Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

2 Samuel

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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introduction

The subject of 2 Samuel

The Second Book of Samuel sets before us the definitive establishment of David in the kingdom; and afterwards, the miseries of his house, when prosperity had opened the door to self-will.

Prosperity not the path of faith

The path of faith and its difficulties, is that in which we walk with God, and in which we celebrate the triumph which His presence secures to us. A state of prosperity makes it evident how little man is able to enjoy it without its becoming a snare to him. Prosperity not being the path of faith, that is to say, of strength, the evil of the heart comes out in the walk. Compare 2 Samuel 22 (the psalm by which David closes the path of difficulty) with 2 Samuel 23, which contains his last words, after his experience of the enjoyment of the prosperity and glory in which faith had placed him.

Chapters 1 and 2

David's genuine sorrow at Saul's death: his dependence on God

Nevertheless piety, and pious (and hence generous) sentiments, were genuine in David. He did not pretend to feel for Saul's misfortunes, and then seize upon the kingdom without regret as soon as Saul had ceased to exist. David's heart was really melted when he heard of Saul's death. Woe to the hard-hearted man who, impelled by the hope of reward, thought to be the bearer of good tidings in announcing it to him. Whatever Saul's misfortunes, he was the king of Israel to David. Whatever his faults, he was an unfortunate king. David had been beloved by him, and had dwelt in his house, where the king's affliction manifested itself, and commanded the respect of all around him And if Saul had unjustly persecuted David, at this moment it was readily forgotten. Now that he has fallen, David will only remember that which can do him honour; and, above all, that it is Jehovah's anointed, and Jehovah's people, who have fallen before their enemies.

David causes the man to be put to death who, deluded by selfishness, accused himself of lacking all fear of Jehovah, all good and generous feeling. For David fears God; and Jehovah's anointed is precious in his sight. He then pours out his heart before God in the touching accents of a grief which, in solemn and affecting language, recalls whatever would exalt Saul, and expresses the tender and affectionate recollections which his heart suggests. Beautiful exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit of God! David is in no wise discouraged, for his faith is in action. If this misfortune grieves him, it gives him also the opportunity of guarding against a similar calamity. He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, by which weapon Saul was slain. David, still humble, goes on well. He asks Jehovah if he should go up to Judah, and to which place; and Jehovah directs him. David testifies also to the men of Jabesh-gilead his satisfaction at their conduct with respect to Saul.

Ishbosheth made king: war results

Nevertheless war has not yet ceased; if not against enemies from without, it is carried on against those from within. That which was linked with Saul's fleshly importance cannot support David. All is however now changed, for Ishbosheth was not Jehovah's anointed, and to make him king was in fact to rebel against God. David makes war upon him by his captains.

Chapters 3 and 4

Joab and Abner: nature and its pretended rights

Alas! the history of this period plunges us into the ways of man. It is no longer merely David walking in the path of faith. It is Joab, a clever, ambitious, bloody-minded, and heartless man. It is Abner, a man morally superior to Joab, but who fights on fleshly principles as a party man against the king whom God has chosen. Abner is related to Ishbosheth as Joab is to David. When his pride has been wounded, he throws himself into David's interests, and Joab kills him as much from jealousy as to avenge his brother's death. And wherein is the prowess and valour of the chiefs of Benjamin and Judah now manifested in this "field of strong men"? In slaying each other. The Philistines were forgotten. But the family of Saul were entirely in the wrong. It was nature which, with its pretended rights, would not submit to God and to His will.

As David now begins to do, so will Christ, the King of Judah, bring all around into subjection to Himself after He has taken the throne.

It is well however to observe, that David does not appear in all this. Joab is the actor; and it appears to me, from the details given, that evil had already begun. I do not see that David had sought counsel of Jehovah; and Joab had certainly not done so, for he was nothing more than an ungodly man, who understood that it was more prudent to honour God, and not to depart too far from Him merely to gratify one's passions; but this did not preserve him from being at length ensnared in his own calculations. And, after all, it is not the energy of Joab which puts the kingdom into David's hands but the wounded pride of Abner, the chief of Ishbosheth's party, who ends by reaping from men that which he had sown. But all this is very sad.

David generally typifies Christ: historically he exhibits the weakness of man

By providential means God accomplishes His purposes, and David is successful. Generally also, in his combats at this period, and in his exaltation, he typifies the Lord Jesus. And I doubt not that the establishment of Christ's kingdom will be accomplished in detail after His appearing; the prophecies of Zechariah and Micah 5 prove this; but, as a history, we are, as I have said, in the midst of men. In the matter of Ishbosheth's death David maintains his integrity; and with respect to Abner's assassination he manifests the sentiments which become a man of God. Nevertheless 1 Samuel 3:39 exhibits the weakness of man as the instrument of God's government. David appeals to the God of judgment.

The election of one in whom God's counsels are accomplished must necessarily take place before his establishment in the place which Jehovah had appointed. It is still more evident that this election precedes the rest of the chosen one, and this is true as to Christ Himself; only He came down into it in grace.

Chapter 5

David made king: the energetic man

David, the king of Judah in Hebron for seven years and a half, becomes the king of all Israel upon Ishbosheth's death And now David is no longer the man of faith who, himself the head of the armies of Israel walking in dependence upon God, guided the enterprises which the circumstances of Israel required of faith; but he is a king who can exalt whom he will The man very soon appears, the energetic man, but not the man of God. "Whosoever getteth up to the gutter," the king said should be rewarded; "he shall be chief and captain" (2 Sam. 5:8). Joab goes up, and he has natural claims upon David.* {* Joab was evidently clever and enterprising: but it is remarkable that he is not named among those who distinguished themselves by brilliant exploits, when individual faith had to fight for God's glory When it is a question of being chief and captain, a place which David had held till then, Joab immediately comes forward.}

Nevertheless, in the main David is guided by God, and he takes the city which God had chosen for His throne upon the earth. It was on this account he could say of those who had it in possession, "they are hated of David's soul"; for in fact they who possess the true seat of God's power, the place which He loves, and who, trusting to their natural strength, resist and scoff at the king whom God has chosen, are more hateful than any people, and are hated by those who have the Spirit of the Lord who establishes His throne upon the earth.

David and Solomon as types of Christ

It is well to remark here, that David is a type of Christ in rejection, and of Christ making war in power for the establishment of the millennium; as Solomon is of Christ reigning in millennial peace. David's wars with the Philistines are subsequent to the taking of Jerusalem, and to the entire subjugation of Israel to David. It is not David, neither is it Christ reigning over the earth, who takes Jerusalem. Christ will descend from heaven for the destruction of Antichrist; but He destroys the enemies of Israel by means of His own people, after having established His throne in Zion (compare Zech. 9 and 10). I do not enlarge upon this; I merely point out the grand features which the word supplies on this subject.

Awakened by danger David turns to God

David establishes himself in Zion; he is acknowledged by some friendly Gentiles; he is conscious too that it was God who made him king. But the natural heart soon shews itself. Strengthened in his kingdom by Jehovah, he does what he likes, he follows his own will (compare Deut. 17:17).

Nevertheless the consolidation of his power does not overthrow the hopes of his former enemies;* it excites their jealousy. They neither know the arm of his strength, nor the purpose of Jehovah who exalted him. They rush on to destruction. And now, with the danger that awakens him, we find again the man of God, the type of the Lord Jesus, inquiring of Jehovah, and obedient to His word. He gains signal victories under the express guidance of God, whose strength goes before him and puts his enemies to flight. Accordingly he gives God the glory. {* It is evident, from many Old Testament prophecies, that it will be the same when Christ returns to the earth. And yet at that period, if man exalts himself, it will be but for sudden destruction.}

Chapter 6

Removal of the ark from Kirjath-jearim

Although God has established a king in power, who is at the same time the victorious leader of His people, yet the bonds of the covenant are not yet restored. The ark is still in the place where individual piety had sheltered it when God was obliged to be the guardian of His own glory. David would bring it to the place where his throne is now established. He desires that the Jehovah of hosts, who dwells between the cherubim, should be honoured, and that He should be at the same time the glory of the king of Israel's throne. They are bound together in his mind. Now the kingdom of Melchisedec was not yet in exercise, not even in type. For Melchisedec is king of Salem (this is, king of peace). God was still maintaining His own glory. He could bless David, the elected and anointed king; but that order of things which united all together under the king's authority was not yet in force. It was to be set up later under Solomon.

The consequences of neglect of God's order: God maintains His majesty

Israel should have acknowledged God's order. But even while seeking to honour God, David thinks of himself, and there is definitively but a faulty imitation of that which the Philistine priests had done when acted upon by the terror of Jehovah. The result was unhappy. What man had done, man seeks to sustain; but in doing this he touches the glory of Jehovah and falls before His majesty. Jehovah vindicates His glory. He dwells not yet in the midst of His people.

The ark of blessing in the house of Obed-edom and in Zion's hill

At once pained and alarmed — pained because his heart truly sought Jehovah's glory, although he did not understand its height, and had forgotten the majesty of Him whom his heart desired to have nearer to him — David leaves the ark in the house of Obed-edom; and there Jehovah shews that it is His nature to bless, whenever His majesty is not so forgotten that men deal with Him as they think proper. If we detract from His glory, He maintains it; as also He manifests what He is by the blessing He bestows. The heart and affections of David are restored; he causes the ark to be carried from Obed-edom's house, and places it in the tabernacle he had pitched for it. Here we only see David, and we see him clothed with the ephod He is the head of his people, when he re-establishes the

relationship* between them and his God, and it is with joy, with offerings, and songs of triumph. It is he also who blesses the people, being in all this a remarkable type of Jesus, and of that which He will perform in Israel in the last days. {* I say "relationship," because, in fact, the ark of the covenant was the outward link, the sign of the formal relationship between God and Israel. This gives much importance to the circumstance we are considering. The loss of the ark had been, on the contrary, the Ichabod of the people.}

All this however was not building the temple, which was a work reserved for the Prince of Peace. It was the king, by faith head of the people, acting up to a certain point for faith as priest, on the principle of Melchisedec, although the order and the blessing belonging to that title were not yet established. The king offers sacrifices, he blesses the people. As their sole head, he had united all Israel, he had beaten his enemies.

Mount Zion, the seat of royal grace of a King who had suffered

But after all it was a transitional period. The ark of the covenant abode still in a tent; David had triumphed, but the peace he enjoyed was but transitory. The establishment of the ark on the hill of Zion formed however an epoch; for mount Zion was the seat of royal grace, where the king who had suffered — and as having suffered — had established his throne in power and grace with respect to Israel. This is the key to Revelation 14 — a book in which the Lamb is always (as it appears to me) the Messiah who has suffered, but who is seated on the throne of God while waiting for the manifestation of His glory; seated there in this character, although as such He had accomplished things far otherwise important (for salvation and the assembly are far more excellent than the kingdom); but it is evidently the kingdom that we have to do with here. I doubt not that the hundred and forty-four thousand who are with the Lamb on mount Zion, are those who have suffered for Messiah's sake in the spirit of His own sufferings in the midst of Israel. They are with Him in His kingly position in Zion, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth. They are morally near enough to heaven to learn its song, which none other on earth can learn. They are the firstfruits of the earth. They are not in heaven.

This explains Hebrews 12:22 also; in which we find Zion in contrast with Sinai, where the people had been placed under their own responsibility, the law having the sanction which the terror of Jehovah's presence gave it. But in the passage referred to, Zion is clearly distinguished from the heavenly Jerusalem.* {* The construction of the sentence (Heb. 12:22) makes it more easy to distinguish the different parts of which it is composed. The word "and" separates them: Zion — the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem — the angels, the general assembly — the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven — God the judge of all, etc.}

The warlike Kingdom of Christ; the subjection of His enemies shown in Ps. 110

I doubt not that at the end a similar relation will exist between Christ and the remnant of His people who have waited for Him. It is a period during which Jesus is fully triumphant, and acts in power and as a king, but does not yet rule in peace; and during which He forms, develops, and establishes, the

relationship of His people with Himself on the earth in His triumphs and in His kingdom, according to the rights of which He will subject His enemies to Himself. The Psalms also open this part of Christ's reign to us prophetically and in type (see Psalm 110). After having seated David's Lord at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the Spirit says, "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning [the morning of His glory, the dawn of day]; thou shalt have the dew of thy youth [of the young men who follow Him]." The whole of this psalm unfolds the same idea, the warlike kingdom of Christ, having Zion chosen of God for its seat, and the place whence His power shall go forth during the triumphant wars of the Messiah.

Let us pursue this latter point.

Election applied to David and Zion in Ps. 78

After having described the ruin of Israel, Psalm 78 shews us Jehovah awaking; but it sets aside all rights of inheritance, and testimony to His former dealings with Israel; for (1 Chron. 5) the birthright was Joseph's — "He CHOSE the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. He CHOSE David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds," etc. This psalm mentions indeed His sanctuary, but the mountain on which it was built is never represented as the object of God's election. This psalm reaches farther than our present history; but it applies election to David and to Zion.

David's inspired sentimens and Jehovah's abundant answers

Psalm 132 sets before us precisely the sentiments with which the Spirit inspired David when he placed the ark upon mount Zion. It is but a tabernacle, but it is that of the mighty God of Jacob on the earth. And Jehovah has chosen Zion. There the horn of David shall bud.

Observe here, that Jehovah's answer goes each time beyond the request and desire of David — a beautiful testimony to the rich goodness of God. Jehovah's rest is in the midst of His people. He will enjoy this rest here in the midst of His own, although He establishes His glory in the temple; and it is there that every one speaks of it. In the wilderness this glory had not had a place of rest. Israel was on a journey, and Jehovah, who dwelt among the people, went before them to search out a resting-place for them (Num. 10:33). Neither was it the case at Shiloh, when His rest among them depended on their faithfulness. "He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered his strength into the enemy's hand" (Psalm 78:61-62). Election and grace alone — by means of "one chosen out of the people" — (Psalm 89:19) — establish the rest of God among His people.

What God is, clearly demonstrated in His public dealings

There is yet a remark to make on the subject of Psalm 132. We have seen that God maintains His majesty in His government, and does not allow any one to touch His ark. He gives David time to learn that God is a God of blessing and of grace; but, however good the intentions of His people may be, it is necessary that truth, that what He is, should be clearly demonstrated in His public dealings. If it were

otherwise, if His government were not stable, all would go to ruin; the levity of man would constantly lead him into the paths of self-will. It is true that God is full of patience, and that after having formed the relationship between His people and Himself, He continues to act according to this relationship as long as possible, although forced to chasten at the same time; but judgment comes at length.

David's failure as to the ark indicated in Ps. 132

In the case we are considering, God had broken this relationship as originally established by His sitting between the cherubim; He had delivered His strength into captivity, His glory into the enemy's hand. David, as victor, restores to Him His place, but on a new principle, that of grace and power. Nevertheless, in examining Psalm 132, we discover much deeper sentiments, a heart which desires to have God glorified among His people in a much more developed and much more intimate manner than was indicated by that which the outward pomp and train, in which Israel could take part, represented; sentiments to which God responded in a very different way than by the death of Uzzah. This psalm, it is true, was written after the touching communications which are revealed in 2 Samuel 7, as verses 11, 12 prove. It teaches us however in what spirit David went to fetch the ark, the ardent desire of his heart to find a habitation for Jehovah,* which, as we have seen, Christ will accomplish. Now it appears to me, that it was the consciousness of this desire that led to David's failure. Alas for man! In the consciousness of it he seeks to put it into execution, and he a little forgets the supreme glory of God, the sin which had caused God's departure from His people, and the majesty proper to Him. When God acts according to the requirements of His glory, and smites the man who lent David his assistance in accomplishing the desire of his heart, David is displeased. The death of Uzzah was the result of David's conduct, and he is angry with Jehovah when this result takes place. This was truly the flesh. God made David sensible of that which was becoming to the service of the God of Israel (see 1 Chron. 15:12-13),** and He restored his soul by shewing him that He was the true source of blessing, and that the leaving the ark aside was leaving blessing aside too. {* We may compare Exodus 15:2 in the English Version, though the translation is questionable. But see Exodus 29:46. ** This is not mentioned in Samuel; because it is David as the type of the Lord, whom the Spirit sets before us here.}

In his maintenance of a sense of Jehovah's glory David rises higher than Solomon

Moreover the position of David, zealously maintaining a sense of Jehovah's glory in the midst of his exaltation, as portrayed in the psalm, is of the highest moral beauty, and has a very peculiar aspect in reference to the divine economies. The place which Solomon occupies at the dedication of the temple presents, no doubt, a more striking picture. The Melchisedec priesthood is there in its simplicity and its fulness, but this was the fruit of the accomplishment of blessing; and the moral condition of those who took part in it was much less the result of deep exercise of heart, and of the close communion with God which is its consequence; it was, therefore, much less connected with the intelligent expectation of Christ. Solomon enjoyed the present realisation of the glory upon which, in its true accomplishment in Christ, David relied by faith; Solomon does not go to a higher source than David's faith, and the responsibility of the people which flowed from it. The temple is the scene of this. David rises higher.

He lays hold of God's purpose, as to the seat of Jehovah's kingdom; and at a time when this required faith, he becomes, as far as possible, the royal priest, and consequently ascends to God Himself, who is the source of this priesthood. Taught of God, he has understood the election of Zion, the seat of Christ's kingly glory; and in this sense his moral position, when dancing before the ark as an obscure man, and to his shame before the world, appears to be a much higher one than that of Solomon upon his brazen scaffold.

The ark is also the sign of the re-establishment of God's power in the midst of His people by this moral link; but this re-establishment takes place, by what was in type the victory and the energy of Christ who prevails over His enemies, as will be the case, and not merely in the enjoyment of the glory.

David a type of Christ as a servant-priest, a Levite

In all this part of the history David (though as to himself with individual failure) is more personally a type of Christ. It is while difficulty exists, before the reign of peace when power will have removed every obstacle to the full enjoyment of it, that he restores the people's connection with God, and blesses and feeds them as Melchisedec. Blessing flows from his person in the presence of all that still opposes it, and in spite of every difficulty. The position which David still takes is that of servant, the immediate servant of God, by grace. He is not a priest upon his throne; but the king makes himself a priest, and this while still performing service.

Samuel, as given to Jehovah, was clothed with a linen ephod. It was the priestly garment, and he was not a priest after the order of Aaron. He served in the tabernacle, by grace and by the Spirit, as one chosen and set apart for God. He was in his right place, but on God's part it was in grace, when the gloomy night of Ichabod already threatened the people with its darkness. Here it is the king who, taking this place, puts on the priestly ephod; not the garments which God had given the priests for glory and for beauty, but those which distinguished the priest considered as the type of Christ as priest,* and which belonged to the essence of his functions,** and in fact he took the place rather of a Levite, that is, of one set apart to serve before the ark, before Jehovah. The leading idea connected with the ephod is that he who wears it presents himself to God. But, even though making request, Melchisedec rather presents himself to the people; although he is before God for the people, as king and priest upon his throne. {* For the high priest (after the strange fire offered on the day of their consecration) it seems, never wore the garments of glory and beauty in the most holy place He only went in in white garments on the day of atonement. ** This priesthood He (Christ) exercises now. The glorious garments He will come out in. He is personally already crowned with glory and honour, but the all things are not put under Him; nor has He taken His Melchisedec throne, which indeed will be on earth. He is on His Father's throne, while His fellow heirs are being gathered.}

The king secures and communicates blessing to the people

Having offered his sacrifices, the king blesses the people. There were yet the Philistines, the Syrians, and other nations, to be subdued; but the connection of the people with God was established and maintained in security by the king in Zion, although the ark on which this connection rested was still

within curtains. Blessing was also secured through the king himself, who had brought the sign of the covenant and the elect king together in the place which God had chosen, and who was still the servant for this. The ephod did not pertain to Melchisedec; but, in honouring Jehovah who had preserved the people, he who wore it maintained as priest the blessing of the people before God. Michal, who in the spirit of Saul her father only dreamt of earthly glory, cannot participate in this. Abasement before Jehovah was incomprehensible to her. She neither understood nor tasted His glory or the joy of knowing Him as the heart's sole master. That which belongs to Saul can have no share in David's kingdom, nor can it suffer with a despised and rejected one. In short, we have a king devoted to Jehovah and to the people, who secures and communicates blessing to the latter; and not as yet a king characterised above all by the enjoyment of established blessing, which is Solomon's condition.

Christ's glory presented in the Psalms

Now the first of these two conditions appears to me to represent Christ, such as He has always been in principle and in right, and especially such as He will be after the destruction of Antichrist, and before the destruction of those enemies who will still oppose themselves to the establishment of His kingdom in peace. His people, all Israel, will be united under Him. The rod of His strength will go out of Zion, and He will rule in the midst of His enemies (Psalm 110); but it will not yet be the fulfilment of Psalm 72 or of Zechariah 6: 12-13. Compare also Psalm 2, in which Christ is looked upon as the Son of God born upon earth, and in which His universal rights to the possession of the earth, which flow from this, are set forth, acknowledged by God and proclaimed to the kings of the earth.

In Psalm 110 Christ is seated at the right hand of God, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool.

In Psalm 8 He is the Son of man, and all things are put under Him.

David as the one who blesses his own house

Under Solomon all Israel rejoices in all the good things which Jehovah had bestowed upon Solomon, as well as upon David. Here David in his own person provides that which is necessary to feed the people, and deals to every one a "good piece."* He returns to bless his house, for David has his own house to which he returns after having blessed Israel; it is something nearer to him than Israel. Michal, we have seen, could not really belong to it. David finds it a joyful thing to humble himself before Jehovah, and he reproves her. How overwhelming was the reply he made to her! {* Psalm 2 shews us the King set upon the holy hill of Zion, the Son of God begotten in time (a distinct thing from His relationship as Son, one with the Father before the world was — a doctrine taught in John 1, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, and elsewhere — yet I do not believe one could be without the other, though the "therefore" of Luke 1:35 shews it to be a distinct thing, and His Sonship in this place is also a truth of the greatest importance), owned as such by Jehovah, and the kings of the earth charged to submit to Him. Psalm 8 speaks of Him as the Son of man to whom all things are subjected according to the eternal purposes of God. In Psalm 110 He who had been despised and rejected, being seated at the right hand of God, is to rule in the midst of His enemies. Compare Psalms 24 and 102. In the first, He is acknowledged as

Jehovah of hosts, the King of glory, after having conquered His enemies: in the second, as the Creator Himself.}

Chapter 7

David's desire and God's answer in blessing

Ardently desiring Jehovah's glory, David is troubled at dwelling in a house of cedar, while Jehovah dwelt within curtains. He wishes to build Him a house — a good desire, yet one which God could not grant. The work of building the temple belonged to the Prince of Peace. David represented Christ as suffering and conquering, and, consequently, not as enjoying the earthly kingdom by undisputed right, and opening to all nations the gates of the temple in which the Lord of righteousness was to be worshipped. He returns then, so to say, into his own personal position, in which God blessed him in a very peculiar manner. David was more than a type; he was truly the stock of that family from which Christ Himself should spring. This is taught in the beautiful seventh chapter. An elect vessel to maintain the cause of Jehovah's people in suffering, and to re-establish among them the glory of the Lord's name (vers. 8, 9), Jehovah had been with him; and David, most especially honoured in this, was also in his faithfulness a vessel of promise of the future peace and prosperity destined for Israel in the counsels of God. But these were yet future things. The perpetuity of the kingdom over Israel is established in his family, which God will chasten if needful, but not cut off. His son shall build the house. Already, at the time of the exodus, the man in whom was the Spirit, desired to prepare a habitation for Jehovah (Ex. 15:2).* But the Messiah was needed for this. Till then Israel was a wanderer, and God with him. {* The translation is very questionable; it was however God's thought. See Exodus 29:46.}

The following are the chief subjects of the revelation made to David, and of his reply: — the sovereign call of God; that which God had done for David; the certainty of future rest for Israel; the establishment, on God's part, of David's house; his son shall be the Son of God, shall build the house; the throne of his Son shall be established for ever.

David's prayer of thankfulness

David's first thought — and it is always so when the Spirit of God works — was not to rejoice, but to bless God. These are the striking features of the prayer of thankfulness: he is in peace and freedom before God; he goes in and sits before Him; he acknowledges at the same time his own nothingness, and how unworthy he was of all that God had already done. Yet this was but a small thing in the sight of God, who had declared to him the future glories of his house. It was God, and not the manner of man. What could he say more? God knew him; there lay his confidence and his joy. He acknowledged that God did it in truth and "of his own heart." It was grace to make His servant know it. The effect of all this was to make David recognise the excellency of Jehovah. There was none beside Him, and none upon the earth therefore to be compared to His elect people, whom He went to redeem for a people to Himself, and whom He had now confirmed to Himself, that Israel might be His people for ever, and

that He Himself might be their God. The highest kind of prayer is that which does not spring from a sense of need, but from the desires and the intelligence which the revelation of God's purposes produces — purposes which He will fulfil in love to His people and for the glory of Christ. Finally he asks that his house may be the place of God's own blessing. In a word, he desires that the purposes of God, which had awakened all his affections, may be accomplished by Jehovah Himself, who had revealed them unto His servant.

Chapter 8

David the man of faith, the Victor-King in Zion

Being entirely delivered from the insurrections of the people,* David exercises his power in bringing his enemies into subjection. The Philistines, who dwelt within the land of Israel, are subjugated. Metheg-ammah signifies "bridle of the capital." David held the key of power. Moab is subdued and made tributary. At length the outward enemies, the Syrians, also, are either conquered or submit themselves. The Edomites become David's servants, and Jehovah preserves David whithersoever he goes. {* Compare Psalm 18:43, where the righteous suffering Christ (under the figure of David) is the source of all blessings for Israel from Egypt to the end.}

In all this we have again the man of faith and the type of the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, who is victorious over the enemies of Israel, and puts Israel in possession of the promised land (Gen. 15:18) as far as the Euphrates. He dedicates the spoil to Jehovah. He reigns over all Israel, and executes judgment and justice unto all his people. The companions of his pilgrimage participate in the glory of his kingdom — a type, in all this, of the kingdom of Christ.

Chapter 9

"The kindness of God" shown to Mephibosheth

He acts in grace also towards the humble remnant of Saul's house; and if Mephibosheth is not associated with the glory of his kingdom, he enjoys the privilege of the king's table, who shews him kindness; although Mephibosheth belongs to the family of his enemy and persecutor, but at the same time to that little remnant which favoured the king whom God had chosen (being itself, on that account, hated by those in power). He enjoys also the whole of his family's inheritance.

This touching and beautiful testimony to David's kindness and faithfulness through grace, appears to me to give us a picture of Christ's relations to the remnant of Israel, or at least that of the spirit of these relations. It was "the kindness of God" which sought out the family of Saul, the enemy of David's crown — and which rests upon the representative of Jonathan, whose history we have read, and who typifies those that will attach themselves to Christ in prospect of the kingdom, to which their thoughts are limited. The remnant enjoys the effect of the establishment of the kingdom, but does not rank among those that surround the throne after having shared the sufferings of the despised and rejected

king.

Chapter 10

Grace despised followed by judgment

2 Samuel 10, the details of which we pass over, sets before us the general principle of the king's rule in Zion. When grace is despised by those to whom it is manifested, the king's judgment follows. Opposition and rebellion only serve to establish his authority in the very place where resistance is attempted. It is useless to strive against the power of God's chosen king.

Chapters 11 to 13

David's great sin and its consequences

The history of David and the wife of Uriah follows. David is no longer acting by faith in God's service. When the time comes at which kings go forth to war, he stays at home at his ease, and sends others in his place to fight Jehovah's battles. At ease and in indolence he falls readily into sin, as was the case when he sought for rest among the Philistines. He was no longer standing by faith.

The nearer David was to God, the more ineffectual were his attempts to conceal his sin. Given up to himself for the time in chastisement, he adds a second transgression to the first; he completes it, and enjoys its fruit, now that the removal of every obstacle gives a semblance of lawfulness to his course. What a sad history! What unworthiness! He forgets his position as king, and a king from God. Was it reigning in righteousness to take advantage of his royal power to oppress Uriah? He makes himself a slave to the wretched Joab by rendering him accessory to his crime. How degrading! How much happier was he, when, though hunted like a partridge in the mountains, he had a living faith and a good conscience! But who can shun the eye of God? Accordingly God, who knows and loves him, fails not to visit his sin.

This was a very great sin: David committed it in secret; God punishes it in the sight of all Israel. If David knew not how to glorify God, nor — while reigning in His name — to maintain a true testimony as to the nature of God's kingdom; if he had on the contrary falsified its character, God Himself will know how, in the sight of all men, to retrace its features through the chastisement He will send upon the man who has thus dishonoured Him, and who had taken away the only witness to His government which God had set up before men.

The work of the Spirit

This history shews us how far sin can blind the heart, even while the moral judgment continues sound; it shews also the power of the faithful word of God. God manifests at the same time the sovereignty of His grace; for although He chastened David by the child's death, it is another son of Bathsheba who was

the elect of God, who became king and the head of the royal family, the man of peace and blessing, the beloved of Jehovah. David submits himself under the hand of God; his heart bows under it in the depth of its affections. He understands it better than his servants do, although more guilty than they. He acts becomingly according to spiritual intelligence. There was confidence in God and intimacy with Him; and therefore David can lay open the tenderest part of his heart to God, the part in which God had wounded him; but when the will of God is manifest, he submits entirely.

We see here the evident work of the Spirit. It is the same Spirit who wrought in Jesus at Gethsemane, although both the occasion and the extent of the suffering were not only different, but far otherwise important; but the heart is opened to God completely and the submission complete when God's will is known.

God's chastisement publicly manifested

The sin of David has been extremely great; but we can plainly see in him the precious work of the Spirit. Confounded by the simple faithfulness of Uriah, he cannot escape the hand of God! David is pardoned, for he confesses his sin; but as to His government, God shews Himself to be inflexible, and while sparing the king — for he deserved death — He announces to him that the sword shall never depart out of his house. We have seen a similar case in Jacob's unfaithfulness. David's punishment also answers to his sins (compare vers. 10, 12 with the history of Absalom). As to David's affections, the chastisement was in the death of his child, a chastisement which he deeply felt; and the public government of God was manifested in that which was done, according to His word, before all Israel and before the sun.

The judgment of the Ammonites

It is possible that the children of Ammon deserved severe judgment, and that this period was the time of their judgment; they were the insolent enemies of the king whom God had set up, and who had given proof of his kind feeling towards them. But as to his personal condition, I know not whether David would have treated his enemies in this manner when he was walking in the narrow path of faith. As a type, this judgment brings to mind the righteous judgment of the Messiah, and the dreadful consequences of having despised and insulted Him even in His glory. We learn from it also, that when a people are ripe for judgment, God will bring it upon them, even although others may seek to act in grace.

The bitter and sorrowful fruits of sin

When David had shewn that he had forgotten God, and had failed in his entire dependence upon Him, the evils in his house soon broke out. He had added to the number of his wives. The root of bitterness buds and brings forth bitter fruits.

Although in the main David's heart was upright before God and deeply acknowledged Him, yet, when once out of that path of humble dependence which is produced by faith and the sense of God's presence,

he embittered the remainder of his days through following his own will in the midst of his blessings. There is sin in his house, wrath on account of the sin, vacillation through partiality for Absalom. Joab appears on the scene, as is the case every time that these matters of intrigue and wickedness recur in the history. This is all that need be said of the sorrowful story of Amnon and Absalom.

Chapters 14 to 20

David driven from his home and throne by Absalom

David's partiality for Absalom had yet other and more painful results, and heavy chastisements. It is painful to see the conqueror of Goliath driven from his home and his throne by his beloved son, and that under God's hand. For if God had not allowed it, who could have driven God's elect from the royal seat in which Jehovah had placed him? The sword was in his house; the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword. How just is Jehovah! But whom He loves He chastens. Accordingly, whilst all this is a manifestation of the righteous rule of God, it is to David an occasion of deep heart-exercise, and of a more real and more intimate knowledge of God; for his heart was truly and eternally bound to God, so that all his sorrows bore fruit, although they were occasioned by his faults.

David's confessions and humiliation expressed in the Psalms

In this respect also, although the cause of his grief was so widely different from that of the Lord's grief, he becomes the type of Christ in suffering, and the vessel of the expression of His sympathy for His people. This is even so much more the case, because with a faithful heart, and in a certain sense with perfect integrity towards God, the king's faults and transgressions gave rise to those confessions and to that humiliation which the Spirit of Christ will produce in the remnant of Israel; so that on the one hand he speaks of his integrity, while on the other he confesses his faults. Now that is what Christ causes His people to say, and what He says for them.

Nevertheless we must remember it is not David himself, as a godly man, who speaks in the Psalms; it is by the inspiration of the Spirit he utters them; and it is a very precious thing for us that, in circumstances where faith might fail and the heart be discouraged, the word supplies us with language suitable to faith, and to faith in one who has perhaps been unfaithful: a precious testimony that, even in this condition, God does not cast us off, and that Christ sympathises with us, since He furnishes us with expressions and sentiments adapted to such a condition.

The principle of the Psalms

The Psalms supply this, and in especial suitability to the remnant of Israel in the last days. They are characterised by integrity of heart and confession of sin. The Spirit of Christ gives the sentiments, and assures of His sympathy. Psalm 16 gives us very strikingly this position of Christ. His goodness extends not to God. It is not His divine place, "equal with God," which He is taking. He calls Jehovah His Lord; but of the saints on earth He says, "in whom is all my delight." By His baptism, which was

the expression of this, He connected Himself, not with Israel in their sin, but with the first movement of the Spirit responding in the remnant to the condemnation of the people as such. This is the principle of the Psalms — the upright and faithful man in the midst of the perverse nation, the object of the counsels and purposes of God. The book opens with this distinction drawn by God; it next presents us with the King in Zion according to the decree of God, rejected by the nation and hated by the heathen who oppress the people. All this develops itself through a variety of circumstances, and all the relationships of the remnant are there depicted, as well as all affections of the heart. All connected with it is gone over by the hand and the pen of God, and according to the Spirit and the sympathies of Christ.

David re-established on his throne in peace

2 Samuel 20 ends this part of David's history, and his history in general. He is re-established on his throne, and has overcome the efforts of his enemies and the rebellion of his own people. The order of his court and officers is restored in peace. Sundry details are added by the Spirit of God.

Chapter 21

The Gibeonites and the house of Saul

And, first of all, the government of God, who forgets nothing, and with whom everything has its results, is recalled to David and to his people by means of the Gibeonites. It is no longer necessary for the establishment of God's economy that David should pursue the house of Saul. There is a righteous judgment, a moral principle of God, which is above all economies.

Saul in his formal and fleshly zeal, although it was for God, had not acted in the fear of God. It is this which especially distinguishes a godly zeal from a zeal for the outward interests of His kingdom. Saul forgets the oaths which Israel made to the Gibeonites. God remembers it, and does not despise the poor Gibeonites. David also recognises its obligation; after having inquired of Jehovah on account of the thrice repeated chastening upon Israel, he submits to the demand of the Gibeonites.* The whole house of Saul perishes, except the little remnant attached to David. With respect to the latter, the circumstances of Rizpah's touching and faithful affection awaken in David's heart the remembrance of brighter moments in poor Saul's career, and he pays the last honours to his memory. After this God was entreated for the land. {* However, in yielding to the Gibeonites, David did not consult Jehovah as to what he should do. We see the government of God as to Saul's house, and Saul's act towards those he had wronged; but though in its general character righteous and upright, had he consulted Jehovah, some happier way of being righteous might have been found.}

Valiant foes conquered by strength, or by faith alone

If with a sling and a stone faith can overthrow its enemies, the flesh is at fault before their attacks. David, when king, as we have clearly seen, gave himself up more to his lusts and to his own will than David suffering.

Nevertheless it is beautiful to see that, where faith has acted amid the people's ruin, it has stirred up many other instruments, who — animated and encouraged by its success — act fearlessly with the same power as that which wrought the first deliverance. It is well however to observe, that to conquer valiant foes, when all Israel was flushed with success and strengthened the hands of the mighty men, is a very different thing from the faith which reckons upon God, when strength and success are on the enemy's side and the people are fleeing before him. The latter was David's case with Goliath; the former, that of the men who slew the other giants.

Chapters 22 and 23

David's two songs

The songs that follow contain instruction of deep interest. In 2 Samuel 22 David comes forth from his sufferings and his affliction with a song of triumph and of praise. He had learnt what God was in his sufferings. He celebrates all that God had been for him, all that he had found Him to be in his necessities and dangers, the effect of God's power on his behalf, and the glorious and blessed result of this power. All this is given in a song, the expression of which will only be fully accomplished in Christ Himself.

In 2 Samuel 23 he celebrates his prosperity. But what a difference! He declares, it is true, what Christ will be when He reigns; and he does so in language of most attractive beauty, a beauty which ravishes the mind and transports it into the reign of Christ, that blessed "world to come of which we speak." But then this sorrowful thought presents itself — "my house is not so with God."

The song of triumph and praise for what God had: the sufferings of Christ

In the first of these two songs there is something more of profound interest. David speaks as a prophet; and, as he had done in so many other instances, he personifies the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus in connection with Israel. This song then sets before us the sufferings of Christ (as the representative of Israel, and often speaking of the nation as though it were Himself), sufferings which obtained also other deliverance of far surpassing excellence, as the cause of the deliverance out of Egypt and of all Israel's blessings, until the establishment of Messiah's glory in the age to come. He surrounds the agony of Christ with the whole history of Israel in salvation and in blessing, from Pithom and Rameses unto the destruction of the violent man at the end of days, and the submission of the nations to Messiah's sceptre; and he gives a voice to their distress in Egypt.

David's second song looks on to the coming of Christ: judgment executed before full blessing

In chapter 23 the covenant is, "all his salvation and all his desire," although at that time "he made it not to grow." Judgment must be executed ere the full blessing he expected could be brought in; and these thorns of iniquity must be "utterly burned in the same place." This will take place at the coming of

Christ.

David's mighty men

If God honours and glorifies David, He does not forget those whom the energy of David's faith had brought around him. The Holy Ghost enumerates the mighty men of David, and recounts their deeds of valour and devotedness — deeds which obtain a name and a place for them when God writes up the people (Psalm 87). Joab is not among them.

Chapter 24

The sin of numbering the people

2 Samuel 24 leads us into a subject which requires particular notice. The wrath of God is kindled again against Israel. It is not in the mind of the Spirit to inform us on what occasion this took place, but to lay open God's dealings both in government and grace. In the preceding chapter God "writes up" the mighty men who prefigure the companions of the true David in glory. Here it is His grace in staying His anger and bringing in His blessing.

God's dealings in government and grace

God punishes the pride and rebellion of Israel by leaving them to the consequences of the impulse of David's natural heart. Joab's habitual cleverness and good sense made him perceive its folly. The flesh, when it is in another, is easily discerned. Joab felt that it was not worth while to despise God when nothing was to be gained by it; for in this way the flesh fears God. But the thing was of Jehovah, and Satan gains his point.

When in truth can man's good sense avail in opposition to the will of God in chastening, and to Satan's malice? It is an awful thing to be given up to his power. Nine months of sin on David's part, and of patience on God's part, shew us the fatal influence of the enemy; but the sin accomplished only awakens David's conscience. The enjoyment of the fruit of our sin undeceives us. It is the pursuit of it which allures our hearts. When Satan has succeeded in inducing the children of God to commit the evil to which he tempts them, he cares no longer to conceal from them its emptiness and folly. Happily, where there is life, conscience resumes its power in such a case.

David's choice: his confidence in God

Nevertheless chastening must follow sin which has been carried out in spite of so much long-suffering. But God, who reaches His servant's conscience, brings into play the sincere affections of his heart, in order to bring about His own sovereign purpose. David exhibits that never-failing token of a heart that knows the Lord — confidence in God above all, and at whatever cost. "Let me fall into the hand of Jehovah." Sweet and precious thought of what the Lord is unto His people! and well He knows how to

fill the heart with the certainty that He deserves its confidence. Even while chastening, God is more loving, more faithful, more worthy of confidence than any other. The plague breaks out; but in the midst of judgment Jehovah remembers mercy, and commands the destroying angel, when he had reached Jerusalem, to stay his hand. It is Jerusalem, the city of His affections, that attracts His attention. God chooses it for the place where His altar shall be built, and His grace shewn forth — His appointed mercy-seat. It is there that His wrath, justly kindled against Israel, ceases; and sin gives occasion to the establishment of the place and of the work in which He and His people shall meet, according to that grace which has put away the sin. This characterises the cross of Christ; this will stay the plague in Israel, and introduce the reign of the true Prince of Peace. David stands in the breach to deliver the people; and at his own cost (ver. 17), and, typically according to the counsels of God, he offers the sacrifice of appeasement.

The altar at Araunah's threshingfloor: the atoning sacrifice

The thoughts on the First Book of Chronicles will contain a fuller examination into this latter part of David's history. But it is a striking close to this book, after all the governmental history of David, that it closes with the atoning sacrifice which stops the wrath through grace, and lays the foundation of the meeting-place of God with Israel and the place of their worship.