

# RISE AND FALL: THE RISE OF DAVID, THE FLAWED MESSIAH

## 2 SAMUEL 1-6

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Please turn with me to 2 Samuel chapter 1. Today we'll be covering the first six chapters of this book. As we've mentioned a few weeks ago, 1 & 2 Samuel are really one book, split into two scrolls for convenience sake, though we see that the place it was split was fairly intentional. 1 Samuel covers the Rise and Fall of King Saul, and 2 Samuel covers the Rise and Fall of King David. I'd like to spend a few minutes giving an overview of the narrative of chapters 1-6 which chronicles David's rise to the throne of Israel, which was promised to him over a decade prior, but which had been kept from him by the unbelieving king Saul.

Saul was told by the prophet Samuel that he had lost God's favor because of his unbelief and corrupt actions, but he clung to the role of king, and persecuted David. We discussed a few weeks ago that Saul relied on religious performance and his own human wisdom to rule the kingdom. He calls to God more like you would a genie, rather than a lord and master, in order to try and gain military and political advantage. When God stopped responding to Saul's inquiries, Saul turned to a witch to try and figure out what to do next. When we pick up in 2nd Samuel 1, we find that Saul and Jonathan suffered a defeat at the hands of the Philistines, Jonathan was killed, and Saul badly wounded, Saul then takes his own life by suicide rather than be captured.

## OVERVIEW OF THE 2 SAMUEL 1-6 NARRATIVE

- David hears of Saul and Jonathan's death and laments
- In the power vacuum left by King Saul's death
  - David anointed King over Judah (in the south) in Hebron
  - Ish-boseth, Saul's son, made king over Israel (in the north) in Mahanaim
- Battle between the two "kingdoms" Abner (Ish-boseth's general) and Joab (David's general) lead armies to fight, several hundred men died, but most of them from Abner's army. Widespread bloodshed and chaos.
- Abner defects to David and is soon murdered by Joab, Ish-boseth is murdered. David mourns them both.
- David is finally anointed king over all of Israel, and moves the capital from Hebron to Jerusalem.
- With God's help David finally defeats the Philistines, and brings the ark to Jerusalem.

### **2 Samuel 5:12 (ESV)**

12 And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

After a decade or more of running for his life from Saul, David is finally crowned king, as promised by God. All his waiting is over, his persecution at an end (for now), and his hopes realized.

David is the undisputed hero of the Old Testament, and perhaps, second only to Jesus in the entire Bible. Certainly he is a model of faith, courage, and godliness... except when he's not. How are we supposed to relate to David's example? That's what I want to talk about today: how we are to relate to David's example.

## **DAVID'S GOOD EXAMPLE**

So much of 1 Samuel so far, and even our chapters today, have highlighted David's amazing example to us. Pretty much every sermon you'll hear about David, that isn't over the incident with Bathsheba, lifts up David as an example to be followed.

Certainly he is a man of character and humility. When we are first introduced to him, we find him doing the humble job of tending his father Jesse's flocks, and doing so diligently and courageously. When the flocks were attacked by wild animals he bravely fought them off. In an example of Jesus's teaching that "he who is faithful with a little will also be faithful with much" - David sees no problem with confronting Goliath, just another wild animal attacking the flocks. God will give him help.

David was a faith-filled man who knew God's promises. Moses communicated God's covenant to God's people at Sinai that, if they were faithful to God:

### **Deuteronomy 28:7 (ESV)**

7 "The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

And this was handed down through the generations, and David knew it, and believed it, and so was able to stand up to even a 9-foot-tall armored giant.

David was a servant-hearted man, graciously serving in Saul's court.

David was an honorable man, respecting God-ordained authority, and not taking revenge. In this past week's sermon we see that while running for his life, multiple times he had an opportunity to end his opponent. Saul, but he did not, choosing instead to rely on God's timing to raise him up to his rightful place.

And we see in our passage today that David was a man that did not seek vengeance on his enemies, instead mourning their death, and carrying out justice for the murder of an imposter king who opposed him!

What a model of faith, courage, humility, patience. And it is right that we should look to David as an inspiration to us. But I'm going to be honest: I have a hard time relating to David.

## **HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO RELATE TO DAVID?**

When I was a younger man, David was my hero. A man of battle. A poet, a lover, a song-writer, the hero of the nation. I wanted to be just like him. I wanted to be brave and strong. I wanted to conquer impossible odds and be looked to as something of a hero by the people around me.

As I get older, however, very little of that has actually happened for me. Faith is hard. I'm not a songwriter or a warrior. Life is pretty normal. My accomplishments, relative to the scope of the world are pretty minor. There have been no 9' tall warriors in bronze armor to fight.

Now, don't hear a pity party, or me fishing for compliments here. I am encouraged with life, and God has helped my perspective. I am living the dream, in all honesty. But it is simply quite a different picture from the one I imagined in my 20s.

I have a hard time relating to David these days, and I'm coming to learn that that's appropriate.

David was literally the messiah (small "m"), the anointed one of Israel. One out of the millions.

When you read the Bible and think through application of a narrative, you are to ask the question "what do I have in common with the people this passage is either to, or about..." - and when we're reading 1&2 Samuel, it is important to realize that we have the most in common with the Israelites, and not with David. Yes we have some things in common with him, but mostly we are like the Israelites. And when we approach the passage from that angle, things become more clear. We are not the hero of the story.

We are the citizens of the kingdom, unable and sometimes unwilling to rescue ourselves from sometimes seemingly hopeless situations, under attack from an enemy, in need of a hero.

## **DAVID THE HERO**

As David turns out to be the hero of Israel, he reminds us of our need for a hero.

In fact David is lifted up as the one out of the millions in the nation, chosen by God to rescue God's people from their enemy. This is why so far in the narrative he is shown to be a classic example of virtue and godliness. And why it is so hard to relate to him. Have you ever felt like you'll never measure up to David's level of faith, courage, godliness, humility? That's intentional.

Another example that confounded me for years as I read the Bible shows up several times in our passage today. David asks the Lord a question, and it seems that he gets a direct, situational response. Look at Chapter 2 verse 1, David asks for guidance from God about what to do now that Saul is dead.

### **2 Samuel 2:1 (ESV)**

After this David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" And the Lord said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" And he said, "To Hebron."

I have wondered for years as to what is wrong with me that I do not hear answers like that. Wouldn't that be amazing? Doesn't it seem like it might be really helpful in our life of faith? Why do we not hear things that way?

We have to remember that David is the anointed of Israel. Liam Golligher, a pastor in Philadelphia remarked that David had to have his story written in the Bible, so he required this sort of guidance, so that we could read his story and get the guidance we need. We read in Romans that "whatever was written in the former days was written for our encouragement..." So, David had to get it right.

We do have the same clarity of guidance that David did, however, as we read the scriptures and learn the wisdom they teach us. Do you want to be led by God with the clarity that David seemed to get? Master the scriptures. They contain everything you need.

## **DAVID IS LIKE US TOO, THAT'S THE PROBLEM**

How are we supposed to get that encouragement from these stories about David if we can't relate to him though? Well that's the thing. We can relate to him. Once we put him in his right place as the hero, our expectations can be set. But we do get to see very clearly that David is not perfect. And we see this most clearly in one of the other most confusing parts of David's life: his polygamy. How can a man lifted up as a hero to be emulated, a man after God's own heart, take so many wives? Seven are mentioned in chapter 3. And then with our theme verse today:

### **2 Samuel 5:12-13 (ESV)**

12 And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

*...the very next verse says...*

13 And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David.

Which is a direct violation of Deuteronomy 17:17, that a king shall not "multiply wives" for himself.

## **A Brief Note On Polygamy**

Now, ancient near-eastern polygamy is tricky. The bible actually never forbids it. The Deuteronomy verse is more about flaunting wealth and power than the actual fact of multiple wives. But it is obvious that the Bible never paints polygamy in a positive light. In chapter 3, the polygamy is mentioned in the context of listing David's children, and the children born of those women all come back to haunt him later in this book. There is no end of chaos and relational strife here.

But I think we see David's fatal flaw here, he gets used to having whatever woman he wants, and this leads to the problem with Bathsheba, which we'll get to in a few weeks.

Clearly David's life is not *all* meant to be emulated. So how do we know which is which? It requires careful thought and a realization of who David is: the hero of the story, which we're not. His life is meant to instruct us. And one of the most powerful ways it helps us is in his faithfulness and humility while waiting to be crowned.

### **Faithfulness during persecution but problems when crowned.**

We see that David did well when under persecution and while awaiting the promise. It is when he received his crown that he went downhill in multiplying wives and concubines and eventually stealing another man's wife and having him murdered.

So perhaps there is a reason God doesn't release us from our trials and give us all the things he promises in this life, and that the best must wait till our flesh is dealt with.

## **CHRIST IS BETTER THAN DAVID**

David is complicated. Lifted up as such a hero, an inspiration, a model of faith and courage and godliness, except when he's not. And I think this is the primary purpose the prophets who wrote these two books had in the narrative of David's. He is so *close* to the hero we need, the hero we want, but falls short. He leaves us wanting more. Not quite satisfied. This is intentional.

David is meant to point us to the True King. King Jesus. The "son of David" this is promised in Chapter 7. The fulfillment of all the promises of God. The perfect obeyer. The most courageous. The most faithful. The conqueror of all our enemies.

Jesus is the hero, the rescuer that we need. Just as the Israelites, the citizens of a kingdom under attack, in need of a rescuer, we delivered by the imperfect king David, the flawed messiah David. We, too, are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, and we are under attack from an enemy who wants to destroy us: the devil. And Jesus is our hero, and he is not flawed. He is everything David was, and better.

Just as David faced down the giant, Goliath, the enemy of Israel, and killed him, and Israel got to run behind David and totally route the Philistine army; Jesus faced down the giant: sin and death, and destroyed it, and we get to run behind him and route out our remaining unbelief. David gave Israel victory over the Philistines. Jesus gives us victory over sin and death.

## **LET DAVID BE A MODEL, BUT NOT OUR ULTIMATE HOPE**

So, let's be inspired by David's example of faith and courage and humility (when it was present), but don't ever stop there in your bible reading and application. Don't stop with "I want to be more like David." Our aim should never be to try to measure up to David's good example, because it is simultaneously too lofty a goal (to follow the footsteps of the anointed king of Israel!) and too low a goal (he points us to the anointed king of the universe!)

No sermon on David should ever stop with an application to be more like David only. We need to keep going down his family lineage, and see Jesus.

Our hope is not that we will be as courageous and faithful as David. We won't be! And this will lead us either to pride when we think we're nailing it, or despair when we realize we'll never measure up.

Our hope is the fact that Jesus is better than David. He is the one David was foreshadowing (though imperfectly). The throne of David, the covenant, is promised to one of David's offspring forever, and we know now that that promised was aimed at Jesus of Nazareth, the 40-times-great-grandson of David.

Let David point us forward to Christ, and let us put our hope in him.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Thinking back so far over 1 and 2 Samuel - what can we learn from and relate to from David's example?
2. What aspects of David's life and character do you have a hard time relating to?
3. How would we know which aspects of David's life we are meant to emulate to (e.g., courage in facing Goliath) and which we are not meant to emulate (e.g., polygamy, adultery, what about killing 10s of 1000s of philistines?)
4. Ultimately, David's life and example are meant to point us to Christ. What are some ways David's life points us to Jesus? What are some ways Jesus succeeds where David did not?