

A Not-So-Smooth Transition

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[0:00] Well, let's take our Bibles tonight, open them to 2 Samuel.

! Read here in just a moment the first 11 verses, so we're not going to make our way through this entire chapter.

And I've kind of entitled my message tonight, really I think this title is going to apply not just for our passage but ongoing a little further.

And I've entitled it this, A Not-So-Smooth Transition. Of course, I'm not talking about a transition from one president to another.

You know, I'm speaking here about a transition from one king to another king. Of course, there are those who would argue that that's the same subject that we're having problems today with. But, of course, we're talking about Saul.

[1:22] Saul is dead. And David, who's been in exile for a number of years now, exiled. Not even, at this point, not even in the land of Israel.

He's in the land of the Philistines, Ziklag. And, you know, and so all through this time he's been in exile and on the run and his life being threatened and, you know, always one, hopefully one step ahead of his enemy, Saul, King Saul.

And yet all the time, all throughout that time, David is anointed to be king. He just, you know, just not his time yet to actually be the king.

But he's been anointed, anointed by Samuel. And so we're hoping and he's hoping and you're expecting, we would expect a kind of transition now.

Saul's dead. Time for David to come to his own there and so forth. And yet it just doesn't happen, not right away. So there's really not a smooth transition at all.

[2:35] And so let me go ahead and read the passage, starting with chapter 2, verse 1. It happened after this that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?

And the Lord said to him, Go up. David said, Where shall I go up? And he said, To Hebron. So David went up there and his two wives also, Ahinoam, the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, the widow of Nabal, the Carmelite.

Yeah, I've always kind of wanted to be a Carmelite. I like Carmel. Well, anyway. I don't know why I said that. That's just ridiculous. Here I'm reading scripture and I throw in some stupid levity there. And David brought up the men who were with him, every man with his household. So they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, The men of Jabesh-Gilead were the ones who buried Saul.

[3:45] So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead and said to them, You are blessed of the Lord, for you have shown this kindness to your Lord, with a small case, lower case L, to Saul, and have buried him.

And now may the Lord show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness because you have done this thing. Now, therefore, let your hands be strengthened and be valiant, for your master Saul is dead.

And also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them. But Abner, the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. And he made him king over Gilead, over the Asherites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was 40 years old when he began to reign over Israel. And he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

[5:06] All right? Now, a lot of part of that we really will not get into tonight because that kind of introduces us to the conflict that is going to, really war, that's going to take place because of this.

But I've put it all together here because I want to point out several things from this passage. Now, again, let me remind you, and you know already, Saul is dead. And King Saul has been, remember, killed on the field of battle in a war between Israel and the Philistines.

And he's killed on the field of battle. And really, more accurately, Saul took the coward's way out, right, and actually killed himself instead of being killed by his enemies.

And so the way to the throne for David, you know, his rightful place. I mean, he's been anointed as king. So the way to the throne over Israel is seemingly open, right?

I mean, you would think it would be. You would think immediately, you know, Saul's dead, now David's king. He's already been anointed, chosen by God, anointed by Samuel.

[6:21] And so, you know, you would think just step right on in. Be the king over Israel, just as Saul was. But hold on. There was some serious opposition to King David, to David being king.

I guess you could say that there were those who questioned the legitimacy of his, you know, his right to be king of the realm. Get a little tired of hearing that kind of stuff.

I'm sorry for making all these current political references here. And so now David is going to triumph.

He really is going to triumph in the end, as we shall see. Not tonight, but as we go forward. Even though there's this conflict, there is this competition for the throne, as we read a little bit about here at the close of the passage.

In the end, he's going to become king, all right? And so kind of with that in mind, if I might just as a side here, give you, I think, a good outline, very simplified outline of the book of 2 Samuel.

[7:32] You're really divided into two parts. First, you have David's triumphs. And that's chapters 1 through 10, as we shall see. David's triumphs.

And then the last half of the book, chapters 11 through 24, David's troubles. And he had some troubles, some major troubles. And so if you're familiar with the story of David's reign as king, then you know that in the first part of the book of 2 Samuel, we can hail David's triumphs.

But you also know in the second part of the book, we could say we hurt for David's troubles. And yet, you know that many of his troubles, most if not all of them, were really troubles brought on by himself, brought upon himself by decisions that he made.

Remember, David's great sin takes place. It's recorded for us in chapter 11, kind of smack dab in the middle of the book. And so it kind of marks the sad divide in the book.

Even though we know that David is a man after God's own heart, the greatest king Israel ever knew, the type and forerunner of the person of Christ, and so forth.

[8:55] All those things true of David and many other things true of David. Great leader, all of those things. And yet, chapter 11, right there in the middle of the book, and also right in the middle of his 40-year reign as king, by the way.

David was king over Israel for 40 years. And so right in the middle of it, middle of the book, middle of his reign, we have David's great fall.

So we look forward to that, don't we, as we study the book. All right, now getting back to chapter 2. David's enemy is dead. And, again, seemingly all rivals to the throne are dead.

Remember, the Bible records for us back there in 1 Samuel, the end of 1 Samuel, not only did Saul die in the battle, but so did Jonathan and two others of his sons.

In fact, as you read the text, it seems to suggest that he only had three sons, and all three of his sons died in the battle. And then we read here in our passage, here in 2 Samuel, we read about another son.

[10:03] And a little confusing, and we'll get to some possible explanations of that. Kind of a son who came out of nowhere. And so the point is, it seemed that all rivals were gone.

The dynasty of Saul came to an abrupt end there. If Jonathan had survived, then everyone would have thought Jonathan to be the rightful heir to his father's throne.

If any of the other two sons had survived the battle, then quite naturally, people of Israel would have crowned one of Saul's sons king.

But all three of them were killed there, and so it seems that, you know, the weight of the throne is open. And it's not going to be for a number of years before David becomes the, what you could call the bonafide, would say uncontested, though there was some contesting of the throne, especially

later in his reign.

But it's going to be several years before he becomes king of all of Israel. So it's not going to be a quick transition, and it certainly, as we've already read, is not going to be a smooth transition.

[11:21] Now, there are three things that I want us to see in these 11 verses. And the first one is this, and it's rather obvious. In fact, we're kind of heartened by what is said right at the beginning of chapter 2, because over the past few years, David's loyalty and commitment to the Lord has kind of wavered a little bit, remember?

And yet, verse 1 removes all of that, and so we see in the first few verses what I would call David's Godward confidence.

His Godward confidence. Verse 1 says, It happened after this. After what? Well, after Saul's death, of course.

After the removal of the only obvious impediment to David becoming king. That's over. That's past. That happened. And also, after David's genuine sorrow for the death of Saul, as we looked at not last week, week before, it was very genuine.

David even writing a song about it. And, you know, the interaction and connection that David had with Saul, even while David was on the run from Saul, pretty clearly exemplifies David's genuine respect for Saul, and had opportunities to kill him, and did not take those opportunities, and even put to death the one who claimed to have killed Saul, as we saw last time.

[13:03] And so, this is after David's genuine sorrow, and added to that, certainly David's grieving over the death of his dear friend, dearest friend, Jonathan.

All right, so, it happened after this. And so, what happened? What happened? David declared himself king of all of Israel. Is that what happened?

No. We would expect that. David went out and selected his court to surround him, and to administrate his kingdom, and, you know, all the, you know, his administration, in a sense.

Is that what happened next? No, it didn't. David packed up his stuff there in Ziklag, and moved to the palace, moved in, you know, kind of like Trump moving into the White House, you know.

Is that what he did? No, he didn't do that. Did David put on the royal robe, pick up the royal scepter, sit down on the throne of Israel immediately?

[14:14] No, he didn't do any of those things. So, that's not what happened. What was David's first order of business? Well, it's right there, isn't it?

He prayed. He prayed. That was his first order of business. He prayed. It happened after this that David inquired of the Lord.

That means pray, all right? And what did he say? Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah? That was his question of the Lord. So, he inquires of the Lord. He prays. And actually, essentially saying, Lord, what do I do next?

What do you want me to do? Specifically, where do you want me to go? And so, it's obvious that David wants God to direct his every step.

Right? And this points to his confidence. His Godward confidence. I want you to notice something else I think is kind of interesting. And maybe, you know, I guess I could be making too much of this, at least from this passage.

[15:23] I don't think I'm making a point that is somehow not true with God and our relationship with him, what God desires. But if you notice there, David asks a question in his prayer, shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?

There's a reason, of course, why he asked that question. But if we just kind of take the principle here. He just simply asked a question. Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?

And what is God's answer? Go up. And that's it. At least at that point.

And it kind of begs the question, why didn't God just go ahead and tell him where? Then, right then. I mean, you know, David asked the question, shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah? And I guess, naturally, I would expect, if I were asking the question, I would expect God to say, yes, go up, and here's where I want you to go.

Go thus and such place. But no, David, or God, rather, makes David ask where.

[16:34] Okay, where, God? Where shall I go up? And then David answers the question, or God answers the question, a Hebron. All right. So what, you know, again, maybe making too much of this, but, you know, I think God desires a conversation with us.

A continuing conversation. You know, in the first place, He wants us to ask Him about where we should go and what we should do and so forth.

But in the second place, God wants us to continue a dialogue with Him. All right. See, God does not send us a memo at the beginning of our walk of faith or a little book, you know, with everything detailed there and calendars and what He wants us to do on this date and that date and where He wants us to go, what He wants us to be.

And, you know, He doesn't on the front end just give us all of that. We might ask, Lord, guide me, will you? Tell me what you want me to do. And God gives a little bit. And then we ask again or ask a little bit more specifically.

And God gives a little bit more. And God gives us the whole thing at the beginning. But He wants an ongoing conversation with us.

[17:58] That's what He wants. and a gradual kind of revealing, an unfolding of his plan. I mean, what kind of faith would it take, really, if God just gave you the whole thing at the beginning and then all you have to do is just kind of like a checklist, boom, boom, boom, I've got these things done.

God expects us to trust him and continue to talk to him and continue to ask him. And, you know, faith, as someone said, faith is like film. It develops best in the dark.

And it's not that God just likes to keep us in the dark, you know, just wants us to fret. Well, just give them a little bit and let them squirm a little bit out there, you know. You know, it's not that.

He's not being cruel. But it's because God desires and he knows how healthy it is for us that we have an ongoing dialogue with him.

But also, I would say that David's inquiry of the Lord points to where his allegiance rested. His allegiance.

[19:09] He's inquiring of the Lord specific steps to take, the very next step. It certainly points to his allegiance. But it also points, and this is, I think, what I want us to get, points to where his confidence rested, that he could trust God.

His confidence was in the Lord his God. You know, David wanted a whole lot more from God than just his blessing, a blessing on David's plan.

You know, that's usually where we kind of fit in. We're sometimes just kind of satisfied. And really, it's what we want in prayer is to kind of lay before God our plan and have him bless it, you know.

I mean, we make that mistake all the time. David didn't want that. He wanted more than that. He wanted to be right in the middle of God's plan. And so he asks some of the most simple, the simplest of questions.

You know, where do you want me to go next? I mean, do you want me to go? I mean, that's the first question. I'll stay right here until you tell me to go. And God says, go.

[20:17] All right, so where, God? All right, here's where. And so, okay, Lord, where do you want me to go after that? You know, we just, and it's a continuing trusting and walking with him.

Then notice what happens next. Verse 2 says, so David went up there. Where's that? To the very place God told him to go, to Hebron. And so this is unquestioned obedience, isn't it?

Now, you know, sometimes we try to make some arguments from silence here, but David doesn't appear to ask any question about it or even question this.

You know, David could have said, Lord, why don't I just go immediately to the, to the, over into the land of Israel and take my rightful place as king?

I mean, I am the king. You chose me, been anointed to be king. Why not just go ahead and step on into that? But, you know, have any indication here from the scripture that David is questioning this?

[21:22] And he's just obeying. And add to that also verse 2 says, so David went up there and his two wives also. Well, you would expect him to take his wives with him.

And David brought up the men who were with him and every man with his household. So all of his 600 men who were loyal to him, he was leading them.

They all went with him. No word about any question from them. So David led his family and his people in obedience to God's will.

So he put all this together. He inquired of God's will. He received God's will. He obeyed God's will. He communicated that will to all of his people, his family, and the people he was responsible for.

And then led those same people to follow God's will as well. It's a great, great example of spiritual leadership. And his people apparently did so without question.

[22:32] And why would they do that? Because David had earned their trust over the years. So David's confidence was in the Lord, his Godward confidence. Second thing, we further see David's good character.

David's good character here. And the proof of David's good character is found in what his own people did, what they thought of him. First of all, his 600 trusted him with the kingship.

They were the first group to trust him. Of course, they had been following him all along. And so it wasn't a huge step after Saul died for them to then think of him as their king.

So they were the first ones to trust him with the kingship. And now, as it says in the passage, his entire tribe, the tribe of Judah, they trusted him with the kingship.

That's what it says in verse 4. For then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. All right? So these just, you know, you can fly by these things, not pay much attention to it.

[23:50] But, you know, what it's indicating to us is the good character of David. I mean, his own people trust him to be king.

His tribe trusted him to be king and anointed him as king, it says in verse 4. And then there's something else here that reveals the good character of David.

And it starts there in verse 4. And they, the men of Judah, who anointed David king of Hebron, they told David, saying, The men of Jabesh-Gilead were the ones who buried Saul.

So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-Gilead. And he sent messengers to them for what reason? Well, they had done a good thing, good deed.

And he communicated to them that they had done a good thing, and they deserved the kindness of God, and they needed the truth of God, needed to accept the truth of God.

[24:54] That's what we find here. And so what is David doing? Well, actually three things in his reaching out to Jabesh, the people of Jabesh-Gilead.

By the way, these are not people of the tribe of Judah. So he's reaching beyond Judah, tribe of Judah, to actually people who are of the tribe of Manasseh, half of the tribe of Manasseh, reaching beyond there to them.

And so he's doing three things, I would suggest. He is, and doing all three of these things at the same time, he is being sincerely complimentary to them for what they did in behalf of Saul, king of Israel, and Jonathan.

He's also being blatantly political in a positive sort of way. And third, he's being earnestly evangelical.

Now, just think about all three of those. He's doing this at the same time. In his reaching out to Jabesh-Gilead, he's doing all three of these things. First place, he's being sincerely complimentary.

[26:00] This is not insincere flattery, you know, for his own personal gain. David really means this. I think it's very clear. But at the same time, second, David is being blatantly political.

I mean, this is a move toward the throne, a further move toward the throne, beyond his own tribe, as I've said, tribe of Manasseh.

But more significantly, this is also a good gesture toward some of the most ardent supporters of King Saul, the previous king. I mean, probably could not find a group of people in all of Israel, all the tribes of Israel, could not find more ardent supporters of Saul.

I mean, they risked all to go and get his body and his son's bodies off the walls there.

You know, they'd been on display. The Philistines had displayed them as trophies of their great victory. And they just couldn't stand anybody spoiling their bodies any further.

[27:13] And so they came and got them and buried them properly and honored them. No one else was willing to do that. Not even the tribe of Judah.

They didn't move in to do anything like that. It was the people of Jabesh Gilead who did this. I mean, they were supporters of Saul. So, you know, here's David reaching beyond his own people, people who you would expect would be his supporters, and his own tribe, in a sense, you would expect them to support him as well.

I mean, this is the tribe of Judah, his own tribe. But reaching beyond them to the most stalwart supporters of Saul. And so he's really kind of reaching across the aisle.

So I said that was the last time I was going to make you a kind of political reference there. All right, so blatantly political, or maybe political, maybe I should use the word practical.

It's very practical here. And he's moving, he says to move toward the throne. And then third, I would call it earnestly evangelical, in the sense of encouraging people to trust God and believe in God, believe him, believe his will, obey his will.

[28 : 37] He earnestly wants them to be on God's side of this thing. What thing? His kingship. He wants them to be on that side of it because it's the right side.

God had chosen him. God had anointed him. And most everyone knew that by now. And so he's reaching out to them with the truth. And he wants them to obey God's will.

He wants them to trust God's will. Verse 6, he says, And now may the Lord show kindness and truth to you. This is kind of a prayer.

I mean, this would be a good prayer to pray for lost people. You know, to pray, God, show your kindness to them, your grace to them, and your truth, your truth.

And so in this case, kindness, of course, to show them kindness for their act towards Saul. And they're keen.

[29 : 39] But truth for their acceptance, David is saying, your acceptance of me, God's anointed. All right, so David's Godward confidence is good character.

And then one more tonight. Oh, I'm going a little fast here. David's great conflict. His great conflict. And this kind of seems to, you know, doesn't fit, we would think, in all this really good stuff.

I mean, he's praying and trusting God and his good character is being honored and revealed in many different ways.

And then we have this conflict, this conflict, which will carry us beyond our passage tonight. But here we have a conjunction. But. But.

You see it? See there? I mean, it just kind of stands out on the page, doesn't it? But. Where am I? Better back up here a little bit.

[30 : 47] Yeah, verse 8. But Abner, the son of Ner. By the way, next week we'll take a look at Abner. This is not the first time we've heard about Abner.

He appears several places in 1 Samuel. And, you know, not in such positive light. So we'll talk about Abner. And then a little later we'll hear about Joab.

Talk about Joab. And this kind of sets the stage for the conflict for the throne. But. Here's that conjunction. And oftentimes, you know, and I've even mentioned this a number of times.

And we can make a list of those times when that conjunction appears in the Bible to function as a transition to something really good.

But sometimes it functions as a transition to something not so good. I wouldn't say bad. I mean, it is bad.

[31 : 41] There's a purpose for all of this. But let's use the word difficult. It transitions to something difficult. Some conflict. Some affliction. And so that's what we have starting there in verse 8.

Yeah, verse 8. But Abner, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, brought him over to Mahanaim.

And made him king over, effectively over Israel. Everybody but Judah. So this is, you know, this is kind of tough.

I mean, this is conflict. I mean, here, David's faced with that. I mean, he's the anointed king. And then this happens? You know? Now, you know, we'll get into this in more detail next time.

Because this kind of introduces us to the conflict that's going to take place. Really, again, war that's going to be taking place over the throne of all of Israel.

[32 : 45] So we get into the details of that. But we might be tempted to say at this point, you know, come on, Lord. I mean, this just doesn't seem fair.

I mean, God, why don't you give David a break here? I mean, for the past umpteen years, that's all he's known is conflict. On the run, in exile, fleeing for his life.

You know, he even happened to flee his own country. I mean, Lord, I mean, why make it so hard on David now? I mean, and after all, you know, he's placed his confidence in you.

He's prayed. You know, he got a little bit off track there. You know, with the Philistines and so forth. But he's repented of that. He's come back to you.

I mean, you know, and I just think he's even... And I say this respect. But, Lord, it's time to give David a break here. He's put his confidence in you.

[33 : 45] He's proved his good character before you. Why should he have to struggle now with this conflict, this conflict in his life?

Someone has said that for every one person who experiences prosperity in life, there are hundreds who experience affliction or adversity in life.

And I don't know if the percentage is correct there. Probably many more than hundreds, maybe thousands. For every one who experiences a prosperous life, you know, everything just goes easy. There are hundreds and hundreds of others who experience just the opposite. And did you know, and you probably do by now, that it's much harder to handle prosperity than it is to handle adversity. And some of you are thinking, well, I'd least like to have the chance, you know, to see how well I do at the prosperity side. Yeah. You're probably right, Pastor, but I'd like to try it out for a little while anyway.

[34 : 57] But we know it's true, don't we? We have a lot harder time handling prosperity when everything's going great, you know. But this is, of course, God preparing David for greatness.

He's been preparing him all along, but this is just another step in that journey. Journey of refinement to shape and mold David into something God could really use.

And David did become the greatest king of all of Israel. Israel ever had until, of course, Jesus comes.

David would later write in one of his most famous, more famous psalms, and that's Psalm 119, verse 71. And as I read this, and you probably have heard this verse before, think about whether you actually agree with it.

David said, it is good for me that I have been afflicted. Good for me. That I might learn thy statutes.

[36 : 11] Your law, your word, your decrees. David said, it's good for me. It's been good for me. It's good for me that I've been afflicted. Is that something we believe in?

Or is it, more generally, the opposite of that? Do we have that kind of outlook on conflict, affliction, problems, whether they be, you know, physical ailments or, you know, other kinds of problems in life that we have faced?

We ever look upon them as something that potentially could be good? David said, it's good for me that I've been afflicted. And he had a lifetime to learn that principle.

And right here, near the beginning of his reign over Israel, which is not going to happen for another five, six years, by the way. He endured affliction when you would expect it'd be time for prosperity. It's a good lesson for us to learn.