

David's Victories

2 Samuel 8

May 7, 2023

- Good morning, please turn with me to **2 Samuel 8**. If you are using the pew Bible, you can find that on page
- Today, we are resuming our study on the life of David.
- I want to thank brother Reid for his wonderful message last week on the Good Shepherd in John 10. It was such a blessing for me and I know many others as well, so thank you for serving us God's word and on such short notice!
- If you recall a couple weeks ago, we looked at **2 Samuel 7** and the covenant that God makes with David, also seeing David's prayer of thanksgiving, literally sitting in awe as he recounts the goodness of God!
- In that sermon that pastor Matt preached, he emphasized the fact that God has built an eternal house through His Son, King Jesus, looking at how this covenant paves the way for the Messiah to come.
- In other words, what is the highlight of **2 Samuel 7** is God's promise about His coming Kingdom that will be fully revealed in Christ!
- This past week, I actually had to write a research paper for one of my classes on the Kingdom of God as it is revealed in the Old and New Testament, so this was a very fitting sermon for me to be preaching on today.
- The Kingdom of God is incredibly important to understanding the narrative of Scripture!
- In fact, Gordon Fee boldly claims that "You cannot know anything about Jesus if you miss the kingdom of God. You cannot have Jesus without the kingdom of God."¹
- And whereas in **chapter 7**, we see the promise of the coming Kingdom, in **chapter 8** we will begin to see a picture of David's kingdom that in many ways anticipates God's coming kingdom.
- It can be tempting for us to gloss over these sections because we are blessed to live in the wake of the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Jesus who has brought and who will bring His kingly rule.²
- However, we would do well to pay attention to the teachings of older revelations, because there is a very clear connection between the teachings in **2 Samuel 7-8** and later kingdom doctrine.³
- All of the essentials are the same.
- And in **2 Samuel 8**, we see that God's Kingdom did come on Earth under David's kingship, meaning that the promises made in chapter 7 did receive a real (though not ultimate) fulfillment even in David's own life.⁴
- In this, **2 Samuel 8** serves as a sort of historical record of how the Lord established His Kingdom under David.

¹ The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross, Patrick Schreiner, 14

² Dale Davis, 2 Samuel, 109

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

- So with that in mind, let's go ahead and look at this account in its entirety. **2 Samuel 8**, starting in **verse 1**. **(READ) Let's pray!**

"Father, we ask that you open our ears and our hearts to you this morning. Speak to us through your Word, and help us to know you more as we consider the truth of your Word this morning. We ask this in your name, AMEN!"

- This chapter is very easily broken up into three sections, with the each section separated by the phrase, "And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went."
- **The first section we see is David's Victories in verses 1-6**
- The chapter begins with the two words, "After this."
- These words should not be taken as strictly chronological.
- After all, this chapter includes events that took place before David became king with the defeat of the Amalekites mentioned in verse 12.
- There are also events that come later in his reign such as such as the defeat of the Ammonites mentioned in the same verse.
- The words "After this" seem to mark a thematic connection with chapter 7 rather than simply a chronological connection.
- **Chapter 8** outlines what happened as a consequence of the promises made to David in chapter 7.
- One particularly important point is the promise in chapter 7:10, "I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more."
- The "place" was the land that God promised to Abraham, which extended from the River Nile in the south to the Euphrates in the North, from the Great Sea in the west, to the desert of the Jordan Valley in the East.⁵
- And what is it that we see throughout the course of this chapter? The kingdom of David extended to the West, to the East, to the North, and to the South.
 - And throughout these areas, the text tells us that the enemies were "subdued" so they were no longer a threat to Israel.
 - Under David, we see God's great promise reach a new level of fulfillment, which really serves as the theme for this chapter.
- The problem with establishing God's Kingdom is that the kingdom has enemies.
- And in the case of David there were enemies in every direction. However, as we touched on earlier, the Lord is with David and He gives David victory over all of his enemies. None of them stand a chance against David and Israel!
- What is really being shown is that none of them stood a chance against Israel's God!
- They were all soundly defeated!
- And the narrator takes the time to explain the victory and then describe the results that soon followed.

⁵ John Woodhouse: 2 Samuel, 399

- And I think it would be wise for us to pause and recognize that each of these victories was an extraordinary act of the goodness of God.
 - The enemies of God’s king were enemies of God’s purposes, so their defeat was necessary if God’s kingdom was to be established!
- *The first enemy that we encounter in this narrative are the Philistines*
- At that time, the Philistines occupied much of the coastal plain to the West of Israel.
- We have dealt with the Philistines in many instances throughout the life of David, so I won’t give the whole story on who they are, but they are a very prominent enemy throughout the life of David.
 - If you remember, twice David had actually moved into Philistine territory, trying to deceive them in different ways, which you can read about in [1 Samuel 21 and 27](#).
- And in their final battle against King Saul, the Philistines are victorious, killing Saul and they move in to occupy much of Israel.
- It is actually the threat of the Philistines and the promise of deliverance from them that is one of the ways that really propels David forward to the throne. (cf. [2 Samuel 3](#))
- And here we read in verse 1 that “**David defeated the Philistines and subdued them.**”
- This is recorded as the first action in the official summary of David’s kingdom.
- This was also the first thing he did when he became king back in [2 Samuel 5](#), meaning that the victory spoken here most likely indicates a reclaiming of territory and complete control.⁶
 - And in this, David did what Saul had been appointed to do but had failed ([1 Samuel 9:16](#))
 - Bill Arnold comments that “Saul’s failure as king may be defined in human historical terms as his failure to drive out the Philistines from Israelite territory. His death and mutilation at the hands of the Philistines was a stunning indictment on his impotency as king.”⁷
- Defeating Israel’s enemies is what God’s king did. And it is what Saul failed to do.
- But now under David, the seemingly greatest adversary of God’s people besides the Devil himself, was at last overcome!
- We are doing a study through the book of Judges in youth Group right now, and this idea of enemies being subdued by a leader raised up by God is a very common theme. In the book of Judges, this is the common practice that the Lord uses to bring deliverance to His people.
- It is also important to note that in Judges as well as here with the Philistines and other enemies, the people are subdued by their enemies because they failed to listen to the Lord and drive out their enemies.
 - And because of this, they invited trouble in. We see a similar scenario in the time of David. Because Saul had not driven out the Philistines or the Amalekites and others, they continue to be a thorn in Israel’s side.
 - This is why David needed to go in and “**subdue**” the enemy, or else the problems would have persisted. So this is what he does!

⁶ NIV Application Commentary, 494

⁷ Ibid.

- And as a consequence of David’s decisive victory over the Philistines, we read that David “Took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines.”
 - There is some debate on what Metheg-ammah really is and there is not really a clear answer.
 - One commentator thinks that it is a figurative expression meaning “The bridle of the mother’s city” but that is not clear.
 - This entire narrative is actually recorded elsewhere in 1 Chronicles 18 and the author notes there that David “Took Gath and its villages from the hand of the Philistines”, meaning that Gath would be seen as the mother city.
 - However, without getting caught up in the weeds of Metheg-ammah, I think we need to just pause for a second and realize the work that God has done in David’s life!
 - It wasn’t that long ago that David was pretending to be a mad man at Gath, quite literally feigning insanity for fear of his life.
 - And then a few chapters later in 1 Samuel 27, David goes and lives in Gath to get away from King Saul.
 - And now fast forward to this account, and David is ruling over Gath, not as a Philistine nation, but as a territory owned by Israel
 - Talk about a transformation! I think this is what the young kids would call a “glow up!”
 - And this transformation is certainly not just a result of David’s faithfulness, but of God’s faithfulness to His faithful, but flawed servant!
 - We serve a faithful God who keeps His promises to His people! Let that comfort you this morning!
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- And now as we move to verse 2, we encounter the next enemy: the Moabites
 - And if we are honest with ourselves, I think most of us would agree that this verse strikes us as at the very least, strange.
 - We read that after David defeated Moab, “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.”
 - The question immediately becomes why did David do this?
 - This is even more surprising when you consider that David’s great-grandmother was Ruth, a Moabite woman.
 - So why does David do what he does?
 - Once again, commentators are torn and there isn’t a definitive answer.
 - One argument that I saw in multiple places was that David was so severe with them because they had broken their trust with him back in 1 Samuel 22 when David asked the king of Moab to let his parents stay with them.⁸
 - Jewish tradition holds that they were later killed by the Moabites.
 - This may have been true, however we just don’t know; while his parents are never mentioned again, Scripture does not tell us what took place there.

⁸ 1 and 2 Samuel – Joyce Baldwin, 220

- This one is sort of tough for me, because this would say that David was so harsh with them because he was simply motivated by a personal vendetta, which isn't completely out of the realm of possibility (we know David was a man driven by passion, for better or for worse!)
- As I was studying, the explanation that made the most sense to me and where I landed is that this practice was done for the main reason (meaning there may or may not have been other motives), but for the main reason as a way to greatly weaken the Moabites.⁹
- The Moabites at this time are still a formidable foe, so by cutting them down by two thirds, it essentially made them no longer a threat.
- However, whatever the reasoning may have been, it's no secret that this was a very severe treatment on the part of David.
- And when we read these violent accounts in Scripture, I think we must be careful in our response.
 - Our task as Bible readers is to learn from the text of Scripture, not to make our own independent moral judgments based on what we find there.
 - We need to be very careful in this regard!
 - It is okay to not have a clear cut answer as to why something is recorded in Scripture, but what is not okay is explaining away certain texts or pretending they aren't there.
 - There are hard passages in Scripture, and it isn't our job to try and "Up God's P.R." by explaining them away.
 - A verse I try to remind myself of often is 2 Timothy 3:16, "ALL Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable..."
 - ALL scripture is profitable for us, not only the ones that make us feel good, but the ones that are uncomfortable to read, and we do a huge disservice to God when we skip over hard passages.
 - We think we are actually doing God a favor, but just the opposite is true!
- This is one of the main reasons why I think Expository Preaching is so essential, the practice of systematically working through books of the Bible, because it allows you to see God revealed in so many ways, with different passages emphasizing different attributes of the Lord.
 - In 2 Samuel 6, while we clearly see God's love and His mercy, we see a major emphasis on God's holiness.
 - In chapter 7, we see a major emphasis on His faithfulness
 - Now in chapter 8, there is a big emphasis in the initial stages of the chapter on God's Justice!
- As we come back to this verse, we see that in the context of this generally positive presentation of David's reign that these actions do seem to be approved.¹⁰
- I think John Calvin does a great job capturing the tone of the text, saying, "The stringency which David exercised against the Moabites ought not to be considered cruelty, but to be the just judgment of God, since they had abused his long patience and had mocked him."¹¹

⁹ 1 and 2 Samuel – Joyce Baldwin, 229

¹⁰ John Woodhouse: 2 Samuel, 422

¹¹ Ibid., 423

- Rather than being tempted to climb up on our own moral high horse and condemning David's actions, it is important to recognize that the righteousness and justice of God's kingdom includes His judgment on all rebellion against Him.
- In His gracious mercy, this judgment may be held back for a time in order to give opportunity for repentance.
- But as was the case with the Moabites, the day will come when God will "Judge the world in righteousness."

 - Let us not abuse the patience of God by failing to heed the warnings of the Gospel concerning the judgment to come. We do so at our own peril!
 - What happened to the Moabites should serve as a warning for us!

- We have spent a lot of time talking about our first two enemies, however we won't spend nearly as much time on these next couple accounts so you can rest easy
- The next enemy we see are actually the Syrians. Of the Syrians, there are two distinct kingdoms mentioned; the Syrians of Damascus and the Syrians of Zobah.
- Both of these kingdoms are referenced in Psalm 60 which Dave Welker read earlier in the service.
- And this psalm is in reference to many of the victories seen here in chapter 8.
- And David begins his battle against the Syrians with the Syrians of Zobah.
 - This conflict that arose with the Syrians is most likely the battle with Syria that will be covered in Chapter 10
 - But for now as we look at the mention of it in Chapter 8, we see the battle happened as a result of David wanting to restore his power at the river.
 - And as he went to do this, the king of Zobah sought to oppose David with force.
- However as has been the theme of the chapter, Zobah and his troops never stood much of a chance and are routed by David's army.
- Not only are they routed, but then David takes from him his chariots and his horsemen.
- The next thing it mentions is that David then "hamstrung" the chariot horses except for 100 chariots.
 - In other words, David made all but 100 chariots completely unserviceable.
 - I think this is because David recognized the command in Deuteronomy 17:16 regarding kings where God commands kings not to multiply horses for himself.
 - I think this also shows that David's confidence is not in his army, but in his living God!¹²
 - In fact, he says this plainly in Psalm 20:7 where he says, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."
- After this, it says that the reinforcements show up, specifically the Syrians of Damascus.
 - However, they too meet the same fate, with 22,000 Syrians perishing, making it quite easy for David to make himself master of the country and set up protection.

¹² Matthew Henry commentary on 2 Samuel 8

- Matthew Henry comments, “The enemies of God’s church, that think to secure themselves, will prove in the end, to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other.”¹³
- God’s Kingdom will be established!
- At the end of all this, we read the beautiful sentence, “And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.”
- In all these wars, David was protected. The Lord preserved him.
- It seems that David often times put himself in Jeopardy; however God covered His servant in the days of battle, which David often speaks of in his psalms, to the glory of God.
- And not only was David just protected which led to his victories, we see in the second section that David was also enriched!
- **This takes us to our second point, which I simply titled “David’s Spoils”. (vv. 7-14)**
- **Verses 7-8** tell us what these spoils were from the battles: “And David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadezezer and brought them to Jerusalem. And from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadezezer, King David took very much bronze.”
- What is highlighted in this section and what is important is not necessarily what David’s spoils were, but rather what he did with them! And this is what is key!
- David’s response to the Lord’s victory becomes the focus in the narrative, in that David consistently dedicated the captured goods to the Lord.¹⁴
- Once again, in direct contrast to Saul, we learn who is suitable to be Israel’s king!
 - When God blesses, the true anointed one gives thanks and obeys.
- As Dale Davis states, “The wealth of the nations belonged to its rightful owner.”¹⁵
- Verse 9 then introduces us to Toi, the king of Hamath.
- As a result of his victory over Zobah, David’s prestige and fame grew to such an extent that the king of Hamath which is a region not exactly close to Israel, took precaution and sent his son to make a peace offering with David and to congratulate him on his victory.
- And when Joram comes, he too brings silver, gold, and bronze.
- And without skipping a beat, what does David do? “These also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued.”
- Again, David’s focus was not on bringing glory to himself, but on bringing glory to the Lord, and his actions showed it!
- David consistently dedicated all of his spoils to God, and the Lord blessed Him for it!
- Once again, we read at the end of **verse 14**, “And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.”
- This is the second time we have seen this statement in this chapter. Why does the narrative mention this twice?

¹³ Matthew Henry Commentary on 2 Samuel 8

¹⁴ NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Samuel, 495

¹⁵ Dale Davis, 113

- As Heath Thomas says, “The reason is simple but profound. We are supposed to understand that the Lord is the only reason David is where he is and is doing what he is doing. In short, the text highlights the true hero of the story: Yahweh the King!”¹⁶
- In this, we see the Divine King granting His human king victory. Or in short, God blesses David.
- And what is the reason God blesses David? It is really the same answer to the question “Why does God bless His children?”
 - Sometimes we act as though God blesses us so that we can just sit back and relax.
 - So that we can pat ourselves on the back as we sit by a pool and think to ourselves, Wow, I am so blessed!
 - But this is the wrong perspective on divine blessing
 - The biblical view of divine blessing is this: Blessed by God to be a blessing to others.¹⁷
- This is John Piper’s entire plea in his best-selling book *Don’t Waste Your Life*, pleading believers to “Live gladly to make others glad in God.”
- And this is the perspective we should have as believers; knowing that we have been blessed as Ephesians 1 reminds us, “With every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”, and so our response is to then be a blessing to others
- And one of the biggest ways we are a blessing to others is in the context of the local church!
- We should absolutely seek to bless others who are not believers through sharing the Gospel for sure!
- But this message isn’t necessarily about charity work, though that of course is not a bad thing.
- When we talk about blessing others, our main focus should be blessing our brothers and sisters! David was a blessing to the Israelites first. And we need to do the same.
- There’s of course nothing wrong with wanting to serve the community, Scripture tells us to do this, so please don’t misunderstand what I am saying; but if you are serving outsiders to the NEGLECT of your fellow brothers and sisters, that’s a problem. In 1 Samuel 30, when David defeats the Amalekites, he doesn’t give the spoils to the Amalekites or the other surrounding areas, who does he give it to? His fellow men; the Israelites!
- John 13:35 says “They will know your my disciples if you have love for ONE ANOTHER!” That is referring to believers; And Jesus is saying that is how the world will recognize you; that is how you will be attractive to a dying world, through the care you show to the household of faith first and foremost.
- And David understood this! God’s blessing is meant to flow to us and it is meant to flow through us.
- The LORD gives David victory and blesses him.
- And what does David do with that gift? Blesses others!
 - We read in verse 15, “So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.”

¹⁶ Christ-Centered Exposition: 1 and 2 Samuel, 384

¹⁷ Ibid.

- God granted victory and success so that David could rule God’s kingdom in “Justice and equity for all his people.”
- God blessed David so that the blessings would flow to him and would flow through him.
- This is true for us as well.
- God’s victory and blessing to David is a picture of what God would do through Jesus.
 - God put all His enemies, including sin, death, and hell, under the feet of Jesus.
 - And God gave victory to Jesus wherever He went.
 - He did this so that we might be forgiven and brought into God’s Kingdom.
- And those who are believers in Christ, blessed in the forgiveness that only Christ offers, we are meant to share that message with others. We are meant to be a blessing to others by sharing the hope that is in us!
- And our main truth which I want you to get from this passage is this: “Believers are blessed by God to be a blessing to others.” (TT) (REPEAT)
- This was true in the life of David, and it ought to be true of believers today!

- **And as we transition to our final section, we see David’s Officials in vv. 15-18**
- With this list of royal officials, we see that David has carefully selected the team that will serve.
- As we already looked at, the narrator gives us the summary sentence of what David’s new monarchy looked like, doing what was just and right for all his people!
- In this statement, we see that David ruled carefully, with his care extending to all areas, ruling over all Israel.
 - The people were safe under his protection.
- He also did justice without showing any partiality; he never perverted justice through favor or affection. What lessons our nation could learn from David!
 - His justice system wasn’t swayed by emotions or by angry protests.
 - David judged fairly to all of his people.
 - Herein David serves as a type of Christ, who was faithful and true and who in righteousness judged
- This is what the narrator wants us to see! David is the embodiment of the Lord’s rule on Earth. He is the Lord’s chosen, anointed one, who rules as God Himself wants His people to be governed.¹⁸
- David becomes the example for all future kings. But as we continue through 2 Samuel, we will see that there is more to the story.
- And at the end of the chapter, we could very easily insert that often repeated phrase one final time, “And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.”
- God’s blessings followed David. The Lord was with David, this is abundantly clear!
- This isn’t some form of “Success theology” saying that David will enjoy easy times and that everything he touches will turn to gold. All you have to do is read the story of David to see that this is not the case.

¹⁸ NIV Application Commentary, 497

- What is being emphasized is that David is promised God’s abiding presence with him wherever he goes and the assurance that God is sufficient for all of David’s needs.¹⁹
- And that truth, brothers and sisters is FAR greater than any success theology!
- We don’t need success; we need Christ!!
- And so the question becomes, “What would it mean for believers today to have victory wherever we go?”
- This chapter illustrates that God is faithful to His word; what He has said will come to pass! It also shows us that God will strengthen his servants for the task that He has called them to.
- So what can it mean for believers to have victory wherever they go?
 - It means that God has already won the victory and He has promised to be with us and strengthen us for the work that He has called us to do in the context of the church and in the world.
- Just as David defeated Israel’s enemies, so today’s believers can with the help of the Holy Spirit, accomplish our God-given tasks as we seek to further His kingdom by using the blessings God has graciously given to us to be a blessing to others
- This account of victories in 2 Samuel 8 should inspire confidence in believers, knowing that we do not work in vain. God is at work fulfilling His Word through His people!
- Those in Christ have victory because of Christ! Let’s pray!

“Lord, we thank you that your Word is sufficient for us! Help us to recognize that we have been blessed to be a blessing to others, and give us the strength to live our lives to that end. Lord, help us to know that the biggest way we bless others is through the context of the local church! Help us to recognize that we serve a generous God who has graciously blessed us, and so let our response be one of Thanksgiving, joyfully giving of our time and resources! God I pray that you would help us to live our lives in a way that makes you known. God be with us now as we transition to communion. I pray that you would humble us and help us to truly evaluate our hearts and our minds, recognizing sins in our lives and asking for forgiveness. We thank you for the free gift of your Son, and we pray this in your name, AMEN!

¹⁹ Ibid., 499