

## November 7

**Scriptures:** Read 2 Samuel 3 & 4

**Key Verse:** “David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.” (2 Samuel 3:1)

### Overview

We read that “there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David” (3:1). No further actual battles are recorded after the conflict at Gibeon (2:17), but there was a state of hostility — a cold war. David was never aggressive, though he could have easily taken over all Israel by force; rather, he was content to wait on the Lord and trust Him to fulfill His plan in His own time. All the while, the Lord was giving David favour among more and more Israelites, so he was quickly gaining support and strength (cf. 1 Chronicles 12:19-22).

Meanwhile, Ishbosheth was a weak ruler with a feeble kingdom that was getting gradually weaker. Abner was the real power behind Ishbosheth, and it appears that this new king may have himself felt threatened by Abner’s strength. The accusation he made against Abner having relations with his father’s concubine was serious, for it implied an act of treason. Often in the east, the harem of a king was considered the property of his successor. To take one of his women was like a claim to the throne. Abner was so angry about the insult of Ishbosheth that he vowed to help David gain control of the whole kingdom, “from Dan to Beersheba” (3:10). Surprisingly, he admitted that God had transferred the kingship from Saul to David, for before this point he had been in opposition to the will of God.

Abner arranged for the return of David’s lawful wife Michal, the daughter of Saul, whom Saul had wrongly given to another (1 Samuel 25:44). He then promised David the allegiance of all Israel, and David made peace with him. When Joab heard of this, he was suspicious of Abner’s intentions and tried to turn David against him (3:25). Joab was probably worried that if Abner truly supported David, then Abner, being more experienced, might take his position. The main reason Joab and his brother conspired to assassinate Abner, however, was in revenge for his killing their younger brother Asahel (3:30; 2:22-23). David strongly condemned Joab for this wickedness and stressed that he and his kingdom were innocent, having no previous knowledge of his evil plan. To have had a part in this would have been politically damaging for David. There were also no grounds for a justified blood-revenge, since Abner had slain Asahel in self-defence during warfare; it was not a premeditated murder with evil intent (Numbers 35:20-21).

The death of Abner left Israel without a strong leader and Ishbosheth lost hope in ever becoming a strong king in Israel (4:1). There was also no other legitimate successor to the throne in Saul’s family, since Mephibosheth was physically incapable (4:4). Two brothers, Baanah and Rechab, who were captains in Saul’s army, also saw the hopelessness of Ishbosheth’s cause and were possibly trying to gain favour with David and get on the winning side by removing the last obstacle to David’s united kingdom (4:8).

Like the Amalekite who claimed to kill Saul, David’s response was not what they expected (4:10). Rather than being looked upon with favour, they were executed for their crime. David’s

words show that he did not need the help of wicked men and their crimes, but he had faith that God would accomplish his will of redeeming and avenging him (4:9). David was willing to trust, obey, and wait for the Lord's redemption, for he understood that God was in control and had a plan, for not only his own salvation, but the salvation of the nation as well.

### **Prayer**

Lord, in our Nation we need the political leaders of Your choice. Please sustain those who do walk in righteousness and raise up godly people to replace those who do not walk in righteousness. Your Word declares that, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.