justice and equity,”** or sometimes translated as, “justice and righteousness.”

There is no clear definition in Scripture for **“justice and equity.”** They should not be understood as two distinct concepts but a reality that is properly described by these two words: it is **“justice”** that is **“equity”** or equitable. In other words, it is doing what is just and right in way that is equal or equitable. There is no double standard. There is a consistency that is unquestionable.

Then, in verses 16-18, follows a list of names, along with the positions that each held in King David's administration. I assume that these are not all the cabinet positions in David's administration, but just some of the more significant ones. The one position that stood out to me was at the very end of verse 18, where we read, **“...and David's sons were priests.”** In what sense were they **“priests”**? David was not a Levite. He was from the tribe of Judah. Because David was not in the priestly line, some have said that they did not serve as priests but as royal advisors or ministers.

However, one commentator argues that having David's sons listed as priests may be an indication that all is not well. Later, two of David's sons (Absalom in 15:12 and Adonijah in 1 Kings 1:9, 19) did in fact perform the priestly function of a sacrifice in the context of a rebellion against David. It is doubtful that verse 18 is referring to these actions, but we have reason to be concerned about trouble to come when we read that **“David's sons were priests.”**

As before, David points us to his Greater Son, Jesus Christ. David administered justice and equity to all his people. David's administration, as we shall see, is not perfect. Jesus' administration, however, will be perfect. All his enemies will be defeated forever. And he will administer justice and equity to all his people forever.

So, we see the conquests of the kingdom, the spoils of the kingdom, and the administration of the kingdom.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the expansion of David's kingdom in 2 Samuel 8:1-18, let us do our part in the expansion of God's kingdom.

You and I do not share the same office as David (or Jesus, for that matter). However, if you belong to Jesus by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, then you are a citizen of the kingdom of God. You and I each have a role to play in the expansion of God's kingdom. You make the kingdom of God visible in whatever office God has placed you. That "office" may be husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, employer, employee, and so on.

Dale Ralph Davis says that his wife is from Kansas. Although they had lived in Mississippi for a long time, she wanted something of Kansas in her yard. So they shipped soil and plants to their home, and she planted a beautiful Kansas garden in Mississippi where it grew and thrived. Davis sees this as an illustration of what we are called to do as Christians.⁷ Wherever God has planted you, you are to make the kingdom of God visible. You are a citizen of the kingdom of God and you are to point people to King Jesus so that they too might enter the kingdom of God.

May God help each one of us to do so. Amen.

⁷ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, 115.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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