

**“Forgetting God’s Faithfulness and Turning to Worldly Ways”**

**2 Samuel 3**

**March 8, 2020**

**Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service**

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We come this evening to Second Samuel, chapter three.

David is on the throne over the tribe of Judah. Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul is on the throne over the rest of Israel. Joab is David’s military commander, and Abner is Ish-bosheth’s. In chapter two we saw conflict, instigated foolishly by Joab, escalate into a civil war between Israel and Judah – exactly the kind of civil war that David had sought to avoid for years. In Israel, it was Abner who placed Ish-bosheth on the throne, but it is still clear that Abner is the real power behind him.

In the Battle of Gibeon Joab’s brother, Asahel, pursued Abner, though Abner encouraged him to turn aside. When Asahel would not relent, Abner had to strike, and he killed Asahel, causing Asahel’s brothers Joab and Abishai to pursue Abner all the more.

With that background, we now pick up in Second Samuel chapter three.

Please listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this evening:

<sup>3:1</sup> There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul became weaker and weaker.

<sup>2</sup> And sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; <sup>3</sup> and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; <sup>4</sup> and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; <sup>5</sup> and the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

<sup>6</sup> While there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner was making himself strong in the house of Saul. <sup>7</sup> Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah. And Ish-bosheth said to Abner, “Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?” <sup>8</sup> Then Abner was very angry over the words of Ish-bosheth and said, “Am I a dog's head of Judah? To this day I keep showing steadfast love to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into the hand of David. And yet you charge me today with a fault concerning a woman. <sup>9</sup> God do so to Abner and more also, if I do not accomplish for David what Yahweh has sworn to him, <sup>10</sup> to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.” <sup>11</sup> And Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

<sup>12</sup> And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, “To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you.” <sup>13</sup> And he said, “Good; I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you; that is, you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come to see my face.” <sup>14</sup> Then David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, for whom I paid the bridal price of a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.” <sup>15</sup> And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. <sup>16</sup> But her husband went with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go, return.” And he returned.

<sup>17</sup> And Abner conferred with the elders of Israel, saying, “For some time past you have been seeking David as king over you. <sup>18</sup> Now then bring it about, for Yahweh has promised David, saying, ‘By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from the hand of all their enemies.’” <sup>19</sup> Abner also spoke to Benjamin. And then Abner went to tell David at Hebron all that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin thought good to do.

<sup>20</sup> When Abner came with twenty men to David at Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him. <sup>21</sup> And Abner said to David, “I will arise and go and will gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires.” So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

<sup>22</sup> Just then the servants of David arrived with Joab from a raid, bringing much spoil with them. But Abner was not with David at Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. <sup>23</sup> When Joab and all the army that was with him came, it was told Joab, “Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has let him go, and he has gone in peace.” <sup>24</sup> Then Joab went to the king and said, “What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you. Why is it that you have sent him away, so that he is gone? <sup>25</sup> You know that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you and to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing.”

<sup>26</sup> When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah. But David did not know about it. <sup>27</sup> And when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him privately, and there he struck him in the stomach, so that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. <sup>28</sup> Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before Yahweh for the blood of Abner the son of Ner. <sup>29</sup> May it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge or who is leprous or who holds a spindle or who falls by the sword or who lacks bread!” <sup>30</sup> So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had put their brother Asahel to death in the battle at Gibeon.

<sup>31</sup> Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth and mourn before Abner.” And King David followed the bier. <sup>32</sup> They buried Abner at Hebron. And the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. <sup>33</sup> And the king lamented for Abner, saying,

“Should Abner die as a fool dies?

<sup>34</sup> Your hands were not bound;  
your feet were not fettered;  
as one falls before the wicked  
you have fallen.”

And all the people wept again over him. <sup>35</sup> Then all the people came to persuade David to eat bread while it was yet day. But David swore, saying, “God do so to me and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!” <sup>36</sup> And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people. <sup>37</sup> So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king's will to put to death Abner the son of Ner. <sup>38</sup> And the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? <sup>39</sup> And I was gentle today, though anointed king. These men, the sons of Zeruah, are more severe than I. Yahweh repay the evildoer according to his wickedness!”

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

Let's pray ...

Lord, you have dealt well with us,

just as you have promised in your word.  
Teach us now good judgment and knowledge,  
for we believe in your word to us – your commandments and your testimonies.  
You are good and you do good,  
teach us your ways.  
We know that your word to us in the Scriptures is of more value for us  
than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.  
Help us now to treat it and attend to it as such.  
Grant this, we ask, for Jesus’s sake. Amen.  
[Based on Psalm 119:65, 66, 68, 72]

Several things happen in our text, and it can, at first, seem hard to know what to make of it all. But as we look more closely, I think a common thread – a common theme – emerges in this chapter.

David, we need to remember, while not always perfect, has been faithful again and again within the Book of Samuel so far. He has trusted the Lord – though sometimes he needed to be reminded to do it – he has not sinfully grasped at the throne even though it was promised to him and even though Saul was trying to kill him. Instead, time after time, he trusted in the Lord, and resisted breaking the commandments of God to receive the kingdom.

Throughout most of that time David has been a military commander – either in Saul’s army, or later on the run with his men. But in the last chapter, things have changed. In chapter two of Second Samuel, David was anointed the king of Judah. He entered a new season of life and a new season of his calling – no longer running, no longer fleeing, but now a king, stationed in Hebron within Judah.

And that change in status – that change in season within David’s life, is important to note. Because in this chapter we will also see a change in David’s actions. And it’s not a good change.

What we note in this chapter is that when David enters a new season of life, he is tempted to forget God’s past faithfulness, and to sinfully grasp at security according to the patterns of the world.

Let me say that again: When David enters a new season of life here, he is tempted to forget God’s past faithfulness, and to sinfully grasp at security according to the patterns of the world.

And we see that play out in at least three ways in this chapter.

The first way is in verses two through five.

There we are given an update on David’s family. And as we hear it, we should be struck by the fact that David has gone from a military leader with two wives to a king with a royal harem. Six wives are listed here – not including Michal (whom we will get to later). [Alter, 209]

And as we look over this list it becomes clear that these marriages were not primarily the result of David’s romantic or sexual desires, but his political desires. Marriages were a common way in the ancient world to form political alliances. And David seems to have entered into a number of politically-motivated marriages in order to increase his leverage towards getting to the throne over all of Israel. And so while David’s marriage to Abigail, who was from Judah, solidified his

standing within Judah, his marriages with women from other tribes of Israel were meant to establish better relationships with those tribes. And then one of his marriages – to Maacah, daughter of the king of Geshur – was to form a political alliance with a Gentile kingdom just north of Ish-bosheth’s base of operations. David’s marriages fit in with how kings in his culture typically gained political leverage. And David was clearly engaging in these political marriages in order to press in on Ish-bosheth’s territory. [Leithart, 188; Alter, 208]

The problem is that this approach towards marriage is also forbidden by the Lord. In Deuteronomy 17 Yahweh gives his regulations for the future kings of Israel, and one of the things he addresses is this issue. In verse seventeen, he explicitly says of the king: “He shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away.” And in fact, that is exactly what we will see play out in Solomon’s life a generation later.

But in the meantime, David has already begun down this road. David has broken the command of Yahweh. And it will lead to disaster in his life. And I think we are led to conclude from his actions that he did what he did because he forgot – through his own fault – the past deeds of the Lord for him.

David went against the Lord’s command in order to secure good allies for himself. But up to this point, the Lord had faithfully provided just the allies that David needed every step of the way.

In First Samuel sixteen the Lord sent Samuel to David, who would be a key ally both then and later on. In First Samuel eighteen the Lord led Jonathan to enter a covenant of faithfulness with David, providing another crucial ally for him. In first Samuel nineteen the Lord used Michal, Saul’s daughter, to be an ally to David who would save his life. In first Samuel twenty-one the Lord provided for David through Ahimelech the priest. In First Samuel twenty-two the Lord gathered a band of soldiers around David, who would support and defend him. In that same chapter the Lord sent Abiathar the priest to serve David and to be a priestly means by which he could inquire of the Lord. In First Samuel twenty-five the Lord sent Abigail to David, to rebuke him and to keep him from sin. In First Samuel twenty-seven the Lord turned the heart of Achish, the king of Gath – Goliath’s hometown – to make him into an ally of David. We could go on.

Again and again, in past seasons of David’s life, God had been faithful – he had provided just the allies David needed in order to bring about the promises that he had made to David, every step along the way. But when David entered a new season of life, with new challenges and opportunities, he seems to have forgotten the Lord’s past faithfulness. And instead he sinfully grasped at security according to the ways of the world.

And that led to disaster in his life.

Anyone who has already read Second Samuel, or who was familiar with Israel’s history, would be struck by the list given here in verses two through five.

Look at that list again. As one commentator puts it: “The list bristles with future disasters: Amnon, who will rape his half-sister and will be murdered by his brother; Absalom, who will usurp the throne; Adonijah, who will proclaim himself king while the infirm, aged David lies in bed unawares.” [Alter, 208].

Though David entered into these political marriages to unify Israel, his sinful actions would instead divide Israel in the years ahead. [Leithart, 188]

Much of David's later life would be marked with pain and disaster because at this key moment he sinfully grasped at security in worldly ways, rather than remembering the past faithfulness of the Lord, and trusting in him.

This is the first place we see this pattern in our text.

The second place we see it comes up in David's interactions with Michal.

In verses thirteen through sixteen we have David's demand that Michal be sent back to him. Michal was David's first wife, and the daughter of Saul. She loved David, we are told, and Saul gave her to David mostly in an attempt to bring about David's death by the hand of the Philistines. The first time Michal is introduced, Saul is using her as a political pawn in his attempts to take down David. But it didn't work, and they were married. But then, when Saul was trying to murder David, David was forced to flee, leaving Michal behind. At which point Saul gave Michal to Paltiel to be married to him. We are not told how Michal felt about this, but we should be struck by the impression that Saul was simply continuing to use her for his own political purposes.

But now, here in chapter three, it appears to be David who is using Michal as a means to a political end. There is no indication in the text that David's motivation here was romantic. Instead, the aim would seem to be leverage towards those loyal to Saul – if Michal and David were to have a son, that would introduce the possibility of an heir to the throne who was both a descendant of David and a descendant of Saul. David might suppose that this would be a good way to unify Israel under him. [Alter, 210; Davis, 47; Firth, 348; Leithart, 190-191]

Did David break God's law in doing this? In a technical sense, he did not. Technically, Saul was wrong to give Michal to another. According to the laws of the ancient world, David was within his rights to demand that she be returned to him. [Davis, 45 n.10; Leithart, 190-191]

And yet, the story is told in such a way as to highlight David's coldness, and the pain and suffering he caused to others. [Leithart, 191]

In verses fifteen and sixteen we read: "And Ish-bosheth sent and took [Michal] from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. But her husband went with her, weeping after her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, 'Go, return.' And he returned."

Robert Alter, a commentator and scholar of biblical narrative, writes of these two verses: "There is scarcely a more striking instance of the evocative compactness of biblical narrative. We know nothing about Paltiel. He speaks not a word of dialogue. Yet his walking after Michal, weeping all the while, intimates a devoted love that stands in contrast to David's relationship with her. Paltiel is a man whose fate is imposed on him. Michal was given to him by Saul, evidently without his initiative. He came to love her. Now he must give her up, and confronted by Saul's strongman with the peremptory order to go back, he has no choice but to go back." [Alter, 211]

In all of this, we are not told how Michal feels, as she continues to be used by others as a political pawn. [Firth, 349]

And while David has not broken a specific law, one cannot help but think of the prophet Samuel's warnings about the ways of a bad king. In First Samuel chapter eight, the prophet

warned about what a worldly king would be like in Israel. Such a king, Samuel stressed, would not serve the good of the people, but would be characterized by selfish *taking*. He would take the people's sons, and he would take the people's daughters – all to work in his service. He would take the people's fields, and their servants, and their livestock. Samuel warned of a worldly king who would take from the people for his own gain rather than serve for the good of the people.

And it's hard not to conclude that David looks at least a bit like that worldly king here, as he demands Michal return to him, not as an act of love but as an act of political maneuvering, indifferent to the harm it causes to her or to Paltiel.

And once again, in doing this, David seems to have forgotten the Lord's past faithfulness. Because over and over again the Lord had blessed David as he sacrificially served the people under his power, and the Lord had stood against Saul as he selfishly used the people under his power.

We have seen God bless David after he faithfully risked his life to defend the people from Goliath, in First Samuel seventeen. We have seen how God protected and blessed David as he risked his life to serve for Saul's good in Saul's court, in chapter eighteen. We have seen how God protected and guided David as he refused to strike against Saul even when given the opportunity. We have seen God protect David as David risked his life to protect God's people from the Philistines in chapter twenty-three and the from the Amalekites in chapter twenty-seven.

Once again, in past seasons of David's life, God had been faithful, and had blessed David as David sacrificially served others. But in this new season of life, David seems to have forgotten the Lord's faithfulness, and is grasping at security according to the ways of the world, rather than trusting God.

And this brought more pain and eventually disaster into David's life as well.

First, the return of Michal to David did not bring about any of what David had hoped for politically – she did not bear him an heir. [Leithart, 191]

Second, we get the impression a couple chapters later, in chapter six, that their marriage was not a good one.

And third, it is hard to read this incident and not see it as a foreshadowing to another time when David would take a woman he wanted and discard her husband. It's hard to read this and not think of how David will treat Bathsheba and then Uriah. The two are not the same thing, and one doesn't obviously lead to the other. And yet, with this action we see a pattern in David's heart and life, that in some ways will reach its fruition in his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah. [Leithart, 191]

This action would cause further brokenness and pain in David's life. And it grew out of his sinful attempts to grasp at security in worldly ways, and his willful forgetfulness of the past faithfulness of the Lord.

We see that pattern first in David's harem. We see it second in his treatment of Michal and Paltiel.

And then we see it third in his dealings with Joab.

And to see this we need to step back and look at the events that play out between David, Abner, and Joab in this chapter.

In verses six through eleven we see the falling out between Abner, Israel's commander, and Ish-bosheth, Israel's king. Ish-bosheth accuses Abner of sleeping with one of Saul's concubines – an accusation not only of sexual impropriety, but of political treason: to initiate a sexual relationship with a king's concubine was to claim his power and position. [Alter, 209]

Commentators disagree over how to interpret these events. The text does not confirm whether Abner actually did what Ish-bosheth claimed. Personally, for a few different reasons I am most persuaded that Abner likely did not do it.

Instead, it seems much more likely that Ish-bosheth, like his father Saul, was a paranoid man. And his paranoid suspicions fell on Abner. And when they did, Abner, who had faithfully served Saul's house for so long, even in a long losing battle against Judah, had had enough. [Leithart 189-190, contra Davis, 43]

It's unclear how Abner came to the conclusion that Yahweh would give the kingdom to David, but his frustration with Ish-bosheth seems to drive him to embrace that conclusion. [Alter, 210; Firth, 347]

Abner declares his intentions to Ish-bosheth, makes contact with David, and begins working with the leaders of the other tribes of Israel to help transfer the kingdom to David. And then Abner comes to meet David at Hebron. And they have a feast to signify their reconciliation. They make a plan to bring Israel under David's leadership peacefully. And David sends Abner away in peace.

And then Joab, the commander of David's military, and also David's nephew [1 Chronicles 2:16] arrives. And there are two threats to Joab here.

One is the fact that Abner killed Joab's brother Asahel in the Battle of Gibeon. Now, Abner did just about all he could to avoid fighting Asahel, but Asahel would not stop pursuing him, and so Abner struck him, and won. Joab and his other brother Abishai should understand that. Such is the way of war. But instead they are set on revenge.

And second, along with that, Abner's alliance with David would be a serious threat to Joab's position. Abner would presumably enter David's service, and as a man much older than Joab and with much more experience, who would have delivered much of the kingdom to David, would be a serious threat to Joab's standing. [Alter, 213; Davis, 46-47]

And so first, Joab erupts with false accusations against Abner.

And then Joab murders Abner.

And the narrative portrays in multiple ways just how heinous this crime of Joab was.

First of all, we read three times in verses twenty-one through twenty-three how David sent Abner away in peace. This was not mere sentiment, but it expressed a promise of safe passage. That

promise is likely what led Abner to return even at Joab's request, and that promise made Joab's murder of Abner all the more treacherous. [Davis, 45]

Second, though Abner had killed Asahel, Joab's brother, vengeance was inappropriate because the killing took place on the battlefield. Joab had no legal standing to bring charges against Abner or demand he pay a penalty for the death of Asahel. This vengeance carried out for a death in battle made Joab's act even more evil. [Firth, 350]

Third, even if vengeance had been appropriate, Hebron was a city of refuge – a city designated as a safe haven for a manslayer, guaranteeing that a judgment would be made on whether the man was guilty of murder or unintentional manslaughter before any sentence could be carried out against him. [Leithart, 193]

Fourth, and finally, we should remember that at the time of the murder, Abner was an older man, while Joab was a young man in the prime of youth. That aspect adds even further to the horror to Joab's treachery. [Leithart, 193]

In these ways it is made abundantly clear that Joab's actions were a sinful act and a heinous crime.

And David's response ... is to pronounce a curse on Joab ... to publicly lament the death of Abner so that Israel knows that David was not behind his murder ... and that's it. David does nothing about Joab himself.

He does not execute him, though he has clearly committed a capital offense.

He doesn't even remove him from power.

We're not told why.

Some speculate that David was not powerful enough to carry out a just sentence on Joab [Firth, 350-352], but that seems questionable to me – especially when we consider that even later on, at the height of his power, David never took action against Joab in his lifetime. Instead, he asked Solomon to do it after his death. [2 Kings 2]

What seems more likely is that David showed Joab partiality and so took no action against him. [Alter, 216; Leithart, 194] In addition to being his nephew, it seems that David believed that he needed Joab if his military was to be successful. And so he kept him in place, ordering Joab's execution only after David was dead and no longer needed Joab's assistance.

In other words, though we have seen David's willingness to carry out a sentence of death on those who admit to treasonous murder in chapter one of Second Samuel and will see it again in chapter four, here in chapter three, when it comes to a man he relies on, David shows partiality to such an extent that he, as king, brings no penalty upon him all.

And this too was a failure on David's part to obey God's commandments to him as king. In Deuteronomy sixteen, as the Lord outlines the responsibilities of leaders among God's people, we read: "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that Yahweh your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a

bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that Yahweh your God is giving you.”

David does not here accept a bribe in the form of money. But he follows the pattern of one who has received a bribe. David shows partiality in judgment in order to get something for himself – military leadership he thinks he needs – and he perverts justice to get it, allying himself with a murderer.

And once again, in doing this, David seems to have forgotten the Lord’s past faithfulness. Because, as we have already seen, again and again in the past the Lord had provided the kind of allies David needed, every step along the way.

And on the other hand, in the court of Saul, we can remember how men like Doeg the Edomite encouraged Saul to evil, and so brought further guilt on Saul’s kingship.

In past seasons of David’s life, God had been faithful – he had blessed David with what he needed as David relied on the Lord. But when David entered a new season of life, with new challenges and opportunities, he seems to have forgotten the Lord’s past faithfulness. And instead of once again trusting God, he sinfully grasps at security according to the ways of the world.

This is what we see in this chapter of David’s life.

And it is the same pattern we can often see in our own lives.

Each one of us have examples in our lives of God’s past faithfulness to us. We have incidents where we can see how he has provided in amazing ways. Or we have times when we have struggled and suffered set-backs, but the Lord worked in those struggles and brought blessing through what at first seemed like a curse. Or we can look back and see how though outwardly things did not end as we hoped, still we can see how God was at work through that outcome to mold us and shape us to be more like Christ. Or we can see how even though a past challenge was real or a past season was dark, God was with us, keeping us close to him and giving us comfort.

We all have examples in our lives we can look back to and see God’s faithfulness. What are some of those for you?

We all have those. And yet, often, when our circumstances change, when we are faced with new challenges, we forget God’s past faithfulness.

And those changes of circumstances can take a whole number of different forms in different stages of life. Children experience it in some ways when they start a new school, or even a new class. Youth can experience it in a range of ways, especially when they begin a new job or head off to college. Young adults experience it as they face the beginning of a new career, or as they approach marriage, or having children. We can experience it when we face a new job or a new role at work, when something significant changes in our spouse’s life, or our children’s lives. We can experience it when we prepare for retirement, when we take on new roles in a range of places, when we struggle with health challenges ... we could go on and on.

Transitions to a new season of life can take a number of forms. What was the most recent one for you? What change might be on your horizon?

Because, when we go through such transitions, it is then that we are often tempted to forget God's past faithfulness, and to sinfully grasp at security now, according to the patterns of the world.

And we can do that in many ways. It might be a temptation to dishonest or unethical conduct at work. It might be a temptation to betray others in your workplace in order to secure your own place. It might be a temptation to sinful behaviors in order to gain acceptance in a new social circle. It might be a temptation to sinful habits to manage new stress that has come into your life. It might be a temptation towards a greedy approach to money as a way of feeling secure. It might be a temptation to act sinfully controlling or manipulative with others, in order to feel like you are in control of your life. It might be a temptation to put yourself first – telling yourself that it is just for this season that you need to prioritize your own good over the good of others.

What does it look like for you? What are the ways that you are tempted to sinfully grasp at security according to the patterns of the world?

And then, how might your sinful grasping lead to ripples down the course of your life if you do not repent of them – just as it did for David?

Patterns we begin in a desperate grasp for control can soon become patterns that shape us and that have long ranging effects. They become habits of thought and affection in our hearts. They become habits of speech and action in our relationships. They become habits of what is deemed acceptable in our work culture. They become habits of relating in our family. And more.

As you consider the ways you are most prone to sinfully grasp at security in a changing season of life, what might that sin lead to if left unchecked? What problems have you already seen it cause? What problems can you see it causing down the road?

With all of that in mind, our text calls us then to repent of our willful forgetfulness and grasping, and instead to remember God's faithfulness and to rely on his promises.

Of course, our promises are not David's. We are not promised a throne in this world. We are not even promised worldly success in this world. But we are promised that if we trust in the Lord then he will never leave us nor forsake us. [Heb 13:5 applying Deut. 31:6] We are promised that nothing can pluck us from the hand of Christ. [John 10:28] We are promised that God will work all things together for our good. [Rom. 8:28]

Where can you look back and see those promises kept in your past? And now, as you look at the challenges you face today, or the difficulties you may face tomorrow, how can you step forward trusting that the same God who made those promises, the same God who has kept those promises in the past, is also the God who will keep his promises in the future?

How do you need to step into the unknown trusting in the Lord who has shown you good, rather than grasping at control for yourself?

This is the calling of our text: to remember God's past faithfulness, and to trust his promises, as we walk into the future – into new seasons and new challenges in life.

It is not easy. We will fail. We will fall short.

David certainly does here.

And his failures bring sorrow and suffering into his life. Just as they can in ours.

But when combined with faith and repentance, his failures still do not negate the promises of God. What makes David is that despite his sin, he eventually repents, and he places his trust in the Lord. And so God's promise remained with David.

In fact, even in all the brokenness of this chapter, God is at work, fulfilling his promise to David. David is referred to as the king five times towards the end of the chapter. God is still at work. And despite all of David's sins and failures, Yahweh's promise will still come to pass. [Davis, 47-48; Leithart, 194]

And so with us. We will sin. We will fall short. The key is to return to God again and again in repentance and faith.

Our sins will bring sorrows on us and those around us in this life. But so long as we cling to God in faith, they will not cancel his promises for us.

And so, as God's people, let us step forward into the different challenges we each face, with our memories intact: remembering the promises of our God and the many ways we have already seen them fulfilled in our lives. And trusting in God to fulfill his promises – including his promise to forgiveness – let us step into the unknown trusting the One who always keeps his word.

Amen.

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**This sermon draws on material from:**

Alter, Robert. *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.

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Firth, David G. *1 & 2 Samuel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

Leithart, Peter J. *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003.