

The Life of David

David Defeats the Philistines

2 Samuel 5:17-25

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Scripture

In our sermon series on “The Life of David,” we have come to the point where David was anointed king over Israel when he was thirty years old. This was, in fact, the third time that David was anointed as king. The first time was about fifteen years earlier when the Prophet Samuel was sent by God to anoint young David as the future king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13). Then, when David was twenty-two years old, he was anointed as king over the southern territory of Judah (2 Samuel 2:1-7). Now, as we said, David was anointed as king over all Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-5).

In the first part of Second Samuel 5, we learned about David’s coronation as king over Israel (5:1-5). We also learned that David chose Jerusalem as his new capitol city (5:6-10). Then, the kingdom was consolidated by the erection of new buildings in Jerusalem with materials from King Hiram of Tyre (5:11-12). Finally, we noted that seeds of compromise were sown by David when he took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem (5:13-16), which was a direct violation of God’s command not to take many wives.

We also noted that David’s coronation as king over Israel was very significant because God was establishing his kingdom on earth, with David as his king. The kingdom of God on earth with David as king was intended to point people to the future, eternal kingdom of God.

In today’s lesson, we learn that the celebration of David’s coronation had hardly died down when significant opposition arose against David and his kingdom. But, because this was God’s kingdom on earth, we see how God used David to protect his kingdom.

Let’s read about David defeating the Philistines in 2 Samuel 5:17-25:

¹⁷ When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. ¹⁸ Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁹ And David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?” And the Lord said to David, “Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.” ²⁰ And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, “The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood.” Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. ²¹ And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.

²² And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. ²³ And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, “You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. ²⁴ And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines.” ²⁵ And David did as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer. (2 Samuel 5:17-25)

Introduction

Dorothy Sayers (13 June 1893 – 17 December 1957) was an English crime writer and poet, and also a student of classical and modern languages. She once wrote, “I believe it to be a grave mistake to present Christianity as something charming and popular with no offense in it.”¹ Sayers was not saying that Christians must give offense to others. Instead, she was saying that Christianity is naturally offensive to unbelievers. Christianity teaches that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and

¹ David Coomes, *Dorothy L. Sayers: A Careless Rage for Life* (Chariot Victor, 1992), n. p.

unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (Romans 1:18). Unbelievers don’t like to hear that at all. They are in rebellion against God and the things of God.

But, the good news of the Gospel is that God saves ungodly and unrighteous men and women, regenerates them and gives them new natures, and makes them citizens of his kingdom. But, unless God changes the hearts of unbelievers, they will continue to oppose God, the people of God, and the kingdom of God.

David quickly learned that though God had crowned him king of his kingdom on earth, that news was not met with support by everyone. Indeed, the Philistines opposed David and his kingdom. But, God was at work establishing his kingdom on earth.

Second Samuel 5:17-25 tells us about two attacks by the Philistines against David. These two attacks by the Philistines show us that God was protecting his kingdom, and how he did so.

Lesson

Second Samuel 5:17-25 shows us how God protects his kingdom.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. God Protects His Kingdom by His Guidance (5:17-19, 22-24)
2. God Protects His Kingdom by His Power (5:20a, 21, 25)
3. God Protects His Kingdom for His Glory (5:20b)

I. God Protects His Kingdom by His Guidance (5:17-19, 22-24)

First, God protects his kingdom by his guidance.

Verse 17 says, **“When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went**

up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold.” Though this verse comes *after* David chose Jerusalem to be his capitol city (5:6-10), some commentators say that this incident took place chronologically *before* David sent the Jebusites packing from Jerusalem. The reason they say this is because when **David heard** of the Philistines looking for him, he **went down to the stronghold**, and did not secure himself in Jerusalem. We don't know the exact location of **the stronghold**. Most likely, this stronghold was in the vicinity of where **the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim** (5:18), which was “a valley, extending southwest of Jerusalem, whose northern portion formed part of the boundary between Benjamin and Judah.”²

After David defeated the Philistines, we read of a second attempt by the Philistines to attack David in verse 22, **“And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim.”**

The Philistines were not happy to hear the news that David had been crowned king over all Israel. For seven and a half years before David's coronation, David had been engaged in a war between the southern territory of Judah and the northern territory of Israel. The Philistines were happy that David was busily engaged in a war because that meant David would not bother the Philistines, and they were free to do whatever they wished to do. But, now that the kingdom was no longer divided, but united, the Philistines wanted to attack David and all Israel.

When Christians are divided against one another, or when churches or denominations are fighting amongst themselves, it seems to me that our enemy, Satan, just sits back and allows us to tear each other apart. There is no need for him to do anything because we are doing a great job of fighting against one another.

² Gershon Edelstein, “Rephaim, Valley of (Place),” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 676.

But, let us come together and join together in unity, then we should expect significant opposition from Satan. Christians and churches and denominations that are experiencing unity should not let their guard down because that is when they should expect an attack from the enemy.

On both occasions, David went to the Lord for guidance about what to do. We read in verse 19a, **“And David inquired of the Lord, ‘Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?’ ”** And verse 23a says, **“And when David inquired of the Lord....”** David stands in stark contrast to his predecessor, King Saul. Saul did not seek guidance from the Lord, whereas David did.

I found an interesting table of the battles of Saul and David in the *Faithlife Study Bible*. Saul was engaged in four battles. He won three and was killed in his fourth battle against the Philistines at the battle on Mount Gilboa. David was engaged in sixteen battles and won every one of them.³

What is interesting in the Lord’s guidance to David is that although both situations against the Philistines seemed to be identical, the Lord varied his guidance to David. The first time, in verse 19b, **“the Lord said to David, ‘Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.’ ”** The second time, the Lord gave David a different instruction, as we read in verses 23b-24, **“You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines.”**

I would like to note two points about God’s guidance from this narrative. *First, our greatest need in battling against Satan is to ask the Lord for guidance to grant success.* The Apostle Paul reminds us that we

³ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016).

“do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). When I was a new Christian at the University of Cape Town, I once said to a mature Christian friend that I thought I was able to fight against temptation and sin and Satan. And my Christian friend said, “Freddy, no Christian can stand against Satan in his own strength. We cannot succeed against him unless God enables us to do so.” David understood that in his strength he could not fight against any enemy without the enabling power of God. So, we must pray and seek God’s guidance to grant success against temptation and sin and Satan.

And second, God’s guidance is not always the same. This is clear from the text. God’s guidance to David was different on each occasion. It does not seem that anything had changed, but God wanted to show his power in different ways. In the same way, God may guide Christians differently. Now, let me quickly add that God’s guidance today is given to Christians primarily through his Word. David did not have much of the Scriptures in his day. We have the completed Word of God. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* says that “all [Scripture is] given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.”⁴ That means that God’s guidance never contradicts his Word. It is always consistent with Scripture.

So, when a Christian man says that God’s guidance is leading him to marry a non-Christian, we can confidently say that he is wrong, for God’s Word clearly teaches that Christians must “not be unequally yoked with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Or when a Christian woman says that she no longer loves her husband and that God is leading her to get a divorce, we can say that she is wrong, for God’s Word teaches that there are only two grounds for divorce, namely, adultery and desertion of an unbeliever.

⁴ Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: Edinburgh Edition* (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1851), 16.

So, God protects his kingdom by his guidance.

II. God Protects His Kingdom by His Power (5:20a, 21, 25)

Second, God protects his kingdom by his power.

Regarding the first attack, we read in verse 20a, **“And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there.”** **Baal-perazim** was about five miles southwest of Jerusalem. David’s victory over the Philistines was so strong that **“the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away”** (5:21). It was not uncommon for armies in those days to take their **idols** into battle. That they left their **idols** is an indication of how thorough David’s victory was over the Philistines.

Regarding the second attack, we read in verse 25, **“And David did as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer.”** This is an area covering perhaps forty miles on the north and northwest side of Jerusalem. The author’s point is that this was another thorough victory over the Philistines. The victory was so thorough that the Philistines did not bother Israel for many decades.

When God’s people obey God’s Word, they will see God’s power at work. Commentator Richard Phillips says, “As Christians and churches today obey the mandates of God’s Word—especially Jesus’ Great Commission for us to take the gospel to all nations and make disciples (Matt. 28:18–20)—we may look to God’s power to give success to God’s work.”⁵ We see this principle at work throughout the centuries as God’s people faithfully obey God’s Word and share the good news of the Gospel with unbelievers. Satan may bring discouragement, but God’s power is greater than Satan. And the result is that more and more people are brought into the kingdom of God.

⁵ 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), 89.

In 1912, medical missionary Dr. William Leslie went to live and minister to tribal people in a remote corner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After 17 years he returned to the U.S., a discouraged man, believing he failed to make an impact for Christ. He died nine years after his return.

But in 2010 a team led by Eric Ramsey with Tom Cox World Ministries made a surprising discovery. They found a network of reproducing churches hidden like glittering diamonds in the dense jungle across the Kwilu River from Vanga, where Dr. Leslie was stationed. Based on his previous research, Ramsey thought the Yansi in this remote area might have some exposure to the name of Jesus, but no real understanding of who he is. They were unprepared for their remarkable find.

“When we got in there, we found a network of reproducing churches throughout the jungle,” Ramsey reports. “Each village had its own gospel choir, although they wouldn’t call it that,” he notes. “They wrote their own songs and would have sing-offs from village to village.”

They found a church in each of the eight villages they visited scattered across 34 miles. They also found a 1000-seat stone “cathedral” that often got so crowded in the 1980s—with many walking miles to attend—that a church planting movement began in the surrounding villages.

Dr. Leslie traveled throughout this remote region, teaching the Bible and the gospel. For seventeen years, Ramsey fought tropical illnesses, charging buffaloes, armies of ants, and leopard-infested jungles to bring the gospel into a remote area. He died feeling like he had failed, but instead, his faithfulness and courage left a powerful legacy of vital churches. Dr. Leslie obeyed God’s Word, and although he did not see direct results of his obedience, the fact is that God’s power was at work through his obedience.⁶

⁶ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2016/june/2062716.html>.

So, God protects his kingdom by his guidance. He also protects his kingdom by his power.

III. God Protects His Kingdom for His Glory (5:20b)

And third, God protects his kingdom for his glory.

After receiving God's guidance and seeing God's power in victory, we read of David in verse 20b, **“And he said, ‘The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood.’ Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim.”** The name **Baal-perazim** means “Lord of breaking through.”⁷ David acknowledged that the victory over the Philistines was not because of his prowess but because of God's power. And so he gave the glory to God.

When Lord Hailsham was interviewed by a TV reporter on the steps on No. 10 Downing Street as the British Cabinet met to respond to news of the Argentine surrender in the Falklands War (on June 14, 1982), he simply and movingly answered with a quotation from Psalm 115: “Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory.”⁸

When God blesses us, it is appropriate to give him the glory for who he is and what he has done. I was reading the newsletter from the Dishmans this week, and one of their points for prayer caught my eye. They wanted prayer “for us to see and celebrate the many ways that God is working in our ministry, in our churches, and in our family.” Let us do the same! Let us give God the glory for the many ways that he is working in our ministry, our churches, and in our family.

So, God protects his kingdom by his guidance. He also protects his kingdom by his power. And he protects his kingdom for his glory.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

⁸ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1990), 41.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the incident of David defeating the Philistines in 2 Samuel 5:17-25, let us serve God in his kingdom.

Pastor and author Craig Brian Larson, who lives and works in Chicago, IL, said that on his way to work one morning, he pulled up to a stoplight and noticed an interesting SUV in front of him. The owner of the SUV was clearly a person of deep loyalty. The spare tire mounted on the back had the words “Texas Longhorns” and an orange, steer-head icon on it. The trailer hitch displayed another steer-head icon and the word “Texas.” The license plate frame was bordered with the words “Longhorns” on top and “University of Texas” at the bottom.

But something didn’t add up. That license plate frame was screwed into a blue-and-white, Illinois, “Land of Lincoln” license plate with a picture of old Abe himself on it. The SUV’s license plate shows that this driver now lives in Illinois. Larson assumed the owner of this SUV had moved, but had not yet identified with his new home and had no plans of changing loyalties.⁹

At one time, the Philistines thought that David’s loyalty lay with them. David had even lived in Philistia for a time. But, David’s loyalty belonged to God. God finally opened the way for David to be crowned king over all Israel. All of Israel expressed their loyalty to God and his king, David.

When you and I become citizens of the kingdom of God, our loyalty lies completely with God. Our allegiance switches from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. We want to serve King Jesus with love and devotion. And we seek to advance his kingdom by his guidance and power, and for his glory alone. Amen.

⁹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2006/august/2081406.html>.

Mission Statement

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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