*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 23 - 28

David, King of Israel

**Monday, August 23 2 Samuel 19:1-43**

*“David’s return”*

 Though David’s men have won the battle and Absalom is dead, the conflict is not yet settled. Absalom’s rebellion tapped into legitimate complaints against David, especially in southern Judah where the rebellion started. With the demise of Absalom, the pro-David voices return. He is, after all, the one who defeated the Philistines, and it is not likely that the nation will find a better ruler. The pro-David voices among the northern tribes of Israel argue that they should move quickly to bring David back into power in Jerusalem.

 However, Judah is apparently slower to act, and David realizes he can never rule effectively in Jerusalem without Judah’s support. He sends messengers to the elders of Judah, stressing his kinship with them and offering to make Amasa the general of the Israelite army. This is a bold offer, which presumably addresses complaints about Joab’s leadership as well. David’s strategy works. Judah acts to bring David back across the Jordan River, meeting him at Gilgal to escort him back into the city.

*In all our ways we acknowledge you, Lord, and you direct our paths. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 24 2 Samuel 20:1-26**

*“Sheba’s revolt”*

 David reenters Jerusalem but still must contend with the conspiracy’s aftermath, which consists mostly of Sheba’s revolt among the northern tribes. Though the revolt is easily quelled, it exposes a dangerous fragility in the union of the kingdom. David rightly understands the seriousness of the northern revolt, even if the danger it poses is more for the future than the immediate present: “Now Sheba son of Bicri will do us more harm than Absalom did.”

 Sectional rivalry among the tribes of Israel emerges during David’s return to Jerusalem, indicating that Absalom’s revolt itself is symptomatic of a larger problem. Apparently, David had held north and south together in a unified kingdom through the sheer force of his personality. It was a personal union, effected through his skills and charisma. But after Absalom’s rebellion, David returns to Jerusalem a weakened monarch. In the wake of Absalom’s defeated rebellion, a greater rebellion looms because the tribes threaten to break into open civil war.

*Only through common commitment to you, Lord, can your people be united. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 25 2 Samuel 21:1-22**

*“Famine, and Philistine wars”*

 After three years of famine, David fervently prays in order to discern the cause of the plague. The Lord reveals to David that the famine is the result of Saul’s hostilities against the Gibeonites, a non-Israelite people who had been promised peace. David seeks restitution as a means of appeasing the guilt of Saul’s actions. When the Gibeonites request that seven of Saul’s male descendants be executed, David complies, saving only Mephibosheth because of his loyalty to Jonathan.

 The four military episodes related in these verses presumably occur at various times in David’s early wars with the Philistines and are held together literarily by two common threads. (1) Each relates the victory of one of David’s warriors in crucial battles against the Philistines. (2) In each episode, one of David’s impressive soldiers is credited with the execution of one of the “descendents of the Rapha,” most likely a distinct group of people that included Goliath, the giant from the city of Gath killed by David with a sling and a stone.

*There be giants, Lord, but in your power they will not conquer us. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 23 - 28

David, King of Israel

**Thursday, August 26 2 Samuel 22:1-51**

*“David’s song of thanksgiving”*

 David’s song recorded for us here in 2 Samuel 22 is repeated almost verbatim in Psalm 18. The song/psalm is of a type most often called a “song of thanksgiving,” at the heart of which is typically a story of deliverance or salvation. Verse 4 summarizes the emphasis of the song: “I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.” Furthermore, two key words recur in its stanzas and give the overall hymn a unifying theme: “rock” and “save, deliver.”

 “Rock” is a common word for describing God in the Old Testament, as it was among other nations of the ancient world to describe their own deities. Referring to God in this way is similar to our “solid as a rock” or to the metaphorical way we use “mountain” to connote stability and strength. The verb “save, deliver” and its related noun “salvation” are used by David to celebrate the assurance that God can be trusted to rescue him and deliver him from certain death.

*As you were for David his rock and salvation, Lord, so you are for me. Amen.*

**Friday, August 27 2 Samuel 23:1-39**

*“David’s last words; David’s mighty warriors”*

 In the thanksgiving psalm of chapter 22, David has looked back at the mercy and faithfulness of God during his life and reign. Here in his “last words” he looks forward, trusting in the promises he has received from God. David extols the benefits and virtues of a righteous kingship, one in which the king’s rule is just and right and is a lasting blessing for all his subjects. David’s must be just such a kingship, because God has made an everlasting covenant with him, granting him the promise of an eternal dynasty which will ultimately be filled by David’s descendent, that is, Jesus, the Messiah. Jesus is the one who will eternally arrange and secure every part of God’s promise to David.

 The military honor roll lists the heroes who supported David, along with a few of their more spectacular exploits. From a human perspective, these are the valiant and loyal soldiers who made David’s kingdom possible. At the same time, the narrator reminds us that the human perspective is inadequate to explain their successes: “the Lord brought about a great victory.”

*We long for the day, Lord, when you will bring about the final victory. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 28 2 Samuel 24:1-25**

*“The census”*

 At first glance, this seems a peculiar way in which to conclude 1 – 2 Samuel. David conducts a census against Joab’s advice, and the nation suffers a bitter plague as a result. Under the direction of Gad the prophet, David acquires a new piece of land in Jerusalem, builds an altar, and offers a sacrifice to God. The books of Samuel conclude with a brief statement that God answers David’s prayer and stops the plague.

 Upon further reflection, this chapter plays a role in the overall message of 1 – 2 Samuel. While chapters 21 through 23 have confirmed and strengthened the message of David’s righteous kingship, so chapter 24 returns to one of the central characterizing features of David as the ideal king of Israel. David here is the repentant king, who puts the needs of his people before his own personal ambitions. By being willing to place aside his royal power in deference to God’s will and authority, he becomes the obedient and prayerful servant of God. God is king; David is only his representative on earth.

*As was David, Lord, may I be your obedient and prayerful servant. Amen.*