

From the Pulpit of Keith Miller
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King David and the Enemy Within

2 Samuel 7:8-17

Introduction

The book of Judges shows us what life looks like when a people try to live without God. Israel was religious, but their religion had drifted far from the God of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua. Judges tells us bluntly that a generation arose “**who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel**” (Judg. 2:10).

Surrounded by nations with kings, Israel wanted one too. Wanting a king wasn’t the problem—God had already promised a coming ruler from Judah: “**The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples**” (Gen. 49:10). He even gave instructions for Israel’s future king in Deuteronomy 17. The issue wasn’t the idea of kingship, but Israel’s motivation. They wanted a king not to be more like God, but to be more like the nations.

Their first king, Saul, looked the part—tall, strong, impressive—but his heart was far from God. He cared more about preserving his image than obeying the Lord. The breaking point came when God commanded him to destroy the Amalekites. The Amalekites were a brutal nomadic tribe who had been Israel’s sworn enemies since the days of Moses, attacking Israel from behind when they were weak and exhausted (Ex. 17). Instead of obeying fully, Saul spared their king and kept what pleased him. So the Lord said through Samuel:

**“Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than a sacrifice,
And to pay attention than the fat of rams.**

**For rebellion is as reprehensible as the sin of divination,
And insubordination is as reprehensible as false religion and idolatry.
Since you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He has also rejected you from being king. (1 Sam. 15:22–23)**

Saul finally confessed, “**I have sinned... because I feared the people and listened to their voice**” (1 Sam. 15:24), but the damage was done. Samuel told him the kingdom had been torn from him and given to “**a neighbor of yours, who is better than you**” (v. 28). That neighbor was a young Judean shepherd named David—someone no one expected.

When Samuel arrived at the home of Jesse (Boaz and Ruth's great-grandson), he assumed Israel's next king would look like one of Jesse's oldest sons. But God corrected him: **"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God does not see as man sees, since man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"** (1 Sam. 16:7). After seven sons passed by without God's approval, Samuel asked, **"Are these all the boys?"** Only then did Jesse mention his youngest—David—so overlooked that even his family hadn't considered him.

But when David appeared, the Lord said, **"Arise, anoint him; for this is he"** (v. 12). And from that moment on, **"the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward"** (v. 13).

David Was God's Man

The first time we are invited to look into David's heart—and to see what set him apart from everyone else—is in 1 Samuel 17 when he faced Goliath in battle. While Israel's army stood frozen on the front lines, David had only been sent to deliver food to his brothers. The Philistines had proposed a champion-to-champion battle: Goliath against anyone Israel dared to send. The stakes were high—*the losing side would become the servants of the winner*.

No one in Israel wanted to step forward. After Goliath roared, **"I defy the battle lines of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together!"** Saul and all Israel were **"dismayed and extremely afraid"** (1 Sam. 17:10–11). For forty days, the giant's taunts filled the valley. And for forty days, young David went back and forth between tending his father's sheep and tending to his brothers—hearing the escalating tension firsthand.

Eventually David had heard enough. Offended by Goliath's insults against God and His people, he asked, **"What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes the disgrace from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he has dared to defy the armies of the living God?"** (v. 26).

When word reached Saul, David was brought before the king. Without hesitation, he said, **"May no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight this Philistine"** (v. 32). David stepped forward—not with armor, experience, or military strength—but with confidence in Yahweh.

Armed only with a staff, a sling, and five stones, David stood as Israel's champion. Goliath mocked him, saying, **"Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?"** and cursed him by his gods (v. 43). He then threatened, **"Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild animals"** (v. 44). But David's response revealed everything about his heart and his source of confidence:

But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a saber, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I

will strike you and remove your head from you. Then I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that this entire assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S, and He will hand you over to us!" (1 Sam. 17:45–47)

David's confidence was not in his ability, but in God's character. The God who had rescued Israel before would rescue them again. David slung one stone, struck the giant in the forehead, and killed him with what seemed like nothing more than a slingshot.

There was no earthly guarantee that David would defeat Goliath. But he knew God had promised Abraham that Israel would represent Him among the nations, and that a king would one day rise from Judah, the one to whom **"the scepter shall not depart... and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples"** (Gen. 49:9–10). David trusted that God's purposes could not be stopped by a Philistine giant.

David Was Israel's Flawed King

Under David's leadership, Israel finally defeated and subdued the Philistines—the nation's greatest threat throughout the time of the Judges and during Saul's reign. David had been one of Saul's most successful military commanders, and the women of Israel even sang, **"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands"** (1 Sam. 18:7). Under David's rule the borders of Israel expanded, and the promises made to Abraham appeared closer than ever to becoming reality.

Some of the high points of David's reign include making Jerusalem the capital of Israel, bringing the ark of the covenant back into the city as the visible sign of God's presence, preparing the way for Solomon to build the temple, and establishing Jerusalem as the spiritual and political center of the nation. David wanted God to be at the center of everything Israel did, reflecting God's covenant at Sinai where the people were called God's treasured possession, His kingdom of priests, and His holy nation (Exod. 19).

But David is also remembered for one of the darkest moments of his life—his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband in a desperate attempt to cover up his sin. Uriah, one of David's most loyal soldiers, was a man devoted to his king and to Israel. He also happened to be married to a woman of striking beauty named Bathsheba.

We are told in 2 Samuel 11 that while Israel's army was out fighting, David remained in Jerusalem—a decision that placed him exactly where temptation could reach him. What follows is one of the most sobering accounts in Scripture:

"Now at evening time David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent messengers and inquired about the

woman. And someone said, ‘Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’ Then David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he slept with her.”

(2 Sam. 11:2–4)

Soon after, Bathsheba sent word back to the king: **“I am pregnant.”** David never imagined his sin would come to light so quickly. Like many who try to hide their sins, he moved from temptation to adultery, and from adultery to deception. He brought Uriah home from battle, attempting to manipulate him into sleeping with his wife so the pregnancy would appear legitimate. But Uriah refused—he would not enjoy the comforts of home while his fellow soldiers risked their lives.

With his plans unraveling, David chose a darker path. He wrote a sealed letter to Joab, the commander of the army, and sent it in Uriah’s own hand as messenger. The letter read: **“Place Uriah at the front line of the fiercest battle and withdraw from him, so that he may be struck and killed”** (2 Sam. 11:14–15). It was a death warrant. And David made Uriah carry it.

Uriah died just as David intended, and for a moment the king must have felt deep relief—his sin was concealed. But the covering of sin never hides it from God. The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to confront David, and when the truth broke through David’s self-deception, he finally said, **“I have sinned against the LORD.”**¹

The difference between David slaying Goliath and David’s failing with Bathsheba was not his strength, his ability, or his status—it was his dependence on God. When David trusted God, giants fell. When David trusted himself, David fell.

We Need a True and Better David

It was before David’s great sin with Bathsheba that God promised him that through his lineage would come another king in 2 Samuel 7:12–16; this moment is one of the most breathtaking moments in the entire Old Testament. Before a flawed king of whom God knew would fall terribly. The One David worshiped exclusively announced that the hope promised to Adam and Eve, the covenant repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that would one day burst into reality through one of David’s descendants:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul,

¹ David is remembered as a great king, but also as a deeply flawed man. And yet, Scripture still calls him **“a man after My heart”** (Acts 13:22).

whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam. 7:12–16)

This covenant echoes the very promises God made to Adam and Eve, and later to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was a promise given specifically to Judah, and its path can be traced through some of the most unlikely people in Scripture. It moved forward through **Tamar**, a Canaanite woman surrounded by scandal. It continued through **Rahab**, another Canaanite woman who married Salmon of Judah and became the mother of Boaz. Boaz then married **Ruth**, a Moabite widow, and they had a son named Obed. Obed fathered Jesse, and from Jesse came David.

Consider the astonishing depth of God's grace, mercy, and love—He chooses to accomplish His purposes through people with significant flaws. The covenant God was fulfilling through them is what theologians refer to as an “unconditional covenant”—a promise not reliant on human strength, virtue, or even obedience, but founded solely on the perfect will of our good and holy God!²

Think about the weight of the promise made to David:

A forever throne that will never be compromised by sin.

A forever kingdom that will never be overcome by evil.

A forever King whose righteousness will never need improvement.

Israel didn't just need a brave king, or a talented king, or even a repentant king—Israel, and indeed the entire world, needed a perfect King. A King who would never fail, never fall, never waiver, and never walk away from God the way David did on the roof that night.

And here is where the grace of God overwhelms: **God chose to fulfill His forever covenant promise through the very place of David's greatest failure.** Bathsheba—the woman David exploited, the woman whose husband he murdered, the woman whose story began with sin—is the very woman God folded into the line of redemption.

Bathsheba bore David five sons; the first was conceived through their affair and was taken from them by God through death. Of the other four sons listed in Scripture, was Solomon and the last child listed was Nathan. Through **Solomon**, the royal line flowed to Joseph, through **Nathan**, the line flowed to Mary. And standing at the end of both genealogies is the One the prophets longed for—**Jesus, the Son of David.**

² “Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you wrongdoers. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My plan will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure...’” (Isa. 46:8–10).

Jesus is the King that David could never be. He is the flawless Son whom God promised. He is the Shepherd-King of Ezekiel 37 who gathers the broken, restores the wandering, and rules with justice and compassion. He is the One who never surrendered to temptation, never hid His sin, never needed to be confronted by a prophet—because He lived in perfect dependence on the Father every moment of His earthly life.

Every one of us knows what it is to stand in front of a “Goliath”—an addiction, a fear, a bitterness, a wound—and feel small. And every one of us knows what it is to stand on the roof like David, spiritually lazy, drifting, self-confident, and one decision away from disaster. But God’s purpose was never for David to be the hero of Israel—David was the signpost, not the destination. His victories pointed to the kind of dependence God wants from us, and his failures pointed to the kind of Savior we desperately need.

The remarkable message of the gospel isn’t simply that God offers us another chance, but that He provides us with a greater King—a true and better David. This King never surrendered to temptation, never acted out of pride, and never misused His power for harm. Instead of taking another’s life to hide His wrongdoing, He willingly gave His own life to atone for ours.

Jesus, as the Son of David, is the true and better Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Boaz, and David. He is the King David could never be. And to the weary and the wounded—to the Davids who have fallen, and to the Bathshebas whose stories have been marked by another’s sin—He speaks: **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”** (Matt. 11:28–30).