

David's Conquests and Ours

The Life of David

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Well, tonight we take 2 Samuel 8, or at least in part, but we're going to be ranging fairly widely and the title is this "David's Conquests and Ours." David's conquests and they're listed here, aren't they, many of them and a few others too which we will refer to in passing.

David is now crowned and very secure in that place he now occupies as head of all of Israel, Judah, king in Hebron, king reigning in Jerusalem and we saw last time that he's been given a promise that his throne is secure, absolutely secure, and stretching on into the future and will remain intact and is going to be occupied one day by the most significant figure of all, outranking David, outshining him in respect of victories that he will achieve and the things that he will accomplish and the glory that attends his office, that, of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ. So all of this is coming into play here. David, as we see from this chapter that we read, all of these kingdoms that fall down before him, give him tribute, places that he now conquers. He deals with, doesn't he, very thoroughly, very strongly, very ruthlessly a host of garrisons there that they can't be a trouble again. And the names, well, the names there are just of classic foes. The Philistines are there and if we refer back to 2 Samuel 5, we would have seen early in David's reign when king, the Philistines came and two notable victories were secured then in the valley of Rephaim, and then they were quiet for a while but then returned. Well, they return here and we learn that he subdued them, verse 1, he subdued them, and that is the result that follows on all the rest of the things and we don't hear much more of the Philistines. He subdued them.

Then following on from them, classic foes like Moab, there's Edom that isn't always there, the family line they share somewhere back along but not always there seeing eye-to-eye at all. Syrians, Ammonites, all of them in the end. We could have read on into chapter 10 to see further victories against the Syrians, victories there against the Ammonites, and how David, well, we balk a little bit and pale a little bit at the way in which he dealt with these conquered kingdoms and the punishments that were meted out. I guess we have to say and this is really what we're going to be coming to in a moment, we moved on from that, that that is not now the mandate that we as the Christian church have. We'll say a bit more about that in a moment.

But then that was the word of God, yes, and it's strong and we struggle perhaps with that, but that is the will of God and David was moving in the will of God. David knew that the Lord was with him, the Lord was establishing him and on every side. We see in verse 6 that the Lord preserved David wherever he went. Wherever he went. This is a time of great success. We know down the way there's the incident with Bathsheba that is around the corner but at the moment, no, it's conquests, great conquests and all those nations and more besides where David is now at rest from his foes. Kings are eager to make their peace with him and to ally themselves with him in some fashion, so his power is at its zenith here. He really is showing himself to be a strong king, the anointed king, the man after God's own heart.

So what of us now? Well, here is the main point really that is the theme this evening, that, well, we're in a battle. We are. I hope you realize that. A nice, quiet sort of evening and spring, yes, we can feel it again having seemingly crashed back into winter these last couple of weeks, particularly in the evenings, well, the comfort bounds around us, we wait for the arrival of the swifts, don't we, there to fill the air with their remarkable and unique screeching. That's actually, having painted that sort of idyllic picture that we're in a battle. We are every single day of our Christian life in peril of which we are finding our progress contested at every turn except you'd be hard put to find the Moabites or there or the Ammonites. Walk to and from the church, you have the recreation ground that I haven't been ambushed there by Philistines or encountered Goliath or his equivalent in that way. No, it's a spiritual battle. This is something now against invisible foes, not foes standing there in flesh and blood. We're wrestling against principalities and powers. It's coming through in the hymns that we were reading a moment ago.

Here is now our battleground, sin, fighting against that. Fighting against the world, that environment that's all around us, some parts of it okay, some parts of it actually quite good but lots and lots of it, though, pretty bad and attacking the Christian faith. And behind it all, yes, spiritual foes so we mention the devil. We must. He's living. He is active and he is working at his maximum to try to derail Christians, derail churches. It doesn't matter how small they are. He'd love to close us down. He really would and so we are ever, as we will see later on, to be alert. We are the church militant, friends. Church militant. We're in a battleground that's a war zone and so don't be fooled by that. The stillness of the evening, spring here, we're the church militant and we have a battle to fight. David's conquests, yes, but we have conquests also that we need to be busy in securing.

Well, I mentioned that we have to try to interpret and understand a passage like this. I am not going to preach a sermon on chariots or how best to hamstring horses or how to measure out Moabites and put them to death every so many, well, every three or whatever it might be. No, so my heading is this: the old covenant is not identical with the new. The old covenant is not identical with the new. This is where we are here. This is the mandate and these are the rules, the laws that applied to David and his time and to the people of God. We read, didn't we, there that various high officials and prophets and priests and such figures that God had appointed in the old covenant under types and shadows, still not the final realization, the fulfillment of all things, the sacrificial system,

for instance, back into Hebrews here, aren't we, that it awaits the Lord Jesus Christ. And when he's come, well, these other things are now obsolete, they're aging and, as the writer to the Hebrews says, they all pass away. They are passing away. So they should. They don't now perform a function. They did a very important function but not anymore because the Lord Jesus Christ has brought an end to the need for sacrifice. How could there be any other sacrifice needed when you've had the ultimate sacrifice?

So we note there are things where very definitely there's been a move forward, a better covenant, better promises founded on the Lord Jesus Christ but there are plenty of other things too which really relate around that and the nature of the new covenant which we're in, Christ's blood that seals that, and our belonging now in covenant commitment to him in that. And so when we look at the old covenant, people living under the old covenant, the Old Testament times broadly speaking, everything is more, well, it's more material, it was more earthbound, earth-centered. It was to do with places and rivers and agriculture and economy and boundaries and borders and neighboring countries. It had a very physical, very material expression.

This is a huge subject and we've really only just skating over the surface of it this evening but then God in establishing the parameters, the rules, the way in which he worked with Israel, his chosen people, living within those confines, those boundaries, those cities, towns, rivers, villages, and all that went with them, that you're able in a way, we'll come to that in a minute, moved on since then, but then to read off from how well agriculture was doing, the crops or whatever else, how well the weather was treating you, how well you were doing vis-a-vis your enemies, they would tell you something of God's either pleasure or displeasure with you and had physical expression, physical kind of territory and therefore what was happening in every kind of material sense, in a very earth kind of sense would explain to you something of where you were in God's eyes whether in a good place or whether in a bad place. And the covenant that was established which stems from Sinai, it's interesting, it's got lots of aspects to it, lots of features to become to and anyway full justice this evening, but it was established with all the people that were before God, all the tribes, all 12 of them with all of the members of those tribes that it worked in a sort of national fashion. They were all regarded as part of that covenant, that promise that is made, promises they return back to God, and they were to live out their promises to God in the context of their towns and their villages in this particular environment, Israel as we would call it, and that was to be where their place was, and all of them belonged in that, all of them were regarded as belonging in that, even though as we know many of them really were not truly belonging. They were, if you will, regarded as belonging, regarded as a nation but beyond that nation there was a nation within the nation and they were the true believers, the ones who really understood.

But in that time, God would suffer, as it were, himself to be pleased with at least outward obedience, a measure of conformity in an outward sense to his law. So as long as no gross idolatry and as long as though as at least some regular worship and proper adherence to those things, then there would be blessing. Well, there would be more than that for those who were truly the Lord's people within that company, the real Israel within Israel but, nevertheless, they could in some outward sense as a whole people prosper

materially, enjoy blessings, enjoy peace from their enemies, score victories over any that came and interfered with them. And the Lord provided for them in remarkable victories and outcomes even though many of the people who enjoyed the fruits of it and the benefits of it weren't in the final analysis actually really his people. They belonged in the nation and he had established a covenant with them but within that company there were perhaps at times just a handful, at times very very few, a remnant that were truly his people.

But nevertheless, you could read off where the nation was in the sight of God whether pleased or displeased depending on how things were turning out literally on the ground. You could understand from your crops, you could understand from the rainfall, you could understand from how things were going whether there was frustration, there was obstacles, whether there was difficulties, how things were so in Deuteronomy 28, some blessings there, the happier part of it. Verse 1, "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth." Of Moab and Ammon and above all the Arameans and above all these countries that still, as we know, were there, they were still either bordering and some of them were actually still, the Jebusites actually in the Promised Land.

Then further blessings and, well, I could read the whole chapter, couldn't I really, but here is interesting, particularly given we're looking at enemies and verses 7 to 10, Deuteronomy 28, "The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you."

So some nations, as we read, 2 Samuel 8, wanted to make peace, they wanted to be on the right side of David because they knew that there was something special about him, something special about the God that he serves, and special, protected, preserved, and they were not going to start an argument with him. So you would have victories over your enemies, you would be above all the other nations, set high above all the nations of the earth, and that would be because it would be evidently so, you would be prospering. Your agriculture, your economy would be booming and those things would be an indication of God's blessing. It's the old covenant and likewise curses. Just to pick up on a few of those so Deuteronomy 28, we're still there, verse 25, very pertinent here in the context of 2 Samuel 8, "The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth." That's what happens if you disobey.

So here's David, obedient, the nation rising to that or at least in some fashion, great victories, but at other times great defeats because they were disobedient and those things then came upon them. Verses 36 and 37, "The LORD will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods--wood and stone. And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you." So you'll feel it. You were disobedient and, of course, that's the final outcome and for the southern kingdom, the northern kingdom having disintegrated, gone into exile under the Assyrians previously, then Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians taking the people, largely speaking, away, deporting them, exiled in Babylon and scattered over the kingdom. And that's how God, through the old covenant, would work, working in the territory, in the people in that territory, blessing or withholding blessing from them in terms of literal enemies and their literal agriculture and their storehouses and their olive trees and their figs and vines and all of these things.

So now if your beans, I don't know, are growing very well at the moment, your roses are not doing too well under those cold nights that we've had, is that it, are you to conclude therefore that you are under God's condemnation, that you are displeasing him? If things are a bit of a battle at work or wherever else they are, just a bit of a battle, does that mean that we're under these curses here and that we are evidently displeasing God? No, that does not necessarily follow now. Things have changed. The new covenant works now in different ways. You can't read off in the same way as you could read off previously where as a nation you were before God because, of course, now it isn't a nation in respect of a people in a settled part of the world, that's where they are and the rest are pagan, heathen people and in that way are outside of the scope of God's mercy, largely speaking. No, we don't have a land to defend. Our property, sure, we have here, haven't we, in the building, well, we've talked about that enough over these last couple of years, we sure have, yes, we've got those sorts of things but, well, dear friends, we can't lay claim to the entire marketplace or think of, I don't know quite how to define the parish boundaries there and we laid title to that as this is now some sort of Christian empire, if you like, and we're going to take up arms and start defending them. Well, nothing of the sort, though sadly at times in church history some have gone pretty near to actually fulfilling what I've just been describing too.

No, we don't have that now. We don't think of, I don't know, Great Britain, what it's going to be after the election there and everything else. We don't think of Great Britain, the United Kingdom there as a sort of Christian nation, as some territory that we have to defend, give or take a few French fishermen around Jersey at the moment. But largely speaking, we don't have that as our kind of view there that we're a Christian nation or that there's Jerusalem and its subsequent sanctity has to be defended at all costs, or other questions would differ on that. I think that's where in the new covenant actually we are and that now we are companies of people scattered all over the earth. That's the glory of it, isn't it, that's what began there at Pentecost and out goes the gospel. The Lord said that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. And here to us, we came believe the gospel and by God's grace we are here part of

a local church, and lots and lots of people all over the world parts of a local church sitting in lots of different nations, lots of cities, towns, villages where they are.

And they don't make their town or their village then a kind of Christian empire. No, they serve willingly as subjects and citizens of those countries and under rule of governments there and able, as far as conscience allows, to follow those laws and requirements. That is now where we are. We don't have a king literally over a territory in that way but it's somebody that we have installed in office. We don't believe in popes. We haven't got those there. We've got local churches, church officers and membership of churches in service together in churches and we're all kings and priests now to our God. And God is not now allowing, as it were, himself to be kind of limited, if you will, localized in Jerusalem, his dwellingplace, his presence there but not known in that way anywhere else but there. He's everywhere in that way wherever his people gather, when two or three and he's in the midst.

So we can see things have moved beyond territories and beyond individual cities or countries with boundaries and there is the blessing of God in that place but not in that place there. And there are literal kind of enemies as though maybe one or the other side of the A38 or whatever there is sort of kept away and kept out of reach. No, of course not. We don't fight religious wars. That's not what we're called to do. We don't have a jihad. We don't take up arms to attack enemies that we perceive to be a threat to the church. And we all of us come from everywhere, all kinds of nations. You and I don't have to trace ourselves in the genealogy of one of the tribes of Israel. We haven't got to do a kind of long-term ancestry to make sure we're fitting within that. He's called us all from all tribes and peoples and nations and tongues.

We have a new mandate too. Not so much now to ensure that we're following the right laws of agriculture and experiencing our crops to prosper and that kind of thing. No, where we are scattered as local churches in all the different nations of the world, confined to one country or thinking of a city as being our sort of territory, but we go out from our local churches, indeed from our homes to witness, to proclaim the gospel. Not with arms, not with swords, not with kind of weaponry such as David is using here, the weapon we have is a sword of the Spirit, isn't it? It's the word of God, the word of truth that we're taking out with us there. We are bringing the gospel to people one way or the other. We proclaim that here we trust we do, we have notice boards out there, we try to meet with people, preach in the open air, whatever else that we do when such things can return.

And we're in our local churches, that is how we live. We're very often to quote 2 Corinthians 10 in this regard, Paul writing there tells us this, "Now I, Paul," reading in verse 1, "myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought

into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."

Well, Paul had much on his heart toward the church in Corinth but he wasn't going to come and so he writes with every third one of you, we're going to put you to death or something like that. This warfare, he's saying, is not carnal. I'm not coming with weapons like that. This is not what it's about. I'm going to be bringing the truth to you and that's going to do the conquering because that's the thing that casts down arguments, as though those arguments are like cities, if you will, that's the thing that's going to bring down every high thing or any giants and such things as this and those who speak proud boasts and bring kind of arguments against the knowledge of God. The word of truth and as it's proclaimed, it's going to bring into captivity not Moab, not Ammon, but your thoughts. It's going to capture you, that you are obedient. It's going to win a war in your soul so that now you'll break down, you'll want to make your peace with God.

And Paul is promising to come with meekness and gentleness. He's not sort of tooling up as to come in full armor, going to come with swords and a whole sort of phalanx of bodyguards and followers who are going to sort of run amok amongst the church in Corinth. He's going to be bold toward them but not bold with a sword. He's not going to be bringing sort of lethal blows but he's going to be preaching as he preaches the truth lethal blows, lethal blows to their sin and obstinacy to the opposition rising up within their hearts, those arguments, those high things, proud, boastful thoughts. That's what he's coming for and he's going to be ruthless with those. He's going to come very boldly against all of that.

So we can see there something immediately too, that blessings are more spiritual. It's to do with how your garden grows, not how the crops are at the moment or whether your house has got mildew or some such thing. So how is your soul? Is that growing well? The inner life. It's looking beyond outward conformity and it's looking at the inward life, the inner life, what's happening in there, what arguments, what opposition, what Ammonies and Moabites are there there fighting, opposing, and wanting to restrict and prevent. And this is a far more spiritual matter, and persecution, well, persecution attacks. Oh, in fact, now the opposite to the old covenant. They're actually showing us, no, that God uses them to refine and sanctify his people. He uses this to wean us off this present world and make us the more hunger for the world to come. It isn't a sign of his displeasure, it doesn't mean if you're having difficulties and people are attacking you for your Christian faith or they're opposing you at every turn, that somehow you're outside of the will of God and he's displeased. In fact, it can be actually the opposite and you're doing exactly the will of God and he is pleased. You may be uncomfortable but he's pleased with the things that we are doing, contending for the faith, preaching, living Christian lives, they are a testimony. Christian lives possessed of the truth, every thought there taken into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Well, such a people as that make a difference. They get noticed. They get seen and that's spiritual warfare. That's coming into a territory that opposes and bringing salt and light to purify, inform, dispel ignorance and secularism and all the atheism and the materialism. To expose it, show it up for empty and because we are filled with the Spirit, yes, and we are exhibiting and expressing the life of Christ, the

inner life that's there, is an outwardly expressed thing and that, indeed, in the hands of God can be very powerful.

So the old covenant is not identical with the new. So much more we could say but I've got to move on. Second heading: wrestling with our sins. Well, we've already got here, haven't we, and been thinking about this already, wrestling with our sins. The Philistines, the Ammonites within, the things that are within the soul, and this is where our conquests are. This is where David, old covenant, being with foes, literal foes, flesh and blood kind of foes, for us spiritual foes, forces of destruction, enmity that is working against God. And of course, sin for us, sin, capital "s" sin stands out as that perhaps greatest of foes, isn't it, to us in the heart, in the soul. That's where the devil finds help, he finds it in our sinful nature and stir that up to great mischief and to great harm.

Sanctification is warfare. Sanctification is warfare. It's where we have declared our war against sin, that we are saying this was just as emphatically as David dealt with the Moabites here and dealt with Assyrians there and slaughtered how many thousands of them there and the Edomites in the valley of salt later on there, and it is for us sanctification. And it shouldn't be that we think that this is a bit dull, after all, I get some action here and something a bit more going up and doing things and being able to give vent to our frustrations in that way. No, that's not what it's about. It's the trouble here and we've got to use our militancy there. We're ruthless, sanctification is a military battle in many ways. We have to come with resolve, boldness, vigor against our sins whether they might be covetousness and idolatry, pride and unbelief, and these are the same old ones that just keep coming back, pride and a haughty spirit, and lust and all of its dirty ugliness. These are the things, there they are and we have to identify them, name them not as friends, not say to them, well, let's make a peace accord here. No, you're a deadly foe. You are spoiling, you are ruining my well-being. You are taking away from me my fellowship with God and the most precious precious things.

I'm at war and we bring that and we before God declare that and we look to him for help in that, and that is the ruthlessness that is looked for here. And we cannot live ignorantly. We cannot. We sail through life, and we thought about that a bit this morning, didn't we, daydreaming through life and actually our sins, well, they're undisturbed, they're working away and working their horrible effects upon us and we're not even bothering to consider them. We're asleep and they're running amok and we think it's fine and it's okay, then the word of God perhaps tricks us and our consciences wake us up a bit and suddenly we're alarmed. God is speaking to us and we realize there are enemies and we've been cultivating them. We have sat them down at the table and we've been feeding them and helping them, and that no longer seems like good strategy.

So sanctification becomes the thing that we're about. "Pilgrim's Progress" tells us plenty of times about those enemies that we have. We can't be ignorant. Temptations, battles, and if we think that we can hide away from the battle, well, it always will find us. A sinful nature wanting to express itself and begin to clamor for attention doesn't give up. Matthew 15 we see there how the heart with all the things that proceed from it, and the adulteries and thefts and covetousness and folly and blasphemy doesn't stop, doesn't

completely end. Like the spring there in the marketplace, well, the water level sometimes drops a bit and it dries up but when the rain comes, back it all comes again and gushing out and causing the grief it does when it ices over in the winter.

Peter and we read, didn't we, a little earlier there in 1 Peter 2 having spoken to us of the great position that we have, our standing, and notice all this, he borrows, as it were, old covenant language here and places it now in its new covenant context, that who is this now, a chosen generation, royal priesthood, a holy nation. Does this mean we've got some great territory here and has the river this and river that that are our boundaries? No, it's the local church in all their entirety, churches, his own special people in a deeper way than the kind of just national ethnic Israel. These are the real thing and this real thing in Israel amongst those people, well, now that's past and it's been seen to be needing more than that. We need the power of God. We need to have encountered him.

But then Peter has to say this, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." It's the language of war, isn't it? That's what's happening. That's what's happening within us and Paul in Romans 7 tells us there we are aspiring to do good, oh, and we fail. Evil leaps in, something else comes and spoils the good intentions that we have. And we are bid to fight back and thus very briefly now in the time that we have because we must mention too as the world reflecting back to us, temptation has within it there the sinful nature being sort of played back to us in various attitudes we meet with and behaviors that kind of would have us conform to that, and there's the devil prowling around seeking whom he may devour.

1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He goes on, "Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." It's as if to say if you think that because you're suffering, you're getting something wrong here, don't think it. All your brotherhood are suffering the same things. You're actually in God's will and these things are common experience to Christians.

So in this warfare, let's look at a few quick thoughts as we finish. It says to us here, doesn't it, be sober and aware. We can't fight a battle if the troops are all drunk or something. That's no kind of army, the armies have failed because their troops are undisciplined and intoxicated and affected too much by alcohol. We need clarity of thought. We need to identify very clearly what's happening within your soul and within my soul and take the necessary action, being biblical and not allowing ourselves to go down the "I'm a victim" path. A huge subject this, isn't it, this day and this age, but everybody is a victim, self-pity is running rampant but it isn't what you'll find in the Bible.

Being sober, being vigilant, well, you won't win a battle if you're not vigilant and watch what's going on, and we are vigilant in our own soul and we're vigilant as we're in the world and what we're seeing is not affecting you, how am I responding to that? Well, watchful. We're listening, as it were, to our soul, how it's reacting and as soon as we detect with our sort of stethoscope in place, what was that, that was a little heart murmur

there, there was some reaction there, what was that? And we investigate and then we begin to see perhaps something that's not quite functioning and we begin to understand how to put it right and move on in sanctification what God is showing us there and we can be able to begin to rectify it. Resist, we resist sin. Rapid repentance is called for, not a confession that is extracted from us perhaps months, years later, but right there, right then. Tender conscience, ready quickly to acknowledge wrongdoing before God and to repent.

Steadfast in the faith. Truth, truth that we've digested, truth that we love, truth that we hold onto. Steadfast in the faith. It's just sort of head knowledge, well, where' that going to get us? Some people, I'm sure, starve to death with their freezer full of food. What use is it there unless you've taken it out and begun to cook with it and made it into something. And in a way, the Bible, it's like a deep freeze. It's full of good things but if we don't take it out and apply it and use it, then it's redundant, you might say. And so we have to be steadfast in faith, building ourselves up in our most holy faith, applying truth, being thoughtful, trying to be as spiritually intelligent as we possibly can to recognize what it is that we're required to do and then to do it prayerfully, looking unto the Lord.

So friends, we've come a long way from 2 Samuel 8 and it's always, in a way, a bit of a challenge when we have these narrative passages that are full of battles and quite gory and quite things not for the squeamish that we read. Well, friends, we've moved now in the new covenant still in a battle but it's got different contours, it's a different kind of battle but it's a vital one and it's a battle, if you will, to the death because this will continue until you and I draw our last breath to go to be with the Lord. David had his battles, he had these foes. We have foes and we've got to be every bit as courageous and prayerful, spiritual as David was to join him in that fight against sin, the world, and the devil, being the church militant at its best, combining that with gentleness and love and all of those Christian virtues. May God bless us mightily.