

Advent Member Assisting with Soles4Souls Shoe Drive

March 9, 2012



Carol Fournier's employer is collecting new and "gently worn" footwear for the charity [Soles4Souls](#), and she is asking Advent members with shoes to donate to bring them to the church or drop them at her home before 31 March.

The Nashville, Tenn.-based non-profit organization has delivered 17 million-plus pairs of shoes to people in more than 127 countries, including Kenya, Thailand, Nepal, and the United States, since 2005.

Bible Study Series: The Book of Second Samuel (Week One Notes)

[March 1, 2012 Bible Study Series, Pastor's Corner, The Book of Second Samuel Bible Study Series, Samuel, Second Samuel Pastor Bob Lindberg](#)

David consolidates power, assumes the throne of Israel, and captures Jerusalem as the new capital.

1:1-16

David returns to Ziklag from chasing the Amalekites, an important action because it totally exonerates him from having any hand in the death of Saul. In fact, it isn't until three days later that he even hears about the death of Saul, and of his son Jonathan. His actions concerning the Amalekite who brings him the message are very important in securing the path towards his future. The messenger is expecting a reward, not only for bringing the news of Saul's death, but for helping the king escape being captured, and probably tortured, by acceding to his wishess and finishing him off after his botched suicide attempt.

David, however, sees it very differently. Instead of looking at this as an act of mercy, he sees it as regicide. And this is not a pattern of behavior he wants to encourage. It probably didn't help that the guy was an Amalekite, part of the tribe that David and his crew had just finished chasing and fighting. David wants to establish two things. One) He wants everyone to see that raising your hand against the king, no matter what your motivation is, will have drastic consequences. Two) By punishing the man, instead of rewarding him, he makes it absolutely clear he had nothing to do with the death of Saul. If he would have rewarded him, there would always be talk that he planned the whole thing.

1:17-27

So David, ever the "Renaissance Man," composes a dirge that he orders the Judites, a group of temple singers, to learn for a public display of mourning. While his sadness may be real, it is also a politically savvy move in that it demonstrates for everyone that he is sad at the loss and that he had no hand in it. Remember, he's been living with the Philistines, and he needs to buff up his reputation if he is ever to be king of Israel.

2:1-11

We are now in a time of transition, and David has to be, and is being, very careful about what he is doing. He still has his eyes set on being the king of Israel, but he knows that what is going to happen in the days to come will be very important in deciding that future. He prays to the Lord about what his next move should be, and he gently moves into Judah and stays there for a period of 7½ years. This is important, because it establishes that David is not “grabbing power,” but rather allowing the situation to evolve to show everyone that when he becomes king, it will be the will of God, not just his ambition.

2:12-32

Now begins the curious “dance” that will establish David as the king of Israel and Judah. His commander, Joab, meets the commander of Ishbosheth’s army, Abner (remember he’d been the commander under Saul), and they have a rather strange “contest” in which all of the participants die. Ostensibly this contest was meant to take place of the battle that was looming, but that idea dies along with the participants.

The battle begins, and Abner’s side loses. He has to run for his life. Joab and his brothers give chase, and the youngest brother, being the fastest one, hounds Abner. Abner tries several times to get the young man, Asahel, to give up the chase. But the young man sees glory in his future and refuses. As a last resort, Abner kills him with the butt end of his spear. This is significant, because it shows that Abner only meant to incapacitate the young man instead of killing him. So the death of Asahel can be excused on several reasons. One) Abner tried to talk him out of the chase. Two) Abner didn’t intend to kill him; at the worst, his death was an accident. If he had meant to kill him, he would have used the pointed end of the spear. Three) At any rate, the death was in the middle of a prolonged battle. It was an act of war, not murder. Joab, as we will see later, does not see it that way.

3:1-11

The war continues. Note that the story refers to the army of Ishbosheth as the “House of Saul.” Ishbosheth is only a figurehead, as we will see. Abner is the true power in Israel, and conflict is inevitable. Abner takes one of Saul’s concubines for himself. This is an act of usurpation that Ishbosheth immediately comes down on him for. Ishbosheth knows that if Abner starts with the concubines, the crown will be the next thing he reaches for.

Abner takes umbrage at being rebuked and uses this conflict as an excuse to begin talks with David about a transition of power in Israel. Note that the impetus for these talks comes from Abner, not from David. This direction of power once again will establish that David does not start the conspiracy that is to ensue.

3:12-21

David and Abner begin negotiations. As a show of good faith, David demands the return of his wife, Michal, daughter of Saul, before any further steps can be taken. This serves two purposes. One) David has a righteous claim on her as he never divorced her. Two) Her presence in his house again will help legitimize his transition into the kingship. He can maintain that Saul had intended him to be in the line of succession all along by allowing him to marry his daughter.

3:22-39

Joab, however, sees things differently. First of all, he knows Abner is not going to be satisfied with just being given a farm and retiring. There can only be one purpose for Abner's negotiation. He wants to be the chief of the armies of the combined kingdoms. That is, understandably, a job that Joab sees as rightfully his. He fought with David through the lean years; now he is not going to take second place to the guy he fought against. And he knows that sooner or later Abner is going to see him as a threat and take care of him. Secondly, there is the blood feud between them over the death of his younger brother Asahel.

So Joab takes matters into his own hands. This is very important, because once again it exonerates David from the actions that are to come. Joab kills Abner without telling David that he was going to do so. David then goes into another public display of grief that, while it may be real, also further absolves him of any guilt in the matter. The only lingering part of guilt that remains is in his not taking any action against Joab for the murder other than forcing them to mourn with him. It might not have been pleasant for Joab to do so, but it sure beat getting killed in retaliation.

4:1-12

Now that David has a clear shot at becoming king of Israel, Ishbosheth feels that he needs to get out of town. So he flees and attempts to hide from David but falls prey to men who think they will curry favor with David by delivering his head. But David stays true to form. While he benefits from the assassination, he once again punishes those who would dare to raise their hand against the king. He is trying very diligently to establish that while he might benefit from the act, he will not reward those who would strike down the regent. A life insurance policy that he hopes will extend into his own rule – but that has different application when the perpetrator is a bit closer to home.

5:1-16

David now begins to establish himself as the king of Israel. The first thing he does is to attack Jerusalem to take the capital for himself. We don't get many details about the battle, other than that the Jebusites resisted him. But the city fell to him, and David established it as his capital. Once he is established as the next king, all the tribes of Israel and the neighboring kings begin to send tribute to him. David takes on more wives and concubines and has more children, firmly establishing himself as a kingly presence in Israel.

5:17-25

The Philistines don't like what they hear, so they decide to send an army to take down the new king before he can consolidate his power. David, once again after consulting the Lord, goes out and defeats the Philistines at Baal-perazim.

The Philistines try again at Rephaim. But instead of confronting them in a pitched battle, the Lord changes his tactics for him. He is told to go into the trees and when he "hears the sound of marching" in the trees (undoubtedly a strong wind blowing) to charge out and hit the Philistines. David follows God's directions and wins the battle, driving the Philistines back to Gezer.

6:1-11

We then have a curious story about David, God, the Ark of the Covenant, and David's desire to build a temple for the Ark. As the Ark is being transported, an accident happens, and it starts to fall from the cart. A man named Uzzah tries to prevent it from falling and puts his hand on the Ark. It was forbidden for anyone to touch the ark except for the priests who are intended to guard it. Uzzah's action – undoubtedly the source of the saying "no good deed goes unpunished" – is struck down by the Lord for the offence of putting his hand on the Ark. This action, harsh though it may be, reinforces how special the Ark is to God and to Israel.

6:12-23

So David finds a nice place for the Ark to be secured and goes to sacrifice in honor of the event. In doing so, he becomes overwhelmed with the spirit and begins to dance extravagantly, some say nakedly, in celebration. Michal sees this and becomes very upset. Remember she was born into royalty and "knows how one should act." David's dance reaffirms his common upbringing and further feeds her anger at being taken away from a husband that she loved. She and David quarrel over it, and David winds up putting her in a kind of a prison. A luxurious prison no doubt, but she will be locked away for the rest of her life, never to know the joy of having a child of her own.

7:1-16

David feels he should honor God by building a proper place for the Ark of the Covenant to reside. The Ark is a very important artifact for Israel, as we saw in I Samuel. So it is only logical that David would want to build a proper place for it to reside. It is not precisely made clear why the Lord does not want David to build the house for the Ark. Some speculate that his hands were too "bloody" to build the temple. Others will say that postponing the construction provides the means to establish the expectation that David's heirs will do so. In postponing the construction, God is assuring David that there is no rush

to build a temple. His Ark has lived on the road for many years; a few more won't hurt. David's job is to establish the kingdom; God will take care of the heritage part.

7:17-29

Nathan the prophet brought all of this to the king. Think for a moment about the job this prophet had. He has a very strong-willed king who may be on the verge of building a "monument to himself." This, I believe, is the real reason God did not want David to build the temple. David is on a high right now. His star is rising so far he can barely breathe anymore. Look at the response that David has to Nathan's words. It is an elegy that on one hand is quite humbling. David gives all of the credit to God for all of his success, but deep inside of him still lays the heart of a man, and a little voice that is screaming "Look at what *I've* done."

God can see the rumblings in David's heart and knows that nothing good comes from such feelings. Pride is one of the seven deadly sins for a reason, and in the story yet to come, we'll see the outcome of pride.

8:1-18

Now David is on a roll. He attacks the Philistines, and the Moabites (with whom he had family ties – remember his grandmother Ruth was a Moabite and how he parked his family with them when he was running from Saul?). Then he whips Hadadezer and the Arameans. He also beats up on the Edomites and establishes control of those lands. That's the story.

But historians and Biblical scholars say there may be a bit of hyperbole. The victories he is describing would take an amazing army, one that many doubt David had at his disposal.

This may be the case, as stories do tend to grow. There is an old expression that goes, "Do you know the difference between a war story and a fairy tale? One begins 'Once upon a time....' The other begins 'There I was....'" And these stories of David's conquests may be along those lines. There may well be some exaggeration of his conquests. Yet it could be that the storyteller is recounting something else for folks. There could be a subtle inference here that acknowledges that David and his army could not have done all these things – on their own.

Remember the "David and Goliath" story? There is no way a little shepherd boy could go out and, with three stones, defeat a giant warrior. But he did, and the reason he did was that God was with him. It was impossible, yet it happened. The same thing could be going on here. This is impossible – except that God made the impossible possible. This is still a story not so much about David, Saul, and anyone else, but a story of how God can work through human beings, combining his strength with their effort to accomplish things they could not even imagine doing on their own.

Bible Study Series: The Book of Second Samuel (Week Two Notes)

[March 7, 2012 Bible Study Series, Pastor's Corner, The Book of Second Samuel Bible Study Series, Samuel, Second Samuel](#)
[Pastor Bob Lindberg](#)

Adultery, betrayal, revenge, and retribution as David falls away from God's path.

9:1-12

David now starts to pay his debts. He had promised Jonathan that if anything ever happened to him, he would look after his family. Jonathan's son Mephibosheth is still alive and probably in hiding. He was crippled at a young age when he was dropped by his nurse. So he's no great specimen of a leader in the physical sense, but he still has the blood of Saul and Jonathan in his veins. David could have easily seen him as a threat to his kingship. Instead of looking at him as a threat, he sees in him an opportunity that has multiple assets.

He can repay his debt to Jonathan. That friendship was very special to him, and perhaps in Mephibosheth he can see the face of his old friend.

He can demonstrate that he is a man of his word. He promised Jonathan that he would take care of his family and, in spite of the political sense it would make to have Mephibosheth have an accident, he is true to his word.

He can show that he is still honoring the house of Saul and the blessing God had bestowed upon that house when he chose Saul to be king.

He is demonstrating that he is secure enough in his kingship to take a risk, one that will later come back to bite him. Ziba the servant will later have an important role to play in the story, so keep his name in mind.

10:1-19

David continues to act "kingly." He tries to make a treaty with the Ammonites, but the new king doesn't want to play nice. So he insults David by shaving the beards of his emissaries

and making them walk bare... back to him. It is the diplomatic equivalent of giving them a “wedgie” and flipping the bird to the king at the same time.

David tried to make nice, at least on his terms, but this cannot be tolerated. So off go the armies of David again seeking vengeance. The Ammonites ally themselves with the Arameans and prepare to do battle. Joab and Abishai lead their troops into battle with a risky strategy. They divide their troops, something like what Custer did at the Little Bighorn, and proceeded into battle. Now, most military analysts will tell you that dividing your troops in the face of the enemy is a losing proposition. But once again, you have God taking charge of the situation. With God backing them up, even risky maneuvers like this succeed. Once again, that’s the point. At this time in his kingship, David and God are tight, and everything that David – or his general – does comes out okay.

David is at the top of his game. Unfortunately, when you are at the top, there is often no place to go but down.

11:1-13

One of my favorite expressions is “There’s nothing like a ‘good-bad example.’” And that begins to become part of the story of David. It is interesting to see that in their time, as in ours, the personal habits of a leader often play a role in defining the greatness of that person. The Kennedys are remembered for their “excesses” in this line. Gingrich has had to answer for his previous behavior. Many will use these incidents as means of defining the character of a leader, and judge them harshly for it. So, too, in the time of our story. So, one might wonder why the narrator would include David’s “indiscretion” with Bathsheba in a story that is ostensibly intended to glorify him.

The answer is that the story was not intended to glorify David, but to glorify God. It was also intended to show that when David followed God’s path, everything he touched turned to gold. But once he stopped believing that the rules applied to him too, everything went bad – until he repented.

Here we have David the king of all he surveys. Kings at this time had a lot of latitude in how they conducted themselves. Everything in the kingdom was theirs; other people simply got to use those things, including wives, only when the king didn’t want them for himself. Such behavior was very common, even expected, for kings in their area at the time. So on that level, David was not engaging in behavior that was unprecedented. He was simply doing what ordinary kings do – except that David was not an “ordinary king.” He was a king anointed by God, and he was expected to behave in a manner that would honor that relationship, not defile it.

But David succumbs to temptation and has Bathsheba brought to him. They follow “nature’s course” and, as there was no birth control in their day (that we know of), she gets pregnant. Now they have a problem. If she had been the wife of a local merchant, it would

have been one thing. But she was the wife of one of his soldiers, and a valiant soldier who had come to him from outside of the kingdom to serve him. This is more than a simple case of adultery, as bad as that would be by itself. David is breaking the “warrior’s code.” As king, he has a sacred bond with his troops. Trust and loyalty is a two-way street. “Loyalty up, loyalty down” is the code that is still taught in the military. You are expected to be loyal to your leaders, and they are, in turn, expected to be loyal to you. They are expected to provide you with what you need to go into the fight. To back you up when trouble comes, and to protect those you leave behind. No greater betrayal can happen than for one of those on the top to invade the home of a subordinate and take his wife. Everybody gets that one – everybody except David.

Sure he tries to cover it up, even getting Uriah drunk so he would go home to his wife. But Uriah is a loyal warrior, and will not violate their code. When everybody is deprived, he must be deprived, too.

11:14-27

David is now desperate. He can see that his whole kingdom will collapse if this becomes public. He can’t get Uriah to cooperate, so he does the only thing left for him to do. The despicable act is made worse by the fact that he gives Uriah the letter that is his own death warrant to carry to Joab. Joab, being the loyal general that he is, complies even though he’s probably sure something is up. We have to remember the description of Joab’s character in the previous parts of the story. He is a ruthless man who doesn’t let the niceties of proper society stand in his way. He knows something is going on, and might even be a little glad to see that the king is becoming a bit more like him, instead of always being the “good boy” he’s been in the past.

So the deed is done. Uriah gets killed and David tries to pretend that it is all just part of the cost of war. There may have been some intent on the part of David that he could show his “care for the fallen” by taking the pregnant wife of one of his soldiers into his house. What a guy!

12:1-14

David, at this point, probably thinks he’s gotten away with it. But God has not been fooled and sends the prophet Nathan to bring his word to the king. Note here how the divine interacts with the real world. If Nathan had directly accused the king, nothing good would have happened. David could have simply denied the facts, or he could have had Nathan killed. He was the king after all. While this may seem simply to be a savvy political move on Nathan’s part – to get the king to condemn himself – it is really much more than that. You have to remember that another king might have reacted poorly to the subterfuge and killed Nathan for it. But God knew that the core of David was still good. While some of his behavior had gone astray, deep down inside there was still that inherit “goodness” that God

has always admired. God could have simply struck David down, but that's not how he is going to play out the rest of the story.

God is going to take the bad example of David's adultery and use it to show some things. He's going to show that for bad behavior there will be consequences, which will not be pleasant. He is going to show that when basically good people do bad things, he will punish them in the most grievous way possible. But he will also show that, after a period of chastisement, redemption is possible, and that even a restoration of good will can come back to the person if they make a significant change in their behavior and get back on track with God.

12:15-25

So the affliction of David, and Bathsheba, starts with the death of the child they conceived. David pleads with God not to kill the child, but to no avail. One might wonder why God would take the life of an innocent child to punish the king. It's a hard question to answer. The only thing I can say is that God knew this was the only way that things could start to get "uncomplicated" and he could inflict pain on David at the same time. Imagine if the child had lived and grown up in the house of David. Every day he was there would be a reminder to everyone of the king's "indiscretion." Then, too, I have to believe that God would have a special place in heaven for the soul of such an innocent one. Neither one of those answers fully to my satisfaction. I guess the only answer is that this is the way God chose to do this, and in their day and time it would have been understood differently than it is in ours.

Note here, too, that God is letting up a bit on David and Bathsheba. They are allowed to have another child as a demonstration that their penance will not last forever. In fact, the result of this union will have a great effect on the future of Israel.

12:26-31

The end of this chapter shows two things. First, the displeasure of God with David does not necessarily extend completely to his kingdom. Their success in battle continues. Secondly, it shows that crusty old Joab is still conscious of his place in the pecking order. He doesn't want to be seen as usurping David's role as "the conqueror." Rather, he wants to help the king maintain that position. One might also think that he knows that David is hurting over the loss of the child and wants to give him something to do that will take his mind off the loss.

Now I have no way of proving either of those statements. I am freely engaging in what Biblical scholars would call "eisegesis." Eisegesis is a process of reading things into the scriptural story that are not really there. I do this less so with the first statement (that Joab wanted David to maintain his position as "conqueror") than I do with the second statement (that he wanted to give him something to do). That is my assumption, a reasonable one I

would maintain, but it is not directly supported by the story. I engaged in this little bit of eisegesis intentionally to make a point.

When we read the scriptures, it is important to know when we are staying with the story, or when we are interpreting the story. We can get ourselves into a lot of trouble when we start interpreting without guidelines. The major guideline always has to be what the scripture says, not what we think it means. Read the story, and listen to the words. Think about the story not in the context of our time, but in the time it was written. Then and only then can we start to interpret it for how it functioned in their time, and what it means for ours. We'll keep ourselves out of a lot of "eisegetical trouble" if we pay attention to those rules.

13:1-22

As hard as all of that has been, David's troubles are just starting. In this next series of events we get a picture of a king who succumbs to the normal weakness of any parent with troubled kids – and almost loses the whole kingdom in the process.

David's family is a "blended" family, to use the term of our time. He has children by multiple wives, not unusual for their time – or ours for that matter – and problems result from the "blending."

Tamar is the beautiful half-sister of Amnon. Amnon is love sick over her and lets himself get talked into a scheme to be able to possess her. So the plan unfolds and immediately after gaining his desired outcome, Amnon, the writer says, "is filled with a great loathing for her." My analysis is that this statement is cover for the real thing is going on. Amnon is probably now terrified about what he has done, fearing the wrath of his father or Tamar's brother Absalom. But he can't admit to that, so he blames it upon her. It's the old "it's really her fault, if she hadn't been so pretty or dressed so provocatively..." excuse that has been used for centuries to justify rape.

But then a curious thing happens in the story, at least to our way of thinking. Tamar pleads with him to go to their father and ask his permission for them to marry. There was a tradition in the Middle East at the time that continues to today: If a man rapes a woman, he is then obligated to marry her. The rape is then considered a little "pre-marital sex," diffusing the guilt of the crime and saving the reputation of the woman at the same time. Women who were raped at that time were often considered the provocateurs of the incident and could be put to death if they didn't fight back hard enough or scream for help at least three times.

This fine tradition was recently in the news with an incident that occurred in Iran where a woman who was raped was forced to marry the man who raped her. In our own world we don't have to look far to find similar situations. Women who were captured by the Indians were often shunned by the whites when they were recovered for having been forced to

sleep with their Indian captors. In our own time, women who are raped are often consumed with guilt over the attack.

I bring these points up because it is very easy to start throwing stones at the folks in this story over these actions and the repercussions to them. This is one of those points in the story that I would encourage you to read the text in the context of the time it was written. They had ways of dealing with these situations that, while they might not conform with our standards, were undoubtedly set up to avoid the blood feud that is to come.

13:23-39

“Revenge is a dish best served cold” is an accurate description of what happens next. Absalom waits two years, lulling Amnon into thinking everybody has gotten over it. Why would he? Nothing has happened. The story only says that David was “greatly upset.” There were no repercussions from the king or from anyone. So Absalom, who is the apple of his father’s eye, sets up a scenario and extracts his righteous vengeance. He then flees to Geshur to escape retribution and/or to save face for his father. There is considerable doubt as to what David would have done if Absalom would have stayed, but public opinion probably would have demanded some sort of action. By fleeing to Geshur, Absalom removes the pressure from both of them.

14:1-27

Enter Joab. He feels the need to fix this thing. So he sets up a scenario whereby the king adjudicates a case that gives him the excuse to bring Absalom back from exile. No one could have told the king that he “needed” to do that. And the way he judged this case made it both impossible not to call Absalom back and gave him the cover he would need to do so. Pretty smart move on the part of Joab.

But then the king messes thing up by holding Absalom at arm’s length and refusing to see him. He can come and stay in Jerusalem, but he can’t come to the royal house. This will begin to eat away at Absalom – and have dire consequences for David in the future.

14:28-33

So Absalom gets tired of waiting and forces the issue by burning down Joab’s field. Joab then sets up the meeting between, and Absalom is welcomed home. But the damage has been done, and Absalom is plotting his revenge against his father.

15:1-12

Absalom would be in line to take over the throne, but he makes a move to have the power early. First of all, he is the impatient sort. Look at how long Prince Charles has been waiting

for the Queen to die! Secondly, considering the whimsical nature of his father in dealing with the whole Tamar thing, there is no assurance that the throne will not be passed to one of his brothers. Finally, there is an undying resentment against his father for his “unfair” treatment of him after his return from Geshur.

So Absalom gathers an army and starts a revolt. The country quickly divides into the pro-David and pro-Absalom camps, and the war is on. Some of those David trusted the most, such as Ahithophel, go over to Absalom’s camp, along with a growing number of people who seem to be weary of David and his rule.

15:13-37

So David flees Jerusalem, leaving behind 10 concubines to care for the palace. They will later be punished by him for their loyalty. He has some notable pledges of allegiance from Zadok who wants to bring the Ark of the Covenant with him. But David sends him back, basically saying that what happens next is all in God’s hands. This is part of the rehabilitation of David’s relationship with God. Once again, he is beginning to rely on the hand of God to preserve him. Somewhere along the way he lost that reliance, and now in this time of trial he begins to gain it back. This is part of the story that is meant to inspire those of us who face hard times to remember that God is with us even when times look their worst.

David’s counselor Hushai comes to offer to go with him, but the king sends him back to be his agent to disrupt the planning of Absalom. He sets up a system of communication so his spies can communicate with him and let him know the plans that Absalom is making.

16:1-4

An interesting thing now happens. Remember that I told you to pay attention to Ziba? His loyalty to David for the kindness he has shown to Mephibosheth now bears fruit. Mephibosheth has deserted David and thrown his lot in with Absalom, thinking that somehow he might become the next king. David takes the gifts that Ziba offers him and returns the favor by giving all of the position of Mephibosheth to Ziba.

16:5-14

David then has an encounter with Shimei, who had been part of the house of Saul. The old angers come pouring out of him, and he throws stones and curses David. Not a bright move. Even a wounded lion is dangerous as shows Abishai who wants to kill Shimei. But David’s rehab in the sight of God goes on.

He withholds any punishment. There will be time for justice later if the kingdom is restored to him. If not, the squelching of one more critic will not make any difference.

16:15-23

Absalom then begins to take over, both literally and figuratively. He moves into the palace, and in the sight of everyone takes all 10 of David's concubines and has intercourse with them. This is a dominance thing and is done to demonstrate to all that Absalom is now in charge.

Bible Study Series: The Book of Second Samuel (Week Three Notes)

[March 8, 2012 Bible Study Series, Pastor's Corner, The Book of Second Samuel Bible Study Series, Samuel, Second Samuel Pastor Bob Lindberg](#)

After his usurping son is killed, David reconstructs the kingdom and writes a psalm about his love for God.

17:1-23

David's network of spies then begins to have their desired effect. Hushai begins to give advice that is counter to Ahithophel's, and the new "king" rejects the plan that would have secured the kingdom for him. Instead of acting when he needs to act, he waits. His waiting gives David time to recover from the shock of Absalom's actions, to gather his forces to him, and to prepare for battle. Ahithophel realizes that everything is lost and that he has no future. Instead of waiting for the ax to fall, he goes off and hangs himself.

17:24-29

David continues to gather his forces and supplies as he waits for the battle that is sure to come.

18:1-5

David then sends out his army and offers to go with them. But he is talked out of that, because everybody knows that if he falls, everything is lost. This may be a bit of hyperbole on the part of the writer, but is true nonetheless. But then David does a very curious thing. His last words to his generals as they are leaving are instructions not to hurt Absalom if possible. These are rather strange instructions to be given to those who are about to go out to save the kingdom. Win the battle, but don't hurt the one who caused the fight! Joab knows what will happen if Absalom is not killed: David will forgive him, and the whole mess will start all over again.

18:6-23

The battle begins, and Absalom's forces are routed. He is caught in a tree by his long, flowing hair and hangs there helplessly until he is found by one of Joab's troops. That soldier goes and tells Joab, who castigates him for not finishing off Absalom. But the word was probably out about what David had said, and everybody knows how David dealt with those who had killed Saul and his son in the past. So, nobody in his right mind would have touched Absalom. But Joab will, and he and his men kill the usurper while he hangs from the tree. A messenger is sent to David, Joab wanting it to be somebody "expendable" – the Cushite – if things go badly when David gets the news.

18:24 to 19:1

So the word gets to David, and in the "fog of war," he first gets only the message that the battle has been won. He immediately begins to ask about Absalom, and the second messenger comes in with news of his death. Note that the messenger only says that he is dead, not how he died. We don't know if David ever got that little tidbit of information. Immediately upon hearing that Absalom is dead, David begins to weep publicly for his lost son. Not exactly the thing to inspire continued loyalty among troops who have just fought a hard battle for him.

19:2-9

Joab realizes just how tenuous their grasp on things is. He goes in and rebukes the king, an action few could do and survive. David is on the verge of grasping defeat out of the jaws of victory, and Joab knows it. But, thankfully, David listens to his long-time companion and pulls it together. He goes out and thanks the troops for all they have done for him and his kingdom.

19:10-44

David then begins the reconstruction of his kingdom. He sends messengers to Judah to convince them to come back into the fold, promising great rewards to Amasa for his services. Other people who supported the king in his time of need are rewarded, such as Ziba. Some like Shimei throw themselves at David's feet and beg forgiveness for having turned against him. David is magnanimous, granting pardon to those who don't deserve it.

A surprise is the greeting that Mephibosheth comes crawling back to David. Now, he pretends he didn't intend to turn against him, but only didn't go with him because he is lame. No mention is made as to whether David believes this, and he does restore half of the property that he took from him and gave to Ziba. But Mephibosheth refuses the offer. No mention is made if he reconsiders this, or is simply glad to be allowed to keep breathing. Others start to come back to the fold, but not everyone is happy that David is restored to the throne.

20:1-26

One of those who was not happy was a man named Sheba. He tries to organize a further revolt against David. At the same time, David is dealing with his concubines by shutting them off from him for the rest of their lives. Nice reward for staying behind and taking care of things, right? Well, they could have been put to death, so I guess this is better than that.

David sends an army after Sheba, and the generalship of that army comes into question. David had promised Amasa that he would be the new general if he brought the men of Judah back to David. But Joab, being Joab, was having none of that, and he murders Amasa right in front of everybody. Then he issues a challenge to everyone to either follow him or else. So the now-combined army chases Sheba up to Able, where they besiege the city. The inhabitants of the city murder Sheba and throw his head over to wall, thereby saving their city from destruction. Joab returns to David, once again secure in his position as general of David's army.

21:1-14

A famine comes over the land, and the oracles say that it is because God is still displeased with the blood guilt of Saul with the Gibeonites. They say that only a sacrifice of seven men from the house of Saul will appease them.

Now there are three problems with this passage. 1) Human sacrifice is absolutely prohibited in Israel. It is one of the things they always look down upon the Canaanites and the Philistines for. The only other reference to human sacrifice is the story of Jephthah in the book of Judges. And that story is there to serve as a "good-bad example" of what happens when you start offering to sacrifice human beings. 2) The only source for these instructions is a private oracle to David. No one else was witness to this statement that the drought was caused by the blood guilt of Saul. 3) There is no clear reference that Saul, and hence his house, ever did anything to incur such blood guilt.

It is entirely possible that David is creating this whole scenario to clean house, and to take care of any future insurrections from the house of Saul before they can occur. He does spare Jonathan's son, but gives him a stark example of what could have happened to him if David wasn't such an honorable man who is keeping his word to Jonathan.

21:15-21

Further wars break out, and David is almost killed in one of them. He is saved by Abishai, and then gives him a "retirement package" so he no longer has to go to war.

22:1-51

Chapter 22 is basically a repetition of Psalm 18. In this, David extols his love for God, how God has supported him throughout all of his trials. He goes on to maintain how he is blameless in the sight of God and how he shall never leave his strong support.

It is a brilliantly written elegy that is probably placed here to try to rehabilitate some of David's image as we come to the end of the story. Remember that there are two heroes in this story: David and God. This lengthy poem assures us that their relationship is tight and that neither has ever given up on the other. Quite a statement from a guy who has been through and done all that David has done. But this is part of the reason David is so well loved. He was a Godly man who lived in the guts of life. He did some very "un-godly" things, but always came back to his base relationship with God.